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## Press release

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### **Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2023: Making Our Democracies More Resilient**

*At the upcoming Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2023 in Berlin, young individuals from the Baltic Sea Region will be collaborating with parliamentarians to address the resilience of democracies and critical issues threatening democratic stability.*

The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2023, or BSPYF, which will be held at the Bundestag, the German parliament, in Berlin on 25-27 August 2023, is expected to provide a dynamic platform for young individuals to engage with seasoned political figures and parliamentarians from the entire Baltic Sea Region, paving the way for more inclusive and resilient democratic systems.

“By addressing critical issues like digital resilience, youth participation, extremism, and social inequality, the forum will mark a significant step towards strengthening democracies across the Baltic Sea Region,” said Aline Mayr, the youth policy coordinator at the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), a co-organiser of the event.

She also emphasised the importance of involving young people in policy-making. “Young people need to be given a seat at the policy-making table, especially when it comes to the future of our democracies.”

About 50 young participants from the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), most of them already active in national and regional politics and policy-making, are expected to attend the BSPYF 2023, titled “Democracy under siege – How do we make democracies more resilient?”. They will notably develop concrete recommendations on achieving resilient societies during working sessions with parliamentarians from various BSR countries.

The recommendations will be presented at the upcoming annual gathering of the [Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference](#), or BSPC, due to be held 27-29 August 2023 in the “Bundestag”, the German parliament, in Berlin.

The recommendations from the young people are anticipated to guide future policies and actions in the BSR, contributing to a more resilient and inclusive democratic landscape:

- Improving digital resilience: In a world increasingly reliant on the internet, concerns that threaten democratic stability such as fake news, conspiracy theories, and hate speech will notably feature on the agenda of the forum.
- Engaging the youth: Acknowledging the need for more youth representation and engagement in politics, the conference will explore strategies to incentivise young people's participation in both formal and informal political processes.
- Social division and polarisation: The rise of right-wing extremism, social division and polarisation, and the blurring lines between extremist groups and mainstream politics will be a topic of discussion, with participants expected to focus on promoting a respectful and peaceful coexistence based on shared democratic values restoring common consensus, while combating extremism, and preventing its emergence.
- Reducing social inequality: Tackling the growing socioeconomic inequality that threatens democratic legitimacy will also be a priority, emphasising the need for policies that address the unequal distribution of political power and wealth, and ensuring that democracy serves everyone, regardless of social status.

The young participants of the BSPYF 2023 will also be hosted by the German President, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, at his official residence in Schloss Bellevue.

The forum is co-organised by the German Bundestag, which currently holds the Presidency of the BSPC, and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS).

The BSPYF 2023 is part of the wider effort led by the CBSS and supported by the BSPC to promote meaningful youth participation in policy-making in the Baltic Sea Region. To that end, the CBSS has recently launched the [Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum](#), where the outcomes of the BSPYF 2023 will also be considered.

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Note to editors:

1. **Media participation and interview requests:** Media access is granted, but media representatives must possess a valid press accreditation from the German Bundestag to attend. More on accreditation procedures can be found at [www.bundestag.de/akkreditierung](http://www.bundestag.de/akkreditierung) (in German) and <https://www.bundestag.de/en/press/press> (in English). Media representatives are invited to contact the CBSS or the Bundestag (see contacts above) for background information or interview requests.

2. **Photos:** Official photos of the BSPYF 2023 will be published on <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cbsssecretariat/albums/72177720310668339>. Additionally, on 28 August 2023, post the opening speeches of the BSPC 2023, there will be a group photo in the plenary hall. This moment can be captured from the press gallery (accredited media only).
3. **About the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS):** Established in 1992 by the Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Sea countries, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is an intergovernmental organisation comprising 11 members: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the European Union. It fosters collaboration and trust in the region while navigating new geopolitical landscapes. Serving as a platform for political dialogue, the CBSS coordinates with various stakeholders such as ministries, national agencies, IGOs, and NGOs to pursue its three long-term priorities: Regional Identity, Safe & Secure Region, and Sustainable & Prosperous Region. The organisation is currently focused on action areas including human trafficking, child protection, youth, civil protection, climate change, sustainable maritime economy, and sustainable development. The CBSS's strength lies in its involvement in both regional policy-making and implementation, ensuring effective translation of global goals from organisations like the UN and EU into actionable policies and projects at the Baltic Sea macro-regional level.
4. **CBSS website:** <https://cbss.org/our-work/>
5. **About the BSPC:** The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) was established in 1991 as a forum for political dialogue between parliamentarians from the Baltic Sea Region. Gathering parliamentarians from eleven national parliaments, eleven regional parliaments and five parliamentary organisations from the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), the BSPC strives at enhancing the visibility of the region and aims at raising awareness and opinion on issues of current political interest. It also promotes and drives various initiatives and efforts to support a sustainable environmental, social and economic development of the BSR.
6. Germany is currently holding the rotating presidency of the BSPC, and the "Bundestag", or German parliament, is responsible for the operational planning and execution of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the BSPC in Berlin on 27–29 August 2023.
7. The BSPC is hosted in the plenary hall of the German Bundestag, located in the Reichstag building. Accredited members of the press are requested to occupy the press gallery in the plenary hall.
8. **BSPC website:** <https://www.bspc.net>
9. **About the BSPYF:** The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum (BSPYF) is a joint initiative by the CBSS and the BSPC that brings together young individuals and parliamentarians from the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) to engage in dialogues and discussions on various pressing political and social issues. Held since 2021 in conjunction with the annual conference of the BSPC, it aims at fostering democratic participation, political understanding, and collaboration among youth. The traditional outcome of the BSPYF is a policy recommendation paper containing the views and desires of the young participants, developed with the guidance of the parliamentarians, and which is presented to BSR parliamentarians at the BSPC Annual Conference.
10. Official titles of the BSPYF 2023 sessions and supervisors (tbc):
  - a. Improving Digital Resilience – Conspiracy Theories and Hate Speech as a Threat to Democratic Societies. Supervised by Anna Kassautzki (MP, Germany) & Jānis Vucāns (MP, Latvia)
  - b. Increasing Youth Participation and Engaging Young People in Political Decision-Making. Supervised by Wille Valve (regional MP, Åland) & Lene Westgaard-Halle (MP, Norway)
  - c. Social Division and Polarisation in the face of Right-Wing Extremism – How Do We Stand Together and Find Common Ground? Supervised by Johannes Schrapf (MP, Germany and BSPC Chair) & Philipp da Cunha (regional MP, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)
  - d. Sustaining Faith in Democratic Institutions by Reducing Social Inequality. Supervised by Henrik Møller (MP, Denmark) & Hanna Katrín Friðriksson (MP, Iceland)
11. The final **youth policy recommendation paper from the BSPYF 2023** will be published on [www.cbss.org](http://www.cbss.org) once presented at the BSPC 2023.
12. A **joint resolution from the BSPC 2023** is also anticipated at the conference's conclusion. It will be accessible on both [www.bundestag.de/bspc](http://www.bundestag.de/bspc) and [www.bspc.net](http://www.bspc.net).
13. **BSPYF website:** <https://cbss.org/event/baltic-sea-parliamentary-youth-forum-2023/>