



20 April 2022

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

Strategy and Work Programme 2021 – 2022

Adopted by the Standing Committee of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) at its meeting on 15 November 2021 in Hamburg

1. BSPC Mission

The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) was established in 1991 as a forum for political dialogue between parliamentarians from all national parliaments, regional parliaments and parliamentary organisations in the Baltic Sea Region. The BSPC also interacts with other parliamentary and governmental organisations in the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension area.

The mission of the BSPC is to raise awareness and opinion on issues of current political interest and relevance for the Baltic Sea Region. It promotes and drives various initiatives and efforts to support a sustainable environmental, social and economic development of the Baltic Sea Region. The BSPC strives to enhance the visibility of the Baltic Sea Region and its issues in a wider European context.

The BSPC shall initiate and guide political activities in the region; support and strengthen democratic institutions in the participating states; improve dialogue between governments, parliaments and civil society; strengthen the common identity of the Baltic Sea Region by means of close cooperation between national and regional parliaments on the basis of equality; as well as initiate and guide political activities in the Baltic Sea Region, endowing them with additional democratic legitimacy and parliamentary authority.

The BSPC Standing Committee may consider any matter of specific interest and relevance for the Baltic Sea Region and may also give its opinion on such issues.

The political recommendations of the annual Parliamentary Conferences are expressed in a Conference Resolution adopted by consensus by the Conference. The adopted Resolution shall be submitted to the governments of the Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS and the EU, and disseminated to other relevant national, regional and local stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region and its neighbourhood.

2. BSPC Priorities in 2021 – 2022

The Swedish BSPC Presidency will focus on sustainable democracy and how to face common challenges, of which COVID-19 is one example. The spread of COVID-19 and the fight against the pandemic is one of many reasons to safeguard the strong cross-border cooperation that constitutes the BSPC as well as the democratic values on which it is based.

Furthermore, COVID-19 constitutes an area where BSPC members can exchange best practices and follow up different strategies that were put to use in order to combat the pandemic, with the aim of learning from each other.

In the light of the Swedish Parliament's commemoration and celebration of 100 years of democracy, the Swedish Presidency of the BSPC will highlight the importance of democracy. Democratic institutions, strong cooperation as well as environmental and social sustainability are cornerstones of the work of the BSPC; preserving these are clear priorities of the Swedish Presidency.

Including that, the priority issues for the BSPC Standing Committee in 2021 – 2022 are:

- Peaceful and reliable neighbourliness and intense cooperation built on inclusive participation and trust in the democratic system, with a specific focus on youth and the role of civil society
- Democracy in a changing media landscape, human rights, protection of free media and freedom of speech
- Adaptation to new demography and challenges to the welfare model: urbanisation, an ageing population and labour shortages and the connection to trust in public institutions, social and regional equality and young people's opportunities
- Climate change mitigation, adaptation and the preservation of biodiversity in connection with the results of the Stockholm +50 Conference

3. Objectives of the BSPC in 2021 - 2022

The objectives of the BSPC in 2021 – 2022 are:

- To disseminate the 29th BSPC Resolution to Parliaments and Governments in the Baltic Sea region, as well as to the CBSS and the EU, and to take initiatives and action – such as interpellations, parliamentary debate and questions to the governments - to follow up the implementation of its political recommendations;
- to disseminate the results and recommendations of the BSPC Working Groups, Rapporteurs and Observers, for instance by advocating them in the home parliaments of the BSPC delegates and through interaction with external institutions and organisations;
- to support the policies of the CBSS and to further the cooperation between the CBSS and the BSPC, for instance by sustaining contacts and cooperation between secretariats, by synchronizing priorities as far as possible, and by maintaining an interaction between working bodies of the BSPC and the CBSS, such as the BSPC Working Groups as well as the BSPC Rapporteurs and the CBSS Expert Groups and Task Forces;

- to promote - in accordance with the calls for action by the BSPC - not only to update the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan but also to visibly accelerate and intensify its implementation, including continuing and enhancing national and international efforts to reduce emissions of nutrients to the Baltic Sea; for instance by active participation in various HELCOM meeting formats;
- to support the further development of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region that is entirely in line with the Northern Dimension, including regular reporting from the European Commission;
- to further develop contacts with the Northern Dimension;
- to actively participate in and contribute to the further progress of the Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF);
- to intensify contacts with other interparliamentary organisations.

4. Resources 2021 - 2022

The BSPC has several working bodies, which serve as resources for driving and implementing BSPC priorities and objectives.

The **Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference** is the annual general assembly in the Baltic Sea Region for broad political debate on Baltic Sea issues. The Conference resolutions are political tools which enable the BSPC to take and support political initiatives, and to approach the governments and regional organisations on issues of common interest.

The **host country** of the 31st BSPC, **Sweden**, is responsible for the operational planning and execution of the 31st Conference in Stockholm on 12 – 14 June 2022.

The **BSPC Standing Committee** (SC) is the highest decision-making body of the BSPC between the annual Conferences. The Standing Committee considers and decides on strategic issues concerning the mission, political priorities, working modes, finances and administration of the BSPC. The Standing Committee has the overall responsibility for preparing the annual Conference and for overseeing the structures and functions of the BSPC. The Standing Committee consists of parliamentarians from all national parliaments, regional parliaments and parliamentary organisations throughout the Baltic Sea Region. The Standing Committee convenes at least four times per year (beginning of the year, spring/summer, in connection with the Conference, and in autumn). The first SC meeting of the year should include a report from the CBSS and may also include progress reports on the EU Northern Dimension, the EU Baltic Sea Strategy and the EU Integrated Maritime Policy. The SC also serves as Drafting Committee during the annual Conference.

The **BSPC Secretary Level meeting** (SL) consists of officials from the BSPC member parliaments. It supports the Secretary General in preparing the work of the Standing Committee, overseeing the preparation of the annual Conferences.

The **BSPC Secretary General** (SG) manages the overall coordination of BSPC activities, prepares activities in the BSPC bodies, delivers content, administrative and organisational support and provides investigative resources.

The **BSPC Working Group** on Climate Change and Biodiversity (WG CCB) will aim at elaborating political recommendations within this field. The Working Group will present its final report at the 32nd BSPC.

The **BSPC Observers in HELCOM**, Ms Saara-Sofia Sirén (Finland) and Ms Beate Schlupp (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), will follow the deliberations of relevant HELCOM bodies. That includes following and reporting on the developments in the field of Eutrophication.

The **BSPC Rapporteur on Sustainable Tourism**, President of Parliament Ms Birgit Hesse (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), will follow and report on the developments in this field.

The **BSPC Rapporteurs on Integrated Maritime Policy**, Mr Jörgen Pettersson (Åland Islands) and Philipp da Cunha (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), will follow and report as co-rapporteurs on the developments in the field of Integrated Maritime Policy.

The **BSPC Rapporteurs on Migration and Integration**, Mr Hans Wallmark (Sweden) and Ms Carola Veit (Hamburg) will follow and report as co-rapporteurs on the developments in the field of Migration and Integration.

The **BSPC Website** (<http://bspc.net>) is a central conduit for disseminating news and information on the BSPC's organisation, activities and results as well as a dynamic archive of BSPC documents and opinions.