

The 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

28th - 30th August 2016 in Riga, Latvia
– BSPC in a Nutshell –



High Quality Education and Labour – The Future of the Baltic Sea Region

The 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference took place in Riga, Latvia. It was opened by H.E. Mr Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia and H.E. Ms Ināra Mūrniece, Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia.

Around 200 delegates met at the University of Latvia Academic Centre of Natural Sciences right in the city center of Riga. The aim of the conference was to pass a resolution on developing the Baltic Sea Region as a role model for future high quality education and labour.

The participants arrived on Saturday and the BSPC Drafting Committee and the BSPC Standing Committee held their first sessions on Sunday, 28th August, in the Saeima, the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia. In the afternoon, a guided tour of Rundāle Castle as well as a reception at the castle provided the participants with insight into the history and cultural wealth of Latvia.

On Monday, the first two sessions took place at the University of Latvia Academic Centre of Natural Sciences. They focused on co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region

and on how to develop competitiveness in the Baltic Sea Region by linking education and the labour market beginning with a speech by Mr Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-president of the European Commission. The second session was continued with a vivid discussion by parliamentarians. In the afternoon a ceremonial session in honour of the 25th anniversary of the BSPC took place. Mr Trivimi Velliste, Mr Franz Thönnies and Ms Anna Abrahamsson presented reviews, successes and perspectives on the Baltic Sea parliamentary cooperation.

Extracts from the Welcoming Speech given

by H.E. Mr Raimonds Vējonis, President of the Republic of Latvia



“I am proud and happy to address you at the time when we celebrate the historic events which took place at the end of August 25 years ago, events which brought to an end fifty years of occupation and allowed the three Baltic States to become free and independent once more. This time reminds us about the value of freedom and statehood. [...]

During these years we have worked to make the Baltic Sea region economically vibrant, secure and stable. Thanks to the openness of our

markets and close economic ties which we have established, the Nordic-Baltic region has developed very fast during the last 25 years and has become one of the most dynamic, IT- and innovation-oriented regions of the world. [...]

We cannot achieve much in our development without high quality education and a dynamic labour market. I am particularly glad that the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference has underlined the necessity for high quality education and equal access to the labour market as the main priorities. [...] Universities are centres of knowledge and innovation. The integration of research, higher education and industry has to be the priority of our efforts. [...]

Let me now briefly turn to sustainable tourism which is one of the growth areas of our economies.[...] If developed and managed in a sustainable way, tourism can be instrumental in safeguarding biodiversity by minimizing the ecological footprint, providing green employment for local populations, channeling revenue back into conservation and functioning as a vehicle for promoting awareness of environmental preservation.[...]

In conclusion let me wish you all a successful Silver Jubilee conference! The parliamentary cooperation of our Baltic Sea region countries will make us all stronger, better-off and safer.”

Welcome Address

by H.E. Ms Ināra Mūrniece, Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia

„It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. Congratulations on the Silver Jubilee!

We are particularly delighted to have you here at the new building of the University of Latvia – the Academic Centre of Natural Sciences. Convening here is symbolic – because universities and quality education are crucial for competitiveness, growth and prosperity in our region. [...]

The founding fathers of the Baltic Sea regional cooperation also had a vision of peace. Today, when our world is shattered by crises and conflicts, their vision inspires us more than ever to build bridges and tear down walls.



The founding vision of the Baltic Sea cooperation was the ideal of democracy. Today more than ever we need to promote democracy across the region – because it makes wars and conflicts less likely.

There is a great need for the countries around the Baltic Sea to have a dialogue on how to uphold democratic values. As many as 11 national parliaments, 11 regional parliaments, and 5 parliamentary organisations are gath-

ered here! Among us, we have the oldest parliament in the world – Iceland’s Athingi with its strong democratic tradition. We have a lot to learn from each other. [...]

We – the parliaments – have the central role in fostering democracy. Parliamentary activity covers the entire spectrum of political, civil, economic, and social rights. As the main institution of democracy, we should respond to the needs of our people. [...]

Let us work together to keep our promise in further building a peaceful, free, and prosperous Baltic Sea region. I wish everyone here in Latvia a successful conference with productive discussions. And I hope to see you in Riga again.”

Rundāle Castle



On Sunday afternoon the participants of the conference visited Rundāle Castle. A guided tour of the palace provided the BSPC delegates with insight into the historical background. During a reception in honour of the silver jubilee of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Prof. Dr Jānis Vucāns, President of the BSPC, welcomed the guests and stressed: “We are all here because we have actively shaped these past 25 years.

And because we want to take inspiration from the past to shape the common future that lies ahead of us. And, ladies and gentlemen, there is no better place to do that than Rundāle palace. You have had your tours of the palace earlier this evening. You have seen and heard that the history of Rundāle is closely linked with the history of Latvia during last 3 centuries, and you can find traces of German, Russian, Polish,

French and Latvian cultural heritage here – it is only fitting that Rundāle has been chosen for our celebration of the 25th anniversary of Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.” After the reception guests were invited to the palace garden to attend an impressive musical performance by Melo-M, a Latvian instrumental cello rock ensemble, accompanied by a marvellous sound, light and water fountain show.



Extracts of the Report from the BSPC Chair by Prof. Dr Janis Vucāns, President of the BSPC

„It is the honourable duty of the BSPC President to provide the delegates of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference with a report on the activities throughout the past year. The following issues – from my point of view – clearly stand out when I think about this last year:

The BSPC has had a clear thematic focus, with excellent expert presentations and discussions on the main theme of the work programme, namely education, the labour market and labour mobility as core issues of our work. Latvia deems the strengthening of the prestige of vocational training and education a priority, as it is part of the innovation system. Ultimately, it should be the goal of higher education to enhance the creativity and entrepreneurship of students to become entrepreneurs, create jobs, provide new products and services and thus expand the national as well as global labour market. Another issue was the “Modernisation of social protection systems”. The Commission regards the free movement of workers as a key pillar of the internal market. Aim is to deliver a balanced approach to labour mobility, combining the protection of mobile workers and the fight against social security abuse. Both elements of the package have been subject to full



impact assessment and consultation with stakeholders.

Additionally a fruitful exchange of experiences about the dealing with the refugee crisis in our home countries took place. However, it did prove useful to get an idea of how the situation is handled elsewhere and maybe to find inspiration for the dealing with the topic in our home parliaments and in international cooperation.

It became very clear that one issue has increasingly been in the spotlight of the work of other parliamentary conferences and assemblies: to undertake joint efforts against terrorism. I emphasize the need both to defend our security and to defend the fundamental values that make us strong, namely freedom, democracy and human rights. Therefore it is (for me) of fundamental importance, that we

- condemn terrorism in all its forms as a common threat for our citizens and our shared values,

- deplore the loss of innocent lives, express sympathy and solidarity with the victims of all terrorist attacks, their families and all those who suffered in these inhumane attacks and,
- express the crucial need for the joint fight against this major threat to any of our societies in our this year’s resolution.

Members of the BSPC Standing Committee travelled to Minsk in April to investigate ways to start a process of contacts and discussions about common issues with the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. One important outcome is that representatives from Belarus have been invited to today’s conference and that the discussion regarding the observer status of the Belarusian parliament will continue, also bearing in mind the outcome of the upcoming parliamentary elections in Belarus. The BSPC is determined to make a final decision in 2017.

The response from the governments to the 24th BSPC resolution has been more comprehensive than ever before. The BSPC has revised the way it approaches the governments with its resolutions under the aspect to investigate even more closely in the future how the resolutions of the BSPC were implemented by our governments.

It has been very good being BSPC President throughout this past year and I think we’ve brought forward good initiatives. People coming together is the basis for any cooperation. And cooperation also contributes to peace. In this spirit I wish all of us fruitful discussions, wise decisions, and a very successful continuation of our 25 years cooperation.”



*On the Podium:
Prof. Dr Jānis Vucāns,
President of the BSPC,
Mr Franz Thönnies, Member
of Parliament, Germany
and Mr Bodo Bahr,
Head of BSPC Secretariat*



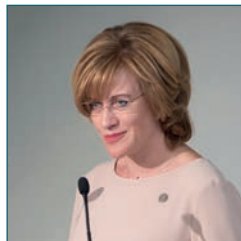
FIRST SESSION

Cooperation in the Baltic Sea region

Chair – Prof. Dr Jānis Vucāns, President of the BSPC
Vice-Chair – Mr Franz Thönnies, MP, Germany



Mr Valdis Dombrovskis



Ms Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica



Mr Michał Czyż



Mr Guðmundur Árni Stefánsson



Ms Carola Veit

The first session of the conference introduced “Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region”. The session was chaired by **Prof. Dr Jānis Vucāns**, President of the BSPC and **Mr Franz Thönnies**, Member of Parliament from Germany as vice-chair.

Starting off in this first session **Prof. Dr Jānis Vucāns** reported from the BSPC Chair. **Mr Valdis Dombrovskis**, Vice-president of the European Commission, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, outlined the role of the BSPC in the European dimension. **Ms Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica**, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Latvia, referred to the importance of regional frameworks to keep a safe, prosperous and connected

region and the importance of strong networking on expert level.

Mr Michał Czyż, Ambassador of Poland and outgoing chair of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), informed the delegates about the latest activities and achievements of the council. **Mr Guðmundur Árni Stefánsson**, Ambassador of Iceland, presented an update on the priorities of the Icelandic CBSS Presidency. He emphasized the focus on the rights of children, on promoting democracy, on equality and respect for human rights and on gender equality. **Ms Carola Veit**, Vice-president of the BSPC, reported on the governments responses to last years resolution. **Ms Monika Stankiewicz**, Executive Secretary of HELCOM, gave a report on the status of implementation of HELCOM

commitments to achieve healthy marine ecosystems. Following this **Ms Darja Akhutina**, General Director, and **Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło**, BS NGO Network 2016 Forum Coordinator, reported from the Baltic Sea NGO Forum and Network and its focus on people-to-people-cooperation and youth.

Ms Maja Gojković, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) and Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, addressed the plenary.

Mr Vitaly Busko, Chairman of the Commission on International Affairs of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, addressed the BSPC delegates.



Ms Monika Stankiewicz



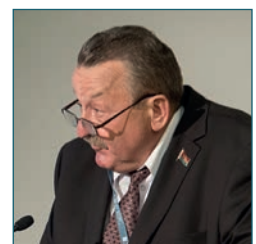
Ms Darja Akhutina



Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło



Ms Maja Gojković



Mr Vitaly Busko



SECOND SESSION

How to develop competitiveness in the Baltic Sea Region by linking education and the labour market

Chair – Ms Dorota Arciszewska-Mielewczyk, MP, Poland
Vice-Chair – Mr Pyry Niemi, MP, Sweden



Ms Līga Lejiņa



Ms Jadwiga Parada



Mr Poul Nielson

The second session was chaired by **Ms Dorota Arciszewska-Mielewczyk**, Member of Parliament from Poland, and by **Mr Pyry Niemi**, Member of Parliament from Sweden, as vice-chair. The topic of the second session was “How to develop competitiveness in the Baltic Sea Region by linking education and the labour market”.

The speakers presented their views and statements on defining labour market needs, tools for forecasting trends in the labour market, vocational education, cooperation in higher education and on corporate social responsibility for systematic

and sustainable introduction of work-based learning. **Ms Līga Lejiņa**, State Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Science, Latvia, presented lifelong guidance strategies and aspects of career management skills. **Ms Jadwiga Parada**, Director of Vocational and Continuing Education Department from Ministry of National Education, Poland, informed on activities on vocational education, on cooperation in higher education and on cooperation with employers. **Mr Poul Nielson**, former EU Commissioner and Danish cabinet minister, author of the brand new review of the Nordic labour market elaborat-

ed on the “Nordic model”, working life and cooperation around it in the Nordic Region. **Mr Jan Guz**, OPZZ President and the Co-president of the Baltic Sea Trade Union Network, is reporting from the regional union federation. **Dr Martin Sauer**, Baltic Sea Labour Forum, highlighted the creation of sustainable regional labour markets within the Baltic Sea Region. **Mr Vatanyar Yagiya**, Professor of the Saint-Petersburg State University and Councillor of the Saint - Petersburg Legislative Assembly Chairman stressed the leading role of the development of education in the Baltic Sea Region.



Mr Jan Guz



Dr Martin Sauer



Mr Vatanyar Yagiya



CEREMONIAL SESSION

in honour of the 25th anniversary
of the BSPC

Baltic Sea parliamentary cooperation:
yesterday, today, tomorrow

Chair – Ms Carola Veit, Vice-president of the BSPC



Mr Trivimi Velliste



Mr Franz Thönnes



Ms Anna Abrahamsson

The ceremonial session in honour of the 25th anniversary of the BSPC was held as a roundtable discussion moderated by **Ms Carola Veit**, Vice-president of the BSPC. The discussion evolved around perspectives on “Baltic Sea parliamentary cooperation: yesterday, today, tomorrow”. After **Mr Trivimi Velliste** and **Mr Franz Thönnes** gave their speeches, **Ms Anna Abrahamsson**, President of the Nordic Youth Council, reported on challenges facing youth today regarding education and labour and what solutions can be found for tomorrow.

Extracts from the Ceremonial Speech by Mr Franz Thönnes, Chairman of the delegation of the German Bundestag to the BSPC

Mr Franz Thönnes congratulated Latvia and Estonia on their independence 25 years ago. He referred to “yesterday”, highlighting the development of a common identity, the stabilization of democratic structures and good neighbourhoods and recapitulating the first steps of the BSPC 1991 in Helsinki. He reiterated that the overall aim of the BSPC was to strengthen regional identity, to initiate more powerful political activities and to enhance interparliamentary, intergovernmental and inter civil societal dialogue at eye-level through close cooperation between national and regional parliaments.

He pointed out that the many achievements characteristic of the situation “today” were the result of this dialogue. The BSPC had proved to have become a strong partner with considerable influence. It initiated claims that were incorporated in the HELCOM Action Plan tackling the challenge of marine litter in the Baltic Sea. The “Clean Baltic Shipping” concept was another example to fight pollution. The Labour Forum brings together numerous employer and union representatives to promote labour mobility and fair labour conditions in the Baltic Sea.

Referring to “tomorrow”, he stressed the importance of further strengthening cooperation in order to look for answers to international challenges such as the refugee situation and the threat posed by terrorism. Cooperating in fields like youth and sustainable tourism were essential to create a solid regional identity, he said. He concluded that as the region would constantly face new challenges, the BSPC needed to continuously work on dialogue, compromise and cooperation to face future challenges.

Extracts from the Ceremonial Speech

by Mr Trivimi Velliste, former President of the BSPC and the Baltic Assembly, Estonia

“For 25 years we have furthered our co-operation and provided a useful forum for open debate and exchange of information between Parliaments and other bodies of the Baltic Sea Region. This cooperation started due to a fundamental geopolitical change that had taken place in the region.



The historic meeting held at Ronneby, Sweden, on 2 – 3 September 1990 was the first summit of political leaders around the Baltic Sea since World War Two where representatives of several States could again sit behind their own national flags.

The BSPC which had its first convention in January 1991 was among the very first Baltic Sea cooperation forums to be established after the end of the Cold War. It predated the founding of the CBSS. I believe it was a symbolic landmark of democratic tradition.

By initiating cooperation among eleven countries of the Baltic Sea, we opened a promising window of opportunity and embarked on a determined course towards stability, security and prosperity in the Region thus fostering step-by-step rapprochement among our nations.

The very existence of the forum as such is a crucial precondition for a dialogue around the Baltic Sea. The end of the Cold War opened up totally new avenues to build our common future. Unfortunately, we have not always been able to meet the new challenge. This is particularly true in the recent years.

However, there are some important practical areas where considerable action has taken place. The Baltic Sea environment as a particularly sensitive issue has always been in the centre of our attention. It is equally true that environmental protection in general and maritime safety are of highest priority for all of us.

The endeavours of the BSPC have substantially contributed to cross-border, economic and interregional cooperation, to social integration of the region as well as to enhancing security of its citizens.

We should always bear in mind the fundamental objectives of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference as spelt out in our Rules of Procedure – strengthening the common identity of the Baltic Sea Region, initiating and guiding new political activities, endowing them with additional, parliamentary authority.

One of the unique features of the BSPC is that it includes representatives from both national and sub-national parliaments. This pattern makes our forum quite heterogeneous. At the same time it is an asset that offers added value in terms of widening and deepening the concept of democracy. Different political levels can interact and complement each another. The dialogue becomes more comprehensive with additional dimensions.

I strongly believe the BSPC should further its cooperation with the Council of the Baltic Sea States. It should in every possible way cooperate in the context of the Northern Dimension, taking advantage of the Action Plan of the Baltic Sea Strategy.

One of the best qualities we can offer each other is our identity – historical, geographical, cultural. Despite all the difficulties we face today, we have to preserve our identity and traditions as they are the most important bridge from nation to nation.”



The BSPC Drafting Committee was responsible for developing the political recommendations of the annual parliamentary conference during the three days consultation. The resolution handles issues on Education and Labour in Baltic Sea Region.

(The conference report, the speeches and the presentations will be available on <http://www.bspc.net/>)



THIRD SESSION

Realising employment opportunities
– Improving labour mobility and
combating youth unemployment

Chair: Mr Jörgen Petterson, MP, Åland
Vice-chair: Giedrė Purvaneckienė, MP, Lithuania



Mr Jānis Reirs



Ms Algimanta Pabedinskiene



Ms Anette Kramme

The chair of the third session was **Mr Jörgen Petterson**, Member of Parliament from Åland Islands, and the vice-chair was **Giedrė Purvaneckienė**, Member of Parliament from Lithuania. The discussion evolved around “Realising employment opportunities – Improving labour mobility and combating youth unemployment”.

The speakers focused on labour mobility, including emigration/immigration aspects, urbanization, on trends, causes, solutions of youth unemployment, on support

mechanisms – the Youth Guarantee (support in the framework of active labour market policies, vocational education opportunities, measures to involve NEETs). **Mr Jānis Reirs**, Minister of Welfare, Latvia, shared experiences on the Baltic employment services and on labour mobility issues in the region. **Ms Algimanta Pabedinskiene**, Minister of Social Security and Labour, Lithuania, presented aspects on labour force migration in Lithuania, measures to reduce emigration and actions to fight youth unemployment. **Ms**

Anette Kramme, Parliamentary State Secretary of the Labour and Social Affairs Ministry, Germany, is presenting causes and trends of youth unemployment and support mechanisms for the integration of refugees in the labour market. **Mr Thor Kleppen Sættem**, State Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, presented perspectives on youth employment promotion and on immigration in Norway. **Ms Egle Käärats**, Deputy State Secretary General on Labour and Employment Policy, reported on the situation in Estonia.



Mr Thor Kleppen Sættem



Ms Egle Käärats



Contributions from BSPC Working Group and Rapporteurs



The Vice Chairman of the BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism, **Sara Kemetter** from the Åland Islands, presented the Working Group's Mid-way report to the conference participants. The group will elaborate its final report for the 26th BSPC in Hamburg. The parliamentarians were also updated by the BSPC Rapporteur on Cultural Affairs, **Sonja Mandt** from Norway, the BSPC Rapporteur on Eutrophication, **Saara-Sofia Sirén** from Finland, the BSPC Rapporteur on Traf-



ficking in Human Beings, **Thomas Stritzl** from Germany and the BSPC Rapporteur on Integrated Maritime



Policy, **Jörgen Petterson** from the Åland Islands on new developments in their respective fields of action.



Closing of the 25th BSPC

Voting and Remarks by Dr Jānis Vucāns, Chair of the BSPC

Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,
I hereby open the Closing Session of the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

I hereby open the Closing Session of the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

I would like to thank all of you for the energetic, productive and I think also

synergetic work during the past couple of days. We have had a constructive discussion, and I think that we have succeeded in finding answers to many questions.

However, some of our main tasks are still ahead – among others the adoption of the resolution of this conference. All delegations received the first draft of the resolution in early July and then were given time until 19 August to

send in additional proposals, and many delegations did so.

I would like to remind that according to the Rules of Procedure of the BSPC any proposals received after this deadline were not taken into account in the preparing of the final list. There are a number of administrative matters that we have to address first. As always, I would like to remind everyone that we can only take decisions by unanimous consent.

Firstly, the Conference is invited to adopt changes to the BSPC Rules of Procedure. These reflect changes to the BSPC Chairmanship. Can everyone agree to the new Rules of Procedure? ... Is there any vote against? ... No vote, so it means unanimously agreed. I recognize that the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference has agreed to the new Rules of Procedure.

Next, the Conference is invited to adopt the Work Programme for 2016 - 2017. Can everyone agree to the new Work Programme? ... Is there any vote against? ... No votes against. It means unanimously agreement. Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, now we can turn to the resolution of the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. My thanks to all the delegations for their hard work, especially to the members of the Drafting Committee. They worked hard, seeking compromises acceptable to all parties and drafting the final version of the resolution, which is now in front of you. As always, it wasn't an easy way to come to an agreement, but to my mind in the end it was worth to go this hard way.

Dear colleagues, the distributed resolution includes also the matters related to the title of this conference, relation between Labour Market and Education in Baltic Sea Region. Therefore during this last ses-

sion I would like to mention only two points from this resolution regarding competitiveness in the Baltic Sea Region by linking Education and Labour Market.

Point 19 is saying the partners agree to strengthen the contact between schools, universities and businesses in order to make sure that university education and vocational education and training are closely and concretely oriented towards labour market and to identify as well as to prevent labour market mismatches. To my mind, this sentence is very important.

And the second one, point 25 from resolution, support business and education cooperation for a sustainable economic area in the Baltic Sea Region, especially a systematic exchange of expertise in the labour market and education sectors. This cooperation between business and education sector is very, very important to go forward and to make our region competitive in the global scale.

Of course there are a lot of other sentences, but I mention those two because those directly relate to the theme of our conference.

Dear colleagues, in the distributed resolution, you will find the unanimous agreement by the members of the Drafting Committee

and I would like to remind everyone that just like every year, the resolution needs to find the unanimous agreement by every BSPC member. With your adoption of the resolution of the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary conference you also agree to the administrative matters included in the resolution, including the Work Programme 2016 - 2017 and the adapted Rules of Procedure. And now I ask you to vote by raising your hand and I'm asking:

Can everyone agree to the resolution of the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference? Who is for such final resolution? ...

Thank you. Are any votes against? ... No. Thank you. It means that we have adopted the final resolution.

Thank you everyone for your great work during this conference, as well as during this past year and not only but also for the whole period when everybody of you had been involved in the activities of BSPC. I hope that the contents of the just adopted resolution will be acted on by our governments, ministries and other institutions around the Baltic Sea.

I truly appreciate the work we have done here together. I am sure that the Hamburg presidency will strengthen the BSPC even further. I expect that everybody of you knows that the Ham-



burg Parliament will be the next presiding parliament in the BSPC for the year 2016 - 2017.

Additional information is that the Drafting Committee agreed to give the honour to the Parliament of Åland to preside in the BSPC in the year 2017 - 2018 and to the Parliament of Norway

to be the presiding Parliament in BSPC in year 2018 - 2019.

The Drafting Committee also decided that the BSPC President for the next year will be Carola Veit and we will have two Vice Presidents, Jörgen Pettersson from the Parliament of Åland, and myself, Jānis Vucāns.

And now, I have a pleasure to give our floor to the incoming President of the BSPC Ms Carola Veit, President of the Hamburg Parliament, for presentation of incoming presidency.

Please, the floor is yours

Speech by Ms Carola Veit, incoming Chairman of the BSPC on the occasion of the transfer of the Chairmanship of the BSPC

Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Jānis,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to take over the chair and to invite you all to the 26th BSPC Conference in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg next September.

Two months before that, governments meet in Hamburg for the G-20-Summit, so it is a good place also for us, representing the parliaments, to come together for our annual meeting.

Geographically seen, I have to admit that my hometown is not too close to the Baltic sea – but of course it is – from the historical and political point of view.

That is why Hamburg has been a participant of our conference since its foundation in 1991. We have never hosted the annual meeting in all those years, so let's say it is high time to do so.

Living and working together with all Baltic sea neighbours has a long and successful tradition in Hamburg. It has been like this since the end of the Middle Age, when we fought pirates together, and it is still valid.

Of course on the economic field, since Hamburg Port still plays the central role for the economic exchange of the Baltic states with the rest of the world.

But also from the cultural point of view: the founders of our oldest church for example asked the same church architects to construct and build our "St. Katharinen" as the founders of "St. Peter's" Church here in Riga did.

Or Nikolaus Kopernikus: He regretted he had never seen planet Mercury. Well, he was short sighted, which of course is a handicap for an astronomer...

But in our Hamburg Planetarium we have a big, impressing star-show which deals exactly with his subject and with the conclusions made by Nikolaus Kopernikus.

You can see: Hamburg has not only been connected with the Baltic area for centuries – it will always be important for us.

Hamburg offers an attractive environment for work and life, that is strongly characterized by taking over responsibility towards nature.

And we have a highly developed system of public participation and civil legislation that enables people to influence and to take part in political decisions.

All that makes Hamburg the only German city among the „Top Ten“ of the most attractive cities in the world.

You all know Hamburg Port, the biggest one in Germany, but my hometown has several bases for economic power.

Hamburg is one of the leading places for aviation industries, for renewables, and Hamburg is the centre of creative industries in Germany. Medical industries and of course tourism are further key aspects.

And of course there is much more: Just to mention that Hamburg was the first state in Germany to have an overall youth employment agency that provides assistance in education and training – as we just discussed. Or that we provide every child between zero and fourteen (and their parents) with child care that is basically free of charge.

So let me now give you some impressions: (short film on Hamburg)



So we can offer you, dear colleagues, an ideal surrounding for the issues of our BSPC 2017 we just adopted in our work-programme, as there are:

1. democracy and participation, also in connection with youth exchange

2. science, education and youth
3. sustainable tourism

So let me once again say thank you to Jānis and his team as well as to Bodo for hosting and organisation of this year's conference!

See you in Hamburg! Thank you!

Closing Words by Dr Jānis Vucāns, Chair of the BSPC



Thank you, Carola, for your kind words. Thank you for the inspiring presentation of the Hamburg presidency in the BSPC. It's a pleasure for me to hand over the presidency from Latvia to Hamburg. And I hold this symbolic relay baton which traditionally goes from one presidency to another one. Therefore, please, now this is yours.

Symbolically this baton has a power of good thoughts, which means that we wish you a very successful presidency for your year and this is with best wishes. I ask all Germans to help Carola organise this conference because I know how difficult it is, how much it is necessary to have a good team and to have support from all sides is very important in this organisational work. Good luck!

And now in the capacity of outgoing president, I would like to emphasise that it has been a true honor to be the BSPC President and it was a great responsibility for us, the Latvian parliamentarians, to preside over the Baltic

Sea Parliamentary Conference at a time when the Baltic region and the whole of Europe is facing great challenges which affect all of us together as well as everybody individually.

That is why, with a great sense of responsibility, the Latvian presidency strived to reach an agreement on joint policy as implemented by the legislature and the executive power in order to provide the people of our countries with the sense that we are living and will continue to live in a secure and open and unified region.

During this conference, there are prepared materials which are already distributed to you. This is the nutshell from this conference. There is additionally a first edition of the booklet about 25 Years BSPC, but the additional information is that there will be the second edition of this booklet where also material from this 25th conference will be included and Bodo promised that it will be prepared quite soon.

I would like to thank also everyone who has participated in the organisation of this 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. First of all, my thanks go to all of you, the parliamentarians, experts, government representatives, and guests for your active involvement.

Let me express thanks also to the management of the Latvians Parliament, Saeima Administration of Parliament and the staff of the Saeima for the support and assistance in efficiently organising this conference.

Many thanks also to you, Bodo Bahr, and to you, Ingrida Sticenko, and to your teams of Secretariat for your very significant input in our work.

And finally, our special thanks to the interpreters sitting in that room for their amazing job that greatly simplified our work over the past couple of days.

I hope that you had pleasant stay in my country and we Latvians tried to do the best. I now declare the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference closed. Thank you all!



Conference Resolution

Adopted by the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC)

The participants, elected representatives from the Baltic Sea Region States*, assembling in Riga, Latvia, 28-30 August 2016,

taking into account a significant number of acts of international terrorism that have occurred since the last BSPC in Rostock, August 2015,

- condemn terrorism in all its forms as a common threat for our citizens and our shared values,

- deplore the loss of innocent lives, express sympathy and solidarity with the victims of all terrorist attacks, their families and all those who suffered in these inhumane attacks,

- express the crucial need for the joint fight against this major threat to our societies and to uphold our democratic values, while stressing that this fight has to respect the rule of law and civil and human rights, discussing Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, Innovation and Competitiveness in the Baltic Sea Region by linking Education and Labour Market, Employment Opportunities, Labour Mobility and Youth Unemployment, and Sustainable Tourism,

- against the background of the BSPC's Silver Jubilee recognizing the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference's model character as a platform for inter-parliamentary cooperation in the region in the face of the current political climate;

- committed to adapting experiences from the past to a common future so that the integration of the Baltic Sea Region shall be carried on while preserving regional identities;

- convinced that respecting the rights of minorities would provide a benefit for all regions in the Baltic Sea Area;

- welcoming that the implementation of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference resolutions has progressively become more comprehensive;

- affirming the importance of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that is devoted to the people, the protection of the planet, prosperity in harmony with nature, peace and partnership, and believing in the necessity of the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 14 which targets to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;

- welcoming the adoption of the Warsaw Declaration: Regional Responses to Global Challenges at the Meeting of Deputy Foreign Ministers of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) in Warsaw on 8 June, 2016;

- welcoming the adoption of the Declaration Baltic 2030: Renewing the Commitment to Sustainable

Development in the Baltic Sea Region adopted by the high representatives of the CBSS government institutions responsible for sustainable development on 6 June, 2016;

- welcoming the acceptance of Chair's Conclusions of CBSS Science Ministers' Conference called Baltic Science: Renewing the Commitment to Science/Research Joint Actions in the Baltic Sea Region in Kraków, on 16 June, 2016;

- welcoming the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) decision that the Baltic Sea special area for sewage discharges from passenger ships under Annex IV or the MARPOL Convention will take effect by latest 2021 for IMO registered passenger vessels, in line with previous BSPC resolutions;

call on the governments in the Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS and the EU,

Regarding Cooperation in the Region, to

1. welcome mutual cooperation and peaceful solutions of international disputes taking into account best practises for example in the Baltic Sea region;

2. take further steps to re-establish mutual trust and dialogue in the Baltic Sea Region, in particular

*Parliaments and parliamentary institutions:

Baltic Assembly, Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, Denmark, Estonia, European Parliament, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Iceland, Kaliningrad Region, Latvia, Lithuania, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Nordic Council, Norway, Poland, City of St. Petersburg, Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Schleswig-Holstein, Sweden, Åland Islands.

within the Council of the Baltic Sea States in order to ensure the most efficient use of the organization's potential as a forum for multilateral intergovernmental cooperation as well as political and policy dialogue in the Baltic Sea Region;

3. further enhance regional synergy and cohesion through deepening collaboration and structured dialogue between organizations and cooperation formats in the Baltic Sea Region;

4. further promote and encourage public-private practical interaction as a tool for cross-border cooperation, economically viable actions and projects for the benefit of the Baltic Sea Region, taking into account and advancing the success of the Saint Petersburg Initiative and encouraging fuller use of the CBSS Pilot Financial Initiative, if the situation permits;

5. build on success of the CBSS Project Support Facility as a tool for supporting the strategically important project activities in the Baltic Sea Region, taking particular note of Russia's and Finland's voluntary contribution to the Facility for 2016, and to explore the possibilities for a continuation of the CBSS funding facility in a form of the Baltic Sea Cooperation Fund after 2016;

6. further strengthen and develop HELCOM as the main coordinating body in the effort to protect the Baltic marine environment, and to strongly support and encourage a fast implementation of the Marine Litter Action Plan, as well as the implementation of the NOx emission control area Roadmap for the Baltic Sea, and to stress the importance of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) as one of the environmental pillars of

the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region;

7. discuss mutual definitions regarding sustainable development throughout the Baltic Sea region and to support innovations with-in green and blue technologies as well as to create a joint web portal for the Baltic Sea region for sharing good examples regarding research, education and environmental best practices;

8. take the lead and coordinate development of a new regulations framework for autonomous vessels with the aim to make proposals to IMO as well as to support research, technology development and standards for autonomous vessels;

9. continue cooperation between each other in areas where mutual benefits and synergies can be achieved among relevant regional strategies and action plans;

10. against the background of the general competitive situation in the tourism economy as well as the current tense situation in Europe to encourage transnational strategies and long-term commitments for fostering cross-border approaches primarily in the field of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region;

11. closely work together in coping with the ongoing challenges connected with the refugees in the region and to continue to ensure the decent treatment of and the right to safe asylum for these refugees in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region;

12. foster closer cooperation and, as far as necessary, following EU respectively UN declarations in tackling illegal and irregular migration;

13. foster cooperation in the field of research and innovation towards more competitive and sustainable region;

14. pay greater attention to the issue of ensuring predictability that could be strengthened through reciprocal transparency and risk reduction measures. This is important in order to avoid any unnecessary risks and tensions, including with regard to the movement of military vessels and planes in the Baltic Sea Region;

Regarding Competitiveness in the Baltic Sea Region by linking Education and Labour Market, to

15. recognize the need to link education and the labour market more closely;

16. against this background to support the New Skills Agenda for Europe;

17. provide vocational training and skills development opportunities to young people which are geared to the needs of industry and which, by way of generally recognized formal qualifications, form one of the most important prerequisites for workplace success;

18. strengthen the contacts between schools, universities and business in order to make sure that university education and vocational education and training are closely and concretely oriented towards labour market and to identify as well as to prevent labour market mismatches;

19. build on success of the CBSS EuroFaculty programme as an ex-

ample of long-term project-based cooperation in higher education and science for the benefit of the people of the Baltic Sea Region and to explore the possible steps forward for this programme;

20 foster the further development and upgrade of skills (basic and specialized) and employability through establishment of a right for lifelong learning;

21. improve transparency and comparability of qualifications, and thereby to further develop the mutual recognition of formal qualifications;

22. facilitate anticipating labour markets' skills needs;

23. explore the need for a Northern Dimension Partnership for Labour Market and Education to further develop education and labour market in the Baltic Sea Region;

24. support business and education cooperation for a sustainable economic area in the Baltic Sea Region, especially a systematic exchange of expertise in the labour market and education sectors;

25. strengthen the cooperation between social associations, the social partners and governmental organisations in a social dialogue;

26. support research and standardization within cyber security, with focus on maritime context and applications and to foster data governance in order to enable a fair and fertile environment for new data driven services that will capitalize our regions technology excellence and trigger high skill job creation;

27. implement the Baltic Sea Region as a leading learning region;

28. call more intensified "bottom-up" collaboration and networking in order to pursue development and synergies in specific areas of science, research, innovation and clusters collaboration;

29. facilitate continuous dialogue and collaboration in science, research, innovation and higher education using existing political and regional formats and initiatives;

Regarding Employment Opportunities, Labour Mobility and Youth Unemployment, to

30. work towards the creation of a joint, collaborative labour market in the Baltic Sea Region;

31. support a common jobs platform and to raise its awareness in order to harness its full potential for the labour force of the Baltic Sea Region;

32. bring together national employment services and private employment agencies, including the social partners, in order to boost job seekers' chances;

33. use and further develop good approaches such as the EU's Youth Guarantee scheme in order to develop sustainable and broad-based concepts for tackling youth unemployment and promote the transition from school to working life;

34. provide targeted measures to NEETS to integrate them successfully into training and work;

35. promote the integration of the long-term unemployed in the labour market, using tried and tested methods based on a coordinated and individualized approach which includes employers;

36. also use for this purpose good approaches such as the recommendation of the Council of the European Union on the integration of long-term unemployed into the labour market;

37. pursue the goal of stepping up efforts to encourage in particular low-skilled, long-term unemployed and older employees to take part in continuing vocational education and training;

38. further develop the promotion of continuing training and improve the conditions for continuing training provision geared to the acquisition of vocational training qualifications, including for young adults;

39. facilitate mobility especially in cross-border regions and to provide information services to frontier workers who are subject to different national practices and legal systems;

40. utilize cross-border capacities for commuters in education and studies thereby understanding cross-border commuting as a means to reduce the risk of unemployment;

41. make better use of the resources of an ageing society;

42. facilitate cooperation between education and business to enable young people to find work and employers to fill vacancies;

43. rigorously and continuously pursue the goal of reducing youth unemployment and opening up job prospects and life chances for all young people, to use financial funds by the European Union to this and to monitor results;

44. intervene at an early stage to inform young people making the transition from school to work about pathways and possibilities with respect to career development and promote successful entry into the jobs market;

45. strive to ensure fair wages and to work towards the reduction of subcontracted, temporary agency work and temporary service contracts where permanent jobs are possible;

46. educate and integrate refugees into the labour market as soon as possible and to exchange experiences with best practice examples within the Baltic Sea Region. And also embed the social partners comprehensively and at an early stage in these efforts;

47. promote the participation of people with disabilities in working life, where possible in business in the general labour market, having regard for the principle of inclusion in the meaning of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

48. support their public labour administrations to promote the mobility of their citizens in the entire Baltic Sea Region;

Regarding Sustainable Tourism, to

49. against the background of the unique natural environment of the Baltic Sea and the vulnerability of many habitats, to work on cross-border strategies in order to minimize existing conflicts between tourism, marine and coastal protection;

50. strengthen the rural development and agricultural production in accordance with the environment in such a way, that the natural landscape and sound environment as precondition for a sustainable tourism in rural areas are protected and restored;

51. support transnational strategies which promote the development of tourism in the Baltic Sea Region and to include the creation of synergies between projects and a communication strategy for the Policy Area Tourism;

52. ensure the better inclusion of all Baltic Sea countries in joint projects and strategies as well as of the private sector to improve direct economic impact;

53. work towards increased coherence with regard to approaches to Sustainable Tourism in the region;

54. order to help mobilize the full potential of Sustainable Tourism to establish the Baltic Sea Region as a common and coherent tourism destination;

55. jointly work towards a common understanding of Sustainable Tourism and to strive to establish joint marketing and joint labels;

56. support the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum and its newly-established project for a permanent platform for information and know-how exchange – the Baltic Sea Tourism Center – as coordinator for the implementation of activities on Sustainable Tourism in the region;

57. especially support the application for the 2nd call by the Baltic Sea Tourism Center for financial support via the EU-INTERREG-Programme South Baltic 2014-2020 to achieve the establishment of an operational

service unit for Sustainable Tourism cooperation and permanent platform for information and know-how exchange at transnational level, the so-called “Baltic Sea Tourism Center”;

58. support the objectives of the Policy Area Tourism in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to facilitate and strengthen the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum process as well as to facilitate coordination with stakeholders through joint workshops;

59. facilitate the networking and clustering of tourism stakeholders;

60. reinvigorate and update existing but untapped knowledge in the Baltic Sea Region about Sustainable Tourism, for instance the Agora Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region;

61. work towards creating longer-term impacts and benefits, thus increasing public acceptance;

Furthermore, the Conference Decides to

62. welcome with gratitude the kind offer of the Parliament of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg to host the 26th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Hamburg on 3 - 5 September 2017.





Conference Site University of Latvia Academic Centre of Natural Sciences in
Riga, Latvia, on 28th – 30th August 2016



Meet you next time in Germany, hosting the 26th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in
Hamburg on 3rd – 5th September 2017



Impressum

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