



FINNISH PRESIDENCY

2023-2024

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FINNISH PRESIDENCY OF
THE COUNCIL OF THE BALTIC SEA STATES**





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ABOUT THE CBSS

UNITING LIKE-MINDED STATES FOR A STRONGER, SAFER AND RESILIENT BALTIC SEA REGION

Established in 1992 by the Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) countries, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is an intergovernmental organisation that facilitates cooperation on regional priorities.

Since its inception, the CBSS has been at the forefront of addressing transboundary and cross-sectoral issues, promoting stability in the BSR, and reinforcing the commitment of its Member States to democratic institutions, adherence to international law, and respect for human rights.

Due to its unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia, a founding member of the CBSS, was suspended from the Council in March 2022 and subsequently withdrew in May 2022.

Comprising the ten democratic and like-minded states in the BSR plus the European Union, the CBSS today serves as a platform for political dialogue—mainly at the ministerial level—and facilitates multi-lateral cooperation on key issues such as safety, civil security, sustainability, and regional identity.

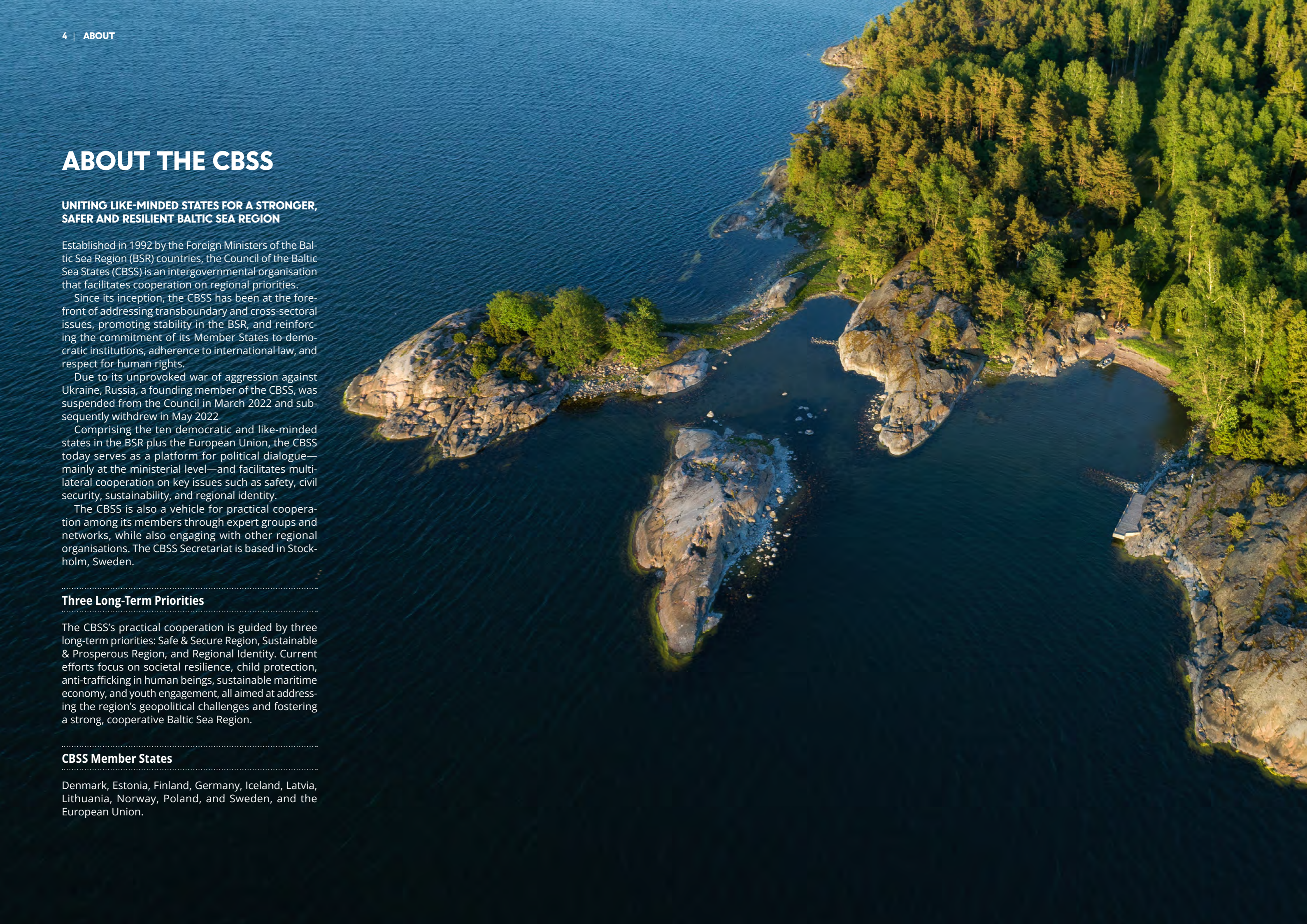
The CBSS is also a vehicle for practical cooperation among its members through expert groups and networks, while also engaging with other regional organisations. The CBSS Secretariat is based in Stockholm, Sweden.

Three Long-Term Priorities

The CBSS's practical cooperation is guided by three long-term priorities: Safe & Secure Region, Sustainable & Prosperous Region, and Regional Identity. Current efforts focus on societal resilience, child protection, anti-trafficking in human beings, sustainable maritime economy, and youth engagement, all aimed at addressing the region's geopolitical challenges and fostering a strong, cooperative Baltic Sea Region.

CBSS Member States

Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, and Sweden, and the European Union.



FOREWORD

by Helena Tuuri
Chair of the Finnish CBSS Presidency 2023-2024

THE CROSS-CUTTING THEMES of the Finnish Presidency – comprehensive security, crisis preparedness, and resilience – played a significant role throughout the year. All three long-standing priorities of the CBSS remained relevant, and Finland strived to promote them, but special focus was given to addressing the impacts of the topical crises and threats in our region. This applied to both the political dimension and practical cooperation.

The Finnish Presidency continued the adaptation of the CBSS to the new geopolitical situation. The Presidency also aimed at strengthening the relevance of the CBSS and the added value it produces for its members. The ministerial meetings in Porvoo on 13–14 June 2024 and the Porvoo Declaration showed that the CBSS can provide an agile forum for political discussions on topical issues.

Regarding practical cooperation, the project selection was focused, and the Member States' steering and leading role in the working groups and networks was strengthened. The challenges were tackled in a solution-oriented way, regardless of the division of labour among the CBSS working groups or the Member States' ministries. A good example is the report on the best practices to prevent and combat child trafficking in the Baltic Sea area. The Civil Protection Network was further developed towards a policy platform.

The last two years and two Presidencies, after the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine broke out in 2022, have formed a transition period during which the CBSS has adapted to the new reality. The Ministerial Session in Porvoo highlighted the successful adaptation and agreed on the need to continue the development further. The Council decided to initiate a review of the role of the CBSS in order to get recommendations for its future.



◀ **Helena Tuuri** is the Ambassador for Baltic Sea Affairs at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.



OVERVIEW OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE FINNISH PRESIDENCY

Civil Protection Network: Development towards a policy platform, sub-working groups

The cooperation in the Civil Protection Network developed further towards a policy platform, and the role of Senior Experts became more akin to that of national coordinators. Concrete steps during the Presidency included the Estonian initiative to establish a sub-working group on fire inspections. Finland is also currently working on proposals to establish sub-working groups on aerial wildfire monitoring, security of supply, and research, development and innovation (RDI).

During the Finnish Presidency year, the networks expanded, and a considerable group of relevant actors was reached in different events. Ukraine was also included, and Ukrainian stakeholders were connected with their counterparts from the Baltic Sea Region.

In June 2024, the Ministry of the Interior of Finland organised the 22nd meeting of Directors General for civil protection in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) in Helsinki. The main topics of the meeting were comprehensive security, preparedness, and civil-military cooperation.

Joint conference between the Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings and Expert Group on Children at Risk

In the context of a project run by the Finnish Ministry of Justice, an international conference gathering around 140 participants was organised in Helsinki, along with three expert workshops on trafficking of children during the Presidency year.

Best Practices for Combatting Trafficking in Children and Young People and for Identifying and Supporting Victims: Report on countries in the Baltic Sea Region

During the Finnish Presidency, a practical report on the best practices to prevent and combat child trafficking in the Baltic Sea area was published. The report examines trafficking in children and youth in the Baltic Sea states. The purpose of the report is to support the work of professionals encountering them and to provide up-to-date information that can serve as a basis for decision-making and concrete action plans.

Strengthened cooperation in the Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy (EGSME)

The EGSME has continued to chart green shipping corridors as defined in the Clydebank Declaration. Finland organised two expert seminars during its Presidency: one in Turku in October 2023 focusing on green corridors and food waste from cruise ships, and another in Mariehamn, Åland, in May 2024, focusing on sustainable maritime fuels and the needed fuel bunkering infrastructure around the Baltic Sea.

CBSS Youth Ministerial

In May 2024, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland organised the CBSS Youth Ministerial together with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Union of Local Youth Councils in Finland (Nuva ry). The event gathered 20 youth representatives from the CBSS Member States to discuss the themes of resilience and social participation. The event also included the production of recommendations, which were presented to the Foreign Ministers at the Ministerial Session in Porvoo in June 2024.

Continued development of the CBSS as a platform for topical discussion, CBSS Policy Guidelines

Finland continued to develop the CBSS as an agile forum for political discussions on topical issues. During the Presidency, a new policy document called CBSS Policy Guidelines was created, aiming to outline the main contents of the CBSS policy.

Decision to initiate a review of the role of the CBSS and recommendations on its future

In the political declaration of the CBSS Foreign Ministers (the Porvoo Declaration), the CBSS Member States decided to initiate a review of the role of the CBSS and recommendations on its future, led by a high-level wise person and supported by a task force open to CBSS Members.

Baltic Sea Science Congress, Baltic Sea Tourism Forum

The Finnish CBSS Presidency also included the following two events: the Baltic Sea Science Congress (BSSC) organised in Helsinki from 21 to 25 August 2023 and the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum in Oulu on 4 and 5 June 2024.

THE FINNISH PRIORITIES

Three cross-cutting themes: comprehensive security, crisis preparedness and resilience

During its Presidency of the CBSS, Finland aimed to strengthen both the political dimension and the practical cooperation of the CBSS. The cross-cutting themes of the presidency were comprehensive security, crisis preparedness and resilience.

Emphasis on security-related issues

For years, the CBSS has been a strong and recognised forum for practical cooperation in the priority area of “Safe and Secure Region”. Its working groups and expert networks each produce unique added value for the Baltic Sea Region. In the Finnish CBSS Presidency programme special focus was given to the strengths of the CBSS while also addressing the impact of serious crises to our region – such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, climate change and biodiversity loss. Therefore, security-related issues were emphasised.

Focus on young people

Youth participation in society is important. It is also important that the new youth forum of the Baltic Sea Region becomes a functional platform that serves the needs of young people and promotes their opportunities to exert influence. Finland wants to strengthen the young generation’s European identity and increase their voter turnout in the European Parliament elections of 2024.

CBSS MINISTERIAL SESSION 2024

The foreign ministers and high-level representatives from the CBSS Member States and the European Union met in Porvoo, Finland, on 13–14 June 2024. During the 21st CBSS Ministerial Session, they adopted the Porvoo Declaration. The meetings were presided over by Elina Valtonen, Finland's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The Porvoo Declaration advocates for strengthened resilience and crisis preparedness, underscoring the necessity of practical cooperation within the Council and consolidating ties among democratic and like-minded states in the region. It further highlights critical areas such as safety, hybrid threats, and societal security.

A notable aspect of the Porvoo Declaration is its reaffirmation of support for Ukraine amidst the ongoing war. The Council condemned Russia's illegal, unjustified, and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. Russia, an initial member of the CBSS, was suspended from the Council in March 2022 and withdrew in May 2022.

The declaration also emphasised the important role of youth in society, welcoming the youth position paper developed during the CBSS Youth Ministerial 2024 held in Helsinki in May. This paper focuses on youth social participation and resilience, stressing the need for meaningful engagement of young people in societal development.

The session also marked the welcoming of Estonia as the incoming CBSS presidency, beginning on 1 July 2024.



The Council stressed the importance of countering rising threats and security challenges in the region and underlined the importance of intensified cooperation between the democratic countries of the region.

▲ From the Porvoo Declaration, adopted during the CBSS Ministerial Session 2024.

[1] Top, from left: Michael Siebert, European External Action Service; Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Iceland; Tobias Billström, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden; Jeppe Tranholm-Mikkelsen, Permanent Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Denmark; Baiba Braže, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Latvia; Grzegorz Poznański, Director General of the CBSS Secretariat; Gabrielius Landsbergis, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lithuania.

Bottom, from left: Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Poland; Margus Tsahkna, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Estonia; Elina Valtonen, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland; Annalena Baerbock, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Germany; Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway.

[2] Ministerial selfie time.

[3] The CBSS Trio Ministers 2023-2024: Estonia (incoming Presidency), Finland (incumbent), Germany (previous).



SAFE & SECURE REGION

The CBSS aim to enhance community well-being and societal resilience across the BSR, for example by establishing robust networks for regional response to emergencies.

Under this priority area, the CBSS operates one network focusing on civil protection and two specialised groups that respectively cover child protection and anti-human human trafficking efforts.

The CBSS Civil Protection Network aims to respond to the evolving security environment by strengthening resilience at the individual, community, and societal levels.

The CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk focuses on protecting children and enhancing their rights in the region, for example, by sharing experiences and best practices to safeguard children from all forms of violence.

The CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings seeks to strengthen the prevention of human trafficking in the region and supports Member States in their anti-trafficking efforts by providing a platform for sharing experiences and best practices.



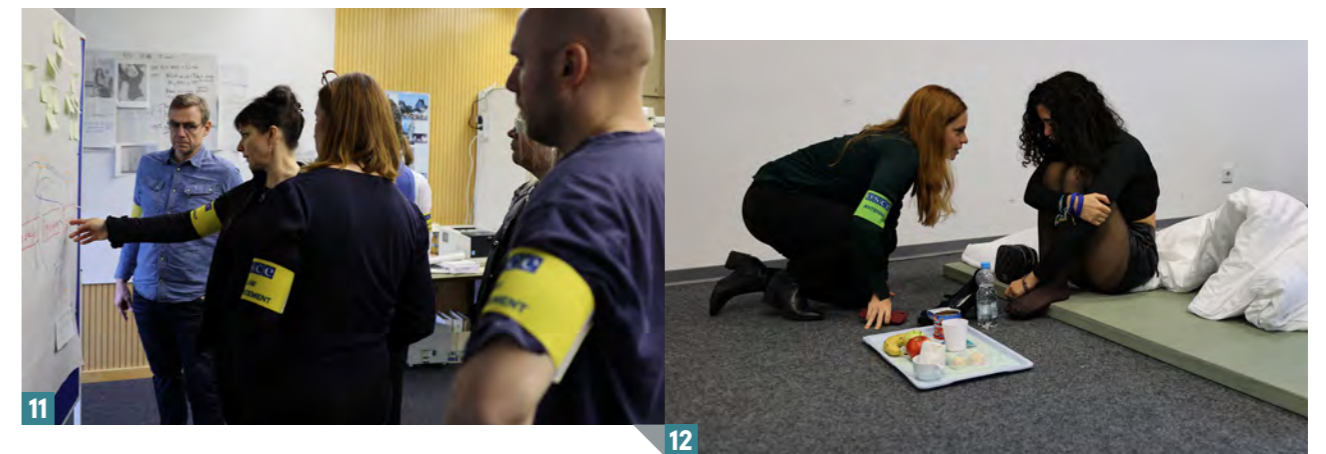
In focus: Safe & Secure Region through the lens (I)

[1-6] European Forum against Human trafficking for forced labour and labour exploitation, 7-8 December 2023 in Stockholm — [1] Paulina Brandberg, Swedish Minister for Gender Equality and Working Life addressing the crowd. [2] Minister Brandberg with Grzegorz Poznanski, Director General of the CBSS. [3] Lena Ag, Director General of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. [4-6] Panellists in the plenary session.

[7-10] Child Trafficking – Justice, Healing and Protection Conference, Stockholm, 10 June 2024 — [7] Dr Petya Nestorova, Executive Secretary of GRETA at the Council of Europe. [9] Ms Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner for Home Affairs.

[11-12] Joint CBSS-OCSE simulation-based training exercise on combatting trafficking in human beings in Brühl, Germany in November 2023

[13-14] Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on How to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking — [14] From left: An IOM official; H.E. Amb. Anna Jardfelt, the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva; H.E. Amb. Yevheniia Filipenko, Ukraine's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva; H.E. Amb. Anna Ekstedt, Ambassador-at-Large for Combatting Trafficking in Persons of Sweden; Edi Mujaj, Head of the CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings.





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In focus: Safe & Secure Region through the lens (II)

[1-3] Youth & Resilience: Building Bridges and Promoting Volunteerism in Civil Protection — Padasjoki, Finland, 27-29 October 2023

[4] Ukraine Forum — Helsinki, Finland, 23 November 2023

[5-6] Secure Kids event — Stockholm, Sweden, 6-7 February 2024

[7] Munimap kick-off event — Sopot, Poland, 20-22 February 2024

[8-9] 12th Baltic Excellence Programme (BEP) and BALTInnoSEC — Helsinki, Finland, 19-21 March 2024

[10-11] Razom project kick-off event — Stockholm, 16-18 April 2024

[12-13] NEEDS meeting



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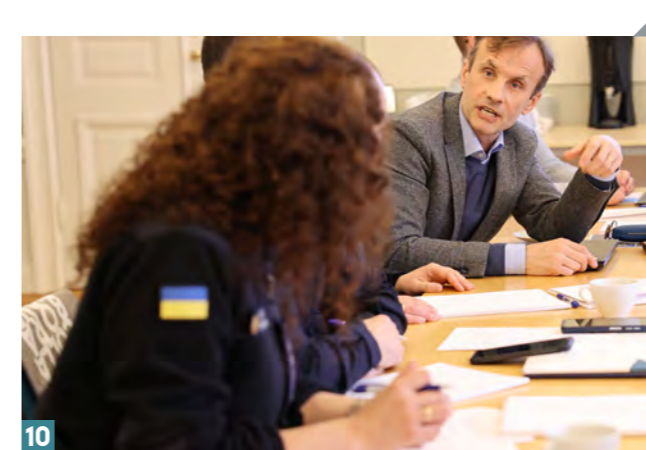
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ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

During the Finnish Presidency, the CBSS achieved significant milestones in combatting human trafficking through the efforts of the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (TF-THB). The TF-THB managed to solidify its position as a leading European entity in the fight against human trafficking by advancing efforts in capacity building and generating valuable knowledge in the field, ranging from training for ministries of foreign affairs and embassies to workshops and international conferences.

Additionally, enhanced collaboration between the TF-THB and the Children at Risk expert group brought crucial attention to the issues of human trafficking and forced criminality, particularly concerning children and young adults. During the Finnish Presidency, the TF-THB prioritised the issue of human trafficking for forced labour and labour exploitation—areas where Finland has emerged as a leading state in combatting these forms of trafficking. At the same time, Finland paved the way for increased focus on human trafficking for sexual exploitation, in line with the TF-THB Strategy.

The TF-THB has intensified its focus on human trafficking as an organised crime, enhancing cooperation with law enforcement authorities in both the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and Ukraine. During the Finnish Presidency, the TF-THB was approached by the EU Advisory Mission Ukraine and Lviv State University, leading to participation in a national anti-trafficking conference in Ukraine. This engagement resulted in an ongoing dialogue about continued support, with plans for collaborative activities scheduled for autumn 2024 to further assist Ukrainian law enforcement in combatting organised crime, including human trafficking.

PROJECT UPDATES

PEX-BSR (2024) — The objective of the PEX-BSR project is to establish capacity-building tools for

professionals to identify and investigate trafficking in human beings (THB) for sexual exploitation and to provide an overview of THB for sexual exploitation in the Baltic Sea Region. Funded by the Government Offices of Sweden, the project outputs include an online training module on human trafficking for embassies and diplomatic missions based on the Handbook, an Investigation Protocol for law enforcement authorities, a BSR-wide study on human trafficking for sexual exploitation and prostitution, and informational material for youth on sexual exploitation, demand, and online exploitation.

CAPE (2019-2024) — The CAPE project aims to combat trafficking for labour exploitation by building competence, providing assistance, and supporting prosecution in the Baltic Sea Region. Funded by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, which also serves as a partner, the project has produced one report on labour exploitation, with another expected by the end of 2024. During the Finnish Presidency, CAPE organised seminars, training sessions, and an international forum to advance its objectives.

FRAUD (2024-2025) — The FRAUD project seeks to address human trafficking linked to financial and benefit fraud in the Baltic Sea Region. Funded by the Swedish Institute and involving national authorities of CBSS member states and NGOs as partners, the project has so far recruited a researcher from Örebro University to draft a study on the subject. Additionally, it has organised a study visit with BSR authorities and conducted national dialogues to further explore human trafficking for benefit fraud.

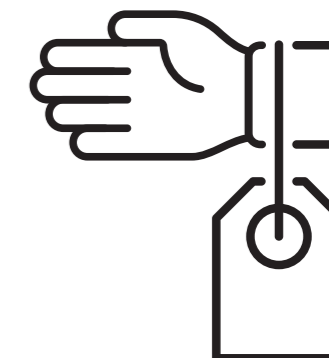
KEY EVENTS

European Forum against Human trafficking for forced labour and labour exploitation — The European Forum against Human Trafficking for Forced Labour and Labour Exploitation held in December

2023 in Stockholm, was a two-day international event that brought together nearly 300 participants, focusing entirely on forced labour and labour exploitation. Organised by the TF-THB in cooperation with the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, the forum featured panel discussions and workshops, attracting representatives primarily from European state authorities and NGOs, with participation from the majority of European states.

Geneva event for the Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on How to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking — In November 2023, a Geneva event was organised to promote the “Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on How to Assist and Protect Victims of Human Trafficking.” Funded by the CBSS Secretariat and supported by partners such as the IOM and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the hybrid event in Geneva gathered diplomatic missions and key international stakeholders. The event was inaugurated by H.E. Amb. Anna Jardfelt, Sweden’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva, with H.E. Amb. Yevheniia Filipenko, Ukraine’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva, highlighting the importance of the anti-trafficking work undertaken by the CBSS and TF-THB.

Joint CBSS-OCSE simulation-based training exercise on combatting trafficking in human beings — The OSCE Simulation in Brühl, Germany in November 2023 aimed to enhance the competence and readiness of frontline workers, authorities, and organisations in tackling human trafficking and protecting victims. Funded by the CBSS Secretariat and the OSCE, this week-long simulation exercise took place at a police academy in Germany and involved national stakeholders from five CBSS member states. The activity was highly rated by participants, with one member state attributing the success of a recent anti-trafficking police raid directly to the skills gained during the simulation, underscoring the significant short-term and long-term impacts of such practical training exercises.



The CBSS & anti-trafficking in human beings

Human trafficking is a significant issue in the Baltic Sea Region, with the most common forms being sexual and labour exploitation. The region serves as both a destination and transit area for trafficking victims, driven by demand for cheap labour and sexual services. Traffickers exploit vulnerabilities, often as part of organised criminal networks, with refugees and displaced persons particularly at risk. In response, the CBSS, through its Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (TF-THB), leads regional anti-trafficking efforts. These include coordinating national responses, facilitating information exchange, and developing regional mechanisms like the Baltic Sea Region Transnational Referral Mechanism.

CHILDREN AT RISK

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

In December 2023, the CBSS's Expert Group on Children at Risk (EG CAR) met in Rovaniemi to focus on best practices to prevent and identify child trafficking and violence against children, with discussions centred on supporting victims, particularly runaways and those in foster care. This was followed by the February 2024 EG CAR meeting in Helsinki, which addressed the prevention of exploitation of Ukrainian refugee families through successful integration and support services. Key topics included employment, labour exploitation, and the well-being of Ukrainian children. In May 2024, another EG CAR meeting in Helsinki explored the dynamics of human trafficking, both in real life and online, with discussions focusing on online-facilitated child trafficking, psychological control, and insights from Finnish court cases.

In addition, the event titled "Achieving Dynamic and Resilient Systems for Protection, Healing, and Justice for Child Victims of Trafficking" held in Stockholm in June 2024 brought together around 85 participants to discuss critical topics for strengthening collective efforts. Workshops at the event covered intergovernmental cooperation, child-centred procedures, the connection between institutionalisation and child trafficking, and youth involvement in advocacy. Moreover, a significant publication titled Handbook for Forensic Child Interviews in Presumed Cases of Trafficking was released to support professionals in conducting investigative interviews in presumed cases of child trafficking.

PROJECT UPDATES

Elpis — The overall goal of this project is to promote multidisciplinary and interagency service models for child victims and witnesses of online sexual violence. The main activities of the project include implementing and evaluating protocols and procedures designed to address cases of online child sexual violence, as well as providing training in interagency collaboration and specialised interventions, including crisis and victim support.

Journeys — This project ensures that all relevant authorities and services work together in the best interests of the child, from the initial report to long-term

recovery. It is developing and evaluating a child liaison role to ensure that children are heard and feel safe and comfortable throughout the Barnahus journey. The project is also creating child-friendly tools, including an app and a child log that describes the child's journey through Barnahus.

Secure Kids — This project aims to develop a child participation mechanism to involve children in disaster risk reduction.

Soteria — This project seeks to improve and understand the structure of well-functioning, accessible, and resilient child protection systems, even during crises. It also aims to strengthen these systems' ability to handle transnational cases and to promote Barnahus' role within the broader child protection system, ensuring excellence in practice.

TRM — This project addresses the specific needs of child victims of trafficking and exploitation by developing standards and guiding principles for national and transnational referral mechanisms (TRM). It incorporates a specific focus on child victims and draws inspiration from multidisciplinary and interagency services for child victims and witnesses of violence (Barnahus) in both national and transnational mechanisms.

2Know — This project gathers data from anonymous offenders searching for child sexual abuse material on the dark web and the surface web to understand the patterns and trends of online sexual violence crimes against children. It also develops a Peer Support Group program that offers both practical and emotional support to parents and caregivers.

EEA Bulgaria - Barnahus: Promoting Multidisciplinary and Interagency Justice and Response for Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence — This project aims to ensure the rights of child victims of violence to justice, protection, and recovery in Bulgaria by supporting multidisciplinary and interagency services. The objectives include supporting Barnahus in EEA Norway target countries to achieve excellence in practice through training, bilateral exchange, and technical support.

Oak - Impact of the Barnahus Model on Protecting the Rights of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse in the Criminal Justice System — This project developed research on the impact of the Barnahus model in supporting the rights and needs of child victims of sexual

abuse, demonstrating shorter processing times and more prosecutions with statistical significance. The Council of the Baltic Sea States supported the project by contributing information from regular Barnahus mappings, reviewing draft reports, delivering training on MDIA teamwork in Barnahus, and participating in the project's final conference in Tarragona, Spain.

KEY EVENTS

Promoting Barnahus with Various National Actors

— In the past year, the CBSS has facilitated a series of contributions to national exchanges and capacity building on Barnahus. These efforts included presentations at conferences in Latvia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro, as well as participation in study visits and conducting trainings on MDIA teamwork in Estonia and Spain.

Achieving Dynamic and Resilient Systems for Protection, Healing, and Justice for Child Victims of Trafficking Conference

— Around 85 participants met to exchange practices and discuss crucial topics aimed at strengthening collective efforts and building more dynamic and resilient systems to ensure justice, healing, and protection for child victims of trafficking.



The CBSS & child protection

The primary strategic objective of the CBSS bodies dedicated to children at risk is to strengthen 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 emphasises 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 the region, such as the Barnahus model. Under the Finnish Presidency, the Children at Risk Expert Group has prioritised combatting child trafficking and counteracting violence against children.

KEY PUBLICATIONS

Handbook for Forensic Child Interviews in Presumed Cases of Trafficking

— This handbook aims to support professionals in conducting investigative interviews in presumed cases of child trafficking. It provides case examples and interview excerpts, and draws on evidence-based interview protocols. The handbook also introduces general core principles and features that are particularly relevant when investigating suspected cases of child trafficking.

ISA: Acute Crisis Intervention

— This publication introduces the "ISA" approach for acute crisis support, developed to address the specific needs of child victims of trafficking for sexual purposes, sexual exploitation, and technology-facilitated sexual abuse during the first critical days following a disclosure or a child investigative interview.

CIVIL SECURITY

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Finnish presidency focused on using existing cooperation structures to engage previously unconnected actors, successfully bridging national agencies in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) for knowledge sharing and joint events. This approach facilitated collaboration on early warning systems, Ukraine assistance, security terminology, crisis communication, wildfire monitoring, volunteerism, climate change, food security, and more. The presidency, with Secretariat support, connected the Baltic Excellence Programme with the business sector and hosted the Ukraine Forum in Helsinki, enhancing contacts, especially for the Ukrainian delegation. The CBSS Civil Protection Network and EUSBSR's Policy Area Secure were also showcased at the EU Civil Protection Forum 2024. Significant efforts led to the creation of the BSR Network of Volunteer Organisations and Authorities (BSR NOVA).

PROJECT UPDATES

Civil Protection Faculty: Supporting Ukraine, Learning from Ukraine — Launched in Helsinki in November 2023, this project helps the Ukrainian NGO Vovchok Folk High School establish a Civil Protection Faculty based on BSR practices. Focus areas include tactical medicine, mine safety, psychological resilience, and democratic engagement. Thousands of Ukrainian civilians and first responders have been trained, with the first Ukraine-BSR online volunteerism conference held in May 2024.

VOALA (Volunteers and Local Authorities – Baltic Sea Region Network) — In June 2024, the CBSS concluded the transnational project “Volunteers and Local Authorities – Baltic Sea Region Network” (VOALA). The main outcome of the project is the establishment of the BSR Network of Volunteer organisations and Authorities (BSR NOVA), which is chaired by the Finnish National Rescue Association (SPEK).

SECURE KIDS — The CBSS-coordinated Secure Kids project developed a Child Participation Mechanism for DRR and a Practical Tool for its adaptation. These resources guide early involvement of children in prevention efforts. The project also produced Strategic Guidance for Inclusive Crisis Communication with Children, providing strategies for engaging children across CBSS Member States.

MUNIMAP/MUNIRISK – Projects Focused on Submerged Munitions in the Baltic Sea — The CBSS has engaged as a communication and policy dialogue partner in two large EU-funded submerged munitions projects, MUNIMAP and MUNIRISK. These projects aim to improve risk assessment and prioritisation of areas needing action and to provide governments with decision-making support tools.

KEY EVENTS

Aerial Wildfire Monitoring Workshop — A workshop aimed at determining potential collaboration needs for aerial wildfire monitoring among Baltic Sea countries was conducted in Helsinki on 21-22 September 2023.

Youth & Resilience: Building Bridges and Promoting Volunteerism in Civil Protection — A workshop in Padasjoki, Finland, on 27-29 October 2023, explored ways to build resilience and promote volunteerism among youth in civil protection efforts.

Ukraine Forum — Held in Helsinki on 23 November 2023, this forum gathered experts and representatives to discuss urgent needs in Ukraine, such as demining, energy, and psychological support.

UN EFDRR Roadmap Action-Oriented Dialogue: Reducing Risk Together – Community Engagement in DRR — Held in Vantaa, Finland, on 13-15 December 2023, this event brought together CBSS CPN members, government officials, youth representatives, volunteers, scientists, and others to discuss topics such as youth and risk communication, volunteer engagement in DRR, inclusive early warning systems, and the role of science and the private sector in resilience building.

Joint Crisis Communication in the BSR — An event in Helsinki on 13-14 February 2024 aimed at creating a network of crisis communicators in the Baltic Sea Region, fostering collaboration and improving crisis response strategies.

12th Baltic Excellence Programme (BEP) and BALT-innoSEC — Hosted by the Ministry of the Interior of Finland, this event took place in Helsinki on 19-21 March 2024. Topics included measuring population readiness, the role of businesses in national resilience, and civil defence structures across different countries. The event also continued the BALTinnoSEC initiative, fostering dialogue between businesses and security stakeholders.

RDI Seminar on Comprehensive Security and Societal Resilience — A two-day seminar in Espoo, Finland, on 25-26 April 2024, focused on BSR projects related to research, development and innovation on overall security, climate security, and societal resilience.

Food Security and Personal Resilience Webinar — This webinar, held in Riga, Latvia, on 31 May 2024, addressed food security and personal resilience within the context of broader regional security concerns.

EU Civil Protection Forum — At a session titled “Bridging the Gap between Local and EU Level Response: Regional Cooperation in Disaster Management,” PA Secure showcased how collaborative efforts enhance Europe’s disaster readiness, prevention, and response.

CPN Director Generals Meeting — At this meeting hosted by the Rescue Services of the Ministry of the Interior of Finland in June 2024, the Directors General for Civil Protection in the BSR discussed key outcomes of the Finnish CBSS Presidency, civil-military cooperation, and the roles of businesses, civil society, and volunteers in disaster risk reduction and assistance to Ukraine.

KEY PUBLICATIONS

The VOALA project culminated in the document “An Overview of the Analysis and Conclusions Identified in the VOALA Project – Identifying Challenges, Good Practices, and Recommendations for Volunteering in Civil Protection in the Baltic Sea Region.”

The Secure Kids project resulted in the “Child Participation Mechanism in DRR Activities and the Practical Tool for Adaptation of the Child Participation Mechanism”, as well as the “Strategic Guidance for Inclusive Crisis Communication with Children”.

The mapping report “Existing Mechanisms and Processes for Child and Youth Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden” was also produced.

The “Societal Security Online Course” is an outcome of the NEEDS (“Needs-based Education and Studies in Societal Security”) project, conducted by eight partner organisations from six countries on societal security in the Baltic Sea Region.



The CBSS & civil security

The CBSS’s main goal in civil security is to foster a common societal security culture in the Baltic Sea Region. This involves promoting a shared understanding of threats and common approaches to crisis management, encompassing prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. With the region facing heightened security challenges, this collaborative approach saves lives and resources. The primary CBSS collaboration platform in civil security is the CBSS Civil Protection Network (CPN), which holds yearly gatherings of Directors General for Civil Protection and Senior Officials. Within the CPN, Baltic Sea Region countries exchange knowledge and share best practices on pressing common issues such as early warning systems, crisis communication, volunteerism, and the participation of youth in disaster risk reduction. CBSS, together with the Swedish MSB, also coordinates the EUSBSR Policy Area Secure (PA Secure), an EU platform for cross-border cooperation that assists BSR countries in aligning national priorities with EU and global policies and funding opportunities. Under the chairmanship of the Ministry of the Interior of Finland, the CPN/PA Secure networks focused on comprehensive security and strengthening the resilience of the BSR.

SUSTAINABLE & PROSPEROUS REGION

The CBSS champions sustainable and resilient societies, advocating for economic and social development that respects the Baltic Sea ecosystem and addresses climate change. The CBSS contributes to making the Baltic Sea Region a leading example of sustainability and prosperity, inspiring other regions worldwide. Under this priority, the CBSS focuses on a sustainable maritime economy, climate dialogue, scientific cooperation, and sustainable development.

Under the priority Sustainable & Prosperous Region, the CBSS is supported by its Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy (EGSME), which focuses on the maritime economy's growth potential while seeking to better protect the marine ecosystems in the region. The group works towards harmonising the implementation of IMO and EU regulations in the coastal states, ensuring that economic growth aligns with environmental sustainability.

SUSTAINABLE MARITIME ECONOMY

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Based on the reflection process conducted by the previous presidency, the new Terms of Reference (ToR) for the CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy (EGSME) were elaborated and adopted during the Presidency period. EGSME, which focuses on promoting sustainable practices within the maritime sector, now advocates for decarbonised shipping and positions the Baltic Sea Region as a model region for maritime best practices. The Finnish Presidency's thematic priorities include continuing to chart clean transport corridors—green shipping corridors as defined in the Clydebank Declaration—and bringing together actors to promote sustainable maritime transport and cruise tourism in the Baltic Sea Region.

PROJECT UPDATES

Baltic Sustainable Boating 2030 — This project is entering its conclusive stage, and to contribute to the elaboration of the “Sustainability Roadmap,” policy dialogue actions were conducted during the Boot 2024 event in Düsseldorf, Germany; the Blue Mission BANOS Arena in Riga, Latvia; and the Tall Ships Race 2024 event in Helsinki, where the Vision for Baltic Sustainable Boating 2030 was presented.

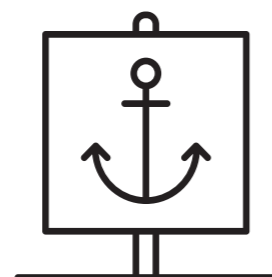
The CBSS & sustainable maritime economy

The sustainable maritime economy is an overarching thematic priority area for intergovernmental cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), led by the CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy (EGSME) in coordination with other organisations and initiatives around the Baltic Sea. This cooperation aims to promote the BSR's international competitiveness in this priority area. Focusing on small and medium-sized ports, clean shipping, maritime coastal tourism, and recreational boating, the CBSS strives to balance economic, social, and environmental aspects in the maritime sector. By pooling knowledge, experiences, and resources, as well as facilitating a cross-sectoral approach and synergies, the CBSS works towards cohesive efforts in all sectors of maritime action.

KEY EVENTS

To address the thematic priorities of the Presidency, two **open EGSME seminars** were organised for group members and collaborative networks such as EUSBSR and the BSR Green Shipping Contact Network. The first seminar, held on 12 October 2023 in Turku, discussed the advancement of green shipping corridors and addressed the issue of food waste pollution from cruise ships in the Baltic Sea Region. The second seminar, held in Mariehamn, Åland, on 22 May 2024, focused on sustainable maritime fuels and the necessary bunkering infrastructure in the Baltic Sea. Participants from the shipping industry, port authorities, and technology developers recognised the importance of EGSME as a stakeholder platform for policy dialogue, knowledge exchange, and experience sharing.

During the **Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2023** in Tallinn, the priority of promoting sustainable recreational boating was emphasised in the panel discussion “Marinas: Inclusive Meeting Points for Boaters and Land Tourists,” which highlighted the challenges and opportunities in creating inclusive marinas and the contributions of local communities.



In focus: Sustainable Maritime Economy through the lens

[1-2] Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2023 — Tallinn, Estonia, 11 October 2023

[3-4] Baltic Sustainable Boating 2030 at Boot 2024 — Düsseldorf, Germany

[5] EGSME seminar — Turku, Finland, 12 October 2023

[6] BaltSusBoating Partner Meeting — Stockholm, Sweden

CLIMATE DIALOGUE

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) funding of the project "Localising SDGs in the Baltic Sea Region and Beyond – Connecting Municipalities and Macro-Regions Towards Climate and Waste Reduction Goals" facilitated the review and publication of the ClimaLoc handbook and provided expert support to prepare the project application "ClimaResponse," which was submitted for Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme funding (decision expected in autumn 2024).

The EUSBSR Annual Forum 2023 workshop "Driving Collaborative Decarbonisation and Climate Adaptation in the Baltic Sea Region" focused on sharing good examples and projects to facilitate adaptation and mitigation measures for climate change in the Baltic Sea Region. The workshop emphasised the need to consolidate actions, share efforts, and encourage municipalities to apply the 10-step approach suggested in the ClimaLoc Handbook.

KEY PUBLICATIONS

The review and printed publication of the *Handbook for Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning in the Baltic Sea Region* (ClimaLoc Handbook) serves as a comprehensive guide, offering a 10-step process for preparing, developing, evaluating, and adjusting local climate change adaptation plans in the Baltic Sea Region. Designed for networks of regional and local governments, this handbook is a valuable resource developed within the framework of the CliMaLoc (Climate Mainstreaming Locally in the BSR) project, led by the Council of the Baltic Sea States. It was funded by the Swedish Institute and printed with support from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.



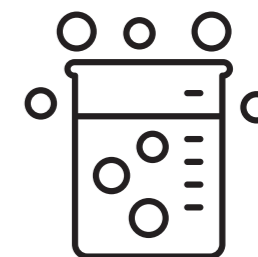
The CBSS & climate dialogue

Mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation actions in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is a key thematic focus under the CBSS's long-term priority, Sustainable and Prosperous Region. While climate change is one of the most pressing global challenges, its effects are felt very locally. Strengthening the capacities of local authorities to incorporate climate change adaptation into development plans and building resilience against climate change are the main action lines for the CBSS. These efforts aim to facilitate practical cooperation among national and local authorities, the business and research communities, and society at large.

SCIENCE COOPERATION

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Baltic Sea Science Congress 2023 was one of the most important scientific events in the Baltic Sea Region, where the latest marine research findings were presented, and the state of the Baltic Sea, trends, and future research needs were discussed. The congress was part of Finland's national plan for the UN Decade of Ocean Science and was also included in the program of the Finnish presidency of the Baltic Sea Council (2023–2024). This biennial congress aims to bring together researchers and experts from the Baltic Sea Region to present the latest research and discuss the state, trends, and future of the Baltic Sea. Special attention was given to food chains in the context of Baltic Sea eutrophication and climate change, as well as hydrodynamic and biogeochemical models for forecasting the future development of the Baltic Sea. The congress also highlighted the importance of "blue carbon" in mitigating climate change and promoting a functioning marine environment.



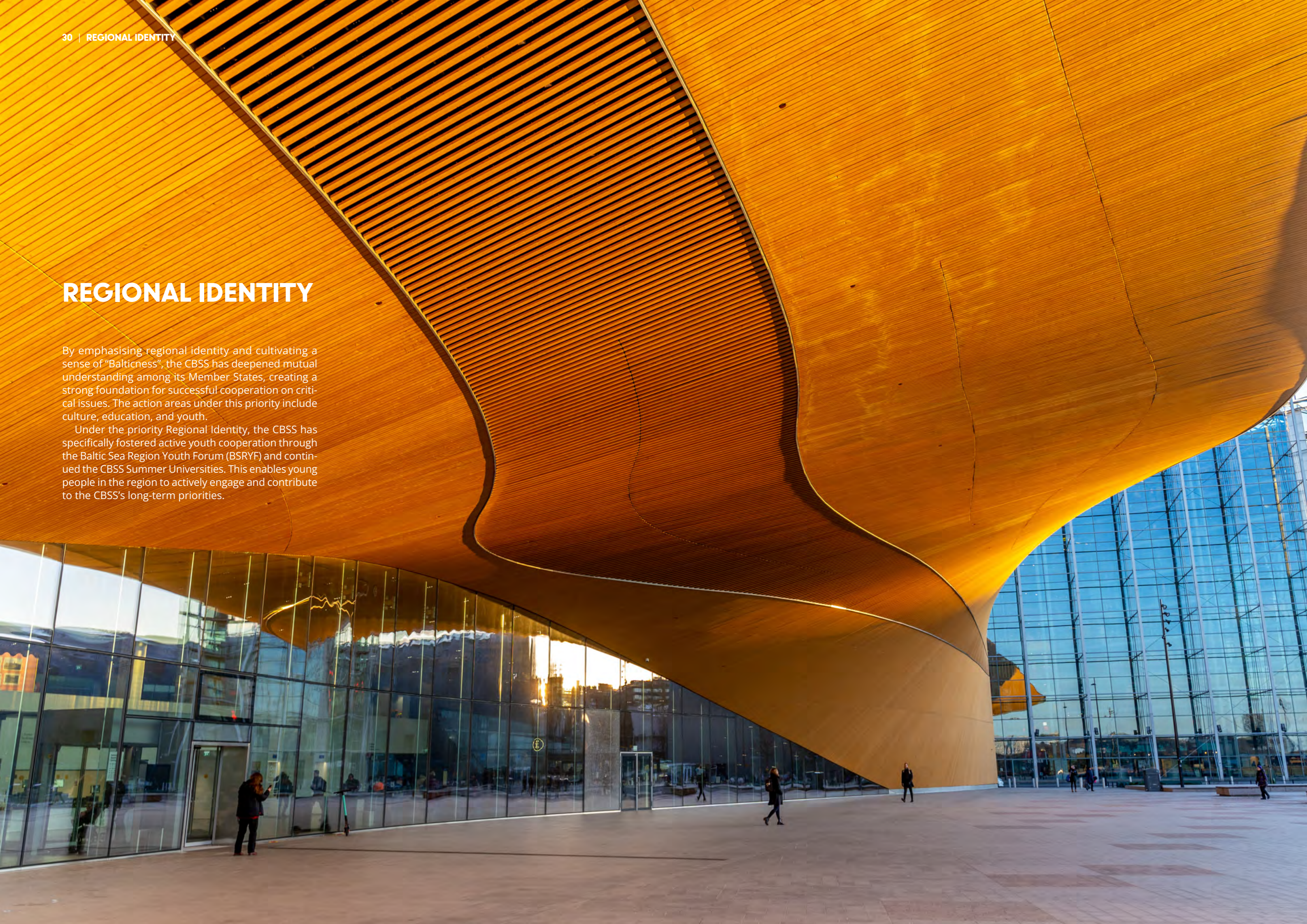
The CBSS & science cooperation

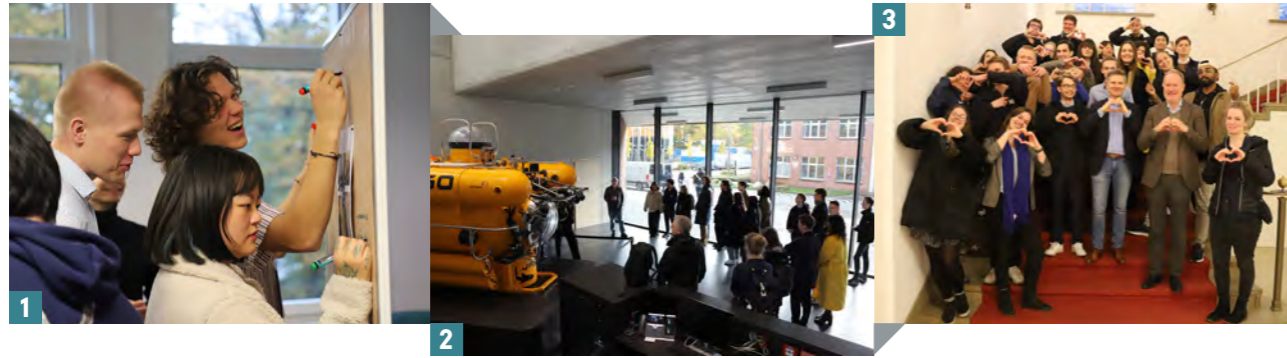
The Baltic Sea Region has a promising research and innovation potential. However, a participation and innovation gap exists. To bridge this gap, we regularly bring together academics, researchers, and policymakers to pool resources, support researcher mobility, connect smaller research institutions with larger ones to help scale their projects, and discuss and propose transnational policy measures for long-lasting effects that boost the region's scientific excellence.

REGIONAL IDENTITY

By emphasising regional identity and cultivating a sense of "Balticness", the CBSS has deepened mutual understanding among its Member States, creating a strong foundation for successful cooperation on critical issues. The action areas under this priority include culture, education, and youth.

Under the priority Regional Identity, the CBSS has specifically fostered active youth cooperation through the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) and continued the CBSS Summer Universities. This enables young people in the region to actively engage and contribute to the CBSS's long-term priorities.





In focus: Regional Identity through the lens

[1-3] Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue in Oeversee, Germany, 5-9 November 2023.

[4-6] Baltic Sea Region Hackathon in Lübeck, Germany, 7-9 July 2023.

[7-8] Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum in Berlin, Germany, 25-27 August 2023 — **[7]** Youth participants posing with Baltic Sea Region parliamentarians and German government officials in the German Bundestag. **[8]** Youth participants with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at a reception in his residence at Schloss Bellevue.

[9] Youth session at the **HELCOM 50 years anniversary** event in Riga, Latvia.

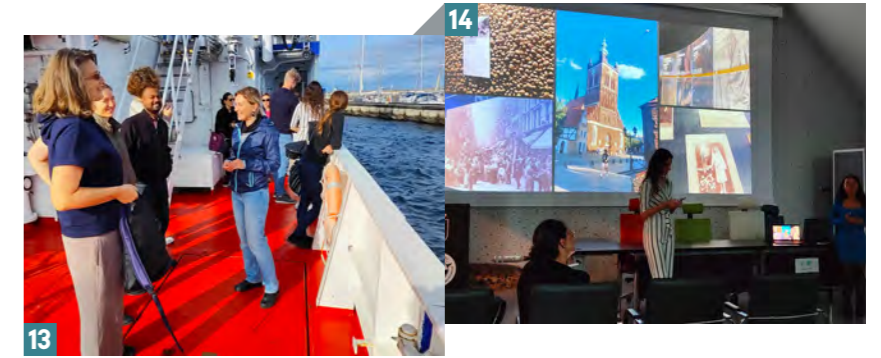
[10-12] CBSS Youth Ministerial in Helsinki, Finland, 21-24 May 2024 — **[11]** Sandra Bergqvist, Minister of Youth, Sport and Physical Activity of Finland.

[13-14] YoPeNet CBSS Summer University in Gdańsk, Poland, 16–25 September 2023.

[15-16] CBSS Spring School on Uncomfortable Heritage in Szczecin, Poland, March 2024.

[17-18] Culture for Resilience Forum in Jakobstad/Pietarsaari, Finland, 7-8 May 2024.

[19-22] “Cultural Pearls 2024” Award Ceremonies — **[19]** Jakobstad/Pietarsaari, Finland. **[20]** Kiel, Germany. **[21]** Rūjiena, Latvia. **[22]** Svendborg, Denmark.



YOUTH

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The first full term of the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) commenced on 1 July 2023, bringing together 19 Committee of Youth Representatives (CYR) and five Steering Group members, including the National Youth Council of Lithuania and the Regional Youth Council of Schleswig-Holstein in Germany. During this term, the BSRYF received 215 membership applications from individuals and 24 organisations, marking a strong interest in youth participation across the region. The same month saw the inaugural Baltic Sea Region Hackathon [#b_hack] in Luebeck, Germany, fostering innovation among young people.

August 2023 featured the largest Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum to date, held in Berlin. In September, the BSRYF received a record 50 applications for its Working Groups, which focused on Advocacy, Security, Culture, Environmental Sustainability, and Child Protection. October saw the BSRYF co-organise two workshops at the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Riga, contributing significantly to panel discussions and the closing session.

The BSRYF celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue in November 2023 in Oeversee, Germany, highlighting this as the CBSS's longest-running youth event. In January 2024, in collaboration with BSSSC youth, the BSRYF hosted a webinar on the HOLAS-3 report by HELCOM, further engaging young people in regional environmental issues.

February 2024 marked the first self-assessment conducted by the BSRYF CYR, setting a precedent for continuous improvement. March saw the opening of the second call for the CYR and Steering Group, with a record number of 25 individual and 4 organisation applications. Nine CYR members continued for a second term, demonstrating ongoing commitment.

April 2024 was notable for the second BSRYF Election Meeting, where 7 new CYR members and 2 Steering Group organisations were elected. A youth panel, moderated by CYR vice-chair Silva Laure, was organised as part of HELCOM's 50th anniversary celebrations. In May, the CBSS Youth Ministerial 2024 in Helsinki focused on societal security and European values, in

cooperation with the Finnish presidency, Nuva, and the CBSS Secretariat.

June 2024 concluded with the BSRYF Focus Group on Child Protection presenting its results at the PROMISE TRM project final conference. BSRYF representatives also co-organised a youth panel at the EU Macro-Regional Strategies Days in Brussels, addressing the issue of disinformation.

Throughout the year, the BSRYF and CBSS Secretariat actively contributed to the Youth4Cooperation initiative by DG REGIO, participated in monthly calls, and engaged with various youth bodies and macro-regional strategies. The CBSS Secretariat provided guidance on youth participation in Baltic Sea Region cooperation projects, promoting youth engagement across various formats and increasing BSRYF's visibility through social media.

PROJECT UPDATES

Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue — Held at the Academia Baltica in Oeversee, near Flensburg, Germany, from 5-9 November 2023, the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD) 2023 was organised for the 10th time by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). Funded by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, it aims to foster intergenerational collaboration on resilient democracies. This year's primary focus was on enhancing collaboration among subregions and reaping the benefits thereof.

KEY EVENTS

Baltic Sea Region Hackathon in Lübeck, Germany — This collaborative event, financed by the Land Schleswig-Holstein and co-organised by the CBSS and the Technical University of Lübeck, aimed to harness technology and creativity to address critical societal challenges in the Baltic Sea Region. The results were presented to the Ministers of Land Schleswig-Holstein, who financed the event.

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum in Berlin, Germany — Fifty participants crafted recommendations on digital resilience, youth participation, social division, and democracy, which were presented at the BSPC Annual Conference in the German Parliament.

BSRYF Election Meeting Online — During the second BSRYF Election Meeting, seven new CYR members and two Steering Group organisations—Regional Youth Council of Schleswig-Holstein and ReGeneration 2030—were elected.

CBSS Youth Ministerial in Helsinki, Finland — On 21-24 May 2024, young leaders aged 18 to 30 from across the Baltic Sea Region gathered in Helsinki to share ideas, learn from each other, and foster collaboration on topics such as youth participation, European elections, and civil security. The participants also worked on youth recommendations, which were presented at the CBSS foreign ministers' meeting in Porvoo, Finland.

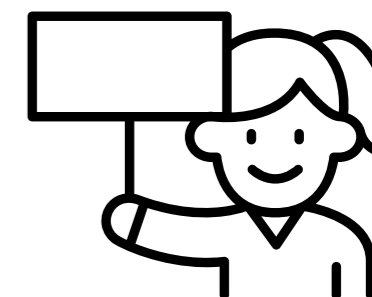
KEY PUBLICATIONS

CBSS Youth website (cbss.org/youth) — A well-designed website featuring information about the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum and CBSS youth activities.

CBSS Youth Ministerial 2024 Position Paper — A youth declaration for the CBSS, offering ideas on how to involve more youth, embrace European identity, and holistically enhance societal resilience in BSR societies.

BSPYF 2023 Policy Recommendations — Youth ideas and recommendations presented to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, later integrated into the BSPC Resolution 2024.

BSYD 2023 Recommendations for Subregional Cooperation — Innovative ideas to enhance subregional cooperation in a changing environment, discussed with and presented to the BSSSC Chairmanship 2023-2025.



The CBSS & youth

In the Baltic Sea Region, young people actively contribute to societal change. The CBSS serves as a coordination point, connecting young talents to ensure their innovative views and fresh ideas influence regional policies. By promoting active youth engagement and meaningful participation in decision-making processes, the CBSS supports intergenerational dialogue across all its topics and priorities.

CULTURE

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

In the CBSS-led and Interreg-financed BSR Cultural Pearls project, an international jury of experts selected four cities to receive the first-ever title of “Cultural Pearl” in December 2023. This was followed by the first Culture for Resilience Forum in Jakobstad-Pietarsaari, Finland in May 2024, which gathered more than a hundred local and regional authorities, experts, and civil society actors. During the spring of 2024, local award ceremonies were held in all four Cultural Pearl cities, allowing the general public to join in the festive inauguration of their city’s title year and launching action plans to strengthen the social resilience of the chosen communities. By the time the second call for applications closed in April 2024, 18 cities had submitted applications, hoping to be selected as a Cultural Pearl for 2025.

Based on the achievements of the Cultural Pearls project, the CBSS’s Regional Identity (RI) unit also successfully developed a new project, the Resilient Communities Learning Platform (RESCOM), funded by the Swedish Institute. This project aims to increase the exchange of experiences on community resilience between Ukrainian stakeholders and BSR partners in the Cultural Pearls project consortium. The project will be launched in September 2024.

PROJECT UPDATES

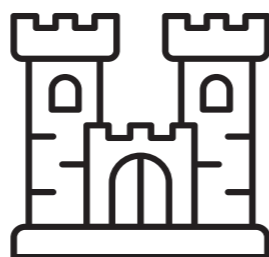
BSR Cultural Pearls — The first selection process for the Cultural Pearls title, an award recognising cities in the BSR for their innovative culture and resilience plans, was completed in 2024. Out of twelve applicants, four cities were selected to implement their culture and resilience action plans: Jakobstad (Finland), Kiel (Germany), Rūjiena (Latvia), and Svendborg (Denmark). The second call for applications, for the Cultural Pearls title in 2025, received 18 submissions, covering all eight member states in the Interreg BSR programme.

Resilient Communities Learning Platform (RESCOM) — This new CBSS-led project aims to provide a platform for mutual learning on community resilience between Ukrainian stakeholders, Cultural Pearl title holders, and other stakeholders in a roundtable format. Co-funded by the Swedish Institute Baltic Sea Neighbourhood Programme, this project runs until December 2025, with the CBSS as the lead partner.

KEY EVENTS

“Cultural Pearls 2024” Award Ceremonies — Between March and May 2024, the four cities awarded the “BSR Cultural Pearls Title” for their exceptional social resilience plans—Jakobstad (Finland), Kiel (Germany), Rūjiena (Latvia), and Svendborg (Denmark)—held their award ceremonies. Jakobstad focuses on transforming a historic building into a community hub, Kiel aims to empower youth through cultural learning, Rūjiena promotes intergenerational dialogue to strengthen rural life, and Svendborg invests in youth participation to build a resilient future.

Culture for Resilience Forum in Jakobstad/Pietarsaari, Finland — To explore the transformative power of culture in strengthening communities and making them more resilient to external shocks, more than 100 representatives from municipalities, NGOs and various stakeholders across the Baltic Sea Region converged at the Culture for Resilience Forum in Jakobstad/Pietarsaari on 7-8 May 2024. The event was organised within the BSR Cultural Pearls project and funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme.



The CBSS & culture

The CBSS fosters cultural understanding and a sense of belonging in the Baltic Sea Region, a diverse area with shared roots and cultural heritage. By making culture a common denominator among its Member States, the CBSS facilitates regional cooperation. The current focus is on cultural heritage and using culture as a means to strengthen both regional cooperation and resilience.

EDUCATION

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

In September 2023, the Young People Network for Balticness (YoPeNET 2.0) project, supported by the CBSS, hosted a summer university in Gdańsk, focusing on the strategic narratives of “Balticness” as foundations of regional identity. The event enabled participants to analyse regional narratives and fostered peer learning through both virtual and on-site platforms.

In March 2024, a CBSS Spring School on Uncomfortable Heritage in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond took place in Kulice, Poland. The seminars gathered doctoral students who presented projects concerning the negotiation and reinterpretation of contested heritage in the region.

Higher education was also a component of various other CBSS events and projects, such as the NEEDS project, which connects higher education institutions and practitioner organisations working in the fields of civil and societal security. Similarly, in August 2023, the Secretariat hosted a session for young professionals from the Eastern Partnership countries enrolled in the Swedish Academy for Young Professionals Programme, run by Södertörn University and funded by the Swedish Institute.

KEY EVENTS

YoPeNet CBSS Summer University — The Young People Network for Balticness 2.0 (YoPeNet 2.0) hosted the CBSS Summer University 2023 on “Strategic Narratives of Balticness – Foundations of Identity,” which took place from 16–25 September 2023 in Gdańsk, Poland. The eight intensive days of the Summer University consisted of seminars, discussions and field visits. The seminars were conducted by specialists from Polish, German, Norwegian, and Estonian universities, as well as practitioners in the fields of regional cooperation and security in the Baltic Sea Region. One of the days was co-organised by the Institute of Central Europe (IEŚ) from Lublin and included a roundtable panel on “Security Challenges for Balticness and the BSR in the Future”. The participants of the Summer University included students at BA, MA, and Doctoral levels, who came from universities around the Baltic Sea and beyond.

CBSS Spring School on Uncomfortable Heritage — The CBSS Spring School on Uncomfortable Heritage in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond was organised in

March 2024 and took place at the International Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies of the University of Szczecin in Kulice, Poland. Besides the CBSS, it was supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Böckler-Mare-Balticum Foundation. Doctoral students from universities across the BSR discussed their PhD projects and received professional feedback on their presentations concerning the negotiation and reinterpretation of contested heritage in the region.



The CBSS & education

The CBSS recognises the role of higher education in fostering regional identity. With citizens of the Baltic Sea Region being among the world’s most educated, the CBSS champions the idea that education is key to addressing global challenges. Consequently, it has made strategic investments in empowering future region-builders through educational initiatives. The organisation facilitates various efforts, from annual Summer Universities that mobilise academic networks to specific projects designed to bridge the gap between education and the knowledge and training needs in the BSR, such as those required by organisations, businesses, and industries. Through these initiatives, the CBSS bolsters cooperation and strengthens ties among its Member States.

BACK PAGES



[1 & 4] Committee of Senior Officials meeting in Stockholm, Sweden, 15-16 November 2023

[2] Helena Tuuri (right), Chair of the CBSS Finnish Presidency and the CSO, addressing guests at a reception at the Finnish Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden, hosted by the Finnish Ambassador Maimo Henriksson (centre) on 15 November 2023.

[3 & 5] Committee of Senior Officials meeting, chaired by Helena Tuuri, at the Finnish Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels, Belgium, 21 February 2024

COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS 2023-2024

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.

FINLAND (CBSS Presidency 2023-2024)

Ms Helena Tuuri, Ambassador, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Chair of the CSO (2023-2024)

Ms Heta Hassinen, Desk Officer, Baltic Sea Region cooperation, Unit for Northern Europe, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

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

GERMANY

Mr Florian Rudolph, Head of Unit 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

Mr Tõnis Nirk, Ambassador-at-Large for Baltic Sea Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ICELAND

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

LATVIA

Ms Andra Kuzmina, Deputy Director, Europe Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

LITHUANIA

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

NORWAY

Ms Aud Lise Norheim, Senior Adviser of the Section for Nordic-Baltic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

POLAND

Mr Andrzej Cieszkowski, Minister-Counsellor, European Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

SWEDEN

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

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE

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



PROJECT SUPPORT FACILITY

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Under the Finnish presidency, the 2024 call for project proposals of the Project Support Facility (PSF) focused on strengthening resilience, safety, collaboration and trust in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), particularly on innovative projects that foster understanding, cooperation, and mutual trust for more resilient societies. In 2024, the Secretariat received 14 PSF project proposals. Four projects were shortlisted by the Selection Committee, and three were approved for PSF funding by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO).

PROJECT UPDATES

Under the Finnish Presidency, the following six projects were finalised and had their results evaluated:

- Danish Cultural Institute — “RuralCulturalPlanning (RurCultural)”
- Sejny Municipality — “DE-PL-LT Civic Education for Resilience of Communities to Crises by Creating a System of Modern Training and Professional Qualifications for Civil Protection Educators”
- Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences — “Child Sexual Abuse Crimes in Media Coverage: Providing Expertise for Sustainable Media Support of CSA Crime Survivors in the Baltic Sea Region”
- Active Youth Association — “They Have a Name”
- Association Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS – “Consulting Citizens for Municipal Green Policies”
- Let’s Do It Foundation – “Zero Waste Academy in the Baltic Sea Region”

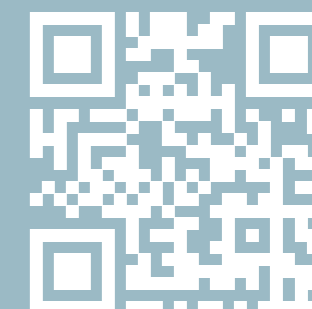
Additionally, under the Presidency, the following three projects were approved for funding:

- World Childhood Foundation — “Development of Instructions for Long-Term Quality Assurance Systems in National Barnahus Networks” Summary
- ROSA — “Let’s Share Knowledge, Let’s Share Experience!”
- Kunsthalle Rostock — “Baltic Sea Biennale for Youth”



The CBSS & projects

The CBSS established the Project Support Facility (PSF) in 2012 to support the preparation and implementation of regional cooperation projects by providing seed money and co-financing for external projects, with the aim of promoting sustainable partnerships in line with the CBSS’s three long-term priority areas.



CBSS.ORG

