



## **FOSTERC Conference**

### **"University Cooperation with Belarus in the Baltic Sea Region"**

in Minsk, on 21 – 22 March 2018

**"Sustainable and Prosperous Region  
Based on a Thriving Higher Education"**

*Dear distinguished guests,*

*Dear friends of the Baltic Sea Region University Network,*

Let me start by pointing out the importance of the subject matter discussed today. Innovation in teaching and learning is crucial for the overall welfare of the Baltic Sea Region.

Therefore, I would like to introduce you to the Council of the Baltic Sea States and how the intergovernmental organisation, which I represent, supports the development of higher education.

I would like to highlight that this is a special moment for the Council of the Baltic Sea States – the key intergovernmental forum of the Baltic Sea Region. This month the Council concluded its **25<sup>th</sup> anniversary** celebrations. Founded in 1992, the Council of the Baltic Sea States has played a vital role in easing the transition of the Baltic Sea Region to a new international landscape. The Council consists of 11 Member States (namely, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia & Sweden), as well as a representative of the European Union. The organisation today supports global perspectives on regional challenges with a focus on such themes as societal security, sustainability, innovation & education, as well as countering

human trafficking. All these areas of cooperation are structured according to the three long-term priorities themed – **Regional Identity, Sustainable and Prosperous Region**, as well as **Safe and Secure Region**. Let me elaborate in more details on two of these pillars, namely, Regional Identity and Sustainable and Prosperous Region. If I may, I will take the liberty to leave the latest developments of Safe and Secure Region aside for a more detailed discussion on one of our future gatherings.

### ***Regional Identity***

The CBSS long-term priority **Regional Identity** of the Baltic Sea Region aims to foster a sense of belongingness through intensified people-to-people contacts. In order to implement the mandate enshrined in this long-term priority, the CBSS Secretariat brings together young people and promising minds during informal education programmes. These events focus on building skills and knowledge for the future.

One of the most successful examples is the **CBSS Summer University** programme launched back in 2014. It was established as a summer seminar for Master and PhD students. The CBSS Summer University has proven its value as a platform for discussing issues that are considered of high relevance to the macro-region, including cross-border cooperation initiatives between EU Member States and Russia. Over the past years, the CBSS Summer University has brought together higher education institutions in a dialogue that may lead to closer collaboration practices. The greatest and most valued experience by the CBSS Summer University alumni has been the proper mix of different nationalities across the programmes. It has led to thought provoking debates and valuable exchanges of perspectives.

All in all, the concept and results of the CBSS Summer University programme are promising. The overall added value of the programme is its capacity to create new partnerships and include countries that might not be actively engaged in other higher education-related forums of the Baltic Sea Region. We see a growing interest among universities in the macro-region to host a Summer University, facilitate an exchange of lecturers and students, as well as co-create new concepts. Networking and mutual learning processes are also among prioritised activities. CBSS will take a leading role in supporting the needs expressed by the universities and further develop the CBSS Summer University as a sustainable format of graduate seminars.

### ***Sustainable and Prosperous Region***

The CBSS long-term priority “**Sustainable and Prosperous Region**” is founded on the commitment to ensure support for sustainable economic and social development, healthy societies and dynamic ecosystems. A large part of this work is done within the framework of the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals** and their Baltic Sea Region-specific implementation framework – the **CBSS Baltic 2030 Action Plan**. This on-going work is inseparable from the multi-lateral science and research initiatives.

In 2016, the **first Council of the Baltic Sea States Science Ministerial** took place in Kraków. This notable event allowed to take a look back at almost decade long reflections on the future of the transnational cooperation in higher education, research and innovation. This high-level gathering paved the way towards the **CBSS Science, Research and Innovation Agenda**. In its current phase, the Agenda is supported by the **Baltic Science Network** and **Baltic TRAM**. Both projects gather a momentum for new initiatives of significant importance to the higher education sector, research cooperation as well as science-business collaboration.

### ***CBSS Baltic Sea Science Day***

Since the **Baltic Sea Region University Network** is a member of the Baltic Science Network and a strategic partner of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the engagement of Belarusian higher education institutions in the Baltic Sea Region-wide cooperation initiatives is of great interest to the Council.

Moreover, such interest is mirrored in specific actions. I have a pleasure to point out that just two months ago the Belarusian State University took part in the second **Baltic Sea Science Day** held in Turku. The University’s presented suggestions for the future macro-regional cooperation was a valuable contribution to the overall debates revolving around the future of the higher education.

Consequently, once elaborating on the details of the suggested collaboration initiatives, I would suggest consulting Baltic TRAM and Baltic Science Network’s published studies. The repository of Baltic Science Network publications is a good source of information on various funding schemes tailored for researcher mobility. Moreover, I should highlight that the added value of Baltic Science Network studies and working papers stems from their offered rich insight in what

successes and limitations research institutions based in the Baltic Sea Region have encountered once implementing these funding schemes.

Since the Baltic Sea Science Day is an annual event of the CBSS Science, Research and Innovation Agenda, I invite you to join the next year's conference in Riga. The next Baltic Sea Science Day will be **hosted by the University of Latvia** on the occasion of its centenary celebrations. I hope you will find this event not only a source of new insights in the cooperation opportunities but also a valuable gathering to present your latest achievements.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you fruitful conversations.