



## **30<sup>TH</sup> BSPC: FOURTH SESSION**

Addresses and reports

Speaker: ***Ms Carola Veit, MP, BSPC Rapporteur on Migration and Integration***

Dear Colleagues,

last year our Working Group ended after three years of comprehensive work on it, so this is the first regular report.

Perusing the answers of the governments of the Baltic Sea Region on this field to the 29<sup>th</sup> BSPC Resolution we can conclude that most BSPC member state pursue their regional/national integration plans and projects.

For example:

The **Norwegian Government** has launched a new integration strategy – *Integration through Knowledge*.

**Germany** was revising the National Action Plan on Integration in a participatory process. In **Latvia**, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the *Guidelines for the development of a cohesive and active society 2021-2027* with one task to promote the integration of foreign citizens.

**Lithuania** renewed in February 2021 the *Action Plan for the Integration of Foreigners into Society*.

One best practice examples has already been highlighted: The projects of Skåne.

An important aspect is the destiny of unaccompanied child migrants. Here I would like to mention Russia's cooperation on migration issues in the Baltic Sea Region that continued through the CBSS Anti-Trafficking Task Force. Interaction on this issue was also carried out within the framework of the Council's Expert Group on Children at Risk.

Of course we have to take note of the already criticized move of Belarus:

Lithuania and Poland see Lukashenko's regime sending migrants across their borders, as part of a "hybrid war", **disregarding** human rights, peace and democracy, using **people** as a means of political pressure in response to EU sanctions imposed on Belarus.

I want to touch against this background on that the EU shall protect its external borders, **but** we need a **genuinely European** approach to sharing the burden of migration as well. ASAF from PABSEC illustrated that as well.

Dear colleagues,

for one aspect, i would like to come back to Sweden's answer to the last Resolution. They point out that when it comes to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on integration, it is becoming more and more evident that the pandemic will have a disproportionate negative effect on the integration of migrants and refugees.

This especially concerns labour market outcomes, but also an increased risk of being exposed to COVID-19, to segregation and to increased vulnerability. One of many difficulties is the accessibility to digital devices.

A German study which was published in April 2021 came to the same conclusion: One year of COVID-19 has affected almost every aspect of society, economy and politics, migrants, refugees and their integration have stayed in the public debate below the radar. We see a severe impact of the pandemic on every aspect of migration related policies: health, housing, education and labour market as well as work.

I believe that applies in a similar way to the whole of the Baltic Sea Region.

In conclusion, dear colleagues, there are many reasons to continue sharing our best practice and **strive** for better inclusion and social cohesion as well as for sharing the task of migration.

Thank You.