

BALTINFO INTERVIEW WITH MR PER UNCKEL, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

“NCM and CBSS have a joint responsibility to contribute towards making Northern Europe a region of prosperity and growth”

Baltinfo: *In recent years, the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) has significantly increased its cooperation with, and its activities in, the Baltic States and the North Western part of Russia. Compared to 15 years ago, the NCM now covers a much larger area. What is the underlying rationale for this expansion into the Baltic Sea Region?*

Mr Unckel: It is correct that the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) has increased its interest not only for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia, but also for Poland and Germany in recent years.

This is a natural development since the world around us is changing. And doing so very fast. Economic and political internationalisation has accelerated in recent years, not least by virtue of the rapid development of what is known as the knowledge-based economy.

In the beginning of the 90s our engagement, particularly with the Baltic Countries, was driven by a wish to contribute to these countries' transition from being part of the Soviet Union to becoming independent states with the potential to become partners in the overall development of our region. Now, these relationships have developed into constructive partnerships, not least as a part of our efforts within the EU.

Over the years the Nordic countries also have entertained relations with Russia. Finland and Norway have important borders with North West Russia. The motives for our cooperation with Russia have evolved over time. Today there is a wish for wider-ranging cooperation focusing on



Mr. Per Unckel, Secretary General of the NCM.

Photo: Magnus Fröderberg

democratic societal development, open and pluralistic relations across borders and a regulated market economy.

The aim is to foster developments in

Russia capable of laying the foundations for stronger neighbourly relations result-

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ing in security and development for all of Northern Europe.

Not least during the dynamic Polish chairmanship of CBSS, bilateral relations between Poland and the Nordic Council of Ministers have deepened in a very promising way. Poland, recognizing these countries' manifold interests and aspirations in Europe, can also play a crucial role in the development of the Baltic Sea region.

So, overall, there is a clear Nordic interest in being directly engaged in promoting the entire region to which we all belong. This is true even if the original rationale for the Nordic Council of Ministers to be engaged in and with our neighbours may have changed over the years. And quite properly will continue to change in the coming years.

Baltinfo: *Nordic cooperation does – geographically as well as with regard to content – overlap with Baltic Sea cooperation. Do you see any areas in which Nordic and Baltic Sea cooperation interfere with one another, or areas where co-ordination between both organisations could be improved?*

Mr Unckel: First, we see ourselves as a part of the Baltic Sea cooperation. We are also convinced that the tradition of the Nordic cooperation – pragmatic, direct and reasonably unbureaucratic – can contribute by offering good examples in a variety of fields.

It is unavoidable that there is, and continues to be, a certain overlap between the work done by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the CBSS in certain fields where both organisations are active. However, we should minimize this overlap and instead join forces in areas where we have a shared interest.

Both organizations have their legitimate role to play. However, in the programme of the present Danish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers it is a clear ambition to look into whether the relationships between the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Barents Council and the Arctic Council are appropriate, and whether the interaction between the organizations can be improved.

Especially over the last year, CBSS and

the NCM have developed an effective day-to-day relationship. We have regular meetings. In fact I might mention that I participated in the CBSS CSO meeting in Kaliningrad just a few weeks ago. And that was based on our two organisations' sincere interest in Kaliningrad. The next step could be using the relationship in order to

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define jointly the strength of each organisation, thus creating a basis for further steps to be taken.

Such steps should also take into account the good experiences that CBSS and the Nordic Council of Ministers have had in sharing responsibility in the Northern e-Dimension and in the broad cross-border project (BEN) now under development (see below).

Baltinfo: *At the Baltic Development Forum in Hamburg (13 September 2004) you asserted that the combination of similarities and differences within the Baltic Sea region can prove to be highly dynamic. How would you substantiate this statement?*

Mr Unckel: I believe truly that the Baltic Sea region is one of – if not *the* – most interesting region in Europe. On and off over the centuries, the countries around the Baltic Sea have cooperated with one another. We know each other. We might agree or disagree, but we still respect each other with similarities and differences. Many of the countries share a common cultural identity.

The similarities could be used for common efforts, but efforts where we also make use of the differences. Differences

could form the basis for a natural division of labour in common efforts, but could also be vital as part of a learning process that is not only a one-way street. In this way we can develop Northern Europe as a true region of growth and prosperity.

However, the region will not be a leading region in Europe without considerable effort. There is a need both to exercise political and business leadership and to make use of the possibilities offered to us all. We have to join forces if we want to be in the top rank of strong regions in Europe.

To this end, as an example, the Nordic Council of Ministers has set up a new structure for research cooperation, the Nordic Research Board. The aim is to join forces in order to be more competitive in the European arena. It is primarily a Nordic Structure, but is also open to others. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have, for example, an observer on the Board.

Baltinfo: *Recently, the NCM and the CBSS have drawn up a joint project – the “Baltic Euroregional Network” project (BEN). Could you describe the main aspects of this project and the expected outcome with regard to Baltic Sea cooperation?*

Mr Unckel: Baltic Euroregional Network (BEN) is one of the most exciting adventures that the Nordic Council of Ministers – and to our great satisfaction also the CBSS – has embarked on, with a total of 35 partners in the Baltic Sea Region.

The main objective of the project is to increase the quality of spatial planning and development in the Baltic Sea Region by establishing existing Euroregions as competent partners to national and international authorities in the area.

The project application has been submitted to the INTERREG III B program of the EU by the NCM Office in Lithuania, the lead partner, and we hope that the project can start as early as this summer.

For three years, the NCM ran a similar, but smaller, project along the Estonia–Lithuania–Latvia–Russia–Belarus border with our own financial resources and with connections to Nordic cross-border cooperation areas. This was a success. The BEN project builds on this earlier project

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Baltic Sea business – as usual?

BALTINFO INTERVIEW WITH MR. PETER EGARDT, CHAIRMAN OF THE BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL

THE BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL (BAC) is an autonomous body within the framework of the CBSS. It came into being in 1997 with the aim of giving advice to the CBSS governing bodies regarding economic and business matters. Baltinfo interviewed Mr. Peter Egardt from the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce who has taken over the chairmanship of the BAC from the Finnish representative Mr Hamro-Drotz.

Mr. Egardt, you have been the Swedish representative since the foundation of the BAC and are currently serving your second chairmanship. Have you seen any developments in the role of the BAC in the Baltic Sea Region?

Just looking back over the last 10 years, free enterprise - and the strong economic development it generates - is a remarkable development. A key to this has been foreign investment. Foreign Direct Investment brings capital and know-how into a country, but it is at least equally important that countries, in order to attract foreign investors, should scrutinize legislation and bureaucracy. The changes thus induced actually benefit the small domestic investors even more than foreign investors.

In the mid 1990s, this was the message the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce helped large international firms to convey to the politicians in the countries in transition. At a time when EU accession still was more a hope than a promise, this was a welcome pressure to carry out reforms and rectify mistakes, says Peter Egardt who, with a background as State Secretary to Carl Bildt during his government in the early 1990s, is well aware of the importance of both political and economic development.

Although conditions for investment have improved enormously over the last decade the issue is still on the agenda. The CBSS Working Group for Economic Cooperation (WGEC), where Mr. Hans Jeppson, vice-president of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce, speaks on behalf



Mr. Peter Egardt, Chairman of the BAC.

of the BAC, is trying to present means for the countries of the region to become even more attractive to investors. The provisional name is “Investment Area Baltic Sea Region” and the aim is to encourage the national governments to review once again those factors that have a negative effect on investments, both foreign and domestic.

The Baltic Sea region still presents some disparities in its economic environment. How can economic growth be promoted throughout the entire region, and what is BAC doing towards this end?

There are still considerable economic differences between the different parts of the Baltic Sea Region – the old EU/EEA Members, the new EU Members and Russia – and we all stand to gain from increased economic growth in the other countries. The GDP growth in the Baltic countries and Poland has been quite impressive for a number of years. The challenge is now for these countries to remain in the high growth league. In Russia, economic growth has been helped by high prices on energy and raw material. However, in a longer perspective, Russia has great potential for other export products, but that requires further improvements in the

“The GDP growth in the Baltic countries and Poland has been quite impressive for a number of years. The challenge is now for these countries to remain in the high growth league”

business climate in Russia. It is quite clear that substantial reforms are needed in most sectors to make the Russian economy vital in a longer perspective. However, the greatest headache in the Baltic Sea Region is countries like Germany and the Scandinavian countries. All the Baltic Sea Region would certainly benefit if economic development was to surge forward in Germany. There are, however, still a number of political “taboos” that prevent politicians from making growth-enhancing changes.

In the BAC, therefore, we feel that the answers lie in general political development. The Lisbon Agenda is in reality also a recipe for economic growth in the Baltic Sea Region.

But there are also other issues more closely connected with the Baltic Sea Cooperation. One such issue concerns the conditions at border crossings between the EU and Russia. Another issue relates to all the minor, but still costly and cumbersome, obstacles encountered by people and small companies when they attempt to live or operate on both sides of a border between two countries in the Baltic Sea Region. The EU accession has done away with a lot of obstacles, but the EU rules do not cover all aspects and there are unfortunately still unnecessary barriers. So BAC, in its contacts with the various bodies in the CBSS, has plenty of issues where it is obliged to argue for a more business friendly environment in order to support economic growth.

More information on the BAC can be found on www.chamber.se/bac

The CBSS EuroFaculty Project in Kaliningrad brings its results

BY OLGA BELOVA & VERA RUSINOVA, KALININGRAD STATE UNIVERSITY

THIS YEAR A TEAM from Kaliningrad, for the first time in history of the Kaliningrad State University, took part in the Phillip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition. The Jessup is the most authoritative public international law advocacy competition in which teams of law students present oral and written pleadings before a simulated International Court of Justice. This competition is conducted entirely in English. Distinguished lawyers, diplomats, academics and members of the judiciary from Russia and abroad have volunteered to judge the Russian teams' written submissions and oral arguments.

At first the competition is held at national level, after which the winning teams from different countries meet in Washington where a final stage takes place. Students from twenty-two Russian universities were competing in the 2005 Russian Jessup Competition.

The team from Kaliningrad State University consisted of three students – Elena Osipova, Ilya Piletskiy and Olga Belova – and was trained by an assistant of the Chair for International and European Law of the Law Faculty Ms. Vera Rusinova.

Participation in this competition was an honour and, at the same time, a considerable responsibility for us all. We knew that a team without any experience in the Jessup usually has no chances of coming first, but we decided to do our best. In the first stage of the competition the team had to compose two memorials. Every day from 8.00 a.m. until 10.30 p.m., even on holidays and weekends, we were working hard. Huge amounts of international treaties, monographs, scientific articles and – what is very unusual for the Russian law system – relevant case-law, had to be studied. It required everybody to forget about their personal lives

and fully dedicate themselves to this preparation process.

AFTER THE WRITTEN memorial had been submitted, the preparation for oral presentation began. We used every day to practice rhetoric and we endlessly rehearsed and corrected our speeches. But the real Jessup Competition was beyond all our expectations: we had not even imagined that judges are used to interrupting a participant and asking thousands of questions. As a result, we lost in our first two rounds during the first day of the competition. Relying on the experience we had already got we transformed our strategy and rewrote the speeches during the night. As a result the team won the next two games.

Finally, the team from Saint-Petersburg State University came first and our team was placed 11th. However, we obtained

EuroFaculty at the Law Faculty of Kaliningrad State University:

BY VERA RUSINOVA

THE CBSS PROJECT "EUROFACULTY" was started in Kaliningrad about four years ago. The EuroFaculty project in Kaliningrad has focused on Economics and Law – and does not constitute an independent institutional unit, but is integrated with the two relevant faculties of Kaliningrad State University. The law component of the project is carried out within the framework of a consortium put together by the universities of Göttingen, Bergen, Uppsala and Kaliningrad.

Modernisation of the curriculum by bringing it in line with international standards, improved teaching methods, the training of local academic staff and the development of the relevant "university infrastructure" were declared to be the main

policy goals of the project. But how does the project work, is it effective or not? To answer these questions one needs to analyse the outcomes of the projects; something that may be not so easy, taking into account the relatively short period of time for which this project has been going. In general, the main achievements of the project can be summarised as follows.

First of all, the curriculum of the Law Faculty has undergone significant changes. The ratio between the hours in auditorium and the hours for independent study has been adjusted to 50% and the auditorium students' load has been reduced to 18-23 hours per day. Practical training has become predominant in auditorium teaching. The number of non-professional subjects has been considerably reduced and a large number of optional courses have been

introduced. The teaching of International Law has been strengthened by introducing several new subjects, such as Human Rights Law, Law of the European Union, Maritime Law, Introduction to the Law of the WTO and International Criminal Law.

Changes in the curriculum necessitated updating of the teaching methods. Nowadays, instead of dictating, the majority of lecturers in the Faculty make use of modern equipment such as overhead and video projectors, computers; they distribute hand-outs and make material available via the Internet. Additionally, working in small groups, problem-based learning, 'moot courts' games and other modern teaching methods, have been successfully used by lecturers.

Special emphasis is placed on the support of the law library. A substantial part of



The Kaliningrad team who took part in the Moot Court competition.

very high scores for both the written memorial (90-94 out of 100 points) and the oral presentation during the second day. Everyone who has ever participated in such a competition would assure you that this is really a great result for a team making their debut. One should also take into consideration that there are more than two hundred Law Faculties in Russia, but only twenty-two of them ventured to participate, and our team was placed in the middle of the final ratings.

A decision to participate in this competition next year has been already been made at the Faculty. Moreover, so as to

strengthen efforts and to obtain even better results, a new preparation course named "Practical course on International Law" will be worked out and introduced into the curriculum of the Faculty.

READING THIS ARTICLE you would probably wonder what the link is between this story and the CBSS Project "EuroFaculty" There are some crucial points which make the existence of such a link obvious. First of all, the whole undertaking would not be possible without the good foreign language skills of the members of the team, and it is one of the achievements of the EF-K Project that students of the Law Faculty are good in languages.

Secondly, an interest in International Law among the students, and a will to compete despite of all obstacles, is partly a result of experience obtained during their study abroad (in Sweden and Germany). Also, in Kaliningrad, students have attended many courses held by foreign professors. Students' mobility and the invitation of guest professors are two important aspects of the EF-K activities.

Thirdly, a crucial role in training the team was played by the coach Vera Rusinova. Much of her knowledge of International Law was gained in the course of an LL.M. program in Germany supported by EF-K. Additionally, our research was more complex and fundamental because we had used much foreign language material and this is due to the fact that, within the framework of the EF-K, the Law Faculty purchases a substantial amount of literature in foreign languages, especially on International Law.

NCM AND CBSS HAVE A JOINT RESPONSIBILITY...
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and our experience in that connection. I hope that, with EU/ Interreg support, the new project now could be 7-8 times larger, thus making our common activities in the border areas more powerful.

For the Nordic Council of Ministers, this activity is also a way of putting our long experience of Nordic cooperation in border regions to use under new circumstances.

We give this activity our highest priority and hope that it will be seen as a trademark of regional cooperation in Europe.

The BEN project is, however, also of interest as a kind of pilot project for cooperation between CBSS and the Nordic Council of Ministers. I hope that we, through BEN, will gain experience that could carry our cooperation further. Finally, one might add that this project is between partners and organisations from the central, local and regional levels in both non-member and member countries of the EU, some new members and some old ones. This is a picture of exceptional regional cooperation in Europe.

Baltinfo: *Lastly, on the basis of the increased contacts between NCM and the CBSS, how do you see the future cooperation between the organisations?*

Mr Unckel: The two organisations have a joint responsibility to contribute towards making Northern Europe a region of prosperity and growth. Both organisations have advantages that the other organisation sometimes lacks. Together, however, they cover almost all areas and competences of interest.

Realizing that these are the facts is also to realize our common responsibility. A definitive goal, embracing both cooperation and an appropriate division of labour, should be to ensure a pragmatic relationship between the two organisations, a relationship in which we together make use of our respective advantages.

I foresee an increased cooperation in the future. This will be to the benefit of both organisations and of the region around the Baltic Sea as a whole.

An Overview

the procurement of legal literature is funded by the EuroFaculty. As a result the library stock has been noticeably increased and a new library department of literature in foreign languages has been established at the faculty.

The EuroFaculty also supports the training of new academic staff. Six post-graduates, after having studied abroad and obtained the degree of magister juris, teach in the Law Faculty. Students' mobility is also considered to be one of the important aspects of the project. Within the framework of EuroFaculty, guest professors come to the faculty to teach special courses either in English or in German. An opportunity to attend courses taught by foreign professors is afforded by the biennial Summer School which takes place in Kaliningrad.

One Voice for the Baltic Sea Region in the EU?

BY DR. ESKO ANTOLA

THE THIRD WAVE of the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 made the Baltic Sea region an internal sea of the Union. It is a “one-third region” of the EU. Eight EU member states from the region make up one third of the population of the EU’s 25 member states. Their share of the total GNP in the Union is just over 30 per cent. Representatives elected from these countries occupy 31 per cent of the seats in the European Parliament and together they have just about 30 per cent of the votes in the Council.

Being a “one-third region” means that the weight of the region is quite considerable in the Union. The Mediterranean region, for instance, consists of seven member states among which are two very small countries (Cyprus and Malta) as well as three large member states (Spain, Italy and France). The weight of the Mediterranean region is greater than that of the Baltic Sea Region in economic and population terms. Of course one may question the place and role of France in the Mediterranean group.

But the Mediterranean voice seems to be much louder than the Baltic voice. An obvious explanation is of course that the expansion of the European Union to the Baltic region has been much slower. Half “the Baltic 8” are at a learning stage of their membership and are still in a process of transition. Portugal and Spain, as the previous new member states from the Mediterranean region before the accession of Malta and Cyprus, joined the Union almost 20 years ago. Their socialisation to the Union is finalised and they have actually become very effective and successful Member States.

Being a “one-third region” as such is not, however, enough to secure influence and voice in the EU. Even if member states from the Baltic Sea region were united in their approach, being a “one-third region” would not ensure direct influence in the Union. The combined voting power of the Baltic Sea region remains far from qualified majority status and does not provide sufficient



Dr. Esko Antola

power to constitute a blocking minority in the Council. A one-third share provides considerable weight but is not enough to make a contribution as such. Therefore a stronger Baltic voice in the Union calls both for a careful co-ordination of policies and an active search for like-minded partners from outside the region.

As a region in the European Union the Baltic Sea constituency is divided by a great number of cleavages. With regard to economy, the region hosts countries with a high economic growth and with a high level of economic achievement. Some of the poorest member states, as well as countries among the top nations in terms of economic prosperity, are to be found in the region. The priorities of the Baltic Sea countries are thus contradictory. For the new member states the priority is catching up, while for Germany and the Scandinavian countries the challenge is to maintain the high level of economic achievement that they enjoy. The gulf between the countries in these two categories – those seeking to catch up and those aiming to maintain their current prosperity – in this way does serve to divide the interests of the Baltic Sea nations.

The small state – large state dilemma is also present. The region contains predominantly small and medium size countries. This could be translated into a strength of the region. In adapting to the international environment where power-related instruments of influence tend to dominate, small states have learned to rely on diplomatic behaviour, co-operation and friendliness. Their diplomacy is often issue-specific and mission-oriented, crossing the ideological and regional boundaries.

Small states are able to seek creative solu-

tions and working habits. They often play an active role: they take the initiative in drafting action plans and proposals for co-operation. The Finnish initiative for the Northern Dimension is a good example of this pattern of behaviour in the Baltic Sea region.

But the smaller member states of the Union in the Baltic Sea region are divided in their strategy in some core issues. Finland belongs to a group of institutionalists, i.e. countries that place a strong emphasis on the strength and operational capability of common institutions. Sweden and Denmark pursue an intergovernmental line. While Finland values the European Commission as a “friend of the small”, Sweden and Denmark have traditionally perceived intergovernmental negotiations as the best instruments available to defend their national interests. The three Baltic member states of the Union seem to follow the Swedish-Danish model rather than adopting the Finnish approach.

The power and voice of the region in the European Union is largely based on the weight of Germany. Germany is the largest country in the Union in terms of population and economic power. It stands for more than one fifth of the GNP of the Union and has the highest number of seats in the European Parliament as well as having the highest number of votes in the Council. In addition, German participation is needed for the realisation of the 62 per cent of population criterion required for a blocking minority as defined in the Treaty of Nice.

The geographical orientation of the leading country, as well as the other large member state, Poland, is more towards central Europe than towards the Baltic region. For them the Baltic Sea region does not have the same priority that it has for the small and medium-sized member states. Germany’s attention is directed primarily towards Franco-German collaboration.

A Baltic Sea voice in the Union is difficult to articulate. A fundamental prerequisite is

that “the Baltic 8” have a common institutionalised forum or a common institution for that purpose. There is, however, no shortage of institutions in the region. On the contrary, the region hosts a great number of common institutions among which, however, none specialise in formulating a common voice in the EU.

The collapse of the Cold War system marked a mushrooming of new institutions. The traditional core bodies are the Nordic organisations that date back to the 1950’s. In the new framework of the early 1990’s the Nordic countries decided to preserve their original Nordic associations (Nordic Council, Nordic Council of Ministers) intact.

This contributed to a new wave of institutions. The Baltic Countries followed the same pattern and established their own Baltic Assembly between the Parliaments in 1991 as well as the Baltic Council of Ministers (1994). For the purpose of region-wide co-operation, the Council of Baltic Sea States was formed in 1992. Its geographical scope and membership pattern is wider in that it includes Norway, Iceland and Russia.

Through the membership of the European Commission the CBSS has a European Union dimension. But membership of the Commission ensures the presence of the European Union in the region, not the other way round. No doubt the value of the CBSS lies in the fact that it can serve as a platform where the EU, the eight Member States of the EU and two other Baltic Sea Countries (Norway and Russia) plus Iceland meet. The Commission may, within this framework, get acquainted with the Baltic views but the body does not perform the function of influencing the EU decisions.

Following the accession of four Baltic Sea Countries to the EU, the question should be addressed of whether all of these institutions still serve their purpose, and whether one of these could specialise in focusing on the single voice, perhaps developing into a forum discussing a common Baltic Sea approach in EU matters. Two basic scenarios exist: either one of the existing bodies could be transformed into an instrument of formulating common EU policy, or a new institution for EU policy coordination could be established.

A subsequent solution in the Baltic Sea tradition would be the establishment of a

completely new institution. But there is hardly room for a new institution. Nordic institutions already have a rather permanent habit of discussing EU matters. The membership of Norway and Iceland in the European Economic Space makes the Nordic institutions fitted for this role as well. Even if the Nordic Member States in the EU employ different strategies, common Nordic issues do exist.

The same is true for the three Baltic countries. Their common history and challenges are unifying factors and speak for common interests. The crude reality is that the Baltic co-operation is not as effective

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and evident as is the Nordic co-operation. It may well be that the three Baltic countries are tempted to seek partners outside the region. In particular Estonia and Latvia look for relationships with countries with neo-liberal economic policies. In the security realm they constitute the heart of “New Europe”.

Poland and Germany are outside these sub-regional institutions. On the other hand their participation in the forming of common Baltic region views is of vital importance. Their participation needs to be ensured. Germany is primarily a Central European power. But for the rest of the Baltic Sea region, it is a key country in influencing the EU and advancing common interests there.

The establishment of a new institution does not seem an adequate solution. Therefore improving coordination between the existing institutions appears to be the best solution. Two additional coordination mechanisms could be added to the picture. Firstly, an institutionalised coordination system could be established between the permanent representations in Brussels. Coordi-

nation already takes place between the Baltic Sea countries but it should be made more institutionalised. Every permanent representation could have a civil servant responsible for coordination, and meetings between the coordinators should be made regular, once a month for instance.

The other permanent instrument for coordination could be established in the EU capitals between the embassies of the Eight. This would be parallel to the consultation mechanism in the political cooperation framework that already exists between the delegations. Coordination in the capitals should be institutionalised in the eight capitals in the Baltic Sea region but could be extended on ad hoc basis throughout the EU.

But the institutions alone are not enough. The common voice must also be targeted on issues that are truly of a common interest to the Baltic Sea Region. Traditional regional topics such as transportation, logistics, energy and environment are quite adequately treated but need a more pronounced EU dimension. New issues such as competitiveness or the promoting of economic clusters must be given greater priority on the common EU agenda.

An additional EU challenge is the emerging framework of the New Neighbourhood policy and Russia in particular. Both the New Neighbourhood policy and relations with Russia primarily emphasise the growing presence of the EU in the region. The European Union is not present only in its traditional civil role as an economic power but also as a high-profile security actor. The deepening of security and defence policy dimensions of the European Union, in particular after the ratification of the Constitution, calls for redefinition of the roles and the agenda of the existing institutions.

Security and defence dimensions cannot any more be isolated from the agenda of the Baltic, the internal sea of the Union. Existing regional institutions have deliberately excluded specifically Baltic interests but their surfacing to the agenda cannot any longer be avoided. As in all EU issues, the Baltic Sea region approach in these issues must be transformed to give it a more proactive contour.

Mr Esko Antola, Ph.D., is working as Jean Monnet professor at the University of Turku in Finland.

Common space

A concept of space features prominently in the present discussion on cooperation frameworks. Between the EU and Russia the focus at the next Summit in Moscow on 10 May 2005 is in Four Common Spaces (economic space; a space of freedom, security and justice; a space of external security; and a space of research and education, including culture).

A space, when defined in a geographical sense, leads to an interesting thought: what is "northern" in the concept of the EU Northern Dimension? Is it the Nordic countries? The Nordic Baltic 8? The Baltic Sea Area (including Northwest Russia, Polish coastal voivodships and German littoral Bundesländer)? Northern Europe? Russia up to the Urals? Or Vladivostok? The Arctic areas? USA and Canada? And how about Belarus? The easy answer would be a pragmatic approach: take the definition best corresponding to the context. That is, however, hardly sufficient, taking into account the more or less established southern (Mediterranean) region and the ongoing institutional and structural considerations of the eastern front of the EU. The enlarged EU is increasingly cognisant of its neighbours. For clear political and economic reasons the North has to find a way to respond to the challenge by the South and the East. What is our answer to the southern and eastern dimension, to the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea?

Before 2007 – coinciding with the new budget period of the EU – intensive talks need to be conducted between the EU and Russia on the role of the Northern Dimension as a framework tool for cooperation, including its relationship to the Common Spaces and the geographical area covered by it. Whatever the outcome of this dialogue may be, inevitably the Baltic Sea Region remains at the core. The CBSS is ready to continue to contribute to this work with our experience, for example in the fields of regional development, cross-border cooperation, civil security and nuclear safety, as well as civil society.



Hannu Halinen,
Director of
the CBSS
Secretariat

The Baltic Sea Region can also be taken as a model with regard to action aiming at fulfilling the Lisbon Strategy on making Europe the most competitive region in the world by 2010. The Baltic Sea Initiative 2010 – where the CBSS is one of the key stakeholders – is a new tool for considering objectives, strategies and actions for increasing competitiveness and innovation in our region towards 2010. BSI 2010 is focusing on a number of issues such as facilitating networks of clusters, creating an entrepreneurial environment, integrating research and development, marketing the region, and (where the CBSS is the lead agency) creating a Common Baltic Information Space (CIS). While structurally CIS is building upon the CBSS experience in developing and hosting the Baltic Sea Region Portal www.balticsea.net, in substance it sets out to improve information flows between the EU/EEA and Russia with a view to reducing misperceptions and making available accurate information on economic conditions and opportunities. A report on BSI 2010 is being made available to the CBSS Ministerial meeting in Szczecin in June 2005, as well as to the Baltic Development Forum Summit in Stockholm in October this year.

A space can also be seen as a state of mind. When our views are converging, we are creating a common space. In the Baltic Sea Region, both metaphorically and literally, such a common space is emerging, but it still needs to be consolidated.

Baltic Sea Calendar 2005

MAY

- 9–10 Sopot, Poland
Baltic 21 Senior Officials Group (SOG) meeting.
- 9–10 Oslo, Norway
CBSS Ministers of Children and Family Affairs meeting.
- 11–12 Gdynia, Poland
CBSS Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) meeting.
- 12–13 Gdynia, Poland
Baltic Sea NGO Forum.
- 19–20 Lund, Sweden
Meeting of researchers involved in "Baltic Sea Regional Study on Adolescent Sexuality".
- 24 Stavanger, Norway
Meeting of the four regional intergovernmental organizations of the Northern Dimension area (AC, BEAC, CBSS, NCM) with the European Commission.
- 25 Copenhagen, Denmark
NCM Expert meeting on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Innovation (with participation of the CBSS Working Group on Economic Cooperation).
- 25 Malmö, Sweden
Coordination meeting of the four main BSR subregional organizations (BSSSC, UBC, B7 Islands, CPMR-BSC) with the CBSS.
- 26–28 Naantali, Finland
General Assembly of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission & CPMR BSC Seminar on the Motorways of the Baltic Sea and Nature Conservation.
- 30–31 Szczecin, Poland
CBSS Working Group on Economic Cooperation (WGEC) meeting.

JUNE

- 3–5 Chojnice, Poland
Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) Executive Board meeting.
- 8–12 Helsinki, Finland
2nd CBSS Cultural Heritage Forum.
- 9 Szczecin, Poland
CBSS Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) meeting.
- 9–10 Szczecin, Poland
Ministerial Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.



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