



Vision for the Baltic Sea Region beyond 2020

**Report by the Council of
the Baltic Sea States
Vision Group**

VISION

Our vision for the Baltic Sea area is that of a region which is prosperous, safe and secure for all its people; open, transparent and inclusive for all nations and nationalities across the region and beyond; confident with its own strong regional identity and focused on sustainable economic growth and development, while being fully aware of its ecological vulnerabilities; committed to pursuing vibrant and enhanced exchanges between its people, especially in the field of education, better inclusion, prosperity and social cohesion; protective of human security and safe societies and capable of building trust between its nations.

In our vision sustainable development in and of the region ensures equal opportunities for people to live the life that they choose to live and secure the same opportunities for future generations.¹

In our vision the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is to play a key role in ensuring that the elements of our vision can be realised. We believe that the CBSS should continue to rest on two fundamental pillars – political dialogue and practical cooperation on the basis of tangible projects. The CBSS bears the potential of becoming a real driver, facilitator, initiator and coordinator of regional cooperation across the region. We see the role of the CBSS as a hub for stimulating political dialogue, the exchange of experiences and best practices as well as finding partners for an efficient implementation of concrete projects. In our vision it is the responsibility of all members of the CBSS to ensure that it is provided with sufficient resources for the attainment of these objectives.

By the 50th anniversary of the CBSS in 2042, the Baltic Sea region has become a role model of ecological, economic, social and security standards and policies, with a vibrant regional civil society.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) has fulfilled many of the objectives set in 1992 and has also provided an inspiration for the creation of new organisations, actors and initiatives in the region. This cooperation network and architecture has evolved into a myriad of different structures with variable membership. Simultaneously both the internal as well as external circumstances have changed fundamentally. For these reasons we conclude that the CBSS would need to undergo a fundamental reform. It needs to find a new and better defined role for itself among the other various cooperative projects and initiatives linking the countries around the

¹ The Vision Group would wish to express its gratitude for the recommendations from the CBSS Youth Vision Group which provided valuable input for this report. The recommendations from the Youth Vision Group meeting of 1-2 February 2018 are attached to this report.

Baltic Sea. It is our hope that the ideas contained in this report will be useful for such endeavours.

The three long term priorities of the CBSS - Regional Identity, Sustainable & Prosperous Region & Safe and Secure Region² - will remain of the highest relevance for regional cooperation, in particular within the context of the CBSS, also in the future.

The Baltic Sea region and many of its countries remain on top of the world according to various indexes but the situation in the region as a whole still remains far from ideal. Trust between some of the nations has been lost. Dividing lines still exist and have become even deeper over recent years, also taking a toll on people to people contacts. The environment of the Baltic Sea remains vulnerable and in need of strengthened and determined cooperation efforts, also taking into account the risks of climate change. The socio-economic conditions remain unequal. Security and safety remain pertinent issues of concern for people, in cities as well as in rural areas. Furthermore, the region has been experiencing a growing trend of remilitarisation for several years. Institutional cooperation lacks efficiency.

We are convinced that the CBSS has a key role to play and is still needed by and for the countries of the region. However, it will need to redefine its mission in order to fulfil this aspiration and to maximise its unique potential. This especially applies to those aspects where it is irreplaceable by any other format of regional cooperation, in particular, its comprehensive membership, encompassing EU members and non-members, including Russia, as well as the European Union. The CBSS should preserve its comparative advantage and potential uniqueness resulting from the possibility of initiating and supporting the development of regional cooperation in important, difficult and sensitive matters. In times of growing insecurity in which crisis prevention is of increasing importance, the dialogue within the Baltic Sea region should be continued at all levels.

Along these lines our seven key recommendations to the Member States and governments are:

- **Dialogue and Communication:** The CBSS has to confirm its role, - regardless of existing tensions and misunderstandings – as a stable forum for unhindered communication about common problems. Communication and dialogue are key for the success of regional cooperation in all fields. No other organisation than the CBSS has currently the mandate to initiate and organize a high-level political dialogue within the region, encompassing all issues of importance. Meanwhile, we strongly advise that properly prepared meetings of Foreign Ministers take place on an annual basis.

² Decision by the Council of the Baltic Sea States on a review of the CBSS long term priorities adopted on 20 June 2014.

- **Sustaining High-level Political Contacts:** Beside the regular meetings on the level of Foreign Ministers, meetings of Heads of State or Government should also be convened. These meetings would not take place within the context of the CBSS (even if the CBSS Secretariat could play a role in their preparation) but would rather be meetings of the *Baltic Sea Region*. This would then allow that these meetings could provide political guidance also to the other entities in the region and by doing so enhance cooperation, create synergies and avoid overlapping. Within this context, the roles and functions of the political and practical/project levels of the CBSS need to be clearly defined, enabling them to complement and profit from each other.
- **Role of Secretariat:** The role of the Permanent International Secretariat of the CBSS in Stockholm has to be strengthened and made more efficient. It has to ensure the continuity of the institutions' work, provide input to the Ministerial Meetings and implement decisions taken at Ministerial or Committee of Senior Officials level. The Secretariat has the potential to regularly prepare strategic expertise on the most important problems of the Baltic Sea region as a whole, from a common, shared perspective. The Secretariat's Terms of Reference should be reviewed. The Secretariat requires the resources, tools and capacity to better serve the Member States' governments and other stakeholders.
- **Funding:** As the member governments of the CBSS continue to highlight the need for the CBSS to engage in project design, fundraising and implementation, the members will need to make sure that they provide sufficient financial resources for that purpose.
- **Other regional actors:** The Council should assign the Secretariat the task to conduct an analysis and operational audit of existing regional cooperation structures in the region. On the basis of such an audit the CBSS should, owing to its unique membership profile including all countries of the region, assert its role in developing projects along the lines of the agreed priorities. This way, the CBSS should transform itself into an engine for creating synergies in regional cooperation around the Baltic Sea. It is an institution that has a good insight into and regularly monitors the activities of other regional organisations and bodies.
- **EU and Russian Strategies for the Baltic Sea region - synergies:** In areas of common concern the CBSS should work to ensure that the existing regional strategies – the Strategy of Socio-economic Development of the North-West Federal District of the Russian Federation and the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region - create synergies and results.
- **Belarus:** It would be important to continue pursuing closer engagement with Belarus on key issues of common interest, taking into account the fact that Belarus is geographically part of the Baltic Sea Region. Belarus and the CBSS Member States can jointly provide a substantial contribution to regional

cooperation in relevant fields such as environmental and civil protection as well as education. We therefore recommend stepping up practical cooperation which may lead in the future to a concrete consideration of Belarus becoming a member of the CBSS.

Council of the Baltic Sea States: Strengths and challenges

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as an intergovernmental organisation (regional council) was founded by ten countries³ and the European Commission in 1992 on the initiative by the then Foreign Ministers of Denmark and Germany, Uffe Elleman-Jensen and Hans-Dietrich Genscher. They stated that “*in light of political changes in Europe, the dream was to create a forum, which could serve as a driving force behind political and economic stabilisation and cooperation in the new Baltic Sea region*“. According to the *Copenhagen Declaration*, the founding document of the CBSS, the goal was “*to strengthen the cohesion among these countries, leading to greater political and economic stability, as well as a regional identity*”. The Council was a first attempt to build confidence and relations based on trust in regards to the new political realities in the region.

Over the years, the CBSS steadily developed its activities and structures. It widened its scope and became a comprehensive network covering almost every field of governmental activity. The Council has been transformed from a political symbol into an organisation that is able to address concrete practical issues and problems and to respond to regional demands and challenges. In retrospect, the CBSS has played a crucial role in facilitating the removal of the boundaries that kept the region apart until the early 1990s. Its comprehensive membership structure reflects this feature well.

The *Copenhagen Declaration* of 1992 defined the main areas of cooperation within the framework of the CBSS: assistance to new democratic institutions; economic and technological assistance and cooperation; humanitarian matters and health; protection of the environment and energy; cooperation in the field of culture, education, tourism and information; transport and communication. Twenty five years after the Council became operational, substantial progress has been achieved in all defined areas. Among the most relevant achievements of the CBSS are: people-to-people contacts, which have grown into diverse networks of knowledge, practices, joint ventures and communities; the Eurofaculty concept, which assisted in the transformation of educational systems in various institutions of higher education in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia; environmental protection has substantially improved; the fight against trafficking in human beings and cross-border crime has become more systematized and effective and there have been some steps to enhance the coordination and coherence of the various regional cooperation efforts. Also, the CBSS played a role in assisting Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland in their efforts to meet the EU accession criteria.

³ Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation and Sweden. Iceland joined in 1995.

At the same time the Baltic Sea region is facing new external and internal challenges, which have to be addressed by all members and stakeholders of the CBSS. EU and NATO enlargement of 2004 has fundamentally changed the geopolitical landscape of the region. Since 2014 new geopolitical realities have emerged affecting regional cooperation. Trust among several of the countries in the region has decreased. The confidence building and problem-solving capacities of international and regional institutions demand reinforced and new approaches. Increased military presence and activity in the region implies the risk of turning the region which should be based on peace and cooperation into one of new confrontations. The promotion and facilitation of people-to-people contacts has become more difficult in an era of increasing distrust among nations.

While civil society in the region remains strong, it is in a process of transformation as a result of which their contributions are not always translated into the language that policy makers are able to process and take account of. This limits making full use of the creative potential of individuals and civil society actors in the context of regional cooperation.

Climate change has a major environmental, economic and societal impact on the region. Complicated and overlapping regional cooperation structures further impede progress in the areas of activity at times.

In its current state, the CBSS is only partly able to address the challenges of the new economic, political and societal environment. It is confronted with a lack of clear commitment and interest by Member States, resources, political will and leadership, hampering its effectiveness and efficiency. Also the CBSS' overall visibility is perceived as low.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Council of the Baltic Sea States: structure and roles

Political level

In order to ensure a fruitful political dialogue within the CBSS we recommend:

- The annual meetings of the Foreign Ministers should be devoted to an unrestricted discussion of the most important topical regional issues. The scope of topics should not be limited.
- Line ministers should continue to meet in different formats when it is required by the rules of respective organizations/initiatives active in the Baltic Sea region. It would fall under the responsibility of the Foreign and/or Prime Ministers to ensure that such meetings are coordinated internally in the Member States. It should be considered how a combination of meetings of the same branch in the same venue and at the same time could be achieved.
- The CBSS should play an active role in facilitating strategic dialogue and policy development efforts in the sectors that are relevant for the accomplishment of general CBSS objectives.⁴

Secretariat and Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)

In order to ensure a more efficient performance of the CBSS we recommend:

- The Secretariat needs to be strengthened in order for its mode of operations to become more effective and efficient so that it could assume a stronger role with regard to coordination, input and continuity of activities. The terms of reference of the Secretariat have to be revised and enhanced accordingly. The Secretariat should use fully-fledged strategic management instruments in order to increase effectiveness and exert a real impact on prioritised areas in the Baltic Sea Region.

⁴ Examples: the role of the CBSS in developing a Joint Position on Enhancing Cooperation in Civil Protection Area adopted by the Directors General on Civil Protection in the BSR (May 2017); Baltic 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2017 by the Ministerial Conference.

- All political declarations adopted at the Ministerial Conferences or other high-level meetings should be followed by long- or medium-term implementation/action plan. The Director General should be mandated to present strategic plans related to all areas of the CBSS activities, to take initiatives and provide the best advice from the Secretariat to the CSO. The role of the Secretariat would then be to coordinate, monitor and evaluate progress made in the implementation of these plans under the political guidance of the Chairman-in-Office and the CSO.
- The CSO will play an important role in terms of defining a more focused work plan for the CBSS. The meetings of this body should become more politically relevant, focusing on strategic issues and evaluation of the progress achieved by different strands of activity. The CSO members should also play a more active role in transmitting initiatives from the CBSS level to their national administrations and should then ensure a proper follow-up of these initiatives. A report on the implementation of the decisions could be prepared and transmitted annually to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC).
- More focused attention needs to be paid to the profiles of staff in order to ensure achieving the right mixture of individuals with expertise and experience in project design, management and fundraising and on the other hand in diplomacy and inter-governmental cooperation. Currently many staff members seem to be predominantly occupied with the details of project implementation without being able to make any contributions to wider political processes.

Priorities of the CBSS

The CBSS' long term priorities - Regional Identity, Sustainable & Prosperous Region and Safe & Secure Region - defined by the Council in 2014 remain valid. At the same time continuity among Chairmanship priorities is not always ensured, as well as constant monitoring of the results and the challenges related to the implementation of the priorities.

We therefore recommend that:

- The priorities of the CBSS should be kept under constant review by the Ministers and the Committee of Senior Officials and be adjusted and adapted to new circumstances when required, allowing for some flexibility.
- More continuity is required between the successive Chairs in Office with regard to the implementation of the long-term priorities of the Council. Each Chairmanship should ensure a consistent follow up on these priorities.

- The role of the Presidency should be more carefully defined, including the balance between the implementation of the long-time priorities of the CBSS and its own Presidency priorities. The continuity between the objectives of successive Presidencies should be a particular focus.

Funding

If the Member States continue to believe in the validity of the CBSS as an organisation that serves the benefits of the region-at-large, they should make sure that appropriate financial resources are provided for this purpose. At the same time the budget of the CBSS should be simplified in order to become a better tool for the management. In addition;

- While there are several funding instruments available for the countries in the region, there might be a need to consider whether a creation of a Baltic Sea Cooperation Fund, based on voluntary contributions from interested Member States and other public and private contributors, could provide a mechanism for a one-stop-shop type of limited funding for concrete projects.
- The CBSS should continue to be involved in small-scale project design, implementation and funding. In recent years only few Member States and the European Union have contributed appropriate financial resources to projects.

Communication and visibility

Despite the engagement of the CBSS in promoting regional cooperation and substantial achievements in different areas the visibility of the Council is not sufficient and communication with stakeholders and the wider public does not meet the standards of the 21st century in terms of substance and new technologies. In that respect we recommend:

- The Member States and the Secretariat should take determined steps in ensuring that better visibility of the Council as a whole and of its activities is given priority.
- In this respect it is necessary to revise the existing Communication Strategy from 3 March 2010 paying more attention to the substance of communication rather than the terms of references of the secretariat. For a revised Communication Strategy, the Council's leadership should take a more proactive, more dynamic and braver approach as regards interaction with civil society and the media.
- The revised Communication Strategy must be supported by the utilization of new technologies, social media and the engagement of diverse stakeholders.

- Based on the newly drafted Communication Strategy the Secretariat should consider more actively organising various sporting and cultural events with high public visibility – for instance, a Tour de Baltic, Baltic jazz festivals, contests of young musicians, a wider annual Baltic Sea Dialogue which would bring together young people, scientific experts and politicians debating future prospects for regional cooperation.

Areas of Activity of the CBSS

There still exists a huge potential for making progress in every area of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. We therefore recommend:

- The projects within the Project Support Facility could be reinforced especially in small scale projects in the priority areas. Projects to promote people-to-people contacts, youth exchange, cultural exchanges and educational meetings should be continued at a larger scale, including various other actors of Baltic Sea and Nordic cooperation.
- Migration presents an increasingly important issue and challenge for the region which would need to be addressed more systematically also on the regional level. The CBSS could provide a forum, together with the regional offices of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to discuss the challenges and opportunities posed by migration. One particular theme could be the integration of migrants in the receiving countries.
- The CBSS has a unique possibility to promote the resilience of the Member States in their adaptation to climate change – which constitutes a task that no other body encompassing the area is involved in. Climate change will imply higher costs for road maintenance, new challenges for agriculture, land use etc. Close coordination between environmental bodies and security and emergency services should be promoted by the CBSS.
- Mandate further work in the relevant structures of the CBSS to consider how the CBSS is currently contributing and how it could more effectively contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Special emphasis could be on developing sustainable models for blue growth, i.e. aquaculture and the circular economy, including recycling of fertilising material from the agriculture.
- The CBSS has the potential to act as a platform for communication, exchange of experiences and good practises among key labour market actors in the Baltic Sea region. The CBSS could, in particular, pay special attention to the linkage between education and the evolving needs of the labour market.

- The CBSS should consider further ways of cooperation in the maritime sector, positioning CBSS as a valuable partner in the Baltic Sea Maritime Dialogue, taking full account of the activities within the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and other relevant activities.
- The CBSS should promote dialogue meetings on the operational level (law enforcement, judicial authorities, and other branches of the governments) where useful and of added value. Such a dialogue on the operational/practical level could eventually lead to a more intensified political dialogue on related topics.
- Special emphasis could be put on activities that are cross-sectoral in nature such as the work against trafficking in human beings. Herein closer cooperation between the Task Force against Trafficking and the police and prosecutors networks is clearly needed.
- The CBSS can be used more and its role can be strengthened as a discussion platform for various political items. This does not automatically have to include the intention to set-up concrete cooperation within each issue area, but in the first place should be allowed for an open exchange of views, experiences and “best practices” without any obligations. It would, however, be an asset if additional cooperation would emerge from the discussions.
- Digitalisation is an important future field of cooperation also for the CBSS. Due to the entrepreneurship of some of the Member States utilizing already the chances and advantages of digitalisation in the public sphere, the region even has a potential to develop into a frontrunner on the European level.
- On the important and challenging issue of cybersecurity CBSS coordinated actions can facilitate the establishment of a common security standard for the safe use of Information and Communication Technologies in every/day life and for the protection of the integrity and privacy of the people in the Baltic Sea region.
- Underline the importance for the region to remain connected and in this context consider possible concrete actions that could be undertaken to ensure functioning interconnections, including in the fields of transport, infrastructure, digitalisation and energy, including nuclear safety.

Education and research as a key area of regional cooperation

The Baltic Sea region can be proud of its achievements in research and innovation as well as the existence of several world class universities. The CBSS has already established its Science, Research and Innovation Agenda and is engaged in initiating

several projects in this field. However, the CBSS has not acted as a facilitator in fostering closer and sustainable cooperation networks in the area of research. On this account, we make the following recommendations:

- The Council could enhance its efforts to encourage the academic community conducting research on the various facets, opportunities and challenges that have direct bearing on the region as a whole.
- The CBSS should become a hub of knowledge, expertise and data on issues related to the Baltic Sea region.
- Annual Baltic Sea Dialogues should be convened, bringing together academia, experts and politicians in collaboration with the already existing forums such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Annual Forum.
- The Annual Baltic Sea Science Day (initiated and launched by the CBSS in February 2017) should be further supported as a visible contribution to the implementation of the CBSS Science, Research and Innovation Agenda. It is a good occasion for awarding the best scientific/research project carried out by young scientists (doctoral students and postdocs).
- The CBSS could initiate a contest for the best research on issues relevant for the future of the Baltic Sea region carried out by young scholars. The Baltic Sea region excellence award for the best project can be announced.
- The Council should initiate and support multi-country postdoc research grants on projects relevant to the region.
- The CBSS and the Secretariat in cooperation with independent experts should design annual State of the Region reports, analysing political, societal and economic developments as well as new challenges.

Cooperation networks

Taking the complicated and overlapping regional cooperation structures into consideration, the CBSS needs to enhance its efforts to ensure coherence and coordination among regional stakeholders. In this regard we recommend:

- The Council should assign the Secretariat the task to conduct an operational audit of existing regional cooperation structures in the Baltic Sea region identifying uniqueness of each of them, existing overlaps and duplications, as well as an analysis of functioning regional strategies adopted in the Member

States. On the basis of such audit the CBSS could find the most efficient ways of cooperating with the Northern Dimension Policy including its partnerships and other initiatives.⁵ Furthermore, the cooperation with the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) and other regional councils - the Arctic Council (AC) and the Barents Euro Arctic Council (BEAC) - needs to be enhanced.

- There is scope to improve the internal coordination within the Secretariat to ensure a better interaction between various fields and sectors of work as well as better coordination and cooperation between different networks.
- The CBSS should continue to contribute pro-actively to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and retain responsibility in a number of policy areas/actions and projects.
- While the current Strategic Partners and Observer States⁶ of the CBSS provide a rich network of actors, it is necessary to ensure better use of the interested observers, for example, involvement in concrete activities. Therefore, a critical assessment needs to be conducted on the existing Strategic Partners with a view to streamlining the overall regional cooperation structures.

In conclusion – the CBSS has the potential to contribute to the creation of a Region with a strong regional identity, based on sustainable development, ecological awareness, increased exchanges especially in the field of education, better inclusion, prosperity and social cohesion, human security and safe societies as well as regained trust. The Baltic Sea region has the possibility to remain, also in the new geopolitical situation, a regional platform for dialogue and cooperation, regarding economic, social and security standards and policies related to encouraging a vibrant regional civil society. But for that to happen, a fundamental reorientation on the role and organisation of the CBSS has to be completed. The recommendations above are to be seen as a contribution towards that endeavour.

⁵ Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP), Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing (NDPHS), Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC), Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL), Northern Dimension Business Council (NDBC), Northern Dimension Institute (NDI) and the Northern Dimension Arctic Window.

⁶ Belarus, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

ANNEX 1

Council of the Baltic Sea States Vision Group

At the invitation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, the Foreign Ministers of the CBSS Members and the representative of the European Union met in Reykjavík, Iceland on the 20 June 2017. They agreed on the need to maintain and strengthen the role of the Council of the Baltic Sea States towards 2020 and beyond. The Foreign Ministers and high level representatives invited the CBSS to appoint an independent group of wise persons, including representatives of civil society.

The task of the independent group has been to elaborate a report with recommendations for a vision for the Baltic Sea Region beyond 2020 and on the future role of the CBSS and the means to expand its impact as a forum for political dialogue and practical cooperation in the Region.

The Vision Group consulted the staff of the CBSS Secretariat on their perspectives of the future of the Council and their vision of regional cooperation. The CBSS Secretariat also provided comprehensive information on the projects that are carried out under the supervision of the CBSS. The Vision Group initiated consultations with youth representatives. As a result the Recommendations from the CBSS Youth Vision Group were proposed and incorporated in the final Report of the Vision Group.

The CBSS Vision Group has been tasked to present its report and recommendations to the CBSS for consideration before the end of the Swedish CBSS Presidency in June 2018. Further reflections on implementation of the report with recommendations should take place during the Latvian CBSS Presidency, with a view to forming the basis for subsequent decisions at the political level.

Members of the CBSS Vision group⁷:

Denmark: Dr. Tobias Etzold Researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs

Estonia: Mati Vaarmann, Ambassador

European Union: Petteri Vuorimäki, Senior Expert, European External Action Service

⁷ The members of the Vision Group have served in their individual capacity as independent experts and their views cannot be construed to reflect the official positions of the CBSS Members which appointed them.

Finland: Astrid Thors, Former Minister of Migration and European Affairs

Germany: Hans – Jürgen Heimsoeth, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Kingdom of Sweden

Iceland: Thorlindur Kjartansson, Economist & Journalist

Latvia: Žaneta Ozoliņa, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Latvia

Lithuania: Neris Germanas, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania

Norway: Öyvind Nordsletten, Ambassador

Poland: Rafał Wiśniewski, Ambassador

Russia: Alexander Vladimirovich Prokhorenko, Former Member of the Government of St. Petersburg, Former Chairman of the Committee for External Relations of St. Petersburg

Sweden: Matilda Dahl, Senior Researcher at Uppsala University

Chair, vice-chair, rapporteurs

- Chair: Petteri Vuorimäki

- Vice-Chair: Alexander Vladimirovich Prokhorenko

- Rapporteurs: Tobias Etzold and Žaneta Ozoliņa

ANNEX 2

Recommendations from CBSS Youth Vision Group Report

We, the CBSS Youth Vision Group, thank for the opportunity to give our input to the future vision of CBSS. We deliver our thoughts and recommendations based on a 24-hour effort and we are open to deepen our input and views if needed.⁸

We, the CBSS Youth Vision Group, represent a variety of backgrounds, competences and experiences. We are willing to offer this pool of resources to the CBSS in the shape of an informal advisory group that can provide input, inspiration and a youth perspective.

We think that in general the current CBSS long-term priorities are relevant and we recommend that CBSS introduce a truly multi-disciplinary approach in the way the work is carried out. We have mapped out crucial issues and questions that can provide important input for a future vision. A vision requires coherent thinking – sector specific actions can't stand alone. We need to include horizontal perspectives such as equality, gender and diversity and address demographic changes, such as an aging population.

Our discussion has focused on a region, which is *safe and secure*, a population equipped with the relevant *skills/competences* to realize their potential and to meet the needs of society. We want *sustainable development* to ensure equal opportunities for people to live the life that they want now and secure the same opportunities for future generations. That requires also a respect and care for our shared sea and ecosystem. We also want to turn attention to Baltic Sea regional identity. It is not a one-dimensional concept and calls for more reflections and discussions.

We recommend that CBSS rethink the approach, visual appearance and communication strategy based on which target audience the CBSS wants to focus on in the future.

Recommendations:

- A renewed vision of the CBSS is decisive for how to communicate policies and actions in the future
- Mapping out who you want to address regarding target audience – for the pre-informed and/or for all the people in the region - can also mean differentiating target groups
- A more clear rhetoric and relevance for everyday people
- Use different social media according to the identified target groups
- More possibilities for participation and interaction & inclusion of more voices
- Consider a makeover of cbss.org: more user-friendly, keep the content updated, be more emotional – use interviews and videos in order to engage a wider audience

⁸ CBSS Youth Vision Group met on 1-2 February 2018 and consisted of youth representatives from BSSSC, ERB, NORDEN Association, BSYD Alumni's, Latvian Youth Council, Member State Embassies and Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Concerning the question of CBSS walking on two legs: political dialogue and practical cooperation

We see the role of CBSS being a hub for stimulating political dialogue, exchange of experiences, finding partners to team up with, pointing out resources and being a channel to showcase best and next practices. In short supporting those, who want to engage in regional cooperation.

Future projects and engaging in practical cooperation should not be dependent on external financing sources that could cause conflicts of interest. Projects jointly financed by contributions of the Member States could raise the political commitment considerably.

We have elaborated some food for thoughts starting with three themes: Education, Safe and Secure Region and Sustainable Development. This does not exclude other issues as well, but due to the lack of time we had to concentrate on a limited number of themes.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Invest in a holistic approach to sustainable development /mainstreaming cooperation on more levels
- Empowerment - a tool to go from theory to action
- Early implementation in school through sustainability literacy – invest in Go Green Generations
- Focus on bottom-up activities and education models; from the grass-root level
- Avoid polarisation between social, ecological and cultural sustainability
- CBSS as a multilateral platform for joint consultations
- Show the results using easier language and be specific
- Establish accreditation systems to encourage best practices

EDUCATION

- Create a shared online platform for students and teachers: inclusive online courses, apps and other tools
- Make recommendations for education at all levels addressing shared needs for the future, such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, social skills, innovation, connectivity between the school and the world out-side
- CBSS should advocate for vocational education in order to improve its reputation
- Lifelong learning programmes are needed
- Establish an exchange programme for high school students
- Make the importance of young teachers more visible
- Make mobility programmes for teachers, focusing on sustainability literacy
- Establish a Baltic labour market exchange programme, that arranges seasonal work for young people in the Baltic Sea Region

SECURITY

- Higher level of social trust – how to discuss it (an Annual Forum to increase the stakeholder involvement)
- Intercultural education models for increased integration

- Connection between inclusion and safety (holistic approach to human security and safe societies)
- New understanding of security in a wider sense; critical re-evaluation of soft/hard security
- Lack of integration mapped out as a major threat (to combine projects with a political agenda)
- Inclusive activities for all groups of society
- Transparency and openness to increase participation and engagement