



High-Level Meeting of the Representatives of the Ministries for Science of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

JOINT STATEMENT

Adopted by the High-level representatives of the Ministries for Science of the CBSS Member States
Riga, Latvia on February 22, 2019

Preamble

High-level representatives of the Ministries for Science of the CBSS Member States met on February 22, 2019 in Riga. The meeting took place under the auspices of the Latvian Presidency of the CBSS, at the University of Latvia. It was part of a joint event with the Baltic Science Network (BSN) and the CBSS Annual Baltic Sea Science Day.

As follow-up and starting point for discussion, the Chair's Conclusions endorsed by the first CBSS Ministers for Science Meeting in Kraków, 15-16 June 2016 have been considered, alongside the outcomes of the project Baltic Science Network, which was launched at that Meeting.

It is important to note that the CBSS Vision Group Report (Vision for the Baltic Sea Region beyond 2020, published in June 2018), defined Education and Research as a key area of regional cooperation and the CBSS is encouraged to act as facilitator in fostering closer and sustainable cooperation networks in the area of research.

The Ministers and high-level Representatives of the Ministries of Science of the Council of the Baltic Sea States agree:

- **To recognize the value** of the further implementation of the amended CBSS Science, Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), promoting the Baltic Sea Region as a leading science-research-innovation area both on a European and global level;
- **To Maintain and foster scientific excellence:** The Baltic Sea Region hosts several top-class research institutions, universities, research infrastructures and leading scientists. The countries of the Baltic Sea Region agree to maintain and foster this level of scientific excellence as a cornerstone for a more sustainable and prosperous region. They acknowledge the need for close collaboration; to

use the variety of skills and knowledge in science and the existing expertise and infrastructures to their full capacity.

- **Supporting mobility of researchers:** Transnational mobility of researchers is the foundation of cross-border cooperation, as it facilitates academic exchange and professional networks, expanding scientific excellence and making the best possible use of the existing and forthcoming research capacities.
- **Overcoming the participation and innovation gap:** Potential for scientific excellence exists across the Baltic Sea Region, and the CBSS Member States must utilize this potential further when it comes to acquiring funding for scientific research and participating in large-scale projects.
- **To enable the transfer of science-based knowledge to society and industry:** Facilitation of exchange of research between the private and public sectors will foster societal advancement, innovation and growth in the Baltic Sea Region.

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned strategic goals, joint challenges and mutual interests as well as outcomes from BSN and Baltic TRAM projects, the high-level representatives of the Ministries for Science and Research agree on the following steps to foster science cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region:

Research and innovation excellence

- To affirm their readiness to invest in the future of the region by endeavouring to allocate sufficient funds for science and research to match the grand societal challenges, in line with 3% Lisbon target and answer the UN Sustainable Development Goals moving forward to 2030.
- To affirm their commitment to continue to support cross-border cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region, opening opportunities for new ideas of macroregional research funding where appropriate. The benefits of macroregional Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI) co-operation for increasing scientific excellence and improved policies have been clearly demonstrated by BONUS, the ongoing joint Baltic Sea research and development programme under the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020. The world's largest framework for transnational research cooperation - Horizon 2020, other existing BSR-wide networks, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and national strategies of the CBSS Member States, provide a multitude of opportunities for cross-sectoral co-operation.
- To consider the demand for financial instruments facilitating regional scientific projects. The existing transnational instruments should be used more extensively to improve joint regional R&I efforts.

- To affirm their continued commitment to facilitate the transnational utilisation of research infrastructures, recognising the importance of interconnectedness of and flexible access mechanisms for research infrastructures in the Baltic Sea Region and in the whole of Europe.
- To consider the output of the Baltic Science Network, as produced by macroregional collaboration over the past three years, as a valuable contribution to enhanced research cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region.

Researcher Mobility

- Welcomes the Baltic Science Network's pilot mobility tool for researchers and scientists in the Baltic Sea Region, acknowledging the importance of personal and professional networks for a knowledge-based society in the European Research Area.
- Endeavour to create advantageous conditions at universities and research institutes for scientific mobility within the Baltic Sea Region to mitigate brain drain in the region and turn the mobility flows into brain circulation to allow the region to benefit from the skills and expertise of the excellent scientists located in the region.

Widening participation

- Acknowledged the need to implement innovative measures on national level to broaden participation and facilitate an inclusive research cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region.
- Recognised the demand for facilitating inclusive research cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, among all CBSS Member States, (as well as CBSS Observer States, where appropriate) as incorporating the whole of the Baltic Sea Region in research cooperation is an important mean to strengthen research within the macro-region in Europe as such.

Cooperation formats

- To facilitate information exchange, create synergies and avoid overlapping with existing cooperation platforms in BSR, dealing with the cooperation in the field of science and research, such as the Baltic University Programme, the Baltic Sea Region University Network and others.
- To endorse the activities so far of the Baltic Science Network as an important platform to enhance a macro-regional dimension of science and research, from which the higher education, research institutions and industries in the Baltic Sea Region may benefit;

- To recognise the annual Baltic Sea Science Day (initiated and launched by the CBSS in February 2017) as a visible contribution to the implementation of the CBSS SRIA, and as a platform, which paves the way to long-term cooperation among leading universities and research centres of BSR;
- To emphasize that science and research cooperation should be given a more prominent role in the revision of the Action Plan for the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea (EUSBSR), enhancing synergy with the Northern Dimension Policy framework and national strategies of CBSS Member states.
- More efforts are needed to better showcase and brand the uniqueness of the Baltic Sea Region and its research landscape to enable and increase its attractiveness as a cooperation partner vis-à-vis other regions.