

Baltic Sea Region - a forerunner in the promotion of Social Dialogue

The BSLN Steering Committee, a high-level body for strategic and political decision making of the Baltic Sea Labour Network project, met for the fourth time on 31 March 2011 in Helsinki. The senior representatives of trade unions, employer organisations, parliaments and governmental organisations adopted a statement that aims at the establishment of a Forum for Social Dialogue in the Baltic Sea Region on 15 November 2011 in Hamburg.

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 open for all committed employer and trade union confederations and governments and parliaments in the region. Stakeholders from all the Baltic Sea countries would be invited in the Forum. The BSLN Steering Committee had also a joint session with Russian stakeholders to discuss the EU-Russian relations and their involvement in the Forum.

Uwe Polkaehn, President of DGB Nord, the Confederation of German Trade Unions in the Northern Region, stated: "The Baltic Sea Region must become a forerunner in the promotion of social dialogue. This is the way how the Baltic Sea Region can become the most prosperous and socially sustainable area in Europe. The new Forum should discuss growth, competitiveness, education, and solutions to achieve high employment rates. The challenges related to free movement of labour should also be addressed. Social dialogue is a precondition for a sustainable labour market. It should play a key role and be respected in implementing the EU2020 strategy and especially the macroeconomic governance scheme."

Dr. Thomas Klischan, General Manager of Nordmetall, Employers Association of the Metal and Electronic Industry, underlined the aims of the cooperation: "Through the tripartite Forum we aim at influencing policy- and decision-making in the field of labour market relations by issuing joint opinions and recommendations. The Forum is about transnational social dialogue, based on the responsibility of social partners for the development of labour market policies in the Baltic Sea Region. It will also facilitate networking and exchange of experience between the social partners and political institutions in the Baltic Sea Region."

Franz Thönnies, German MP and the Chairman of the Working Group on Labour Market and Social Affairs of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), emphasised the importance of the future cooperation. "Well-functioning and fair labour markets are a key element in developing our welfare models in a fair and sustainable direction. We have to bring stakeholders together to tackle this. North-West Russia is a very important part of the Baltic Sea Region – this is why representatives from Russia have been invited to Helsinki to plan the future cooperation with us and to take part in the upcoming Forum for Social Dialogue."

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