

Working Together for Stronger Social Dialogue in the Baltic Sea Region

Statement of the BSLN Steering Committee 31 March 2011, Helsinki

The Steering Committee of the Baltic Sea Labour Network (BSLN) project is the first and only high-level tripartite body for social dialogue and cooperation on labour market issues representing the social partners and the political institutions in the Baltic Sea Region. The core aim is to support sustainable economic growth and social welfare by promoting social dialogue and tripartite structures and cooperation.

The BSLN Steering Committee is committed to establishing a **Forum for Social Dialogue in the Baltic Sea Region** in conjunction with the BSLN Final Conference in November 2011. The Forum should aim at

- influencing policy- and decision-making in the field of labour market relations, e.g. by issuing joint opinions and recommendations;
- promoting transnational social dialogue, based on the responsibility of social partners for the development of labour market policies in the Baltic Sea Region;
- networking and exchange of experience between the social partners and political institutions in the Baltic Sea Region.

The forum will assemble tripartite representatives from the countries in the Baltic Sea Region once a year in an **Annual Round Table** meeting. The Forum and the Annual Round Table meetings will be an open cooperation platform for all committed employer and trade union confederations and governments and parliaments in the region. We call for close cooperation between the Forum and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) and the European Union, especially the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

During the year 2011, we will pay special attention to the inclusion of Russian tripartite stakeholders in the preparatory discussions on the Forum, including social dialogue and development of the economic cooperation. North-West Russia is an integral part of the Baltic Sea Region. We support an intensified EU-Russian dialogue with an aim of reaching a new partnership agreement, as well as the development of the European Economic Area (EEA).

The Forum for Social Dialogue in the Baltic Sea Region should be a platform for social dialogue on jointly identified problems and challenges. **The agenda of the Forum** should concentrate on issues such as sustainable labour market solutions, growth, competitiveness, education and training, and high employment rates. It is important for our societies to safeguard fair competition for enterprises based on



respect for industrial and labour relations as well as decent working conditions and fair treatment of workers. For instance the planned EU macroeconomic governance scheme should be based on respect for industrial and labour relations.

The Forum will pay special attention to the challenges of the free movement of services and of labour in the Baltic Sea Region. From the point of view of both employees and employers it is important to have access to accurate and timely information regarding their rights and obligations. Existing cross-border and regional information centres should be strengthened and new centres established, in order to provide accurate and comprehensive information on the labour market situation, legislation, regulations and procedures.

We believe that the Baltic Sea Region should be a driving force in the development of democratic and organised civil society all over Europe. The situation of the trade union movement in Belarus remains of particular concern and requires renewed efforts to be resolved. The ILO conventions and the revised European Social Charter are important for the development of democracy, sustainable societies and high level standards of living and should be fully implemented in all the countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

The Forum can also contribute to the implementation of the Northern Dimension, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and other policies and strategies in the region, and to achieving the EU2020 goals.

On behalf of the Baltic Sea Labour Network,

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Dr. Thomas Klischan, General Manager of Nordmetall, the employers association of the metal and electronics industry, Germany

Jan Lundin, Director General of the CBSS Secretariat

Mikko Mäenpää, President of the Finnish Confederation of Professionals STTK, Finland, Member in the Steering Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Uwe Polkaehn, President of the Confederation of German Trade Unions Northern Region (DGB-Nord), Germany

Harri Taliga, President of the Confederations of Estonian Trade Unions EAKL, Estonia

Franz Thönnnes, Member of Parliament, former Parliamentary State Secretary, Member of the Standing Committee of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

