



POLISH PRESIDENCY
2025–2026



BALTIC SEA REGION
YOUTH FORUM

YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CBSS MINISTERIAL MEETING 2026

DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE CBSS YOUTH MINISTERIAL 2026 IN WARSAW



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**BALTIC SEA REGION
YOUTH FORUM**

SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

1. Integrate youth into security discussions

- ▼ Strengthen multilateral cooperation and democratic resilience by integrating civil society — especially youth — and citizen engagement into security strategies, while supporting transnational networks which build trust, cooperation, and democratic resilience alongside military capabilities.

2. Improve youth resilience for times of crisis

- ▼ Urgently improve youth security and crisis preparedness through voluntary civil preparedness training, non-military basic skills and survival programmes, accessible crisis communication systems, integrated mental health support, and stronger rural youth inclusion.

3. Improve FIMI monitoring

- ▼ Mandate a twelve-month feasibility study for a Baltic Sea FIMI early-warning network aggregating open-source intelligence across the region. The study should deliver an institutional model, burden-sharing funding framework, for example drawing on EU Democracy Shield funding, and operational protocols that reconcile national intelligence sovereignty with the pre-emptive, cross-border response capacity no single state can sustain alone.

4. Support BSR AI capabilities

- ▼ Recognise the strategic relevance of artificial intelligence infrastructure and capabilities for the long-term security, prosperity, and autonomy of the Baltic Sea Region, and encourage

continued dialogue among CBSS members on this basis.

5. Fight climate change and nature loss

- ▼ Set up an action plan on how to tackle and prevent threats on food security, economic stability and overall livelihood caused by consequences of climate change and nature loss. This plan should include short-term measures such as engaging the CBSS Civil Protection Network as well as long-term measures such as improving structural conditions for nature restoration projects with a focus on the inclusion of youth.

6. Advance green and affordable energy

- ▼ Advance the transition to climate-friendly and affordable energy systems, while establishing youth advisory mechanisms in energy and transport policymaking and financially supporting youth participation in green initiatives..

7. Improve economic chances for young people

- ▼ Strengthen financial literacy and career development through accessible modules at the secondary level and a regional mentorship and opportunities network.

BACKGROUND

The CBSS-supported, Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) for the 2025–2026 term established six Working Groups, led by 8 of the 20 elected members of the Committee of Youth Representatives (CYR). While the forum’s activities extended beyond these groups, their work formed the core thematic input to the CBSS Youth Ministerial.

During the term, active members met in person twice. The first meeting took place at the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD) in Stockholm in November 2025, funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. This event allowed participants to explore their Working Group topics through a security-focused lens, deepening their discussions and perspectives.

The second meeting occurred at the 2026 CBSS Youth Ministerial in Poland, which served as the culmination of the BSRYF’s work. It provided a platform for participants to exchange views on key issues, engage with a broad network of elected and active members, and present the outcomes of their efforts from the 2025–2026 term.

Over the course of three days, 25 young people aged 18–29 representing the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) and the national youth councils of the Member States came together to deliberate on the future of security and cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Drawing on diverse national contexts and lived experiences, these discussions have resulted in the following recommendations addressed to the Foreign Ministers of the CBSS Member States and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The participants underscore the need to promote and apply a holistic understanding of security. This includes recognising not only traditional dimensions of defence, but also the critical role of environmental sustainability, cultural cohesion, and societal resilience. Particular attention must be given to emerging and interconnected challenges such as foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), economic uncertainty, and the growing impact of mental health pressures on individuals and communities.

In this context, meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes is not only a matter of representation, but a strategic necessity. Actively involving young people strengthens societal resilience by fostering trust in institutions, enhancing the legitimacy of policy responses, and ensuring long-term perspectives are integrated into today’s decisions. Inclusive governance that reflects the

priorities of young generations is better equipped to anticipate and respond to complex, evolving security challenges.

As articulated in the Vihula Declaration 2025, young people play a vital role in shaping the future of the Baltic Sea Region and Europe as a whole. The contributions of young people to decision-making processes are essential to building a common and secure Europe — one that is firmly grounded in shared European values and strengthened by a sense of belonging among its citizens.

In this spirit, the following recommendations reflect both the urgency of current challenges and the long-term vision of a resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking region.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Security

As Baltic Sea Region Youth, we recognise the strained security situation in the Baltic Sea Region. In such an environment, an improvement of societal resilience and defensive capabilities are highly relevant. The fullest potential of societal resilience, however, can only be reached in close collaboration with a whole-of-society approach and by addressing weaknesses that potentially hinder societal resilience. To address this, we propose:

- ▼ **Integrate youth in security policy.** Strengthen multilateral cooperation and democratic resilience by integrating civil society — especially youth — and citizen engagement into security strategies, while supporting transnational networks which build trust, cooperation, and democratic legitimacy alongside military capabilities.
- ▼ **Improve crisis preparedness for youth.** Urgently improve youth security and crisis preparedness through voluntary civil preparedness training, non-military basic skills and survival programmes, accessible crisis communication systems, integrated mental health support, and stronger rural youth inclusion.

AI

As Baltic Sea Region Youth, we recognise the growing relevance of artificial intelligence in shaping our societies, economies, and security environment. However, Europe is not yet fully realising its potential in this field, particularly due to its limited capacity to develop and deploy sovereign AI models and to sustain the necessary data centre infrastructure. This dependency on external actors poses risks to technological sovereignty, data security, and strategic autonomy. Strengthening Europe's ability to build, maintain, and govern its own AI systems and infrastructure is therefore essential to ensuring resilience and competitiveness in an increasingly digital world. To address this, we suggest:

- ▼ **Recognise AI relevance.** We recommend that the Foreign Ministers recognise the strategic relevance of artificial intelligence infrastructure and capabilities for the long-term security, prosperity, and autonomy of the Baltic Sea Region, and encourage continued dialogue among member states on this basis.
- ▼ **Improve AI conditions.** We recommend that member states explore, where appropriate and in accordance with national priorities, how existing regional cooperation frameworks may be used to support favourable conditions for AI-related innovation, investment, and the secure and inclusive deployment of AI technologies.
- ▼ **Youth-inclusive open-source AI governance.** We recommend that member states promote transparency, knowledge-sharing, and inclusive participation — including that of young people — in the development of governance and open-source approaches for artificial intelligence and facilitate the exchange of best practices in this regard.

Digital Literacy & Democracy

As Baltic Sea Region Youth, we recognise that the information environment in the Baltic Sea Region is increasingly shaped by high levels of foreign hybrid threats and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI). The growing presence of disinformation across digital platforms poses a serious challenge to societal resilience and cohesion, as it undermines trust in democratic institutions and public discourse.

This deterioration of trust not only weakens social cohesion but also constitutes a direct threat to democratic processes and stability. Addressing these risks requires sustained efforts to strengthen digital literacy, critical thinking, and societal awareness, enabling citizens — especially young people — to navigate an increasingly complex and contested information landscape. To address this, we propose:

- ▼ **Strengthening Regional FIMI Early-Warning Cooperation.** CBSS Member States should initiate a twelve-month feasibility study for a Baltic Sea FIMI early-warning network aggregating

open-source intelligence across the region. The study should deliver an institutional model, burden-sharing funding framework, for example drawing on EU Democracy Shield funding, and operational protocols that reconcile national intelligence sovereignty with the pre-emptive, cross-border response capacity no single state can sustain alone.

Climate Change & Environment

As Baltic Sea Region Youth, we recognise that climate change and biodiversity loss pose growing risks to livelihoods, security, and wellbeing across the Baltic Sea Region. Their impacts are interconnected and often reinforce one another.

Floods damage homes, transport systems, and critical infrastructure, disrupt daily life, and destroy harvests. Droughts reduce agricultural productivity and threaten water availability. Repeated drought can also increase flood risks, as degraded soils retain less water.

Biodiversity loss undermines food security by disrupting pollination, soil fertility, and other ecosystem services. Pollution and eutrophication weaken marine and freshwater ecosystems. In the Baltic Sea, declining fish stocks threaten biodiversity as well as income and jobs in coastal communities. Habitat destruction further limits recovery.

Environmental degradation also affects public health. Damaged ecosystems increase exposure to pollution and other health risks, while access to healthy natural spaces is important for recreation, mental health, and social wellbeing.

These pressures can translate into wider economic and social instability. Food and water insecurity, rising costs, and livelihood loss can increase inequalities and place additional pressure on public institutions and civil security systems.

The proposed action plan should therefore strengthen civil security systems while improving long-term resilience. Therefore, we propose:

Short-term preventive measures:

- ▼ **Activate existing cross-sectoral platforms.** Engage the CBSS Civil Protection Network and other expert-level platforms within the Council of the Baltic Sea States as formal coordination mechanisms for climate-security integration.
- ▼ **Conduct joint exercises on climate-related risks.** Organise regular multi-country exercises simulating combined climate and security crises to strengthen preparedness and interoperability.

Long-term preventive measures:

- ▼ **Embed climate risk into core planning systems.** Integrate climate risk assessments into civil protection frameworks, critical infrastructure resilience planning, and energy security strategies.
- ▼ **Ensure policy coherence for nature restoration.** Align biodiversity, climate, agriculture, marine, and water policies; reduce contradictory incentives; and streamline administration.
- ▼ **Strengthen local delivery capacity.** Provide local authorities, communities, and project managers with sufficient staff, funding, technical support, clear rules, and training to implement nature restoration effectively.

Youth Advocacy

As Baltic Sea Region Youth, we recognise that young people across the region are facing increasing economic uncertainty and a highly competitive and challenging labour market. These conditions risk limiting opportunities for personal development, long-term stability, and the full utilisation of young people's potential. Notably, these concerns were identified as a top priority in a recent Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) survey, which gathered the views of more than 500 young people from across the region.

Addressing these challenges requires coordinated action by Member States to strengthen pathways into employment and ensure fair and accessible opportunities for youth. Education plays a central role in this regard. It must be adequately supported and aligned with labour market realities, while also equipping young people with the skills needed to navigate a rapidly changing economic and technological landscape. Empowering young people through education and targeted policy measures is essential to fostering resilience, inclusion, and sustainable growth in the Baltic Sea Region. To address this, we propose:

- ▼ **Financial literacy.** Provide education opportunities. Strengthen financial literacy and career development education through accessible modules at the secondary level and a regional mentorship and opportunities network.
- ▼ **Improve education opportunities.** Expand student housing support and youth employment guarantees; encourage the private sector to introduce trainee/junior programmes.
- ▼ **Youth Entrepreneurship.** Support youth

- entrepreneurship region-wide.
- ▼ **Tax Incentives.** Introduce tax incentives for companies hiring first-time young employees.
- ▼ **Paid Internships.** Mandatory payment for internships.

ANNEX

- ▼ Report Working Group AI
- ▼ Report Working Group Digital Literacy and Democracy
- ▼ Report Youth Advocacy

Transport & Energy

As Baltic Sea Region Youth, we recognise that the expansion of green and reliable energy capacity is fundamental to the future development, resilience, and competitiveness of our region. A rapid scale-up of clean energy infrastructure is necessary to ensure energy security, affordability, and progress towards climate neutrality. At the same time, the transition to sustainable energy and transport systems must be both inclusive and forward-looking.

Meaningful youth participation is essential to achieving these objectives. Young people should be systematically involved in energy and transport policymaking processes to strengthen their sustainability, legitimacy, and long-term effectiveness, which includes the establishment

- ▼ **Youth-Driven Green Transition.** Advance the transition towards decarbonised, climate-friendly, and affordable energy and transport systems by 2030, while integrating the needs and perspectives of younger generations into policy development.
- ▼ **Youth Voice in Energy & Transport.** Enable and institutionalise the active participation of the younger generation in the green energy transition and sustainable transport policies by creating consultation bodies, including cooperation with national and macro-regional youth councils.
- ▼ **Green Trainings for Youth.** Launch targeted green training and apprenticeship programmes for young people. Develop partnerships with energy and transport industry to provide practical skills, paid work experience and clear pathways into sustainable sectors.