



**Professor Espersen:
A Formidable Chapter in CBSS History**

On 30 September 2000, the present mandate of the CBSS Commissioner, adopted in 1994 and revised in 1997, expired. This date also marked the end of Professor Ole Espersen's 6-year tenure of the office.

Doctor of Law and Professor of Constitutional Law at Copenhagen University, Mr. Espersen joined the framework of the CBSS with an outstanding record on both national and international arenas. He is a former member of the Danish parliament (1973–1994) and Minister of Justice (1981–1982). In 1965–1970 Dr. Espersen was a member of the Expert Committee on Human Rights of the Council of Europe and in 1976–1979 a member of the UN Human Rights Committee. In 1991–1994 he chaired the Danish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. In 1997 the Government of Denmark appointed Mr. Espersen as the Danish member of the Board of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia.

Thus, when in 1994 the Council decided to establish the office of a Commissioner on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, including the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities, Professor Espersen was a welcome choice. He was armed with a mandate to promote and consolidate a democratic development and the protection of human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, in the Member States and to encourage favourable conditions for applying the Council of Europe standards in our region.

In his new capacity Mr. Espersen displayed remarkable energy and dedication. Supported by a competent and devoted staff of his Secretariat in Copenhagen, he travelled extensively all over the Baltic Sea region, acquiring in-depth knowledge of the situation on the ground and establishing good working contacts with his counterparts. His personal integrity, professional attitude and profound understanding of the frequently complex issues have won Ole Espersen respect of authorities, organisations and individuals in all CBSS Member States. Co-operating closely with the Council of Europe, OSCE, UN Centre on Human Rights, as well as with other relevant international institutions, he soon became a valuable source of information on the progress of democratic development and promotion of human rights in the Baltic Sea region. Thus, the Commissioner contributed to raising the profile of his office, and therefore that of the CBSS as a whole, in the eyes of European and international fora.

Apart from the annual reports submitted to CBSS Ministerial Sessions, Professor Espersen has produced over the years an impressive number of in-depth surveys focusing on specific issues of particular relevance to strengthening democratic institutions and promoting human rights in the Member States. Blending expert analysis with concrete conclusions and recommendations, these surveys continue to serve many a national authority in the region as a source of reference and guidance. Suffice it to cite here as examples such surveys as

- "Conditions for Travel Across the National Borders of the CBSS Member States" (May 1999),
- "The Right to Freedom of Religion and Religious Associations" (March 1999),
- "Rights of Non-citizens Residing Legally in the Member States of the CBSS" Parts 1 and 2 (February 1996 and March 1998),
- "The Right to Freedom of Association" (January 1998),
- "The Right of Access to Official Information. National and International Regulations" (December 1997)
- "Implementation of Certain Rights of the Child" (April 1997)
- "Criteria and Procedures for Obtaining Citizenship in the CBSS Member States" (April 1996)

Mr. Espersen has also launched a number of initiatives, including an extensive Programme for the Strengthening of Democratic Processes in the Baltic Sea Region, which is currently underway. It includes a series of seminars on good law-making, including human rights issues, specially tailored to meet the needs and working conditions of national parliaments in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the legislative assemblies of St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad in Russia.

Though institutionally accountable to the Council, the Commissioner has over the years developed and maintained close co-operation with the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) and the Working Group on Democratic Institutions (WGDI). The Commissioner has regularly attended CSO and WGDI meetings to present subjects for further deliberations and action. The WGDI has frequently taken up selected reports produced by Mr. Espersen and his office for discussion and follow-up.

On behalf of my colleagues in various CBSS structures, many of whom had the pleasure to work with Professor Ole Espersen for several years, I would like to extend to him sincere expressions of gratitude and appreciation and wish him success in his future activities.

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Council of the Baltic Sea States opens EuroFaculty in Kaliningrad, Russia

September 2000.

Over 500 guests attended the inauguration ceremony, including top local officials, delegations from CBSS countries and representatives of partner universities involved in the project.

Speaking on behalf of the CBSS, Ambassador Hans-Jürgen Heimsoeth of the German Foreign Office and Chairman of the Council's Committee of Senior Officials, said that EuroFaculty- Kaliningrad (EF-K) would contribute to the scientific and economic dynamics in the Baltic Sea region. It should help the Russian Oblast of Kaliningrad and its university become academically and economically integrated into the region. The Chairman of the CSO stressed that building a "knowledge-based, information society" around the Baltic Sea constituted one of the top priorities of the German CBSS Presidency, and EF-K was a major step forward in that direction. Coming as a result of a request from the Russian side, the project enjoys complete and unreserved support from local and federal Russian authorities, which is a basic prerequisite for the success of EF-K.

Addressing the participants of the inauguration ceremony, Kaliningrad Governor Mr. Leonid P. Gorbenko noted the project's particular significance in view of the Oblast's neighbouring countries' expected accession to the EU. KSU Rector Dr. Andrei P. Klemeshev stressed that EF-K was a pioneering project in the history of Russia's system of higher education, as it focused on reforming the contents of university education and modernising the teaching methods. In his written address to the guests of the EF-K opening ceremony, Russian Foreign Minister Igor S. Ivanov praised the project as a good example of growing co-operation among the states of the Baltic Sea region in addressing common issues, among which education is one of the top priorities.

Since its foundation in 1992, the Council of the Baltic Sea States has actively promoted economic, political, cultural and scientific integration in the region. The CBSS established the first EuroFaculty centres at the universities of Riga, Vilnius and Tartu in 1993, with the aim of assisting the participating universities in reaching international standards in research and teaching. The main objective of EF-K is to support Kaliningrad State University in the fields of curricula reform, upgrading teaching methods and strengthening scientific research. Subjects such as marketing, environmental law and private law will be introduced, and emphasis will be made on practical skills and teamwork. The project will be completely integrated in KSU and will not create any parallel structures. EF-K will not be a simple clone of the projects currently implemented in the three Baltic republics. Rather, the experience gained in Riga, Vilnius and Tartu has been used to create a solution "tailored" for Kaliningrad State University. With the current concept it has been possible to secure funding for EF-K for its entire duration of (initially) three years. Substantial contributions have been made by four donor countries - Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden; Lithuania, Poland and United Kingdom are also supporting the project. The "host" university provides logistical support and the necessary infrastructure.

EuroFaculty-Kaliningrad includes two sub-projects: in business studies, Roskilde (Denmark), Trondheim (Norway), Göttingen (Germany) and Kaunas (Lithuania) universities have established a consortium to co-operate with the KSU Faculty of Economics. In the field of legal studies the universities of Göttingen, Bergen (Norway) and Aalborg (Denmark) form a consortium co-operating with the KSU Faculty of Law. In addition, the EF-K project devotes considerable attention to foreign language teaching.

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Priorities for the German Presidency of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) 2000–2001

The Council of the Baltic Sea States as an intergovernmental forum of the Baltic Sea Rim has had an important part in improving relations and co-operation in the region and fostering democratic developments in the region during the last years.

The positive developments in the region have helped in paving the way to further steps towards enlargement of the European Union and the creation of bonds of partnership with the Russian Federation. The Northern Dimension Action Plan of the European Union has taken up a multitude of aims of political initiatives presented by CBSS and the different supporting bodies.

To contribute to the achievement of the overall aim of stability, security and best use of the potential of the Baltic Sea Region for the well-being of its inhabitants, the German presidency of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) proposes the following priority areas of co-operation in the upcoming year:

- 1 Economic Co-operation
- 2 Active Participation in the Northern Dimension of the EU
- 3 Environmental Protection
- 4 Promotion of the Baltic Sea Rim as a region of knowledge-based societies, cultural identity and active civic participation in democracy and regional exchange

The German presidency envisages the following tasks and projects where the political role of the CBSS should contribute to achieve results:

1 Economic Co-operation

- Implementation of the Bergen Action Plan of the Baltic Sea States Trade Ministers: Focus on removing barriers to trade, specification of partly very ambitious goals, monitoring of implementation process in members states
- Setting up of IT-Network for small and medium-sized enterprises
- Transport infrastructure: discussion on shared use of transport facilities in connection to the planning on Trans-European transport networks
- Follow up on Conference of Energy Ministers (October 1999), support for activities to create a Baltic Energy Ring
- Creation of the IT-ad-hoc Task Force: report on the use of IT, especially E-Commerce for intensified cross-border economic development, issues of IT security
- Progress on the Protection of Intellectual Property
- Report on profile of International Financial Institutions in the Baltic Sea Region, recommendations for improved financing conditions
- Organisation of a high-level international economic forum

2 Role of the CBSS in the Northern Dimension of the EU

to EU policies in the region

- development of a shortlist of regional projects to become part of the Action Plan of the Northern Dimension, including projects on Kaliningrad
- close co-operation with EU Commission, fostering conditions for the Commission to be an active participant in the regional co-operation

3 Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development

- Political follow-up on summit decisions of Kolding concerning sustainable development and protection of the environment
- Combining environmental and energy policies to promote ecologically compatible energy production (gas, hydrogen) through a pilot project
- Upgrading of safety standards in the Baltic Sea Region, examination of possibilities to improve respective civil security measures

4 Promotion of the Baltic Sea - Rim as a region of knowledge-based societies, cultural identity and active civic participation in democracy and international exchange

- Promotion of experimental use of IT within the Baltic Interface Net (BIN) for scientific and economic co-operation, research and development
- Make maximum use of the academic and scientific potential of the region through promotion of further development of university co-operation
- Strengthening of cultural co-operation by connecting government and NGO activities, e.g. Ars Baltica
- Improvement of academic resources for the whole Baltic Sea Region through continued support for Euro Faculty (existing centres in Tartu, Riga and Vilnius as well as Kaliningrad from September 2000); support for the establishment of Euro Faculty Kaliningrad beyond the phase of inception
- Close co-operation with special participants representing the co-operation on the sub-regional level (BSSSC, UBC), mutual complementation of tasks and programmes
- Closer contact with and promotion of the mutual exchange between NGOs as an element to strengthening the democratic development in the region.
- Initiatives promoting the exchange and mobility in education and training of young people.

5 Other tasks of the German Presidency:

- Continuation of the Review of Structure and Working Methods, focusing of activities of the CBSS
 - Support for the work of the Task Force on Organised Crime and continuation of activities to combat corruption
 - Co-ordination of different fora in the Baltic Sea, co-ordination with the Barents/Euro--Arctic Council
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New Observer State in the CBSS: Italy

Throughout the centuries, the Baltic Sea region has been an area of challenges and opportunities, a land imbued with noble and genuine values, a crossroad of economic and human exchanges. The end of the Cold War has laid the ground for crucial changes in our continent, opening the path for the first time in history to a new undivided, peaceful and democratic Europe. Thus, an increasing attention has been given to regional and sub-regional co-operation as an instrument for fostering cohesion and solidarity, developing good-neighbourly relations, accelerating economic growth, enhancing security and stability.

The Council of the Baltic Sea States, since its institution in 1992, has made an important contribution to a better understanding of the common interests of the Member States, irrespective of their political systems and participation in other international groupings and organisations. It has emerged as a valuable forum for strengthening regional co-operation and promoting a confident dialogue with the European Union in a number of priority areas.

It is in the interest both of the countries of the region and of the international community to explore and exploit the potentials of existing channels of co-operation at the regional level, with the aim of avoiding the creation of new barriers and divisions in Europe.

Nowadays, international opportunities and the promotion of self-interest coincide. In this respect, the European integration process broke new ground in the past fifty years. The EU has now finally found the broader scope it has always implicitly sought. In the Baltic Sea area, the European Union actively contributes to the process by its enlargement policy, its Northern Dimension Action Plan, the Europe Agreements established with candidate countries, and the Partnership and Co-operation Agreements with Russia and Ukraine. The overall terms of reference have thereby been established, providing coherence both to the EU and to bilateral and multilateral initiatives that may concur with it.

Italy, as one of the founding members of the European Union, remains at the forefront of its broader continental ambitions. That is why the Italian government will not confine itself to the many co-operative tasks that have developed in its immediate neighbourhood, but intends to contribute also to the promotion of positive opportunities that may emerge for the European integration process further afield. In this context we consider it a privilege and a duty to develop continuous and increasing relations of co-operation and dialogue with the Baltic countries.

In the Baltic area, the consolidation of democratic environment and observance of human rights, as well as other humanitarian matters, are of course paramount. This is an area deserving special attention. The Italian Government is ready to share its experience in this field.

Protection of human environment, development of natural resources and energy supplies, along with issues of nuclear safety and of re-processing or disposal of nuclear waste, are matters requesting an enhanced co-operation on a priority basis. Italy could contribute with its expertise to the feasibility of the relevant projects in the multilateral framework already established, i.e. the European Commission's PHARE and TACIS programmes.

Considering the priority importance of fostering integration in such fields as transport and communications, Italy would

like to establish a close co-operation with CBSS countries in the infrastructure field, in particular concerning pan-European multi-modal transport corridors, identified at Crete and Helsinki international Conferences.

Italy has also started exchanging experiences with some of the Baltic Sea countries with respect to the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises, promoting best practices as well as assessing the economic, legal and training aspects – once again in the context also of existing PHARE and TACIS projects. Italian financial institutions will assist in providing export credit and risk capital, on the basis of the OECD consensus. Among others, mechanical and electromechanical, textile, agro-alimentary, tourism and other service-oriented areas are already taken into consideration. Promotional support, managerial assistance and other advice are offered by the Italian foreign trade bodies for the best possible orientation of bilateral exchanges and co-operative ventures at both national and local levels. A useful backdrop, apart from the EU Interreg cross-border approach, will be provided by the Action Plan for Trade and Economic Co-operation approved by the CBSS ministerial meeting in Bergen in February.

Furthermore, Italy's contribution is increasing in the public administration twinning initiatives promoted by the EU, in order to ensure that the European "acquis" are assimilated by candidate countries as effectively as possible. For the same purpose, visits are exchanged among public administration experts. Finally, in the educational field, academic exchanges and scholarships in specific fields could be considered for inclusion in bilateral cultural agreements, as well as in the framework of the EU Socrates and Erasmus programmes. A similar approach inspires Italian participation in international research and co-operation in the environmental and health fields, such as infrastructure, social hygiene and child care, which are particularly high on the list of many an international agenda.

Italian presence in the opportunities developing among the Baltic Sea States could grow and be adjusted on the basis of specific requirements and interests that may develop over time. The multilateral framework of CBSS will usefully underpin any bilateral initiative with an overall sub-regional consistency and coherence. Thus, apart from taking into account the many co-operative initiatives and programmes already carried out in the region by the European Union, Italy looks forward to following ever more closely the activity of the CBSS.

Italy is fully in support of regional and sub-regional co-operation in Europe, in the North-eastern (being an observer in the Barents-EuroArctic Council), as well as in Central (Central European Initiative) and South-eastern Europe (through the Stability Pact, the recent Adriatic and Ionian Sea Initiative and the South-east European Co-operative Initiative). It supports the EU strategies towards the region, firmly believing in the beneficial effects, synergies and cross-fertilisation of the abovementioned initiatives for Europe as a whole.

Italy, also in its capacity of Chairman-in-office of the Council of Europe until November 2000 and of the Central European Initiative starting from beginning 2001, hopes to establish in the near future a regular dialogue with the CBSS Presidency in order to identify priorities and modalities for the most effective Italian participation in the important initiatives promoted and implemented by the Council.

Note from the editor:

This statement was made by the Italian representative, Minister Plenipotentiary Maurizio Moreno, Director General for European Countries, at the CBSS CSO meeting on 8 June 2000

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Opinion:

At the Dawn of German CBSS Presidency:
Hopes vs. Doubts

Water connects, land separates – this wisdom of old sailors has become a child's belief. It takes a hydrofoil only 45 minutes, but with a diesel-powered boat it takes at least three hours from Malmö to Copenhagen. Since 2 July 2000 it takes about 35 minutes to cover these 16 km by train and maybe a quarter of an hour by car. Joschka Fischer made it in some 90 minutes in the half-marathon over the new Öresund bridge on Pentecost Monday.

An old dream came true: for the first time since the end of the ice age 7 000 years ago, one can travel around the Baltic Sea without getting one's feet wet. A historical milestone has been reached, and people will definitely make use of it: the project of the Fehmarnbelt-connection has already passed its planning phase. A pool of chambers of commerce and regional planners has been constituted with the goal of closing this missing link between the North and the continent.

For the Öresund and the Baltic Sea region in general, outstanding possibilities have been created. Already today the volume of German trade here is greater than that with the USA and Japan combined. Economic growth in this part of Europe is higher than the EU/OECD-average, differences in affluence between "old" and "new" democracies have proved to be motors for innovation and structural change. Transport systems and infrastructure, the level of education and professional skills – important prerequisites for cultural and economic dynamics – are on the rise. Over the past ten years, labour forces and capital flows have risen dramatically. Today Stockholm is the leading city for the IT-market while Finland is the frontrunner in communications technology.

Since 1989 a new region has emerged: after the fall of the Berlin Wall we are dealing with a new, large North, which spans from Greenland to North-western Russia. The new reality has been noticed by Canada, Iceland, Norway and even the UK. Time will also tell what the new US administration is planning for the region.

Is it then surprising when many voices refer to the Baltic Sea region as a power centre of Europe? The State secretary for Economics and Technology in Berlin, Ms. Gisela Meister-Scheufelen, for example, considers the Baltic Sea to be the most important topic of the future. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder told the recent CBSS summit in Kolding that trade with this region was more important for Germany than that with the USA.

Since Germany took over the Presidency of the CBSS – a weakly institutionalised union of countries bordering the Baltic Sea with nothing but a secretariat in Stockholm – the light has finally changed to green for a speedy political journey toward a peaceful and prosperous future. Probably nowhere else in Europe can such a blossoming flora of co-operation be found: city partnerships, economic co-operation structures, university contacts, regional art events – a wide array of official institutions and NGOs offer a solid basis for political action.

In spite of these ideal preconditions for political innovation, public, political as well as entrepreneurial interest in the region is relatively low: Brussels takes less and less interest in the region, while the EU Northern Dimension is hardly noticeable on its agenda. The possibilities for constructive interaction with Russia within the framework of the CBSS are largely ignored. Out of consideration for Russia, Germany keeps a low profile in the three Baltic republics while Kaliningrad, for internal political reasons, can never become a German topic...

As a result, official policies towards the north of Europe and the Baltic Sea region are largely anaemic and lacking drive. This is true not only for Germany but also for Denmark and Poland: plenty of rhetoric, very little action. The priority list of the German CBSS Presidency contains the usual topics, without surprises, without innovations, without inspiration: economic co-operation, environment protection, promotion of civil societies, technological development and cultural co-operation. The only concrete measure in this catalogue is the EuroFaculty – a project that could have been a good idea, but, instead, demonstrates helplessness when considering the political and cultural reality in eastern Baltic Sea area. Building on Swedish (and Finnish) ambitions, Germany could initiate the establishment of a (virtual) Baltic Sea University – the cultural preconditions and the identification with the region exist.

The German government has at least managed to appoint a "special representative" for the Baltic Sea region and thus demonstrated its interest in the area. Strengthening of the CBSS would also be welcome – that would be of interest for the European Union, though not for all of its member states. The CBSS could become an important instrument of European politics, especially – albeit not exclusively – with respect to Russia. The revitalisation of the Northern Dimension would offer the possibility of actively engaging Russia – but maybe the interest in this is as low in Moscow (though it is quite high in St. Petersburg, the hometown of President Putin) as it is in Brussels.

There is a need for a more active and innovative approach by the German CBSS Presidency. When the Swedes take over the EU presidency in the first half of 2001, the moment will come to finally formulate the framework of a political concept for Northern Europe - this time without parentheses. But not only the political brass should make a bigger effort: observers all around the Baltic Sea complain about the German (and European) business world's lack of interest and call for more involvement by entrepreneurs.

Obviously lacking is a thorough analysis of German interests in the region: not the willingness to help, not the appeal to others to get involved, but an evaluation of the benefits of political, economic and cultural development of the region should be high on Berlin's agenda. Only then can one make a sensible list of measures concerning matters of security, energy and the environment, only then can one draw a concrete action plan with respect to science, research and culture. Only then will Germany really become noticed in the region, instead of being merely regarded as one of the actors.

When after the Pentecostal Öresund-half-marathon a major Swedish newspaper listed the names of the 93 000 participants and their individual times, one name could not be found – that of the German Foreign Minister. He took part but did not register. There is hardly a better way of summing up the essence of German politics with respect to the Baltic Sea region.

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