



German Presidency **2022-2023**

**Annual Report of the German Presidency
of the Council of the Baltic Sea States**



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Presidency Foreword

by Florian Rudolph
Chair of the German CBSS Presidency 2022-2023

The German Presidency of the CBSS was marked by the decision, taken during the previous Norwegian Presidency, to suspend the participation of the Russian Federation followed by the withdrawal of the Russian Federation from the CBSS in light of the unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against democratic and sovereign Ukraine.

While the remaining member states reiterated their conviction that cooperation with the Russian Federation was no longer possible under these circumstances, they confirmed their will to jointly tackle common challenges in the region through political dialogue and practical cooperation among like-minded democratic partners.

In this context, the German Presidency addressed three specific priorities:

1. the challenges posed by the thousands of tons of **conventional and chemical munitions dumped in the Baltic Sea**,
2. the region's great **potential for renewable energy, in particular offshore wind**, which can make an important contribution to our efforts to combat climate change, increase energy security and independence and reduce energy prices,
3. and the value of **meaningful youth participation** on all levels in the Baltic Sea Region.

Work continued in the well-established experts groups to promote the three long-term CBSS priorities Sustainable and Prosperous Area, Safe and Secure Area, Regional Identity. Exchange with other regional actors, for example HELCOM, on topics of common interest served to provide synergies in regional cooperation.

The Ministerial Session in Wismar on 1 and 2 June 2023 provided an opportunity for open and trustful exchange on the topics of strengthening resilience and energy security in the Baltic Sea Region. In their joint political declaration adopted in Wismar, the Foreign Ministers condemned Russia's war in Ukraine and, for the first time, acknowledged the shared challenges emanating from underwater munitions dumped in the Baltic Sea. From Wismar, the Foreign Ministers sent a signal of unity and strength and charted the course for the future development of the CBSS as a platform for political dialogue and practical cooperation among like-minded democratic partners in the Baltic Sea Region.



Florian Rudolph
Head of the Northern Europe (EU) division
German Federal Foreign Office



I firmly believe that all democratic Baltic Sea states must stand together – now more than ever. [...] This region is strategically important and holds enormous potential, for example in terms of our energy supply.

— Annalena Baerbock,
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany

The German Presidency of the CBSS 2022-2023

On 1 July 2022, under the lead of Annalena Baerbock, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Germany took over the presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) from Norway, for a tenure of one year. The German leadership notably set its sights on three priorities during its presidency: offshore wind energy, the issue of dumped munitions, and the role and interests of the youth in the Baltic Sea Region. Additionally, Germany pledged to uphold and advance the trio of the CBSS long-term priorities: Regional Identity, Safe & Secure Region, and Sustainable & Prosperous Region.



Key achievements of the German Presidency

Expert Round Table on Underwater Munitions in the Baltic Sea

In cooperation with the secretariats of CBSS and HELCOM, the German Presidency and Land Schleswig-Holstein hosted an Expert Round Table on dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea on 12 and 13 December 2022 in Kiel. This workshop brought together a wide range of experts with backgrounds in research, politics and business from almost all CBSS member states for a multidisciplinary exchange on the challenges posed by underwater munitions in the Baltic Sea.

Joint HELCOM/H9–CBSS CSO–DG MARE meeting

In order to further coordinate the follow-up process on the issue of underwater munitions in the Baltic Sea, the German Presidency hosted an informal joint CBSS – HELCOM – DG MARE meeting. This meeting

held online on 24 April 2023 was chaired by the German CBSS Presidency and attended by the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials members (CSO), the HELCOM (H9) Head of Delegations (HoD), the secretariats of CBSS and HELCOM, as well as the EU Commission's DG MARE.

Joint position on Underwater Munitions in the Wismar Declaration

In the political declaration of the CBSS Foreign Ministers (Wismar Declaration), all CBSS member states for the first time acknowledged the environmental, human safety, security and economic risks emanating from the thousands of tons of conventional and chemical munitions dumped in the Baltic Sea. It was the aim of the German Presidency to raise awareness of the challenges connected to underwater munitions dumped in the Baltic Sea.

Berlin Declaration on Baltic Offshore Wind by CBSS Foreign Ministers

Under the German CBSS Presidency, Foreign Ministers of the CBSS member states adopted the Berlin Declaration on Baltic Offshore Wind. This political declaration emphasises the need to develop offshore wind energy in the Baltic Sea particularly from a security policy point of view. In the declaration, the member states commit to ambitious expansion targets for offshore wind, including a sevenfold increase in offshore wind power capacity in the Baltic Sea by 2030.

Baltic Offshore Wind Forum

Together with Denmark, the German CBSS Presidency hosted the Baltic Offshore Wind Forum at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin on 9 May 2023. Approximately 300 participants from politics, administration, business and civil society of nearly all CBSS member states exchanged views on offshore wind energy generation. German Foreign Minister

The German CBSS Presidency 2022-2023 Priorities

Offshore Wind Energy



All CBSS member states share the goal of becoming climate neutral by 2050 at the latest and are committed to strengthening cooperation in the field of renewable energy. The Baltic Sea Region offers great potential for developing renewable energies, especially through offshore wind turbines. Exploiting this potential in an environmentally friendly manner could make an important contribution to our efforts to combat climate change, increase energy security and independence and reduce energy prices. What is more, with the focus on energy security triggered by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, developing renewable energy sources to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian fossil fuels has gained particular urgency.

Underwater Munitions



Over 400,000 tons of conventional and 40,000 tons of chemical munition dumped in the Baltic Sea pose a serious environmental, human safety, security and economic hazard. In addition, they can pose a risk to marine life, fishing and navigation, impede the installation of offshore energy infrastructure and may negatively affect aquaculture, tourism and other sectors of the blue economy. Building on previous work done by the German HELCOM presidency 2020-2022 and the Norwegian CBSS Presidency 2021-2022, the German CBSS Presidency intended to further raise awareness of the issue and create a common understanding of the impacts and challenges associated with munitions waste in the sea.

Youth Participation



Germany attaches great importance to personal encounters between young people from different countries in the Baltic Sea Region and the participation of young people in shaping responses to the challenges faced by the region. As many of the issues addressed within the framework of Baltic Sea cooperation affect youth directly or indirectly, this is a cross-cutting issue relevant to the entire spectrum of CBSS work.

Annalena Baerbock, together with her Danish and Finnish colleagues Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Pekka Haavisto, opened the Forum.

Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF)

In order to advance youth participation in the Baltic Sea Region, the German Presidency supported the creation of the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF). This is the first time a permanent focal point to coordinate youth activities across the region and across multiple cooperation formats has been established. The BSRYF develops and organises appropriate formats for youth encounters and participation in the Baltic Sea region, such as the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD) and the CBSS Youth Ministerial. Elections for the BSRYF's Committee of Youth Representatives were held in March 2023.

Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD)

The 9th Edition of the BSYD on Civil Security was organised by CBSS and Hamburg Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS). From 21 to 25 November 2022, 20 young participants from around the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) discussed youth engagement and developed an Engagement Roadmap for the BSR in the field of Civil Security.

CBSS Youth Ministerial

In the run-up to the Ministerial Session in Wismar, the Federal Foreign Office hosted the CBSS Youth Ministerial together with the BSRYF. 30 young people from the CBSS member states met in Berlin from 21 to 25 May 2023 for a project workshop on the topic of societal resilience. The young adults developed concrete project ideas on combating disinformation, increasing youth involvement in civil defence, as well as on preventing and detecting human trafficking. Five of the young participants presented the results of the CBSS Youth Ministerial to the Foreign Ministers in Wismar.

Key CBSS events 2022-2023

CBSS Ministerial Session 2023

📍 Wismar, Germany
1–2 June 2023

Hosted by the German Presidency of the CBSS and attended by the Foreign Ministers and other high-level representatives of the Baltic Sea countries, the 20th CBSS Ministerial Session in Wismar, Germany on 1–2 June 2023 reinforced support for renewable energy, particularly offshore wind, and the instrumental role of youth in the region's future. The Council condemned Russia's military actions in Ukraine, standing in solidarity with Ukraine and criticising Belarus's complicity. Given Europe's fossil fuel dependency, the CBSS highlighted the need for climate neutrality by 2050 and spotlighted the potential of offshore wind for energy security and climate change mitigation. The Council accentuated strengthening the societal resilience of the Baltic Sea Region against external shocks, including misinformation, and highlighted cooperative initiatives for managing dumped underwater munitions. Recognising youth's pivotal contributions, the Council lauded the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum and CBSS Youth Ministerial's outcomes. The session, praising Germany's successful CBSS presidency, welcomed Finland as the next presidency holder from July 2023.

25th Anniversary of the CBSS Secretariat

📍 Stockholm, Sweden
25 April 2023

On 25 April 2023, the CBSS Secretariat marked its 25th anniversary with a celebratory forum at its premises in Stockholm. This commemorative event delved into the history, legacies and regional influence of the CBSS through a series of panel discussions. Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tobias Billström, lauded the CBSS's response to Baltic Sea Region challenges, underscoring its contributions in fostering people-to-people contacts, enhancing civil security, and supporting Ukraine. Ambassador Catalina Cullas, representing the German CBSS Presidency, highlighted the special role of the CBSS in regional development. The "Historical waves" panel, with former CBSS Director Generals Maira Mora, Jan Lundin, Gabriele Kotschau and Hannu Halinen, alongside youth representative Silva Laure, retraced the organisation's milestones. Another panel on "Successful Collaboration in the Baltic Sea Region" featured Erik von Pistohlkors from the EU Commission, Kurt Bratteby from the Swedish Institute, and Bengt Sundelius from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), discussing impactful regional cooperation strategies. Coinciding with Sweden's EU Presidency, the event drew about 100 attendees, spanning Swedish officials, embassy representatives and various Stockholm-based stakeholders.

EUSBSR Annual Forum 2022

📍 Lappeenranta, Finland
28–29 September 2022

In September 2022, over 400 policy makers convened at the Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in Lappeenranta, Finland, to address pressing Baltic Sea Region issues like energy, climate change, and security. Co-organised by the CBSS and partnered with the City of Lappeenranta and Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the forum emphasised the EUSBSR action plan priorities: Saving the Sea, Connecting the Region, and Increasing Prosperity. Notably, youth representatives presented the Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2022, formulated with insights from over 200 young individuals and outcomes from the preceding Baltic Sea Youth Camp 2022, also held in Lappeenranta as a prelude to the forum. Besides being a co-organiser, the CBSS moderated the parallel session on combating climate change. Noteworthy forum attendees included Finnish Ministers for Foreign Affairs Pekka Haavisto and for the Interior Krista Mikkonen. At the forum, participants were repeatedly urged to step up their efforts in implementing the agreed-on strategies and action plans of the EUSBSR. The EUSBSR, initiated in 2009, stands as the EU's pioneering macro-regional strategy, with the CBSS co-leading its policy area on civil security, PA Secure.



CBSS Ministerial Session 2023: The CBSS Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives in Wismar



25th anniversary of the CBSS Secretariat: Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Tobias Billström (c) and CBSS Secretariat staff



EUSBSR Annual Forum 2022 in Lappeenranta, Finland: Youth representative Silva Laure on stage with officials from Finland and Germany

Key CBSS events 2022-2023

Expert Round Table on Underwater Munitions in the Baltic Sea

 Kiel, Germany
12–13 December 2022

This multi-disciplinary dialogue in Kiel, Germany brought together over 40 specialists from across the Baltic Sea Region with backgrounds in research, politics and business for an exchange on the challenges posed by submerged munition waste in the Baltic Sea. Jointly organised by the German Federal Foreign Office and the Land Schleswig-Holstein in cooperation with the CBSS and select HELCOM contracting parties, the roundtable aimed to address the challenges posed by the over 400,000 tons of conventional and 40,000 tons of chemical munition dumped in the Baltic Sea. These pose serious environmental, human safety, security and economic hazards, as well as a risk to marine life, fishing and navigation. In addition they impede the installation of offshore energy infrastructure and may negatively affect aquaculture, tourism and other sectors of the blue economy. Raising awareness of the issue and creating a common understanding of the impacts and challenges associated with munitions waste in the Baltic Sea was one of the German CBSS Presidency's core priorities and built on previous work done by the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, the German HELCOM presidency 2020-2022 and the Norwegian CBSS Presidency 2021-2022.

Baltic Offshore Wind Forum

 Berlin, Germany
9 May 2023

Jointly organised by the German Federal Foreign Office, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the German Energy Agency (dena), the forum brought together approximately 300 participants from politics, administration, business and civil society of nearly all CBSS member states to exchange views on the potential and promise of offshore wind energy generation in the Baltic Sea Region. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock opened the forum together with her Danish and Finnish colleagues Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Pekka Haavisto. Minister Baerbock highlighted the significance of renewable energy in enhancing regional security, as energy transition policies have become synonymous with security strategies amid geopolitical tensions arising from Russia's war in Ukraine. The forum culminated in the adoption of the Berlin Declaration on Baltic Offshore Wind by the CBSS Foreign Ministers, who expressed their commitment to reduce dependence on Russian energy through rapid energy transition. With new offshore wind farms, the Baltic Sea could potentially deliver 93 GW of energy. The forum emphasised the importance of partnering with the private sector and recognised the CBSS's role in realising the Berlin Declaration's objectives.

CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023

 Berlin, Germany
21–25 May 2023

Held in Berlin from 21-25 May 2023, the CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023, co-hosted by the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the German Federal Foreign Office, highlighted the crucial role of youth in building resilient societies in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). Attracting 30 young delegates from CBSS Member States, the event facilitated active youth dialogue on regional challenges, resulting in a project proposal and a youth position paper, which were both presented at the CBSS Ministerial Session in June 2023. Participants introduced four project proposals targeting societal resilience, with the winning proposal on combatting disinformation being supported by a 5,000 euro seed grant. Other projects addressed human trafficking, climate change, and civil security. Additionally, delegates built on a position paper from the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum, expressing collective positions and recommended actions for the CBSS. Supported by the German Federal Foreign Office, the conference echoed Germany's commitment to youth participation in the Baltic region. The outcomes of the Youth Ministerial showcased the immense potential of youth to contribute to the development and implementation of policies in the BSR.



Expert Round Table on Underwater Munitions in the Baltic Sea in Kiel, Germany



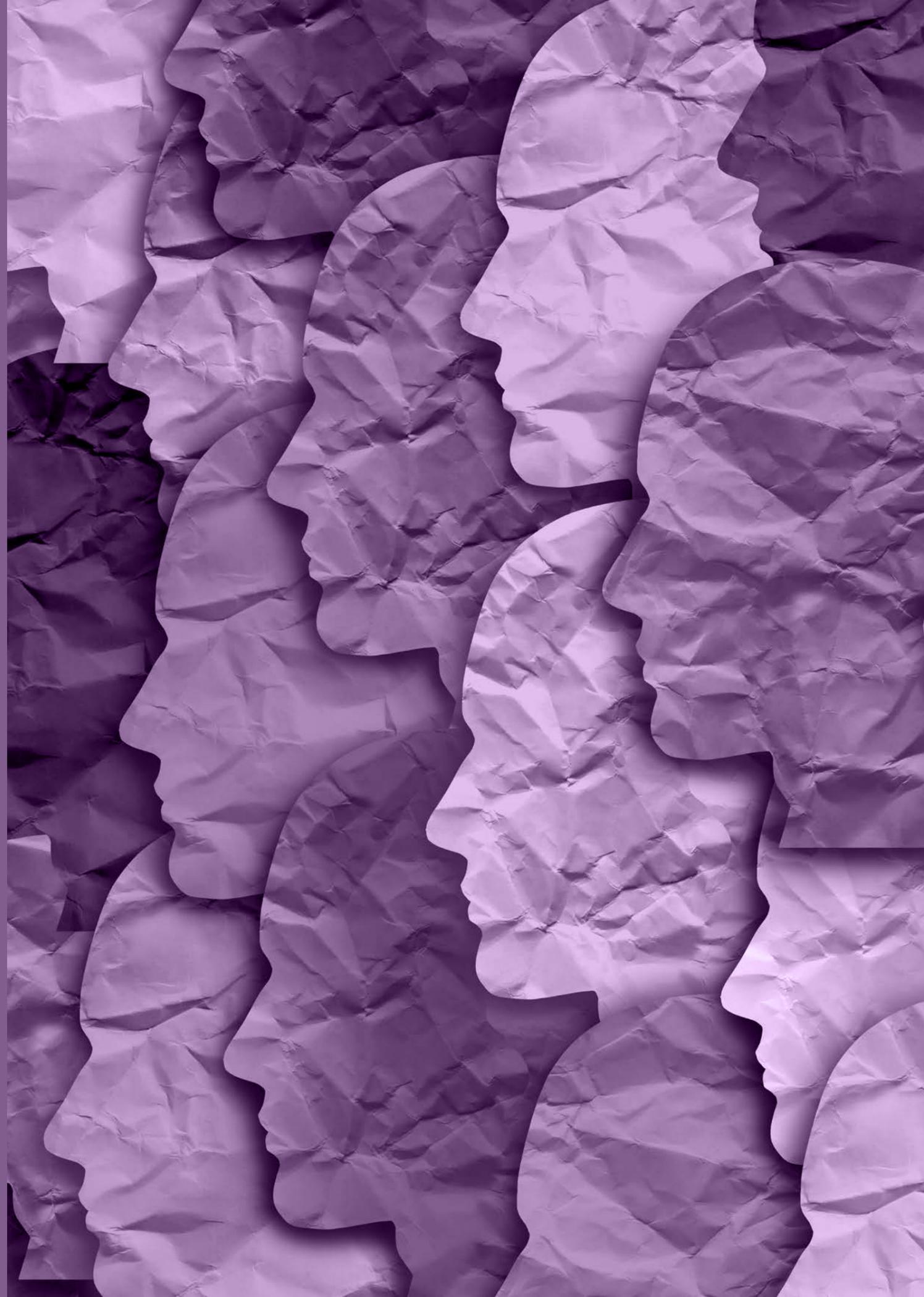
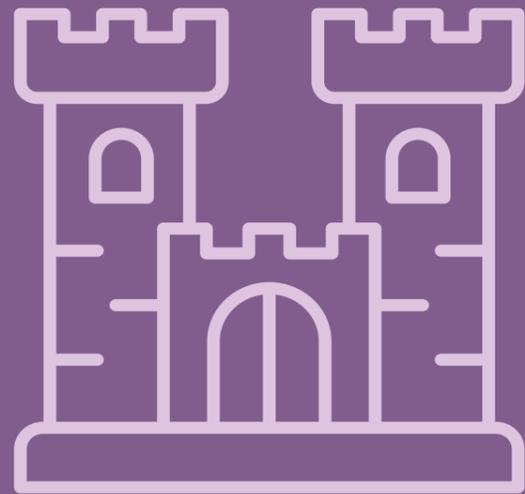
Baltic Offshore Wind Forum: Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Germany and Finland



CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023: Youth representatives from the Baltic Sea Region in Berlin, Germany

Regional Identity

The CBSS fosters a regional identity by promoting belonging and a sense of “balticness”, cultural understanding, and mutual respect among the CBSS member states and citizens of the Baltic Sea Region, supporting initiatives that encourage dialogue and cooperation. Focus areas include **culture**, **higher-education**, and **youth**.



Culture

Overview

On culture, in the 2022-2023 German Presidency period, the CBSS particularly focussed on the approval and the launch of the BSR Cultural Pearls project, a CBSS-led initiative on culture-driven social resilience. Funded by the EU's Interreg BSR programme and with a total budget of 3.5M euros, BSR Cultural Pearls will contribute to strengthening social resilience in Baltic Sea Region municipalities by harnessing the potential of local assets of culture. Furthermore, the CBSS was granted observer status in the EUSBSR Policy Area Culture (PA Culture) in April 2023. Besides attending the Steering Group meeting of PA Culture in November 2022, and as an additional token of increased cooperation between CBSS and PA Culture, the CBSS hosted the Steering Group meeting of PA Culture at its premises in April 2023. The CBSS also participated in the annual meeting of the EU's Creative Europe programme and hosted one of its receptions.

Key events

Launch of BSR Cultural Pearls

The BSR Cultural Pearls project, led by the CBSS and co-funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, was launched in Stockholm at the premises of the CBSS on 29-30 March 2023. Aimed at enhancing social resilience in Baltic Sea Region municipalities through culture, the three-year initiative offers various tools, mentorship, and an award for outstanding efforts.

Baltic Region Heritage Committee Annual Forum

On 12-13 October 2022 in Kaunas, Lithuania, the Baltic Region Heritage Committee (BRHC) met under the CBSS German Presidency with its Chair Matthias Maluck of the German Archaeological State Department of Schleswig-Holstein. The committee notably presented their work — spanning underwater, coastal, and 20th Century built cultural heritage — and preparations for the 2023 BRHC Cultural Heritage Forum in Poland, following up on the 2021 Oslo forum's climate-focused deliberations.

Project updates

BSR Cultural Pearls

The BSR Cultural Pearls project, launched in March 2023 and co-financed by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, is led by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) alongside 11 partners. This three-year project aims to bolster social resilience in smaller BSR cities by leveraging local cultural and creative resources. Key aspects of the project include a database of successful culture-driven social resilience initiatives and tools for municipalities to devise their own social resilience action plans. The project's highlight is the BSR Cultural Pearls Award, which recognises outstanding culture-driven social resilience plans and work done by municipalities and awarding them the title of "BSR Cultural Pearl".



The CBSS & culture

The Baltic Sea Region's cultural cooperation is rooted in its rich diversity and shared heritage, crucial for forging a unified regional identity. Promoting cultural understanding strengthens the sense of regional belonging and of "Balticness", thus enhancing collaboration on other topics too. The CBSS intensifies this by building robust connections with other Baltic Sea cultural networks. Within the CBSS framework, prioritizing culture enhances visibility and inclusivity, transforming creativity into tangible outcomes. The CBSS's cultural endeavours encompass heritage preservation, modern culture promotion, linking culture to policy-making in general, and backing for Cultural and Creative Industries.



Launch and first partner meeting of the BSR Cultural Pearls project at the premises of the CBSS in Stockholm



Higher education

Overview

In September 2022, the Young People Network for Balticness (YoPeNET) project, supported by the CBSS, hosted a summer university in Gdańsk, emphasizing “Balticness” identity, enabling participants to analyze regional narratives, and fostering peer learning through both virtual and on-site platforms.

Higher education was also a component of various other events of the CBSS and the projects and initiatives it is involved in, such as the NEEDS project connecting higher education institutions and practitioner organisations working in the fields of civil and societal security. Other initiatives included the Baltic Science Network, the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue and the Baltic Sea Youth Camp.



The CBSS & higher education

The CBSS recognizes the role of higher education in building a cohesive regional identity. With Baltic Sea Region citizens being among the world's most educated, the CBSS champions the idea that education is the key solution to global challenges. Consequently, it has made strategic investments in empowering future region-builders across varied themes and disciplines. The organisation facilitates several initiatives, from annual Summer Universities aiming to bolster academic networks to specific projects designed to bridge the gap between education and the current knowledge and training needs in the BSR, such as those required by organisations, businesses and industries. Through these endeavours, the CBSS bolsters cooperation and strengthens ties among its member states.

Key events

YoPeNet CBSS Summer University

The Young People Network For Balticness (YoPeNet) hosted the CBSS Summer University 2022 titled “Strategic Narratives of Balticness” in Gdańsk, Poland on 17-25 September 2022. Collaboratively organised by the University of Gdańsk, European Solidarity Centre, Zatoka Foundation, Council of the Baltic Sea States, and the City of Gdańsk, this summer university aimed to foster an understanding of the “Balticness” identity, notably comparing it to other transnational identities. Participants analyzed narratives shaping regional perceptions and their societal impacts.

Project updates

The YoPeNET project, which is financed by the CBSS Project Support Facility (PSF), promotes long-term collaboration in the Baltic Sea Region, emphasizing the cultural memory and historical heritage as facets of BSR identity. Aiming to enhance the traditional summer school formats, it integrates both secondary and tertiary students. YoPeNET offers a dynamic communication platform, featuring webinars and both virtual and on-site interactions, fostering educational exchanges and peer learning. More information: <https://yopenet.ug.edu.pl>

Youth

Overview

During the German Presidency, the CBSS has achieved significant progress in involving youth, exemplified by the launch of the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF). This initiative follows the conclusion of the Baltic Sea Youth Platform (BSYP) in December 2022. In May 2023, the German Federal Foreign Office hosted the second CBSS Youth Ministerial Meeting, leading to a position paper and concrete project proposals presented by young delegates at the CBSS Ministerial Session 2023. The CBSS co-organised the 3rd Baltic Sea Youth Camp in Lappeenranta in August 2023. Moreover, it facilitated youth participation at the EUSBSR Annual Forum in October 2022. The 9th Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue in Hamburg during November 2022 resulted in the formulation of an Engagement Roadmap for youth involvement in civil security. Additionally, the CBSS engaged in preparations for the 3rd Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum in Berlin in August 2023 and the first-ever Baltic Sea Hackathon (#b_hack), held in Lübeck in July 2023, addressing challenges in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) by devising IT-based solutions.



The CBSS & youth

In the Baltic Sea Region, young people actively contribute to societal change. The CBSS acts as a bridge, connecting youths to ensure their innovative views and fresh ideas influence regional policies. Promoting active youth engagement and meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes, the CBSS supports an inter-generational dialogue on all its topics and priorities. Historically, the CBSS has actively driven youth engagement in the BSR, as seen with initiatives like the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue and the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum. The latter, established in 2023, currently offers various possibilities for youth participation, networking, and policy advocacy.

Key events

CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023

The CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023, held in Berlin on 21-25 May 2023, emphasized the importance of youth involvement in shaping resilient BSR societies. 30 young delegates attended, producing a project proposal and a position paper, which were presented by selected participants to the CBSS foreign ministers at the ministerial meeting in Wismar. The event showcased youth-driven solutions, including a winning project proposal on combating disinformation. Supported by the German Federal Foreign Office, the event highlighted Germany's commitment to youth engagement, one of its priorities for its CBSS Presidency.

Baltic Sea Youth Camp (BSYC) and EUSBSR Annual Forum 2022

Held on 15-19 August 2022 in Lappeenranta, Finland as a prelude to the Annual Forum of the EUSBSR 2022, the Baltic Sea Youth Camp offered workshops,

seminars and discussions that empowered youth to address BSR issues. Supported by the CBSS, the City of Lappeenranta and Erasmus+, the camp led to the Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2022, a set of concrete recommendations for a better BSR which was presented to policy makers at the closing plenary of the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2022.

Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue 2022 (BSYD)

In November 2022, the 9th Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD), a one-week seminar attracting students and young practitioners in the field of civil protection, was held in Hamburg, focusing on societal security and international cooperation on civil protection. Organised by the CBSS and Hamburg Fire and Rescue Service and financed by the German Federal Foreign Office, it notably addressed threats from dumped WW2 munitions in the Baltic Sea. Participants produced recommendations on youth engagement in civil protection, summarised in the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue Engagement Roadmap 2022, and influencing future CBSS agendas and events.

[#b_hack]: Baltic Sea Region Hackathon

In early 2023, the CBSS, the German state of Schleswig-Holstein, and the Technical University of Lübeck (TH Lübeck) collaborated to address disinformation and examine the confluence of technology, democracy, and the environment. This led to the inaugural Baltic Sea Region Hackathon 2023, or [#b_hack], from 6-9 July in Lübeck, Germany. Attracting about 50 young IT enthusiasts from the region, the event tackled issues like echo chambers, bot detection, deep fakes, and media misinformation. Participants also delved into marine data visualization and equitable budgeting in democracy.

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2023

In the first half of 2023, the CBSS collaborated with the German Bundestag and the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) to organise the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum (BSPYF) 2023. Held in Berlin on 25-29 August 2023, it provided an opportunity for young representatives from the BSR to engage with parliamentarians, experts and policymakers, helping them to formulate recommendations targeting parliamentarians and stakeholders. The focus of the BSPYF 2023 was on strengthening the resilience of democracies and addressing critical threats to democratic stability. The youth-led recommendations were subsequently presented at the 32nd BSPC annual conference in Berlin on 28-29 August 2023.

Project updates

Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF)

Officially launched in April 2023 and initiated by the CBSS, the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) is a platform empowering young individuals and representatives of youth organisations in the BSR to share their perspectives on prevailing issues and advocate for impactful and meaningful youth participation in policy-making. Its member base comprises regional and national youth councils, and other young individuals who aim to make a difference in the Baltic Sea Region, alongside different stakeholders involved in youth work. The BSRYF facilitates youth cooperation and participation, offering networking opportunities for youth organisations and promoting an intergenerational dialogue between young individuals and decision makers. The governing structure of the BSRYF is comprised of the Steering Group (SG) as the executive body and the Committee of Youth Representatives (CYR) as the legislative body. Participation in the BSRYF is open to all BSR youth, who can also join various working groups on diverse topics to devise solutions for pressing BSR matters. While the BSRYF operates autonomously, the CBSS provides administrative support and an advisory role.

Baltic Sea Youth Platform (BSYP)

Running from February 2020 to December 2022, the Baltic Sea Youth Platform (BSYP) was a project funded by the EU's Erasmus+ programme to increase the involvement of young people in Baltic Sea Region politics and policy-making. During its implementation, the BSYP developed into a brand connecting youth events and initiatives throughout the Baltic Sea Region. A distinctive feature of the BSYP was that it was co-initiated and coordinated by young people, alongside the CBSS and other partners. The success of the BSYP and its proven format for facilitating meaningful youth participation has led to the creation of the BSRYF, its successor.

Child and Youth Advisory Board on child trafficking (CYAB – TRM)

A deliverable of the PROMISE TRM project, work on the establishment of a Child and Youth Advisory Board on child trafficking commenced in 2022 to bring in a youth perspective and support the implementation of the BSR Transnational referral mechanisms for victims of human trafficking.



Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue 2023



Baltic Sea Youth Camp 2023



CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023



CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023



CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023



CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023

Safe & Secure Region

Under its Safe & Secure Region priority, the CBSS endeavours to enhance societal security and safety, counteract all forms of trafficking in human beings, promote comprehensive and sustainable child protection, and strengthen societal resilience to disasters and hazards. The specific focus areas are **anti-trafficking**, **child protection**, and **civil security**.



Anti-trafficking in human beings

Overview

During the German CBSS Presidency, the Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings (TF-THB) held three meetings: two hosted by the German Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and one by the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. On 17 October 2022, aligning with the EU anti-trafficking day and the first Task Force meeting under the German Presidency, the Baltic Sea Region Round-up report was released, notably highlighting the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis due to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

In November 2022, the international campaign “Before You Go” debuted in Stockholm, a collaboration with the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. It educates migrants from Ukraine, Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania about potential labour exploitation in the Baltic Sea Region, particularly in Sweden.

In February 2023, the Task Force, alongside the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, introduced a handbook for embassies on assisting trafficking victims. The launch, opened by the Swedish Minister of Justice, H.E. Gunnar Strömmer, and CBSS Director General Grzegorz Poznanski, saw 90 diplomatic representatives in attendance.

Key events

Launch of the Human Trafficking – Baltic Sea Region Round-Up Report

In October 2022, the CBSS released its Human Trafficking – Baltic Sea Region Round-Up Report, spotlighting the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, particularly the heightened risk of human trafficking due to the Russian war. Officially launched by Lilian Tschan, State Minister at the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the report highlighted the consequences of the displacement of nearly 8 million Ukrainians, with 2.7 million seeking refuge in the Baltic Sea Region. The round-up report notably presents the actions taken by the CBSS member states against trafficking in human beings in the context of the refugee flows. It also provides an overview of initiatives and projects in the CBSS member states that have contributed to preventing trafficking in human beings.



The CBSS & anti-trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings, a transnational issue, impacts all CBSS Member States. The Baltic Sea Region, known for its economic growth and stability, is both a destination and transit area for trafficking victims due to demands for cheap labour and sexual services. Various forms of trafficking such as sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced marriages, and child trafficking are prevalent. Events like the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015 and Ukraine's humanitarian crisis highlight the need for regional anti-trafficking strategies. The CBSS emphasizes human trafficking prevention under its “Safe and Secure Region” priority and the EU's Baltic Sea Region Strategy. Since 2006, the CBSS's Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings has led regional anti-trafficking efforts, facilitating cooperation, leading projects, coordinating responses to crises, and producing relevant research. CBSS also offers funding support for regional anti-trafficking initiatives.

“Before You Go” campaign

“Before You Go”, an information campaign to fight labour exploitation in Sweden and the Baltic Sea Region, was launched on 15 November 2022 by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. The campaign aims at informing labour migrants and displaced persons from Ukraine, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania about the risks of labour exploitation and the rights they have as workers. Specifically geared towards people from Ukraine, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania who plan to work in Sweden, a CBSS member state, the campaign features a video with advice, to their compatriots, from people who have already settled in there. Additional guidance on how to avoid the pitfalls of labour exploitation and on the rights of labour migrants is also published on an information page on the Swedish Gender Equality Agency's website.

Launch of the Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on How to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking in Stockholm

In February 2023, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), in collaboration with the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, launched a revised edition of the “Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on How to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking” in Stockholm. This comprehensive guide, originally published in 2011, offers critical insights and tools for diplomatic personnel, enhancing their ability to identify and assist victims of human trafficking. With a focus on a victim-centred, child-rights approach, and emphasizing the gendered aspects of trafficking, the handbook underscores the role of consular staff in recognizing and addressing this heinous crime. Notably attended by Gunnar Strömmer, Minister of Justice of Sweden and Annika Wäppling Korzinek, Head of European Commission's representation in Sweden, the event featured an interactive panel discussion with experts, illuminating the state of human trafficking and underscoring the importance of multi-sectoral cooperation.



Launch of the Human Trafficking – Baltic Sea Region Round-Up Report



RENATA from Poland
Came to Sweden 2012

#BeforeYouGoCampaign

“Before You Go” campaign video screenshot



TF-THB meeting in Berlin



Launch of the Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions

Children at risk

Overview

In 2022 and 2023, the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk convened in Berlin to address critical child protection issues in the Baltic Sea Region. The October 2022 meeting addressed sexual violence against children and adolescents, emphasizing the significance of working with survivors, appreciating the benefits of such engagements, and understanding the need for both immediate and prolonged perspectives on these grave matters. The subsequent session in May 2023 highlighted the issue of children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) and peer-based sexualized violence. The discussions underscored the need for specialized support systems for both victims and offenders of HSB and spotlighted the requisite therapeutic services for children with HSB, particularly for those with special needs.

In December 2022, the Barnahus forum in Stockholm gathered approximately 170 participants to exchange insights, challenges, and lessons regarding the Barnahus practice. Moreover, efforts have been undertaken to establish a comprehensive registry cataloging best practices that fortify child protection systems in the region. This initiative aids in building trust and resilience within these protective systems.

Additionally, a pivotal publication, the Second Addendum to the CBSS Guidelines, has been released to bolster the human rights and best interests of transnational child protection cases, particularly focusing on children in motion and trafficking scenarios.

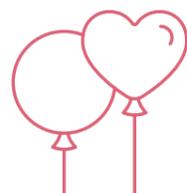
Key events

Barnahus Forum

Approximately 170 participants from 23 countries convened at the Barnahus Forum 2022 in Stockholm. They gathered to discuss practices, challenges, learnings, and the ongoing evolution of their work. More information: <https://cbss.org/2022/12/08/promise-barnahus-network-members-at-the-first-barnahus-forum-in-stockholm/>

Joint CoE and CBSS High-Level Coordination Meeting

Held on the Day on the Protection of Children against



The CBSS & children at risk

The primary strategic objective of the CBSS bodies dedicated to children at risk is strengthening national child protection frameworks. The CBSS Children at Risk unit, along with its expert group, is committed to safeguarding the rights of children who have witnessed or been victims of violence. Their approach emphasizes child-centric justice, protection, and a structured recovery path. They foster regional discussions and form robust international collaborations, facilitating initiatives across legal, administrative, social, and educational domains to shield children from all types of violence. Notably, they champion exemplary practices from our region, such as the Barnahus model. Under the German Presidency, the Children at Risk Expert Group has prioritized combating child sexual violence and exploitation.



Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, this meeting, organised by the Council of Europe and the CBSS under the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, had the theme “Getting it right: ensuring child-friendly justice through Barnahus structures in Europe”.

Promoting Barnahus with national actors

During the German Presidency, the CBSS has facilitated numerous contributions to national dialogue and capacity building concerning Barnahus. Activities included presenting at a conference in Prague, partaking in study visits to Denmark, Slovenia, and Berlin, and conducting a training on Barnahus standards in Estonia. Participants from Armenia, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Moldova, and Slovenia attended the training. Furthermore, the CBSS showcased Barnahus at a Council of Europe conference in Spain, aiding its progress in that country.

Child Participation Training

In October 2022, a child participation training took place at the CBSS Secretariat. It saw complete attendance from the CBSS secretariat as well as officials from Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, and Poland.

Project updates

Elpis

The primary objective of this project is to advocate for multidisciplinary and interagency service models that cater to child victims and witnesses of online sexual violence. The project’s core activities include 1) implementing and evaluating protocols and procedures tailored for cases of online child sexual violence, and 2) facilitating training in interagency collaboration for cases encompassing online child sexual violence, and in specialized interventions, encompassing crisis support and victim assistance.

Journeys

Securing that all relevant authorities and services work together with the child in their best interests, from initial report to long-term recovery, this project will specifically develop and evaluate a child liaison role. This role will ensure that children are heard and that they feel safe and comfortable throughout the Barnahus Journey. The project also aims to develop child-friendly tools, including an app and a logbook describing the child’s journey through Barnahus.

PA Secure Kids

This project is geared towards devising a child participation mechanism focused on involvement in disaster risk reduction.

Promise 3

Promise 3 (2020-2022) established a European Competence Centre for Barnahus, laid the groundwork for an accreditation system for Barnahus, and expanded PROMISE activities to include University training and case management tools.

Promise 4

Promise 4 brought new countries into the PROMISE circle of influence by supporting Estonia, Armenia and Moldova to take the next steps in the Barnahus developments based on the resources and experience of the PROMISE Barnahus Network.

Soteria

This project strives to enhance and comprehend the structure of robust, accessible, and resilient child protection systems, even amid crises. Moreover, it seeks to bolster these systems’ capacity to handle transnational cases. The project also accentuates the significance of Barnahus within the extensive child protection network, ensuring excellence in its practices.

TRM

Addressing the specific needs of child victims of trafficking and exploitation. The project develops standards and guiding principles for national and transnational referral mechanisms incorporating a specific focus on child victims including a multidisciplinary response for child victims of trafficking, drawing inspiration from multidisciplinary and interagency services for child victims and witnesses of violence (Barnahus), in national and transnational mechanisms.

2Know

This initiative seeks to accumulate data from anonymous offenders browsing for child sexual abuse material on both the dark web and the surface web. Its purpose revolves around discerning patterns and trends associated with online sexual offenses against children. Furthermore, the project aims to conceive a program – a Peer Support Group – that proffers practical and emotional aid to parents and caregivers.



Civil security

Overview

During the German Presidency, the work in the “Safe and Secure Region” priority emphasized volunteerism in civil protection, with a particular focus on youth through the VOALA/BYFORES projects. The efforts also centered on the meaningful engagement of youth and children in disaster risk reduction activities, as highlighted in the EU-funded PA Secure Kids project. Additionally, there was the establishment of a cross-sectoral problem-solving forum in societal security in the BSR, known as BALTInnoSEC. Recommendations regarding societal security education and the collaboration of higher education institutions with practitioners were developed within the NEEDS project. Furthermore, Ukrainian partners participated in the development of new collaboration projects. The issue of dumped munitions was also addressed during the German Presidency of the CBSS.

Key events

BALTInnoSEC

On 27 January 2023, Warsaw hosted BALTInnoSEC, the first cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary innovation forum for civil security experts in the Baltic Sea Region, funded by the Swedish Institute. The forum attracted 75 participants from all BSR countries. It featured three panels addressing the influx of migrants, CBRN, and natural disasters, with a particular emphasis on crisis and risk communication. The State Emergency Service of Ukraine’s delegation shared their experiences of operating amidst war.

Civil Protection Network Senior Expert Meeting

Hosted by the Berlin Fire and Rescue Service on 18-20 April 2023 in Berlin, the meeting delved into civil protection in Berlin, forest fires, and ammunition recovery. Experts also took study tours to the Forest Fire Early Warning Centre and an Ammunition Recovery site.

Directors General for Civil Protection Meeting

Focused on bolstering resilience in the Baltic Sea Region, topics of the event that was held on 20-21 June 2023 in Hamburg included cooperation with volunteer organisations, youth, academia, and aiding

Ukraine’s resilience. Young fire cadets from the Danish Civil Protection League presented a statement on youth volunteerism. Prof. Dr. Johann Georg Goldammer, Director of the GFMC, discussed wildfire threats amplified by land mines, ordnance, and climate change. He also outlined strategies for community resilience against wildfires.

Conference on Volunteering in Civil Protection

Coinciding with the Directors General for Civil Protection Meeting, the conference that was held on 19-20 June in Hamburg, celebrating volunteer accomplishments in the Baltic Sea Region and delineating future aims. A Youth Volunteer Statement, later presented to the Directors General, emphasized young volunteers’ roles in civil protection. The event drew over 40 participants, including youth, civil protection authorities, and international representatives from multiple countries.



The CBSS & civil protection

The primary strategic priority of the CBSS and its Civil Protection Network (CPN) is to establish a unified societal security culture in the BSR. This entails fostering shared attitudes towards societal security threats and promoting an understanding of prevention, preparedness, response, as well as recovery and learning processes associated with disasters. The significance of this cooperation has been underscored by the deteriorating security situation in the region coupled with the escalating impact of climate change. These factors are affecting the health and lives of the populace, the environment, and the economy. Under the leadership of the Hamburg and Berlin Fire and Rescue Services, the CPN has concentrated on dumped munitions, youth, early warning systems, and climate change.



Underwater munitions

The German CBSS Presidency placed a particular focus on the challenges emanating from the approximately 400,000 conventional and 40,000 chemical munitions submerged in the Baltic Sea.

To raise awareness and work towards a common understanding of the environmental, safety, security, and economic hazards posed by munition waste, an **Expert Round Table on Underwater Munitions in the Baltic Sea** was held by the German Presidency and the Land Schleswig-Holstein in cooperation with the CBSS and HELCOM in Kiel, Germany in December 2022. To coordinate a follow-up on the issue of underwater munitions in the Baltic Sea, the German Presidency hosted an informal **joint CBSS-HELCOM-DG MARE online meeting** in April 2023.

For the first time, the CBSS foreign ministers commonly acknowledged the challenges resulting from underwater munitions in the official ministerial declaration adopted at the CBSS Ministerial Session 2023 in Wismar. In the declaration, the CBSS Foreign Ministers noted “the environmental, human safety, security and economic risks emanating from the thousands of tons of conventional and chemical munitions dumped in the Baltic Sea.” They further “welcomed the initiation of a cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary and macro-regional dialogue on underwater munitions”, further encouraging “the continuation of close cooperation with HELCOM and other relevant organisations with the aim of filling knowledge gaps, developing best environmental practices for risk assessment, and exploring financing options for developing and implementing best available techniques for environmentally sound and safe management.”

Project updates

NEEDS — Needs-based Education and Studies in Societal Security

The Erasmus+ NEEDS project aims to enhance the quality, attractiveness, and scope of societal security education by addressing discrepancies between the education focus and the field’s knowledge requirements. Significant outputs from the project include a Glossary, Case Studies (addressing climate change, cyber security, pandemics, and youth in security), an Online Course that offers fresh ideas and viewpoints on societal security in the Baltic Sea region, an Online Community, a Handbook for Societal Security Education in the BSR, and Policy Recommendations. These recommendations are based on

project findings about skill gaps and the mismatch between societal security education and real-world knowledge needs. All these outputs are collaborative efforts from experts, teachers, practitioners, and students, ensuring a comprehensive representation of perspectives.

VOALA — Volunteers and Local Authorities – Baltic Sea Region Network

This project seeks to bolster society’s resilience to both natural and man-made disasters by enhancing inclusive, cross-sectoral cooperation between authorities and volunteer organisations in the Baltic Sea Region’s crisis management. National round tables have been organised in Finland, Germany, Latvia, and Sweden to discuss the roles, missions, and coordination of volunteers. They also address potential challenges in effectively involving and coordinating volunteer activities at both national and local levels. On 19-20 June, a conference titled “Volunteering in Civil Protection and Disaster Management: Strengthening Cooperation between Authorities and Volunteer Organisations in the Baltic Sea Region” took place in Hamburg.

Secure Kids

On 1 March 2023, the “PA Secure Kids - Strengthening Children’s Participation in Civil Protection and Building Resilient Societies” project was initiated. Its objective is to reinforce meaningful child involvement in disaster risk reduction.



Civil Protection Network Senior Expert Meeting



Meeting of the Directors General for Civil Protection Meeting in Hamburg

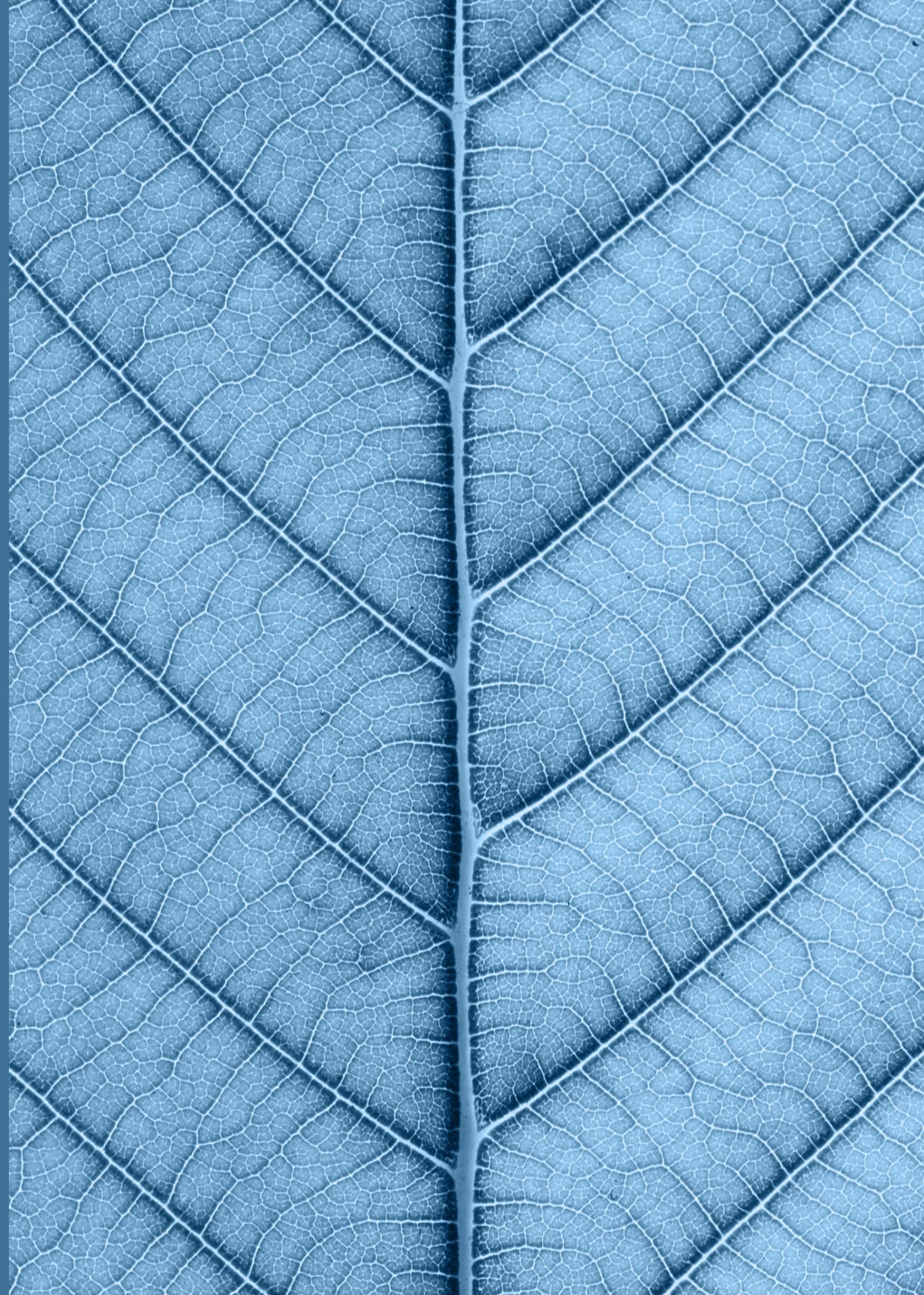
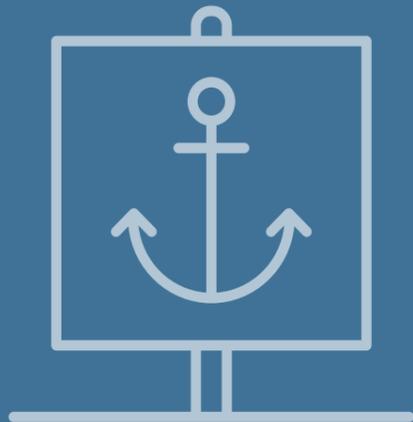
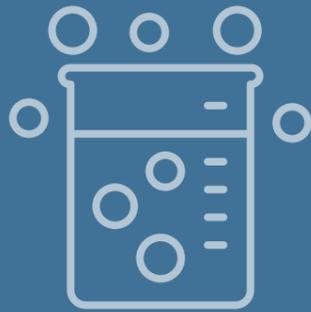


Experts brief the CBSS Foreign Ministers on underwater munitions at display during the Ministerial Session 2023 in Wismar.



Sustainable & Prosperous Region

The CBSS promotes a sustainable, prosperous region by prioritizing economic growth, social inclusiveness, and environmental sustainability, working to implement the UN Agenda 2030 and SDGs in the Baltic Sea Region. Focus areas include **climate dialogue**, **science cooperation**, **sustainable development**, and a **sustainable maritime economy**.



Climate dialogue

Overview

The CLiMaLoc project, funded by the Swedish Institute, concluded successfully, with its final conference held in Riga in October 2022. This event showcased the project results to stakeholders from local Baltic Sea Region authorities and facilitated discussions on local climate adaptation planning, with contributions from Riga Energy Agency and other entities. The project officially wrapped up in March 2023.

Also in October 2022, the CBSS introduced the “Handbook for Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning in the Baltic Sea Region” during a webinar. The guide specifically helps local governments and authorities such as municipalities in crafting climate adaptation strategies.

In April 2023, the CBSS hosted a workshop discussing local climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the Baltic Sea Region. Expert participants from various countries and pan-Baltic organisations pinpointed challenges in climate change adaptation. They also brainstormed a project concept to bolster the capacities of smaller towns in climate adaptation and risk reduction.

Project updates

CLiMaLoc

The CLiMaLoc “Climate Mainstreaming Locally in the Baltic Sea Region” project, which ran from September 2021 to March 2023 and was funded by the Swedish Institute, has been successfully completed. Its objective was to assist local authorities in the BSR countries with integrating climate change considerations and to foster future partnerships for cooperation in this domain. To further this aim, the “Handbook for Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning in the Baltic Sea Region” was developed and published to aid local authorities in crafting their climate change adaptation plans. Further in 2023, the CLiMaLoc partnership was working on a follow-up project addressing climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the BSR.

Key events

28 September 2022 – Panel discussion at the EUSBSR AF “Contribution of EUSBSR cities and regions to combating climate change” moderated by the CBSS.

5–6 October 2022 – Final CLiMaLoc conference in Riga, Latvia.

14 March 2023 – Dissemination webinar of the “Handbook for Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning in the Baltic Sea Region”.

15–16 March 2023 – Presentation of the CLiMaLoc handbook at the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) conference in Stockholm, Sweden.

17–18 April 2023 – Workshop on local climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the Baltic Sea Region.



The CBSS & climate change

Mainstreaming climate change action in the Baltic Sea Region is one of the key thematic focus areas of the CBSS. While climate change is one of the most pressing global challenges, it has very local effects. Recognizing climate change’s local impacts, the CBSS Climate Change Dialogue platform enhances cooperation among member states, sub-regional groups, researchers, and civil society. The platform consolidates knowledge and best practices, fostering regional and local climate adaptation efforts and addressing urgent challenges through joint initiatives and capacity-building projects.

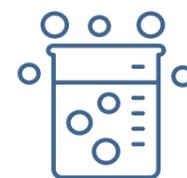
Science Cooperation

Overview

Although not backed by a specific project, during the German Presidency, the Baltic Science Network (BSN) continued its collaboration, focusing particularly on programmes and initiatives supporting Ukrainian scientists. The network has initiated a mapping process to track ongoing activities and programmes in which its partners are involved. This will help prevent overlapping efforts and identify further areas of cooperation. The concept of expanding the tools that were introduced by the concluded BSN Powerhouse project are due to be developed later in 2023.

Key events

The Baltic Science Network follow-up meeting took place on 26 January 2023 and addressed the implementation of the Baltic Science Network Vision 2030 and other follow-up activities and project initiation opportunities.



The CBSS & science cooperation

The CBSS Science, Research, and Innovation Agenda serves as a platform to maintain scientific excellence, support academic mobility, and boost the competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region. The CBSS brings together academics, researchers, and policymakers to pool their resources. This supports researcher mobility, connects research institutions to allow them to scale their projects, and discusses and proposes transnational policy measures for long-lasting effects, thereby enhancing the region’s scientific excellence. The Baltic Science Network is a core implementing tool of the Agenda, representing a unified voice of the BSR science community at the macro-regional level, encompassing scientists, policy actors, funders, and innovators.

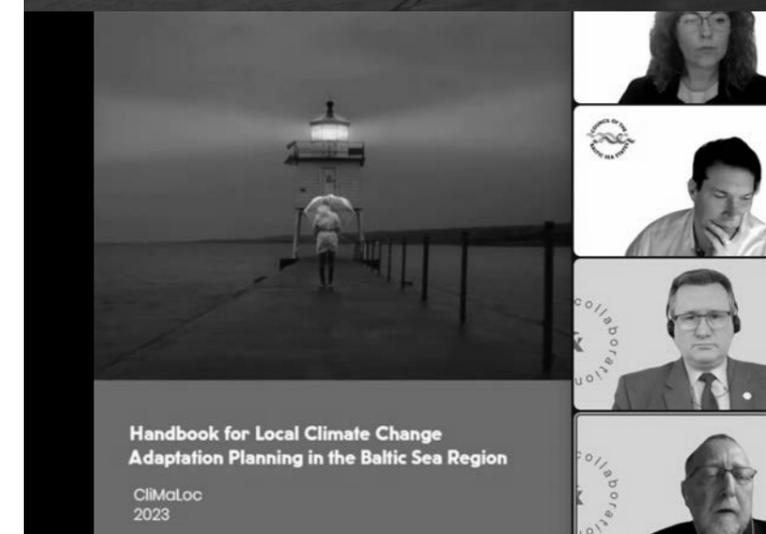


Workshop on local climate change adaptation in the BSR



Handbook for Climate Change Adaptation Planning in the Baltic Sea Region (.pdf)

Launch of the CLiMaLoc handbook



Handbook for Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning in the Baltic Sea Region

CLiMaLoc
2023

Sustainable development

Overview

During the German Presidency, the CBSS prioritized the reform of expert formations in sustainable development. Recognizing the need for a more sector-specific approach to localize the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs, the Presidency proposed a more flexible coordination format. This concept was developed by experts, with the CSO slated to review it during the Finnish CBSS Presidency 2023-2024.

Germany highlighted offshore wind power and the circular economy as its main thematic areas. The Baltic Offshore Wind Forum identified wind energy as the Baltic Sea Region's most reliable and sustainable energy source. Furthermore, the CBSS panel on the circular economy, presented during the 6th European Resource Forum by the German Environment Agency, emphasized the value of regional and cross-border cooperation. This cooperation facilitates sharing successes and challenges in transitioning from linear to circular approaches in sustainable resource use.

Beyond the Agenda 2030 framework, the updated VASAB Long-Term Vision 2040 stands as a testament to strategic cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. The CBSS and VASAB will continue their strategic partnership during the Vision's implementation phase.

Key events

4 October 2022 – The Expert Group on Sustainable Development convened. Main topics included the review process of the EGSD, circular economy, waste management, and discussions stemming from the recent HLPF on sustainable development.

1 December 2022 – The 6th European Resources Forum (ERF) was held online, orchestrated by the German Environment Agency. The event saw participation from around 400 attendees spanning 30 countries.

15 March 2023 – The European Sustainable Development Solutions Network held a conference assessing Europe's current position in relation to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and its path forward until 2030. During this, the CBSS unveiled the Handbook for Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning in the Baltic Sea Region.

9 May 2023 – The Baltic Offshore Wind Forum emphasized the significance of offshore wind energy and the crucial aspect of energy security, as highlighted in the Berlin Declaration on Baltic Offshore Wind by the CBSS Foreign Ministers, adopted on the same day.

1 June 2023 – The VASAB Ministerial meeting was held, during which the Wismar declaration was adopted. This declaration accentuates present geopolitical challenges, highlighting the urgency to bolster strategic alliances among pan-Baltic organizations. It also emphasizes the drive to focus on the endorsed VASAB Vision 2040's execution."

Project updates

"Localising SDGs in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond – Connecting municipalities and macro-regions towards climate and waste reduction goals"

Funded by the Swedish Environment Agency, this one-year project aims to enhance the capacities of municipalities to meet national and European targets, particularly in climate resilience building and waste reduction. Furthermore, the project seeks to align these targets with the framework set out by the UN's Agenda 2030.



The CBSS & sustainable development

To realize a vision of sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region consistent with the UN's Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the CBSS emphasizes collaborative regional governance processes. By operationalizing and localizing the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and targets, they enhance the coordination of regional activities and bolster sustainable development governance. This approach also fosters a platform for governments to engage in voluntary peer learning and share best practices. Priority has been given to the most challenging thematic sectors to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and their specific targets.



Sustainable maritime economy

Overview

During the German Chairmanship of the Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy (EGSME), two significant milestones were reached. Firstly, under the guidance of the German Presidency, the EGSME launched collaborations on two key topics for a sustainable maritime economy in the Baltic Sea Region: green shipping corridors and integrated maritime policy strategies.

Secondly, the German Presidency steered the EGSME through the reflection process on the future of the CBSS and its bodies initiated in the wake of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. It concluded that, even in the face of regional geopolitical changes, the commitment to a sustainable maritime economy remains paramount. This process highlighted the importance of addressing both the energy transition and security challenges in the region. Keeping a concise EGSME agenda and bolstering ties with other regional entities were identified as crucial. These considerations will be key when revising the EGSME mandate in 2024.

To support these goals and foster collaboration, the German Chairmanship organised two events. These gatherings promoted best practices on green shipping corridors and integrated approaches to maritime policy.

Key events

Webinar on maritime policy

On 19 October 2022, under the German EGSME Chairmanship, a webinar was held that centered on integrated approaches to maritime policy. During this webinar, experts from the Ecologic Institute and the Institute of Shipping Economics and Logistics (ISL) in Germany showcased indicators designed to monitor trends in coastal communities, the maritime economy, and the marine environment.

Green shipping corridors EGSME meeting

A subsequent EGSME meeting took place on 7 June 2023 in Berlin. This meeting was coordinated alongside the EUSBSR PA Ship workshop, with a specific focus on green shipping corridors. Esteemed experts



The CBSS & sustainable maritime economy

At the CBSS, the priority area of sustainable maritime economy is covered by the CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy (EGSME), collaborating with various Baltic Sea Region organisations and initiatives. This group offers a platform for CBSS Member State ministries and the European Commission's Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries to share knowledge and best practices about the maritime sector's sustainable growth and marine ecosystem protection. Prioritizing areas like small to medium-sized ports, clean shipping, maritime tourism, and recreational boating, the EGSME aims to harmonize the economic, social, and environmental facets of the maritime sector.

from organisations such as the Global Maritime Forum, Swedish Transport Administration, and European Commission (DG MOVE) were invited to present. Additionally, a round table discussion was conducted that evaluated the progress of green shipping corridors in CBSS member states. The dialogues from this meeting have provided a base for ongoing initiatives surrounding green shipping corridors in the Baltic Sea Region. Moreover, a directory of national contact points for green shipping corridors within the Baltic Sea Region has been compiled.

Other events included the October 2022 launch of the "Baltic Sustainable Boating 2030" project with a subsequent kick-off in Gdansk. In the same month, the EGSME convened under the German Chairmanship, emphasizing maritime policy's integrated approaches. In February 2023, the project's partners met in Riga for a branding workshop. May 2023 saw the CBSS attendance at the "Baltic Offshore Wind Forum" in Berlin. In June 2023, the CBSS showcased the Baltic Sustainable Boating 2030 project at the VASAB Expert Conference "Vibrant, Resilient and Well-connected – The Baltic Sea Region in 2040". The BaltSusBoating 2030 project meeting in the Åland Islands spotlighted environmental challenges in the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, at the Riga "Ports 4.0 Conference," the CBSS discussed the role of digitalization in the Baltic's green shipping corridors.

Project updates

BaltSusBoating 2030

In October 2023, the "Baltic Sustainable Boating 2030" (BaltSusBoating 2030) project was launched. Supported by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme, it is the continuation of a prior initiative, the "Baltic Sustainable Boating (BSA)" project, which was funded by the Swedish Institute Seed Funding and led by the CBSS. The overarching aim of the BaltSusBoating 2030 is to foster strategic collaboration across the Baltic Sea Region to transform the Baltic Sea into a unified and sustainable boating destination. The CBSS is a project partner, along with principal umbrella organisations and major boating tourism stakeholders in the region.



BaltSusBoating 2030 project meeting in the Åland Islands



Green shipping corridors EGSME meeting in Berlin



BaltSusBoating 2030 project meeting in the Åland Islands

Project Support Facility

The CBSS Project Support Facility (PSF) promotes regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region and aims to strengthen regional partnerships. It provides seed money and co-financing for key projects that are aligned with the long-term priorities of the CBSS.



Project Support Facility

Overview

Under the German Presidency, a new phase for the PSF was approved for 2023-2025. The PSF call for 2023 focused on the CBSS long-term priority “Safe and Secure Region”, particularly addressing the challenges of managing risks for societies — like those from climate change — and fostering resilient communities. The CBSS Member States have expressed concerns about the region’s worsening security landscape and the escalating impacts of climate change on public health, the environment, and the economy. The PSF call underscored the importance of empowering communities and individuals to understand threats, strategize for adaptation, reduce vulnerability, and devise tangible solutions. By the cut-off date on 31 March 2023, the Secretariat logged 20 PSF final applications. Out of these, six projects were shortlisted, which were all approved for PSF funding by the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials (CSO). In 2023, the PSF also updated its Manual, which notably provides information on eligibility and how to apply for PSF grants.



Concluded PSF projects

The following ten PSF-funded projects were finalised during the German Presidency period:

1. CAPE (Start: 02/2019. Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Latvia)
2. Dare to Care Baltics (Start: 01/2020. MARTA Centre)
3. BSR Mobilities for Young Researchers (Start: 02/2020. Uni of Latvia)
4. YoPeNET (Start: 03/2020. Uniwersytet Gdanski)
5. A Safe Place (Start: 01/2021. Active Youth)
6. Resilient Child Protection Systems around the BSR (Start: 02/2021. Bufdir)
7. Building resilient and inclusive sustainable maritime tourism (Start: 04/2021. Motus Foundation)
8. Creative Waves (Start: 05/2021/05. Intercult)
9. Child sexual abuse crimes in media coverage (Start: 07/2021/07. Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences)
10. Improving communication with migrants for crisis preparedness: lessons learned from COVID-19 (Start: 08/2021. Tallinn University)

About the PSF

The CBSS established the Project Support Facility (PSF) in 2012 to provide co-financing for projects across the Baltic Sea Region, with the aim of promoting sustainable partnerships in line with the CBSS’s three long-term priority areas. The PSF offers grants to small-scale projects in the Baltic Sea Region. These projects should benefit the region, align with at least one CBSS long-term priority, and enhance macro-regional cooperation. To be eligible, projects must team up with partners from at least three CBSS Member States. A project can receive up to 65,000 euros from the PSF.

New PSF projects 2023

In 2023, the following six projects were approved for PSF funding:

Sisterhood Pathways

Project leader: Active Youth Association. Countries: Latvia, Lithuania, Poland

The Sisterhood Pathways project continues the efforts of the 2022’s “A Safe Place” PSF project addressing violence against women in the Baltic Sea Region. It promotes unity, inclusion, and regional cooperation. The project educates the public, supports victims, and emphasizes understanding minority women’s perspectives on violence.

Zero Waste Academy in the Baltic Sea Region

Project leader: Let’s Do It Foundation. Countries: Estonia, Germany, Poland

The Zero Waste Academy aims to instill zero waste skills across the Baltic Sea Region. Beyond environmental protection and cost-cutting, it fosters community ties, skill retention, and prioritizes well-being over consumption. The initiative underscores cooperation, resource efficiency, and aligns with multiple UN global goals.

Joint Crisis Communication in the Baltic Region

Project leader: Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). Countries: Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden

The Joint Crisis Communication project enhances crisis preparedness through effective communication. Prioritizing both pre-crisis and during-crisis communication, the initiative empowers individuals to act, ensuring safety and fostering regional identity, ultimately contributing to long-term sustainability.

From NEEDS to SEEDS

Project leader: Swedish Defence University. Countries: Latvia, Poland, Sweden

“From NEEDS to SEEDS” focuses on professionalizing the societal security workforce in the Baltic Sea Region. Drawing from the BSYD 2022 Engagement Roadmap and Erasmus+ NEEDS project, it advances resilience against state and societal risks. The project seeds knowledge for future CBSS presidencies and strengthens student engagement in security issues.

Safety for All?

Project leader: The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations (HEUNI). Countries: Finland, Norway, Sweden

“Safety for All?” supports the CBSS 2020-2025 strategy against trafficking in human beings, focusing on countering labour exploitation and empowering victims. It aligns with Agenda 2030’s SDGs, addressing the eradication of forced labour and promoting migrant workers’ rights. Climate change heightens unsafe migration risks, underlining the need for effective redress for exploited workers.

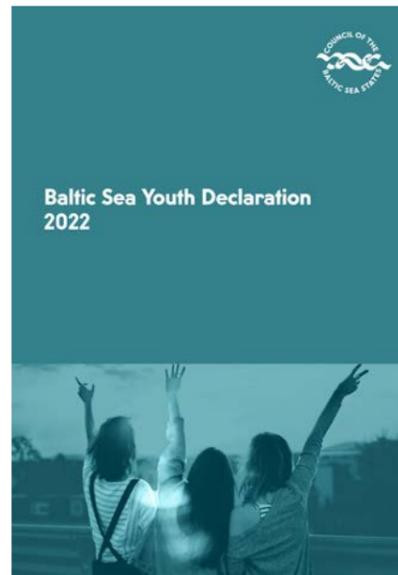
Prepared Together: Stronger Together

Project leader: University of Latvia. Countries: Finland, Germany, Latvia

“Prepared Together: Stronger Together” led by the University of Latvia focuses on enhancing regional preparedness in an unstable security environment. Through cooperation across the Baltic, the project aims to establish a platform for sharing best practices and addressing emerging threats. It aligns with various regional agreements and frameworks, advocating for a joint approach to disaster preparedness and resilience.

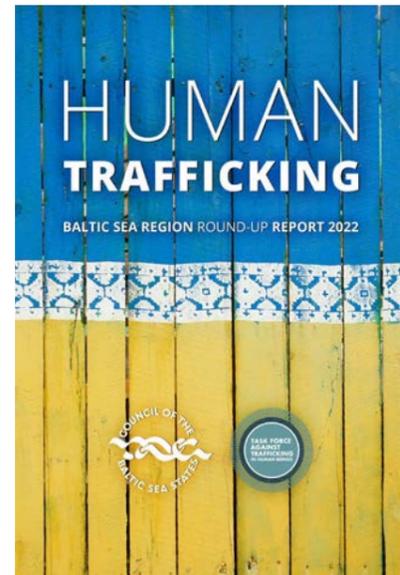
Publications





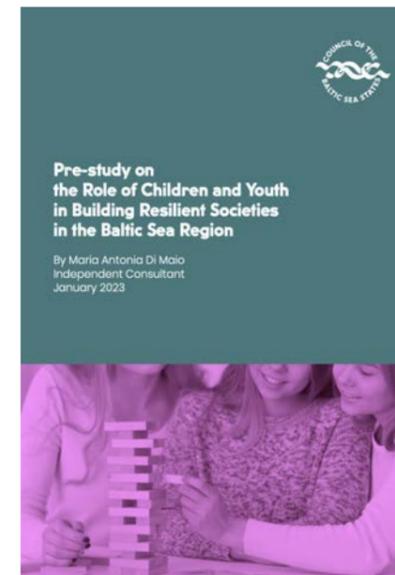
Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2022

The Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2022 was developed by young people in the Baltic Sea Region who are asking for actions from policy makers and therefore provide concrete steps on how their views, ideas and impulses can be better integrated into decision-making processes. The document represents the various views of many young people from all around the Baltic Sea Region. In total, over 200 young people from various youth formats and fora contributed to this declaration.



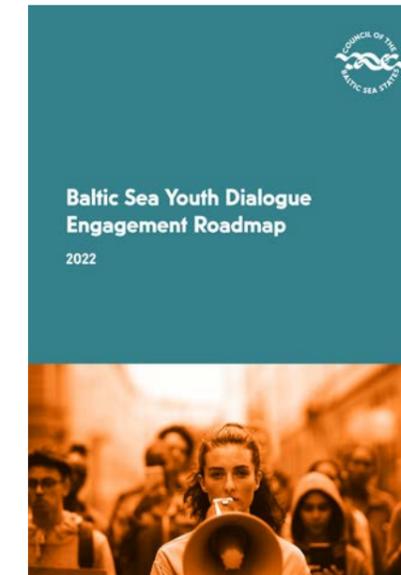
Human Trafficking – Baltic Sea Region Round-up Report 2022

This report provides an overview of initiatives and projects within the member states of the Council of the Baltic Sea States that have particularly contributed to preventing human trafficking. Moreover, this new edition focuses on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, presenting actions taken by our member states against trafficking in the context of the crisis and refugee flows. The solidarity shown towards Ukrainian refugees in our member states has not only been demonstrated through governmental initiatives but also clearly reflected in the actions of non-governmental organisations and the private sector.



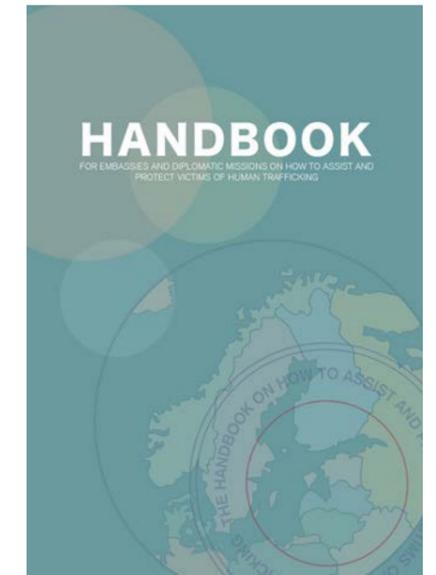
The Role of Children and Youth in Building Resilient Societies in the Baltic Sea Region

The Pre-Study seeks to understand how children and youth can be empowered to actively contribute to societal resilience and to identify barriers that prevent their involvement in disaster prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. Specifically, this study examines critical factors that either enable or hinder children and youth in building resilient societies. The findings are based on a literature review, fourteen focus group discussions with children aged 7-25 years, and 24 interviews with experts from various fields, each offering different perspectives, mandates, and approaches.



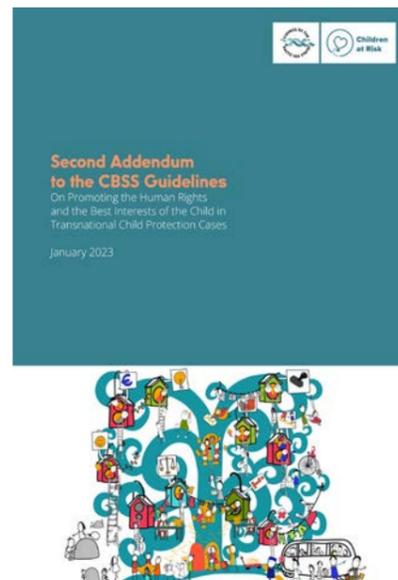
Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue Engagement Roadmap 2022

In November 2022, the CBSS and the Hamburg Fire and Rescue Service hosted the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue 2022: Civil Security Edition – Your Engagement in a Safe and Secure Baltic Sea Region in Hamburg. During this event, 20 young participants from across the region gathered to discuss youth engagement in Civil Security and devised concrete steps towards enhancing safety and security in the Baltic Sea Region. This dialogue culminated in the creation of the Engagement Roadmap, designed to guide decision-makers and stakeholders in the region in implementing youth-driven initiatives.



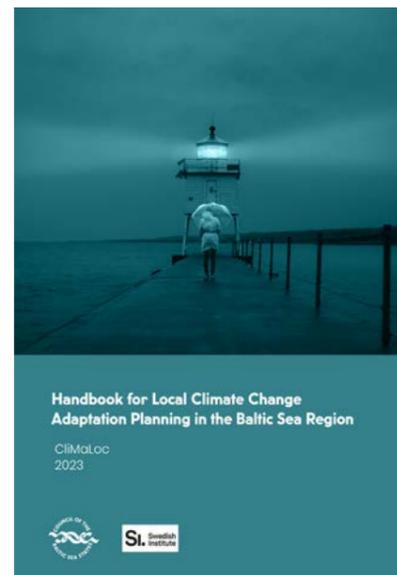
Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on How to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking

Trafficking in human beings is a serious crime that exploits and violates the human rights of its many victims. All state agencies and authorities bear the responsibility to prevent this offense and to act upon identifying potential victims. This handbook, designed for staff at embassies and diplomatic missions, serves as a tool to prevent, detect, and assist victims of human trafficking. It delineates the definition of human trafficking, the international legal framework, risk assessment procedures, assistance chains, and safe return protocols. The guide adopts a victim-centric and child-rights perspective, emphasizing the gender-specific facets of human trafficking.



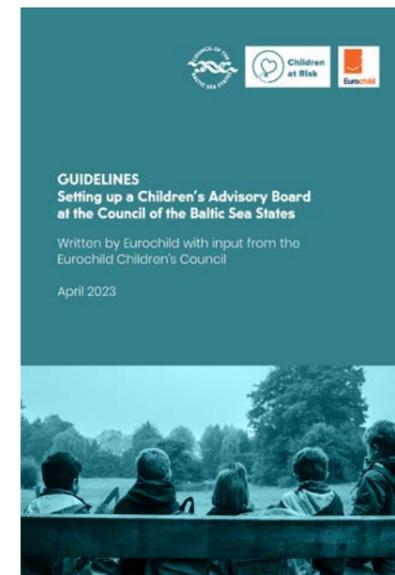
2nd Addendum to the CBSS Guidelines On Promoting the Human Rights & the Best Interests of the Child in Transnational Child Protection Cases

In 2016, the CBSS issued the “Guidelines Promoting the Human Rights and the Best Interests of the Child in Transnational Child Protection Cases”. Since then, Europe has witnessed significant developments, particularly new challenges in this arena. This 2nd Addendum offers updates reflecting these changes and is intended to be referenced in tandem with the original Guidelines. Highlighting progress since 2016, this Addendum complements its predecessor and identifies areas warranting revisions in the Guidelines. It equips policymakers and practitioners with insights into pivotal recent developments, enabling informed action.



Handbook for Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning in the Baltic Sea Region

This handbook offers guidelines to assist local governments in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) as they prepare and craft their climate change adaptation plans. Developed by the CBSS through the CliMaLoc project – co-funded by the Swedish Institute – its objective is to help BSR local authorities integrate climate considerations into local development plans, align with the 2030 Agenda, and bolster the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region’s push for low-carbon economies across various sectors and policies. The CliMaLoc project also aimed to establish future cooperation partnerships among these authorities.



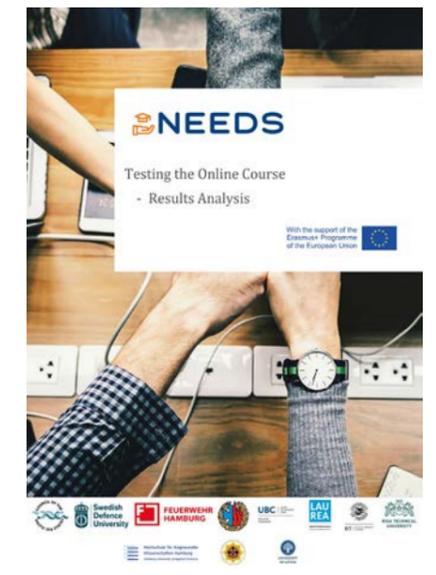
Guidelines: Setting up a Children’s Advisory Board at the Council of the Baltic Sea States

Written by the CBSS and Eurochild, with contributions from the Eurochild Children’s Council, these guidelines provide a practical overview for establishing a children’s advisory board. This board’s purpose is to integrate children’s perspectives and expertise into the Council of the Baltic Sea States’ operations. Truly effective, sustainable, and relevant decisions arise when those affected actively participate in decision-making. Children, as rights holders, not only have the right to be heard but are also experts of their own experiences. Their insights can drive positive changes for themselves, their peers, and their broader communities.



Building Trust and Resilience: Child Protection Systems in the Baltic Sea Region

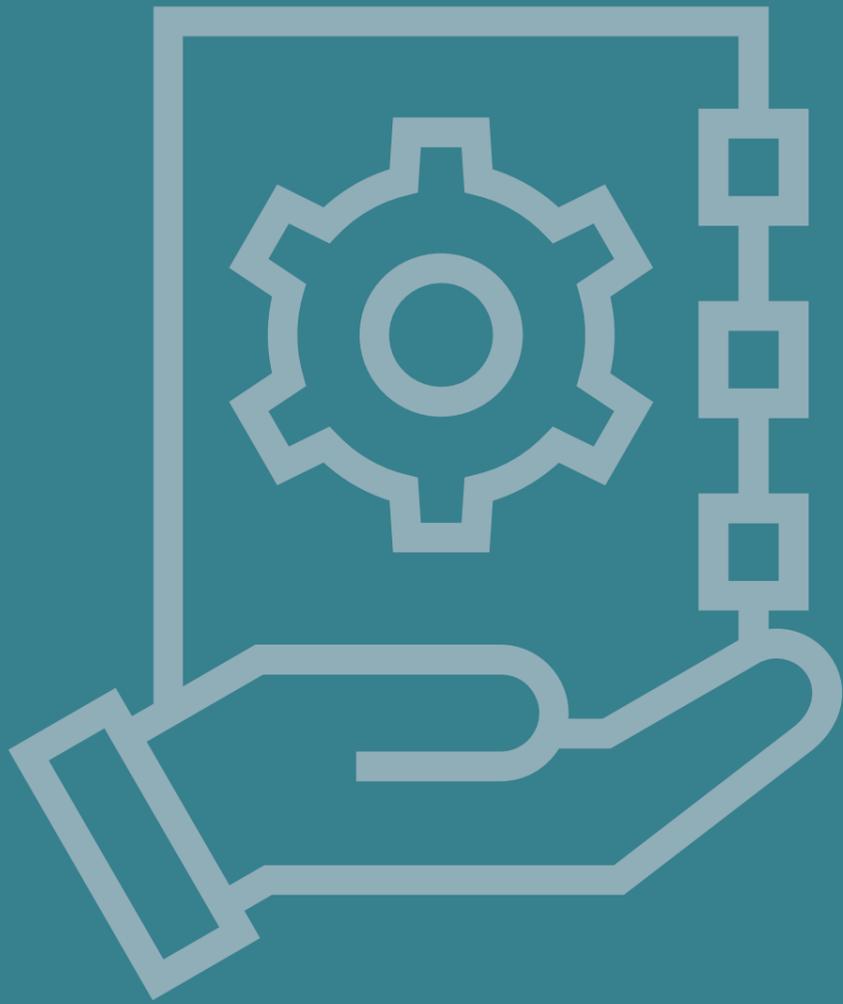
This document offers a succinct overview of a 2021-2022 mapping of child protection systems across seven Baltic Sea Region countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, and Norway. Led by the Norwegian Presidency of the CBSS, the mapping was initiated by the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk. The goal was to guide the implementation of its strategy to bolster national child protection systems and champion integrated strategies proven to benefit children at risk of violence. Maestral International executed the mapping using desk reviews and interviews with key informants from the mentioned countries.



NEEDS: Testing the Online Course – Results Analysis

This paper synthesizes the analysis of results from the NEEDS Online Course in societal security studies testing. After completing a module in societal security studies, expert practitioners dedicated time and effort to evaluate the course. The report provides an assessment of the NEEDS online course based on feedback gathered from questionnaires, focus group sessions, and individual user discussions. The objective was to evaluate the course from multiple angles, including technical aspects, the efficacy of skill tests, course materials, user viewpoints, and recommendations for enhancement.

Projects



Key projects and initiatives in 2022-2023

In line with its three long-term priorities, the CBSS strengthens intergovernmental cooperation by leading or being involved in various initiatives in the BSR.

Culture

BSR Cultural Pearls: The BSR Cultural Pearls project, co-funded by the EU's Interreg programme, aims to strengthen social resilience in Baltic Sea Region municipalities by harnessing the potential of local assets of culture and creativity.

Higher Education

CBSS Summer University: The CBSS Summer University provides a platform for building partnerships between Summer University programmes in the Baltic Sea Region. It aims to support students with additional study opportunities and future host institutions with teaching expertise.

Youth

Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF): The BSRYF is a youth-led body that represents the voices and interests of young people in the Baltic Sea Region. It specifically advocates for meaningful youth involvement in organisations and institutions while encouraging their active participation in policy-making.

Baltic Sea Youth Working Groups: The CBSS coordinates the Baltic Sea Youth Working Groups on Advocacy, Culture and Security for young people to improve the political impact of youth on decision-making in the Baltic Sea Region.

CBSS Youth Ministerial: The CBSS Youth Ministerial, organised by the CBSS Secretariat and the Presidency, elevated youth voices on the topic of societal resilience to the CBSS Ministerial Session.

Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD): The Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue in November 2022 brought together young and established experts on a specific and timely topic relevant to macro-regional cooperation.

Baltic Sea Youth Camp (BSYC): The Baltic Sea Youth Camp is organised as a prelude to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Annual Forum. Various youth formats are cooperating to update the Baltic Sea Youth Declaration presented to all stakeholders of the EUSBSR.

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum (BSPYF): The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum enables young people to participate actively in the Annual Conference of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) and share their views in a common policy recommendation paper.

Baltic Sea Region Hackathon: The Baltic Sea Region Hackathon brings together young IT specialists interested in developing IT solutions to the various challenges the BSR is facing.

Anti-trafficking

CAPE II: The CAPE II project aims to inform potential labour migrants in Sweden about the risks of trafficking in human beings (THB) for forced labour and labour exploitation. The aim is to raise awareness about issues of THB taking place in the Swedish labour market.

BSR Transnational Referral Mechanism: The aim of the BSR-TRM is the effective and safe transnational assistance and referral of victims of trafficking to a range of services to the Baltic Sea States and Ukraine, Bulgaria and Romania.

Child Protection

Elpis: The overall goal of this project is to promote multidisciplinary and interagency service models for child victims and witnesses of online sexual violence.

Journeys: The aim of this project is to secure that all relevant authorities and services work together with the child in their best interests, from initial report to long-term recovery.

Promise 3: The project established a European Competence Centre for Barnahus, laid the groundwork for an accreditation system for Barnahus, and

expanded PROMISE activities to include University training and case management tools.

Promise 4: Promise 4 brought new countries into the PROMISE circle of influence by supporting Estonia, Armenia and Moldova to take the next steps in the Barnahus developments based on the resources and experience of the PROMISE Barnahus Network.

Promise TRM: Addressing the specific needs of child victims of trafficking and exploitation. The project develops standards and guiding principles for national and transnational referral mechanisms incorporating a specific focus on child victims including a multi-disciplinary response for child victims of trafficking.

Soteria: This project aims to improve and understand the structure of well-functioning, accessible and resilient child protection systems, even in periods of crises. Furthermore, the project aims to strengthen these systems' ability to work on transnational cases.

2Know: This project gathers data from anonymous offenders searching for child sexual abuse material on the dark web and the surface web. The aim is to understand the patterns and trends of online crimes of sexual violence against children.

Civil Security

Secure Kids: Secure Kids strengthens the sustainability and impact of child participation mechanisms in decision-making processes at both national and local levels with a specific focus on decisions and action to build safe and secure societies.

NEEDS - Needs-based Education and Studies in Societal Security: The Erasmus+ NEEDS project aims to strengthen the quality, attractiveness, and scope of education in societal security through tackling the mismatches between the focus of education, and the knowledge needs of the field.

BALTInnoSEC: Pan-Baltic Cross-Sectoral Innovation in Societal Security aims to investigate the feasibility of an interface, connecting civil security actors in constellations, focused on tackling risks, specific to the BSR.

VOALA: Volunteers and Local Authorities – Baltic Sea Region Network (VOALA) aims to enhance society's resilience to natural and man-made disasters by

strengthening inclusive, cross-sectoral cooperation between authorities and volunteer organisations in crisis management in the BSR.

Baltic Excellence Programme in Societal Security: The overall aim of the BEP is to enhance the capacity of civil protection and law enforcement organisations. These goals are achieved by engaging experts, who hold a key to strategic leadership positions at the local, regional and national levels.

Climate Dialogue

CliMaLoc: The Climate Mainstreaming Locally in the BSR project supported the capacity building of local authorities in the BSR countries in mainstreaming climate change adaptation action as well as providing a dialogue platform for establishing partnerships for cooperation in this field in the future.

Sustainable Development

Localising SDGs in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond – Connecting municipalities and macro-regions towards climate and waste reduction goals: The one-year project aims to support capacity building of municipalities in fulfilling national and European objectives especially in the fields of climate and resilience building and waste reduction, and to harmonize these objectives with the 2030 Agenda framework.

Baltic Offshore Wind Forum: The forum, held in May 2023, aimed to enhance sustainable energy and bolster regional security by developing Baltic Sea offshore wind power.

Sustainable Maritime Economy

Baltic Sustainable Boating 2030: The goal of the project is to initiate a strategic cooperation at BSR level for developing the Baltic Sea into a single & sustainable boating destination. The project is supported by CBSS, the main umbrella organisations & boating tourism actors in the Baltic Sea Region.

Expert round table on underwater munitions in the Baltic Sea: In December 2022, policy makers and experts met in Kiel, Germany, to discuss dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea, including the importance of remediation.

About the CBSS

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is an inter-governmental organisation established in 1992 to promote collaboration and trust among the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea. Its vision is to create a prosperous, secure, and interconnected Baltic Sea Region (BSR), fostering mutual understanding and respect among its members.

The CBSS encompasses all multilateral intergovernmental regional cooperation in areas agreed on by its Members and serves as a forum for political dialogue. It also fosters practical cooperation in the region and acts as a focal point of information and coordination.

The objectives of the CBSS have evolved over time, adapting to the changing needs of the region. Initially focussing on supporting the democratic development in the BSR in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, its activities have included supporting democratic institutions, enhancing economic and technological collaboration, addressing humanitarian

and health challenges, protecting the environment, promoting sustainable energy, strengthening cultural ties, and improving transportation and communication infrastructure.

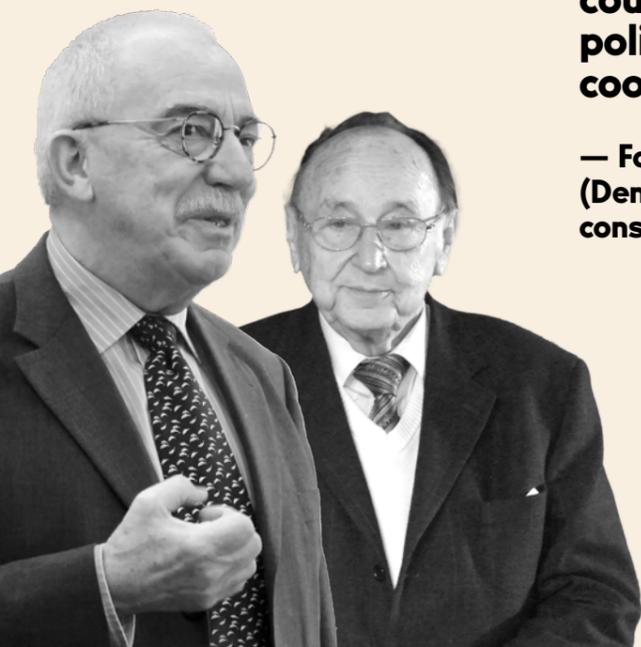
Today, the CBSS supports a global perspective on regional problems. This includes politically and practically translating global initiatives into regional actions on the ground in the BSR, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sendai Framework on disaster risk reduction, the Palermo Protocol on trafficking in human beings, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Comprising 11 members – ten member states and the European Commission – the CBSS provides a forum for political dialogue and partnership, working through various committees, expert groups, and networks to implement joint initiatives and projects that contribute to regional development and collaboration.



In light of political changes in Europe, the dream was to create a forum, which could serve as a driving force behind political and economic stabilisation and cooperation in the new Baltic Sea region.

— Former foreign affairs ministers **Uffe Ellemann-Jensen (Denmark, left)** and **Hans-Dietrich Genscher (Germany)**, considered to be the founding fathers of the CBSS



The CBSS long-term priorities

Regional Identity

The CBSS fosters a regional identity by promoting belonging and a sense of “Balticness”, cultural understanding, and mutual respect among the CBSS member states and citizens of the Baltic Sea Region, supporting initiatives that encourage dialogue and cooperation. Focus areas include culture, higher-education, and youth.

Sustainable & Prosperous Region

The CBSS promotes a sustainable, prosperous region by prioritizing economic growth, social inclusiveness, and environmental sustainability, working to implement the UN Agenda 2030 and SDGs in the Baltic Sea Region. Focus areas include climate dialogue, science cooperation, sustainable development, and a sustainable maritime economy.

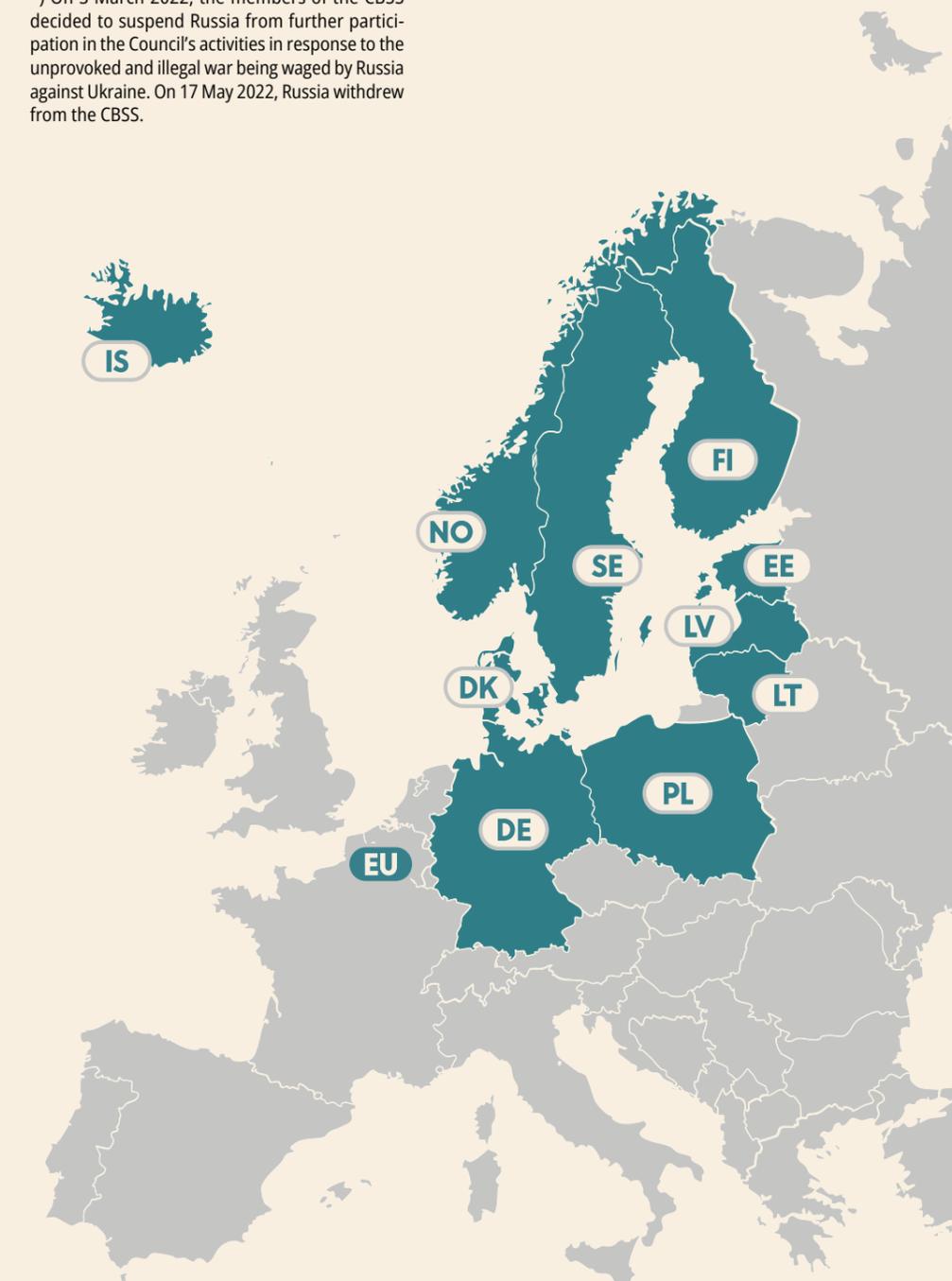
Safe and Secure Region

Under this priority, the CBSS endeavours to enhance societal security and safety, counteract all forms of trafficking in human beings, promote comprehensive and sustainable child protection, and strengthen societal resilience to disasters and hazards. The specific focus areas are anti-trafficking, child protection, and civil security.

The CBSS Member States

The Member States* of the CBSS are: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden. The European Union is also a member of the CBSS.

*) On 3 March 2022, the members of the CBSS decided to suspend Russia from further participation in the Council’s activities in response to the unprovoked and illegal war being waged by Russia against Ukraine. On 17 May 2022, Russia withdrew from the CBSS.



A brief history of the CBSS

Established in 1992, the CBSS has, over the past 30 years, cemented its role as a prime intergovernmental forum for the Baltic Sea Region, promoting peace, stability, and prosperity among its member states. Further underscoring its commitment to ensuring close collaboration and streamlined operations, the CBSS Secretariat was set up in 1998. This year marked the 25th anniversary of the Secretariat, a testament to the continuous dedication of its members and the broader CBSS community. Together, both milestones highlight the Council's unwavering commitment to fostering cooperation and unity within the region.

Pre

Historically, the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) has been a space for diplomacy, trade, migration and cultural exchange, but has also been the theatre of conflicts, with major powers vying for dominance since the Viking ages. Fast-forward, the Iron Curtain, a period of heightened political and ideological division after World War II, was characterized by the separation of Eastern and Western Europe, with the Soviet Union asserting control over large parts of the BSR. This period witnessed restricted movement, cultural isolation, and suppressed political dissent in the East. The détente period, lasting until the Soviet Union's collapse, brought reduced tensions and better East-West relations. Diplomatic engagement, trade, and cultural exchanges flourished, easing Cold War hostilities. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania saw softened Soviet control, fuelling national identity and independence aspirations. This period laid the groundwork for the major political transformations taking place in the BSR in the 1990s.

1990s

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) was established in 1992 by the Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Sea countries. In the 1990s, its birth decade, the CBSS focused on fostering cooperation and promoting stability in the region following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Key aspects included supporting new democracies, encouraging economic and technological assistance, addressing humanitarian and health issues, protecting the environment and promoting sustainable energy, enhancing cultural ties and education, and improving transportation and communication infrastructure. The CBSS aimed to create a platform for dialogue, partnership, and joint initiatives among Baltic Sea nations. The Secretariat of the CBSS was established in 1998.

2000s

The decade of the 2000s was marked by considerable transformation for the CBSS. The expansion of the European Union during this time resulted in the inclusion of multiple CBSS member countries, specifically Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. Once the CBSS goal of facilitating the EU accession of some of its members was achieved, the organisation set new priorities and broadened the scope of its work, reinforcing the importance of regional cooperation. Following a comprehensive review process, the CBSS Riga Declaration of 2008 heralded a shift towards a more project-based approach, enabling the organisation to focus on tangible outcomes and specific initiatives. This strategic shift allowed the CBSS to concentrate on key areas of collaboration, such as environmental protection, economic development, and social well-being, enhancing the region's stability and prosperity.

2010s

During the 2010s, a major focus of the CBSS was its commitment to localising the UN Agenda 2030 and facilitating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Baltic Sea Region. By launching the CBSS Baltic Action Plan 2030, its own action plan inspired by the UN Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, the organisation played a crucial role in fostering cooperation among its member states to address environmental, social, and economic challenges, in line with the global sustainability agenda and other macro-regional strategies such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). In 2014, the CBSS adopted its three long-term priorities Regional Identity, Sustainable and Prosperous Region, and Safe and Secure Region — all designed to increase the capacity of the CBSS member states to address cross-border challenges. However, the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014 had an impact on the Baltic Sea Region's cooperation and the work of the CBSS, with the Baltic Sea States Summits — the meetings of the CBSS at the head of government level — and CBSS Ministerial Sessions ceasing to be held.

2020s

As the 2020s unfold, the CBSS continues to adapt to the shifting regional landscape, which has been significantly affected by multiple crises. These include the COVID-19 pandemic, the environmental crisis, climate change, and, most notably, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The latter has brought a raft of consequences to the Baltic Sea Region, such as a geopolitical crisis, an energy crisis, and a humanitarian and migration crisis. Russia has been suspended and subsequently withdrew from the CBSS in 2022. Since then, the CBSS has been working diligently to strengthen regional cooperation and foster a cohesive Baltic Sea Region. The Vilnius II Declaration, a strategic roadmap for the CBSS which was adopted in 2021, has been instrumental in guiding the organisation's efforts to address the challenges posed by the changing geopolitical situation. It contains a "Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2030" ("Vilnius II"), which emphasizes the need for stability, security, and prosperity within the region and addresses pressing issues such as environmental protection, sustainable development, civil safety, trafficking in human beings and meaningful youth participation among other topics.



The CBSS Foreign Ministers in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1992



Democracy is the political system most conducive to individual freedom, respect for human rights, and economic growth. [We, the CBSS Foreign Ministers] are prepared to protect, support and develop democratic institutions.

— Copenhagen Declaration of 1992, the founding documents of the CBSS

Committee of Senior Officials 2022-2023

The day-to-day decision-making of the CBSS is led by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO). The CSO consists of representatives from the Foreign Ministries of the CBSS Member States. The Member State that holds the Presidency of the CBSS is also chairing the CSO.

GERMANY (CBSS Presidency)

Mr. Florian Rudolph, Chairman of the CSO, Head of Unit Division E21, Northern Europe (EU), Federal Foreign Office,

Mr. Maurice Gajan, FFO of Germany, Desk Officer, Council of the Baltic Sea States & Regional Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Division E21, Northern Europe (EU), Federal Foreign Office.

DENMARK

Ms. Eva Egesborg Hansen, Ambassador, Head of Department, Nordic Cooperation and Council of the Baltic Sea States, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

ESTONIA

Ms. Marika Post, MFA of Estonia, Ambassador-at-Large for Baltic Sea Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

FINLAND

Ms. Helena Tuuri, Ambassador, Ministry for Foreign Affairs,

Ms. Kaisa Arkkila, Assistant Desk Officer, Baltic Sea Region cooperation, Unit for Northern Europe, Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

ICELAND

Mr. Emil Breki Hreggvidsson, Director, Directorate for International and Security Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

LATVIA

Mr. Janis Kalva, Deputy Head of Baltic, Nordic Countries and Regional Co-operation Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

LITHUANIA

Ms. Kornelija Jurgaitienė, Ambassador-at-Large, European Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Mr. Tomas Irnius, Head of Division for the Baltic States, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

NORWAY

Mr. Olav Berstad, Senior Adviser of the Section for Nordic and Baltic Affairs and the European Green Deal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

POLAND

Ms. Ewa Dębska, European Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

SWEDEN

Ms. Eva Ekmeahag, Director, Department for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE

Mr. Marco D'Abbraccio, Policy Officer for Nordic Regional Cooperation and Eastern Partnership, European External Action Service (EEAS),

Mr. Julien Bourtembourg, Deputy Head of the Nordic Regional Cooperation and Eastern Partnership Division, European External Action Service (EEAS),

Mr. Eduard Auer, Head of Division of the Regional Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation and OSCE (EURCA.1), European External Action Service (EEAS).



The CBSS Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) and CBSS Secretariat staff at the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union in Brussels during their third meeting under the German Presidency on 16 February 2023.

