



Ministry
of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Poland



EUSBSR
EU STRATEGY
FOR THE BALTIC
SEA REGION

BETTER TOGETHER

10 YEARS

EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION





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WELCOME TO THE EUSBSR

What is the aim of this publication?

This brochure is a joint effort of the key stakeholders of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) dedicated to the current and future implementers. After 10 years of the launch of the EUSBSR we wish to look back in time and present to the world our good work and some of the achievements.



The Baltic Sea has united people and nations through many centuries. Our history has been marked by flourishing trade relations during the rise of the Hanseatic League, historical bonds between ruling dynasties across the coastline as well as some turbulent and stormy moments. All this constitutes the common Baltic legacy of centuries-old ties.

Never in history have these ties been as strong as today. An undeniable reason for that was the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 when the Baltic Sea became the Mare Nostrum of the European Union.

The current year brought some exceptional anniversaries. Fifteen years have passed since Poland joined the EU and ten years since the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region was established. We are very proud to celebrate the jubilee of the first EU macro-regional strategy in the beautiful Polish city of Gdańsk which will host the 10th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

In 2009 eight EU Member States around the Baltic Sea decided to step up with their efforts in transforming our region

into an even safer, wealthier and more interconnected place to live in. New ideas began to flourish, cutting-edge networks across the borders sparked new models of cooperation. The rising awareness of our common challenges met new means of handling them in a more efficient and coordinated manner.

The challenges are vast. Endangered marine ecosystem, bottlenecks in infrastructural networks, new social trends such as ageing populations and migration are just a few of them. Ten years of successful implementation of the EUSBSR which resulted in hundreds of project results, made us all ambassadors of the macro-regional concept. I hope that in ten years' time our continent will see the EU macro-regional cooperation as something obvious and universal.

On the occasion of the jubilee, I would like to thank all the past and current EUSBSR stakeholders for your commitment and innovative ideas which help our region to grow stronger. I wish you all another successful decade of implementing the EUSBSR objectives.

Through our joint publication we would like to revive the spirit of the strategy's beginnings and highlight the results of our cooperation through all those years.

Indeed, we are better together.

Jacek Czaputowicz


*Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Poland*



EU macro-regional strategies are a natural step forward in the European integration process: neighbouring countries join forces and coordinate to address together joint challenges they could not solve alone. This is the very essence of our European Union.

The importance of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is undeniable. This is the first-ever EU macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Commission, endorsed by the European Council in 2009. With 8 participating EU Member States bordering the Baltic Sea, accounting for more than 80 million people in the region, the EUSBSR has paved the way and become a benchmark for the three other macro-regional strategies: the EU Strategy for the Danube Region in 2011, for the Adriatic and Ionian Region in 2014 and for the Alpine Region in 2016.

This year we celebrate 10 years of the EUSBSR. It is a successful initiative that has brought important results in diverse areas such as innovation, safety of maritime transportation, preparedness for maritime emergencies or reduction of plastic in the Baltic Sea.

The EUSBSR has also contributed to policy shaping and development in energy, navigation, environment and climate change. The current efforts of flagship projects in tackling marine litter are encouraging. The experience from these should be widely shared with other regions, even beyond our EU borders.

All European institutions have acknowledged the importance of macro-regional strategies as a unique framework to address common challenges and a useful instrument to channel EU, national or private financing sources. These strategies have also inspired the Commission's legislative proposals for the 2021-2027 cohesion policy, by introducing the notion of functional areas and strengthening territorial cooperation as a cross-cutting dimension of cohesion policy.

Now it is time to capitalise on the success of the EUSBSR, to build a stronger cohesion policy, in particular in view of the coming 2021-27 funding period. In this regard, the participating Member States and regions have a key role to play, keeping up strong political support and momentum. We need to ensure that we will all live up to the high ambitions we set when establishing this macro-regional strategy. Let's stick together, let's take all opportunities to further raise the political profile of EUSBSR.

Happy 10 year anniversary to EUSBSR!

Corina Crețu


*Commissioner for Regional Policy
European Commission*



This publication summarises 10 years of implementation of the first macro-regional strategy. I hope it will be a valuable input to the Baltic dialogue which will take place during the 10th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in Pomorskie region on 12-13 June 2019. The representatives of non-governmental organisations, business, academia and administration will meet in the symbolic, Hanseatic city of Gdańsk, which had already hosted the Forum in 2011. It is worth mentioning that the *Forum* is, for the first time, organised mainly by the region hosting the event. It is also the first time when a Norwegian partner chairing the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation is a co-organiser.

You may ask yourself: why should I participate in the event? Mainly, to explore a strong link between the *EUSBSR* and growing challenges such as depopulation, ageing, migration, new production and consumption models, but also new social, cultural, mobility and labour market patterns which influence our everyday behaviour and attitudes.

The main topic of the Forum is “Circular and sharing economy as an answer for demographic challenges and environmental

problems in the Baltic Sea Region”. The debate will focus on the following issues:

- Going circular - a pathway to well-being in the Baltic Sea Region.
- Business-driven approach to circular economy in the Baltic Sea Region.
- Demography and circularity in the Baltic Sea Region: interdependent or disconnected?

During the Forum, we will sum up the main achievements of the *Strategy* so far, but also try to pave the way for smarter, more efficient and better coordinated actions aiming at prosperous future for the *Baltic Sea Region*.

The aim of this publication is to build new partnerships and to take up new challenges in order to solve problems within defined priorities - Save the Sea, Connect the Region and Increase Prosperity.

I believe presented examples of Baltic actions will serve as an inspiration and good practice!

Pomorskie is involved in the Strategy since the very beginning. We see the opportunity for fruitful Baltic cooperation as well as the need for synergies. We do not hesitate to put ideas into actions: with EU co-financed regional operational programme, worth nearly 1.9 billion EUR), being mostly EUSBSR-oriented, we contribute to many projects important for the Baltic. We shall continue this approach in the years to come. We are glad to be an active member of the Baltic community.

Mieczysław Struk



Marshal of the Pomorskie Region



The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region has from the very beginning, 10 years ago, influenced the actions of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation and its regions. BSSSC sees the Strategy as a key macro-regional tool for finding solutions to joint problems - and a good framework for project development and cooperation. BSSSC was the key stakeholder in the process leading up to the Strategy, among others hosting the first Round Table on Accessibility in Kaunas, Lithuania, in September 2008.

BSSSC also co-hosted the 1st Annual Forum of the EUSBSR in Tallinn, Estonia in September 2010. Today, in 2019, we are celebrating the Strategy's ten years jubilee and the 10th Annual Forum will be organised in Gdańsk, Poland. Again, BSSSC is partner in the preparations to the Forum. This underlines the high interest from our regions towards the Strategy and the commitment of the sub-national level to the Baltic Sea region cooperation.

BSSSC represents regions in the eight EU Member States around the Baltic Sea, but also non-EU members Norway and Russia. Therefore BSSSC has always voiced the need for active cooperation with neighbouring countries within the

framework of the EUSBSR. The success of the Baltic Sea Region cooperation is built on mutual trust, common challenges and joint interests.

Together with the Union of the Baltic Cities and EuroRegion Baltic, BSSSC has promoted the inclusion of youth in the EUSBSR at the Annual Fora under the headline "Nothing about us without us". In 2019, we have stepped up this effort and will arrange a Baltic Youth Camp for 100 young people in the days leading to the 10th EUSBSR Annual Forum. BSSSC will continue to advocate for a fixed role for the youth voice within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The Annual Forum 2019 has a focus on circular and sharing economy. These topics are closely linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. BSSSC is working actively to promote the SDGs and the role of local and regional authorities to make the needed change in our societies. Mainstreaming the SDGs in the EUSBSR will be a good step forward.

BSSSC is looking forward to taking an active part in the Baltic Sea Region cooperation in the next 10 years, but first:

Welcome to Gdańsk in June!

Roger Ryberg

A handwritten signature of Roger Ryberg in blue ink.

*BSSSC Chairman
Eastern Norway County Network*

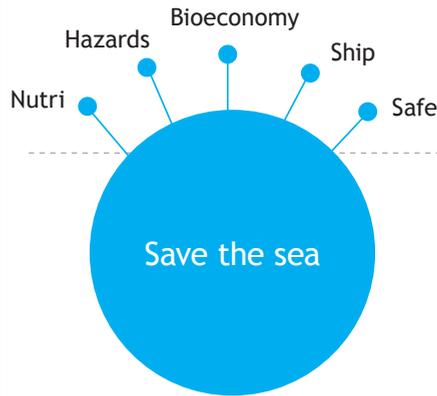
EUSBSR IN A NUTSHELL

EUSBSR is an integrated framework that allows the European Union and Member States to identify needs and match them to the available resources by coordinating of appropriate policies, thus enabling the Baltic Sea to achieve a sustainable environment and optimal economic and social development.

Spatial Planning

Neighbours

Capacity

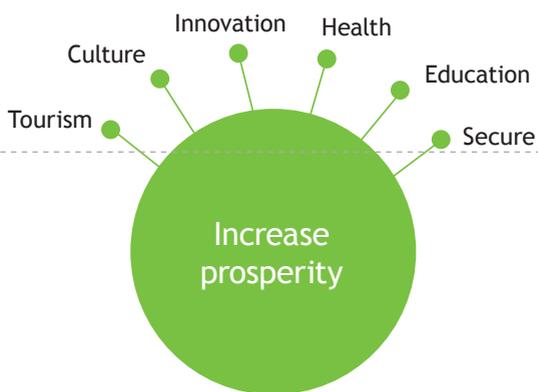


- Clear water in the sea
- Rich and healthy wildlife
- Clean and safe shipping
- Better cooperation

- Good transport conditions
- Reliable energy markets
- Connecting people in the region
- Better cooperation in fighting cross-border crime

Climate

**4 HORIZONTAL
ACTIONS**



**13 POLICY
AREAS**

3 OBJECTIVES

- Baltic Sea region as a frontrunner for deepening and fulfilling the single market
- EUSBSR contributing to the implementation of Europe 2020 Strategy
- Improved global competitiveness of the Baltic Sea region
- Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management

12 SUB-OBJECTIVES

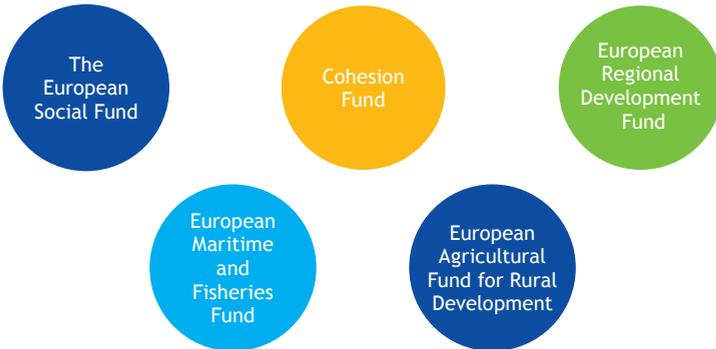
EUSBSR IN NUMBERS



FUNDING

The Strategy is “financially neutral and relies on a coordinated approach, synergetic effects and, on a more effective use of existing EU instruments and funds, as well as other existing resources and financial instruments”.

Key funding sources of the Strategy:



Other:



HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The EUSBSR was initiated in 2006 by a resolution of the European Parliament. The idea came from the “Baltic Europe” Intergroup of the European Parliament which issued a Baltic Strategy report, directing the attention of the European Commission and the Council of the EU to challenges and trends in the area of the environment, economy, culture, education and security, faced by the Baltic Sea region countries following the EU enlargement from 2004.

The Intergroup consisted of 7 Members of the European Parliament: Mr Christopher Beazley from the United Kingdom (Chairman); Mr Toomas Hendrik Ilves from Estonia; Ms Satu Hassi, Mr Henrik Lax and Mr Alexander Stubb from Finland; Mr Michael Gahler from Germany and Mr Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis from Latvia.



TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES

Chairman of the Baltic Strategy Working Group within the “Baltic Europe” Intergroup of the European Parliament, President of Estonia 2006-2016

“We hear often that Europe must be brought closer to the citizen, as it indeed should be. The Baltic Sea Strategy is actually the first EU strategy to have originated in the European Parliament. It is the first EU policy initiative to get its start from those people democratically and directly elected by the citizens of the European Union”.

October 2010, Tallinn

“I believe that the Strategy we are proposing could, if successful, become a model for other regions and thus to the whole European Union”.

March 9, 2010, Tallinn University

“This model of macro-regional development can be adapted and spread in a different way to suit the conditions across the entire EU. We are no longer a community of six member states (...) so we really do have an obligation to ensure the success of the Baltic Sea Strategy to give hope to the others”.

October 2011, Gdańsk



CHRISTOPHER BEAZLEY

Chairman of the “Baltic Europe” Intergroup of the European Parliament

“[In ten years’ time I hope] that the current disparity of economic performance and prospects of the eight littoral states will have been replaced by an effective EU Single Market (...) [and] that the natural harmony - economic, environmental, social, political and cultural - which existed for centuries prior to the Hitler/Stalin, Molotov/Ribbentrop Pact, will have been restored”.

*Christopher Beazley
Summer 2009*



“I as a politician don’t often make a claim to fame (...) but there is one thing that I am at least moderately proud of in my political career and that is when I became a MEP in 2004, I started to push for something that later was branded as the Baltic Sea Strategy. (...) We felt that this was one of the kickoffs for greater awareness of the Baltic Sea region (...)”.
June 2014, Turku

ALEXANDER STUBB
Member of the of the Baltic Strategy Working Group within the “Baltic Europe” Intergroup of the European Parliament, Prime Minister of Finland 2014-2015

“The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is a major step as it marks a new way of working together in the Union. It does not imply new laws or institutions but is rather based on the will of governments and citizens in the Member States and regions to meet urgent, shared challenges. The Commission is proposing a comprehensive action plan, based on a thorough consultation with national and regional governments, business, NGOs and academia: the EU is well placed to coordinate the work that needs to be done in order to make the most of available resources to save the Baltic Sea, boost trade and improve the quality of life of everyone in the region”.

June 10, 2009, Brussels



DANUTA HÜBNER
European Commissioner for Regional Policy 2004-2009

“In 10 years’ time, I hope the strategy will have contributed to deepened integration and competitiveness in the Baltic Sea Region, and that the Baltic Sea will be much healthier than today”.

Summer 2009



CECILIA MALMSTRÖM
Swedish Minister for European Affairs 2006-2010

MILESTONES

before 2006

**"BALTIC EUROPE"
INTERGROUP IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**
The idea of the EUSBSR starts here.

16.11.2006

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION
The European Parliament "urges the Commission to come up with a proposal for an EU Baltic Sea Strategy".

ANNUAL FORA

2011 GDAŃSK

New Ambitions for the Baltic Sea Region

15.11.2011

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE REVIEW OF THE EUSBSR

The first review of the EUSBSR takes place – a number of recommendations how to improve the EUSBSR.

22.06.2011

COMMISSION REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUSBSR

2012 COPENHAGEN

Connecting Europe - Smart and Green Partnerships

23.03.2012

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION CONCERNING THE EUSBSR

26.06.2012

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE COMPLETION OF THE REVIEW OF THE EUSBSR

The first review of the EUSBSR completed – now we have three objectives, as well as targets and indicators.

2015 JŪRMALA

Achieving E-Quality by Connecting the Region

2016

THE COMMUNICATION EFFORTS ARE COORDINATED BY LET'S COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATION POINT OF THE EUSBSR IS ESTABLISHED

2015

EUSBSR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY PREPARED BY INTERACT STARTS

2016 STOCKHOLM

One Region, One Future - Vision 2030 for the Baltic Sea Region

16.12.2016

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EU MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

25.04.2017

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EU MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

2017 BERLIN

Connectivity (Connecting People and the Region)

The first EC report on the implementation of all four EU macro-regional strategies.

14.12.2007

EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS (POINT 59)

The European Council “invites the Commission to present an EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region at the latest by June 2009”.

10.06.2009

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION CONCERNING THE EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION

The European Commission presents the EUSBSR requested by the European Council and invites the Council to examine and endorse the EC Communication and related Action Plan.

ANNUAL FORA

2010 TALLINN

First Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

29-30.10.2009

CONCLUSIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

The European Council adopts the EUSBSR – The First Macro-regional strategy in the EU.

27.10.2009

CONCLUSIONS OF THE GENERAL AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COUNCIL

2013 VILNIUS

Baltic Sea, Baltic Growth, Baltic Environment

27.06.2013

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION CONCERNING THE ADDED VALUE OF MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

22.10.2013

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE ADDED-VALUE OF MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Making efforts to define and promote the added value of the EUSBSR.

2014 TURKU

Growing Together - for a Prosperous, Inclusive and Connected Baltic Sea Region

21.10.2014

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE GOVERNANCE OF THE MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Trying to improve the governance system of macro-regional strategies.

20.05.2014

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION CONCERNING THE GOVERNANCE OF MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

2018 TALLINN

After 2020 (maritime environment, digital area, future of the EU cohesion)

01.2019

COMMISSION REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EU MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

The EC for the second time highlights the recent development, progress and challenges of the four EU macro-regional strategies.

2019

BETTER TOGETHER 10 YEARS OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION

2019 GDAŃSK

Circular and sharing economy as an answer to demographic changes and environmental challenges in the BSR

HAVE WE DELIVERED?

10 Years of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region: Impact and Outcomes

Veronika Józwiak, Kinga Raś

The Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM)

Summary

- The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the EU's first macro-regional strategy, representing 80 million people (around 16% of the EU's population), was launched by the European Commission (EC) in consultation with the eight EU Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden) that developed the initiative. It was established in 2009 with the aim of enhancing regional integration and its proponents envisaged cooperation with third countries (Belarus, Iceland, Norway, and Russia).
- More than 170 flagship projects have been carried out within the framework of the 13 policy areas (PAs) and four horizontal actions (HAs), focusing on the objectives of: "Save the sea", "Connect the region", and "Increase prosperity".
- The strategy has become a model of a new type of regional cooperation. It has had an impact on how transnational collaboration can be understood and implemented in practice in the EU and with neighbouring countries.
- 10 years after it was launched, the EUSBSR is assessed as the most advanced macro-regional project¹ in the EU. This is mainly because before the EUSBSR was implemented, the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) already had a long tradition of effective sub-regional cooperation with several platforms comprised mainly of prosperous states with advanced governance structures.²

- EUSBSR harmonises transnational and intergovernmental regional cooperation and is an example of a new, innovative EU governance structure. Simultaneously, cooperation in the BSR, in principle, remains intergovernmental. Because national governments have the responsibility to implement the EUSBSR objectives, the overall success of the strategy depends to a large extent on the Member States.
- The strategy is one of the support tools of European Territorial Cooperation, but it is not formally anchored in EU cohesion policy. It is an evolving framework in terms of substance, as well as finance and management. Reinforcing links with the existing funding instruments, especially the EU Cohesion Fund, is likely to happen, which is in line with the EC's suggestions.
- Depending on the political and economic direction the EU will follow and taking the planned reform of cohesion policy into account, regionalisation may gain greater importance in Union governance in the future. Thus, the significance of the EUSBSR—the oldest macro-regional strategy—goes beyond meeting the practical objectives set 10 years ago. Its future depends on the extent to which it will be adjusted to the new EU budget and modernised policies, as well as the willingness of the participating Member States to invest in transnational cooperation.

EUSBSR, the EU's first macro-regional strategy, is still a young instrument for territorial cooperation, as achieving the Union's long-term objectives (especially in the area of regional synergy or social cohesion) in practice takes more than a decade. However, 10 years is enough to assess this new instrument of EU macro-regional governance. The evidence shows that the EUSBSR has delivered a number of concrete results by integrating the region and eliminating, or at least reducing, the disparities between states or bringing together new players across countries, sectors, and levels of administration.

1. The Baltic Sea Area as a Region of Cooperation

a. Cooperation traditions in the BSR

Over the last several decades, the scope and scale of cooperation in the BSR have remained dynamic and determined by geopolitical factors (such as the dissolution of the USSR and former Eastern Bloc, EU enlargement, the financial crisis in the eurozone, and Russia's aggression against Ukraine). However, the geographical location was the main factor determining the level of integration and it mobilised BSR countries to collaborate. This is due, in particular, to

the historical relationships, mainly the Hanseatic cities existing in the Middle Ages. Another tradition and additional background to this cooperation come from the Nordic states, which over the years established numerous institutions and regional organisations, with key roles played by the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.³ During the Cold War, there were already examples of regional initiatives that included all the states around the Baltic Sea, from both the Western and Eastern blocs. The most significant was the Helsinki Convention of 1974 and the subsequent establishment of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), which still steers intergovernmental cooperation with a view to protecting the fragile marine environment.⁴

Next, the democratic transitions in Central and Eastern Europe influenced the strengthening of cooperation in the BSR. The collapse of the USSR changed the layout of the security architecture, including in the Baltic Sea area. This increased interest in cooperation among the “southeastern” Baltic states. Then, during the 1990s, the scope of the collaboration took shape, with the Nordic countries having a dominant influence in this respect.

Simultaneously, the growth of cooperation at the national level amongst the BSR states translated into efforts that improved the participation of both municipalities and other sub-national authorities in the region.⁵ At that time, for instance, the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) or the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Cooperation (BSSSC) were created. This is how the macro-region around the Baltic Sea came to be characterised, on the one hand, by a long tradition of cooperation and, on the other, at various levels, as well as in diverse formats and many sectors of policy development (there are more than 600 organisations linked to regional collaboration).⁶

b. The North from the EU Perspective

The enlargement of the Union in 1995 with the admission of Sweden and Finland and in 2004 to Poland and three Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—gave in effect a growing role to the EU as the main regional actor in the BSR. It also resulted in the Baltic Sea itself becoming almost an exclusive internal Union “reservoir”, with the exception of the part of the Russian Federation near St. Petersburg as well as Kaliningrad Oblast, which became a Russian exclave within the EU.

At the initiative of the countries themselves, as well as the increased interest of the EC, the changed conditions motivated matters in the north to become a direct subject of EU management. A key initiative in this regard was the

Northern Dimension (ND), a tool for better coordination of EU instruments and policies concerning economic integration, competitiveness, and sustainable development in Northern Europe. This policy covers a broad geographic area, from the European Arctic and subarctic to the southern shores of the Baltic Sea and the countries and territories in its vicinity, and from northwest Russia in the eastern Baltic Sea area to Iceland and Greenland in the west.⁷ The ND was formed in 1999, and to make it more effective, it was renewed in 2006 as a common EU policy framework for cooperation between the Union and partner countries Iceland, Norway, and Russia. That already made macro-regional cooperation an important element of EU governance in the north.⁸

Moreover, after EU enlargement and the European Parliament elections in 2004, the Euro-Baltic Intergroup was launched. For the BSR countries, an important impulse for enhancing cooperation was the need for sustainable development, aiming to eliminate disparities between the countries. Next, following a mandate by the European Council, the EC adopted the idea of a macro-regional strategy and finally started to develop a joint framework.⁹

2. EU Strategy for the BSR

The idea of macro-regional cooperation within the EU was born in the BSR based on a need and willingness expressed by different actors around the Baltic Sea to address and overcome common problems they were facing.¹⁰ The Nordic states, particularly Sweden, were behind the initiative, which aimed at integrating the new Member States into a formula of practical collaboration. Sharing common resources and being highly interdependent in specific areas such as maritime policy, the countries concerned needed to act together to deliver results in practice. The most urging challenge they aimed to address was environmental pollution of the Baltic Sea. Other goals concerned enhancing the region's prosperity, accessibility, and attractiveness. Thus, a bottom-up approach lies at the heart of the EUSBSR. Its functional nature made it distinct from a number of previous multilateral platforms, which mainly set policy goals and played a coordinating role.

At the same time, from the point of view of the EU, establishing a new framework of regional cooperation in the BSR was a natural step after the EU enlargement of 2004. This made the Union a driving force of further collaboration across the region. The EU also perceived the possibility of creating a macro-region as a potential new tool of implementing social and economic-integration goals in an area highly heterogeneous in economic, environmental, and cultural terms.¹¹ External aspects of regional cooperation, such as

including Russia in joint actions on the regional level, were also among the arguments raised by the EC in favour of the EUSBSR. It also intended for it to be a model of regional cooperation, where new solutions could be tested, developed further, and implemented in other regions.

The EC did not propose the form of cooperation itself and has mainly played a role of coordinating, communication, reporting, monitoring, and facilitation, based on previous intergovernmental arrangements. After the European Parliament called for a strategy for the BSR in 2006, the European Council invited the EC to present the EUSBSR, which was eventually endorsed by the European Council in 2009. The project comprises eight EU Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden) and four partners (Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and Belarus). Thus, it is often described as an intra-EU strategy, in contrast to three macro-regional strategies adopted later—EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) of 2011, the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) of 2014, and the EU Strategy for Alpine Region (EUSALP) of 2015, which all conduct an external policy agenda because of the inclusion of non-EU countries (e.g. Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia, Montenegro, Switzerland). Apart from the Member States and the EC, several other actors are involved in the practical implementation of the BSR strategy, such as regional and local authorities, intergovernmental organisations, and civil society.

According to the EC's definition, a macro-region is “an area covering a number of administrative regions but with sufficient issues in common to justify a single strategic approach”.¹² These common issues in the case of the EUSBSR are reflected in three (initially four) named overall objectives: “Save the sea”, “Connect the region”, and “Increase prosperity”, divided into 13 more specific PAs. Besides that, four HAs (“Spatial Planning”, “Neighbours”, “Capacity”, and “Climate”) mark overall goals to be achieved across the PAs. All of them are established by a regularly updated Action Plan, the implementation of which is evaluated regularly by the EC.

The implementation concept of the strategy has been evolving over time, but cornerstones were laid at the beginning. The EC did not intend to assign any additional funding nor create new institutions or legislation to make it operate. The idea of using existing EU funds, resources and other instruments more efficiently resulted from the unwillingness to subsidise new, large-scale initiatives amidst the financial crisis of 2008, the beginning of which coincided with the preparations of the strategy. The aim behind the

lack of institutions, in turn, most probably was to keep the cooperation flexible and to avoid the creation of further long-term financial obligations. Similarly, to ensure the flexibility, simplicity, and coherence with the Community *acquis*, no new EU legislation is assigned to macro-regions. What's more, the principle of the "three noes" (no new funds, no new legislation, and no new institutions) made other non-macro-regional Member States more inclined to accept the new territorial cooperation scheme.

3. Results and Challenges

The EUSBSR Action Plan sets a number of goals, both hard, specific ones for which evaluation is easier, and ones that are softer and vaguer and often difficult to clearly assess on the basis of evidence. The implementation of the strategy also brings "side-benefits", unintentional gains that should be viewed as added value. Because the EUSBSR has been established as a flexible framework, it is to a great extent up to the stakeholders to make what they will of it.

a. Governance and Funding

The process of implementing and managing the EUSBSR is dynamic and changeable and therefore evolves over time. Its key element is the revision of objectives at specific intervals and cycles in order to evaluate its results. This demonstrates that the strategy is underpinned by the logic of experimentalist governance.¹³ In line with the rule of "no new institutions", the governance architecture strongly draws on existing structures that have been involved in the framework of the EUSBSR.

EUSBSR has a multi-level governance system in which the players are mixed and share different roles and responsibilities. EU Member States cooperate in the network of National Coordinators (previously: National Contact Points), which coordinate the implementation of the strategy at the national level. The participating states are linked to policy formulation by a High Level Group (HLG) consisting of senior civil servants from each Member State. The EC, in turn, assumes overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the strategy but is also linked to the Action Plan. Policy Area Coordinators (PACs) or Horizontal Action Coordinators (HACs) from the different Member States and organisations coordinate and implement each of the 13 PAs and four HAs. In addition, the role of Steering Groups¹⁴ has noticeably grown recently, as they play a crucial role in policy development and serve as a discussion platform.¹⁵ Different flagship projects are carried out under all the PAs and HAs. Organisations operating at the macro-regional level, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), HELCOM,

or Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB), also participate in the implementation of the strategy. This makes its management one of the most difficult challenges for all the actors involved. For this reason, it seems the wide thematic focus and governance structure need to be simplified.

However, in looking at the last Commission report, it is visible that the strategy's governance is evolving and becoming focused on concrete actions. For instance, further efforts to strengthen ownership of the countries involved have been taken up with the adoption, in June 2017, of Rules of Procedure for the group of National Coordinators of the EUSBSR. The order of the rotating chair of the National Coordinators and the organisation of the EUSBSR Annual Forums until 2025 has been established, which brings more stability to the governance structure. Moreover, in the future it would be possible to convene meetings of sectoral ministers, for example, those responsible for regional development, as issued last year in Tallinn during the Annual Forum there.

Funding has been one of the most discussed aspects of the EUSBSR. Achieving the strategy's goals, defined as delivering practical change, without assigned funding has always been a challenge, despite many available resources. According to one of the core principles of the strategy, its implementation is based on existing EU financial instruments, mostly on EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESI), with EU cohesion policy as a key source. However, flagships can be funded from several other sources, such as national resources, the Horizon 2020 Programme, and funds from the European Investment Bank or other international financial institutions. Nevertheless, in the assessment of the stakeholders, all funding sources beyond EU funds are more difficult to obtain¹⁶; therefore, the EC suggests that it is crucial to mainstream the EUSBSR activities into general programmes under ESI funds, especially the cohesion fund, in the upcoming 2021-2027 budgetary period. There are also efforts to facilitate transnational cooperation with the use of the national policy frameworks under the European Regional Development Fund (an EU Regional Policy instrument), within the EUSBSR.¹⁷

b. Sample of Results: Saving the Sea¹⁸

Tackling environmental issues in the Baltic Sea basin is one of the most successful areas of cooperation within the EUSBSR, especially in terms of creating synergy between different policy settings and implementing platforms. This is mostly because the scope and scale of the strategy are best tailored to environmental challenges specifically while for the EU

as a whole “for most environmental problems, [the Union] is not an optimal regulatory area, being either too large or too small”.¹⁹ Goals linked to environmental protection are of utmost importance in this macro-region, as the Baltic Sea is still among the most polluted in the world.²⁰ Under the “Save the sea” objective, relevant PAs aim to restore to good the environmental status of the Baltic Sea. Since improving its state and establishing a healthier marine ecosystem is a very broad objective and a common interest, the EUSBSR substantially contributes to the implementation of policies developed by other platforms, such as HELCOM or CBSS. EUSBSR also facilitates cooperation between sectors, such as environment and agriculture. The strategy’s stakeholders confirm that thanks to it, more cooperation has been developed in water projects; the EUSBSR also provides them with an opportunity to focus more on concrete solutions and to target objectives characteristic only to the BSR.²¹ According to the EC, the work carried out through the EUSBSR has also contributed to the implementation of new EU regulations, including the strategy on the use of plastics.²²

4. Future Scenarios for the Role of the EUSBSR

The 10th anniversary of the implementation of the strategy provides a perspective with which to evaluate the entire process. Its management is dynamic and evolves over time. The new, experimental idea of EU multilevel governance has been an ambitious answer to the needs of the BSR. Effectively, as part of the implementation of the strategy, it involves several institutional and non-institutional actors in line with the EU’s regional policy goals. In the future, EUSBSR may increase its role as a platform for gathering various actors interested in cooperation, depending on the ongoing revision of its management.

It should be noted that the future role of the strategy and its effectiveness will depend, on the one hand, on the Member States’ political willingness to engage in transnational cooperation and, on the other, on the actions taken by the EU institutions. In this respect, the review of the EUSBSR in 2019 will be crucial for determining its future shape. The ongoing debate on the revision of this macro-regional initiative covers a wide range of issues, from the potential redefinition of goals, through how they are implemented, to governance, and ultimately its financial sources. That is why the old questions and doubts return, even in previous reviews. Nevertheless, looking at the current process and practices developed in its implementation, it can be noted that the minor changes in the strategy’s governance are already gently heading towards the centralisation of the management process. The debate among the BSR’s stakeholders and experts confirms the

increasing willingness to strengthen the key implementers of the strategy, to make it more coherent, and to simplify its governance mechanism.

Based on 10 years of cooperation, two scenarios seem probable for the strategy's future. The first assumes maintaining or even strengthening the existing practices as well as the consistent adherence to the three-noes principle. Hence, the strategy would maintain its role as an umbrella for EU policies in the region and the current wide range of activities and various policies would only undergo minimal changes. In practice, this could mean the consolidation of existing activities. Moreover, the possible increase in efficiency would result mainly from the experience of all actors involved in the implementation of the strategy. This applies not only to EU institutions but also to regional organisations, local governments, and think-tanks.

The second scenario would be quite a radical change in the strategy, including setting new goals and limiting PAs. This would probably translate into focusing on the region's main priorities, hence bringing the strategy to its initial thematic scope (environment, maritime issues). This could result in the empowerment of the EUSBSR as a tool within the framework of EU regional and cohesion policy. It might then become a more dedicated instrument of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), and, as such, EU cohesion policy, which is being modernised for the next long-term EU budget, the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. The budget's shape is still unknown, but one of the lines of this reform is a more tailored approach to regional development, which might be a favourable perspective for macro-regions covering large geographic areas and several cohesion-policy programmes. At the same time, an assumed decreased share for cohesion policy in the next budget (from 34% to 29%²³) may also narrow the resources for the ETC and, hence, add to the challenges of future cooperation within the strategy for the BSR.

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**POLICY AREAS
AND HORIZONTAL
ACTIONS**



**From bold ideas to tangible results
- stories about people, projects
and processes**

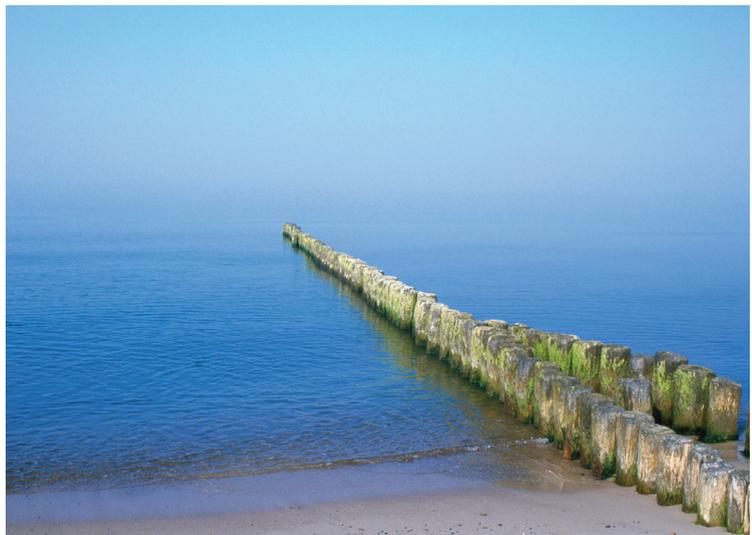
The aim of this chapter is to present the very core of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, namely the work done within the Policy Areas and Horizontal Actions. On the following pages you can learn the specific fields of activity of all Policy Areas and Horizontal Actions, challenges they address, examples of flagships and most prominent success stories - told by their creators.



POLICY AREA NUTRI

Policy Area Nutri has focused on nutrient management and improving cross-sectoral policy in two main areas: agriculture and wastewater management. Over the past 10 years we have identified and developed more than 10 flagships to implement cost-effective, cross-sectoral and cross-border nutrient reduction measures to improve the environmental quality of the Sea. The flagships have supported transnational networks and exchange of knowledge, tested profitability of pilot measures and created new growth opportunities. Synergy of activities with HELCOM has strengthened the results.

With HELCOM, we have organized several stakeholder seminars and workshops related to nutrient recycling. As a result, the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018 committed to elaborate by 2020 a Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy. The vision is that nutrients are managed sustainably in the Baltic Sea region, securing the productivity of agriculture and minimizing nutrient losses to the Baltic Sea environment through efficient use of nutrients and cost effective nutrient recycling.





Our success stories:

- IWAMA launched a Smart Water Hub online portal (www.balticwaterhub.net) to support knowledge exchange. It can be used by the water professionals in the region interested in good practices, technical solutions and tools for water management.
- The assessment “Identification of Priority Projects to Reduce Nutrient Inputs from Belarus to the Baltic Sea” resulted in investments that were launched or are in preparation in Belarus through the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership.
- Baltic Deal created a transnational network of advisory and farmer’s organizations. The project developed a joint toolbox with a diverse set of best agricultural practises to reduce nutrient losses that were tested in the network of 118 demonstration farms in the Baltic Sea region.
- NutriTrade launched a www.nutribute.org for crowdfunding for the Baltic. It connects effective nutrient abatement measures with voluntary financiers willing to neutralize their nutrient footprint.



balticwaterhub.net



nutribute.org

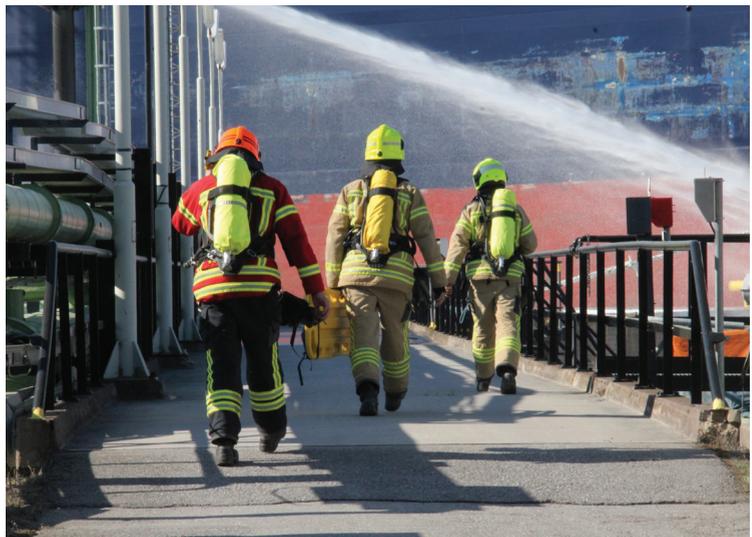


POLICY AREA HAZARDS

Over the last ten years, PA Hazards has worked with the prevention of pollution and reduction in use of hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea region. Our efforts have focused on key main challenges related to hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea: sources and inputs of hazardous substances, environmental risks from dumped ammunitions, pharmaceuticals, biological effects of anthropogenic chemical stress, contaminated sediments, antifouling agents and plastics.

The EUSBSR and the Policy Area worked both with agenda setting for identifying main challenges related to hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea region, and as a mediator between applied projects (flagships) with policy relevant results and regulatory frameworks and conventions.

One of our success stories is work on pharmaceuticals in the Baltic Sea environment. The process started with a seed money project funded by Swedish Institute in 2014 with the aim to “Make the Baltic Sea region a lead in sustainable management for pharmaceuticals”. Today the BSR-





PharmaPlatform forms a long-term flagship process, consisting of three pillars: projects, policy development and knowledge creation. This went hand in hand with a similar process at Helcom where a Correspondence Group (CG) Pharma was established.

PA Hazards' flagship CHANGE took an interdisciplinary approach to reducing toxic compounds from antifouling paints used on leisure boats in the Baltic Sea. The results obtained thanks to the CHANGE project supported the revision process of the Helcom recommendation on antifouling paints.

“The Baltic Sea region can act as a model region for the whole of Europe!”



POLICY AREA BIOECONOMY

Policy Area Bioeconomy includes agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and rural development. This policy area has defined five focus areas for the strategic development of bioeconomy in the region: Bioeconomy policy; Bio-based Business; Research, Development and Innovation; Civil Society and Communication.

One of the PA Bioeconomy initiatives is a forum for policy dialog, called the BSR Bioeconomy Council, with participation from all the countries in the Baltic Sea region and several NGOs and bioeconomy-related organisations. The Council has functioned mainly as a reference group for the Policy Area, but has also produced valuable contributions of its own. A good example here is guidelines “Sustainability Criteria for Bioeconomy” published in November 2017.

Another example of success stories are the networks of Managing Authorities of both agricultural and rural development (EAFRD) and fisheries (EMFF). These networks



have made it possible for the national authorities in the region to meet and learn from each other, to discuss possible alignment of activities or other potential cooperation and to give policy recommendations to the European Commission.

A third important area of impact concerns nutrient recycling from agriculture. During the last ten years PA Bioeconomy has on several occasions brought together researchers, NGOs, farmers and authorities from all member states around the Baltic to work for better recycling of nutrients from agriculture. The joint events have led to the exchange of knowledge, new forms of cooperation throughout the region, new ideas and projects.

The Baltic Slurry Acidification project aimed to promote the implementation of slurry acidification techniques throughout the Baltic Sea Region. These techniques reduce the ammonia losses from livestock manure and thus airborne eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. It also benefits farmers by increasing the nitrogen use efficiency of their manure fertilizers and thereby decreasing their dependency on mineral nitrogen.

Under PA-Bioeconomy there are 8 flagship projects that contribute to the policy development in the Baltic Sea Region. The flagships can be projects or consortia of several projects that share the same aim. The Blue Platform is an example where several completed projects connect and build on their results in a process aiming at larger effects and possible policy impacts.





POLICY AREA SHIP

Clean shipping has developed rapidly in the last decade due to technological innovation and political awareness. Policy Area Clean Shipping (PA Ship) is a result of this development and an acknowledgement of the importance of clean shipping in the Baltic Sea region.

PA Ship and its flagships have contributed to important developments such as building infrastructure for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) as an alternative marine fuel, ensuring that environmental regulations for shipping are enforced effectively and initiating policy processes, which have led to regulations of emissions.

Shipping is a global business; hence it is difficult to estimate the exact contribution of the EUSBSR in this field. However, cooperation between clean shipping projects in the Baltic Sea region has improved due to PA Ship's facilitation.

Earlier, competition, overlapping activities and duplication of efforts between the projects were common. However, in the last decade while PA Ship has been active, projects have started working together. A good example is the cooperation





between three air quality projects funded by three different funding programmes: CompMon, EnViSuM and BONUS SHEBA. This cooperation not only resulted in better research results and a broader impact on politics, but also in more effective spending of public funds. Recently these and other projects are continuing the cooperation in the CSHIPP project platform, working for instance with the business potential of clean shipping.

From the very outset, PA Ship has promoted increased involvement of businesses in regional projects and lately there has been an increased interest from business stakeholders to participate in PA Ship flagships. ECOPRODIGI, which develops digital solutions for the industry, is a good example, which shows the importance of involving the industry if we want to develop solutions for the future.

“The transition to the clean shipping is a challenge which should be addressed on multiple levels. The unique cooperation in the Baltic Sea region makes it perfect for testing and developing new methods, practices and technology that can help combat global challenges”.

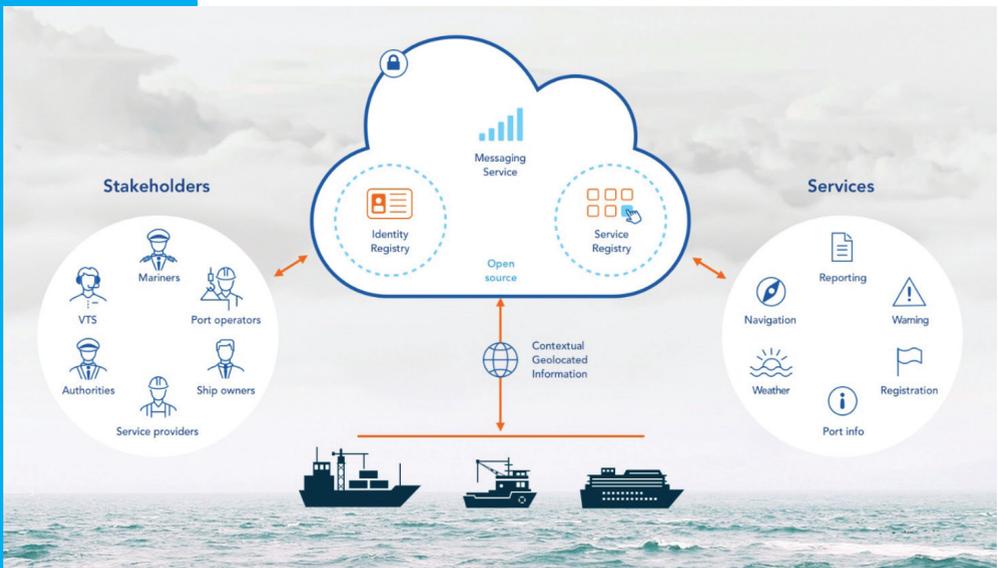


POLICY AREA SAFE

The Baltic Sea is an important transportation route for the region. There are over 2000 ships travelling through this area at any given moment and the traffic volumes are expected to increase.

To ensure safe and secure shipping in the Baltic Sea, cooperation and exchange of knowledge are needed as no single country has the capacity to face all the challenges alone. For this purpose, the EUSBSR Policy Area on Maritime Safety and Security (PA Safe) has been established with the aim to make the Baltic Sea a leading region for safe and secure shipping.

Based on the feedback from the PA Safe member states and stakeholders, the cooperation has reached a mature state. PA Safe and its flagships are working together to implement the EUSBSR and the work is following the principle of continuity, as new projects are established based on the outcomes of the previous ones.





In the framework of PA Safe, 16 flagships have been completed so far. Projects such as FAMOS, STM Validation and WINMOS II are good examples of success stories, with outcomes such as up-to-date nautical chart information and ship-to-ship route exchange platforms (including winter navigation). Another important achievement which has led to policy change, is the work related to e-navigation. This started in 2009 with the EfficienSea project, and through a number of e-navigation and digitalization projects, solutions have been developed laying the ground for the digital standards used by the maritime sector today and in the future.





POLICY AREA TRANSPORT

As it was stated in the first Action Plan of the EUSBSR, transport in the Baltic Sea region is particularly important in terms of its significance for accessibility, economic growth and sustainable development.

During a meeting of the Nordic and Baltic ministers for transport in September 2010 a Common Statement on the TEN-T core network of the Baltic Sea region was signed. German and Polish counterparts joined the initiative, finalizing the establishment of a full-fledged common TEN-T core network in the Baltic Sea region.

The Baltic Transport Outlook 2030 study was intended as an important step towards a shared view on the common transport system in the region.

Several projects under the action “Facilitate efficient and sustainable Baltic passenger and freight transport solutions” were successfully completed under the auspices of PA Transport over the last 10 years. The aim was to propose how to effectively implement EU regulations, restrictions and incentives with the intention to facilitate the implementation of a network of “Green Corridors”. East West, Scandria, GreCor, COINCO North, TransBaltic, Swiftly Green are examples of such projects. PA Transport was also engaged in several projects in the Baltic Motorways of the Seas network projects.

The need for coordination of projects with similar or adjacent thematic content grew stronger. A new form of “umbrella projects” was emerging. The first step was to coordinate projects within the PA Transport family. A cluster cooperation was established in 2012 by eight leading organizations of the former umbrella projects. In addition to the formal partnership, several other projects took part in the cluster meetings and contributed to the thematic work. A final policy conference was held in June 2013.

In relation to the development of the transport corridor networks in the East-West direction, the International East -



West Transport Corridor Association (EWTCA) was established in June 2010 as an innovative instrument for the regional and inter-regional cooperation, uniting representatives from business, academia and public structures.

The main mission of the EWTCA is to facilitate new business opportunities, such as the VIKING Shuttle or pilot SUN container trains, to develop intermodal transport, simplify the procedures and enhance transport opportunities along East - West transport corridor in the Baltic Sea region and beyond.

Cooperation within PA Transport was very successful during its first ten years of activities. Still, it can certainly be further developed through capacity building and moving from project based activities towards flagship processes, for more efficient coordination and implementation which will make the Baltic Sea a model region for transport corridors development.



POLICY AREA ENERGY

In 2015 a reform took place to optimise regional cooperation formats in Energy and the EUSBSR Policy Area Energy was merged with the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP). These two initiatives go in line with the energy policy goals and targets of the European Union. While the BEMIP group has been dealing with bigger energy projects, the PA Energy concentrated on regional projects that support policy decision making and the energy market as such.

To establish networks and processes PA Energy coordinators have provided a platform for the involvement of governmental institutions, NGOs, educational institutions, businesses and civil society. Various regional events were organised to foster discussions on the objectives stated in the EUSBSR Action Plan to address possible solutions to challenges in the field and promote the development of new regional project ideas which implement the EUSBSR.



There are 8 flagships within the PA Energy, 4 of them financed by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme. The results of one of the Flagships, Baltic InteGrid, has been included in the European Commission research on offshore wind energy policy development.

The project EFFECT4buildings develops in collaboration with public building managers a comprehensive decision-making support toolbox with a set of financial instruments to unlock the investments and lower the risks of implementing energy efficiency measures (retrofitting, upgrading and deep renovation) in buildings owned by public stakeholders.

Recently a decision has been made to develop flagships as processes, involving more stakeholders and making their results more sustainable and efficient.

„Cooperation and sharing experiences facilitate mutual understanding and helps to generate new ideas that can solve common problems in the region”.





POLICY AREA TOURISM

The policy makers of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region have realized the significance that tourism has in maintaining and reinforcing the attractiveness of the Baltic Sea region, calling for a number of measures in this field to achieve further progress. Two cooperative actions are foreseen in this regard:

- To highlight and optimise the sustainable tourism potential;
- To network and cluster stakeholders of the tourism industry and tourism education institutions.

In 2008 German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern initiated the annual Baltic Sea Tourism Forum (BSTF). To strengthen the cooperation in the area of tourism the Baltic Sea Tourism Center (BSTC) was created, following the ideas of the Danube Competence Centre. To learn more about key aspects of BSTC please visit www.bstc.eu.

With the help of the BSTC Tourism Market Monitor®, the first report “State of the Tourism Industry in the Baltic Sea Region” was published at the BSTF in 2018.





Further development of tourism reports is firmly anchored in the BSTC's areas of responsibility.

Furthermore, the BSTC is aiming to increase the visibility of the Baltic Sea Region and to contribute to the growth of the share of international visitors through the project "Smart Destination Campaign". Its target markets are Austria and the United Kingdom, where potential visitors, tour operators and media are being addressed through various channels.



POLICY AREA CULTURE

Policy Area Culture has established well-functioning cooperation structures between Baltic Sea region cultural policy institutions by joining forces and contributing to avoiding duplication of activities. The PA Culture Steering Group brings together representatives of the existing cultural fora and organizations in the region. It has been developed to a well-accepted and reliable information and communication platform for cultural policy cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. It is a common goal of the group to identify relevant issues for joint actions and coordinate its implementation. For example, the members raised and discussed the necessity of better funding conditions for cultural projects in the region within the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework and fed their positions into the respective political decision making processes.

Cultural cooperation in the Baltic Sea region has more weight than before. Currently culture is on the agenda of the Annual Fora of the EUSBSR. Furthermore, PA Culture contributes significantly to a better strategic project development in the cultural field. The cooperation between different cultural





actors on local, regional, national and pan-Baltic level has been improved as well.

Regular meetings and news exchange led to a trustful cooperation atmosphere. Another result was the foundation of a group that is developing the instrument called “BALTIC SEA CULTURAL CITIES - Connecting Citizens & Cities through Culture”. This initiative targets the “Connect the Region” objectives of the Strategy in a thorough way. It shall help strengthening cultural ties in the region, citizen participation and people-to-people contacts, also with the non-EU countries of the region.

One of the success stories is the project “BalticRIM - Baltic Sea Region Integrated Maritime Cultural Heritage Management”. The cultural heritage of the Baltic Sea Region is exceptionally versatile and well preserved. However, to date the maritime cultural heritage assets are only barely protected. The BalticRIM project is developing tools to integrate cultural heritage resource management into the Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea, across all Baltic Sea region countries, including Russia. BalticRIM contributes to safeguarding the uniqueness of the underwater heritage of the Baltic Sea.



POLICY AREA INNOVATION

Innovation has been among leading sectors of the Baltic Sea region cooperation since early 2000 with a large number of networks and projects. Providing a strong platform for enhanced macro-regional collaborative ecosystem for innovation, research, SMEs and digitalization, Policy Area Innovation has helped this cooperation to evolve into strategic and complementary actions with stronger impact and more scalable results.

In recent years, PA Innovation activities have been centered around the implementation of the PA Innovation Strategic Action Plan 2016-2020, focusing on increasing innovation capacity and supporting entrepreneurship, business development and science within the three drivers of innovation: Market, Knowledge and Challenges. PA Innovation flagships such as BSR Stars, SUBMARINER Network, ScanBalt, Baltic Science Link and BSR Digi co-lab have produced numerous interesting and highly relevant results and new solutions in the fields of research collaboration, health, blue growth, circular and digital economy.





PA Innovation has also embraced a strong smart specialisation policy agenda to support our collective innovation ambitions across the macroregion. PA Innovation experiences show that transnational efforts to join forces in the area of smart specialisation can generate scaled up innovation efforts, accelerate cross-regional value chains, create stronger innovation investment and generate new market opportunities. One of the key results and activities of the PA Innovation over the last decade was the establishment of a network of ERDF Managing Authorities (MA Network). Its goal is the development of proposals on transnational collaboration to help regions implement smart specialisation strategies. Pilot projects on clean technologies and digital transformation have been created under the MA Network so far.



POLICY AREA HEALTH

Bringing together actors working in the field of health is Policy's main achievement of the decade-long cooperation. Establishing sustainable cooperation networks takes time, first the mutual trust needs to be built and only then strategic results will follow. The EUSBSR has been helpful in providing a common reference point and framework for cooperation in the area of health.

We have expanded the network of public health enthusiasts in the region, we have raised their awareness of cooperation possibilities, we have enhanced the capacities of our stakeholders to create successful project applications and, most importantly, together we have created new knowledge on important health issues that will inform the policy making in the countries around the Baltic Sea.





One example is the “Northern Dimension Antibiotic Resistance Study” (NoDARS) flagship. Nowadays antimicrobial resistance is among the most serious health threats and extensive knowledge of the antibiotic resistance epidemiology is important to understand the risk factors and to help countries design more effective and efficient approaches to the antimicrobial resistance. The NoDARS project provided new useful information on the level of antibiotic resistance in society in several countries in the region and will form a basis for international and governmental organisations and policy makers to make evidence-based decisions. Some countries have already notified that they will adjust their national guidelines in line with the project’s recommendations.



benefit is that it helps Europe to re-integrate in times of disintegration.

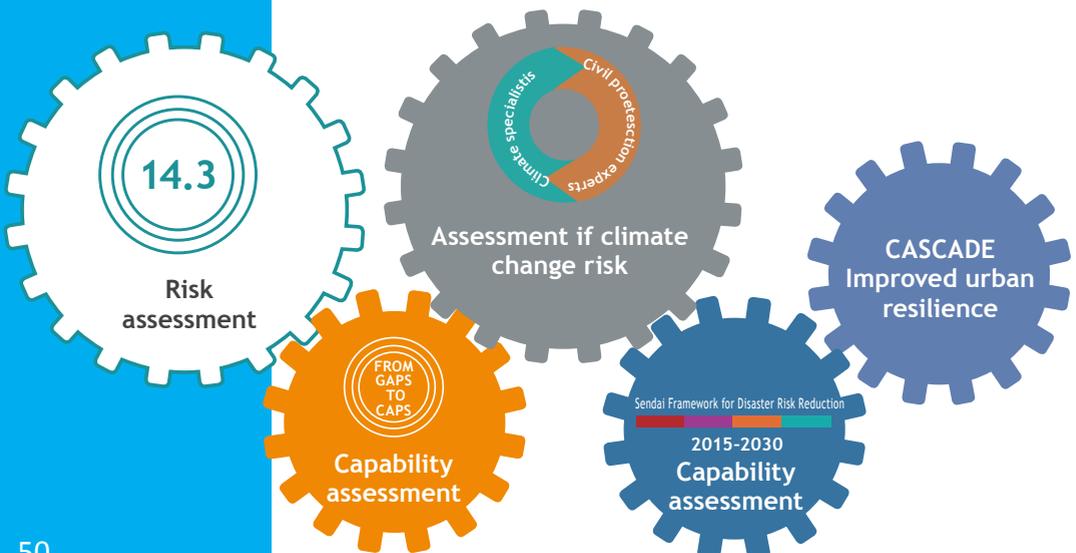
PA Education has five flagships. We view them as laboratories for a new Europe where new formats for transnational collaboration are developed and tested. The latest innovation is thematic working groups where stakeholders from all Baltic countries, from different sectors and representing different levels of governance are invited to co-create, developing new methods and policy recommendations.

“Most societal challenges today have a social dimension where macro-regional strategies can play an important role, integrating stakeholder’s perspective while solving challenges together”.



POLICY AREA SECURE

A resilient macro-region depends on a sound risk assessment in each country. In 2012, when the EU Commission started addressing this issue, the methodology and the quality of the national risk assessments varied greatly. Policy Area Secure took the initiative and launched a series of projects adding value at each step. Project 14.3 anticipated possible disasters (e.g. floods, fires, nuclear accidents) through scenarios and From Gaps to Caps investigated the Baltic Sea region countries' capability to deal with them. The results helped several governments to improve risk assessment methodologies. This, in turn, enabled a more rapid and effective EU response through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. The continuation of this resilience-strengthening process would not be possible without collaboration within the EUSBSR. In 2018, PA Secure and Horizontal Action Climate teamed up for a project: CASCADE, which combines climate change adaptation expertise with risk assessment methodologies. The resulting training curriculum for city officials will help make urban communities more resilient to climate change risks and contribute to the implementation of the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.





From 2012 to 2018, the PA Secure flagship the Baltic Leadership Programme in Civil Security brought together 100 experts holding key leadership positions in civil protection and law enforcement agencies from 11 countries in the region. During the four modules the participants had a unique opportunity to share experiences and best practices among peers, acquire new knowledge and enhance leadership skills through the combination of theory and practice. The course strengthened the ties between the agencies and, most importantly, created strong personal bonds between the people, upon whom the safety and security of the region depend.

“EUSBSR helps to bridge jurisdictional, mental and cultural gaps as well as build transboundary capacities, necessary to handle crises which know no borders”.

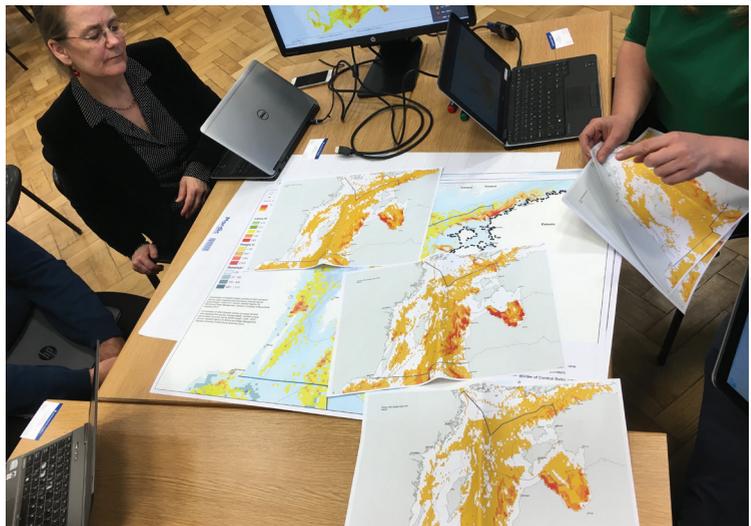




HORIZONTAL ACTION SPATIAL PLANNING

One of the HA's busiest tasks is the implementation of a coherent maritime spatial planning (MSP) that applies ecosystem-based approach. Nearly all Baltic Sea region countries are engaged in the MSP processes and are preparing their maritime spatial plans. Various cooperation projects and flagships are supporting these efforts by providing test-beds, working methods, practical solutions and "know-how" transfer, beneficial both to national countries, as well as pan-Baltic coordination. In this regard, the availability of the MSP data has been marked as one of the prioritized topics within HA coordination to foster coherent MSP across the borders. Two flagships, the Baltic LINes and Pan Baltic Scope, have elaborated a spatial data infrastructure prototype, so called BASEMAPS - the first decentralized data sharing platform that aims at gathering updated datasets that are relevant for MSP practitioners.

Additionally, Baltic SCOPE and Pan Baltic Scope has initiated relatively new cooperation practice on informal collaboration among MSP practitioners and national authorities, called Planning Forum. It acts as practical dissemination and





collaboration platform supporting ongoing national and regional MSP processes and implementation of MSP policy. While the well-established HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group (WG) is the official cooperation platform for policy proposals and implications, Planning Forum is an opportunity for in-depth discussions, establishing practical task forces and exchanging good practices and experiences in MSP among practitioners. It is complementing the current cooperation within HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG with practical, task-oriented and informal working methods, thereby building an efficient, more complete and strengthened MSP network.

Launch of the EUSBSR has stimulated stronger cooperation between various sectors. For instance Horizontal Area Spatial Planning collaborates closely with Policy Area Transport through various thematic projects (NsB CoRe, TENTacle, Scandria2Act, MARA etc.) and joint events. This collaboration has resulted in a joint visioning process to test spatial planning for transnational transport corridor in the NSB CoRe project area.



HORIZONTAL ACTION NEIGHBOURS

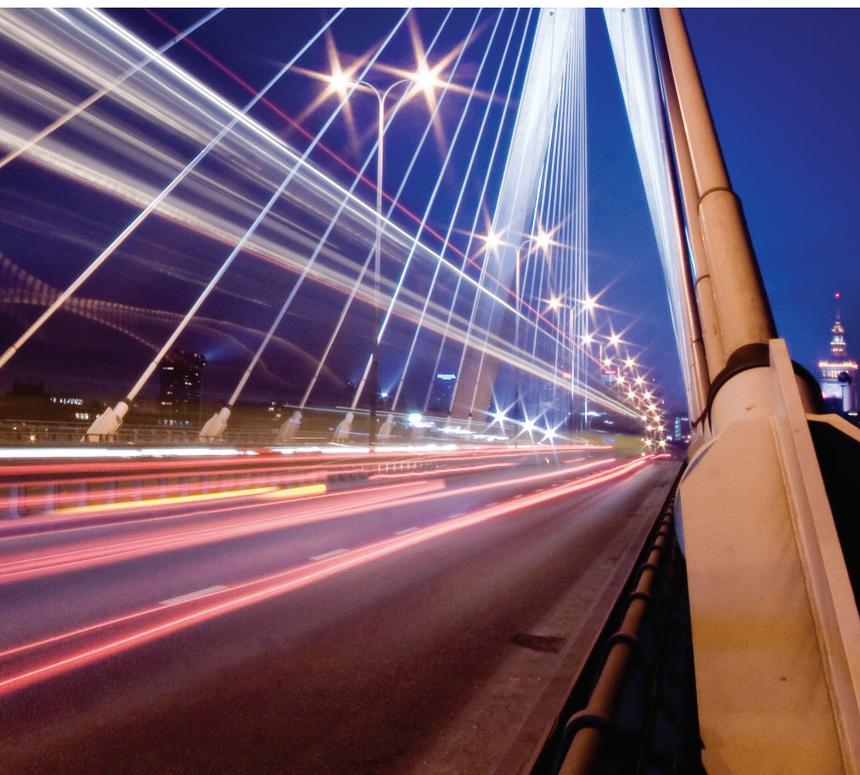
Horizontal Action Neighbours began within the Turku-Process which is a development process built on the tripartite cooperation between the cities of Turku, St. Petersburg and Hamburg. The process endeavoured to promote the importance of taking a larger geographic scope when trying to deal with the Baltic Sea region issues, despite the tendency to perceive the Baltic Sea as an internal sea of the European Union. The drainage alone is very much affected by Northwest Russia, Belarus and even Norway. And when we look at the region more comprehensively, we can see that even remote Iceland is not that far away.



Neighbours was added to the EUSBSR as a Horizontal Action in the revision process of 2013. Since then the cooperation between the four neighbouring countries and the EUSBSR has really been able to take off. At the moment, the EUSBSR has around 100 ongoing projects and out of them around 70 have non-EU partners. Russian and Norwegian partners are very well represented and as the Strategy matures and cooperation methods develop, Iceland and Belarus will also become more involved.

The HA Neighbours coordinators have participated and organized many meetings, seminars and conferences to facilitate cooperation between the EUSBSR and its neighbours.

One major challenge regarding the cooperation in such a complex environment as the Baltic Sea region is communication. While working as a contact point between the non-EU partners and the EUSBSR stakeholders, HA Neighbours has been able to tackle this challenge by constantly communicating the EUSBSR to different parties with different methods and in different languages.





HORIZONTAL ACTION CAPACITY

Why macro-regional strategies?

In essence, macro-regional strategies are referred to as "implementers" of the EU Cohesion policy in the four European macro-regions. Until their emergence, the role of an "implementer" was played by projects of various sizes and scopes. As the lion share of the EU funding is allocated in national and regional funds, cohesion was assumed to be assured through raising living standards within national borders and by implementing sizeable projects. In reality, most of the challenges pressing European development today, are much wider in geography and much more complex in scope and impact that any nation alone can manage. And certainly, approaching such challenges requires "implementers" with a much higher impact potential than any project regardless of its size.

In practice, a macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework that can address region-wide, common challenges, by working at two levels simultaneously: the policy level, by sustaining and deepening generative and multi-stakeholder policy dialogues across the region; and the implementation level, where existing and new policies get enacted and produce tangible impact "on the ground", by efforts of all types of actors gathered through the multi-level governance (MLG) principle inherent to the strategy.

Seen as strategic frameworks, macro-regional strategies seem to become the implementer of appropriate size, scope and character, to match the level of the modern cohesion challenge in Europe, and the actual bulk of EU funding available for the purpose, at various governance levels.

Horizontal Action Capacity and EUSBSR Support

HA Capacity/EUSBSR Support have created a 3-phase development model of Policy Area/Horizontal Action (PA/HA). The phases are described in terms of activities needed in each phase, as well as the resulting outcomes.

Presently most PAs/HAs are finalizing the first phase of their development. This is a critical phase which creates prerequisites, sets standards and measures, and guides the PA/HA stakeholders in their strategic and operational work. The quality of decisions made in Phase 1 determines the overall performance of the PA/HA.

HA Capacity and EUSBSR Support offer capacity building to implementing stakeholders, both as workshops, seminars and as individual coaching.

In recent years the way of implementing the strategy has been changing. Single projects are being avoided in favour of processes with a widened participation of stakeholders from different sectors and from most parts of the Baltic Sea region. Focus is on the development of new policies and reaching policy impact.

This *modus operandi* demands more flexible funding schemes, focused on long-term processes rather than short-term projects. It also needs more funding than can be provided by the Interreg programmes. Focus is now on embedding the macroregional strategies in the Operational Programmes of the European Structural and Investments Funds (ESIF). Except for funding, new skills are required on how to organize multi-stakeholder dialogues, on ways to organize development processes and reach policy impact.

Besides capacity building HA Capacity is supporting stakeholder involvement by reaching out to new groups of stakeholders and facilitating their engagement. The Participation Day is one of the tools where local and regional actors are invited to present cooperation ideas. Policy Area Coordinators provide feedback and help the new stakeholders to engage in the flagships.





HORIZONTAL ACTION CLIMATE

Main achievement of the Horizontal Action Climate is that the transnational cooperation between the countries of the Baltic Sea Region on the climate issues is continuously prioritized on high-level political agenda and major stakeholders are engaged and actively participating in the policy dialogue. 7 out of 8 EU Member States in the Baltic Sea region have adopted National Climate Adaptation Strategies. Latvia is expected to adopt NCCAS in 2019. Climate has gained prominent place in a major macro-regional policy document -The Baltic 2030 Action Plan, endorsed by the Council of the Baltic Sea States Foreign Ministers on the 20th of June 2017 in Reykjavik. The Baltic 2030 Action Plan provides a common



vision for sustainable development that will be communicated to all stakeholders, institutions, sectors and citizens in the Baltic Sea region. The Action Plan presents six focus areas and six activation processes for realizing the vision of a sustainable Baltic Sea Region, including climate action.

Climate mitigation and adaptation are gradually mainstreamed by other Policy Areas of the EUSBSR. Series of joint meetings by HA Climate together with PA Energy, PA Transport, PA Ship, PA Secure, PA Bioeconomy and PA Culture have yielded higher awareness on climate change and new opportunities for increasing resilience of the region towards negative impacts of extreme weather events. Cooperation between HA Climate and PA Secure have led to the establishment of macro-regional network of rescue and climate authorities, local municipalities and experts aiming at implementing the SENDAI Framework and increasing the capacity of local governments to address long-term climate risks within regional planning and day-to-day activities.

Even though the Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Region and the Action Plan do not contain any concrete deadlines, the implementation of actions is advanced. From 11 strategic goals, 6 goals have been implemented or are well on track and implementation of the remaining 5 goals is pending.





LOOKING

INTO

THE FUTURE



The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region would not exist without Member States' strong will and commitment. Political involvement of the participating countries is key to give the macro-regional cooperation guidelines and new incentives.

We asked all EUSBSR National Coordinators to share their thoughts on the past 10 years of the Strategy's implementation, current challenges and outlook for the future.

You can find their reflections on the following pages.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE



MARCUS HAAS

Danish National Coordinator,
MFA of Denmark

“I am looking forward to working on the upcoming revision of the Action Plan which will make the Strategy even more relevant and future-oriented”.



SOFIA WENNERSTRAND

Swedish National
Coordinator, Office of the
Prime Minister of Sweden

“During the second half of 2009, Sweden took over the rotating Presidency in the Council of the EU. A main priority was the adoption of the EUSBSR. Back then there was a great deal of enthusiasm, but also questions not least regarding governance. The rather loose governance structure has been replaced by a much more target- and result-oriented one. Nevertheless, one aspect remains as important now as it has ever been before, the reliance on highly committed and passionate individuals. They have inspired three new Macro-Regional Strategies in the EU, an innovative model for cooperation that today involves no less than two-thirds of the EU”.



HELENA TUURI

Finnish National Coordinator,
MFA of Finland

“The EUSBSR is a unique, inclusive forum for citizens, civil society, regions and business to cooperate for our common interest - the Baltic Sea”.



FRANZISKA SCHWELM

German National Coordinator,
MFA of Germany

“The EUSBSR’s 10th anniversary is an occasion to be proud of what we have achieved in Baltic Sea cooperation - and an opportunity to make the Strategy fit for the future. I am looking forward to seeing the Baltic Sea Region continue to thrive!”

“10 years ago, we started with an idea of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Now we also have the experience we gained in its implementation and development. Let the next decade open up more new opportunities for the Strategy!”



RENĀTE BULA
Latvian National
Coordinator, MFA of Latvia

“Demography, environment, external instability - those will be great challenges. The answer could be the 4th Industrial Revolution if we adopt and adapt well. Let’s get ready to be the pioneers of the technological innovation for the benefit of all!”



NIJOLĖ ŽAMBAITĖ
Lithuanian National
Coordinator, MFA of Lithuania

“The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is like the region itself: full of challenges but with a lot of ambitions and positive energy. Supported by a vibrant group that can be recognized as the “Baltic civil society” striving to make a difference by implementing concrete Baltic projects. Realizing together a dream of better living conditions in a clean, secure, attractive and prosperous region. After 10 years of implementation we are more mature and conscious. This effort should be continued because we are simply BETTER TOGETHER”.



JOANNA WOJTKOWSKA
Polish National
Coordinator, MFA of Poland

“Reaching 10 years EUSBSR is full of energy. There are practical results, vibrant community and the main event of the regional co-operation - Annual Fora”.



RAUL MÄLK
Estonian National
Coordinator, MFA of Estonia

PHOTO CREDITS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

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