BALTIC SEA REGION YOUTH FORUM

APRIL 2025

Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum

Impact Report 2023-2025

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Table of contents

1. Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum **4**
1.1 What does BSRYF stand for? 5
1.2 Youth engagement ladder 6
1.3 BSRYF structure 7
1.4 BSRYF membership 8
1.5 CYR members 2024/2025 9
1.6 BSRYF activities 10
1.7 Key positions of the BSRYF 11
1.8 BSRYF communication 12
2. Baltic Sea Youth - impact **13**
2.1 CBSS mandates 14
2.2 Youth Ministerial 15
2.3 Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 16
2.4 Hackathon 17
2.5 Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue 18
2.6 BSRYF Working Groups 19
2.7 ...and more 20
3. BSRYF Youth Survey 2024 **21**
3.1 BSRYF Youth Assessment Survey 2024 22
3.2 Key messages 23
3.3 Youth organisations background 24
3.4 Youth organisations priorities & interest 25
3.5 Youth organisations motivation & challenges 27
3.6 Young individuals background 28
3.7 Young individuals priorities & interest 29
3.8 Young individuals motivation & barriers 30
3.9 General event feedback 31
3.10 We want to learn more about... 32
3.11 EU Youth Survey 2024 33
3.12 Final thoughts 34
4. Learn more about youth **35**
4.1 Definition of *youth* in BSR 36
4.2 BSR youth councils and initiatives 37
4.3 Get inspired 38
4.4 Further reads 39

Abbreviations

- **BSR** - Baltic Sea Region
- **BSRYF** - Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum
- **BSYD** - Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue
- **BSPC** - Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference
- **BSPYF** - Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum
- **BSSSC** - Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation
- **CBSS** - Council of the Baltic Sea States
- **CYR** - Committee of Youth Representatives
- **EUSBSR** - EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
- **PA** - Policy Area
- **SG** - Steering Group
- **ToR** - Terms of Reference

BALTIC SEA REGION YOUTH FORUM

1

What does BSRYF stand for?

Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum – a platform for future changemakers, offering a space for young people to share ideas, express opinions, and make a difference in the region.

The Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF) is a dynamic **platform** to create democratic spaces where young people from across the region can unite to advocate for their views and interests. Coordinated by **the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)**, the BSRYF members are presented with multiple opportunities to participate in key regional and European events, facilitating direct contact with some of the most influential decision-makers.

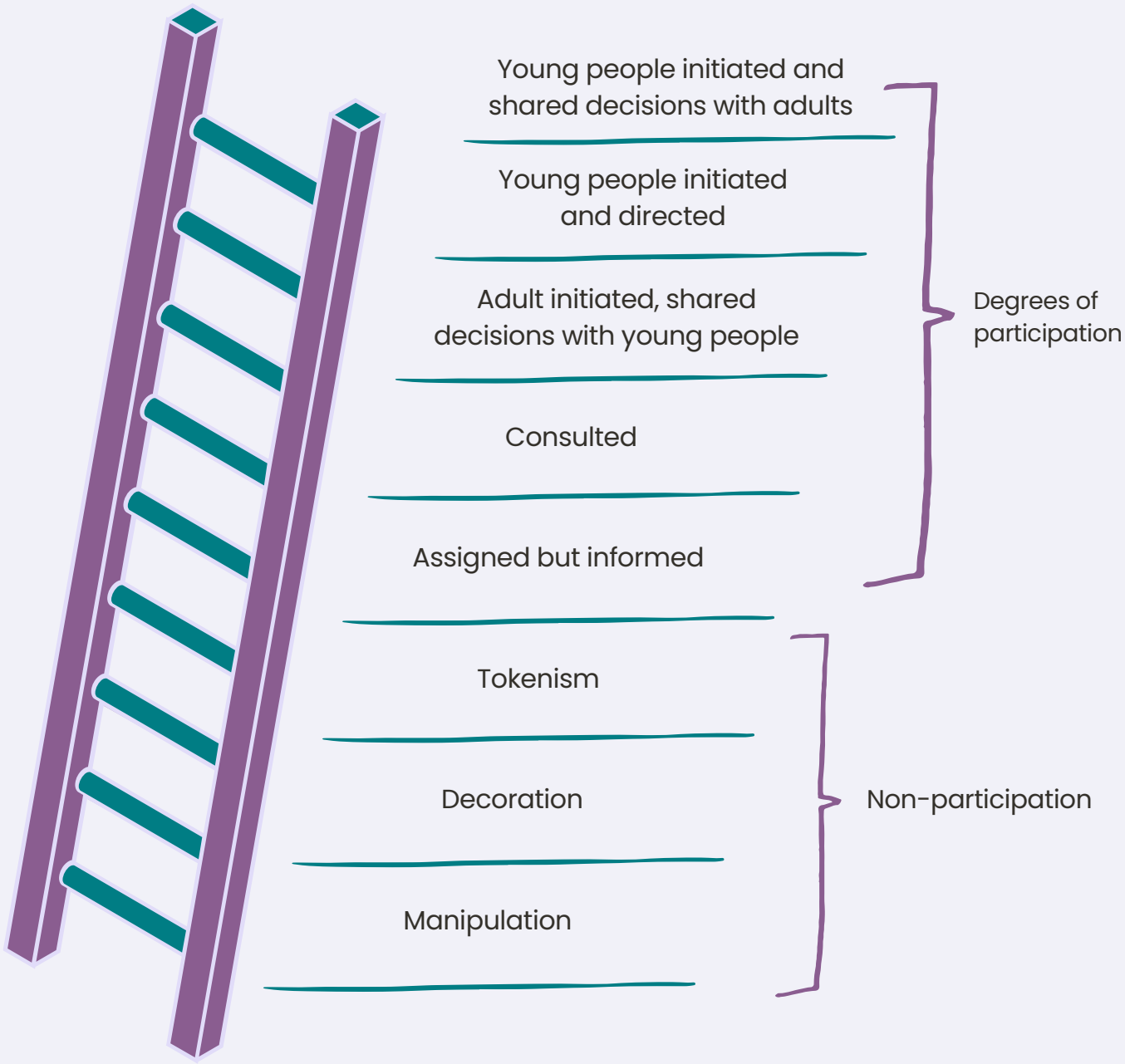
The forum emphasises the importance of improving youth representation and empowering young people to actively shape policy and contribute to societal progress at a macro-regional level. It is, therefore, a youth-led initiative dedicated to raising the concerns and aspirations of young people throughout the Baltic Sea Region.

The BSRYF offers a platform for emerging leaders and active citizens to share innovative ideas and perspectives. By fostering genuine engagement, the forum ensures youth voices are heard and incorporated in a meaningful way.

Having now completed two years of activity, the BSRYF recently conducted a survey to gather insights on events and obtain a general overview of what young people involved in the Baltic Sea Region think and desire for the future. Additionally, the report comprises general information, the EU policies, and research.

Youth engagement ladder

According to Roger Hart (1992) meaningful youth participation takes the shape of a ladder, illustrating different levels of involvement. While participation varies in form, the ultimate goal is to foster dialogue and empower young people to bring their ideas to life.



Source: Roger Hart's (1992) ladder of participation.

BSRYF structure

The BSRYF operates under the framework established by the Terms of Reference, which outline its purpose, structure, and working mechanisms.

The Forum promotes meaningful youth participation through a well-defined structure of Actors, Bodies, Events, Information, and Networks. However, its **lack of a dedicated budget** - despite CBSS coordination support - means it relies on third-party funding and voluntary contributions, challenging the sustainability of BSRYF's initiatives.

Actors

- Council of the Baltic Sea States (coordination)
- Citizens and residents of the BSR aged 16 - 29
- Partner organisations (youth councils, pan-Baltic org., youth initiatives etc.)
- Experts / Facilitators / Trainers
- External Funder

Bodies

- BSRYF Election Meeting
- BSRYF Steering Group
- BSRYF Committee of Youth Representatives
- BSRYF Working Groups
- BSRYF Stakeholder meetings (monthly)

Events

- BSRYF Election Meeting (April)
- CBSS Youth Ministerial (May/June
- Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum (Aug)
- Hackathon (July)
- EUSBSR Youth (Oct)
- Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (Nov)
- Partner events (NBYS, BSSSC youth events, B4B, youth hansa, BRYC)

Info

- CBSS Youth website
- Baltic Sea Youth Social Media
- Baltic Sea Youth Newsletter
- Baltic Sea Youth Webinars
- BSRYF Impact Report
- BSRYF Youth Survey
- EU and national research, policies

Networks

- European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Youth Test
- Youth for Cooperation (DG REGIO)
- Citizens Agora MRS (European House Budapest)

BSRYF membership

With over 300 members, the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum unites both young individuals and youth organisations dedicated to driving positive change in the region.

The BSRYF consists of regional and national youth councils, youth organisations, and passionate young individuals striving to make a difference. Cooperation is key, and active members collaborate across borders in a coordinated way. Most participants come from Poland and Germany; however, active members from the Baltic and Nordic countries ensure equal representation across the Baltic Sea Region. Notably, BSRYF membership is fee-free, enhancing inclusivity.

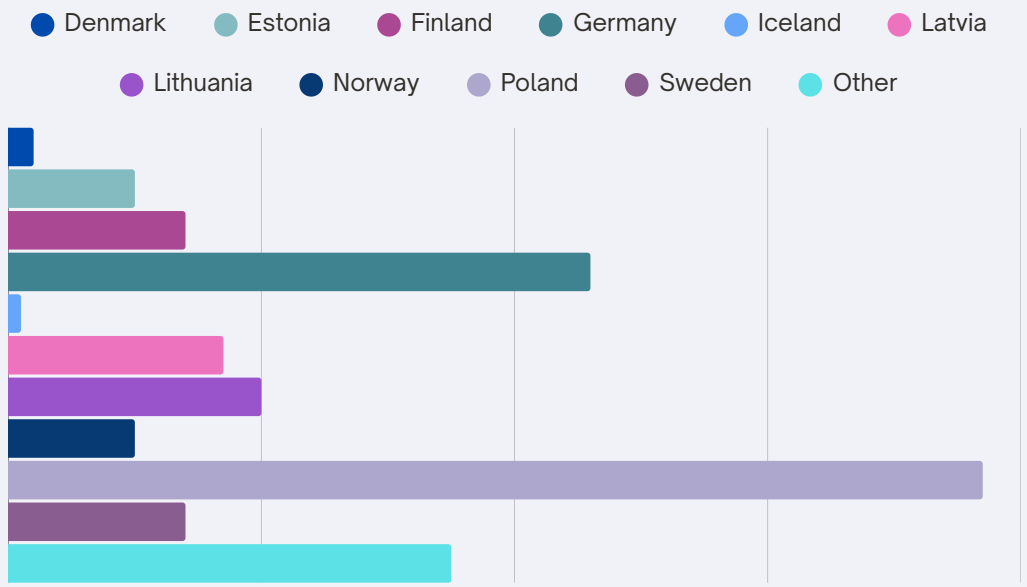
The Forum's structure includes two key bodies:

- **the Committee of Youth Representatives (CYR)** and
- **the Steering Group (SG)**.

The **CYR**, with up to 20 elected youth representatives aged 16-29, serves as the legislative voice, shaping policy discussions. While the **SG** functions as the executive branch, comprising five members - two from youth organisations and three from the CYR - who oversee strategic initiatives.

In 2023/2024, the SG included representatives from Landesjugendring Schleswig-Holstein and the Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT), while for 2024/2025, ReGeneration 2030 replaced LiJOT. Alongside these structured bodies, regular members also play a vital role by participating in elections and contributing to activities and Working Groups.

GRAPHIC 1: MEMBERSHIP DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO CBSS MEMBER STATES



CYR members 2024/2025

Simona Jakaitė, Lithuania
"I joined BSRYF because I love the connectivity we foster here all over the region."

Alma Jokinen, Finland
"I joined the BSRYF to increase dialogue and cooperation in our Baltic Sea community – shared issues require shared solutions!"

Silva Laure, Latvia
"I joined the CYR because I believe in the transformative power of youth voices and their absolute necessity in shaping our collective regional future. Let's dial up the volume, shall we?"

Antoni Wyligała, Poland
"I have been interested in the Baltic Sea Region for a long time. I was born, raised and live here, so I would like to make this place safer and more prosperous, taking into account the voice of the young generation. Hence my involvement in the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum."

Andreas Schoop, Germany
"I joined the CYR to drive positive change in the Baltic Sea region, focusing on climate action and having a blast connecting with passionate young leaders. With my passion for strategic collaboration, I endeavour to creatively weave the visions of the CYR into regional initiatives, ensuring we make waves together."

Szymon Górny, Poland
"I joined the CYR to contribute to meaningful youth participation in policy-making and to help shape a more sustainable and inclusive future for our region."

Felix Emmesberger, Finland
"I joined the CYR since I want to push for more youth engagement within the Baltic Sea Region."

Stanisław Kostulski, Poland
"If you want something done, do it yourself. If you want the youth involvement to be truly decisive and meaningful, get involved yourself!"

Simon Jyrkäs, Sweden
"The Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum has given me amazing opportunities to meet decision makers, fellow young people and to learn about challenges facing the Baltic Sea Region."

Ray-Kevin Finger, Germany
"I don't want to stand on the sidelines when things get tough, rather than be involved in making decisions!"

Marta Kielpinski, Germany & Poland
"The youth of today holds the key to shaping the world of tomorrow, so it is essential that young voices are heard and our diverse concerns are addressed. I joined the Committee of Youth Representatives because it serves as the perfect platform for this undertaking where decision-makers and young leaders meet. Together, we brainstorm and develop ideas that will strengthen the Baltic Sea Region, both now and in the future."

Elias Arndt, Germany
"The CYR is, for me, the central hub for effective youth participation in the Baltic Sea region and provides the opportunity to meet and collaborate with young people who share the same interests. Here, I can contribute proactively."

BSRYF activities

The Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum offers a diverse range of activities for young people to get involved. Here's an overview of the key initiatives.

BSRYF Election Meeting (General Assembly): once a year, all members are invited to participate in an online meeting where strategic decisions regarding the forum's guiding documents are made, and members of the Committee of Youth Representatives and the Steering Group are elected to serve as the platform's governing bodies.

Stakeholder Engagement (non-CBSS units): these meeting such as the Baltic Stakeholder Conference 2023 organised by HELCOM or EU Commission events, invite young people and provide them with the opportunity to shape the agenda and promote the BSRYF.

BSRYF Stakeholder Meetings: monthly online meetings for organisations to get informed about activities and share news regarding Baltic Sea Youth initiatives.

CBSS Unit Activities: these initiatives involve CBSS units and projects, allowing young people to participate in activities that match their specific interests while facilitating direct communication with professionals from diverse backgrounds over a longer time with concrete outputs for the work of the CBSS.

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum (BSPYF): enable active youth participation in the Annual Conference of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, this forum brings together young people from the region to discuss pressing issues and collectively develop a policy recommendation paper to be presented at the conference and incorporated in the resolution of the next year BSPC Annual Conference.

BSR Hackathon: this event brings together Baltic Sea Youth programmers and IT enthusiasts passionate about strengthening the societal resilience of the Baltic Sea Region by developing innovative digital solutions.

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Activities: due to the close partnership between the CBSS and EUSBSR, youth representation from the BSRYF is actively promoted in initiatives across various policy areas. The BSRYF provide resources for capacity building among decision-makers and young people, offering valuable recommendations e.g. in the Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2022, which reflect youth priorities. They also support areas such as Culture and Security through dedicated working groups and facilitate youth participation in events and projects.

Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD): an annual event for young people engaged in Baltic Sea Region affairs, BSYD fosters intercultural understanding and peer dialogue on historical, political, and societal issues aims at in-depth information and network creation.

BSRYF Working Groups: formed based on decisions by the Committee of Youth Representatives, these groups foster discussion and collaboration among young people across the region. They encourage intergenerational dialogue through expert input, draft policy statements for regional decision-makers, develop innovative initiatives to address macro-regional challenges, and support the overall implementation of the forum within the CBSS priorities. Members are also invited to propose topics for new working groups.

CBSS Youth Ministerial: organised by the CBSS presidency in collaboration with the Secretariat and partners. This event elevates youth voices by providing a platform to present a youth proposal directly to regional decision-makers during the CBSS Ministerial Sessions.

Key positions of the BSRYF

The Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum Representation Guidelines, approved by the CYR, based on the policy recommendations and position papers of BSRYF supported events, outline key messages for BSRYF and CBSS in the Baltic Sea Region.

1. Youth participation in governance: young people in the Baltic Sea Region consistently call for greater involvement in decision-making processes. They advocate for structured roles in political bodies through mechanisms like paid youth advocate positions, advisory boards, and representation on steering committees, especially within areas impacting the environment, social issues, and the economy. The goal is to **make youth participation a norm** in both regional and national governance structures, ensuring that young voices are central to policy development (Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2022)(CBSS Youth Vision 2020).

2. Cross-border and cultural exchange: to foster a shared regional identity, youth representatives are pushing for initiatives that strengthen connections across borders. Proposals include establishing a common Baltic Sea Day, expanding inter-regional travel opportunities, and supporting intercultural education programmes. These exchanges are seen as vital to enhancing mutual understanding, celebrating cultural diversity, and reinforcing unity within the region (CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023)(CBSS Youth Vision 2020).

3. Social equality and resilience: addressing social inequality and strengthening resilience within democratic institutions is a core priority. Young people advocate for policies that promote inclusive governance, combat social polarisation, and combat disinformation. They call for **participatory budgeting and community engagement** to ensure equitable resource distribution and to build societal resilience against divisive influences (BSPYF 2023) (CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023 and 2024).

4. Mental health and education: youth representatives are prioritising accessible mental health support and education reforms that align with contemporary challenges. Recommendations include integrating mental health resources within school curricula and introducing new educational topics like civil preparedness, digital literacy, and environmental responsibility. The aim is to equip young people with skills for resilience and social responsibility (BYD 2019)(BYD 2020).

5. Environmental sustainability and climate action: protection of natural resources and ecosystems remains a central priority. This includes advancing renewable energy sources, conserving biodiversity, and embedding circular economy principles. Youth call for action on conserving marine and forest ecosystems, reducing pollution, and fostering green technology initiatives to mitigate climate impacts and promote sustainable living in the Baltic Sea Region(BSPYF 2021 & 2022).

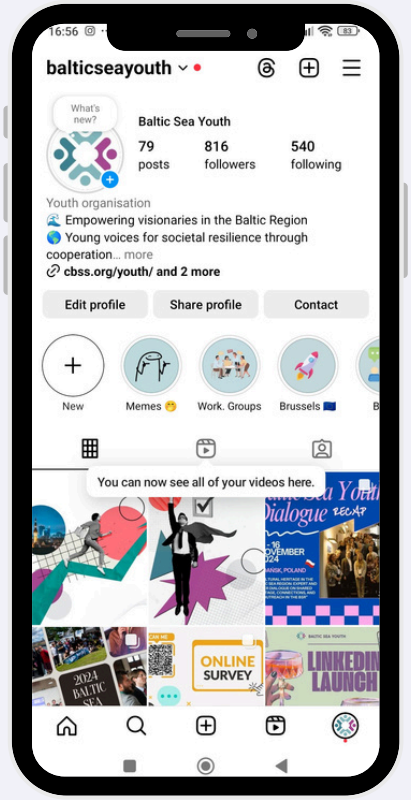
BSRYF communication

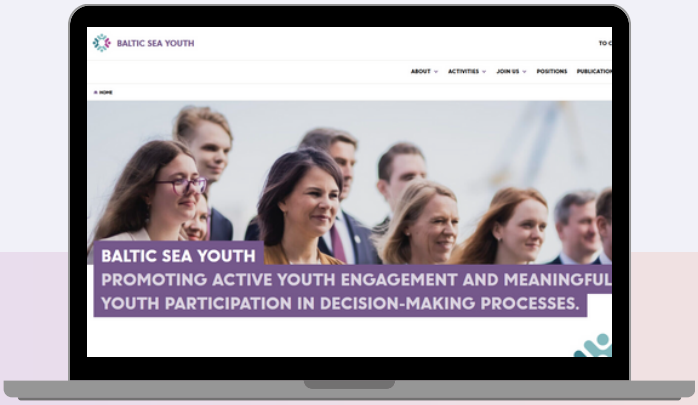
The CBSS youth website serves as a central hub for information on youth participation, cooperation, and initiatives in the Baltic Sea Region, offering insights into events, opportunities, and key youth recommendations that aim to influence regional decision-making.

JOIN US!

To stay updated, follow BSRYF on Instagram and LinkedIn, where news, engagement opportunities, and success stories are shared.

Additionally, a newsletter provides regular updates on youth activities, ensuring that those interested in BSRYF and broader Baltic youth initiatives stay informed and connected.





BALTIC SEA YOUTH IMPACT

2

CBSS mandates

The BSRYF was established based on the Vilnius II Declaration through the mandate given by the Foreign Ministers of the CBSS Member States and the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy.

Bornholm Declaration (19 May 2020): regarding the engagement of young people, it underlined the need to promote active and meaningful youth participation and representation in institutions in the region.

The Vilnius II Declaration: A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2030 (1 June 2021) mandates the role of youth in institutional decision-making and regional cooperation. It states:

"Young people participate and are represented in a meaningful way in institutions and decision-making processes, giving impetus to efforts to reach a more resilient, gender-equal, and safe region."

The Kristiansand Declaration (25 May 2022) reaffirms the Vilnius II Declaration, explicitly emphasizing the importance of young people in decision-making processes.

The CBSS Wismar Declaration (2 June 2023) welcomed the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue Engagement Roadmap, which provides youth-driven recommendations on regional security and resilience. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of all CBSS member states encouraged stakeholders to actively involve the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum as a structured platform for youth participation.

The CBSS Porvoo Declaration (14 June 2024) reaffirms the importance of youth engagement, highlighting the outcomes of the Youth Ministerial in Helsinki and the need for inclusive opportunities for young people to influence policy. It stresses that future generations must play a key role in building a safer, more secure, and sustainable Baltic Sea Region.

Youth Ministerial

At **the CBSS Youth Ministerial 2023,** held in Berlin, Germany in July, young experts and representatives from the Baltic Sea Region came together to present their vision for a more resilient, united, and cooperative region. Their collective efforts resulted in a **position paper** that highlights key priorities for strengthening societal resilience:

- **Reviving the Baltic Sea States Summit** to address geopolitical challenges and renew regional cooperation.
- **Establishing a Common Baltic Sea Day** to foster unity and regional identity.
- **Annual CBSS youth networking meetings** to enhance collaboration and youth participation in policymaking.
- **Increased funding for youth initiatives** to empower young voices and drive meaningful engagement.

The CBSS Youth Ministerial 2024 took place in Helsinki, Finland, in May. The event focused on youth engagement, EU elections, security, resilience, and civil crisis management. The outcomes are reflected in the **Youth Declaration**, which focuses on:

- **Youth participation**- advocating for the systematic integration of young people into decision-making through legislation, accessible information, and international cooperation.
- **European identity**- emphasising the importance of education on EU functions, fostering unity, and promoting cultural exchange (e.g., a synchronised Baltic Sea Day).
- **Security & resilience** - calling for improved civil protection awareness, educational programmes on preparedness, and greater gender inclusivity in security sectors.

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

Graphic Recording: Sebastian Lörscher

CBSS Youth Ministerial 2024

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum

The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum (BSPYF) 2023 took place in Berlin, Germany in August and was organised alongside the 32nd Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC). The youth participants, representing various Baltic Sea nations, developed and finalised eight policy recommendations addressing:

- **Digital resilience** – enhancing digital literacy and prohibiting data-driven disinformation.
- **Youth participation** – srengthening political education and legally mandating youth councils.
- **Social division & extremism** – promoting civic education and cross-border exchanges.
- **Democratic faith & inequality** – ensuring inclusive governance and strengthening workers' unions.

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2023

The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2024 took place in Helsingør, Denmark, in August, alongside the 33rd BSPC. During this event, the youth developed policy recommendations across three focus areas:

- **Energy security & resilience** – enhancing infrastructure security through investment, risk assessments, and collaboration with strategic partners.
- **Sustainable energy independence**– phasing out fossil fuels, modernising power grids, and ensuring a just transition with support for affected workers.
- **Youth engagement in energy policy**– establishing formal youth advisory bodies in energy policy and expanding green education and career opportunities in the energy sector.

The 33rd Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Report featured a dedicated section on these youth-led recommendations, highlighting the proactive role of Baltic youth in tackling energy challenges. Young people were given a meaningful platform to voice their perspectives, with their contributions formally recognised in the **report**.

Hackathon

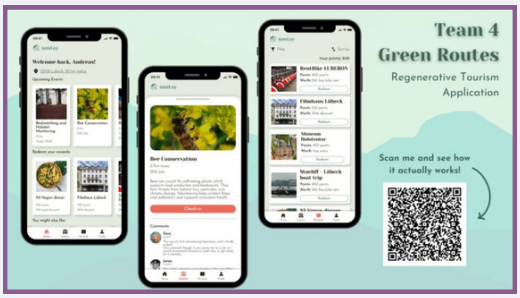
The Baltic Sea Region Hackathon was initiated by Land Schleswig-Holstein in collaboration with the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The 2023 event focused on generating innovative ideas to tackle regional challenges, emphasizing efforts to combat disinformation and strengthen democracy. Meanwhile, Hackathon 2024 brought together young innovators to create digital solutions for sustainability, with the winning idea, **SuStay**, offering an app that promotes eco-friendly travel choices. This event underscored the transformative potential of youth-driven innovation in building a greener future.

The topics of the 2024 Baltic Sea Region Hackathon were:

1. Developing a dashboard for student mobility for the Baltic Sea Region
2. Gamification and regional identity building
3. Concept for an intercultural exchange platform for the Baltic Sea Region
4. Green Routes Connect – Shaping the future of Baltic Sea transport
5. Stories & visions from the Baltic Sea Region
6. Good News AI
7. Baltic Sea perspectives
8. Prototyping a sustainable future

echtdigital
Vernetzt mit der Zukunft

SH
Schleswig-Holstein
Der echte Norden



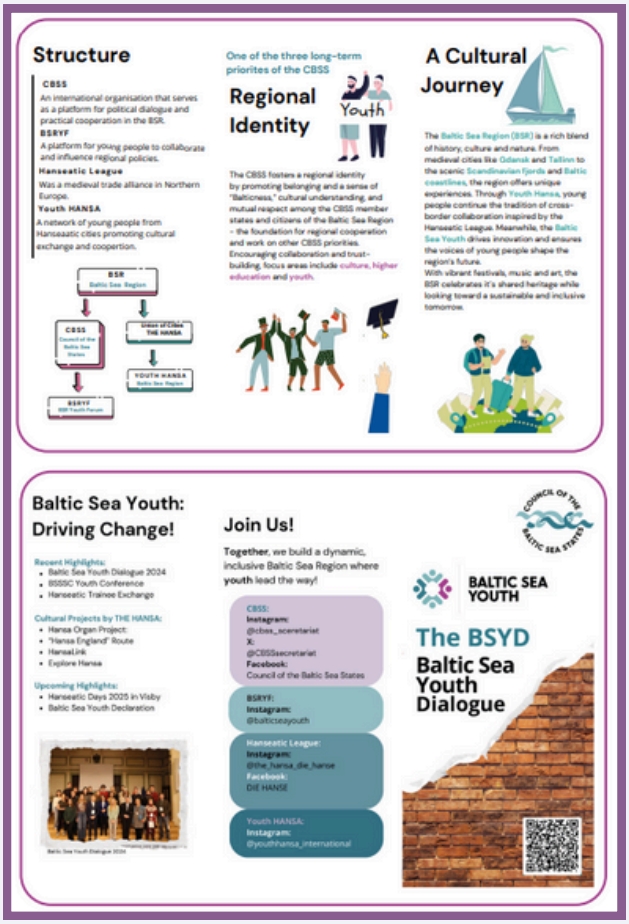
The **Hackathon's 2023** winning project focused on visualizing Baltic Sea data, driven by concerns about climate change. The team worked to make this data accessible to all, with a special emphasis on water quality information.

Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue

The Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD) is organised annually by CBSS and funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, with different partners each year.

In 2023, in collaboration with Academia Baltica and BSSSC, BSYD took place from 5-9 November in Oeversee, Germany, focusing on resilient democracies and subregional cooperation. 21 young participants explored regional frameworks (CBSS, BSSSC, EUSBSR), security, and environmental challenges, resulting in youth-driven recommendations to strengthen subregional partnerships. The report is available under this **link**.

Federal Foreign Office



BSYD 2024 - flyer.

In 2024, supported by Die Hansa and the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, BSYD was held in Gdańsk, Poland, from 11-16 November, centring on youth engagement in cultural heritage. 20 participants developed outreach materials for cities, schools, and museums to engage youth in cultural heritage. Outputs included a peer-to-peer **outreach concept**, **flyers**, an **interactive quiz**, and **city games**, promoting youth involvement in cultural preservation.

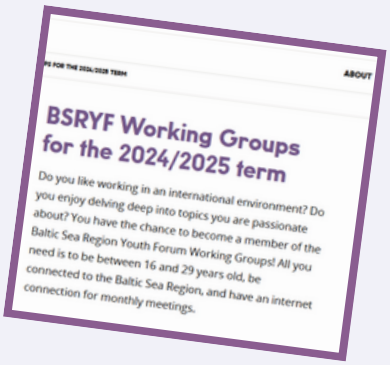
BSRYF Working Groups

The BSRYF Working Groups provide a platform for young people with shared interests to exchange ideas and deepen their knowledge. With 3 to 20 members per group, these focused teams ensure efficient collaboration tailored to specific tasks.

Achievements in 2023/2024:
In 2023, BSRYF attracted 73 applications through two calls for Working Group participants. Drawing from the Baltic Sea Youth Platform's structure, the CYR successfully formed **four** dynamic groups:

- Advocacy
- Culture
- Security
- Environmental Sustainability
- Additionally, a Focus Group on Child Protection

was created in partnership with the PROMISE TRM project.

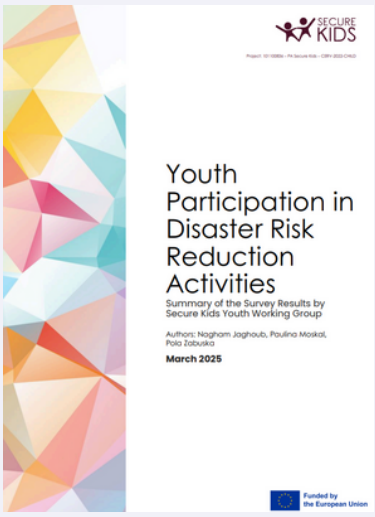


Highlights of 2024/2025:
For this term, three impactful Working Groups were established, each closely tied to ongoing projects and Baltic Sea Region cooperation frameworks:

- **Culture**: focused on promoting youth participation in cultural institutions, contributing to PA Culture Steering Group meetings, and engaging with BSR Cultural Pearls events.
- **Security**: supported the PA SecureKids project by advising on website usability and child participation in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), including attending the SecureKids conference in Riga (January 2025).
- **Anti-Trafficking**: collaborated with the PEX-BSR project to review child-friendly language documents and participated in a study visit to Stockholm (October 2024), providing concrete recommendations on policy improvements.

A total of 26 applications were received, resulting in compact and effective groups of 3 to 9 members each. All Working Groups adhere to the BSRYF Code of Conduct, ensuring a respectful and productive environment.
For more details, visit: **BSR Working Groups.**

and more...


SECURE KIDS
Youth Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction Activities
Summary of the Survey Results by Secure Kids Youth Working Group
Authors: Nagham Jaghoub, Paulina Moskal, Pola Zabuska
March 2025
Funded by the European Union

Policy Area Secure
Council of the
Sea States (C
SECURE
COUNCIL OF THE BALTIC SEA STATES

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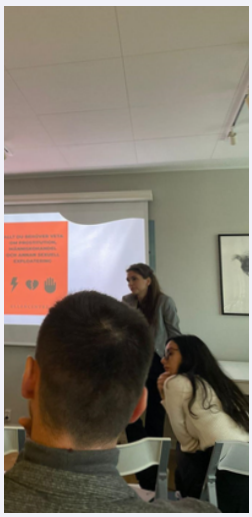
BALTIC SEA YOUTH DIALOGUE 2024
EXPLORING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION
GDAŃSK, POLAND
11–16 NOVEMBER 2024
BALTIC SEA YOUTH



BSRYF YOUTH SURVEY 2024

3

BSRYF Youth Assessment Survey 2024

Engaging youth is essential for the Baltic Sea Region. Survey results highlight the challenges, aspirations, and current viewpoints, offering valuable insights to enhance the influence of young people in shaping the future of the region.

Youth are often referred to as the driving force behind innovation, progress, and social transformation, yet their voices and views often go unheard in decision-making processes. The Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is home to a vibrant and diverse youth community that plays a crucial role in shaping the region's future. To better understand the challenges and opportunities faced by young people and organisations, the Youth Assessment Survey was conducted.

The survey has been open from 10th December 2024 until 31st January 2025. Throughout this time, **42 responses were collected**. The survey allowed young individuals and youth organisations in the Baltic Sea Region to share their opinions regarding collaboration, general activities, interests, motivations, and barriers. By analysing various perspectives, this report sheds light on the current state of youth involvement and encourages further reflection on this matter. Strengthening youth engagement is not only essential for fostering a more inclusive society but also for building a more democratic, resilient and forward-thinking region.

Key messages

- ## Empowering youth and strengthening their role

"Youth participation, especially through organised youth councils on the local and regional level is fundamental for the development of the Baltic Sea Region."

Youth participation is regarded as both fundamental and transformative for the Baltic Sea Region. Respondents emphasised that young people must be involved at all levels of decision-making and that their voices are crucial for a democratic, sustainable future.

"Make use of what is already there. Take care of the municipal, regional and national youth organisations, for them to be prepared to work on the international level meaningfully. Bottom-up is the only approach here."

- ## Collaboration and bottom-up approaches

There is a strong demand for collaborative, inclusive, and bottom-up strategies. Stakeholders are urged to leverage existing frameworks and foster teamwork, beginning at the local level.

- ## Ensuring transparency and accountability

"If you already make youth events, gather input then try to show how you use it. Or be honest if you don't and give feedback also."

Transparency in decision-making and genuine follow-up on youth input are key to building trust and effective participation.

"Youth participation needs sustainable structures within organisations. This requires sustainable funding beyond participatory events."

- ## Building sustainable structures and securing resources

For youth participation to have a lasting impact, there is a need for sustainable organisational structures and long-term funding beyond one-off events.

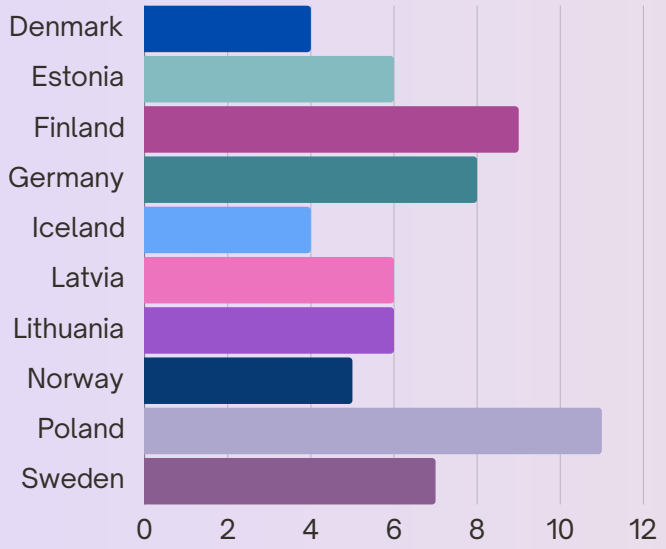
Youth organisations background

The survey was distributed to youth organisations and individuals under the age of 29 in the Baltic Sea Region. Unfortunately, despite incorporating questions aimed at other stakeholders, such as decision-makers, there were no responses received from that group.

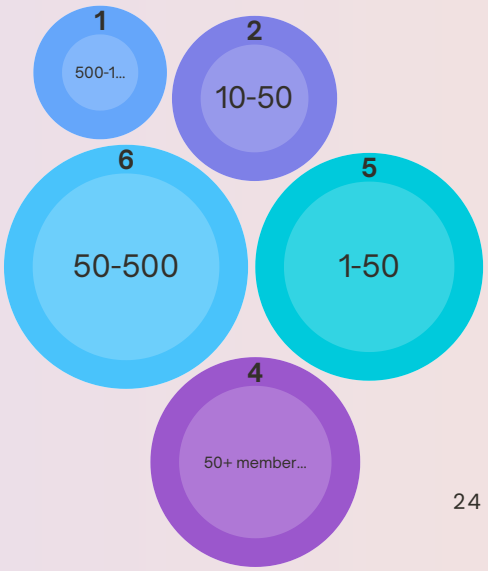
The survey collected a total of 42 responses, among which 18 belong to youth organisations and 24 to young individuals. Noticeably, **the survey reflects the opinions of youth organisations operating in all CBSS Member States.** The highest number of responses came from organisations based in Poland (6) and Germany (4).

The most common answers to the number of active members in the organisation were between 50 and 500 individuals (6) and 1 to 50 individuals (5). However, four responses also indicated networks with 50+ member organisations.

GRAPHIC 2: WHICH COUNTRIES DO YOU/DOES YOUR ORGANISATION OPERATE IN?



GRAPHIC 3: HOW MANY ACTIVE MEMBERS ARE PART OF YOUR ORGANISATION?



Youth organisations priorities & interest

Youth participation in society, governance, policy-making, and related areas was identified as the highest priority among respondents from youth organisations.

The survey clearly emphasises the importance of **youth participation**, which garnered 18 votes, followed by **macro-regional and international cooperation** with 7 votes, and **environmental sustainability** with 6 votes. Youth organisations showed a strong interest and/or engagement in BSRYF events. 61% of respondents expressed interest in the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue, while nearly 56% showed enthusiasm for the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum. Furthermore, 50% of respondents have already taken part in the CBSS Youth Ministerial, underscoring its significance among the following activities:

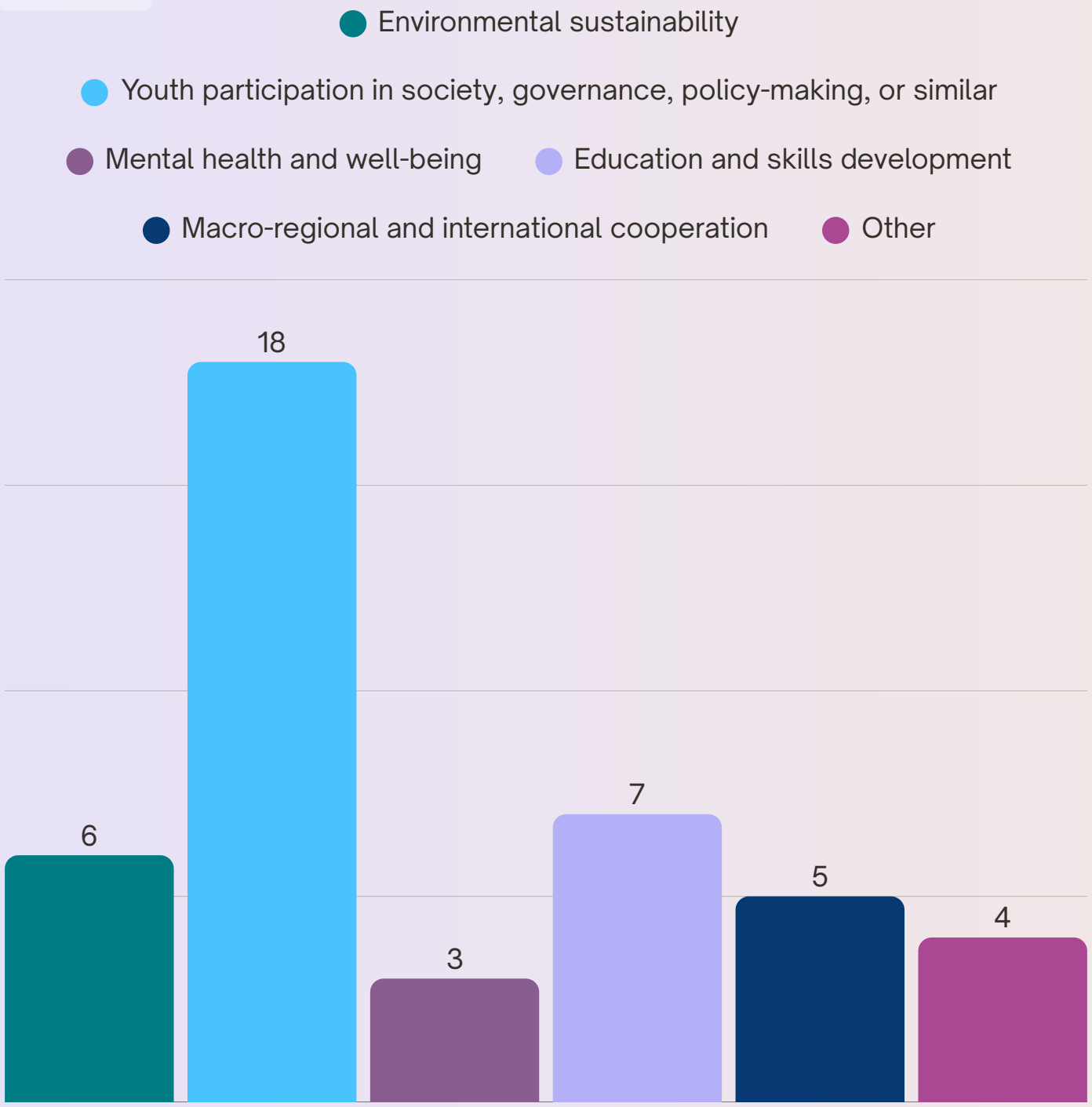
- BSRYF Election Meeting (General Assembly)
- BSRYF Stakeholder Meetings
- BSRYF Working Groups
- CBSS Youth Ministerial
- CBSS Unit Activities
- Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum (BSPYF)
- BSR Hackathon
- Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD)
- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Activities.

In relation to the BSR Hackathon, survey data indicates that more than 44% of participants would like additional information about the event. There appears to be a belief that Hackathon primarily targets individuals with specific IT skills. The feedback collected presents an opportunity to highlight the event's inclusive nature and expand its appeal to a broader audience.

The survey also collected opinions from youth organisations regarding the effectiveness of BSRYF activities. It reveals that a considerable **majority of respondents find all the listed activities to be either useful or somewhat useful.** The CBSS Youth Ministerial received the highest approval rating at 72%. The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum also secured strong support, with around 67% considering it "very useful." Furthermore, 50% of respondents recognized the value of the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue.

Youth organisations priorities

GRAPHIC 4



Youth organisations motivation & challenges

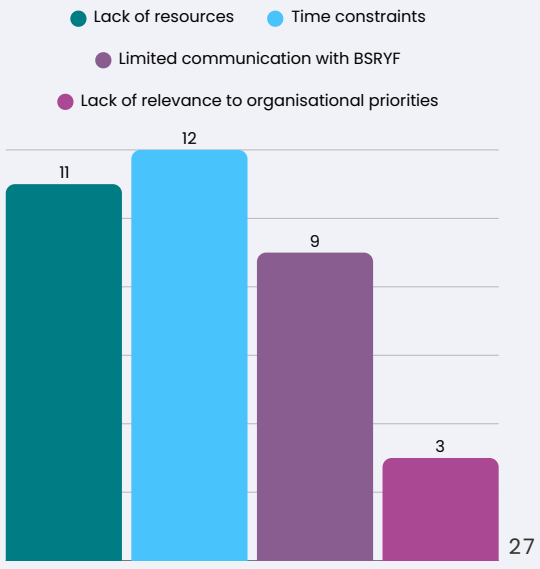
Youth organisations in the Baltic Sea Region are driven by a shared desire to learn, influence policy, and build networks.

The conducted survey provided valuable information about what motivates youth organisations in the Baltic Sea Region to engage in collaboration with the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF). The results highlight that learning from others in the region (16) is a key driver, closely followed by the desire to influence policy and decision-making, as well as networking with other youth organisations (15 votes each). Additionally, access to resources and training serves as a motivation for eight organisations.

However, these organisations face significant challenges that hinder their ability to fully engage with the BSRYF. The most pressing issues include **time constraints** (12), as many participants balance volunteer work with other commitments, and a **lack of resources** (11 votes), for example, limited funding for co-organising events. Furthermore, **limited communication with the BSRYF** (9 votes) was also identified as an important barrier.

GRAPHIC 5: WHAT MOTIVATES YOUR ORGANISATION TO BE ACTIVE IN THE BSRYF?

GRAPHIC 6: WHAT FACTORS HINDER OR LIMIT YOUR ORGANISATION'S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE BSRYF?



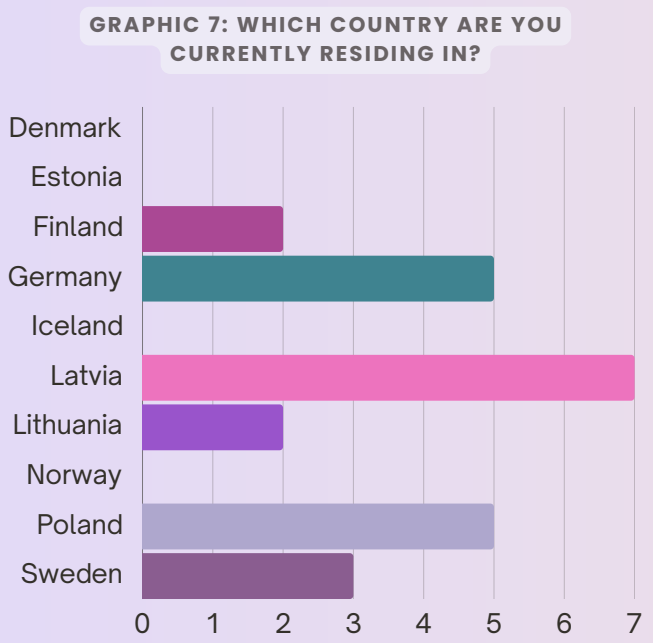
Young individuals background

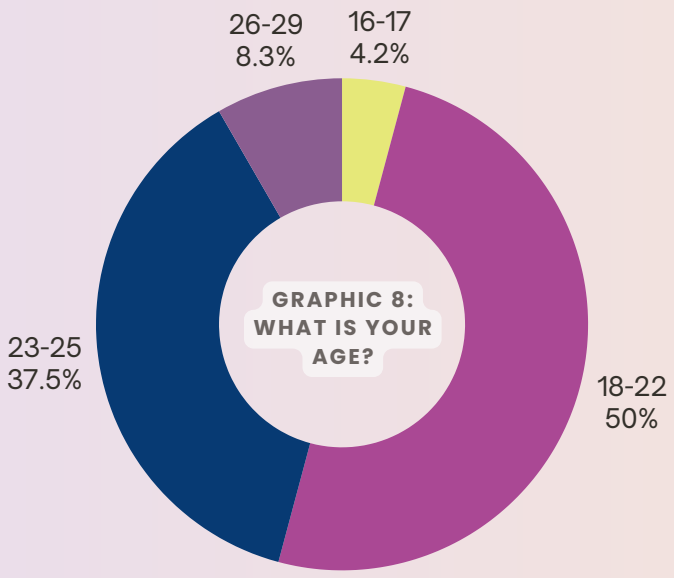
The survey results provide a general overview of the opinions, perspectives, and overall situation of young people and youth organisations in the Baltic Sea Region.

The survey captures the perspectives of 24 young individuals, primarily consisting of 12 participants aged between 18 and 22. Additionally, there were nine respondents aged 23 to 25, two aged 26 to 29, and one aged between 16 and 17.

Despite being widely advertised on the CBSS website, featured in a newsletter, and shared with youth involved in BSRYF activities, the overall number of respondents remains relatively low. However, it sheds light on essential aspects and highlights common concerns and interests among young people in the Baltic Sea Region, making it a valuable observation for discussions related to youth issues.

As illustrated in the graph below, the most engaged respondents hailed from Latvia (7), Germany (5), and Poland (5).



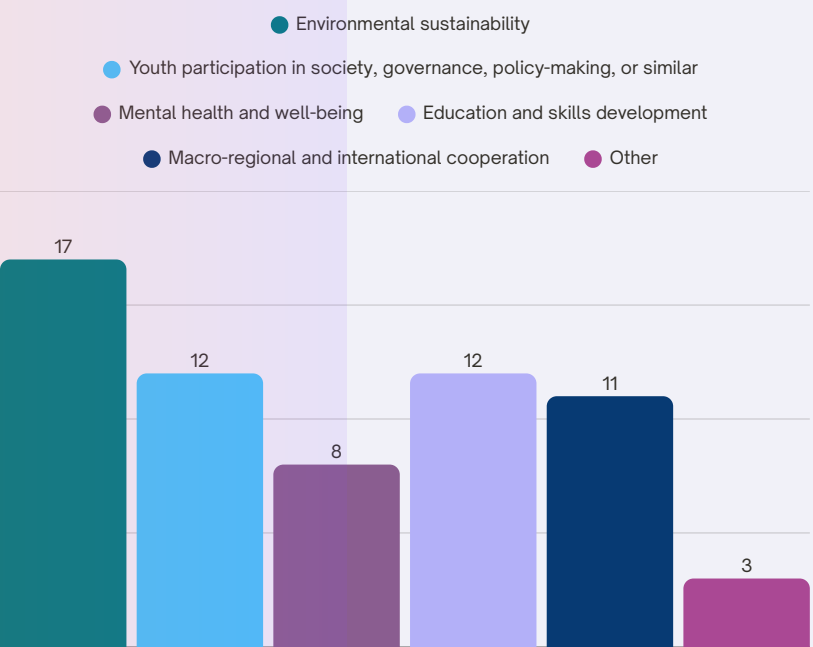


Young individuals priorities & interest

Among young people, environmental sustainability plays an essential role. Today's Baltic Sea Region youth consistently emphasise its importance for the future of our planet.

As indicated by the graph below, **environmental sustainability** ranks as the top priority for youth in the BSR, garnering 17 votes. This is closely followed by **youth participation in society, governance, policymaking, and related fields,** along with **education and skills development**, each receiving 12 votes. Macro-regional and international cooperation is also significant, with 11 votes. It's important to note that this was an open multiple-choice question, allowing respondents to select multiple options.

GRAPHIC 9: WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL PRIORITIES WITHIN THE BSR?



When it comes to youth interest in BSRYF activities, the data reveals that the highest level of enthusiasm is for CBSS Unit Activities, with 50% expressing interest. This is followed by nearly 38% showing interest in BSRYF Working Groups and an average of 30% for all other activities. Conversely, the BSRYF Election Meeting, Stakeholder Meetings, and Hackathon received the highest "not interested" response, at 46%.

However, respondents also highlighted the importance of all BSRYF events. The BSPYF garnered the most interest, with around 67%, followed by BSRYF Working Groups and the CBSS Youth Ministerial, each at 54%, and 50% for the Stakeholder Meetings. In conclusion, a substantial **majority of respondents viewed all BSRYF events as either very useful or somewhat useful.**

Young individuals motivation & barriers

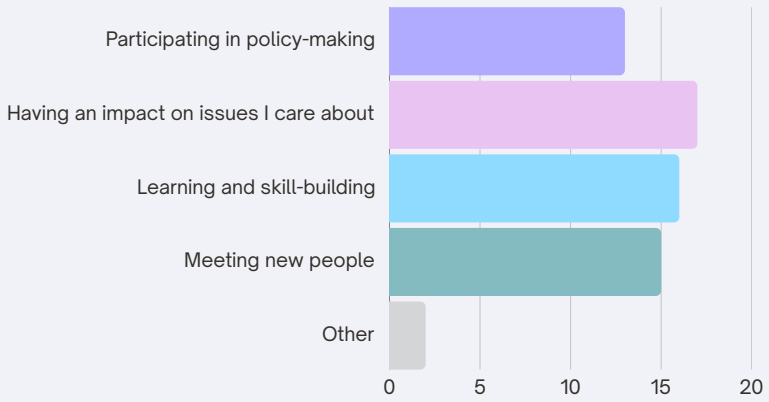
Today's young people are eager to make an impact on tomorrow's world. They are motivated to create a better future, they want to be taken seriously and have their participation in global affairs acknowledged.

In the survey, 71% (17 votes) of collected responses stated that **having an impact on issues the young people care about** is important to them. This was closely followed by **learning and skill-building** (16) and **meeting new people** (15). Additionally, 54% highlighted that participation in policymaking (13) also motivates the youth to be active in the Baltic Sea Region.

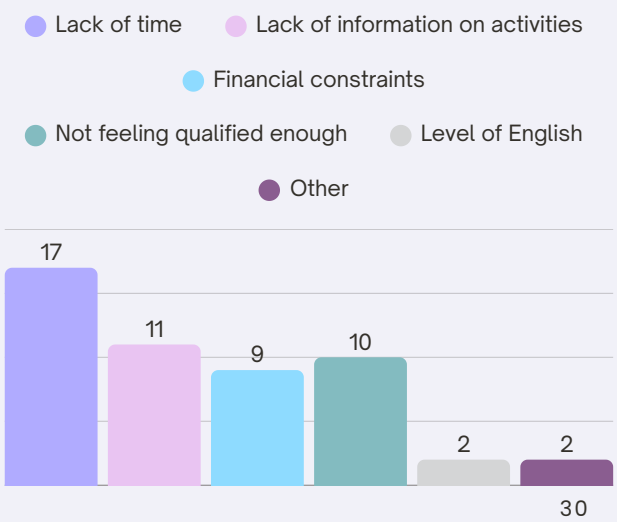
The BSRYF provides young people with opportunities to get involved and be proactive, whether they aim to pursue a political career or simply seek inspiration and guidance through networking with others.

Nevertheless, despite BSRYF being a great platform for encouraging youth engagement, there are certain barriers that respondents have identified as limiting their participation. They identified the biggest challenges as **a lack of time** (17), **a lack of information about activities** (11), **not feeling qualified enough** (10), and **financial constraints** (9). These factors significantly influence their ability to get involved.

GRAPHIC 10: WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO BE ACTIVE IN THE BSR?



GRAPHIC 11: WHAT FACTORS HINDER OR LIMIT YOUR ABILITY TO PARTICIPATION IN THE BSRYF?



General event feedback

Over the past two years, the BSRYF has contributed to multiple youth events. After each event, feedback forms were distributed to gather insights on participants' overall impressions.

Youth Ministerial

For the Youth Ministerial event organised in 2023, among 14 respondents, 9 gave a 5 out of 5 rating, and 11 indicated they would recommend the event to friends and colleagues. In 2024, the event received an average rating of 4.43. Overall, the Youth Ministerial is well-regarded. Participants emphasised the importance of having relevant topics and sufficient time to develop meaningful outputs to present in front of decision-makers.

Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue

In 2023, the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue received an average rating of 4.43 based on 14 total responses. Participants felt their contributions were taken seriously and that the discussions broadened their horizons, with 72% of respondents recommending the event to colleagues and friends. In 2024, the event received an average rating of 4.00 based on 19 responses, with feedback indicating that while the organisers performed well, a more equitable distribution of tasks is needed.

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum

For the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum 2023, 21 participants provided an average rating of 4.62, highlighting the vital role of youth participation in regional cooperation. In 2024, 9 respondents gave an average rating of 4.44, with feedback suggesting the need for clearer details on the practical aspects of recommendations, including the number of proposals, time allocated at the forum, and initial input from the application process.

Hackathon

The Hackathon events in 2023 and 2024 achieved an average rating of approximately 4.40. Participants emphasised the importance of well-organised presentations and appreciated the opportunity to expand their networks with like-minded youth from the Baltic Sea Region.

We want to learn more about...

- **International cooperation, diplomacy, and cultural exchange**

"How do the countries and regions work together; which topics are most important; Which impact do they really have?"

- **Governance, policy, and youth participation**

"Where youth is heard within the decision-making / policy-developing process."

- **Social justice, gender equality, and feminism**

"I think I'd like to learn more about gender equality, how it connects to sustainability, and how leaders are addressing these challenges globally."

- **Infrastructure, spatial planning, and urban development**

"Spatial, tangible outcomes of cooperation in the form of physical products, infrastructure, architecture, cooperation of cities, marine spatial planning, and other spatial concerns."

"Cultural differences between the regions, infrastructure, importance of traditional art and beauty, environmental issues, flood defense."

- **Sustainability, climate change, and environmental protection**

"I'd like to learn ways of decreasing pollution by making our own decisions - veganism, zero-waste, and such, and their actual impact on the environment."

- **Mental health and well-being**

"I think young people are very concerned about their future... activities to support mental health would be required."

EU Youth Survey 2024

Ipsos European Public Affairs conducted the EU Youth Survey 2024 to gain insights into the opinions of young people across the European Union.

The survey examines the views of 25,863 young Europeans aged 16-30, including their key concerns and the values they consider most important across various aspects of society. The findings highlight that the **protection of human rights, democracy, and peace** remains the most important value for young Europeans, with 45% of respondents emphasising its significance. Closely following this, 41% identified freedom of speech and thought as a key priority, underscoring the importance of civic freedoms and open dialogue. Other notable values include human dignity (28%), tolerance and respect for diversity (27%), gender equality (26%), and combating discrimination while protecting minority rights (24%).

When asked about the key challenges that should be prioritised at the European level, young people overwhelmingly pointed to **economic and social issues.** Rising prices and the cost of living (40%) emerged as the most urgent concern, followed by environmental and climate change policies (33%) and the economic situation, including job creation (31%). These concerns are further complemented by strong support for social protection, welfare, and access to healthcare (29%), education and training (27%), and affordable housing (23%).

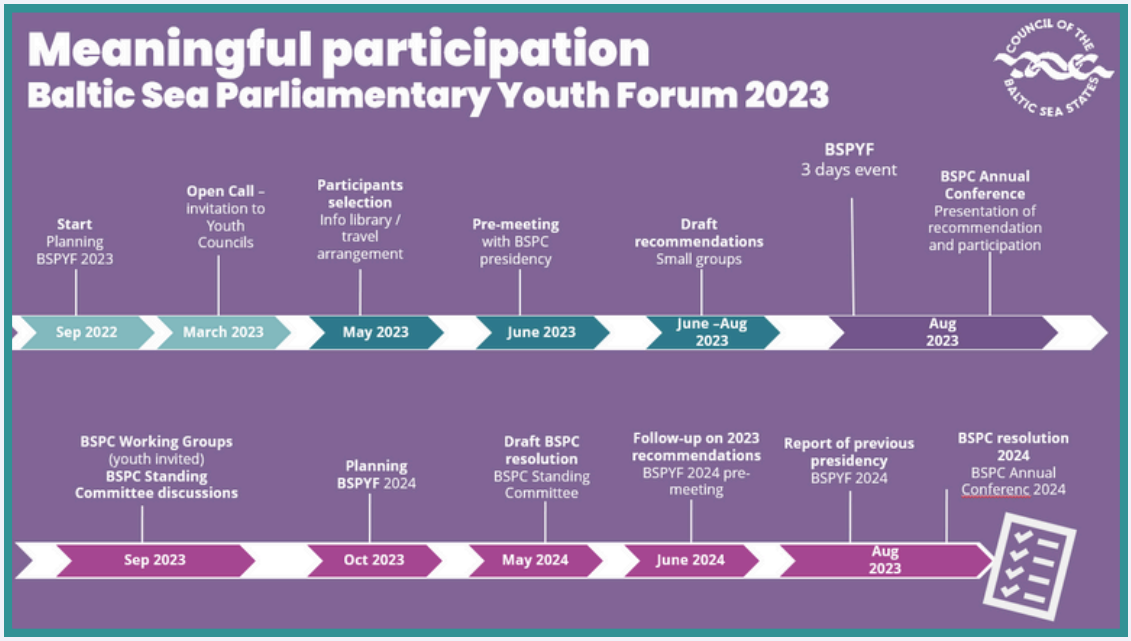
The findings of the EU Youth Survey 2024 suggest that young Europeans are highly engaged with both societal and political issues, demonstrating a clear vision for the future of Europe. Their priorities reflect a balance between economic security, social justice, and democratic values, emphasising the need for European policymakers to address both immediate financial hardships and long-term sustainability challenges. As the EU moves forward, integrating these perspectives into policy decisions will be crucial to ensuring **meaningful youth engagement and fostering a more inclusive and resilient European society.**

Final thoughts

By embracing the energy, creativity, and determination of youth, a future is envisioned that is both resilient and reflective of the democratic values inherent to the BSR.

Today's youth are well aware of the interconnected challenges shaping our futures. While safety and stability remain critical priorities, it is recognised that lasting security hinges on their proactive participation in driving change. Nevertheless, young people acknowledge that there is always more to learn; they are determined to grow and refine their skills to meet these challenges head-on. Youth demand goes beyond a superficial acknowledgement of their presence; they seek meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes, where their voices directly shape policies and actions.

This perspective is echoed in Aline Mayr's insights, which state that "empowered young adults contribute significantly to the development of strong societies in the Baltic Sea Region." It is further stressed that "involving all generations - those who experienced the Iron Curtain and those who did not - is imperative," thereby calling for a dialogue that bridges historical insight with the fresh, forward-thinking approach of today's youth. Effectively institutionalising youth engagement requires patience and openness from all parties involved - young people, institutions, coordinators, and organisations. In this way, a holistic, future-oriented approach is encouraged, one that challenges entrenched paradigms and inspires innovative policy solutions.



LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUTH

4

Definition of *youth* in BSR

The concept of *youth* is not uniformly defined across the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN). The age range designated for youth varies according to national policies and cultural contexts, shaping the framework for youth engagement and policy-making. These diverse definitions also influence how youth initiatives and programs are structured within the Baltic Sea Region. According to the **European Parliament Factsheet on Youth**, the EU's youth strategy includes individuals aged 13 to 30 years, while the UN uses an age range of 15 to 24 years for statistical purposes.

The definitions underscore the importance of contextual and cultural factors in shaping youth policies. They highlight that "youth" is **not a one-size-fits-all category** but rather a flexible concept that reflects the unique social, economic, and political landscapes of each region. The information provided by the European Parliament Factsheet on Youth offers a comprehensive overview that is crucial for understanding the diverse approaches to youth engagement and the development of tailored, effective youth policies.

COUNTRY/ORGANISATION	AGE RANGE
Denmark	15 - 29
Estonia	7 - 26
Finland	13 - 28
Germany	14 - 27
Iceland	16 - 25
Latvia	13 - 25
Lithuania	14 - 29
Norway	15 - 30
Poland	15 - 29
Sweden	13 - 25
European Union (EU)	13 - 30
United Nations (UN)	15 - 24

BSR youth councils and initiatives

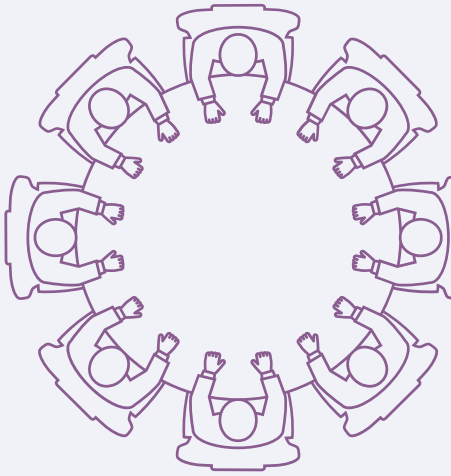
Across the Baltic Sea Region, youth councils and organiations form a vibrant network that not only advocates for the rights and interests of youth but also empowers them to shape resilient and inclusive policies at every level.

National youth councils:

- **Denmark**: Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd (DUF)
- **Estonia**: Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit (ENL)
- **Finland**: Nuorisoala
- **Germany**: Deutscher Bundesjugendring (DBJR)
- **Iceland**: Landssamband Ungmennafélaga (LUF)
- **Latvia**: Latvijas Jaunatnes padome (LJP)
- **Lithuania**: Lietuvos jaunimo organizacijų taryba (LiJOT)
- **Norway**: Landsrådet for Norges barne- og ungdomsorganisasjoner (LNU)
- **Poland**: Polska Rada Organizacji Młodzieżowych (PROM)
- **Sweden**: Landsrådet för Sveriges Ungdomsorganisationer (LSU)

Selected regional youth councils and initiatives:

- Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF)
- Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum (BSPYF)
- BSSSC Youth Conference
- Landesjugendring Hamburg
- Landesjugendring Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
- Landesjugendring Schleswig-Holstein
- Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Pomorskiego
- The Eastern Norway County Network Youth ØstsamUng



Get inspired

Baltica – A Place, A Sea, A Home
Poem by Lova Eveborn

She was born
Thousands of years ago
The ice melted, letting her grow
The land raised and slowly she became the one she is today
It was a remarkable childhood

She matured and started to make friends
Cod, seaweed, and clam
They all got used to her
Seeing all parts of her personality

Sweet but a little salty
Nourishing but at times smothering
Warm but also chilly

Her friends
They are depending on her
Trusting her to provide
Them a home

They are many and diverse
Mussel, sitting still and taking it all in
Porpoise, keen to play
Shrimp, not making much of a fuss
Algae, loving the sun
Jellyfish, just going with the flow
Flatfish, master of hide and seek
Just to mention a few of her friends

Now she's aging prematurely
Under so much pressure
From us humans
t's hard for her to stay in good shape

When constantly being
Pushed over the edge

If you also had, to take care other people's garbage
If you also had, unwanted guests stomping into your house
If you also had, neighbours being way to loud
If you also had, the temperature to rise over your preference
If you also had, to see your friends get exploited

Never getting to rest from it all
You wouldn't be in your best state

She needs all her friends
If they disappear, she will become worse
They are keeping her in a good state
Supporting her and taking care of things
Not allowing someone to spread out on behalf of someone else

She's not good at making new friends
It normally takes some time before they get used to her
It's a risk, that she will change to a worse version of herself
Then not as many would want to be her friend

So please
Be kind to Baltica
She is a wonderful friend
She gives you energy, food and experiences
So let her be herself

Hear her
Feel her
See her

Be her friend
And she will be yours,
Baltica

Buzzword bingo – youth washing

Some of the words and phrases regularily told to young people when engaging in policy work with adults.

Great work in such a short time!	You have five minutes to present all your ideas.	You are our future.
These recommendations will be taken into consideration.	Add your own buzzword	Maybe you can start this and then it will be taken up.
One day you will be in our position and hopefully you will do better!	You are absolutely right, but...	What does the youth think about XYZ?

Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2022

Further reads

Ministerial Declarations

- 2024 Porvoo Declaration, the declaration of the 21st CBSS Ministerial Session in Porvoo, Finland
- 2023 Wismar Declaration, the declaration of the 20th CBSS Ministerial Session in Wismar, Germany
- 2022 Kristiansand Declaration, the declaration of the 19th CBSS Ministerial Session in Kristiansand, Norway
- 2021 Vilnius II Declaration
- 2020 Bornholm Declaration

CBSS Youth Ministerial

- CBSS Youth Declaration Youth Ministerial 2024
- CBSS Youth Ministerial Position Paper

Baltic Sea Youth Declarations

- 2019
- 2020
- 2022

Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue

- 2020
- 2022
- 2023
- 2024

BSPC Youth Recommendations

- 2021
- 2022
- 2023
- 2024

Other

- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Action Plan (2021)
- Ipsos European Public Affairs (2025), Youth Survey 2024 (FL013EP). Brussels: European Union
- Perovic B. (2016), Defining Youth in Contemporary National Legal and Policy Frameworks Across Europe, https://shorturl.at/KZxhW
- Youth Vision Statement Beyond 2030 (2021)

Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the presented topics further, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

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https://cbss.org/youth/