

# 30th BSSSC Annual Conference RESOLUTION



OCTOBER 16TH – 20TH, 2022

PALANGA, LITHUANIA



**KLAIPEDA  
REGION**  
association



West  
Pomerania



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# Table of contents

## Main messages:

Regarding Russian-Ukrainian conflict and supporting Ukraine

Regarding Removal of munition from the Baltic Sea

Regarding Climate, Environment, Energy, Maritime issues and green transport

Regarding Innovation Transfer

Regarding Bioeconomy

Regarding Cohesion Policy

Regarding culture, creativity and regional identity

Regarding Youth involvement and new CBSS youth platform

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The Baltic Sea States Sub-regional 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 – promoting common political ideas with a joint regional approach.

The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation met in Palanga, Lithuania 16 – 19 September to discuss the shaping of a future sustainable Bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and to discuss the cooperation for a more sustainable Baltic Sea Region with new opportunities ahead of us.

The BSSSC Annual meeting of Baltic Sea Region Stakeholders was held physically for the first time since the outbreak of the Pandemic. We were able to meet again to continue cooperation and discussions on the Future of Europe and the Baltic Sea Region (BSR).

To highlight the role of regions and cities in the difficult situation in which Europe, the World but especially Ukraine found itself in the post-February 24th era when Russia began its aggression against Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens. To discuss a common future and what consequences the Baltic Sea Regions will face as a result of the war.

BSSSC also focused on circular bioeconomy, blue bioeconomy and renewable energy. The funding opportunities for regional Bioeconomy, EU Green Deal importance in the current geopolitical situation and BSR Bioeconomy competitiveness in Europe were also one of the key topics.

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# Main Messages:

## Regarding Russian-Ukrainian conflict and supporting Ukraine

- ◆ The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has taken a huge toll on Europe and the Baltic Sea Region. Millions of people have been affected by the situation related to the emigration of Ukrainians, providing them with security, with shelter and needed necessities such as medical care, access to education and fundamental essentials. Our economies have suffered and large parts of our lives have changed.
- ◆ While the war is not yet over BSSSC shares good practices and believe that this situation forces us to adapt and develop to the new reality. It's also a great example of how a community functions, helping each other in difficult situations not only materially but also through the exchange of experience and non-material contributions.
- ◆ BSSSC supports the idea that any European city or region should enter into cooperation, partnership with a selected Ukrainian region in the near future.

## Regarding Removal of munition from the Baltic Sea

- ◆ BSSSC finds it of vital importance to take an active part in spreading awareness of the problem that is an impact of munitions and explosives of concern (MEC) on maritime safety, security and sustainable remediation.
- ◆ BSSSC shares the concerns regarding the amount of munitions that threaten human lives, but also the environment within the Baltic Sea.

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## Regarding Climate, Environment, Energy, Maritime issues and green transport

### The BSSSC:

- ◆ Requests the European Commission and member states in the BSR to facilitate seamless transnational train journeys for persons as an important contribution to the agreed targets for decarbonisation of transport.
- ◆ Believes that cargo volumes should not be the sole criteria for the classification of ports in the TEN-T network. Calls on the European Parliament and the Council to also take into account the total value creation in the surrounding ecosystems of ports and their strategic role in ensuring security of supply and resilience when adopting the revised TEN-T regulation.
- ◆ Supports the CPMR Baltic Sea Commissions position on the revised TEN-T regulation.
- ◆ Strongly supports the European Commission action plan to establish 'Solidarity Lanes' to ensure that Ukraine can export grain, but also import the goods it needs, from humanitarian aid to animal feed and fertilisers. Also welcomes the initiatives to integrate the transport network of Ukraine with the TEN-T, and calls for support to the comprehensive task of rebuilding transport infrastructure which has been destroyed by the war.

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## Regarding Innovation Transfer

- ◆ BSSSC stands for fostering knowledge transfer from science to industry and the public sector, utilizing the best available technologies, and fully utilizing the opportunities provided by open data to facilitate evidence-based decision-making.
- ◆ BSSSC encourages innovation actors across the BSR to help companies, especially SMEs, bring their innovation to market. For example, by strengthening and expanding innovation brokerage services, developing matchmaking services, setting-up advisory services, etc.
- ◆ BSSSC invites BSR regions and innovation systems to invest in value chain-based collaborations and specialisations, localising productive systems and strengthening knowledge, innovation, markets and joint learning exchanges.
- ◆ Conserving biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem services, and wisely managing and using natural resources are fundamental to sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region. As a result, BSSSC encourages innovation actors across the BSR to maintain and improve the goods and services provided by biodiversity and ecosystems, and to ensure that innovation activities have no negative impact on natural resources, biodiversity, ecosystems, and ecosystem services.
- ◆ BSSSC encourages BSR innovation actors to stop wasting resources that can be shared, exchanged, transformed, and fully re-used by strengthening knowledge and expertise exchange, sharing and opening research and innovation infrastructures, transforming wasted raw materials and side-streams into new products, and rapidly digitalising of industries.

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- ◆ BSSSC invites financial ecosystem actors, such as public and private financial institutions, regulators, rating agencies, and others, to collaborate in designing and developing instruments (e.g., programs, schemes, financial products) for financing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to facilitate innovation creation, scale-up and implementation, and green transition.
  - ◆ BSSSC encourages BSR local, regional and national governments, and innovation actors to strengthen children and young people's voices and meaningful stakeholder engagement in developing creative ideas and innovative solutions, as well as decision-making processes.
  - ◆ BSSSC supports local, regional, national, and macro-regional bodies to create space for established and emerging innovation actors from various sectors and fields of expertise to network, co-create, experiment, exchange knowledge, and learn from one another. Particularly, BSSSC welcomes initiatives aimed at development and application of innovation skills, e.g. complex problem solving, cross-sector and cross-functional collaboration, interdisciplinary thinking, and creativity, etc.

## Regarding Bioeconomy

In the face of the on-going war in Europe, the continuing presence and impact of COVID-19, increased damage to the environment through global warming, and an economic downturn in the financial markets, it's clear that stronger, more coordinated, efforts must be made to provide for a sustainable future.

- ◆ BSSSC encourages the continued close cooperation of the regions through the fostering of partnership platforms between politicians,

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businesses, consumers, and citizens for the furtherance of the development of bioeconomy

- ◆ BSSSC recognises that, although the bioeconomy already represents a significant share of BSR economies, specific bioeconomy sectors should not be underrated. These sectors include: renewable energy sources including offshore wind power, reduction of energy consumption, and implementation of The European Green Deal including The Farm to Fork Strategy.
- ◆ BSSSC emphasizes that expectations are not just towards the development and growth of bioeconomy in BSR but also towards a reduction in our collective environmental impact at the same time.
- ◆ BSSSC highlights the need to carefully consider equally and as a single entity, the social, environmental, and economic impacts when planning any sustainable investment, research, and development in bioeconomy sectors. In addition, that bioeconomy policies are built on solid sustainability foundations that include social fairness and sustainable value chains.
- ◆ BSSSC supports the promotion of continued regional and rural cross-sectoral cooperation and clustering, and from this, the fostering of new product innovations - especially in industrial symbiosis (circular economy of waste materials from industrial processes) and sustainable use of the BSR's biomass resources
- ◆ BSSSC calls on BSR politicians at all levels, as well as all other key society actors to support the growth of bioeconomy and to secure funding and resources to support continued, sustainable investment in this sector.

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## Regarding Cohesion Policy

- ◆ With regard to the 2014-2020 funding period BSSSC urges the Commission to extend the deadline for the submission of closure documents as approval of programmes started only in the summer of 2021. It is challenging for regions to implement EU resources in the remaining time until the end of 2023. Beneficiaries and authorities require more time to close the implementation of projects .The Commission should consider giving regions the time to implement the resources towards beneficiaries such as the vulnerable groups of the society;
- ◆ BSSSC expects the European Commission to speedily approve submitted draft Programmes of the 2021 – 2027 programming period for the European Structural and Investment Funds. Boosting sustainable regional development by a forceful and well-resourced cohesion policy requires taking into account regional peculiarities, legislative systems and needs. In the approval process the European Commission needs to display the degree of flexibility, which is necessary for successfully coping with the multiple crises which Europe currently faces.
- ◆ These crises require a maximum amount of flexibility also from actors on the ground. BSSSC urges the European Commission to reflect this flexibility not only in the programming process but as well in implementing the programmes. The needs of regions and municipalities should not only be included in the design of programmes but also in applying them on a day-to-day basis. The flexibility should be all the greater the smaller programmes and projects are. This is particularly important concerning cross-border, trans- and interregional cooperation with a special focus on

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cooperation with Ukraine. In case of legal uncertainties, the Commission should discuss these with the European Parliaments budget control committee and the European Court of Auditors.

## **Regarding culture, creativity and regional identity**

In these days of severe threats and challenges that the Baltic Sea Region is facing, the long-term trust-building work of cultural relations is more important than ever before.

- ◆ BSSSC, therefore, calls on regional policymakers to take the power of cultural cooperation and relations in building mutual trust and in strengthening of Baltic Sea Regional cooperation in various fields seriously and to foster favorable conditions for this.
- ◆ BSSSC, furthermore, calls on future regional cultural policymakers to take into account the societal resilience-building aspect of culture. Cultural cooperation transports common values, is inclusive and fosters the involvement of civil society including all generations. The Baltic Sea Region therefore needs a variety of cultural projects and common endeavors more than ever.
- ◆ BSSSC, therefore, supports the newly approved project Baltic Sea Cultural Pearls in its implementation and follows closely other Baltic Sea projects such as Culture for Climate on their way to receive funding.
- ◆ BSSSC calls on the responsibility of the cultural actors for building bridges in the Baltic Sea Region, especially during these troubled times.

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## **Regarding Youth involvement and new CBSS youth platform**

To ensure a good representation of society as a whole, it is essential to include young people in decision making processes in the Baltic Sea Region. Politicians and stakeholders should consider that they can benefit from the knowledge, experience, and perspective of young people. Young people want to be included from the start, from planning until evaluation. Decision makers should take the time to engage with youth, and offer resources so that young people can give new impulses to and ensure more sustainability in decision-making processes.

To increase the participation of young people in the Baltic community, we propose taking several actions.

- ◆ Provide local youth coordinators and a budget for them.
- ◆ Increasing the number of regional youth coordinators in cooperation with local schools and universities will allow for raising awareness, and spreading knowledge about the activities carried out, and will also facilitate building stronger participation of young people in the Baltic community.
- ◆ Spread structured information using more specific messages and be more present on social media. To reach young people, communication channels should be adapted to this target group
- ◆ Regular, more frequent meetings involving young people in discussions with politicians (fund for more meetings also for educational purposes) to increase the sense of belonging to the BSSSC. These meetings will introduce the activities of the executive board to the youth.

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- ◆ Better cooperation between regions (e.g. in projects, stronger cooperation between neighboring states as West Pomerania and Brandenburg Youth are starting to do).
  - ◆ Treating young people as equal partners in discussions, by providing information, concrete plans, goals, and time for young people to understand the agenda of BSSSC.
  - ◆ Climate change, a healthy Baltic Sea, regional youth representation, peace and human rights are crucial topics young people around the Baltic Sea are passionate about.

BSSSC supports the Final Recommendations of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum Stockholm 2022 and the Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2022. Both papers were drawn up also by BSSSC Youth members. Regarding the main topics of the Annual Conference 2022 we want to highlight especially the Chapter on the Policy Area Bioeconomy. We appreciate the West Pomerania chairmanship initiative to invite youth to an extra event to Szczecin in September 2022 to prepare the Annual Conference. We think this could be the basis for further developments mentioned above. It is an encouraging signal for BSSSC Youth, that CBSS will foster the continuity of youth engagement by founding a permanent Baltic Sea Regional Youth Forum from 1 January 2023.