



# ESTONIAN PRESIDENCY 2024-2025

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ESTONIAN 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 multilateral 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 H.E. Amb. Tõnis Nirk  
Chair of the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials  
under the Estonian CBSS Presidency 2024-2025

**THE OVERARCHING PRIORITY** of the Estonian Presidency was strengthening resilience and sustainability in the Baltic Sea region. In this context, the Presidency emphasised the CBSS's role as a platform for political dialogue, particularly concerning hybrid threats affecting the Baltic Sea region. Meetings with the CBSS Observers, the EU Commission and the NATO International Secretariat contributed to enhancing the understanding of hybrid threats among the CBSS members. The Vihula Ministerial meeting facilitated constructive discussions on the complex threats posed by the so-called shadow fleet and resulted in a decision to draft and adopt a Code of Practice to address this issue. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the protection of critical underwater infrastructure marked a significant step towards strengthening cooperation on this highly relevant matter.

The Presidency prioritised support to Ukraine, focusing on issues of importance to Ukraine, where the CBSS has the capacity to contribute. In this regard, the expert groups, in particular the Civil Protection Network and the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings, but also the Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation, played a crucial role in fostering mutually beneficial cooperation with the Ukrainian partners.

The Presidency also facilitated the preparation of the report and recommendations by the Wise Persons, Mr Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Mr Gabrielius Landsbergis, on the future of the CBSS. The report makes a strong case for transforming the CBSS into a strategic forum for security dialogue in the Baltic Sea region. The Ministers agreed in Vihula that the report adequately reflects the need to significantly reform and refocus the CBSS in order to effectively meet the challenges of the new security environment.



◀ **Tõnis Nirk**,  
Ambassador-at-Large for Baltic Sea Cooperation,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia.



## THE ESTONIAN CBSS PRESIDENCY 2024-2025 PROGRAMME & PRIORITIES

### Continued focus on security

The Estonian Presidency proceeded from the principle of continuity and long-term focus in advancing the long-term priorities of the CBSS: Safe & Secure Region, Sustainable & Prosperous Region, and Regional Identity. Therefore, Estonia aimed to build its activities on the achievements of Finland and other preceding presidencies. Taking into account the changing security environment of the Baltic Sea Region, the main focus of practical co-operation was strengthening resilience and sustainability.

### Discussing the future of the CBSS

In terms of political dialogue, the aim of the Estonian Presidency was to organise a Foreign Ministers' meeting that would address the main challenges under the current scope of activities of the CBSS as well as other topical issues concerning the Baltic Sea Region, while taking into account the need for an efficient division of labour and avoidance of duplication in regional co-operation. As Presidency, Estonia also facilitated the discussions on the future of the CBSS as agreed by the Foreign Ministers during their 2024 meeting in Porvoo.

### Closer collaboration with Ukraine

During its Presidency, Estonia continued to invite Ukrainian representatives to expert group meetings, organised dedicated events to strengthen collaboration with Ukrainian counterparts, and mapped additional opportunities for co-operation. The focus was on issues important to Ukrainians and where the CBSS possesses substantive competence, such as civil protection of the population, anti-trafficking, border guard co-operation, heritage protection, and youth engagement.



# OVERVIEW OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ESTONIAN PRESIDENCY 2024-2025

The Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Margus Tsahkna took over the CBSS Presidency on 1 July 2024 from Finland. The Presidency ended with a Foreign Ministers' meeting and a handover to Poland.

### Civil Protection Network: Lessons from best practices and failures

- ✦ Raising public crisis awareness, developing early warning systems, addressing issues related to sheltering and large-scale evacuation. Additional themes: crisis management, fire safety, forest and wildfires.
- ✦ Incorporating Ukraine's experience and exploring opportunities for involving volunteers.
- ✦ Meeting of Directors-General for Civil Protection on civil-military cooperation, private sector engagement, and the protection of critical infrastructure.

### Joint meeting between TF-THB and EG-CAR on child sexual exploitation and trafficking

- ✦ Addressing child sexual exploitation and trafficking, focusing on practical approaches to victim support. Special attention: child participation and involvement, both in services like Barnahus and in broader social and criminal justice systems. The meeting reflected the continued cooperation between the expert groups that began during the Finnish Presidency and concluded with expert-led group sessions and professional networking.

### Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings: Co-operation with third countries and renewing the strategic direction

- ✦ Co-organising a seminar with Central Asian Anti-Trafficking Network countries on regional anti-trafficking networking for tackling crimes of trafficking, including with US and Ukrainian experts. Producing materials with UNODC for Uzbekistan advising about entering and working in Estonia.
- ✦ Organising a training for Estonian diplomats about trafficking.
- ✦ Adopting a renewed mandate and a strategy for 2025–2030.

### Expert Group on Children at Risk: Advancing meaningful child participation and renewing the strategic direction

- ✦ Involving children in shaping policies and practices that have a direct impact on them. Issuing a thematic guide for child participation supported by practical tools and examples from CBSS Member States to help professionals involve children in shaping the policies and services that affect them.
- ✦ Adopting a renewed mandate and a strategy for 2025–2030.

### Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy (EGSME): Green shipping corridors and marine digital twins

- ✦ Reaching a common understanding of the meaning of a green shipping corridor by carrying on

the work of the German and Finnish Presidencies and enhancing the network of interested parties. Creating a digital twin of the Baltic Sea. Publishing a thematic baseline report.

### Regional identity: Youth Ministerial, Summer University, and Heritage Committee Seminar

- ✦ Hosting the CBSS Youth Ministerial that focused on radicalisation, digital participation, and civic security, and resulted in policy recommendations presented to CBSS Foreign Ministers.
- ✦ Co-organising CBSS Summer University and engaging with the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum.
- ✦ Holding a seminar for the Baltic Region Heritage Committee and Working Groups on unwanted or difficult heritage — cultural legacies that challenge established narratives or pose preservation dilemmas — highlighting conflicts between heritage protection and environmental goals, as well as the complexities of reusing large industrial sites in shrinking communities.

### Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation: Strengthening border security and involving Ukraine

- ✦ Bringing together experts from border and coast guard agencies to strengthen border security.
- ✦ Launching new initiatives — a meeting on countering unmanned aircraft systems and involving the Ukrainian Border Guard in BSRBCC activities.



## CBSS MINISTERIAL SESSION 2025

On 15–16 May 2025, Estonia hosted the Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) for a high-level meeting at Vihula Manor, focusing on regional security and the threat posed by Russia’s “shadow fleet” in the Baltic Sea.

In their joint statement – the Vihula Declaration – the ministers reaffirmed their united support for Ukraine, condemned Russia’s aggression and hybrid threats, called for stronger protection of critical underwater infrastructure, and highlighted the importance of regional co-operation and youth engagement.

At Vihula, the ministers also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on enhanced co-operation regarding critical underwater infrastructure in the Baltic Sea, signalling a commitment to increased regional coordination on this issue.

The ministers also acknowledged the report by former Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and former Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, appointed in January as high-level rapporteurs, or “Wise Persons”, and tasked with developing proposals for the future of the CBSS.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States was organised by the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Estonia’s CBSS Presidency.

“

We called for decisive steps to address actions, be they negligent or malicious, that threaten the Baltic Sea, including its critical maritime infrastructure [...].

▲ Extract from the Vihula Declaration, adopted during the CBSS Ministerial Session 2025

[1] From left: **Daniel Olsson**, Deputy Head of the Euro-Atlantic and Security Policy Department, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden; **Martin Eyjólfsson**, Permanent Secretary of State, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Iceland; **Baiba Braže**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Latvia; **Radosław Sikorski**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Poland; **Lars Løkke Rasmussen**, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Denmark; **Margus Tsahkna**, Chair of the Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Estonia; **Vivian Loonela**, Head of the Cabinet of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Union; **Gustav Lindström**, Director General of the CBSS Secretariat; **Kęstutis Budrys**, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lithuania; **Elina Valtonen**, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland; **Espen Barth Eide**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway; **Gunther Krichbaum**, Minister of State for Europe, Federal Foreign Office, Germany.

[2] Ministerial selfie.

[3] Margus Tsahkna (left), Minister of Foreign Affairs, Estonia, chairing the CBSS Ministerial Session 2025.



## SAFE & SECURE REGION



CIVIL SECURITY



ANTI-TRAFFICKING



CHILDREN AT RISK

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 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.



# CIVIL SECURITY

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Under the Estonian Rescue Services Agency's chairmanship, the CBSS CPN and EUSBSR PA Secure focused on strengthening public awareness, improving early warning systems, and enhancing sheltering and mass evacuation capacities — with particular emphasis on supporting Ukraine, learning from its experience, and promoting youth and volunteer engagement in civil security. The Estonian chairmanship was marked by a practical, hands-on approach that ensured continuity of processes initiated under previous presidencies while addressing today's most pressing regional challenges.

Notable achievements include the organisation of thematic knowledge exchange events, such as seminars on large-scale evacuation and on public awareness, both of which gathered and consolidated the Baltic Sea Region's expertise in these critical areas. In addition, two important new initiatives were launched: the Fire Safety Working Group, providing a platform for coordinated fire prevention and response efforts, and BSR NOVA — the Baltic Sea Region Network of Volunteer Organisations and Authorities — to strengthen volunteerism and cooperation between civil society and authorities.

These efforts have contributed to building a more resilient and better-prepared region, demonstrating the value of collaborative approaches in addressing shared security challenges effectively and efficiently.

## PROJECT UPDATES

The **Secure Kids project** developed a mechanism for child participation in disaster risk reduction (DRR) related activities. The mechanism is available on [cbss.org/securekids/](https://cbss.org/securekids/) and consists of a step-by-step guide, games, guidance for inclusive crisis communication and other resources on child participation.

The **CREWS project** on volunteerism —Enhancing Capacities in Disaster Risk Reduction by Facilitating Public-Civil Cooperation—officially launched in March 2025.

Through the **Civil Protection Faculty project**, implemented together with EUSBSR PA Education and Ukrainian NGO "Vovchok" approximately 40,000 people

in Ukraine were trained on life-saving techniques, mine safety, and psychological resilience. These trainings were based on curricula from BSR countries—especially Sweden, Finland, Estonia, and Lithuania.

CBSS contributes by facilitating communication and policy dialogue in two major EU projects addressing submerged munitions in the Baltic Sea. **MUNI-RISK** identifies and prioritises areas where action is needed, balancing environmental risks and safety concerns, while **MUNIMAP** develops a monitoring strategy that defines which hazardous compounds to track, how often, and by what methods. Together, these projects support evidence-based policymaking and regional cooperation to tackle this shared environmental and security challenge.

Together with Swedish and Ukrainian educators the **RAZOM project** worked on updating a societal security online course for Ukrainian and Baltic Sea Region students.

## KEY EVENTS

The CBSS Civil Protection Network (CPN), under Estonia's presidency, launched a new **Fire Safety Working Group** to enhance regional cooperation and strengthen fire safety measures across the Baltic Sea Region.

The **High-Level Dialogue on Resilience Through Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region** during the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2024 brought together Directors-General of civil protection authorities and high-level decision-makers to discuss cooperative efforts to ensure a resilient, safe and secure Baltic Sea Region amidst an increasingly challenging security landscape.

The **Food Security and Home Preparedness workshop** at the EUSBSR AF 2024 examined the impact of recent geopolitical changes on food security and preparedness in the Baltic Sea Region.

In October 2024, the Estonian presidency organised an international seminar, "**Public awareness: individual self-resilience for at least one week!**".

The importance of disaster risk reduction and child participation in DRR activities was highlighted and

discussed at the **2024 UNDRR Europe and Central Asia Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**.

Child participation in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience-building was the focus of the **Secure Kids conference** in Riga, Latvia, on 28–29 January 2025.

The Estonian Rescue Services Agency hosted an **international seminar in January 2025**, focusing on strategies for large-scale evacuations and bringing together experts from the Baltic Sea Region and Ukraine.

Bringing together civil protection experts from across the Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS's **13<sup>th</sup> Baltic Excellence Programme** in Tallinn focused on strengthening crisis communication and early warning systems through inclusive, cross-border cooperation.

In April 2025, the **23<sup>rd</sup> PA Secure Steering Group meeting** redefined the Policy Area's practical focus areas for 2025–2027.

On 13–14 May 2025, civil protection authorities from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Sweden, Poland, Denmark and Ukraine met for the regional seminar, "**Shelters – Different Systems, Same Purpose**", hosted by the Estonian Rescue Services Agency.

The **Directors-General for Civil Protection** met in Estonia in June 2025 to advance regional cooperation on crisis preparedness. The Directors-General also addressed civil–military cooperation, critical infrastructure security and the role of public–private partnerships, including the involvement of volunteers.

## KEY PUBLICATIONS

**Mechanism for child participation in disaster risk reduction (DRR) related activities** (<https://cbss.org/securekids/>).

**Public awareness: individual self-resilience for at least one week** – full video of the seminar with BSR countries practical tips and experiences (<https://work-sup.com/app/#/event/CBSS2024/agenda/plan>).



### The CBSS & civil security

The CBSS aims to build a common societal security culture in the Baltic Sea region by fostering a shared understanding of threats and joint crisis management approaches. By addressing shared regional challenges collectively, countries can pool resources and save time and costs. The CBSS Civil Protection Network (CPN) brings together Directors General and senior experts to exchange knowledge and best practices. Together with Sweden's MSB, the CBSS also coordinates the EUSBSR Policy Area Secure, aligning national priorities with EU policies. With the Secretariat's assistance, these two networks connect societal security professionals across sectors and implement joint projects and initiatives in areas important to CBSS Member States.

# ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

During the Estonian Presidency, the TF-THB continued enhancing regional action in combatting human trafficking. The priority areas of the Estonian Presidency included joint activities with the Children at Risk Expert Group to address child trafficking, as well as efforts to strengthen cooperation with third countries to tackle human trafficking involving the Baltic Sea Region as a destination.

Under the Estonian Presidency, the TF-THB also developed a new Strategic Plan for 2025-2030. The revised Strategic Plan aims to ensure that the TF-THB can effectively add value to regional anti-trafficking work and respond to emerging developments. It emphasises the importance of issues such as recognising the polycriminal nature of human trafficking and its close links to organised crime, responding to new technologies, as well as working with an innovative and evidence-based approach.

Furthermore, the TF-THB launched capacity-building and knowledge-generation activities to improve the ability of stakeholders to prevent, recognise, and respond to human trafficking. For example, TF-THB conducted a training session for the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published a report on human trafficking and benefit fraud, and progressed with the development of an Investigation Protocol for law enforcement officers. These activities have reinforced the TF-THB's role as a key regional actor in combatting human trafficking and laid a solid foundation for continued impact.

## PROJECT UPDATES

**PEX-BSR/PEX-BSR II (2024–2025)** — The PEX-BSR project aims to produce capacity-building tools for professionals to address trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation and to provide an overview of the issue in the Baltic Sea Region. Funded by the Government Offices of Sweden, the project targets all groups vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation, with a focus on young people and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Project outputs include an online training module for embassies and diplomatic missions, an Investigation Protocol for law enforcement authorities, a study on human trafficking for sexual exploitation in the

Baltic Sea Region, and an international conference on human trafficking as organised crime and a security challenge.

**FRAUD (2024–2025)** — The FRAUD project aimed to uncover links between human trafficking and welfare-related crimes, focusing on benefit and financial fraud. It was funded by the Swedish Institute and involved national authorities of CBSS Member States and NGOs as partners. During the Estonian Presidency, FRAUD published a pilot study on the topic, which was presented in a seminar at the Swedish Parliament.

**CAPE (2019–2024)** — The objective of the CAPE project, funded by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, was to combat human trafficking for labour exploitation. During the Estonian Presidency, CAPE organised a workshop for Swedish state authorities to exchange knowledge and build capacity, as well as published a report that consolidates findings and recommendations from its five years of implementation.

## KEY EVENTS

**Development of an Investigation Protocol** — During the Estonian Presidency, the CBSS developed an Investigation Protocol for law enforcement officers in the Baltic Sea Region and Ukraine. It will provide police officers and prosecutors working on suspected human trafficking cases with relevant knowledge and practical guidance to support their investigations, highlighting the frequent links between human trafficking and organised crime. The Protocol is the result of a partnership between the CBSS, prosecutors and police authorities in the region, as well as Europol and Frontex. The development process included a workshop with police investigators and prosecutors in September 2024, along with further expert consultations. The final Protocol, including translations into several Baltic Sea Region languages and Ukrainian, is currently being finalised.

**Training for Estonian diplomats and consular officers, 27 November 2025** — The TF-THB conducted an online training session for the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tallinn. This session, based on the CBSS Handbook for Embassies and Diplomatic Missions on How to Assist and Protect Victims of Human

Trafficking, aimed to raise awareness about human trafficking among diplomats and consular officers. It covered investigation and victim assistance, with a focus on migrant labour and individuals in prostitution.

**FRAUD seminar in the Swedish Parliament, 13 March 2025** — The Social Democratic Party and the Moderate Party of Sweden organised a seminar in the Swedish Parliament to discuss the findings of the FRAUD study. The CBSS Secretariat and the author of the study, Dr Märta Johansson, presented the study's findings on the connections between benefit fraud, other types of financial fraud and human trafficking. The seminar highlighted the need for further research, legal clarity and stronger enforcement mechanisms to effectively address the issue.

## KEY PUBLICATIONS

**Human Trafficking for Benefit Fraud and Related Financial Fraud: Securing a Steady Revenue Stream**  
Link: [https://cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/fraud\\_20250204.pdf](https://cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/fraud_20250204.pdf)

Published within the framework of the FRAUD project, this study provides a legal conceptualisation of benefit fraud in the context of human trafficking. It also explores whether the victims of such schemes can be considered human trafficking victims under international legal frameworks.

**Effectively Identifying, Disrupting and Countering Trafficking in Human Beings for Labour Exploitation: A Roadmap for Sweden**

Link: <https://cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/cape-iv-roadmap-for-sweden.pdf>

This publication synthesises key findings from the five-year CAPE project. Drawing from national and international research, study visits and expert consultations, it presents recommendations to improve institutional responses to human trafficking for labour exploitation.



### The CBSS & anti-trafficking in human beings

Human trafficking is a significant concern in the Baltic Sea Region, with sexual and labour exploitation being the most common forms. Often closely tied to organised crime, it undermines not only the human rights of victims but also public safety, the rule of law and regional stability. In response, the CBSS, through its Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings (TF-THB), leads regional anti-trafficking efforts. With activities such as coordinating national responses, producing research and facilitating information exchange, the TF-THB aims to disrupt human trafficking networks, promote robust victim support systems and ultimately enhance security and resilience across the Baltic Sea Region.

# CHILDREN AT RISK

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**Expert Group on Children at Risk** — Between September 2024 and May 2025, the Expert Group met several times in Tallinn to develop its Mandate and Strategy for 2025–2030, hold a joint workshop with the CBSS Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings on child sexual exploitation, and discuss the Wise Persons' report. Adoption of the Mandate and Strategy was postponed pending the report's outcomes. The May meeting also reflected on the launch of the child participation guidelines.

**Barnahus Forum** — The Barnahus Forum, organised by the CBSS with the Barnahus Network, PROMISE Soteria partners, Child Circle and Marie Cederschiöld University, brought together over 140 professionals from 27 countries to advance child-centred, multidisciplinary responses to child abuse

## PROJECT UPDATES

**Elpis** — Promotes multidisciplinary and interagency models for child victims and witnesses of sexual violence, with a focus on specialised interventions where online technology is involved. Aims to ensure early identification, assistance, protection and access to child-friendly justice. The project was co-funded by the EU and ended in July 2025.

**Journeys** — Worked to ensure coordinated action between authorities and services in the child's best interests, from first report to long-term recovery. Developed child-friendly tools, including an app and a child log for Barnahus. The project was co-funded by the EU and ended in December 2024.

**Secure Kids** — Strengthened child participation in decision-making on building safe, resilient societies and preparing for hazards and emergencies. The project was co-funded by the EU and ended in February 2025.

**Soteria** — Improves the structure and resilience of child protection systems, including in crises, and strengthens work on transnational cases. Promotes Barnahus' role; milestone was the Barnahus Forum (June 2025). The project is co-funded by the EU.

**Promise TRM** — Developed standards for national and transnational referral mechanisms for child trafficking

victims, inspired by Barnahus practice. Published "Creating a cycle of protection" guidance. The project was co-funded by the EU and ended in September 2024.

**2Know** — Collected data from offenders seeking child sexual abuse material online to identify patterns and trends. Created You Are Enough peer support for parents and caregivers. The project was co-funded by the EU and ended in February 2025.

**Bulgaria Barnahus** — Supported justice, protection and recovery for child victims in Bulgaria through multidisciplinary services, training and exchanges. The project was funded by the EEA Norway Grants and ended in April 2025.

**Impact of the Barnahus model** — Researched Barnahus' effect on protecting child victims' rights, showing faster case processing and more prosecutions. CBSS contributed expertise, reviews and training. The project was funded by the Oak Foundation.

**Lithuania Barnahus** — Developed a Barnahus model suited to Lithuania's legal and socio-economic context, promoting quality standards and sector engagement. The project was funded by the EEA Norway Grants and ended in April 2025.

## KEY EVENTS

**Secure Kids final conference in Riga, 28–29 January 2025** — The conference gathered over 80 participants from across the Baltic Sea Region (in person and online) to explore child participation in disaster risk reduction. Sessions examined why children's voices matter, how to involve them effectively and best practices for resilient communities. Day two focused on inclusive crisis communication and strategies to ensure children are heard in preparedness efforts.

**2KNOW final conference in Brussels, 4 February 2025** — Held at the European Parliament, the event showcased the 2KNOW Project's key findings on combatting online sexual violence against children. Over 350 participants from 36 countries joined in person and online, hearing from EU officials, experts and the Protect Children team on offender behaviour, prevention and legislative strategies.

**Elpis networking event in Brussels, 20 May 2025** — The event on strengthening multidisciplinary and

interagency collaboration in online child sexual violence cases brought together 39 project partners, EU representatives and experts. It shared insights and tools from the PROMISE Elpis Project and others, covering child and caregiver perspectives, forensic interview techniques and collaborative responses, with emphasis on future cooperation.

**Barnahus Forum 2025: And then what happened... in Tallinn, 12–13 June 2025** — Organised by the CBSS with the Barnahus Network, PROMISE Soteria partners, Child Circle and Marie Cederschiöld University, the forum gathered over 140 professionals from 27 countries, plus online attendees, to advance child-centred, multidisciplinary responses to abuse. Four thematic tracks covered protection standards and holistic support, tailored interventions, evaluation and quality standards, and improved forensic interview protocols.

## KEY PUBLICATIONS

**Child Participation Guidelines: Implementation of the Child's Right to Participate – A Guide for Meaningful Involvement of Children**

The guide outlines ten core principles of child participation, supported by practical tools and examples from CBSS Member States, to help professionals involve children in shaping the policies and services that affect them.

**Creating a Cycle of Protection: Guiding Principles and Key Considerations for Developing Comprehensive, Child-Centred Cooperation to Identify, Support and Assist Trafficked Children**

This guidance encourages CBSS Member States to develop and strengthen comprehensive, child-centred cooperation between anti-trafficking and child protection systems.

**A Toolkit for Standard 5: Interagency Case Management**

This toolkit provides practical guidance for Barnahus seeking to implement interagency case management effectively. It covers establishing formal procedures, conducting child-centred case planning and maintaining continuous case reviews while ensuring the child's voice remains central. Practical tools, case examples and clear frameworks help improve interagency collaboration, reduce (re)traumatisation and promote more effective support for child victims.

**Guidance on Exploring Transnational Child Protection Cases in Europe**

This guidance supports child protection and justice systems – including policymakers, professionals, NGOs, lawyers and guardians – in ensuring children's rights are upheld in transnational cases.



## The CBSS & child protection

The primary strategic objective of the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk is to strengthen national child protection systems. 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 Estonian Presidency, the Expert Group on Children at Risk (EG CAR) prioritised the active involvement of children in shaping the policies and practices that affect them. To support this priority, a guide for meaningful child participation was developed under the leadership of the Estonian Presidency.

## SUSTAINABLE & PROSPEROUS REGION



SUSTAINABLE  
MARITIME  
ECONOMY



CLIMATE  
DIALOGUE

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

During the CBSS Estonian Presidency, the Estonian Chairmanship of the Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy (EGSME) published the Baseline Report on Marine Digital Twins and Green Shipping Corridors in the Baltic Sea Region – an initiative launched by the German and continued by the Finnish CBSS Presidency.

The report outlines the Baltic Sea Region's progress, challenges, and prospects in developing marine digital twins and green shipping corridors, based on survey data provided by the CBSS Member States. It highlights the region's strong position to become a frontrunner among Europe's six sea basins in these areas.

Further steps for developing a digital twin of the Baltic Sea include building a network of existing national data systems, improving access to marine data, and fostering public-private collaboration to reduce data fragmentation and duplication. In the area of green shipping corridors, priorities include harmonising definitions, assessing outcomes, and exploring the potential of regional working groups to align strategies and develop action plans.

### KEY EVENTS

**First Open CBSS EGSME Seminar under the Estonian Presidency – “Co-operation for Smart and Sustainable Baltic Sea” (25–26 September 2024)** — The seminar introduced the CBSS Estonian Presidency priorities under the Sustainable and Prosperous Region objective. It also set the goal of reaching a common understanding of the term “green shipping corridor” and initiated preparations for creating a digital twin of the Baltic Sea.

**CBSS EGSME Consultations (12 March 2025)** — During the meeting, EGSME members discussed the Estonian CBSS Presidency's priorities and initiatives on green shipping corridors and marine digital twins, including the baseline report, and gathered input from the Member States.

**Second CBSS EGSME Seminar under the Estonian Presidency (12–13 May 2025)** — The seminar focused on marine digital twins and green shipping corridors, featuring autonomous vessels such as Mindchip for

monitoring and cleaning marine environments and automated ferry berthing systems. The Estonian Presidency also launched the Baseline Report on Marine Digital Twins and Green Shipping Corridors in the Baltic Sea Region during the event.

### KEY PUBLICATION

**Baseline Report on Marine Digital Twins and Green Shipping Corridors in the Baltic Sea Region** — The report focuses on the Baltic Sea Region's progress, challenges, and prospects in developing marine digital twins and green shipping corridors, based on survey data provided by the CBSS Member States.



#### The CBSS & sustainable maritime economy

The CBSS promotes a balanced maritime future by uniting national experts in its Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy (EGSME). Working with regional partners, the CBSS advances small and medium-sized ports, clean shipping, coastal tourism, and recreational boating, ensuring growth supports both communities and ecosystems. By pooling expertise and resources, it helps position the Baltic Sea Region as a model for sustainable maritime development. This cooperation strengthens the region's competitiveness while safeguarding its unique marine environment.

## CLIMATE DIALOGUE

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

During the CBSS Estonian Presidency, the ClimaResponse project (Responsive Local Action for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction) was officially launched with its kick-off meeting on 1–2 April 2025.

ClimaResponse aims to enhance climate resilience across the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) by equipping local and regional authorities with practical solutions to prepare for and adapt to climate risks. Its main outcome will be a Digital Planning Platform for Climate Resilience – a comprehensive online knowledge-sharing tool providing step-by-step guidance on integrating climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) into local governance.

The project will run until February 2028 with a total budget of 3 million euros. It is co-financed by the EU-funded Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, which contributes over 2.3 million euros. The consortium comprises 12 partners from research institutions, municipalities, and regional organisations across the Baltic Sea Region, with the CBSS serving as lead partner.

### KEY EVENTS

**ClimaResponse Kick-off Meeting (1–2 April 2025)** — The meeting focused on outlining project activities, clarifying responsibilities, and defining the next steps for implementation.

**Coordination Meeting between Interreg BSR Climate Resilience-oriented Projects (16 June 2025)** — Within the framework of ClimaResponse, the CBSS met with representatives of the CREWS and BALTFLOODS projects. Discussions centred on potential areas of cooperation to expand outreach, including the possibility of organising a joint final project conference and a common workshop at the next EUSBSR Annual Forum.



#### The CBSS & climate dialogue

Mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is one of the key thematic focus areas under the CBSS long-term priority Sustainable and Prosperous Region. The CBSS Climate Change Dialogue provides a platform for political dialogue and practical cooperation in the region through joint initiatives and projects aimed at raising awareness, strengthening preparedness, and building capacity to address the most urgent climate change challenges.

## REGIONAL IDENTITY



YOUTH



CULTURE



EDUCATION

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.



# YOUTH

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

During the Estonian Presidency, the CBSS advanced its youth agenda through strategic and outreach initiatives, strengthening youth engagement in regional cooperation. The first biennial Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) Impact Report, based on a region-wide youth survey, provided insights into youth priorities and participation trends. The Steering Group, Committee of Youth Representatives (CYR), and CBSS CSO revised the BSRYF Terms of Reference to ensure sustainability and clearer governance.

The BSRYF launched Working Groups on Civil Security and Child Participation, Anti-Trafficking, and Culture, and contributed to EU policy through Youth4Cooperation and the EESC Youth Test. Monthly stakeholder meetings now engage partners and young people in forum activities. The 2025 Election Meeting attracted a record number of applicants, forming a 20-member CYR. Membership grew to 300 individuals and 35 organisations, with outreach boosted by social media.

## PROJECT UPDATES

### Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD) 2024

Held in Gdańsk in November 2024 with the Union of Cities – THE HANSA, the 11<sup>th</sup> BSYD explored cultural heritage in the Baltic Sea Region, focusing on youth perspectives and engagement. Participants created outreach tools for use in schools, museums, and civic initiatives, contributing to the BSRYF agenda and strengthening links between youth and cultural stakeholders.

### Baltic Youth Waves for Democracy (BYWD) 2025 – BSSSC Youth Spring Event

This event aligned CBSS and other youth structures, reflecting priorities on democratic values, civil security, and societal resilience. Outputs fed directly into the CBSS Youth Ministerial 2025.

### BYWD 2025 – Youth Event for EUSBSR Annual Forum & BSSSC Annual Conference

Planned for autumn 2025, this CBSS-led joint event will provide a platform for youth input into regional strategies, showcase achievements, and promote sustained participation in Baltic Sea Region governance.

## KEY EVENTS

**Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) Election Meeting 2025** — Held online in April 2025, the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum elected 20 CYR members and two Steering Group members for 2025/2026 from 36 applicants. The meeting also aligned future priorities with CBSS strategic goals and approved the revised Terms of Reference in principle. Key output: CYR and Steering Group 2025/2026 composition, approved revised ToR.

**CBSS Youth Ministerial 2025** — In Tallinn, Estonia, ministers, youth delegates, and regional organisations discussed youth participation, regional security, and digitalisation. Key output: Position Paper on Building Democratic Resilience through Digitalisation, Civic Education, and Consistent Youth Participation.

**BSR Hackathon 2024** — Fifty young innovators developed civic tech solutions on digital democracy, youth security, and cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. The winning app promoted sustainable tourism through rewards for eco-friendly actions. Key output: Hackathon result presentations.

**Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum (BSPYF) 2024** — In Helsingør, Denmark, youth refined energy policy proposals and advanced 2023 recommendations into the BSPC Annual Conference Resolution. Key output: BSPYF 2024 final recommendations.

**BSSSC Cooperation** — The CBSS and BSRYF contributed to BSSSC youth events in Rendsburg and Trebnitz, with recommendations integrated into the Youth Ministerial position paper.

**Generation Barents 2024** — Linked Barents and Baltic youth formats, identifying shared sustainability and cohesion challenges.

**Study Visits: Stockholm & Riga** — Youth engaged in anti-trafficking (PEX-BSR) and security policy dialogues (Secure Kids project). Key output: Youth participation in Disaster Risk Reduction.

**Youth for Future Cooperation** — Five CYR members co-drafted a joint declaration on territorial cooperation in Brussels. Key output: Declaration on the future of territorial cooperation.

**Nordic Baltic Youth Summit (NBYS)** — Promoted the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum to 200 Nordic and Baltic youth representatives in Vilnius, sharing expertise on policymaking and security.

**ReGeneration Week 2024** — Engaged climate-conscious youth in sessions on culture and societal resilience; strengthened links with ReGeneration 2030, organiser of BSPC Youth Forum 2025.

## KEY PUBLICATIONS

### BSRYF Impact Report 2023–2025

A comprehensive report summarising the achievements, structures, and impact of the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum over its first full term.

### Youth Position Paper – CBSS Youth Ministerial

A formal document drafted by BSRYF members outlining youth perspectives and policy priorities, presented at the 2025 CBSS Youth Ministerial in Tallinn.

### Youth Recommendations to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC)

Outcomes from BSPYF 2024, including concrete youth policy proposals on regional security, democracy, and sustainability.

### BSYD 2024 Outputs – Cultural Heritage Tools

A set of peer-to-peer learning tools – postcards, games, and workshop formats – co-created during the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue 2024 on cultural heritage.

### Youth Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

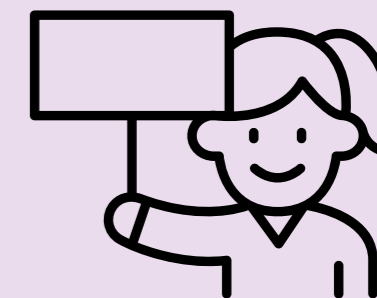
Reflections and inputs from youth involved in reviewing CBSS child participation guidance on DRR, in collaboration with civil protection experts.

### Hackathon Outputs – BSR Hack 2024

A summary of project ideas and digital tools created during the second CBSS Youth Hackathon, focused on democracy, climate, and cross-border innovation.

### Youth for Cooperation Declaration

A joint declaration drafted by youth organisations and individuals in support of continued cross-border cooperation and democratic resilience in the Baltic Sea Region.



## The CBSS & youth

The CBSS recognises young people aged 16–29 as a key generation requiring both support and space to become empowered – and to empower themselves. In response, the CBSS acts as both an advocate and a facilitator of meaningful youth participation. This includes engagement within its own structures as well as support for youth involvement in broader pan-Baltic decision-making processes. The overarching goal is to engage as many young people as possible, fostering awareness of the opportunities that cross-border cooperation offers. By encouraging active participation, the CBSS seeks to ensure that youth perspectives help shape the region's future.

## CULTURE

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Under the CBSS-led BSR Cultural Pearls project, which taps into the potential of culture as a driver of resilience and community engagement, six municipalities were awarded the BSR Cultural Pearls 2025 title for their innovative use of culture to strengthen community resilience. This year also saw the first Cultural Pearls Network Conference, fostering exchange and collaboration on culture-driven social resilience among municipalities in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond, alongside a networking meeting of the 2024 titleholders in Kiel. Local activities across Pearl municipalities showcased diverse approaches to building social cohesion: from Peipsiääre's celebration of local traditions and Helsingborg's intergenerational Living History Project, to Kaskinen's wooden town revival and Smiltene's community clean-up. Svendborg used culture and creativity to help young people connect, while in Kiel, youth-led graffiti projects and cultural learning programmes empowered residents and strengthened a sense of belonging.

In September 2024, the CBSS launched the RESCOM (Resilient Communities) project, aimed at enhancing community resilience in Ukraine, Moldova and the Baltic Sea Region through knowledge exchange, capacity building and cross-border cooperation.

### PROJECT UPDATES

**BSR Cultural Pearls** — In 2025, six municipalities – Helsingborg (Sweden), Peipsiääre (Estonia), Alytus District (Lithuania), Płock (Poland), Kaskinen–Kaskö (Finland) and Smiltene (Latvia) – were awarded the BSR Cultural Pearls 2025 title in recognition of their ambitious Culture and Resilience Action Plans that harness culture to enhance community resilience. These municipalities were selected from 14 candidates across the Baltic Sea Region and will now embark on a transformative journey that includes mentorship, seed funding, capacity-building, and participation in a peer-learning network.

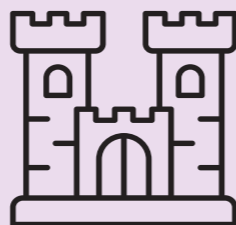
**Resilient Communities Learning Platform (RESCOM)** — The CBSS has launched the RESCOM project to strengthen local resilience in Ukraine, Moldova and the Baltic Sea Region through knowledge exchange, capacity building and cross-border cooperation. Funded by the European Union, the initiative will help communities develop tailored strategies to address socio-economic challenges, enhance crisis preparedness and promote

inclusive, community-driven solutions. RESCOM notably took part in the Cultural Pearls Network Conference, providing a concrete example of knowledge transfer between projects and regions.

### KEY EVENTS

**Strengthening Communities Through Culture – First Cultural Pearls Network Conference** — The first Cultural Pearls Network Conference gathered municipalities, cultural practitioners and community leaders from across the Baltic Sea Region and beyond to exchange experiences and strategies for culture-driven resilience. Participants explored how cultural initiatives can strengthen social cohesion, shared best practices, and built new connections to support future collaboration.

**BSR Cultural Pearls 2024 Meet in Kiel to Learn, to Exchange, and to Network** — In Kiel, the 2024 BSR Cultural Pearls titleholders met to reflect on their year-long journeys, exchange lessons learned and showcase their achievements. The event provided a platform for peer learning, fostering stronger ties between municipalities committed to using culture as a tool for building resilient, engaged communities.



#### 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

On 15–21 July 2024, a CBSS Summer University in Tallinn was organised under the PSF-funded YoPeNET 2.0 project, addressing Balticness in Transition: Exploring Identity and Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region.

In February 2025, the Horizon Europe We-ID project was launched, with the CBSS joining higher education and research institutions to address identities, migration, and democracy.

In April 2025, the CBSS organised a panel on How Regional Institutions Enhance Societal Resilience in the Baltic Sea Area during the Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe at the University of Cambridge. The panel facilitated interaction with key stakeholders in BSR higher education while showcasing the achievements of the Cultural Pearls project.

### PROJECT UPDATES

The PSF-funded project **Young People Network for Balticness 2.0: Enhancing Capacity for Strategic Narratives on Identity with Young People in the Baltic Sea Region** organised a summer university in Tallinn, attended by over 20 participants from bachelor to post-doctoral level, representing the BSR and beyond. The project also produced four texts (with four more forthcoming), six podcasts, four videos (some jointly with *New Nordic Lexicon*), and two reels.

Since 1 February 2025, the CBSS Secretariat has been a partner in the Horizon Europe research project **Identities – Migration – Democracy (We-ID)**, collaborating with seven other EU research institutions. The project focuses on fostering local cohesion and belonging through resilient democratic communities in the face of growing migration pressures. Drawing on its competences in two priority areas — Regional Identity and Sustainable and Prosperous Region — the Secretariat is responsible for case studies in Lithuania and plays a leading role in conducting a scenario-building exercise, hosting thematic roundtables with high-level experts from academia and policy communities, and organising stakeholder conferences.

### KEY EVENTS

**8-10 April 2025, Brussels:** The We-ID project held its initiation meeting to outline overall objectives and deliverables and to present the responsibilities of the partner consortium.

**24-26 April 2025, Cambridge:** The Baltic Programme at the Centre for Geopolitics, University of Cambridge, organised the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe (CBSE), “Converging Paths: The Baltic Between East and West”, on 24–26 April 2025, with CBSS Secretariat speakers.



#### The CBSS & education

The CBSS recognises the role of higher education in fostering regional identity. With Baltic Sea Region citizens among the most educated in the world, the CBSS champions the idea that education is a key solution to global challenges. It has therefore made strategic investments in empowering future region-builders through educational initiatives. These range from annual Summer Universities, which mobilise academic networks, to projects bridging the gap between education and the current knowledge and training needs of organisations, businesses, and industries in the BSR. Through these efforts, the CBSS strengthens cooperation and deepens ties among its Member States.

# BACK PAGES





## THROUGH THE LENS

### Select CBSS events during the Estonian CBSS Presidency 2024-2025

- [1] 13<sup>th</sup> Baltic Excellence Programme (BEP) in Tallinn.
- [2] Meeting of the Directors-General of the CBSS Civil Protection Network.
- [3] High-Level Dialogue on Resilience Through Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region during the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2024.
- [4] 23<sup>rd</sup> PA Secure Steering Group meeting.
- [5] CREWS project launch in Hamburg in March 2025.
- [6] FRAUD seminar in the Swedish Parliament, 13 March 2025.
- [7] Secure Kids conference in Riga, Latvia on 28–29 January 2025.
- [8] H.E. Amb. Tõnis Nirk, Estonian Chair of the CSO, at a reception at the Estonian Embassy in Stockholm in November 2024.
- [9] ClimaResponse kick-off Meeting in Stockholm (1–2 April 2025).
- [10] CBSS Youth Ministerial 2025, in Tallinn.
- [11] Barnahus Forum 2025: “And then what happened...” in Tallinn, 12–13 June 2025.
- [12] CBSS Summer University in Tallinn.
- [13] Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum (BSPYF) 2024, in Helsingør, Denmark.
- [14] BSR Hackathon [#b\_hack] 2024 in Lübeck in July 2024.



## COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS 2024-2025



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.

### LIST OF SENIOR OFFICIALS 2024-2025

ESTONIA (CBSS Presidency 2024-2025)

**Mr Tõnis Nirk**, Chair of the Committee of Senior Officials; Ambassador-at-Large for Baltic Sea Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Mr Andreas Sepp**, Desk Officer, Department for European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

DENMARK

**Mr Peter Wilhelm Linde**, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

FINLAND

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

GERMANY

**Mr Florian Rudolph**, Head of Unit Division E21, Northern Europe (EU), Federal Foreign Office

ICELAND

**Mr Emil Breki Hreggvidsson**, Director, 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

**Mr Finn Christian Nordli**, Senior Adviser of the Section for Nordic-Baltic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

POLAND

**Ms Katarzyna Barcikowska**, Head of the Baltic Multilateral Unit, European Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

SWEDEN

**Mr Jan Lundin**, Ambassador, 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)

## CBSS SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT APPOINTMENTS



### NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL

The CBSS appointed Mr Gustav Lindström as the new Director General of its Secretariat.

On 1 September 2024, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) appointed Mr Gustav Lindström as the new Director General to lead its Secretariat in Stockholm, Sweden.

Mr Lindström brings extensive experience in security policy and international cooperation, having previously served as the CBSS Secretariat's Deputy Director General from September 2023 to August 2024. From January 2018 to August 2023, he was the Director of the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) – the European Union's agency analysing foreign, security and defence policy issues based in Paris. In his capacity as EUISS director, he also chaired the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific – EU Committee (CSCAP-EU).

Earlier in his career, Mr Lindström served as the Head of the Emerging Security Challenges Programme at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP). In this function, he was also co-chair of the Partnership for Peace Consortium (PfP-C) Emerging Security Challenges Working Group and a member of the Executive Academic Board of the European Security and Defence College. Prior to his tenure at the GCSP, he was a Research Fellow and later a Senior Research Fellow at the EUISS. He has also worked at the RAND Corporation and the World Bank.

Mr Lindström holds a doctorate in policy analysis from the RAND Graduate School and a master's degree in international policy studies from Stanford University.

Mr Lindström succeeds Mr Grzegorz Poznanski, who led the CBSS Secretariat from 2020 to 2024.



### NEW DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL

The CBSS appointed Mr Markus Helavuori as the new Deputy Director General of its Secretariat.

Mr Markus Helavuori has been appointed Deputy Director General at the CBSS Secretariat, starting on 1 April 2025. He has 20 years of experience in policy and regulation at national and international levels.

Before assuming his role at the CBSS Secretariat, he served as Deputy Executive Secretary and Professional Secretary at the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, also known as the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), from 2018 to 2025, where he was responsible for matters related to sea-based activities, including intergovernmental cooperation on maritime affairs, spill response, and submerged munitions, among other areas.

From 2011 to 2017, Mr Helavuori served as a Technical Officer and Group Lead at the Secretariat of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London, a UN specialised agency responsible for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution from ships.

He also served the Government of Finland for more than seven years. At the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Finnish Maritime Administration, and the Transport Safety Agency (now the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency), he contributed to legislative and policy development and was part of the Finnish delegation in international negotiations within the IMO, the EU and HELCOM.

Mr Helavuori holds a master's degree in environmental and marine biology from Åbo Akademi University in Finland.

# PROJECT SUPPORT FACILITY



Established in 2012, the Project Support Facility (PSF) is the CBSS's seed money funding tool, designed to stimulate regional cooperation and sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. It provides co-financing to prepare and implement small-scale, community- or expert-driven projects involving partners from at least three CBSS Member States. Operating within the CBSS's three long-term priority areas, the PSF adds value by fostering cross-border partnerships, generating tangible impact, and laying the groundwork for larger-scale initiatives that strengthen cooperation across the region.

## PSF PROJECT UPDATES

### COMPLETED PSF PROJECTS IN 2024-2025

- **Baltic Youth's Visions, Innovations and Initiatives to Green Deal.** Lead: Polski Klub Ekologiczny Okrug Pomorski. Countries: PL, SE, LT, EE. Engaged youth in eco-innovation for the European Green Deal through workshops, guidelines and cooperation.
- **Baltic Youth for Resilient Society (BYFORES).** Lead: Suomen Pelastusalan Keskusjärjestö. Countries: FI, LV, DK, SE, DE. Created a BSR Network of Volunteers and Local Authorities and advanced youth engagement in civil protection.
- **Strengthening the Identity of the BSR Borderlands.** Lead: University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. Countries: PL, LT, LV, EE. Promoted regional identity and civic engagement among youth in border areas through cultural exchange.
- **Young People Network for Balticness 2.0 (YoPeNET 2.0).** Lead: Uniwersytet Gdański. Countries: PL, DE, DK, EE, SE. Held summer universities, produced media content, and strengthened academic cooperation.
- **Sisterhood Pathways.** Lead: Active Youth Association. Countries: LT, LV, PL. Tackled violence against women through awareness, innovative responses and improved support services.
- **From NEEDS to SEEDS.** Lead: Swedish Defence University. Countries: SE, PL, LV. Enhanced societal security education, hosted a summer university, and expanded cross-border collaboration.
- **Safety for All? Remedy for Exploited Migrant Workers.** Lead: HEUNI. Countries: FI, NO, SE. Mapped grievance mechanisms and proposed remedies for exploited migrant workers.

### ONGOING PSF PROJECTS IN 2024-2025

- **Joint Crisis Communication in the Baltic Region.** Lead: MSB. Countries: SE, FI, EE, LT, LV. Strengthens crisis communication across the BSR to boost preparedness and shared identity.
- **Prepared Together: Stronger Together.** Lead: University of Latvia. Countries: LV, FI, DE. Promotes inter-regional cooperation and a platform for emerging threats and preparedness.
- **Long-Term Quality Assurance in Barnahus Networks.** Lead: World Childhood Foundation Germany. Countries: DE, SE, FI. Creates shared principles for auditing systems in Barnahus services.
- **Let's Share Knowledge, Let's Share Experience!** Lead: ROSA. Countries: NO, LV, LT, PL, FI. Improves cooperation and best practice exchange among anti-trafficking organisations.
- **Art Connects: Youth from the Baltic.** Lead: Kunsthalle Rostock. Countries: DE, DK, LV. Uses art to empower youth and strengthen Baltic Sea identity.

### APPROVED PSF PROJECTS (2025 CALL)

- **SAFE-BS2BKS.** Lead: HELCOM. Countries: FI, DK, LV, UA. Applies Baltic methods for managing underwater munitions in the Black Sea.
- **CHIPS.** Lead: Save the Children Lithuania. Countries: LT, EE, LV, FI. Enhances child participation in improving Integrated Child Protection Systems.
- **YoPeNET-Futures.** Lead: Zatoka Foundation. Countries: PL, DE, EE, SE. Combines foresight research and youth training to tackle future regional challenges.
- **Sustaining Communities and Ecosystems of the BSR.** Lead: Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation. Countries: EE, PL, FI, UA. Supports climate adaptation, heritage preservation and biodiversity in coastal communities.
- **#JournalismForSecurity.** Lead: Latvian Transatlantic Organisation. Countries: LV, EE, PL. Trains journalists to counter disinformation and strengthen resilience.
- **NextGenDemocracy Baltics.** Lead: Media Hub Riga. Countries: LV, FI, LT, EE, DK. Prepares youth journalists to address AI-related challenges and support reliable media.
- **Culture Connect.** Lead: ARS BALTICA / Nordkolleg. Countries: DE, PL, LV. Fosters resilience and cohesion through cultural dialogue and community capacity building.
- **BalticMUN 2027.** Lead: NGO Mondo. Countries: EE, LV, LT. Involves youth in Model UN activities to strengthen regional identity and resilience.



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