



Thematic Report

Annual Forum of the EU Strategy
for the Baltic Sea Region 2022
28-29.9.2022, Lappeenranta,
Finland



Contents

A word from the organisers.....	3
Inspiration from the keynote speakers	4
Forum in facts and figures	5
What shaped the Forum: background and the Forum's philosophy	6
What we discussed in the plenaries	8
Selected Forum's workshops.....	16
Conclusions – what we learned from the Forum	24

A word from the organisers

The event was organised by the City of Lappeenranta and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Secretariat in cooperation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. This is what the heads of these organisations said in their welcoming speeches to the Forum:



” *It is a great pleasure to see again a big number of international visitors in Lappeenranta after challenging times. I trust this forum will provide excellent and innovative solutions for sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region. New challenges – like those related to environment and energy are today more crucial than ever.*

Kimmo Jarva, Mayor of the City of Lappeenranta



” *We live in the time of great geo-political change. Russian aggression on Ukraine and the events at the bottom of the Baltic Sea this week – are clear signs that we should redouble our efforts at implementing the Strategy's priorities.*

Grzegorz Poznanski, Director General of the CBSS Secretariat



” *EUSBSR is an excellent tool for tackling key challenges of today such as pursuing the green transition or recovery after the pandemic. Our efforts make us resilient when faced with emerging challenges.*

Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Inspiration from the keynote speakers



You will hardly find a macro-region with so tightly knit cooperation structures. And cooperation creates trust, produces results and helps us to realize the potential we have in the region.

Bettina Martin, Minister of science, culture, Federal and European Affairs, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern



In the future, I hope to see even more of you participate, bottom-up approach, bringing solutions which are more difficult to achieve in a formalized context.

Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner, Cohesion and Reforms, European Commission

Forum in facts and figures



490
GUESTS
411 on site
79 online

PANELLISTS AND SPEAKERS

REPRESENTING: EU Commission, national governments, intergovernmental organisations, EUSBSR community, business, research and education, NGOs, youth. 57% - male, 43% - female panellists.



181
votes in
2 polls



What shaped the Forum: background and the Forum's philosophy

The original philosophy of the Forum was to make it as broad as possible, encompassing all three of the EUSBSR objectives: **saving the sea, connecting the region and increasing prosperity** with the main focus on the practical steps in the implementation of the new EUSBSR Action Plan, including the mainstreaming of neighbours action and climate. The organisers also put extra emphasis on networking and dialogue between the EUSBSR key stakeholders, especially important after two years of pandemic. The war in Ukraine, which started after the preparations for the Forum began, forced the organisers to also pay attention to topics, which became vital for the entire region: energy independency and security. These new topics were reflected in the programme of the Forum as well, supported by the relevant speakers.

Drawing on the experience from the Annual Forums in 2020-21 and on the results of a questionnaire, distributed among the Policy Area Coordinators, it was announced that the workshops are welcome to be organised during the entire Forum week online or offline in a free format, which resulted in ten workshops as side events in the Forum.

Another important focus area for the organisers was to include meaningful youth participation in the Forum's programme. After a successful application for additional funding from Erasmus +, Baltic Sea Youth Camp was organised prior to the Forum and youth participants from the Camp were invited to the most important sessions: opening and closing plenaries, together with high-level speakers.

Lastly, the organisers invited representatives from all levels of EUSBSR implementation: from

PACs to National Coordinators Group, from funders to ministries, from European Commission to Steering Group members, so they could share their challenges and give their perspective on the EUSBSR implementation in the closing panel - "Multi-level governance – put on stage."

This panel proved to be a very effective catalyst of a fruitful discussion – the consensus on the necessity of continued EUSBSR implementation was as obvious as the need for improving multi-level governance.



Below is the short summary of the opening and closing plenaries, as well as the sub-plenaries of the Forum. The summary is composed with the aim to highlight prevailing topics and main agreements reached by the experts, capture the essence of the audience input and thus to provide the EUSBSR community with a set of recommendations for implementation of the Action Plan.

An aerial photograph of a large, deep blue lake. A long, light-colored bridge spans across the middle of the frame. In the lower right, a white ferry boat with multiple decks is moving across the water, leaving a wake. The lake is surrounded by green, forested islands and peninsulas. A large, semi-circular blue graphic element is on the left side of the image. A semi-transparent teal rectangle is centered over the lake, containing white text.

**What we
discussed in
plenaries**

Opening plenary: setting the stage

Main question for the panellists:

In the light of the recent events, what are the most important issues in the Baltic Sea Region in need of urgent attention? The last years we have lived through several crises – what did we achieved despite the crises? What are the key lessons in relation to the Baltic Sea cooperation? The way forward? How do we continue cooperating successfully?

Prevailing themes from the conversation

- Russian aggression in Ukraine – war in the BSR neighborhood, and a threat to democracy
- Resilience of the Baltic Sea Region
- Energy security and independency
- Climate change

Concrete actions suggested

- Cooperation is more important than ever
- Consider adjusting EUSBSR to new realities
- Diversifying energy supply to become independent and minimize the risks for BSR societies is vital. Current crisis is an extra push for green transition
- Need for new investments into sustainable energy production
- Biodiversity loss needs action
- We need a stronger local and civil society component in the cooperation
- Strengthen capacity of rescue services in all BSR countries

1. New plans and visions for Seas, Oceans and Waters

Objectives

The aim of this session is to present the new initiatives and plans around the Baltic Sea that contribute to save the Sea, increase the prosperity and connect the Region. The European Commission will introduce the EU Mission "Restore our Oceans and waters by 2030". After its Mission Charter was launched in summer, the EC is inviting all Members States, regions and relevant stakeholders to adhere to the Mission Charter and engage by submitting actions for a successful implementation of the Mission and its lighthouses. The Baltic and North Sea Lighthouse will work as the Mission site focused on climate neutrality, circularity, and economic prosperity of our sea. The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, HELCOM, will introduce its strategic programme of measures for achieving good environmental status of the Baltic Sea by 2030 and the 2021 update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. Spatial planning cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, VASAB, will introduce its new Vision 2040 – a forward-looking document presenting the desirable spatial future of the region, respecting its diversities and specificities and embracing sustainability and integration throughout, as well as proposing possible future actions that would help to implement the Vision 2040.

Main messages

In the session "New plans and visions for our seas, oceans and waters" the Baltic Sea Action Plan by HELCOM, the vision for 2040 in planning and development by VASAB and the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters by the European Commission with a "Baltic-North Sea lighthouse" were presented, triggering a fruitful discussion of what these three plans and initiatives in the Baltic have in common and how they can be implemented efficiently and work together in the future for healthy waters in the Baltic.

2. New (and Persistent) Challenges for Societal Security

Objectives

A fresh look at the Baltic Sea Region's societal security challenges: from regional to individual perspective. Feeling secure vs being secure. Prevention and preparedness

Main messages

The importance of trust in society, involvement of civil society and fact-based information from authorities

We have to look into increasing societal security from very different perspectives (including perspective of individuals and their concerns) and through wide and evolving range of risks.

In order to effectively anticipate and respond to challenges, authorities need to cooperate and coordinate with society and other sectors, including academia and business; and they need to constantly take into account value of international cooperation.



3. Innovation for the digital and green transition and sustainable growth

Objectives

Our region is a home for many innovative approaches. How do they help bring us to a sustainable future?

Main messages

- basis for BSR innovation performance and competitiveness still strong in Europe
- BSR has been a winner of globalization, but the question is: what happens to the winner of globalization when globalization is changing? (scale matters more, innovation is increasingly concentrated in a few urban hotspots; BSR is small in global competition)
- elements of a unique role in BSR innovation collaboration: Common Action (cross-border projects in areas of significant regional value-added, e.g. in blue economy); Common Voice (shared efforts to shape EU policies and position the region as an innovation leader); Common Tools (e.g. a new challenge fund for high risk, high return missions?)
- if you are small, you have to be bold – a great example is what Estonia has achieved in terms of digitalization (EUSBSR PA Innovation and Interreg BSR supported Real-Time Economy concept as an example of related BSR cooperation)

4. Contribution of EUSBSR cities and regions to combating climate change

Objectives

The impact of climate change is obvious in the BSR: from increased water temperature to unpredictable weather events. How is our Strategy contributing to solving these challenges? Presentations of the EU Missions “100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030” and “Adaptation to Climate Change”. Examples of adaptation measures and actions towards climate-neutrality in BSR cities and regions.

Main messages

Interesting examples of what can be done in terms of tools and involvement of different level of governance in the planning of climate adaption.

The impact of climate change is obvious in the BSR: from increased water temperature to unpredictable weather events. How is our Strategy contributing to solving these challenges? Presentations of the EU Missions “100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030” and “Adaptation to Climate Change”. Examples of adaptation measures and actions towards climate-neutrality in BSR cities and regions.



5. Energy and connectivity of the region

Objectives

Expert views on energy independency, alternative fuels, new green technologies, sustainable and competitive transportation and more.

Main messages

Summary from the moderator:

- In the short run there is tough time ahead for the energy sector and the consumers
- However, in the short run the future of renewable and independent energy is bright
- Collaboration both international and between different sectors is the key
- Even individual consumers can play great role in reducing the energy consumption and bringing down the price



6. Recovery after shocks

Objectives

How can the Strategy help BSR communities become more resilient, stronger and sustainable, better at bouncing back after economic, political, social and health crises?

Main messages

How can the Strategy help BSR communities become more resilient, stronger and sustainable, better at bouncing back after economic, political, social and health crises?

Cross cutting themes were.

- More political will/leadership
- Better coordination between levels of governance
- Out with silos – cross sectoral cooperation is needed
- More inclusion of civils society – especially youth but not only



Closing panel

Objectives

Multi-level governance –put on the stage!

Representatives of all EUSBSR levels of implementation from PAC to NCG to ministries share their challenges, give their perspective on the implementation.

Main messages

- Implementation is the most important success factor of the Strategy – we need actions
- Concrete actions are the most important – they need to be measurable
- Real impact should be shown – it is sometimes unclear what happens behind the “PAC” acronyms
- Cross-sectoral multi-level cooperation is the key for success



An aerial photograph of a large, deep blue lake. A concrete bridge with multiple piers spans across the middle of the lake. In the lower right, a white ferry boat with a red stripe is moving across the water, leaving a wake. The shoreline is lined with green trees and vegetation. A semi-transparent green rectangular box is centered over the middle of the image, containing the text "Selected Workshops" in white. A large, solid blue curved shape is visible on the left side of the image, partially obscuring the lake.

Selected Workshops

Children, youth and disasters.

Organiser

Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat (CBSS) and Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)

Contact

Vineta Polatside

vineta.polatside@cbss.org

Challenges

Despite evidence of the benefits of involving children and youth in DRR activities to children, youth, as well as to the whole communities and societies, there are many critical factors that hinder children and youth from playing an active role in building resilient societies. Children and youth do not receive much support by adults in forming their views about ways in which they could contribute towards DRR actions.

Expected results

Children and young people would be given possibility to learn responsibility and ownership and increase self-esteem. Through the involvement in DRR they feel more appreciated and proud and have fun doing something for the benefit of the society. Such activities also positively affect children development and mobilization. Children have capacity to imagine innovative solutions and can easily learn new knowledge and skills that older people would not always be able to do. With these skills and knowledge young people can contribute to the safety and resilience of the whole society.

Proposed solutions

To be successful in all stage of crisis management, an active engagement of non-civil protection actors and an all-of-society involvement and partnership, including children and young people, is needed. Children in the region should be offered meaningful opportunities for participation and active involvement in building a prosperous, safe and secure region for all, for example, contributing to preventing and responding to disasters, educating peers, and influencing national strategies. In order to implement our obligations and commitments to child and youth participation, it is important to engage in concrete work, together with children, youth and adults to identify and implement safe and sustainable participation models that recognise and involve children as active agents in building resilient societies.

Train responsible authorities and raise their awareness about how to involve children and youth and about the benefits of such involvement.

Children and young people should be given space, voice, audience, and influence to take an active role in building more resilient societies. It is also important to pay attention and eliminate factors that can limit participation, such as marginalization, discriminatory cultural norms, social exclusion, disability etc.

[Read report *The Role of Children and Youth in Building Resilient Societies in BSR*](#)

Improved nutrient management in biogas production and utilization of new biomass sources for sustainable bioenergy

Organiser

John Nurminen Foundation, the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and Environment for Southwest Finland

Contact

Henri Nikkonen
henri.nikkonen@jnfoundation.fi

Challenges

Two EU funded projects, Sustainable Biogas and Biomass4value, addressed challenges on nutrient management in biogas production and utilization of new biomass sources for sustainable bioenergy. Biogas production may involve a risk of nutrients entering the waterways if the treatment of digestate generated in production and wastewaters from biogas plants are not carefully planned. Furthermore, to enable growth of sustainable bioenergy production utilization of new biomass sources need to be enhanced.

Proposed solutions

Careful consideration in the biogas plant planning, permit granting, and production phases is essential for sustainable nutrient management. Noteworthy considerations include e.g. the nutrient balance of the area in question, sufficiency and adequacy of stocks of raw materials and digestates, and care in spreading no more digestates than is needed by the plants.

Development of biogas production digestate nutrient recycling is crucial for better circular economy. Concrete measures to improve the quality of recycled fertilizers and soil improvers, such as quality systems deployment and communications initiatives, play a key role in making the demand for recycled fertilizers grow. Therefore, the focus should be also on solving structural problems, which include the low profitability of recycled fertilizer and nutrient production, and the products' low degree of refinement.

As the circumstances, problems, and legislations vary in different locations, the Baltic Sea protection requires cooperation and information exchange across borders.

Expected positive change

Improved nutrient management of biogas production and utilization of new biomass sources for bioenergy will result as more sustainable energy production systems and cleaner water systems in the Baltic Sea Region.



PA Education Seminar for stakeholders in Finland

Organiser

PA Safe PA Education

Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland

Contact

Andraschko, Merle
merle.andraschko@sk.hamburg.de

Challenges

Networking with Finnish stakeholders: how can Finnish stakeholders be included in PA EDU's work? Who are the relevant stakeholders? How do we reach them?

Expected positive change

- Broader visibility of the EUSBSR and the PA Education among relevant stakeholders in Finland
- Showcasing the added value of the EUSBSR and cooperation/networking within PA Education and its policy action processes/flagships
- Engaging new stakeholders and establishing new contacts

Summary of proposed solutions

Participants were familiarized with the overall objectives of the EUSBSR and the actions pursued by PA Education. They were presented ongoing policy action processes and projects such as the Coordinators Training Programme for coordinators of youth guidance centres. Furthermore, they learned about funding opportunities under the ESF+ by the Finnish intermediate body.



New spatial challenges in the Baltic Sea Region

Organiser

PA Spatial Planning coordinator

Contact

Elīna Veidemane
elina.veidemane@vasab.org

Challenges

Webinar shared the views and thoughts on current challenges caused by war and discussed what would be the conceptual and strategic way forward in the context of spatial development in the Baltic Sea Region, how updated VASAB Vision 2040 should better address new challenges and consequences raised by war, how VASAB work could help to mobilise green transition (and energy independency) in more focused way and how to build further the cooperation at macro-regional, national or sub-national level.



Expected positive change

Collected inputs will be used to refine the draft VASAB Vision 2040 that is expected to be adopted by the end of this year and endorsed by VASAB Ministerial Conference in early summer 2023. VASAB Vision 2040 will provide strategic framework for coherent territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region indicating.

- The following questions were discussed:
- What has changed in the Baltic Sea Region, in cross-border/ international level and cooperation and for BSR cities, territories, connectivity since the beginning of war?
- What new changes in spatial development are there? What are new perspectives for Baltic regions? What are concrete examples?
- What forms of cooperation are now needed on macroregional, national and sub-national level that VASAB could use?
- What issues should be emphasized in VASAB Vision 2040? What is still lacking to address current challenges properly?

Sustainable oceans by governance and planning – dream or reality?

Organiser

The workshop is organized by the Policy Area Spatial Planning, coordinated by HELCOM and VASAB, and in cooperation with the eMSP project.

Contact

Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky

dmitry.frank-kamenetsky@helcom.fi

Baltic Sea is an integral part of the global ocean, which makes the sustainable ocean governance one of the regional policy objectives. In this respect, cooperation with other sea regions and mutual learning are of high priority.

On the other hand, one of the key tasks for the PA 'Spatial Planning' within the EUSBSR is to follow up on the projects which are relevant for spatial planning, and which support grass-root implementation of the Strategy's Action Plan.

With this workshop we intend to create a platform for various MSP projects to jointly discuss how they contribute to the implementation of the EUSBSR, Baltic Sea MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 as well as European marine policies. Furthermore, the workshop will enable cross-project collaboration.

Is there enough
SPACE?

How to balance between
ecosystems and the economy?

Join our workshop on maritime spatial planning
Listen and learn – and challenge the attendants!

29 Sept 2022 at 14.00–16.00
Room: Venla

annualforum2022.eu



Conclusions

During the Forum, the EUSBSR community asked itself three main questions: **1) How can we intensify implementation of the EUSBSR Action Plan? 2) How relevant is the Strategy in the current political situation in the region? How can the strategy adapt to the new reality?** From the conversations it became apparent that:

- The Strategy is more important than ever, since only collaboration can keep the region resilient
- Current crises such as ongoing war in Ukraine demand for more collaborative action, especially in energy independency
- Traditional issues of the Baltic Sea Region has not disappeared and continue to demand EUSBSR attention. Climate change, biodiversity loss, consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic need joint action.
- **a cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary approach to tackling common BSR issues is still the most effective** and should be applied in all fields of cooperation
- current energy crisis can also be a catalyst for green transition and energy independency Youth must be included in all collaboration formats – [read Baltic Sea Youth Declaration here](#)
- The Strategy must adjust itself to the new reality.
- Include all levels in cooperation – think macro-regionally but act locally

What were
the main topics?



In one-two words, what would be the most important means/tool or task for EUSBSR in the acceleration of the green and digital transition?

124 



More information about the 13th Annual Forum
of the EUSBSR including its video recording is
available at: <https://annualforum2022.eu/>

This report is produced by the Council of the Baltic Sea
States Secretariat with the support from the City of
Lappeenranta editor: Andriy Martynenko,
andriy.martynenko@cbss.org

