

Seminar summary

8th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Berlin 13 – 14 June

Nothing about us without us - making it work!

Time: Tuesday 13 June, from 15:15 to 16:45
Organisers: BSSSC, UBC and ERB
Moderator: Ole Martin Gjestad, former member of the BSSSC youth network - now youth worker in the County of Östfold in Eastern Norway.

Description

The seminar focused on sharing good practises on youth participation and empowerment - for better youth involvement at local and regional level as well as macro-regional level for the future. The seminar related to the Governance of the EUSBSR - to ownership, involvement and communication of the strategy to the young people of the BSR. The seminar was a follow-up from Stockholm last year.

The seminar opened with three interventions from political level by Roger Ryberg, Chairman of BSSSC, Marie Louise Rönmark, Vice-President of UBC, Sebastian Magier - on behalf of Ms. Akko Karlsson, President of ERB. An expert panel of six youth representatives from the BSSSC, UBC and ERB youth networks - representing the countries Russia (Kaliningrad), Finland, Germany, Poland, Denmark and Sweden contributed to the discussion.

Short summary

The young inhabitants of the Baltic Sea Region are important stakeholders when discussing the BSR today and tomorrow. We face difficult times in Europe - and the political landscape in the Baltic Sea Region is demanding - with challenges. Dialog and openness is vital for our democracy and for the development of good, inclusive and future oriented societies. Real inclusion of all youth in the BSR is our goal, and we have a number of good models in the cities and regions around the Baltic Sea. These models can be shared and improved together, further developed and implemented.

Young people should have genuine possibilities of participating in the life of their municipality and/or school and influencing the decisions taken through access to public discussion. Young people's commitment, creativity and critical thinking must be seen and utilized as a resource.

The seminar lifted some examples and some concerns with regard to youth involvement. How shall youth influence policy and take responsibility in their societies? Young people are impatient and wants to see concrete results. We need to show that their efforts really mean something to keep them interested and active. The best way to reach out to young people is via the youth themselves - involving more youngsters. School is a good arena to meet the youth - to inform about policies and possibilities to influence them. Politicians have to actively stretch out a hand and meet the youth to get them involved/invite them in. Face-to-face connections are still important. When people are involved - social media is a good tool.

We need to get from talking about youth involvement - to making it work - by giving young people independence and to trust them to do good things for society. It should be allowed to make mistakes and learn from them. Youth need support from politicians and some funding to make concrete projects for youth involvement. Tools and activities - by youth for youth - should be shared within the BSR. The youth pointed to the need for more and different voices in decision-making. Youth want to influence and are ready to do so!

Voting at elections is a key part of our democracies and young people need to use their rights as well as obligations to take part. The terms of democracy is that sometimes you win and sometimes you lose - but you have to continue working and being engaged if you want to make changes.

A message from the seminar: Hey, listen! The youth of the BSR have real opinions and want to share their approaches and models for more and better involvement in decision-making. Nothing about us without us!