



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council conclusions on the completion of the review of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

*3180th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 26 June 2012*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. **RECALLING** the Commission's Communication on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) of 10 June 2009 endorsed by the General Affairs and External Relations Council of 28 October 2009 and the European Council of 30 October 2009.
2. **REITERATING** the conclusions of the General Affairs Council of 15 November 2011 calling on the European Commission to review the EUSBSR by early 2012 in light of the recommendations in these conclusions and to assure the review of the EUSBSR Action Plan shortly thereafter.
3. **WELCOMING** the Commission's Communication on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) of 23 March 2012 (hereinafter: the Commission Communication) constituting the basis for the present Conclusions as well as the efforts done by the Member States, regional, local and civil society stakeholders to develop the Strategy in cooperation with the Commission.
4. **RECALLING** the debates and consultations on EUSBSR review conducted within the framework of the Danish Presidency of the Council and **WELCOMING** the commitment of the European Parliament, national parliaments of the Member States concerned, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, representatives of Baltic Sea regions as well as other interested stakeholders.

P R E S S

5. **RECOGNISING** that an overall assessment of the macro-regional strategies and evaluation of their added value is to be undertaken by the Commission in mid-2013.
6. **REITERATES** that the Strategy is based on the principle of no new EU funds, no additional EU formal structures and no new EU legislation, while relying on a coordinated approach, synergy effects and more effective use of EU and other financial instruments and funds.
7. **RECOGNISING** the contribution of the EUSBSR implementation experience towards achieving common EU goals inter alia completing and deepening of EU internal market and competitiveness, in particular building the missing energy infrastructure links, as well as towards addressing the shared challenges of the macro-region and providing regional implementation of the integrated maritime policy and **ACKNOWLEDGING** the need to make the Strategy more effective and result oriented for further attaining the Strategy's objectives and thus continue its success.

Based on this, the Council:

8. **ENDORSES** the revised EUSBSR as presented in the Commission's Communication with its improved strategic focus, including the three overall objectives which are mutually reinforcing, clarification of responsibilities, alignment of policies, funding and improved communication and **TAKES NOTE OF** 1) the proposed indicators and targets on strategic level¹ and 2) the definition of roles and responsibilities of the main implementing stakeholders² as the current status subject to regular adjustment by the Commission with assistance of the High Level Group.
9. **RECOGNISES** the serious environmental state and fragility of the Baltic Sea Region and **AGREES TO** the objective "Save the Sea", supporting the various efforts to obtain good environmental status of and biodiversity in the sea such as reduction of nutrient inputs and clean shipping and **STRESSES** the importance of regional cooperation, including cooperation with HELCOM, with a view to providing, *inter alia*, for maritime safety and security and facilitating sustainable growth.
10. **RECOGNISES** the insufficient integration in the Baltic Sea Region and **AGREES TO** the objective "Connect the Region", noting that a deeper regional integration not only relies on a good transport and reliable energy infrastructure but includes important aspects of people to people connectivity and increasing cooperation to combat cross-border crime such as trafficking.

¹ See Addendum 1.

² See Addendum 2.

11. **RECOGNISES** the economic disparities and the specific conditions of different Member States in the Baltic Sea Region and **AGREES TO** the objective "Increase Prosperity", recognising that this not only calls for the deepening and fulfilling of the Single Market and the objectives of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth of the Europe 2020 strategy but also includes a wider range of issues ranging from climate change adaptation to the very important social dimension.
12. **RECOGNISES** that the indicators, targets and clearer roles will improve the functioning and monitoring of the EUSBSR and **INDICATES** that the system of indicators and targets should stand as reference point marking the progress by the strategy stakeholders and will provide a basis for a comprehensive evaluation system that will enable the Strategy and its governance structure to become more operational and result oriented.
13. **UNDERLINES** the need for the Member States concerned to align and adjust existing and future sources of funding, including cohesion policy, as outlined in the Commission Communication with view to maximising the impact of the EUSBSR.
14. **EMPHASISES** the benefit for the Baltic Sea Region of reflecting the Strategy in the future programming period 2014-2020 by providing links and interconnections with the policies thematically relevant to EUSBSR at EU and national level.
15. **CALLS** on the Commission and Member States concerned to intensify actions to further enhance existing political support for EUSBSR implementation at all levels (EU, transnational, national, regional, local), particularly by making the EUSBSR a reference point for all adequate fora. **RECOGNISES** the territorial dimension of the EU sectoral policies and the need to include the EUSBSR on the agenda of the Council in its different formations as and when appropriate in order to promote effective involvement of, and closer links to, relevant EU policies in the Strategy implementation. **NOTES** the recently declared commitment of the city networks of the Region to the long-term implementation of the Strategy in co-operation with other networks representing various administrative levels of general public powers.
16. **WELCOMES** the proposal of promoting awareness of the Strategy among the wider public of the macro-region and to improve communication channels between key EUSBSR stakeholders as well as between them and administrators of funding sources, *inter alia* by establishing an interactive web based tool for sharing experiences and good practices further developing the on-going work of the Commission and the Member States concerned.
17. **ENCOURAGES** intensification of dialogue between all relevant stakeholders and in particular the private sector in developing and implementing the Strategy and its Action Plan in order to ensure that the Strategy brings added value to them all and thereby engaging them in joint efforts to achieve the objectives of the Strategy.

18. **WELCOMES** all the efforts made so far in cooperation with third countries in the region to attain the objectives of the Strategy as well as the progress in cooperation with Russia and through CBSS³ and **UNDERLINES** the need to further enhancing such cooperation. **TAKES NOTE** of efforts by Russia to strategically address common challenges in the region, in particular the urgent environmental challenges of the Baltic Sea. **INVITES** the Commission to further develop the potential of joint work in these efforts.
19. **INVITES** the Commission to explore in detail how concrete cooperation on Baltic Sea Region Strategy with third countries can further be intensified using e.g. the Northern Dimension Structures, the CBSS, and HELCOM as cooperation platforms.
20. **ENCOURAGES** the Member States concerned and the Commission to strengthen links between the EUSBSR, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and possible future macro-regional strategies and sea basin strategies by securing exchange of relevant experiences and good practices, leading to increased quality of implementation solutions for those strategies as well as to added value in strengthening European territorial cohesion, including *inter alia* coherence in implementing infrastructure and energy projects.
21. **NOTES** that the present conclusions mark the end of the review process of the EUSBSR started by the Polish Presidency, which should be followed by a review of the Action Plan to be completed by the end of 2012 and with reflection of the changes agreed upon, including the three new objectives and proposed indicators and targets. **UNDERLINES** the importance to safeguard that all levels, including local and regional as well as non-governmental, are represented in the consultation procedure and to take into account the discussions, reflections and comments made at the Annual Forum in Copenhagen on 18 and 19 June 2012 by the respective stakeholders.
22. **EXPECTS** that this new framework provides an integrated and sustainable contribution to economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Baltic Sea, and to the objectives of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth of the Europe 2020 strategy and the implementation of the integrated maritime policy (IMP)."

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³ Discussed *inter alia* at the recent 9th Baltic Sea States Summit in Stralsund, Germany, on 31 May 2012 (see the Presidential Communiqué of the Summit).

Objectives, indicators and targets for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Objective/sub-objectives	Indicator	Baseline	Target/deadline	Data sources
1 - Save the Sea				
1.1 Clear water in the sea	Environmental status, incl. level of inputs of nutrients – in line with indicators being developed in HELCOM by 2013 and under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive	current situation in 2010	indicators agreed in 2013 good environmental status (GES) by 2021	HELCOM, Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
1.2 Rich and healthy wildlife	Biodiversity status and ecosystem health (incl. fish stocks) and amounts of hazardous substances - in line with indicators being developed in HELCOM by 2013 and under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive	GES integrated indicators	indicators agreed in 2013 good environmental status (GES) by 2021	Marine Strategy Framework Directive, HELCOM
1.3 Clean and safe shipping	Number of shipping accidents	annual average of shipping accidents * 2008-2010: 3,017 per 10.000 vessels	Decreasing trend	HELCOM <i>* shipping accidents are defined according to the HELCOM definition "all accidents (including but not limited to grounding, collision with other vessel or contact with fixed structures (offshore installations, wrecks, etc.), disabled vessel (e.g. machinery and/or structure failure), fire, explosions, etc.), which took place in territorial seas or EEZ of the Contracting Party and involved tankers over 150 GT and/or other ships over 400 GT irrespectively if there was pollution or not are reported."</i>
	Illegal discharges	current situation in 2011	elimination of illegal discharges by 2021	HELCOM
1.4 Better co-operation	HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)	2007 (BSAP adoption)	evaluation in 2013 full implementation of BSAP by 2021	HELCOM
	Drawing up and application of trans boundary, ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Plans	none in 2011	pilot plans in 2013 Drawing up and application throughout the region in 2020	European Commission, DG Mare, national ministries, HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, European territorial co-operation programmes' reports where relevant

Objective/sub-objectives	Indicator	Baseline	Target/deadline	Data sources
2 - Connect the Region				
2.1 Good transport conditions	Internal and external connectivity of the region, including travel time.	The amount of the TEN-T core and comprehensive network elements' meeting the criteria as set out in the TEN-T Regulation	Completion of the TEN-T core and comprehensive network in the Baltic Sea Region according to CEF and TEN-T timetables and their links to Russia and Belarus as defined under the framework of NDPTL and involving EaP regional transport network	TEN-T implementation reports TENtec portal
2.2 Reliable Energy markets	State of Market Conditions and Interconnection of Baltic States' energy markets with the rest of the EU	Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan and its schedule	Full and environmentally sustainable interconnection of the gas and electricity markets according to BEMIP schedule	BEMIP National ministries
2.3 Connecting People in the Region	Number of organisations and people participating in programmes of cultural, educational, scientific exchange and co-operation	Number of organisations participating in <i>Framework Programme, Cultural Programme, Youth in Action and Marie Curie Action Programmes</i> in 2009 = 43 452 Number of people participating in <i>Lifelong Learning</i> programme in 2009 = 148 117 Total in 2009 = 191,569	Influencing a 20% increase in the number of participants (people or organisations) in such programmes, by 2020 = 229,000	COM data European territorial co-operation programmes' reports where relevant

Objective/sub-objectives	Indicator	Baseline	Target/deadline	Data sources
3 - Increase prosperity				
3.1 EUSBSR as frontrunner for deepening and fulfilling the Single Market	Volume of intra-regional trade in goods	3 year average for the BSS region in 2008 = 416,9 billion Euros	Influencing an increase in the intra-regional trade in goods in the BSS region of 15% by 2020	Eurostat annual data available with 2 year time lag (NUTS2) <i>(Trade in goods figures are based on imports + exports of goods between BSS countries only, the baseline is the average of the 2007-08-09 totals)</i>
	Volume of cross-border Services	3 year average for the BSS region in 2008 = 43,473.1 billion Euros	Influencing an increase in the intra-regional trade in services in the BSS region of 15% by 2020	Eurostat annual data available with 2 year time lag (NUTS2) <i>(Trade in services figures are based on imports + exports of services between BSS countries only)</i>
3.2 EUSBSR contributing to the implementation of EU 2020 strategy	Employment Rate (people aged 20-64) as a % of the total BSS region population	Average for the BSS region in 2008 = 70% of the people aged 20-64	Influencing a higher average for the BSS region by 2020 = 75% of the people aged 20-64	Eurostat annual data available with 2 year time lag (NUTS2)
	Employment Rate (people aged 20-64) as a % of the total BSS region population	Average for the best performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region in 2010 = 79.53% Average for the worst performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region in 2010 = 61.21%	Positive influence on diminishing the difference in an average Employment Rate between the best and worst performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region by 2020	Eurostat annual data available with 2 year time lag (NUTS2) <i>(The Index is based on 'million EUR / person employed'. The average Index for the BSS region can be compared with the EU27 average Index = 100)</i>
	General Expenditure on R&D	Average for the BSS region in 2008 = 2.16% of GDP	Influencing a higher average for the BSS region by 2020 = 3% of GDP	Eurostat annual data available with 2 year time lag (NUTS2)
	General Expenditure on R&D	Average for the best performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region in 2008 = 4.55% Average for the worst performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region in 2008 = 0.2%	Positive influence on diminishing the difference in the General Expenditure on R&D between the best and worst performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region by 2020	Eurostat annual data available with 2 year time lag (NUTS2)

3.3 Improved global competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region	GDP growth	Average GDP growth for the BSS region in 2007-2008 = 1.4% Average GDP growth for the EU in 2007-2008 = 1,75%	Influencing a higher average GDP growth across the BSS region by 2020	Eurostat annual data available with 2 year time lag
	GDP (in PPS)	4 Member States with highest GDP average GDP 120.1% of EU average (2007-2010), remaining constant 4 Member States with lowest GDP average GDP 59.2% of EU average (2007-2010), in decline	Positive influence on diminishing the difference in an average GDP between the Member States of the BSS region with the highest and lowest GDP by 2020	Eurostat annual data available with 2 year time lag
	Human Development Index	Average for the BSS region in 2008 = 44.8	Influencing an increase of the Human Development Index of 25% for the BSS region by 2020	UN Human Development index <i>(The Index is based on 'life expectancy in good health', 'net adjusted household income per head' and 'high and low educational attainment for the population aged 25-64'. The average Index for the BSS region can be compared with the EU27 average index – 62)</i>
	Human Development Index	Average for the best performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region in 2008 = 86.41% average for the worst performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region in 2008 = 21.05%	Positive influence on diminishing the difference in the Human Development Index between the best and worst performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region by 2020	UN Human Development index
	Labour Productivity Index	Average for the BSS region in 2008 = 77.8	Influencing an increase of the Labour Productivity Index by 20% across the BSS region by 2020	Eurostat annual data available with 2 year time lag (NUTS2) <i>(The Index is based on 'million EUR / person employed'. The EU27 average Index = 100).</i>
	Labour Productivity Index	Average for the best performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region in 2008 = 150.1% Average for the worst performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region in 2008 = 28.6%	Positive influence on diminishing the difference in the Labour Productivity Index between the best and worst performing 10% of the total population of the BSS region by 2020	Eurostat annual data available with 2 year time lag (NUTS2) <i>(The Index is based on 'million EUR / person employed'. The EU27 average Index = 100).</i>

3.4 Climate change adaptation	Integrated coastal protection plan and programme, including providing for effects of increased runoff and changes in marine environment	none in 2011	Regional strategy in 2013 Adoption of an integrated coastal protection plan and programme by 2020	European Commission, DG Clima, national ministries, OPs' annual reports
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NB: The indicators cover all NUTS II regions in eight Member-States in the BSS: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, except Germany, where only three NUTS II regions are included: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg.

Roles and responsibilities of the main stakeholders of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The tasks of the **National Contact Point** include:

- 1. Seek political support for and contribute to political commitment to the implementation of the EUSBSR¹ in the home country.**
- 2. Cooperate with other National Contact Points of the EUSBSR to secure coherence and exchange the best practices.**
- 3. Ensure overall coordination of and support to the EUSBSR implementation in the home country:**
 - Ensure information to, consultation with national institutions regarding the EUSBSR and seek their involvement;
 - Act in order to facilitate involvement of other relevant stakeholders;
 - Maintain an on-going policy dialogue and work with national coordination body to initiate operational action;
 - Encourage dialogue between relevant programmes/financial instruments and national stakeholders for the alignment of resources;
 - Identify the Priority Area Focal Points².
- 4. Formulate and communicate national positions on the EUSBSR and Action Plan.**
- 5. In close cooperation with the European Commission, Priority Area Coordinators and Horizontal Action Leaders participate in the review and updating of the EUSBSR and Action Plan.**
- 6. Support Priority Area Coordinator(s) and Horizontal Action Leader(s) in the implementation of the EUSBSR.**
- 7. Monitor and on the request of the European Commission report on the coordination activities taken in the implementation of the EUSBSR.**
- 8. Encourage participation of relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region in the implementation of the EUSBSR.**
- 9. Promote the visibility of the EUSBSR.**

¹ European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

² The Member States are appointing Priority Area Focal Points (line ministries, agencies, other national/regional institutions) for each Priority Area of the EUSBSR.

The tasks of the **Priority Area Coordinator** include:

Facilitate involvement of and cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region and in close cooperation with those:

- 1. Implement and follow-up the Priority Area towards targets and indicators defined. Whenever relevant, review of the indicators and targets set.**
- 2. Review regularly the relevance of the Priority Area as described in the Action Plan. Propose necessary updates including the addition, modification or deletion of actions and Flagship Projects to the European Commission.**
- 3. Facilitate policy discussions in the Baltic Sea Region regarding the Priority Area concerned.**
- 4. Facilitate development and implementation of actions and Flagship Projects defined under the Priority Area.**
- 5. Convey relevant results and recommendations of on-going and completed Flagship Projects to the policy level.**
- 6. Ensure communication and visibility of the Priority Area.**
- 7. Maintain a dialogue with bodies in charge of implementation of programmes/financial instruments on alignment of funding for implementation of the Priority Area and Flagship Projects.**
- 8. Liaise and cooperate with other Priority Area Coordinators and Horizontal Action Leaders in order to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of actions in the EUSBSR implementation.**
- 9. Monitor progress within the Priority Area and report on it.**

The tasks of the Horizontal Action Leader include:

Facilitate involvement of and cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region and in close cooperation with those:

- 1. Implement and follow-up the Horizontal Action towards targets and indicators defined. Whenever relevant, review of the indicators and targets set.**
- 2. Review regularly the relevance of the Horizontal Action as described in the Action Plan. Propose necessary updates of the Horizontal Action to the European Commission.**
- 3. Facilitate policy discussions in the Baltic Sea Region regarding the Horizontal Action concerned.**
- 4. Facilitate development and implementation of the Horizontal Action concerned.**
- 5. When relevant, convey relevant results and recommendations of the Horizontal Action to the policy level.**
- 6. Ensure communication and visibility of the Horizontal Action.**
- 7. Maintain a dialogue with bodies in charge of implementation of programmes/financial instruments on alignment of funding for implementation of the Horizontal Action.**
- 8. Liaise and cooperate with Priority Area Coordinators and other Horizontal Action Leaders in order to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of actions in the EUSBSR implementation.**
- 9. Monitor progress within the Horizontal Action and report on it.**

The tasks of the **Flagship Project Leader** include:

- 1. Ensure implementation of the Flagship Project.**
 - 2. Liaise regularly with the respective Priority Area Coordinator(s):**
 - Take actively part in the activities of the respective Priority Area, e.g. relevant meetings and conferences;
 - Regularly monitor and report on the progress of the Flagship Project to the Priority Area Coordinator(s).
 - 3. Ensure sustainability and promotion of the Flagship Project results. Support the Priority Area Coordinator(s) in conveying relevant Flagship Project results and recommendations to the policy discussions and policy development in the Baltic Sea Region.**
 - 4. Establish and maintain cooperation with other relevant Flagship Projects of the EUSBSR, in order to ensure coherence, exchange information and avoid duplication of efforts.**
 - 5. Ensure communication and visibility of the Flagship Project and its results.**
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