

Draft
10 Minutes Intervention in English

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Position of the BSSSC

Chairman, dear ladies and gentleman,

Many thanks for inviting BSSSC, the Baltic Sea Subregional Cooperation, to participate at this BSG seminar. We are in the middle of the debate about our position for the Baltic Sea Strategy which will be presented at our next annual conference in Kaunas mid September. This conference will serve as well as one of the “Round Tables” of the DG Regio. We will discuss the topic “accessibility and attractiveness” of the strategy. I take the liberty to invite you already now to attend this event.

It goes without saying that a successful Swedish initiative of a European *Baltic Sea Strategy* is a major step forward for the Baltic Sea Region. This initiative is welcomed by all. We have been arguing for such a step for years. But it probably needed not only the Northern enlargement of the Union but the accession of the Eastern European countries before the EU was ready and found time for such a step.

Together with the other organizations, BSSSC appreciates the effort to ask as many stakeholders as possible for input for this new strategy. And we hope, this broad participation will be continued when it comes to the implementation. Many items have already been mentioned in writing or

at conferences or seminars. Therefore, I would like, on behalf of BSSSC, to reflect on five particular points

First: BSSSC will bring forward the issue of “governance”. It is very important to us that the new strategy will not remain another “guideline” for Baltic Sea Region promotion. We have seen several of those schemes. This new strategy should aim at actions. We welcome the idea to concentrate at a sort of *Action Plan* in the strategy.

You are all aware of the intensive networks of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, mainly provided and exercised by regional and local level. It has been rightly pointed out that in our area, cooperation at the regional and local level is far more advanced than at the national level by governments.

For the *Baltic Sea Strategy* the challenge remains how to involve the national level accordingly.

We have seen the hesitation of a strong involvement by Baltic Sea States governments over the years. And we are aware that it is always difficult to engage member-states in a common European exercise if a legal basis is lacking.

But the EU institutions together with governments have developed an instrument to involve member-states and the EU in agreed common efforts. It helps to overcome the danger of *lip-service-commitments*. This instrument is the *Open Method of Coordination*. It is based on mutual agreed objectives to be implemented by member-states and an EU mechanism to control the implementation process. It has been successfully applied in certain EU policies.

BSSSC suggests considering carefully if the *Open Methods of Coordination* could be used as an instrument to make the intended *Action Plan* work.

Another aspect of governance is related to the effort of involving EU institutions directly with the regional and the local level in compliance with national governmental authorities. We regard the form – formerly called Tri-Partite-Cooperation – of *multilevel governance schemes* as a very helpful approach to implement commonly agreed actions and in involving the regional level.

A second major point of special concern for us is the involvement of those parts of the Baltic Sea Region which are not members of the EU. I am talking of Norway and Russia. It has been stressed before, that they are indispensable partners in the development of the Baltic Sea area and our immediate neighbors.

BSSSC is aware that the new *Baltic Sea Strategy* is an EU-strategy, developed and realized inside EU member-states. But it is a fact that the development of the Baltic Sea Region depends not only on our EU efforts but as well on Norway and the Baltic Sea regions of Russia. That this situation needs particular attention is visible in the Council decision by referring to the Northern Dimension.

If we understand it correctly, the EU Commission solution is so far to keep the Norwegian and Russian authorities informed on the evolvement of the strategy.

It is our feeling that this is not sufficient. If the intended *Action Plan* really concentrates on fostering the Baltic Sea Region, these actions have to be open and have to include the partners from Norway and Russia. This requires that we take into account their view and objectives of the further development of our area as well. And in good time. Because we might face otherwise the danger of drawing up an *Action Plan* which does not match

with the Baltic Sea intentions of our neighbors. Misunderstandings and blockages could be unwanted consequences.

BSSSC therefore strongly advocates creating a *forum* where stakeholders of our neighbor-regions in Norway and Russia could contribute more directly to the new *Baltic Sea Strategy*.

Thirdly, I would like to point *only to one* of the thematic issues, which seems to us relevant for the new strategy and in which BSSSC has been involved in the last years. This is the *maritime dimension* of the Baltic Sea. We appreciate the intention to include the implementation of the European Integrated Maritime Policy in our area in the new *Baltic Sea Strategy*. This combination has to have its consequences in the intended *Action Plan*.

To our understanding, measures of the *Action Plan* should be outlined as concrete as possible. They should not only describe objectives but should make clear who has the responsibility for implementation and what administrative and financial instruments should be made available.

Fourthly, I would also like to stress the importance of Research and Development (R&D) as a strategic focus in the strategy as this will be an indispensable catalyst for real growth and development in the Baltic Sea Region. Moreover, economic growth as a result of concentrating efforts in the field of R&D in particular will also have a positive impact on the security of the region. In short, economic growth will improve the stability and security in the region.

Fifthly, it is also important to view the Baltic Sea Region in a larger context. The area is part and parcel of Europe which in turn is part of an international community, which is why looking at the Baltic Sea Region as a transregional entity will help understanding the challenges facing the region and will facilitate cooperation with adjacent and more distant regions in terms of

sharing experiences in regional development. The vision of the strategy should be: The Baltic Sea Region in Europe, Europe in the world.

Let me end by expressing my sincere hope that this new *Baltic Sea Strategy* will not only be a decisive step for our region but as well a model for a new approach of EU policies towards major European regions. We are happy to support this effort as much as we can.

Thank you for your attention.