

Baltic Metropolises Position Paper On The EU Strategy For The Baltic Sea Region

I Cities - The Key To A Successful Baltic Sea Region

The Baltic Metropolises network (BaltMet) represents 11 capitals and metropolitan cities around the Baltic Sea: **Berlin, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Malmö, Oslo, Riga, Stockholm, St.Petersburg, Tallinn, Vilnius and Warsaw**. The network welcomes the development of the Strategy and Action Plan for the BSR, supports the alignment of policies and funding under a joint strategic document, and underlines the importance of working together with other non-EU countries around the Baltic Sea, especially with the city-region of St.Petersburg.

The members of the network strongly believe that metropolitan areas play a pivotal role in ensuring that the BSR Strategy reaches its aims of making the Baltic Sea Region a more prosperous, sustainable, attractive, accessible and secure place, since cities:

- are the drivers of economic development and prosperity;
- produce large amounts of waste and pollution, but have significant potential in reducing emissions;
- attract creative and innovative human resources as well as financial investments;
- are the transport hubs linking the region together;
- are diverse melting pots of peoples and cultures;
- are closer to the citizens than national governments;
- are responsible for the safety and security of their inhabitants.

Therefore, a clear urban dimension must be reflected in all priority areas of the Strategy and Action Plan.

Given that cities are key actors within all priority areas of the Baltic Sea Strategy, the Baltic Metropolises strongly encourage that:

- The Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities¹ is taken into account when drafting the Strategy;
- cities are involved in consultation and dialogue when developing the Strategy and the Action Plan, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle and to ensure informed policy making and efficient implementation of policies and initiatives;
- the urban dimension becomes more prominent in the Structural Funds and other funding mechanisms for the Strategy implementation, in order to achieve the aims of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies.

The Baltic metropolises offer to support the development and implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy by:

- providing metropolitan expertise on the four prioritised areas,
- participating in consultation and dialogue structures,
- supporting the policies of the Northern Dimension Framework Document and proposing co-operation initiatives that engage the biggest city of the region, St. Petersburg,
- actively using European funding mechanisms as well as own financing to implement policies contributing to realising the Strategy and the Action Plan.

II The Urban Dimension of The Baltic Sea Strategy

80% of the world's population live in cities and urban areas. The 11 Baltic metropolises with surrounding areas are home to almost 25 million inhabitants – every fourth citizen of the Baltic Sea region. This fact represents great opportunities and challenges. Based on human capital and financial investment, the metropolises are drivers of regional development as primary centres of economic and cultural activity, of innovation and research. They are melting pots of diversity and home to some of the most resourceful and creative segments of the population, but also to those facing poverty and deprivation. The metropolises are essential transport hubs integrating the whole Baltic Sea region and face challenges related to pollution caused by industry and transport.

It is against this background that the Baltic metropolises urge the European Commission and the EU Member States to facilitate integrated urban development in the Baltic Sea Region in line with the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, by **addressing the urban dimension in all the thematic areas of the Baltic Sea Strategy**:

¹ Adopted by the informal meeting of the EU Council of Ministers for Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion in Leipzig on 24 May 2007: http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/download_docs/Mai/0524-AN/075DokumentLeipzigCharta.pdf

1. Prosperous region

The cities of the BSR are not only engines of their respective national economies, but they also function as engines of the entire BSR. In order to create synergies, the Baltic Metropolises, in co-operation with universities and science parks, local and regional level development agencies and the private sector, have developed a common innovation policy framework called the 'Baltic Sea Archipelago of Innovation'². The EU strategy for the BSR must support similar joint actions that directly contribute to increasing regional competitiveness.

Action is needed to:

- bridge the innovation gap among players in the region through increased cooperation and transfer of tools and know-how;
- foster the development of strategically important clusters, including the development of 'soft' and 'hard' innovation infrastructures;
- develop measures to support internationalisation of innovative SMEs and facilitating their access to financing;
- develop innovative public procurement strategies supporting of innovative SMEs and to find new solutions for public services;
- advance measures to develop e-services and to avoid the digital divide (e.g. broadband access).

2. Environmentally sustainable region

The poor state of the Baltic Sea is weakening the living environment and competitiveness of the entire Region. The numerous environmental problems concentrated in urban areas must be addressed through the Strategy and the Action Plan. This would be in line with the EU Strategy for Urban development³, which states that a high quality urban environment contributes to the priority of the renewed Lisbon Strategy to 'make Europe a more attractive place to work and invest'.

Action is needed to:

- raise awareness about and improve the state of the Baltic Sea;
- develop regional cooperation initiatives to improve waste and waste water management;
- promote action to reduce traffic congestion, air pollution and noise;
- develop measures for brownfield regeneration of old industrial sites;
- develop measures to improve energy efficiency and promote renewable energy resources.

3. Attractive region *

Attractive regions start with attractive cities. In a globalised world, the competition in terms of human and financial resources is intensifying. Increasingly, the attractiveness of a city in terms of culture, education and recreation, and its tolerance and celebration of diversity are determining factors for investors and migrant workers in choosing where to invest and settle. There have been a number of efforts to develop a shared identity and a recognized image for the Baltic Sea Region, but so far the marketing of the region as a whole has remained rather haphazard. The metropolises of the region support the promotion of the BSR both internally and externally, and urge the Commission to include targeted support to collaborative actions to this end in the Strategy. It is also important to further develop regional cooperation in the fields of culture and culture policy in order to sustain and attract high-quality human capital.

Action is needed to:

- develop joint promotional products and services to strengthen the identity and image of the Baltic Sea Region in Europe and global markets;
- initiate activities supporting a unified BSR profiling, e.g., mapping regional promotional players and their activities;
- promote integrated development of regional innovation infrastructure and providing broader support for innovative and sustainable city planning;
- support development of creative industries;
- support regional culture cooperation;
- Foster mobility and exchange of staff in city administrations, universities and enterprises across the Baltic Sea Region.

4. Accessible region *

The Baltic metropolises are the major transport hubs and junctions in the Baltic Sea regional transport and logistics networks. When addressing the issue of accessibility in the Strategy, the Commission and the Member States must be aware of political priorities made at the local and regional level regarding improved accessibility. For example, the Mayors of Stockholm, Copenhagen, Gothenburg and Oslo recently agreed to join forces and encourage the European Commission and national governments to realise the Nordic Triangle. The BaltMet Mayors' Resolution from 2006, highlighted 26 focal infrastructural projects seen as crucial to integrating the Baltic Sea Region in terms of transport networks and logistics. These 26 projects (see Annex 3) are parts of three main corridors:

² See BaltMet Inno Project Final Report <http://baltmet-inno.latreg.lv/uploads/filedir/File/brochure.pdf>

³ "Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment" adopted by the EC on 11 January 2006
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/thematic_strategy.htm

* NB! We suggest that 'attractive' and 'accessible' region are treated separately, as the underlying areas of action have little overlap

- "Rail Baltica", extended to Berlin and St. Petersburg, and including permanent rail link Tallinn-Helsinki;
- "Via Baltica", with the aim to develop a "Baltic Main Street" connecting the urban nodes;
- The "Nordic Triangle", including the Fehmern Belt Bridge.

5. Safe and secure region

City administrations are concerned with safety and security issues that are a matter of concern for their citizens. This includes safety and security risks, perceived or real ones, linked to climate change and pollution as well as those inflicted by social and cultural tension. Successful social integration policies, is one key to a safe and secure region. Cities are the main locations where the integration of different social groups is critical to building and maintaining a safe and stable environment for all. The Baltic metropolises encourage the Commission to acknowledge the role of the cities in keeping the region safe and secure for all inhabitants in the BSR.

Action is needed to:

- advance initiatives supporting a climate of non-discrimination, respect for human rights, equality, cultural diversity and combating racism and xenophobia;
- support integration measures based on "EUROCITIES Contribution to Good Governance Concerning the Integration of Immigrants and the Reception of Asylum Seekers";
- address general security issues (such as waterfront security, threats of organised crime and terrorist attacks, threats of consequences of climate change, etc);
- develop measures to ensure energy security.

A number of the proposed actions have already been taken up by the cities and regions in different cooperation initiatives – please see Annex I, "Existing and planned BaltMet and related co-operation initiatives", for more details.

III Governance and Implementation

A successful Strategy and Action Plan for the BSR must take full account of the pivotal role of the cities as local authorities implementing policies and as regional drivers in terms of growth, employment, competitiveness, innovation and change.

In particular, the cities should participate in planning, programming, decision making, monitoring and communication of programmes and projects which concern their development or make use of their function as development drivers for surrounding sub-regions, or in interregional and neighbourhood cooperation. For example, regulations should recognize that the expertise of professionals working with implementation of funds on the local level are involved in relevant planning and monitoring bodies. This is especially important for partner cities outside the EU in evaluation of the Neighbourhood programme, e.g. St.Petersburg and Oslo.

The Strategy and Action Plan for the Baltic Sea Region must:

- respect the subsidiarity principle – i.e., all proposed actions must respect local and regional self-governance and local budget priorities.
- be based on impact assessment and informed decision-making. Effective mechanisms to validate and check the impact of the Strategy on city development must be in place.
- be followed up with comprehensive monitoring and evaluation
- be aligned with the policies of the Northern Dimension and developed through structured dialogue with all levels of government and with all relevant partners including Russia and other non-EU actors along the BSR and the Barents Region.
- encourage cooperation and transfer of expertise with other European macro-regions, and provide corresponding instruments for such cooperation.
- be accompanied by sufficient financial resources and competences allocated to those public authorities responsible for their implementation.
- reinforce effective usage of different EU funding programmes by increasing their compatibility.
- enable the development of transnational investment projects.
- be well communicated to the public. The communication of the Strategy should make integrated use of relevant European, as well as national and local media resources and support the identity building of the Baltic Sea Region.

Sufficient funding must be available to ensure the implementation of the Strategy. The instruments used for its implementation must be transparent and easy to use. The Commission's continuous efforts to simplify the management of funds are supported and encouraged, especially for programmes with participation of more than three partners. The funds should allow city-to-city cooperation within partnerships with the cities both in and outside the EU and with entities from civil society, business and scientific and educational institutions. Advance payments should be made possible.

The Territorial Cooperation programme is seen as a key instrument in strengthening the Baltic Sea Region on both a European and a global scale and should be further strengthened. Especially partners from Russia (as well as Belarus) should be enabled to cooperate within joint projects, and instruments supporting such cooperation should be made more compatible with other Structural Fund instruments and other EC initiatives.

The relevant funding instruments, such as Structural Funds, should be open for direct participation of cities.

Annexes

1. Existing and planned BaltMet and related cooperation initiatives (4 pages)
2. Baltic Metropolises Activity Plan 2008-2010 (3 p.)
3. BaltMet Mayors resolution October 2006 (Infra projects; 5 p.)
4. BaltMet Opinion on the draft concept of Programme for Transnational Territorial Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region 2007-2013 of June, 2006 (2 p.)
5. "EUROCITIES Contribution to Good Governance Concerning the Integration of Immigrants and the Reception of Asylum Seekers" (9 p.)