



POSITION PAPER BY THE BALTIC SEA YOUTH ON BUILDING DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE THROUGH DIGITALISATION, CIVIC EDUCATION AND CONSISTENT YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Written by the participants of the CBSS Youth Ministerial in Tallinn (Estonia), the BSSSC Youth Spring Event in Müncheberg (Germany) and the members of the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum - Committee of Youth Representatives.

SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

Establish digital engagement channels and structured capacity building for consistent youth participation.

- ▼ We recommend establishing a structured, user-driven digital feedback system, complemented by capacity-building initiatives such as Youth Advisory Councils in ministries—as proposed during the CBSS Youth Ministerial Meetings in 2023 and 2024— municipalities, youth delegates and youth organisations to foster sustained youth participation in democratic processes and ensure broad representation.

Institutionalise monthly civic education in schools and vocational training.

- ▼ We advocate for mandatory regular classroom sessions on civic rights, democratic skills and civil-security competencies to cultivate a sustained culture of informed, resilient citizenship – as a lesson learned from Ukraine.

Implement early digital literacy programmes to prevent youth radicalisation.

- ▼ We recommend introducing comprehensive digital literacy training for children in the 1st and 2nd grades, along with support for their families and educators, to reduce their vulnerability to extremist content.

Strengthen AI comprehension and critical thinking across the BSR.

- ▼ We recommend launching region-wide AI education initiatives, drawing on the forthcoming Estonian AI Leap 2025, and critical-thinking curricula to combat misinformation and empower informed, vigilant citizens.

Establish integrated crisis communication and simulation frameworks.

- ▼ We recommend establishing unified digital tools, such as crisis communication applications, mandatory alerts and routine simulations to facilitate effective coordination and rapid response across the Baltic Sea Region.

BACKGROUND

This Position Paper reflects ideas developed during the CBSS Youth Ministerial 2025, held under the Estonian Presidency of the CBSS in Tallinn from 4–7 May 2025.

The Youth Ministerial brought together 20 young people from CBSS member states – representing youth councils, organisations, grassroots initiatives, and their own personal interest in cross-border collaboration.

The event focused on three key topics, which were discussed in small groups alongside a facilitator and an expert:

- ▼ Dangers to democracy in relation to youth and digitalisation
- ▼ Digital participation in elections
- ▼ Participation in civic security as a norm

These topics were selected to reflect the Estonian Presidency's priorities and align them with the current realities faced by youth.

Young people aged 16–29 are increasingly exposed to radicalisation, disinformation, and civic disengagement – often without the tools or support needed to respond effectively.

Each youth group developed suggestions and recommendations aimed at enhancing societal resilience through cross-border collaboration among like-minded countries in the Baltic Sea Region.

Additionally, this Position Paper incorporates ideas from the BSSSC youth event held in Münchenberg, which brought together 40 young people from Baltic Sea sub-regions – primarily representing regional youth councils and organisations.

This event focused on safety and security in the Baltic Sea Region and gave young people the opportunity to explore decision-making processes at the regional level and how interregional collaboration can be used to strengthen societal resilience and crisis preparedness.

Participants also examined the multilevel governance of the Baltic Sea Region and received input from experts across EU, Baltic Sea, national, regional, and local levels.

This Position Paper builds upon the ideas and recommendations previously presented during the 2023 and 2024 CBSS Youth Ministerial, as well as the Youth Vision Statement Beyond 2030 of 2021, and can be seen as an extension of the discussions already underway.

In addition to this paper, the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) would like to draw attention

to the BSRYF Impact Report 2023-2025 published in April 2025.

As well as to the outputs of the Working Groups of the BSRYF term 2024 / 2025 focusing on:

- ▼ enhancing child and youth participation in Disaster Risk Reduction in the Secure Kids project led by the CBSS Civil Security and Children At Risk unit,
- ▼ enhancing knowledge of youth on combatting sexual exploitation and human trafficking in the PEX-BSR project led by the Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings.
- ▼ elevating the voices of youth in cultural institutions and initiatives, such as the BSR Cultural Pearls project, led by the CBSS Regional Identity unit.

IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS

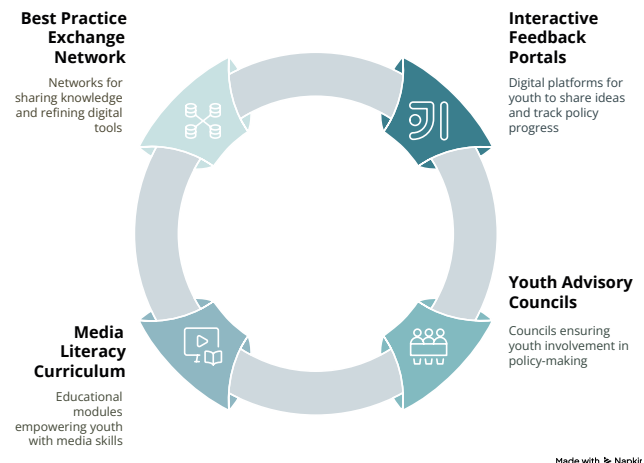
Establish digital engagement channels and capacity building for consistent youth participation.

Nonparticipation does not simply equate to apathy, because politically uninvolved young people may not be uninterested in politics, but mostly **uninformed**, **distrustful** or **disempowered**.

Youth get most of their information about politics and social-political issues from social media. Keeping this in mind, the Eurobarometer Post-election Survey 2024 found that just 24% of young voters believed their vote could make a difference at the EU level. Moreover, the Eurobarometer Youth Survey 2024 indicated that 30% of young respondents felt that contacting a politician would have no impact, while 23% said that decision-makers “don’t listen to people like me.” To reverse this trend, we propose:

- ▼ **Interactive feedback portals:** launch a transparent, mobile-friendly platform where young citizens can submit policy ideas, track decision-making progress, and receive tailored responses from public officials on what has been done with the input prepared by the youth. It could be developed during the Baltic Sea Region Hackathon event organised by the German State of Schleswig-Holstein, in collaboration with the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and Technische Hochschule Lübeck (TH Lübeck).
- ▼ **Establish Youth Advisory Councils in ministries and local municipalities, youth delegates, youth organisations, etc.:** ensure meaningful youth involvement in shaping policies on all Baltic Sea Region governance levels, particularly in areas related to societal resilience, digitalisation and innovation.
- ▼ **Blended media literacy curriculum:** integrate formal and non-formal education modules that teach and develop youth media literacy and empower them to take part in decision-making processes.
- ▼ **Best-practice exchange network:** facilitate regular knowledge sharing and co-development services, governmental newsletters and forms across CBSS Member States - partnering with Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, ERIYCA and national youth agencies - to continuously refine digital participation tools.

In this way, youth voices could be systematically collected, acknowledged and acted upon. We are aware that policy implementation is a long process, thus, we do not expect fast solutions. **We expect to start building the culture of involvement. It means that young people need to be part of the whole decision-making process, from consultation, through drafting, to implementation.**



Institutionalise monthly civic education in schools and vocational training.

We encourage CBSS Member States to institutionalise mandatory monthly civic education sessions across both general and vocational education systems. According to the Disaster Risk Awareness and Preparedness of the EU Population Survey (2024), 58% of EU citizens do not feel adequately prepared for disasters or emergencies in their area, and two out of three agree that they need more information to improve their preparedness.

These sessions should cover essential democratic and civil-security competencies, including democratic participation, active citizenship, digital literacy, civil defence awareness, first aid and survival skills. We propose:

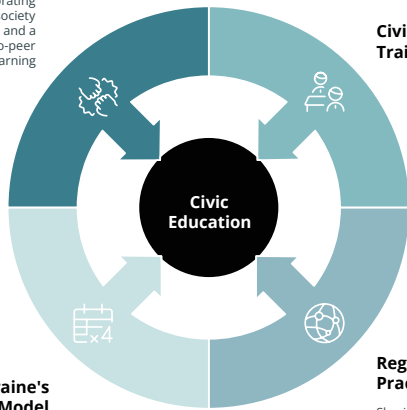
- ▼ **Highlight Ukraine’s weekly civic model:** adapt the practice of dedicating a weekly hour to civic topics - guest speakers, non-traditional learning - into a streamlined monthly session across schools and vocational centres.
- ▼ **Partner with civil society and peer mentors:** encourage collaboration with civil society actors (e.g. scouts for survival skills, IMCC for first aid, student unions for civic engagement) and peer-to-peer learning, as well as promote general

student involvement in shaping the content of these sessions.

- ▼ **Share regional best practices:** establish a repository recognising informal learning initiatives and youth-led civic projects, encouraging cross-border exchange and adaptation of successful models.
- ▼ **Pilot a “Civic Resilience Training Course”:** the CBSS should organise an international training course as a pilot project, delivered as a summer or winter camp. By the end of the pilot, Member States will be equipped to assume responsibility for running these training courses regularly at the national level.

Civil Society Partnerships

Collaborating with civil society actors and a peer-to-peer learning



Ukraine's Civic Model
Adapting weekly civic hour into a streamlined monthly session

Civic Resilience Training Course

The CBSS pilot course for national implementation

Regional Best Practices

Sharing and adapting successful civic initiatives

Made with Napkin

support groups for parents and caregivers to learn about emerging digital risks and effective countermeasures.

- ▼ **Systematic teachers' education:** deliver regular, stage-appropriate training for teachers, led by experts and psychologists, emphasising both the mechanics of online platforms and the psychological drivers of radicalisation.

By teaching digital literacy **from the earliest school years (1st and 2nd grade)** and reinforcing it through ongoing training for teachers and parents, this holistic model builds resilience against radical narratives before they take root. The Council of the Baltic Sea States can serve as an ideal knowledge hub, through its **Children At Risk** unit (CAR), to help reach common ground across generations.

Teacher Education

Providing teachers with tools to address radicalisation



International Expert Training

Training specialists to combat radicalisation

Parent Workshops

Educating parents on digital risks and countermeasures

Made with Napkin

Implement early digital literacy programmes to prevent youth radicalisation.

Young people today navigate a vast and ever-evolving online world, yet too many lack the skills to differentiate reliable information from manipulative propaganda. As a result, they become vulnerable to misleading content - something that neither parents nor educators can fully prevent without engaging, accessible guidance. To address this, we suggest a three-pronged approach:

- ▼ **International expert training:** establish a proper course for digital literacy specialists aimed at stopping radicalisation by working with youth, teachers and parents.
- ▼ **Mandatory workshops for parents/caregivers:** focusing on digital literacy and radicalisation, the initiative involves creating school-based

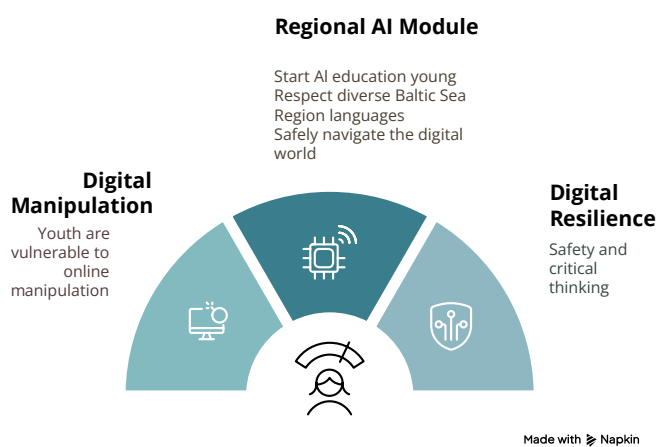
Strengthen AI literacy and critical thinking across BSR.

AI is increasingly part of daily life in the BSR - from personalised newsfeeds to political campaigns, it changes how we access information. But this powerful technology also brings risks: realistic fake news, images and videos are spreading misinformation faster than ever across our region. This can influence our daily choices and even our political views, eroding trust and creating division within and between Baltic nations. The good news is that AI can also be a powerful tool against misinformation, quickly identifying false content. However, technology alone isn't enough; therefore, we propose:

- ▼ **Collaborative educational AI programmes:** AI education should begin at a young age. A Baltic

Sea Region module should be developed that respects our linguistic diversity and encourages critical thinking, helping us navigate the digital world more safely and fostering resilience against manipulation. A practical example could be Estonia's AI Leap 2025 initiative, launching on 1 September 2025, which will provide students and teachers with free access to AI applications and equip them with the skills to use them effectively in learning.

By understanding AI's potential and its pitfalls, we empower ourselves as informed citizens. However, we must approach it with awareness and responsibility, working together across borders.



Establish integrated crisis communication and simulation frameworks.

As Baltic Sea youth, we recognise our shared identity as rooted not only in history and geography but also in our collective responsibility to forge an inclusive, sustainable and peaceful future. By coming together, we can build a strong and connected Baltic community that empowers young voices and shapes a better tomorrow for us all. To address future crises effectively, we must continue to learn more about one another and the Baltic Sea Region as a whole. We are certain that effective communication and clear structures are essential to democratic resilience. To strengthen regional preparedness and mutual understanding, we propose:

- Baltic crisis communication app with AI chatbot:** develop a mobile platform that delivers real-time crisis updates and an AI-powered chatbot to answer citizen queries and dispel misinformation.

- Mandatory emergency alerts:** require all smartphones in Member States to receive standardised push notifications for imminent threats, ensuring rapid, region-wide awareness.
- Regular tests and preparedness crisis simulations:** CBSS Member States should facilitate frequent crisis simulations for various crises scenarios at designated locations with all relevant organisations and a broad range of civil society organisations involved. CBSS units such as the Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings (TF-THB) and the Civil Protection Network (CPN), should set the focus area and involve all units such as the Children At Risk (CAR) and Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) to ensure broad representation of actors and effectiveness. Each test must rehearse press-conference procedures, enforce clear command structures and integrate data-based resource tracking, with dedicated support from national and EU bodies to ensure continuous practice and effective coordination.

