

"Cooperation on sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region – climate change adaptation case study"

This document shows how different institutions and formats in the Baltic Sea Region cooperate in the field of sustainable development, especially with regard to the climate change adaptation. The aim of the document is to facilitate the discussion on building synergies between various actors in the region, which clearly contribute to the same goal. The document highlights already existing projects and proposes future actions. The document has been produced by the CBSS Secretariat and the Polish CBSS Presidency for the joint meeting, 28 October in Warsaw, of the Council of the Baltic Sea States Committee of Senior Officials, the CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Development, the Baltic Sea Region Climate Dialogue Platform, the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region National Coordinators, the EUSBSR Policy Area/Horizontal Action Coordinators, the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - HELCOM, the European Commission and other invited stakeholders.

Sustainable Development.

The Baltic Sea Region is traditionally being considered as one of the world's leading regions when it comes to climate, prosperity, social security and sustainability of economic development. Since 1996, the sustainability and cooperation in the Baltic Sea region has been facilitated by the Baltic 21 - a multi-stakeholder network initiated by the Prime Ministers of the Baltic Sea countries and the European Commission as a regional expression of the global Agenda 21 adopted by the United Nations Earth Summit in 1992. In 2011, the Foreign Ministers of the CBSS endorsed the CBSS Sustainable Development Strategy for 2010-2015. The Strategy defines 4 key strategic areas of cooperation, amongst other climate change adaptation and enabling more coordinated actions in the Baltic Sea Region. In 2007, the HELCOM renewed its Action Plan on the Baltic Sea, and in that same year the Council of the Baltic Sea States started its reform process to address long-term priorities of environment, economic development, energy, education and culture, as well as civil security and human dimension. In 2009, the European Union adopted a Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and in 2013 the sustainable development was included as a new horizontal action of the revised EUSBSR Action Plan.

The framework of current **global processes** forms the general bases for our future co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region. On 25th of September, the UN General Assembly adopted the new Sustainable Development Goals "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The 2030 Agenda is an extraordinary achievement for transformation to sustainable future. We all should start to think on how to translate these global goals into nation-scale implementing plans. Here is a unique opportunity for the BSR countries to take a lead in making SDGs truly transformative, empowering the regions and local communities to drive the process.

Sustainable development is also a macro-regional challenge - the UN General Assembly has stated that regional organisations and partnerships will play an important role in implementing and monitoring the 2030 Agenda. In order to support the global sustainability goals at regional level, the Council decided to develop a **new sustainable development agenda for the BSR post 2015**. This is one of the strategic actions of the CBSS, implemented under the priority "Sustainable and Prosperous Region". This is also the Polish CBSS Presidency priority. Vital for this development is to engage stakeholders across the region and across sectors in a dialogue on opportunities and challenges on implementation the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at macroregional level.

The CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Development started this process on 9th of April 2015, organizing a stakeholder seminar „Improving the Baltic Sea region's capacity towards Sustainable Development“. Now it is important to continue with this dialogue. The Union of the Baltic Cities new Sustainability Action Programme 2015-2020 "Stairway towards Sustainable Baltic Cities" and the

Nordic Council of Ministers strategy “A Good Life in a Sustainable Nordic Region: Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development” are another examples on how to contribute to the global sustainability goals.

Climate Change adaptation

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges faced by societies today. 2014 was the warmest year ever recorded in human history, and so far 2015 has been even warmer. It already impacts key sectors of the world economy, as well as international security

The BSR countries are all concerned by vulnerability to climate change with potential impacts on human security, the environment and competitiveness. In order to meet these challenges and ensure future resilience against those challenges, as well as quality of life for the people, we need to better adapt our societies to present and expected impact of climate change on the Baltic Sea Region. Presently, one of the biggest challenges is low awareness on climate change impacts in the region, especially at municipal level. The EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, as well as the CBSS new long term priority “Sustainable and Prosperous Region” emphasize the importance of cooperation, knowledge exchange and capacity building. Therefore coordinated actions between member states, regions, cities pan-Baltic players and other relevant stakeholders for policy mainstreaming must be further promoted.

The BSR countries elaborated a **macro-regional strategy to climate change adaptation** and established a **regional climate change cooperation**. In June 2014 the Council of the Baltic Sea States agreed in its Decision on a Review of the CBSS Long Term Priorities to initiate the **policy process for strengthening dialogue**, knowledge and information exchange across national and sectoral borders supporting the BSR countries to elaborate their national climate change adaptation strategies by establishing of the **BSR-wide Climate Change Adaptation Stakeholder Platform**. This initiative contributes also directly to the implementation of the EU Climate Change Adaptation Strategy that stresses the need for closer cooperation between the EU Member States.

The Climate Dialogue is supported by:

- ✓ (Flagship) projects
- ✓ sector analyses and policy recommendations
- ✓ training programmes (e.g. Baltic Leadership Programme)
- ✓ an information tool - the Baltic Sea Region section on EU Climate-ADAPT web-portal for sharing the case studies, information on vulnerability etc.
- ✓ stakeholder and awareness raising events, seminars and conferences.

1. What we have done:

- **Baltadapt** was approved by the Baltic Sea Region Programme in 2010 and implemented as EUSBSR flagship and Baltic 21 Lighthouse project. CBSS Baltic 21 was a fully-fledged partner in the project. The CBSS Baltic 21 arranged the **BSR Policy Forum on Climate Change Adaptation ‘Time to Baltadapt’**. The Policy Forum was arranged three times (April 2012, December 2012, May 2013).
- The EUSBSR Flagship Project 14.3. conducted the workshop on disaster risk reduction as a part of adaptation to climate change within 2nd Baltadapt Forum. This paved the way to develop an advanced framework for constructing compatibility between civil protection and climate change adaptation. These efforts were continued during 3rd Baltadapt Forum within the Thematic Session “Civil Protection and Climate Change – A Dialogue in Practice”. One of the major achievements of the project was producing guidelines for macro-regional risk assessment, tailored for the BSR and taking into account factors related to climate change.

- In September 2013 the Baltadapt project handed over the **BSR Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan** to the Member States.
- **BSR Climate Change Dialogue Platform (Platform)** is a perfect example of facilitating macro-regional knowledge exchange and policy dialogue on the issue of climate change adaptation in the BSR. In June 2015 the European Commission decided to include the BSR Climate Change Dialogue Platform as a new **Flagship** of the EUSBSR, implemented under the HA Climate. The Climate Dialogue convenes national representatives from all BSR countries, climate scientists, pan-Baltic organizations (BSSSC, Nordregio, UBC, VASAB, CPMR), NGOs, the European Commission and the European Environment Agency.
- Four Roundtables have been organized by the Platform (December 2013 in Stockholm, April 2014 in Warsaw, November 2014 in Tallinn, April 2015 in Tallinn).

The 3th Round Table agreed upon the potential for a knowledge and information sharing webpage for the region – **BSR Climate Inventory**. In May 2014 CBSS-Baltic 21 arranged a **Pan-Baltic roundtable on Climate Change Adaptation** in Stockholm. This meeting called a majority of pan-Baltic organizations, active in the field of climate change, to engage in discussion, knowledge exchange and capacity building.

- From 14 April - 15 May 2015, the Baltic 21 Unit implemented ‘**CBSS Climate Weeks**’, aimed at raising awareness, increasing capacity on climate change and promoting adaptation and mitigation actions in the Baltic Sea region. One of the key events of the CBSS Climate Weeks was the Baltic 21 session ‘Adapting the Baltic Sea Region to a changing Climate’ at the 2nd European Climate Change Adaptation Conference (ECCA), in Copenhagen from 14th May 2015.
- In September 2014, the EGSD initiated the **study “Assessing the status of SD in the Baltic Sea Region: a macro- regional perspective”**. The study is carried out by the Centre for Sustainable Development at Uppsala University and is one of the documents paving the way for discussions on elaboration of a new sustainable development agenda for the Baltic Sea Region post 2015, with regard to the global SDGs. The study is to be finalized by October 2015.
- The CBSS Baltic 21 became an official partner of the first **European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW)**, initiated by Germany, Austria and France. The ESDW took place from 30 May – 5 June 2015. The aim was to facilitate the sustainable development actions and raise the awareness across the Europe. In total **1280 events from the BSR** was registered as a part of the ESDW.
- On 9th of April, the CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Development-Baltic 21 organized a stakeholders **seminar „Improving the Baltic Sea region's capacity towards Sustainable Development“**. The event gathered the EGSD members, national SD coordinators, Pan-Baltic organizations, EUSBSR coordinators and experts working at the UN level. Discussions focused on possibilities for enhanced collaboration in the CBSS/Baltic 21 context, in light of the Post-2015 agenda and the future implementation of the SDGs.

2. What we are currently doing:

Developing a new Sustainable Development Agenda for the BSR post 2015 as well as Climate change adaptation are one of the priorities of the Polish CBSS Presidency.

- **The 5th round table of the BSR Climate Change Dialogue Platform** will take place on 29th October 2015 in Warsaw.
- **A COP 21 side event in Paris December 2015**, presenting work on climate related issues in the BSR for a wider audience.
- Contributing to the Macro-region Chapter of the EEA 2016 Climate Change Impact and Vulnerability Report

3. What we will do in 2016:

- **An International Conference on Climate Change Adaptation** focusing on adaptation actions at local level (Poland, spring 2016).
- A Session on “**Macro regional cooperation within clusters of countries in the issue of Climate Change Adaptation**” at the International Conference entitled Adaptation Futures 2016, which is the biennial conference of the Global Programme of Research on Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation (PROVIA), organized by the **CBSS and BENELUX** in cooperation with the European Commission, Union for Mediterranean, Carpathian Convention and Danube Strategy (Rotterdam, 9-13 of May 2016).
- Support the European Sustainable Development Week in May-June 2016.
- Develop a HA Climate flagship projects on capacity building and training on adaptation for local and regional authorities, and a macro-regional awareness raising campaign on climate change for the Baltic Sea region.
- Draft a new Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 for the BSR by the end of 2016.

4. What our partners are doing – macro regional context

CBSS Sister Councils of the North

- **The Arctic Council** Sustainable Development Working Group (SDGW) deals with adaptation to climate change with a strong commitment to reduce vulnerability and implement adaptation initiatives related to climate change in the Arctic, including practical community-based actions. Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic is one of the flagship projects addressing this question.
- An Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Co-operation was adopted by the **Barents Euro-Arctic Council** Environment Ministers in December 2013. Adaptation is one of the main policy areas highlighted in the document. Review of the results and proposals for the way forward was adopted in September 2015.
- The Climate and Air Pollution Group of the **Nordic Council of Ministers** contributes to goals of limiting serious climate change and preventing air pollution. Climate change adaptation could become a potential new field of cooperation.

CBSS Strategic partners

- From **HELCOM's** perspective, adaptation to climate change means adjustment and development of the necessary new measures to protect the Baltic Sea marine environment. In the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Declaration, the countries decided to make the assessment of regional climate change and its implications on the Baltic Sea ecosystem a regular, indicator-based activity. HELCOM first thematic assessment in 2013 showed among others that the Baltic Sea region is warming faster than the Earth as a whole. Annual average sea-surface water temperature has increased by up to 1°C per decade since 1990 and a further increase of 2 to 4°C is projected near the end of this century.
- The “Climate Smart Baltic Cities” is one of the priorities of the new **Union of the Baltic Cities** Sustainability Action Programme 2016 – 2021. The UBC IWATER-project is addressing the challenges related to urban flooding and developing new approaches to urban flood management to decrease discharge of hazardous substances into the Baltic Sea.

CBSS Intergovernmental networks:

There is an enormous potential for developing cooperation on climate change adaptation with CBSS intergovernmental network **BASREC** (Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation) and **VASAB** (Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea). As far as the latter is concerned, **HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group** could bring an added value to this area of cooperation.

European policies and strategies:

- Climate change adaptation is one of the cooperation areas in the first European macro-regional strategy – **EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region**. Since March 2013, the CBSS has been leading the EUSBSR **Horizontal Action Sustainable Development**. In the revised EUSBSR Action Plan, approved in June 2015, HA Sustainable Development was renamed to **Horizontal Action Climate**, focusing i.a. on climate adaptation.
- The Baltic Leadership Programme on Sustainable Development (2014 and 2015) focuses on building a transnational and cross sectoral network working on resource efficiency and climate change. The Leadership Programme involves, representatives from national and local authorities, NGO`s, pan-Baltic organisations across the region, including Russia, as well as the stakeholders from the 5 EUSBSR Flagships.
- EUSBSR HA Climate Flagship **ClimUrban** enhances the capacity of cities and municipalities to reduce the discharge of hazardous substances from urban areas to the Baltic Sea. The project is seen as a model case for truly integrated cross-sectoral cooperation within the BSR and the EUSBSR AP by linking activities of HA CLIMATE and PA Secure in a coherent manner.
- The EUSBSR **Policy Area Secure** (co-coordinated by the CBSS) incorporated the adaptation to climate change as one of its top priority in all actions aimed at strengthening regional capacity to respond to major emergencies and accidents on land. The EUSBSR Flagship Project 14.3 has developed scenarios and identified gaps for main hazards in the BSR. Two scenarios: on extreme weather/storm and on flooding are dealing with constructing an effective response to the major hazards caused or amplified by climate change. EUSBSR Flagship Project Risk Management Capability Based on Gaps Identification in the BSR “From Gaps to Caps” works on the facilitation of the national risk assessment capabilities and includes adaptation to climate change as one of key challenges for the whole crisis management cycle in the BSR.
- The Baltic Leadership Programme on Civil Protection (2014 and 2015 editions) focuses on strengthening capacity for transboundary cooperation in tackling with major emergencies by building a network of civil protection decision-makers. The 2014 edition focused i.a. on the disaster scenarios grounded on climate change effects. The 2015 edition highlighted the use of social media in strategic actions and policy implementation within the crisis management cycle, intercultural communication in the course of the crisis management planning phase and operational cooperation, as well as effective implementation of the results of regional cooperation projects and lessons learnt from rescue operations.
- EUSBSR PA Secure Flagship Project BaltPrevResilience contributes to raising awareness of the consequences of climate change at local level and to create better BSR resilience, in particular as regards cooperation at local level in coping with floods and extreme weather.
- In April 2013 the **European Commission** adopted **EU strategy on adaptation to climate change** which has been welcomed by the EU Member States. The EU also addresses knowledge gaps through research and the **European climate adaptation platform (Climate-ADAPT)**. This platform, launched in March 2012, provides useful resources to support adaptation policy and decision making.
- **The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership** focuses on water and wastewater treatment, solid waste management, energy efficiency and nuclear safety.

4. What could we do in the future? Recommendations:

- ✓ Make all relevant networks and stakeholders in the region aware of the importance of climate adaptation through constant communication and outreach in various fora.
- ✓ Audit the progress on implementation of the BSR Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan.
- ✓ Build on the work of the Round Tables to aid Member States to implement their commitments on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, adopted on 25th of September 2015.
- ✓ To strengthen the cooperation with the European Commission (DG Climate) and the EEA on the issues related to adaptation.

- ✓ To continue with the BSR Climate Adaptation Inventory - a knowledge and information sharing for the BSR in the European climate adaptation platform (Climate-ADAPT).
- ✓ Develop PA Secure flagship projects dealing with enhancing BSR resilience to major natural disasters related to climate change, both on local and macro-regional levels.
- ✓ Continue Baltic Leadership Programmes as a leverage to build professional community dealing on the macro-regional scale and multidimensional framework, dedicated to the safety and security of citizens in the Baltic Sea Region.
- ✓ Build on already existing synergies between HA Climate and PA Secure, while cooperating on disaster risk management and climate change impacts.
- ✓ Pursue a coordinated response to the complexity and magnitude of challenges to the climate and environment in the Arctic and adjacent areas. The Arctic Council, Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Nordic Council of Ministers, Northern Dimension and Council of the Baltic Sea States are the most important actors in that respect. Develop a cross-regional cooperation on sharing relevant data-bases, assessments, reports, etc., which could lead to developing common projects. The first step could be the creation of an expert contact network.
- ✓ Future actions related to climate change adaptation need to reflect new and potential migratory patterns and vulnerabilities.