



Manifested here by bridges in Öresund, "Building Bridges – Breaking Barriers" is the theme of the 12th BSSSC Conference in Malmö 21–23 October. Poland's Pomorskie Region hands over the BSSSC Chairmanship to the Swedish Skåne Region at the conference.

Photo: Malmö Turism/Jan-Erik Andersson

EXCLUSIVE BALTINFO INTERVIEW WITH BRUNON SYNAK,
OUTGOING CHAIRMAN OF THE BALTIC SEA STATES SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION (BSSSC)

Strong Subregions Fuel Economic Growth

Baltinfo would like to say a big thank you and good-bye to you. After more than four years you are going to hand over the BSSSC Chairmanship at the 12th BSSSC Conference in Malmö (21–23 October) to the Region of Skåne, Sweden. Looking back, could you draw for us a personal conclusion on what has been achieved during your chairmanship? Referring to the title of the 12th BSSSC Conference "Building Bridges – Breaking Barriers", which was the biggest bridge to be built and the biggest barrier to be broken in the last four years?

Brunon Synak: First of all, thank you to the CBSS and Baltinfo for supporting our activities on the subregional level. When giving this title to the BSSSC conference in Malmö our Swedish hosts looked into the future and the new situation for the

Baltic Sea region (BSR) after the EU enlargement. We face the new budgetary period in the EU as well as all the other challenges we meet in the 21st century.



Brunon Synak, outgoing Chairman of BSSSC.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 ►

“During the whole period the BSSSC has worked to encourage young people to be involved in our activities”

Looking at the past four years I rejoice about the many strong bridges that have been built between “eastern” and “western” partners, between younger and older generations, between the numerous Baltic Sea region organisations and structures and finally between the Baltic Sea region and Brussels. The Polish region of Pomorskie’s role in chairing the BSSSC proves the strong involvement of the “new Europe” in BSR issues. Annual conferences and related projects arranged in Latvia, Estonia and Russia have been important, too. During the whole period the BSSSC has worked to encourage young people to be involved in our activities – such as seminars, workshops, annual conferences and youth networks. I would like to thank very much the Baltic Sea Secretariat for Youth Affairs in Kiel for its devotion to this cause.

We are also extremely grateful that the CBSS has accepted the BSSSC initiative to arrange annual coordination meetings of BSR organisations and structures. This really adds to the synergy of work and our joint effectiveness. And last but not least, we have managed to bring the BSSSC to the Committee of the Regions where we have observer status, and to European institutions with which we have discussed issues like good governance and the Northern Dimension.

Concerning barriers, there are still very different attitudes to decentralised cooperation and lobbying for BSR issues between Russian partners and the rest of the Baltic Sea area. Another barrier is the inadequate visibility of the BSR in the EU and its institutions. There are also big differences among internal structures of the BSR countries. Some of the central gov-

ernments could do more to foster responsibility and authority on the subregional level. We also face a major challenge in involving the decentralised level in Belarus in all types of networking and cooperation.

Baltinfo: In your opinion, does the subregional level get the attention it has deserved?

Synak: There have been positive signs about the recognition of the role of the subregional level in some of the countries. Poland is one of them, where subregional self-government was established in 1999. However, we observe worrying reform tendencies in the BSR. Another problem is seen in the lack of sufficient funding from central government to match the tasks given to the subregional level. Even though the European Commission (EC), with its “White Book on Good Governance” and propagation of the rule of subsidiarity, seems to support a strengthening of this level, regions do not get the recognition they should in some of the regulations and solutions agreed on between the EC and national governments. Within both BSR and EU countries much remains to be done in this respect, to the benefit of all of us.

Baltinfo: To what extent do the differences in allocation of rights and duties between the national and the subregional level in the different BSSSC countries affect the subregional cooperation in the BSR?

Synak: I have already mentioned those differences as one of the barriers. It is difficult for subregional politicians to find a joint platform of cooperation if, for instance, we represent subregions having powers only over the health care sector and regions being responsible for regional and economic development. This impedes not only bilateral contacts and effective networking but also broader scale cooperation, which should aim at making the whole of the BSR competitive on the global market. Differences in legal aspects also pose problems to joint participation on equal footing in EU co-financed pro-

jects, for instance within the Interreg programme.

Baltinfo: Looking ahead, what are the future tasks for the subregional cooperation, especially in the light of the EU enlargement?

Synak: This discussion on the future has also been launched in the publication we have just published, and it is going to continue during the Swedish chairmanship starting with the annual conference in Malmö this October. For me one of the most challenging issues is our role in implementing the New Neighbourhood Policy. And I mean here the role of individual regions but also networks such as ours, in cooperation with partners from Russia and Belarus. We have to work more adamantly for a stronger economic development of the BSR. One prerequisite for economic growth is increased accessibility within the Baltic Sea area. We also have to work in a more concerted way to make use of the current possibilities resulting from the enlargement and especially the future subregional policy to close the development gap, as well as to address the growing social demands.

Baltinfo: The cooperation between the BSSSC and the CBSS has a long-standing tradition. The BSSSC was designated a Special Participant of the CBSS. To what extent have your expectations from having such status been met? What are you still expecting from this special status?

Synak: The BSSSC believes that all BSR structures should work as closely together

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as possible. Therefore we appreciate the status of special participant granted to us. The BSSSC has on several occasions been invited to participate in the CBSS meetings. It is extremely important for the sub-regions that the CSO holds one of its meetings alongside the BSSSC annual conference. However, I believe that this cooperation could still be deepened and made more structured. We could have closer contacts between secretariats and working groups. It would be helpful for us in planning our work, and for the sake of greater synergy in the BSR, to have regular access to the CBSS working documents. Our secretariats discussed those issues recently and I am sure we will continue when we meet at the Malmö conference and especially at the coordination meeting.

Baltinfo: Not only will you be handing over the chairmanship, but the BSSSC

Secretariat will also be moving from the Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland, to the Region of Skåne, Sweden. What advice do you wish to give to your successors?

Synak: I find it essential that the BSSSC should continue to work on an equal partner basis involving as much as possible all the countries and regions. This is indispensable especially in a network such as ours. I hope BSSSC will not lose the young people it has managed to encourage working within the network. I hope partners from Russia and Belarus will work with us for the sake of the common BSR. And finally I am sure we will do our best to be much more visible in EU institutions.

Baltinfo: Please allow finally a personal question. What are your plans after you have handed over the BSSSC Chairmanship?

Synak: The BSSSC chairmanship has been an additional job for me. I am the President of the Pomorskie Region Parliament, which is quite a time-consuming job in itself. As a subregional politician I will stay active in the BSSSC representing my region on the board. I am also a member of the Committee of the Regions where I will continue to promote BSR issues and BSSSC activities. I will continue working as a professor of sociology at Gdansk University where I share the ideas of Baltic Sea cooperation with young people. I will of course remain a Cashuba, representing the Cashubian ethnic group which is strongly rooted in Pomorskie. As such I will do my utmost to foster the cultural diversity of the United Europe.

I believe it is quite a demanding and satisfying mixture of duties, especially for somebody who is already a happy grandfather.



CBSS Seminar on Germany in the Baltic Sea Region

A CBSS seminar on Germany in the Baltic Sea Region after EU enlargement will be held at Strömsborg on 11 November. The seminar will examine and discuss new German perspectives on Baltic Sea cooperation after the recent EU enlargement. General views on the development of German policy towards the region will be compared to

sub-regional perspectives of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. On the panel will be H.E. Busso von Alvensleben, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Stefan Musiolik, Commissioner for Baltic Sea Affairs of the State Chancellery Schleswig-Holstein Land and Jan Henrik Nilsson, Lector at Lund University.

Kiel in Schleswig-Holstein, where Heide Simonis is Prime Minister. At the Baltic Development forum in Hamburg in September she called for a coordinated strategy by the Baltic Sea States vis-a-vis the EU.

Parliamentarians Explore New Avenues for Cooperation

Baltinfo: At the 13th BSPC in Bergen in August you called for a “Parliamentarian Partnership for Northern Europe” that would provide an overarching structure. Could you please elaborate on the geographical scope of such a partnership? When could it materialise?

Jørgen H. Kosmo: In my view the EU enlargement in the spring of 2004, when the number of BSR countries in the EU grew to eight, has changed the scope of the cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, as it has influenced the cooperation in the Barents region. In addition we have the EU Northern Dimension and its second action plan with its aim of closer cooperation with Russia in the Northern region of Europe. This is why I put forward the proposal about a “Parliamentarian Partnership for Northern Europe”. The geographical scope of such a partnership should include both the countries around the Baltic Sea and the other Nordic countries, which of course also include Greenland and the Faeroe Islands.

I hope that this new parliamentary structure can start to materialise during 2005.

Baltinfo: Do you recommend the creation of an assembly along the lines of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament or another type of structure? How do you foresee the practical set-up of a new Northern European parliamentarian partnership?

Kosmo: My idea of a “Parliamentary partnership for Northern Europe” is to have a kind of a co-ordination network that can draw on already existing experience within the parliamentary Baltic Sea conferences, within the Barents cooperation and from the long-standing wealth of cooperation between the Nordic countries. This must be an efficient network,

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using modern communications in preparing documents and decisions. This is not going to be a “heavy” organisation like the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly or the all-encompassing European Parliament. Here I would also remind you that in my proposal for a parliamentary partnership, the European Parliament would also be invited to appoint members to this network. I really do hope that the European parliament will play an active role in this new structure.

Before we can see this new partnership, there is some practical work to be done. But as I pointed out in Bergen, we already have the tool: the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Baltic Sea cooperation. In this committee the parliament of every country must be represented and, of course, the European parliament. This committee should be transformed to become the active vehicle in this partnership. The discussions on how the future work should be organised have already started in various bodies. I understand that the Standing Committee of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference is discussing the follow-up of the resolution from the Bergen conference regarding how to develop the parliamentary dimension, and also that the Presidium of the Nordic Council

has the future parliamentary cooperation in Northern Europe on their agenda.

Baltinfo: What role should such a new partnership play vis-à-vis the EU, NATO, the CoE, the OSCE, the UN and regional parliamentarian structures in, for instance, the Adriatic and Black Sea regions? You mentioned the foreign ministers as suitable “opposite numbers” to a new parliamentarian partnership – do you suggest establishing a new Council of Ministers for Northern Europe?

Kosmo: I do not think that the new partnership can play a specific role vis-à-vis other regional parliamentary organisations, with the exception of the EU where the partnership can exercise a certain influence through its members from the European Parliament. In addition, the Commission obviously will, together with the governments in the region, receive recommendations and proposals from the parliamentary side. Otherwise, I hope that this partnership can serve as a good example of a small, efficient parliamentary network. The main work of such a new partnership will be directed towards the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. However, the establishment of a new Council of Ministers for Northern Europe is not an issue. The foreign ministers are already meeting in the Arctic Council, Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Council of the Baltic Sea States, so Northern Europe is already well covered.

Baltinfo: Parliamentarians who addressed the 13th BSPC, including you, stressed the need for innovation and for adaptation to recent political developments. Expansion of cooperation increases the need for effective communication across borders. Do you believe that parliamentarians can make better use of com-



Jørgen H. Kosmo, (to the right) President of the Norwegian Parliament, and Inge Lønning, Vice-President, joined the City of Bergen in hosting the 13th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in August. The photo was taken during the Nordic Council Session in Oslo in October 2003.

Photo: Lennart Perlenhem (Nordic Council)

munication via the Internet and, for instance, videoconferences for smaller meetings? How could one ensure enhanced openness towards the electorate via electronic and other means?

Kosmo: There is clearly a need for the effective use of communications across borders. In my opinion the Partnership must work in such a way that members of the Standing Committee must exchange views and experience and work out new proposals and recommendations. If all participating countries have access to videoconferences, this tool should also be used. But parliamentarians will also need to meet face to face, looking into each others eyes, before making bold decisions. Videoconference and modern communication serve to supplement actual meetings but can also enhance efficiency dramatically.

Openness towards the electorate is important, but this is the responsibility of each participating parliament.

*Message to the
12th BSSSC:
“..., we truly need
cooperation also on
a subregional level”*

Baltinfo: Congratulations on your appointment as County Governor of Telemark! How do you plan to use your experience from the BSPC and the Nordic Council in your new capacity as County Governor? What is your message to the 12th BSSSC Conference in Malmö on 21–23 October?

Kosmo: I look forward to taking up my new position as County Governor from January 2006. After many years as parliamentarian and minister – I have also been Minister of Nordic Cooperation – I believe

that it is possible to transfer the idea of cooperation at local and regional level, and not only at country level, to my new working place. The most important experience I can bring with me from the 13th BSSPC Bergen is the emphasis that all speakers put on the environment and maritime safety in the Baltic Sea region. My new county, Telemark, has a heavily industrialised coastline with one of the busiest stretches of coastal waters much used by ships transporting dangerous cargos.

I would like to wish the 12th BSSSC Conference good luck with its work to increase the subregional cooperation. We have good experience in the Barents region with that type of cooperation between counties in Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Now we also see such cooperation emerging between German and Polish counties on the rim of the Baltic Sea. With a more complicated and global world, we truly need cooperation also on a subregional level.



Participants of the meeting in front of the Trakai Castle (built in the 14th century by the Lithuanian Duke Kestutis).

III MEETING OF CBSS CIVIL PROTECTION DIRECTORS GENERAL 15–17 SEPTEMBER 2004 IN VILNIUS, LITHUANIA

New Security Threats Highlighted

The Fire and Rescue Department and the Civil Protection Department under the Ministry of the Interior of Lithuania brought together Directors General for Civil Protection and representatives from the European Commission. The first such meeting took place in 2002 in Tallinn, the second in 2003 in St. Petersburg.

Presentations outlined: Development of the Lithuanian State Fire and Rescue Service in 1999–2004; The Civil Protection Mechanism in the EU; Lessons Learned from the NOSE 2004 Oil Spills Exercise in Klaipeda, June 8–10, 2004; Review of the CBSS Activities in the Field of Civil Protection, and Overview of the EU-ROBALTIC Civil Protection Programme Activities. Briefings also provided a starting point for discussion: Civil Protection in the 3rd Millennium – What is it?; A close Neighbour is Much Better Than a Distant Relative; New Safety Projects – Roles of Rescue Services within them; and Perspectives of Cooperation Develop-

ment among the Baltic Sea States in the field of Natural and Industrial Safety.

Participants highlighted the difficulty in being prepared for the so-called “new threats”, the security of infrastructure including airports, harbours, data communications and drinking water, the need for cross-sectoral cooperation and the safety and working environment for rescue personnel. Special emphasis was placed on the need for regular and joint exercises. A successful example in this context was the NOSE 2004 Oil Spills Exercise on 8–10 June 2004 in Klaipeda, Lithuania. A video

presentation of this exercise was given.

Besides the expert discussions, the well-organised meeting served as a confidence-building and networking event. Participants agreed to continue holding annual meetings at the level of Director General. Finland will host the IV Meeting of CBSS Civil Protection Directors General in 2005.

Presentations are available at the CBSS website: www.cbss.st/documents/cbsspresidencies/13polish/directorsgeneral/

The Secretariat for the Nordic Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing

The Secretariat for the Nordic Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing started its activities on 1 September and is located at the CBSS Secretariat in Stockholm. Dr. **Lars Blad** from Sweden heads the Secretariat and Dr. **Jurate Sabaliene** from Lithuania serves as Senior Advisor.

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STAFF ROTATION AT THE CBSS SECRETARIAT

The end of the summer brought some staff changes at the CBSS Secretariat.

Senior Advisor/Head of Administration **Rasa Kairiene** from Lithuania has completed her three-year contract at the Secretariat and is back in Vilnius serving as Adviser in the Foreign Policy Division of the Office of the Prime Minister. Senior Advisor **Gry Tina Tinde** from Norway headed for Geneva in October to take up a new duty as Special Advisor on Gender Equality to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.



Senior Advisor **Philipp Schwartz** from Germany joined the Secretariat in September. He was previously Head of the Co-operation Office of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for the Eastern Baltic Sea Region in Tallinn, Estonia. He serves the Working Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety and his portfolio also includes civil security, the Northern Dimension and cross-border cooperation.

Senior Advisor **Bjarke W. Bøtcher** from Denmark joined the Secretariat in October. Most recently, he was Project Manager at the Trade Unions' International Centre for Education in Denmark. He also served two and a half years as Advisor to the CBSS



Bjarke W. Bøtcher

Commissioner on Democratic Development in Copenhagen. Mr. Bøtcher is secretary to the Working Group on Democratic Institutions. His responsibilities also include civil society, BALT-INFO and the information strategy of the CBSS.



Gertrude Opira

Administrative Officer **Gertrude Opira** from Sweden joined the Secretariat in September. Before assuming this post, Ms. Opira was working as project manager for the international energy group Vattenfall. One of the pioneers who helped to establish the Secretariat in 1998, **Claire Nyström**, has returned to the Swedish Foreign Ministry. **Ligia Broström** from Sweden has replaced her as Administrative Assistant.

The new division of responsibilities resulting from the staff rotations can be viewed on <http://www.cbss.st/about/organisation/secretariat>

Throughout the year there is a constant flow of interns at the Secretariat:

Hanna Gross from Germany is serving as an intern until 20 November. She is currently studying for a Master's degree in intercultural communication and European Studies at the University of Applied Sciences in Fulda and is sponsored by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Piotr Kucharski from Poland will begin a three-month internship on 1 November. Mr. Kucharski is a PhD student at the Faculty of Law of the University of Silesia in Katowice.

Baltic Sea Calendar 2004

OCTOBER

21 – 23 Malmö, Sweden
12th Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) Annual Conference

21 Brussels, Belgium
Northern Dimension Action Plan – Senior Officials Meeting

22 Malmö, Sweden
CBSS Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) meeting

23 Malmö, Sweden
4th Coordination meeting of Heads of Baltic Sea Region organisations

29 – 30 Kaliningrad, Russia
Kaliningrad State University, Baltic Sea Region as a Pole of European Integration, International Conference

NOVEMBER

1 – 2 Tallinn/Tartu, Estonia
CBSS Working Group on Democratic Institutions (WGDI) meeting and seminar

11 Stockholm, Sweden
CBSS Secretariat Seminar, German policy in the Baltic Sea Region

11 – 12 Berlin, Germany
CBSS Working Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety (WGNRS), meeting

15 – 16 Warsaw, Poland
Working Group on Economic Cooperation (WGEC) meeting

17 – 19 Warsaw, Poland
4th Annual Council of the Baltic Sea States
CBSS Ombudsmen seminar

17 Copenhagen, Denmark
The Kaliningrad Enclave within the Baltic Sea Region and the Russian-EU Relations

22 – 23 Lund, Sweden
2nd Nordic Conference on Decision Support

22 – 23 Brussels, Belgium
Baltic Sea Region – Perspectives 2010, conference

24 Stockholm, Sweden
Transnational co-operation instruments of the EU in the Baltic Sea Region 2007–2013, seminar

30 Nov. – 1 Dec. Tallinn, Estonia
Baltic Sea Region Energy Co-operation (BASREC) Energy Conference

“Baltic Sea Choir in Concert”

At the end of September an interesting workshop was held in Stockholm under the title: *“Baltic Sea Choir – Still in Concert?”* – perhaps inspired by the famous “Sea Concert” held in Kozsalin, Poland in 1967, where Edward Krasinski conducted, literally, the waves of the Baltic Sea.

The incumbent Polish CBSS Presidency places emphasis on the involvement of the EU in Baltic Sea regional cooperation: “The CBSS should complement the EU-Russia dialogue by enriching it with regional activities”. Furthermore, the Polish Presidency refers to, among others, the Wider Europe – New Neighbourhood policy, Northern Dimension Action Plan, Kaliningrad District, Ukraine and Belarus. The Speaker of the Finnish Parliament Paavo Lipponen made a strong call at the Baltic Development Forum in Hamburg in September for governments to be more proactive in persuading the EU Commission to become more deeply involved in the Northern Dimension. The Prime Minister of Schleswig-Holstein, Ms. Heide Simonis, focused at the BDF meeting on a “coordinated strategy to be drawn up by the Baltic Sea States themselves, not Brussels”. And finally, Mr. Ilkka Kanerva, Vice Speaker of the Finnish Parliament at the STETE Conference in Gdansk in September, called for an EU Baltic Sea Strategy to be formulated under the Finnish EU Presidency in 2006.

I just wish to point out here that, as I see it, the CBSS is eminently placed to consider, and contribute, to the issues above, having 11 Governments – including Russia – and the EU Commission as full members, sitting at the same table.

Within the new EU, leading positions (including the President of the Commission, the Speaker of the Parliament, the “Foreign

Minister” of the Council – even the Desk Officer for the Northern Dimension in the Commission) are in the hands of two Mediterranean countries. For the South, the EU structures are of longer standing and are more advanced, the lobbying efforts more effective. The differences in the standard of living are, no doubt, quite substantive around the Mediterranean Sea. But so are they around the Baltic Sea. Ensuring political stability and economic growth is a common concern for the whole of Europe. Within the EU, this task should not be left only to the countries in the region. And it should not be seen as just an issue of competition between various parts of the Union.

There is a need for a vision for the Baltic Sea region. The EU Commission is contributing by providing new concepts, such as the Wider Europe, and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Initiative. But it remains to be seen whether those concepts really enhance, rather than dilute, the focus on Baltic Sea cooperation.

The Baltic Sea region has been described by many as the fastest growing economic area in Europe. Those more modest would talk about a dynamic growth region. Be this as it may, we have – in the words of the former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt – “a window of opportunity of some ten to fifteen years before the Balkans will take over as the world leader (in economic growth)”.

In September we celebrated in Gdansk the 15th Anniversary of *Ars Baltica*. This initiative, introduced in 1989 by one of the early visionaries of the Baltic Sea cooperation, Björn Engholm, is still going strong – if not stronger than ever, with the vigour of a 15-year old teenager. Many new threads of multilateral cultural cooperation and exchange have been woven around and across the Baltic Sea during these years. Reaching out to people,



Hannu Halinen, Director of the CBSS Secretariat

by effectively informing and engaging them, is the basic prerequisite for interactive cultural exchange. The new *Ars Baltica* Portal, launched in Gdansk, together with the Baltic Sea Portal hosted by the CBSS, are the most useful tools in making this information available. These Portals could contribute to building a platform for a comprehensive Baltic Sea Cultural Programme and Plan of Action.

The Baltic Sea Portal is just one of the practical results of a Coordination Meeting of the Heads of Regional Organisations of the Baltic Sea area in Lillehammer two years ago. Last year this meeting was held in Klaipeda. Now in October we shall meet in Malmö, to consider how best to further increase our impact and to provide, individually and together, more added value to the region.

But let me return to the initial question: is the Baltic Sea Choir still in Concert? The conclusion of the workshop was: “Yes, but the music more closely resembles Arnold Schönberg’s (pieces with high drama and novel expressive means) than Piotr Tchaikovsky’s (sensitive symphonies).”



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