

Position Paper to strengthen the societal resilience of the Baltic Sea Region

written by the participants of the CBSS Youth Ministerial; Baltic Sea
Region Youth Forum CYR; Baltic Sea Youth Advocacy Working Group



Summary of priorities:

- **Baltic Sea States Summit**

We urge the heads of governments and the President of the European Commission to reconvene the bi-yearly meetings and renew the Baltic Sea Region agenda as a reaction to the recent events, inter alia, Russia's withdrawal from BSR cooperation platforms and the everchanging political atmosphere.

- **A common annual Baltic Sea Day**

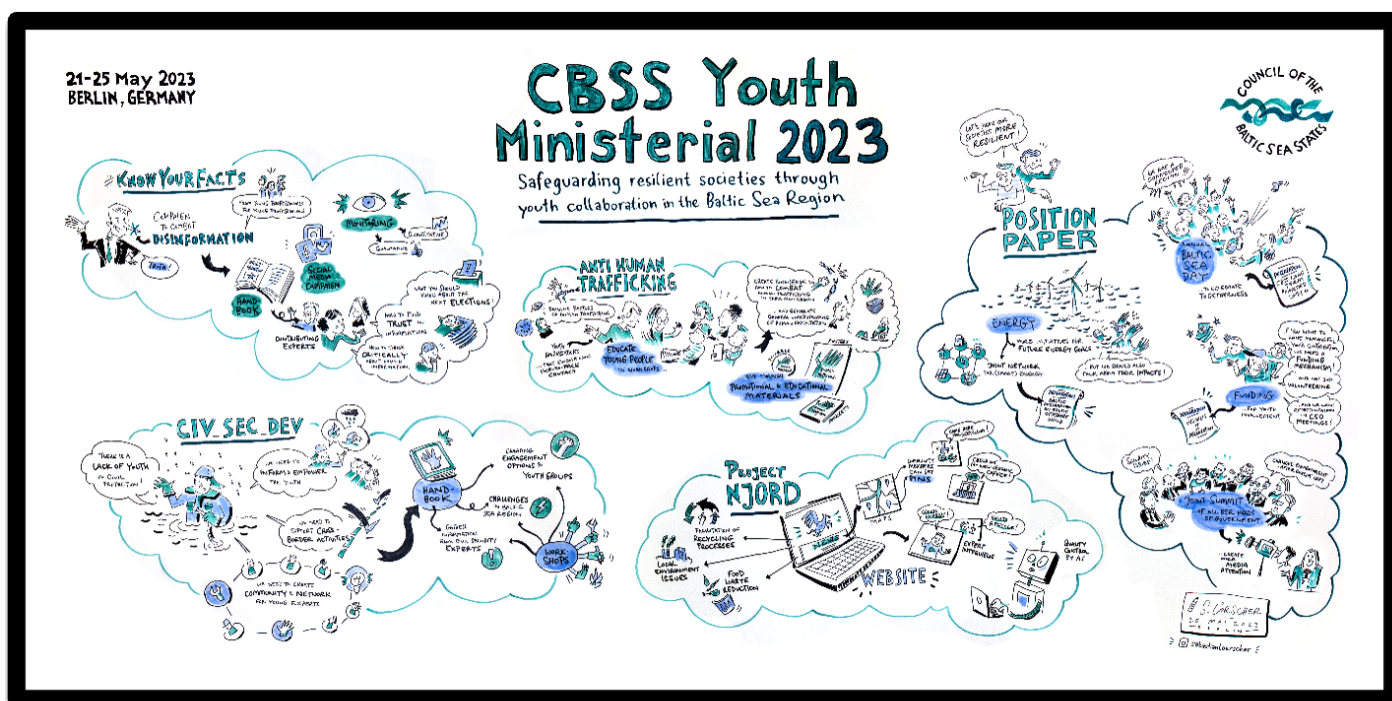
We encourage the Presidency to take the initiative and develop a common Baltic Sea Day among the democratic countries surrounding the Baltic Sea, that would foster a deeper sense of unity among the countries and communities and strengthen the societal resilience of the region.

- **Annual presidency youth networking meeting**

We call upon the CBSS presidency to take a proactive role in organising annual networking meetings for young experts, providing a platform for synergies, knowledge exchange and joint initiatives that address the challenges and opportunities in our region.

- **Further funding for BSRYP and CBSS youth activities**

We strongly insist on the allocation of additional funds to the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum, which would demonstrate a commitment to meaningful youth empowerment and strengthen the Baltic Sea Region's ability to address emerging issues as well as strengthen societal resilience of the Baltic Sea Region societies.



Graphic Recording: Sebastian Lörcher

Background

In times of multiple crises affecting young people in unprecedented ways, it is of utmost importance for governments in the Baltic Sea Region to recognise the significance of the youth's voices and take young experts seriously by considering the points mentioned in this position paper. In the Vilnius II declaration adopted in 2021 the Council of the Baltic Sea States agrees that:

“Young people participate and are represented in a meaningful way in institutions and decision-making processes giving impetus to efforts to reach a more resilient, gender equal and safe Region. The Region also benefits from an active civil society, vibrant and enhanced exchanges between people that help nurture a shared regional identity.”

Therefore, young people in the Baltic Sea Region express their needs, wishes and requests to strengthen societal resilience in the Baltic Sea Region.

Implementation ideas

Baltic Sea States Summit

Action Point: organise meetings of the heads of governments and the President of the European Commission to address new challenges that the region is facing and establish a renewed Baltic Sea Region agenda

It is of utmost importance to revitalise high-level engagement within the CBSS format. We therefore highlight the fact that since 2013, no meeting of the heads of governments and the President of the European Commission has taken place under the CBSS framework.

It is essential to acknowledge the emerging demands and challenges that require attention.

Moreover, we recognise the increasing importance of topics such as energy security, civil security, youth participation, and combating disinformation. These issues should be actively addressed and incorporated into the regional agenda.

In addition to the three long-term priorities, we believe the CBSS can serve as a valuable forum for collaboration among regional stakeholders, including the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, HELCOM, VASAB, and others.

Therefore, we urge the heads of governments and the President of the European Commission to come together and establish a renewed Baltic Sea Region agenda.

By setting a common vision and strategic goals, we can effectively address the challenges at hand and enhance societal resilience in the region.

Common Baltic Sea Day

Action Point: Organise a common Baltic Sea Day amongst all democratic countries surrounding the Baltic Sea to strengthen the regional identity

To enhance unity and ensure broader public recognition, we strongly urge the democratic governments of the Baltic Sea Region to establish a common Baltic Sea Day. Currently, various local, regional, and national authorities celebrate different days as their respective Baltic Sea Day, leading to fragmentation and missed opportunities for increased media attention and public engagement.

By designating a specific day as the common Baltic Sea Day, recognized by all governments in the region, we can create a unified platform to promote sustainable development, conservation, and cooperation in the Baltic Sea

Region. It is essential that this day is also acknowledged by the European Union, further emphasising the significance of the Baltic Sea as a shared resource and highlighting the region's importance on a broader scale as the first EU macro-region.

On the common Baltic Sea Day, activities such as concerts, exhibitions, workshops, lectures, and initiatives aimed at raising awareness and fostering cooperation should be promoted.

Establishing a common Baltic Sea Day will not only generate increased media attention but also encourage collaboration among different stakeholders, leading to a more coordinated and impactful approach towards the region's challenges and opportunities.

Annual CBSS presidency networking meeting for youth

Point of Action: commit to an annual CBSS presidency networking meeting for young experts in the Baltic Sea Region

We strongly advocate for the commitment to an annual CBSS presidency networking meeting for young experts in the Baltic Sea Region with representation from each country. The success of the CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023, organized by the German presidency and the CBSS Secretariat, has demonstrated the profound impact such an event can have in fostering collaboration, networking, and the exchange of innovative ideas among young people in our region.

The Baltic Sea Region's multilevel governance system requires a cohesive approach that interconnects various organizations, stakeholders, and institutions. By establishing an annual CBSS presidency networking meeting for young experts, we can enhance this interconnection, facilitating a bottom-up approach where the voices and perspectives of young people are heard and integrated into regional decision-making processes.

We call upon the CBSS presidency to take a proactive role in organizing annual networking meetings for young experts. This commitment will strengthen meaningful youth participation and create a platform for sustained engagement, enabling young experts to shape the future of our region. Together, let us create a space where young voices are not only heard but also actively incorporated into the decisions that shape our collective future.

Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF)

Point of Action: Allocate additional funds for the BSRYF

The BSRYF is a vital platform for youth participation, as outlined in the CBSS Action Plan of 2021. The implementation of the BSRYF was a significant

milestone, representing a commitment to creating a sustainable format for youth engagement in the work of the CBSS and other regional organisations.

However, it is crucial to recognize that the current resources allocated to the BSRYF only enable a limited version of its potential. To fully harness the benefits of this platform and enhance youth participation, additional funds must be allocated both on national or a transnational level.

The allocation of additional funds to the BSRYF demonstrates a commitment to youth empowerment and strengthens the Baltic Sea Region's ability to address emerging issues and strengthen societal resilience of the Baltic Sea Region societies. By investing in the BSRYF, governments will foster an inclusive environment, amplify the voices of young people, and create opportunities for their meaningful engagement.

Recap – why is it important to listen to young people?

Firstly, the unjustified war of Russia against Ukraine, has a profound impact on young people. The uncertainties and insecurities created by these geopolitical challenges are felt acutely by the youth, who are seeking stability and a secure future. By acknowledging their concerns and involving them in decision-making processes, governments can ensure that the perspectives of young people are taken into account when formulating policies and strategies.

Secondly, strengthening democracy is vital for the Baltic Sea Region, and the engagement of young people plays a pivotal role in achieving this goal. As the future leaders and active citizens, young individuals have a unique ability to contribute fresh ideas, innovative solutions, and a sense of social responsibility. Governments need to recognize the value of youth participation in democratic processes, such as inclusive consultations, youth committees, and political representation, in order to create a more inclusive and representative democracy. This is especially important in light of the upcoming EU elections in 2024.

Furthermore, peacebuilding efforts in the region can greatly benefit from the active involvement of young people. By empowering and engaging youth in initiatives focused on conflict resolution, tolerance, and dialogue, governments can foster a culture of peace and understanding. The young people active in the region recognize the important role of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as an institution that can create a positive impact on societies in various fields and especially by providing platforms for young people to collaborate, exchange ideas, and work towards common goals.

The Baltic Sea Region has a reputation for being a forerunner in various areas such as sustainability, combating human trafficking, civil security, and child protection, and it should continue to lead the way in addressing the needs of young people. By implementing innovative policies and programs that prioritize the well-being, education, and employment opportunities for youth, the region can serve as an inspiration for other parts of the world. This would not only benefit young individuals directly but also contribute to the overall development and prosperity of the region.

Moreover, the loss of wealth in all our societies and the economic challenges faced by young people cannot be tackled effectively unless governments work together collaboratively. By fostering regional cooperation and sharing best practices, governments in the Baltic Sea Region can develop comprehensive strategies to address youth unemployment, ensure equal access to education and training opportunities, and promote entrepreneurship. Young people need governments to prioritize their economic prospects and create an enabling environment for their success.

In addition, the engagement of young people in EU elections is crucial for the democratic process and the future of the European Union. Governments should actively encourage youth participation in electoral activities, including voter education, campaign support, and the promotion of youth-friendly policies. Strengthening EU institutions is vital for ensuring that the voices and aspirations of young people are effectively represented and translated into policies that address their needs.

Finally, governments must prioritize the implementation of international treaties and United Nations agendas that have a direct impact on young people and future generation. These include commitments related to climate change, sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, and social justice. By taking young people seriously and actively involving them in the implementation process, governments can foster a sense of ownership and commitment among youth, leading to more effective outcomes.

In conclusion, governments in the Baltic Sea Region should recognize the unique challenges faced by young people in times of multiple crises and take their demands seriously. By strengthening democracy, peacebuilding efforts, regional cooperation, and engagement with international commitments, governments can create an inclusive and prosperous future for the Baltic Sea Region. The active involvement and empowerment of young people are essential to building resilient societies and ensuring the well-being of both current and future generations.

