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**Council of the Baltic Sea States**

**Communication Strategy**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Successful communication is characterized by openness and willingness throughout the whole organisation to engage internally and with the outside world. Communication is a management issue and must be integrated into operations and planning from the offset of all CBSS activities. The Media & Communications Unit at the CBSS Secretariat is responsible for implementing the CBSS Communication Strategy.

## **CONTEXT**

The CBSS Communication Strategy builds on previous strategies and communication guidelines of the CBSS. It sets out a vision, aims and objectives for CBSS communication activities until 2020 and beyond.

In 2017 the CBSS marked its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. During the last few decades our region has shifted, and with it the communication landscape.

The CBSS communication Strategy 2018 seeks to look to the future, to be authentic in our communication and map the road ahead for the organisation to re-iterate its status and role in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond, through engaging new target audiences, media outlets and further embracing social media tools.

## **MISSION**

“Reiterate and strengthen the role of the CBSS as a main player for Baltic Sea Region cooperation through increased visibility. “

### **Mission statement**

“CBSS – building collaboration & trust in the Baltic Sea Region for the future.”

## **AIMS**

### **Recommit to the ethos behind the founding of the organisation.**

The region today is not where we thought it would be back in 1992. The founding of the organisation acted upon a historical moment in time to build a common narrative, keeping in mind the different societal experiences of the past on both sides of the Baltic Sea. It was an idea to create a meeting point where a shared vision can be established, based on rule of law, care for our communities, economic development and environmental protection. These challenges are still with us, hence it is essential to continue collaborating to live up to the message set out by our founders.

### **Position ourselves as a strong voice within regional and global frameworks.**

In an interconnected world, it is important for us as a Council to be seen, heard and to be a voice for the Baltic Sea Region on the international arena.

### **Strengthen CBSS and its work in the Member States**

Increased visibility in the Member States through direct dissemination of information about the work of the Expert Groups and Task Forces.

### **Build a regional narrative based on common traits and interests.**

There are many facets of the Baltic Sea Region that unite us. We want to explore and communicate this commonality and points of connection through visual and written work.

### **Enhance cooperation between organisations in the Region.**

Stimulate and benefit from the growing level of integrity of the BSR by promoting enhanced cooperation between organisations and formats thus facilitating implementation of common goals and objectives.

### **Maintain an open dialogue and cooperation on equal terms.**

The CBSS is a consensus organisation, where each country, no matter their size, has an equal voice at the table. While we don't always agree, we value every opinion and try to find a common ground.

### **Explain our work on topics which answer the long-term priorities of the organisation.**

We need to move forward from the policy jargon we have grown accustomed to within the Baltic Sea Region and present the work of the organisation in simple and relatable terms by thematic area.

**Communicate and advertise the role of CBSS as a donor organisation in the Baltic Sea Region in the framework of the Project Support Facility (PSF).**

Since 2013, the CBSS has funded over 30 projects, resulting in a total of 2 million Euros to support Baltic Sea Region cooperation.

**Put forward the importance of continued collaboration on the regional level.**

The proximity of our countries, similar structures, cultures and high ambitions among member states to profile their achievements, means that it is quite easy to multiply the effects of our work on topics which all our countries are grappling with.

**Engage new target audiences for the organisation who would benefit from cooperation within CBSS frameworks.**

After 25 years of doing something, there is always risk of getting complacent. To move forward and keep our work innovative and current, we need to involve new actors and communication arena's that can bring their expertise and perspectives to our work.

## **OBJECTIVES**

**Review, evaluate and present the current state of affairs in the region** through commissioning studies (along the lines of the CBSS long-term priorities), campaigning and creating a glossary of Baltic Sea Region terminology.

**Increase our liaison with other regional and international entities**, especially EU institutions, Council of Europe and the UN through intensified work and targeted meetings.

**Prepare guidelines for crisis communication** across the organisation.

**Media train** all CBSS Secretariat senior staff members, as well as the members of the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials.

**Introduce a new tradition of coordination meetings** between the Public Relations Departments of the CBSS Member States Foreign Ministries.

**Create brand ambassadors** to multiply the CBSS message.

**Organise themed gatherings in an informal setting** for different interest groups, where views can be exchanged openly without a formal agenda.

## **KEY MESSAGES**

25 years after its establishment, the CBSS remains the only regional organisation to have all 11 countries from the Baltic Sea Region as members, giving it the power to bring EU, EEA and non-EU Member States to a common table.

Taking into consideration regional realities, we maintain open lines of communication and build bridges on topics of common interest.

In a globalised world, to stand the test of time, the CBSS Member States need to work together, building respect and trust their neighbours. To this end, the CBSS provides a platform for regular exchange, projects and collaborations.

The CBSS addresses global questions on a local level. These include politically and practically translating the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, the Palermo Protocol and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, into regional actions on the ground.

The CBSS is the leading voice and a pioneer on topics such as child rights, human trafficking, climate change and civil protection in the region.

The CBSS fills a gap through the Project Support Facility grants that support local grassroot projects and build capacity for organisations in the region.

The CBSS coordinates a significant number of networks within the areas of its three long-term priorities: Regional Identity, Sustainable & Prosperous Region and Safe & Secure Region.

The CBSS is the hub for regional cooperation activities in the Baltic Sea Region. Its best practices and policy proposals are viewed as exemplary throughout the world.

## **TARGET AUDIENCES**

### **1. Policymakers and government officials**

CBSS Member State Officials and EU officials are the main transmitters and multipliers for the CBSS work and message. Keeping individuals within this group in the loop and up-to-date on CBSS developments helps to generate support for the work of the organisation and more understanding of Baltic Sea Region issues in general.

Well-informed policymakers engaged in the Baltic Sea Region can help to promote BSR topics in their home countries, as well as in the international arena.

### **2. Baltic Sea Region organisations and interest groups**

To multiply the effects of our work in the region, collaboration is key. To this end it is vital for us to keep our partners, counterparts and Sister Councils, NGOs, parliamentarians and monitoring bodies informed of our work, so that common grounds for cooperation can be established.

### **3. Academics and the research community**

The academic community in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond provide us with much needed research and evaluation of the progress in the region in our fields of interest, as well as paving the way for what needs to be done to future-proof our region. The CBSS should provide space to promote their work, as well as to incorporate their work in our communication on the region.

### **4. Business sector with an interest in the Baltic Sea Region**

Outreach to businesses and industries with an interest in the Baltic Sea Region, (e.g. resource-efficiency, maritime economy, travel industry and others) helps fulfil the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as create a dynamic and interconnected economic system in the region.

### **5. The next generation**

The future of our region lies in the hands of the tech-savvy and globally-orientated young people up to 30 years of age. We need to increase their interest in regional collaboration and empower them to carry on the vision and mission set out by the founders of the CBSS.

### **6. Baltic Sea Region inhabitants and General Public**

As the end users of our work in the region, it is essential for us to keep the Baltic Sea Region inhabitants and general public informed about our work.

## **COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS**

### **Website**

The CBSS website [www.cbss.org](http://www.cbss.org) is the main hub and most up-to-date channel of the work of the Council. The website should act as an easily accessible and comprehensive overview of what the organisation does on a daily basis, how it operates and who it involves. Its visuals, language and tone should support the overall messaging of the organisation.

All other CBSS-affiliated websites should bear the CBSS logo and support the mission set out above.

### **Traditional media outlets:**

#### **Print media, radio & television**

Traditional media carry with them a credibility and status. Reaching out to journalists and engaging is one of the focuses of our outward communication.

### **New media outlets:**

#### **Social media, influencers & bloggers**

Today social media provides an outlet for almost anyone to make their voice heard. One of the core pillars of CBSS communication should be to be transparent and visible on these channels, to use its potential to become a broadcaster for our work, and to engage the pioneers of this landscape in our work.

### **Outreach events and initiatives**

One of the most effective ways to build awareness of our work is getting people together in the same room and engaging them in a dialogue on a given topic. Open seminars and breakfast briefings on topics linked to our work, such as climate change, child rights, countering human trafficking, civil protection and culture can provide this space for interested parties and journalists alike.

## **METRICS**

All CBSS communications activities benefit from a continuous internal monitoring, as well as evaluation. A *Communication in Review* is undertaken on an annual basis and published for the Committee of Senior Officials.

### **Google Analytics**

This provides an overview of the visits to the CBSS website, as well as our affiliated sites.

### **Facebook Insights**

An overview of the visits to our various Facebook pages.

### **Twitter internal analytics & Twitter Ad analytics**

An overview of our Twitter presence.

### **MailChimp analytics**

An overview of the numbers of readers and subscribers to the *Balticness Light* newsletter.

### **MyNewsdesk media review**

An overview of the number of viewers of the CBSS press releases, as well as mentions of the CBSS in the media.