



**Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation**

# **BSSSC WORK PLAN 2020-2021**

Adopted by the Board on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2020

## **1.0 Introduction**

The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) is a political network organisation for decentralised authorities in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). BSSSC acts as an open, non-party political platform, which represents the interests of all sub-regions around the Baltic Sea – stressing common political ideas with a common regional approach.

Over the past decades, the co-operation between actors in the Baltic Sea Region has been growing rapidly and it got additional momentum in 2009 when the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) was adopted and put into action. Just now we are experiencing another formative moment with the Brexit influencing the European Union structure and finances as well as with definition of new policies as Green Deal and Digital Europe which are to address the newly defined challenges and which also seriously influence BSR cooperation.

On a global scale, the Baltic Sea Region is a small, prosperous macro-region with high innovative capacities. It is home to close to 60 million people. Within the region, political dynamics at the national level as well as sub-regional collaboration affect the development perspectives.

The Baltic Sea Region consists of communities with shared values and attitudes, built upon its diverse cultural heritage and committed to a common peaceful future. The BSR has been a place of intense cultural exchange for thousands of years and inter-cultural dialogue is a key tool in promoting the building of fair, peaceful and inclusive societies. The political landscape in Europe and in the Baltic Sea Region remains demanding - with challenges such as citizens' lack of trust in the political systems with tendencies towards nationalism and centralisation, infringements of civil liberties and threats to the independence of the judiciary, unsolved migration issues, reintroduction of border controls. This is topped with demands such as ageing societies, climate crisis, poor environmental status of the sea, digitalisation and cyber threats.

Peace and democracy are Europe's greatest achievements and should not be taken for granted. All political actors have to take responsibility and to involve and interact with the citizens. Among others, we need to involve young people in the visions and

values of the BSR/Europe. BSSSC believes in a permanent dialogue with the young generation of the BSR as they are at the core of social and political change - and the key to any region's future economic success.

The Chairmanship of Pomorskie Voivodeship 2020 - 2021 will focus on strengthening cooperation and the voice of the BSR sub-regions. Pomorskie Voivodeship will continue the good work of previous chairmanships and further develop the BSSSC political network - keeping regions involved and active in BSSSC as well as attracting the interest of new regions. Information and communication will be the core tools to achieve these goals.

The Chairmanship will aim to still strengthen the dialogue and cooperation with other organisations, networks and structures in the Baltic Sea area. In addition, actions will be taken to strengthen the renewed cooperation with the Committee of the Regions (CoR) as well as to continue the dialogue with European institutions and networks in Brussels.

Addressing the current challenges in the Baltic Sea Region and the whole Europe, Pomorskie Voivodeship during its Chairmanship will focus also on the issues of subsidiarity, multilevel governance and deliberative democracy. In this context the Chairmanship will follow the developments related to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

In addition the BSSSC will contribute to the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals by streamlining the SDGs in all our work.

## **2.0 BSSSC Strategy Towards 2030**

### The BSSSC vision is

To facilitate dialogue, partnerships and strengthen interregional cooperation in line with the SDGs - creating a more sustainable, better accessible and more prosperous Baltic Sea Region (BSR) – putting local and regional policy makers and the young generation at the heart of its work.

### BSSSC's strategic objectives towards 2030 are to

- mainstream SDGs in all its work and stimulate learning, peer reviews, and exchange of good practises among BSR regions
- be a strong and recognised platform to voice the interests of the regions in BSR
- become part of the EUSBSR governance structure representing regional authorities in relevant policy areas and horizontal areas
- actively engage in policy discussions and lobby work on topics of particular relevance for the regions - towards decision makers, such as national governments, the EU institutions and inter-governmental organisations
- be a platform for project development, partner search and dissemination of project ideas and results as well as an arena for exchange of best practises

- become a networking arena for dialogue between public and private sector - making use of its Annual Conferences
- continue to be a platform for young people in the BSR and to strengthen youth participation in all BSSSC policy work as well as in the EUSBSR context and beyond

### Important policy areas for the BSSSC are

- Cohesion policy and programmes – in particular Interreg - 2021 – 2027 and beyond (SDGs: 10, 16, 17)
- Environment, climate, energy and circular economy (SDGs: 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15)
- Transport and accessibility – transport corridors and clean transport (SDG 9, 11)
- Maritime policy - Blue Economy and protection of the marine environment (SDGs: 8, 9, 14)
- Culture and creativity (SDGs: 4, 11, 12, 13)
- Youth involvement and empowerment – supporting the establishment of a One Youth Platform (SDGs: 4, 10, 16)

## **3.0 Work Plan 2020 - 2021 under the Pomorskie Chairmanship**

### **3.1 Cross-cutting themes**

- ***The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and involvement of local and regional authorities and young people in the implementation***

The EUSBSR constitutes an important basis for the actions of the BSSSC and its regions, and BSSSC has since the very beginning participated as a key stakeholder in the planning and implementation of the strategy. The BSSSC strives to advocate the interests of the regions and promotes its implementation and ownership on all levels of governance.

BSSSC will:

- Promote the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance in the implementation of the EUSBSR and voice the need to actively cooperate with neighbouring countries;
- Follow and give input to the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan in 2019/2020;
- Keep close contact with the National Coordination Group of the EUSBSR and relevant Policy Area and Horizontal Action Coordinators;
- Take actions and contribute to the programmes of the Annual Fora of the EUSBSR both in Turku, June 16-17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (“Our Region, Our Future – Towards a Decade of Innovation and Sustainability”) and in 2021 in Lithuania – tbc.;
- Connect the BSSSC annual conferences to the work of the strategy - offering a platform for local and regional actors to interact with the EUSBSR structures;

- Cooperate with Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) and Euroregion Baltic (ERB) as well as the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference BSPC with regard to youth participation and involvement in the EUSBSR;
- Take an active part in the "Let's Communicate project" (Interreg BSR programme) via ENCN and Pomorskie Voivodeship (project partners) – as associated partner.

*Responsible rapporteurs: BSSSC Chairmanship and ENCN ?*

➤ **Cohesion Policy 2021 - 2027**

The prominent role of cohesion policy for the regions around the BSR requires a constant focus from the side of BSSSC. The work with regard to Cohesion Policy and the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) beyond 2020 is ongoing. BSSSC has fed into the process and responded to the European Commission's proposals. BSSSC will continue to monitor the development, follow up its policy papers and keep its network of regions informed. Cohesion policy is an effective investment policy that contributes strongly to growth and jobs in Europe and BSR, and the policy has benefitted the citizens of all EU Member States and supported them during difficult economic times

BSSSC will:

- Continue to promote the interests of the BSR sub-regions towards the European Commission, the European Parliament, national authorities and others with regard to Cohesion Policy beyond 2020;
- Follow the process constantly and monitor the development;
- Advocate its policy papers with political requirements given as input to the process and – if needed - develop additional position papers;
- Emphasise the need for territorial cooperation - among others in view of the EUSBSR - and strive for more financial resources to Interreg post-2020;
- Promote the cooperation with neighbouring countries and a smooth system for project development and implementation;
- Continue to lobby for radical simplification for better delivery of results from Cohesion Policy;
- Give input to and take part in the development of a next-generation Interreg BSR programme 2021 – 2027 as a stakeholder organisation.

*Responsible rapporteur: Land Brandenburg, Germany in cooperation with the ad hoc Working Group on Cohesion Policy with support from Pomorskie Chairmanship*

➤ **Youth involvement and empowerment**

BSSSC acknowledges the youth of the Baltic Sea Region as important stakeholders when discussing the BSR today and tomorrow. The youth are more sensitive to many

challenging issues - and through the way they live and communicate, they are very aware of changes taking place in society. The BSSSC will focus on a continuous and permanent dialogue with the young generation.

BSSSC will:

- Strengthen the work of the youth network/working group youth policy (WGYP) and better integrate the youth voice in all BSSSC policy areas. Support the youth in their will to comment on and contribute to the European as well as BSSSC policy;
  - Continue to advocate for a fixed role for the youth voice in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region after 2020;
  - Prepare and execute the Baltic Sea Youth Camp in June 2020 – alongside the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2020. Cooperate closely with the BSSSC partners on youth cooperation (UBC, ERB, CBSS and others) as well as PA Culture;
  - Continue to organise a youth event along with the BSSSC annual conferences as well as a yearly spring meeting;
  - Formulate political requirements towards decision-making bodies at the national and European level on youth policy – continue the work on the “Baltic Sea Youth Declaration” together with ERB and UBC;
  - Continue the close cooperation with CBSS, UBC, ERB and other relevant organisations and actors;
  - Develop cooperation with the Committee of the Regions (CoR) on youth policy and youth involvement
- Take part in the Baltic Youth 2030 and One Youth Platform for a sustainable Baltic Sea Region arranged by the CBSS.

*Responsible rapporteur: Land Brandenburg, Germany*

#### ➤ **Northern Dimension (ND) and cooperation with Russia**

BSSSC recognises the importance of continued dialogue and cooperation with regions in Russia despite the political situation on national and supranational levels. BSSSC welcomes the opportunity to cooperate in concrete projects with Russian partners through the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme as well as within the cross-border programmes.

BSSSC provides a sub-regional dimension and contribution to the ND work and stresses the importance of dialogue and cooperation between EU member regions, Norwegian and Russian regions. ND has an important role as a platform of cooperation in several policy areas (e.g. environment, transport, health and culture). BSSSC strongly supports the concrete work of the Partnerships and calls for better involvement of the sub-regions in the ND cooperation.

BSSSC will:

- Participate in the ND Steering Group meetings as an observer;

- Keep up and develop the contact to ND partners and to the relevant partnerships;
- Continue the dialogue and cooperation with Kaliningrad Region and North-West Russian Regions - and encourage other Russian regions to join the work of BSSSC;
- Intensify cooperation with the Kaliningrad Region in preparations for the BSSSC Annual Conference in 2020.

*Responsible rapporteur: Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, FI and BSSSC Chairmanship*

### **3.2 BSSSC Policy Areas 2017 - 2019**

#### **➤ *Mitigation and adaptation to the climate crisis***

In the face of the climate crisis and most urgent need to address it on all levels of governance the BSSSC commits to promote the related issues and work for solutions in economic, social and environmental areas to help mitigate the problem and achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions. The BSSSC will follow the EU and UN work and the related documents and reports in the field.

The BSR is highly vulnerable to climate change and the capacities of all stakeholders must be used to design effective policies on mitigation and adaptation through a bottom-up and multi-sector approach as well as through in-depth information campaigns.

BSSSC will:

- Promote and contribute as far as possible to promotion of the Green Deal among the regional and local policy-makers and civil society;
- Cooperate with the Baltic 2030 unit in CBSS and take part in the Expert Group on Sustainable Development (EGSD). Contribute to the implementation of the Baltic 2030 Action Plan – adopted by the CBSS in June 2017;
- Connect the work to actions of the Horizontal Action Climate in the EUSBSR - to follow up the local and regional actions with regard to Paris agreement;
- Promote the SDGs in connection with the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2020 in Turku;
- Support the ReGeneration 2030 process and its events such as Summit 2020 August 22-24 on the Åland Islands.

*Responsible rapporteur: BSSSC Chairmanship, ENCN*

#### **➤ *Transport and accessibility – transport corridors***

BSSSC will:

- Cooperate with the Transport WG of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission to join forces on issues of common interests (e.g. TEN-T revision, new CEF programme from 2021)

- Capitalise on the results of the Interreg BSR transport corridor projects Scandria2Act, TENTacle and NSB CoRe.
- Follow the work of the transport platform BSR Access as an associated partner
- Link up with EUSBSR Policy Area Transport and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Transport and Logistics.
- Follow the work in the relevant TEN-T (Trans European Network - Transport) core corridors and take actions when relevant (policy paper and lobby work). Keep the regions updated.
- Support the project Interreg BSR project MAMBA (“MAXimised MoBility and Accessibility of Services in Regions Affected by Demographic Change”) as an associated partner
- Work to have Policy Objective no.3 – A more connected Europe – included as a priority in the Interreg programme for the BSR 2021 – 2027

*Responsible rapporteurs: Agder County Council*

➤ ***Culture, creative industries and regional identity***

The Baltic Sea Region has an outstandingly diverse and attractive cultural life and a valuable cultural heritage. The EUSBSR focuses on strengthening and integrating BSR policy co-operation, with a view to develop synergies and to join forces. The Policy Area Culture in the EUSBSR focuses on intensifying the dialogue and cooperation between the main BSR cultural players in order to strengthen intercultural networking, to improve the ecosystem for cultural and creative industries in the BSR and to strengthen regional identity. The positive impacts of culture and creativity on the economy, employment, regional development, social integration and cohesion are proven. Culture builds bridges across borders and across social and political differences. The force of culture as a catalyst for social and technological innovations has to be better used and promoted.

BSSSC will:

- Follow up the BSSSC policy paper on Culture – adopted in May 2018;
- Advocate for better possibilities for the funding of cultural projects in the upcoming EU funding period 2021 – 2027;
- Cooperate closely with and take part in the work of EUSBSR Policy Area Culture;
- Continue the dialogue with the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture;
- Support the Interreg BSR projects as an associated partner:
  - BalticRIM („Baltic Sea Region Integrated Maritime Cultural Heritage Management“)
  - Creative Ports
  - UrbCulturalPlanning

- Cooperate with the UBC Cultural Cities Commission, Ars Baltica and other relevant organisations and networks to join forces and look for synergies;
- Support CBSS-led project Baltic Sea Cultural Cities;
- Follow up the Cultural Planning approach as a tool to a better life in cities and better, more inclusive neighbourhoods.

*Responsible rapporteur: Schleswig-Holstein, Germany with support of Chairmanship*

➤ **Maritime Policy and HELCOM**

The Blue Economy has significant importance for the whole Baltic Sea Area. Blue Growth has a strong potential for sustainable business and innovations in many sub-regions in the Baltic Sea Area. For example, clean-tech, aquaculture and digitalisation, provide positive input in increasing the prosperity of the whole area.

The HELCOM State of the Baltic Sea report explores the need for intensified action. The Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) is the most important tool for improving the ecological status of the Baltic Sea. As an observer in HELCOM, BSSSC shares the vision on a healthy Baltic Sea environment connected with a wide range of sustainable economic and social activities, at the same time contributing to the Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). BSSSC will promote the implementation of the BSAP, especially on the sub-regional level. Clear water, safe maritime traffic and healthy wildlife have concrete effects on the sub-regions.

BSSSC will:

- Continue its role as an observer in HELCOM and contribute to the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the EUSBSR “Save the Sea”;
- Advocate for funding for the Blue Economy post-2020 as well as for the continuation of the maritime cross-border INTERREG programmes - towards EU institutions and national authorities;
- Support the work of the Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy of CBSS and take part in the meetings;
- Continue the cooperation with the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Maritime Working Group.

*Responsible rapporteur: Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, Finland*

➤ **Smart specialisation and Bio-economy**

The concept of smart specialisation has proven to be successful in fostering innovation by strengthening the competitive advantages and development potentials of regions.



Bio-economy offers great opportunities for accelerating growth and sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. The cross-cutting nature of bio-economy calls for new ways of working and cooperating, as well as new processes, services and products that can contribute to a greener future.

Bio-economy development creates business opportunities in both urban and rural areas with circular management of material flows and energy and effective innovation ecosystems. BSSSC believes that existing development projects and business examples in BSR deliver concrete experiments of innovation ecosystems as a basis for continuous development together.

BSSSC will:

- Cooperate with the relevant Policy Area Coordinators in the EUSBSR;
- Take part in the Advisory Board of the RDI2Club project;
- Formulate political requirements of the regions towards decision-making bodies on the topics concerned;
- Provide meeting places and be a platform for stakeholder engagement and share of good practises and disseminate best practise examples from projects and governance models;
- take an active role in following and promoting blue and green economy projects in the BSR via Submariner network;
- Follow the work and be an associated partner in the Interreg BSR projects:
  - RDI2Club (Rural RDI milieus in a transition towards smart Bio-economy Clusters and innovation ecosystems).
  - Smart-Up BSR (Improving smart specialisation implementation of the Baltic Sea Region through orchestrating innovation hubs).

*Responsible rapporteur: Häme Region, FI with support from BSSSC Chairmanship*

#### **4.0 Rapporteur-ships to programmes and organisations**

- Interreg BSR programme - Matti Lipsanen, *Häme Region, Finland*;
- Baltic Sea Commission/CPMR - *Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, Finland*;
- CoR Intergroup Baltic Sea – *BSSSC Chairmanship*;
- UBC - *Toivo Riimaa, Estonia*;
- BSPC – *BSSSC Chairmanship*.

#### **5.0 Implementation structure 2020-2021**

- The Chairman and the Secretariat (Pomorskie Voivodeship);
- The Board;
- The Youth Network/WG Youth Policy;
- Rapporteurs for policy areas - and in some cases ad hoc working groups;

- Cooperation with BSR organisations and programmes;
- Brussels Antenna.