



4 June 2015

Note of the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials to the Council on the Implementation of the CBSS Long-term Priorities

Introduction

The CBSS Members - Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden and the European Union – recall the core role of the Council of the Baltic Sea States as a forum for all multilateral intergovernmental cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region in areas agreed by its Members.

Following the decision of the Council at the 18th CBSS Ministerial Session in 2013 held in Pionersky, Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation, the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) evaluated and reviewed the CBSS long term priorities originally adopted by the Council's Riga Declaration on the Reform and endorsed by the 7th Baltic Sea States Summit in 2008.

The Council of the Baltic Sea States, under the Finnish CBSS Presidency in 2014, agreed on the importance of the implementation of the Vilnius Declaration – A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2020 and decided to adopt and mainstream in all activities of the organization the renewed CBSS long term priorities – *Regional Identity, Sustainable and Prosperous Region and Safe and Secure Region*.

Regional Identity implies supporting the emergence of a sense of belonging to the Baltic Sea Region and creating a notion of regional unity across borders.

Sustainable and Prosperous Baltic Sea Region implies supporting the emergence of a model region of sustainable societies able to manage and use resources efficiently and to tap into the economic, technological, ecological and social innovation potential of the region in order to ensure its prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion.

Safe and Secure Region implies cooperating to enhance societal Security and Safety in the Baltic Sea Region and to ensure that people of the Region are protected from and resilient to violence, accidents and emergencies through preparedness, and safeguarded against harm caused by criminal exploitation and human trafficking.

Coordination and coherence

The Estonian CBSS Presidency following its priorities – practicality, efficiency and cooperation, the CSO and the CBSS Secretariat took several steps to facilitate, coordinate and consolidate the implementation process of the CBSS long term priorities through a mixture of stakeholder round tables, projects and activities undertaken in each long-term priority field.

A Round Table “Baltic Sea Regional Identity - Is it only a CBSS long term priority?” was held at the CSO meeting in December 2014 in Stockholm; the implementation of the CBSS long term priority Sustainable and Prosperous Region was discussed at the CSO meeting in September 2014 in Tallinn; and a Round Table “CBSS long term priority – Safe and Secure Region” took place during the CSO meeting in February 2015 in Tallinn.

Coordination and cooperation between stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region have improved through the involvement of the CBSS working structures in the implementation and review of the Action Plan of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in its priority areas compatible with the CBSS long-term priorities and where mutual benefits with the CBSS were identified. The CBSS Secretariat has also actively participated in relevant events in this context such as the Annual Forum of the EUSBSR and national fora such as the All-Russian Strategic Planning Forum which discussed the EUSBSR and the Strategy for the Social and Economic Development of the North-West Federal District of the Russian Federation respectively.

A conference of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of 11 Baltic Sea Region countries was held in Tallinn, Estonia on 26 September 2014. VASAB ministers set new tasks and objectives to promote cooperation between the cities, improve the internal and external accessibility of Region, and enhance maritime spatial planning.

With a view to implementing the long-term CBSS priorities, the CSO considered ways of improving cooperation with other councils in the North - the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Northern Dimension partnerships as well as HELCOM.

The CSO supported activities of the CBSS Secretariat to maintain contacts with other macro-regional organizations e.g. Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII), Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Central European Initiative (CEI), South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) through the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Visegrad Group (V4) through the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) in order to exchange best practices.

Action

The CBSS Project Support Facility (PSF), launched in 2013, provided funding, in particular seed money, to 14 projects and awarded a total of more than 650 thousand euro out of 1 million euro to 97 Baltic Sea Region actors. Additional 4 project applications for the PSF funding were approved by the CSO at its meeting on 4 June 2015 in Tallinn. Thus, the PSF has contributed to the implementation of the CBSS long-term priorities.

The Regional Identity long-term priority

- has been launched to promote regional cross-border cooperation within the fields of tourism, youth cooperation, education and culture;
- inspired a Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue sharing knowledge and starting a discussion on common regional identity;
- triggered a CBSS Summer University project to advance regional cooperation in education adding to what has been achieved by the EuroFaculty project being in its final phase of implementation in Pskov;
- was supported by the Balticlab programme entering its 3rd phase of implementation and currently developing a Balticlab Innofesto - an Innovation Manifesto for the Baltic Sea region;
- benefited from the project "Common Map for Culture Tourism in the BSR" funded by the CBSS PSF and led by the Association NORDEN (Russia) to establish a sustainable platform for cooperation in the sphere of culture tourism and update information on cultural and historical heritage in the Region.

The Sustainable and Prosperous Region long-term priority greatly benefited from

- a continued implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Summit 2010 practical and concrete commitments to save the Baltic Sea through carefully chosen projects by the Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG) and from the Saint Petersburg Initiative established by the Baltic Sea Forum organized by the Russian CBSS Presidency in 2013 as a regional platform for practical public-private interaction for the benefit of environment of the Baltic Sea region;
- the establishment of the Climate Dialogue - the Baltic Sea Region Climate Change Platform facilitated by Baltic 21 involving also BSSSC, the European Environment Agency, the Nordic Council of Ministers, Union of the Baltic Cities, VASAB and other stakeholders;
- the establishment of the "Green Technology and Alternative Fuels Platform in Baltic Sea Shipping" new cooperation forum between the CBSS, Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), Baltic Development Forum (BDF) and Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistic (NDPTL);
- the activities of the joint working group of VASAB and HELCOM on maritime spatial planning and from the continuation of the Baltic Sea Maritime Dialogue with participation of CBSS, HELCOM, BSPC, BDF, BSF, VASAB and EUSBSR Policy Area Ship representatives;
- the recently prepared study on Evaluation of Low-Carbon Development policy implementation in the Baltic Sea Region, status assessment of sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region and from the guidelines for low-tech solutions and governance aspects for increased energy efficiency in buildings as an outcome of the EFFECT project;

- the CBSS establishing a closer relationship with the Baltic Sea Energy Cooperation (BASREC) and facilitating cooperation in areas of mutual interest such as sustainable production of bioenergy and CO2 emissions reduction.

Under *the Safe and Secure Region long-term priority*

- cooperation to protect children carried forward by the CBSS Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (EGCC) was strengthened by preparing the Tallinn Recommendations on Alternative Care and Family Support, Guidelines, a Wiki on transnational child protection and a Report on how to strengthen child-friendly justice in laws and practice in the Region;

- cooperation maintained by the CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (TFTHB) delivered a set of Guidelines to prevent exploitative employment and trafficking of migrant workers, as well as guidelines for municipalities on human trafficking. A research analysis of policy and project responses to human trafficking was also undertaken;

- at the CSO meeting with the Russian Presidency of the Baltic Sea Task Force on Organized crime it was welcomed that trafficking in human beings is one of the priorities for cooperation and that the CBSS TF-THB and the CBSS Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk will be in close contact with the BSTFOC on these issues;

- cooperation on civil security was boosted by the recently launched project FROM GAPS TO CAPS on risk management capabilities based on gaps identification in the BSR, by the project "BaltPrevResilience" aimed at preventing and reducing the consequences of everyday accidents and by the Baltic Leadership Programme in Civil Protection aimed at building a strong network of dynamic leaders in the Baltic Sea Region;

- along with the continued work on establishing a macro-regional system of environmental monitoring which will enable exchange of data between existing national monitoring systems the CBSS Expert Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety (EGNRS) will explore legal, administrative and technical conditions to establish a cooperation mechanism for nuclear and radiation forensics.

More detailed information on Strategic Actions taken to implement the CBSS long-term priorities is provided in the Annex to this document.

Way forward

In times of change the CBSS intends to continue to further develop its longstanding and close partnership and strengthen relations and cooperation with its network of engaged stakeholders to implement the CBSS long-term priorities in the Baltic Sea Region.

The CBSS will continue to pursue the implementation of strategic activities approved in the *Decision by the Council of the Baltic Sea States on a review of the CBSS long term priorities* and will disseminate information on these strategic activities in each long-term priority to Observer states and partner organizations and will invite all stakeholders in the BSR to participate. The Vilnius Declaration - A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2020 remains a significant guiding document in this respect.

The CBSS will continue the successful practice of Roundtables with partners such as relevant international organizations, foundations of CBSS Member States, private public partnerships and others with a view to optimize implementation of the CBSS long term priorities.

The CBSS expert groups and intergovernmental networks will continue participation in those priority areas of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region where the CBSS could provide expertise and where it would benefit all CBSS Member States. They shall also seek synergies with relevant strategies of CBSS Member States such as the Strategy for the Social and Economic Development of the North-West Federal District of the Russian Federation when appropriate for regional cooperation and the implementation of the CBSS long-term priorities.