

# Statements of the governments in the Baltic Sea Region to the 30<sup>th</sup> BSPC Resolution.

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Åland



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### **Unofficial translation: The Government of Åland's comments regarding the BSPC Resolution of 2021 and information of measures taken and actions planned**

On 30 August 2021 at the annual Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) during Sweden's presidency the BSPC resolution was adopted. Due to the pandemic this year's conference was held digitally. The purpose of the resolution is that governments around the Baltic Sea region pay attention to different areas described below. December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the Parliament of Åland forwarded the resolution to the Government of Åland for further actions.

The resolution contains 48 priority appeals/points sent to the governments in the Baltic Sea region. The points are assigned in the following three headings:

1. How will different collaborations within the region be used in the coming decade for a restart after the pandemic?
2. How to develop digitalization to combat disinformation and "fake news" while safeguarding free media and freedom of expression?
3. How can we protect the Baltic Sea and our environment for future generations, stop climate change and the loss of biodiversity?

The Government of Åland also notice that the appeals/points are being tangent to each other. In this letter the Government of Åland describes measures taken and actions planned for these objectives.

#### Point 1

Åland and the Government of Åland are actively participating in the Central Baltic Programmes. The Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 and the Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027 are cross-border cooperation programmes (INTERREG) funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and one of the EU's cohesion policy objectives. To receive funding from the programmes, projects must have a clear cross-border nature and involve partners from at least two programme countries (Estonia, Finland including Åland, Latvia and/or Sweden).



#### Point 3

Within the Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027, sustainable development is of central interest. All program activities must be socially, ecologically, culturally, and economically sustainable. The impact on the environment, climate and human well-being should be positive. Program Objective 4 ("Improving the coastal and marine environment") in the Central Baltic programme 2021-2027, finance projects that lead to direct positive effects on the Baltic Sea. The first projects will be approved for funding in 2022.

#### Point 22

The Central Baltic Programme for 2021-2027 is designed to contribute to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and supports all three objectives of the strategy: "Save the Sea", "Connecting the Region" and "Increasing Prosperity". The Central Baltic programme 2021-2027 contributes directly to seven out of nine EUSBSR milestones.

#### Point 35

This point is the new "Baltic Sea Action Plan" and it includes the Government of Åland in Finland's part of the plan. The plan is considered by the "Management Plan for all waters in Åland" and the related measures were established on 22 December 2021.

#### Point 36

Focus regarding inadvertent influx of nutrients into the Baltic Sea, lies in the implementation of the existing continuous control and action program, the objective of which is good ecological status under the WFD.

#### Point 38 - 39

The Government of Åland participates in cross-border cooperation between Finland (Ministry of the Environment) and Sweden (Swedish Agency Marine and Water Management) through knowledge exchange and discussion on strategies to reduce eutrophication and increase biodiversity through the Marine Strategy Directive (2008/56/EU) and the Water Directive (2000/60/EU). The Government of Åland also participates in various projects, both local and cross-border, such as the research-oriented project "ÅlandSeaMap", which aims to inventory Åland's underwater environments to support ecosystem-based management of Åland's marine areas. A cross-border project, that focuses on more cross-border cooperation and research linked to strengthening and preserving the Baltic Sea's food webs and biodiversity, is the IP LIFE project "Biodiversea". There are also collaborations through "Three Archipelagos", a knowledge exchange between Sweden-Åland-Finland.

#### Point 39

In the Central Baltic programme 2014-2020, several Åland partners contributed to projects aimed at improving the environment in and around the Baltic Sea. Åland's partners participated for example in the following projects:



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- The project "Waterchain" (2015-2018) worked with the prevention of water pollution by using spatial planning and source-specific cost-effective technical solutions for water purification. The cross-border cooperation that were established within the framework of the project enabled Åland, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, and Swedish partners in the water treatment areas to implement the successful development and implementation of several practical measures to prevent and reduce the influx of nutrients and hazardous substances into the Baltic Sea. More about "Waterchain": <http://database.centralbaltic.eu/project/8>
  - The project "PortMate" (2016-2019) worked to improve services in 19 small ports in Finland, Sweden and Åland (Rauma, Gävle, Söderhamn, Kökar, Sottunga and other small ports nearby). A significant part of the project budget and resources were devoted to upgrading the ports – service houses, waste management solutions, drinking water systems, lighting, renewable energy through solar panels and more. More about "PortMate": <http://database.centralbaltic.eu/project/66>
  - The project "Seabased" (2018-2021) investigated and evaluated measures that reduce the internal load of nutrients from the seabed. The project also strengthened cooperation and shared knowledge between authorities, policy makers and third sector in the region. The aim of the project was to reduce nutrients from the Baltic Sea and to improve water quality, especially in coastal areas, by testing and developing offshore activities. More about "Seabased": <http://database.centralbaltic.eu/project/79>
  - The "Coast4us" project (2018-2020) aimed to create sustainable plans for marine and coastal zones and their surrounding communities. The project clarified the importance of coexistence between exploitative activities and the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the sea. The project used various tools and data bases that help to facilitate the planning of marine and coastal zones in the Baltic Sea. Local collaboration was an important part of the project. Pilot areas in Åland were Mariehamn, Sund municipality and Kökar municipality. More about Coast4us: <http://database.centralbaltic.eu/project/95>

The Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027 has three program objectives that focus on improving the environment and the use of resources. In 2022, the first projects will be approved for funding under these program objectives.

#### Point 40

Through the water action program that will be implemented during the period 2022-2027, several different cooperation groups need to be formed with different actors from authorities, municipalities, business activities and interest groups. In addition, the Government of Åland will conduct various information initiatives and workshops on an annual basis linked to the ecological status and marine environments of coastal waters, as well as project information.



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Point 41

It is important that the Government of Åland actively participates in cooperation with various activities that support new technologies and innovations, aimed at reducing the load on the Baltic Sea. This is one of the measures included in the new action program for groundwater, lakes and coastal waters.

Point 42 - 43

The Government of Åland's project for large-scale offshore wind power will enable an energy production potential that has a major impact on the entire Baltic Sea region. According to the draft, fully expanded energy areas would have about 500 wind turbines with an output of up to 6 GW and an annual energy production potential of 30 TWh. Energy production will be an export product for Åland, which means that the energy produced would primarily be delivered to the Finnish and Swedish grid, but possibly also to the Estonian grid.

In the first phase of the project, the electricity produced from the wind turbines will be distributed as electrical energy to the Nordic electricity grid, but the project is closely monitoring the development of hydrogen production to possibly include power-2-x at a later stage.

Since the shipping industry has always been important to Åland, the project also comes with the possibilities of providing fossil-free fuel alternatives to the shipping industry in the future. Possible fuel alternatives for shipping are hydrogen or by further processing also ammonia and methanol.

Point 45

In 2017, the Government of Åland introduced a plastics strategy that addressed various areas of action and efforts to reduce the use of plastics and to support cleaning campaigns against plastic litter for aquatic environments. The City of Mariehamn and the Government of Åland collaborated on the multifunctional wetland at Nabben (urban environment), which will take care of microplastics, reduce eutrophication, and strengthen the predatory fish (pike). Some parts of the project were carried out through the Central Baltic project Coast4us and through the operational program for the fishing industry.

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DENMARK



**UDENRIGSMINISTERIET**

## **Comments from the Danish government concerning the conference resolution adopted by the 30<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference**

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The Danish government welcomes the resolution adopted by the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) and its recommendations.

Based on contributions from the relevant authorities, the Danish government has the following comments to the operative parts of the resolution:

### **Cooperation in the Region**

During the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), Denmark actively contributed to the formulation of the new vision document for the region's development until 2030, the *Vilnius II Declaration*, adopted by CBSS Foreign Ministers on 1 June 2021. The document reflects fundamental values and central policy objectives, notably as regards the green and digital transitions.

Denmark also engaged proactively in the development of the *CBSS Action Plan* for the years 2021-2025, a key tool for ensuring effective implementation and follow-up of the reforms agreed in 2020 during the Danish Presidency. Denmark regards the Action Plan as an important management instrument to sharpen the focus of the practical cooperation and streamline the Council's activities.

On 1 July 2021, Lithuania handed over the Presidency of the Council to Norway. During the Norwegian Presidency, Denmark has focused on ensuring that the CBSS Action Plan is implemented in practice and that the sharper focus of practical cooperation becomes a reality. Denmark has also supported further development of the Council's work with young people.

Following the unprovoked and illegal military attack and aggression committed by Russia against sovereign and democratic Ukraine, the Foreign Ministers of ten CBSS Member States plus the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on 3 March 2022 adopted a declaration suspending Russia's participation in the CBSS. Due to Belarus' involvement in Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the declaration also suspends the CBSS Observer State Belarus from participating in the activities of the organization. The CBSS Committee of Senior Officials will ensure the proper adjustment of the functioning of the CBSS in these changed circumstances.

Denmark also supports the suspension of Russia's and Belarus' participation in other regional cooperation organizations and networks in the Baltic Sea Region, such as the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC), Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), and Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB).

### ***Civil society***

Denmark has adopted a civil society strategy for 2022 -2025 regarding the social sector. The strategy focuses on a stronger collaboration between the public sector and civil society by establishing local and national partnerships as well as strengthening the existing infrastructure that helps and supports social civil society associations. Furthermore, Denmark supports the collection of data and knowledge about civil society in Denmark to evaluate the development and involvement of the population in civil society activities.

### ***Children at Risk***

Children's rights and child protection is the focus of the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk. Denmark and the majority of the Member States have in 2021 prioritized participating in a project that aims to map good practice and core elements in the national social protection systems that secure children's rights and the protection of children. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the mapping has an additional focus on how to ensure that the child protection systems are adequately structured and equipped to function in periods of crisis. The knowledge that this project will generate will form the basis of a more systemized knowledge sharing across Member States for the purpose of shared learning. The Norwegian Presidency is expected to launch the report at an event in June 2022.

### ***Initiatives against organized crime***

With the new multi-annual financial framework for the police and prosecution service 2021-2023 (the agreement) the government and a broad majority of the Danish Parliament (Folketing) decided to establish the Special Crime Unit (SCU). SCU was established on 1 January 2022 and aims to strengthen efforts against the most complex cases of economic and organized crime. Within the SCU a public-private operational cooperation on combatting money laundering and terrorist financing is established. Furthermore the agreement ensures an introduction of a fast-track scheme on suspicious transactions reports from banks etc. This obliges banks etc. to flag and freeze (until the following bank day) transactions with the potential to seize assets.

## **Democracy in a Changing Media Landscape: Digitalisation, Combating Disinformation, Misinformation and "Fake News" as well as Protecting Free Media and Freedom of Speech**

Danish media play a crucial role in upholding democracy. But the digital development is changing the conditions for democratic debate and our media use. A timely media policy needs to address more than just the distribution of public funding. In a global and digitalised media reality, the government will fight to ensure a vibrant future for our democracy and public debate.

Tech giants have taken over much of our democratic infrastructure, and have become intermediaries in our relations with each other without sufficient democratic control and transparency. The government will take the lead both internationally and nationally to ensure tech giants act in a responsible manner commensurate with their size and influence. We must dare to take the lead, even when there are no easy solutions.

The government will initiate new international alliances for greater democratic accountability for tech giants, aiming at setting the strongest possible transparency requirements on how their algorithms affect democracy, social cohesion and wellbeing.

The government will establish a new Centre for Tech and Democracy under the Ministry of Culture to strengthen the knowledge capacity on technology and better enable us to deal with the impact of tech giants and their business models on our democracy. With a “cultural contribution” from streaming services, the government will strengthen the production of content based on Danish culture, values and history. In this way, streaming services will also contribute to the economic ecosystem of the Danish media and film industry.

### **Safeguarding the Baltic Sea and our Environment for Future Generations, halting Climate Change and the Loss of Biodiversity**

The update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan is an important tool to achieve good environmental status of the Baltic Sea and Denmark is committed to implementing the actions. In the development of the updated plan, Denmark submitted concrete action proposals with the aim to ensure an ambitious focus on marine litter, eutrophication and biodiversity. At a national level, the Danish Government has already proposed the designation of new protected areas and we expect to go from around 19 percent to approximately 30 percent coverage of our protected areas at sea.

Denmark remains committed to reducing the input of nutrients to the Baltic Sea, by addressing all relevant sources of nutrient input. Denmark recently sent the 3rd generation River Basin Management Plans in public hearing. These set an ambitious target for nutrient input reduction. The revised Baltic Sea Action Plan, adopted in October 2021, contains measures targeting agricultural run-off, point sources incl. wastewater treatment plants, atmospheric emissions and nutrient recycling.

Denmark supports the development of an international legally binding instrument on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). The agreement could provide a means of creating a global, integrated network of marine protected areas (MPAs) – areas set aside for long-term conservation – which would support ecological connectivity and climate change resilience, and help preserve species and ecosystems. The SDGs have a number of targets related to the work of the regional sea conventions OSPAR, HELCOM and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) covering areas such as marine litter, ecosystem management, ocean acidification, marine protected areas and the conservation of the ocean. Denmark is actively engaged in the work of these conventions and the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy which work

will contribute to the delivery of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs.

Denmark is strongly engaged as co-facilitator, along with Grenada, of the negotiations on the Political Declaration from the UN Ocean Conference. The Conference, due to take place on 27 June to 1 July 2022 in Lisbon, Portugal, will be an important platform for mobilizing global action and cross-border cooperation on the implementation of SDG14 (Life below water).

A number of stone reefs are being restored among other as part of the initiatives funded by the Agreement on 888 million DKK for Nature and Biodiversity with the aim of improving the local marine environment. Planning of further projects is ongoing. Furthermore, financial contribution has been given to establishment of a new research centre focusing on marine nature restoration.

Reaching good ecological status in the coastal waters is one of the objectives of the water planning in Denmark and the EU. Denmark is using a highly inclusive approach to engage the public at large in the drafting of the River Basin Management Plans in order to ensure important local entitlement and access new knowledge and information. This includes the involvement of small groups consisting of particularly interested parties that closely follow projects central to the content and drafting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> River Basin Management Plans. Moreover, two main platforms were established to follow all the work throughout the development, i.e. Blue Progress Forum and Technical Reference Group. Under the Agriculture Agreement on Climate 16 million DKK has been assigned to the creation of Coastal Water Councils with the participation of several municipalities and locally interested parties, including agricultural organizations, that shall look into possible alternative ways to deliver on the obligations under the Water Framework Directive.

Denmark has implemented HELCOM's Maximum Allowable Inputs (MAI) on nutrients in our national marine strategy as environmental targets on eutrophication. Denmark has also adopted a prohibition against fertilizing in areas (habitat types) protected by the Nature Protection Act § 3. Furthermore, Denmark has implemented the decision of IMO to establish the Baltic Sea area as an emission control area (NECA), resulting in increased demands for NOx emission reductions from shipping.

Denmark is participating actively in the IMO negotiations concerning how to handle discharges from exhaust gas cleaning systems with a focus on protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems. Furthermore, Denmark welcomes future regional cooperation on reducing ship emissions in order to achieve the goals of the newly updated Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Denmark welcomes cooperation and sharing of information related to coastal and flood protection, especially where challenges run across borders. The Floods Directive has been implemented in the Danish Floods Act, and Denmark is already actively participating in cooperation in the EU related to the Floods Directive, especially in the Working Group Floods (WG-F) and a specific Nordic-Baltic network within the WG-F group. For the 14 areas with potentially significant flood risk in Denmark, the 27

affected municipalities have just finished preparing their risk management plans, for which Denmark has made two summaries, which have been shared with the EU Commission along with links to the municipalities' risk management plans. In addition, Denmark is in the process of preparing a national climate adaptation plan. In collaboration with Sweden and Germany, among others, Denmark also participates in arranging a conference on the occasion of 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1872 storm surge.

Denmark contributes to regionally coordinated actions on marine litter. It takes part in the HELCOM Expert Group on marine litter and has taken the lead country role for four of the actions in the action plan for marine litter. Denmark is also actively supporting a new and ambitious legally binding global agreement on plastic pollution under the auspice of UNEA.

The Ministry of Environment of Denmark has since 2019 been in charge of the Nordic Council of Ministers' project on Sustainable Cruise Tourism. The purpose of the project has been to contribute to the implementation of the Nordic Ministers' vision of turning the Greater Baltic Sea Area into the most sustainable cruise destination in the world by reducing air pollution from cruise ships in port. In this context, a workshop was held on 28 October 2021 in Copenhagen, focusing on e.g. identifying necessary actions required to meet the 2030 objectives. The Ministry of Environment of Denmark also presented highlights from the Nordic project on Sustainable Cruise Tourism at the Nordic Pavilion at COP26.

In 2021 The Ministry of Environment of Denmark initiated "The Zero Emissions Port Stay project", where focus is on cruise-ships and terminals and on how port stays can use technological solutions to reduce emissions from ships. In addition, the project will expand its scope and analyse the different challenges that various shipping sectors are facing when it comes to a transition towards a zero-emissions port stay. The project will be finalized in 2022.

The Ministry of Environment of Denmark supports the project to raise awareness of the applicable waste regulations by Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG) and the Finnish Maritime Cluster. The project has compiled an information package (Baltic Sea Waste Info) to be distributed to cargo ships to inform ships of the possibilities to hand in sewage, grey water and food waste to port reception facilities and inform of the No-Special-Fee system.

Regarding introduction of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens in ballast water, Denmark contributes to regionally coordinated actions on ballast water and participates in the expert group on ballast water including the pilot study work on an "early warning system" for the detection of aquatic organisms and pathogens in the Baltic Sea.

Denmark contributes to regionally coordinated actions on submerged munitions and explosives in the HELCOM Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Submerged Objects (EG SUBMERGED). Furthermore, Denmark will take part in the regional work on developing best environmental practice for comprehensive risk assessment

of munitions, wrecks and hazardous submerged objects and implement the best available techniques for environmentally sound and safe management in HELCOM (S34) as part of implementation of the newly updated Baltic Sea Action Plan.

ESTONIA

## **RESPONSE OF ESTONIA REGARDING THE RESOLUTION OF THE 30th BALTIC SEA PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE**

Based on the inputs from the Ministries of Culture, Environment, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Justice and Social Affairs.

### **General issues of the Baltic Sea Region cooperation**

Estonia contributes to efforts to ensure that the Baltic Sea Region is a region of peaceful and close neighbourliness and intense cooperation.

There are several essential **guiding documents** adopted by the BSR cooperation formats during the last years, including the Vilnius II Declaration "A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2030" and the subsequent CBSS Action Plan (2021), as well as renewed EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Action Plan and EU Council conclusions on the implementation of EU Macro-regional strategies" (2020). HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in 2021 adopted a document "Updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan". Estonia participated in preparing all mentioned important documents. The cooperation formats defined their priorities and aims for the coming years, and now the goal is to implement them. It is vital that different cooperation formats in the Baltic Sea Region cooperate, have an efficient division of labour and avoid duplication in their activities. The Covid-19 crisis remains a challenge also for the BSR regional cooperation.

Russian foreign policy activities from the end of 2021 led to increased tensions in Europe, including BSR. Its aggression against Ukraine from February 2022 is a clear violation of the principle of peaceful and close neighbourliness stated in the Conference Resolution. Countries of the Baltic Sea Regional cooperation and the European Union decided that there is no possibility of continuing cooperation as envisaged with the Russian Federation within several particular cooperation formats. They decided to suspend Russia from the proceedings, work and projects until cooperation under the fundamental principles of international law becomes possible again.

The Estonian Government is committed to democratic values, the rule of law, human rights, free media, a strong civil society and robust NGOs. These fundamental values and principles are the basis for Baltic Sea regional cooperation. Many recent Russian internal decisions and actions go against these statements of the Conference Resolution.

Because of the involvement in Russian aggression against Ukraine, the participation of Belarus in cooperation formats was suspended. The situation with human rights, peace and democracy in Belarus is even worse than in August 2021, when the Resolution was adopted. Estonia applied political and diplomatic instruments at its disposal towards Belarus together with other democratic states.

Estonia used its position as a member of the UN Security Council to raise the issues of democracy and human rights in Belarus. On 8 October 2021, Estonia called an informal high-level virtual meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss Belarus's deteriorating human rights situation. In her statement, Foreign Minister Liimets called on Belarus to stop the violence and for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners. Previously on 22 January 2021, on the initiative of Estonia, the UN Security Council held an informal high-level virtual meeting to discuss media freedom in Belarus. The meeting was built on a high-level Arria-formula UN SC meeting organised by Estonia on 4 September 2020, which focused on human rights in Belarus.

On 22 November 2021, Estonian Foreign Minister Eva-Maria Liimets attended participated in the conference 'Towards a Prosperous and Safe Future in Belarus' in Vienna, convened to look into how the international community can support democratic processes in Belarus, encourage the civil society there and send them a message of support in their challenging circumstances.

The International Accountability Platform for Belarus was founded in March 2021 to collect and preserve evidence of human rights violations in Belarus. Estonia has supported the launch of this important initiative as a contributor.

Estonian political leaders also had meetings with prominent representatives of the Belarus opposition, for example, in January and April 2022 with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

The Baltic Sea States Summits of the Heads of Government have played a significant role in developing the BSR cooperation. CBSS Terms of reference state that "The CBSS takes overall political guidance from the Baltic Sea States Summits, which gather the Heads of Government and the President of the European Commission." The CBSS Presidency is responsible for the substantive preparation of the Summit meetings. The Summits take place when the Members consider such political discussions opportune. There has been no discussion about the Summit during the current CBSS Presidency.

Estonia supports collaboration between the regional cooperation formats with different levels of participation (national, regional and municipal) in the BSR. It is crucial to have a good division of labour and minimise duplication.

Estonia has been and continues to be a supporter of people-to-people contacts in the Baltic Sea Region. These contacts have been seriously reduced in physical presence formats because of the Covid-19. Estonian participants are eager to resume such meetings, as there are limits to the efficiency of virtual meetings. Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine has led to the suspension of meetings in Russia and Belarus.

Estonia has supported different BSR initiatives in **Youth** cooperation, including the international activities of the Estonian Youth Council and other NGOs. There are several international Youth cooperation formats, and the National Youth Councils and other participants have to decide their priorities and which issues they wish to keep in focus in which format. It is a significant challenge, especially for Youth organisations in smaller states with limited human and financial resources.

From the youth affairs perspective, one of the Youth Field Development Plan's 2021-2035 strategic objectives is participation, with concrete measures to ensure that young people can express their opinion on all levels of governance and to empower young people to be active citizens. The state supports youth participation with local and regional youth councils- 76 out of the 79 local municipalities have created opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making processes. Additionally, there is a support scheme for youth organisations, and young people can also participate in pupils and student councils.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, and the Ministry of Culture have established Youth Councils in their respective ministries. The members of the Youth Councils are various youth organisations, all of whom can propose agenda points for the Council meetings – thus being able to express their views on diverse topics.

The process of programming the new EU MFF period instruments is nearing its conclusion. Better alignment of Macro-regional activities (EUSBSR) with different EU funds and instruments is an essential and integral part of that process. Support for the aims of the EUSBSR presented in its renewed Action Plan has been an important input in Estonian programming activities.

Estonia supports the project activities in the different cooperation formats of the region, besides CBSS, for example, in the EUSBSR. CBSS discusses the future of the PSF now. There are possibilities to involve private partners in it, and the CBSS PSF 2020-22 Manual states that Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) can be part of the project in exceptional cases. In this case, they cannot act as Lead Partner. Estonia considers such a solution optimal.

### **Restart after the Pandemics. Social, Health and Education issues**

In multiple crises (political, health, economic), participants of the BSR cooperation formats aim to find adjusted and innovative ways to cooperate and respond to the challenges in their countries and the region, including green and digital transitions, as well as strengthening the resilience of our economies and societies. The restart is an opportunity to regain the lost impulse in many cooperation activities, primarily because of the absence of direct human interaction.

Now is the time to initiate new projects, including follow-ups to previous projects and other cooperation activities, to use opportunities of the CBSS PSF and new period EU MFF funds and instruments. The covid-19 challenge is not over, and it is vital to make our societies more capable of resisting the new phases of the pandemics.

Estonia aims for **better inclusion, prosperity, public health and social cohesion**. The Ministry of Social Affairs is currently preparing the Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030, which sets long-term strategic goals in the areas of poverty reduction, employment and working life, social protection and welfare, gender equality, equal treatment, and wellbeing of children and families. The Plan takes into account the strategic goals set in the country's long-term development strategy Estonia 2035, the UN sustainable development goals, European Union directions and international commitments. Social partners, NGOs, other ministries and experts are included in the preparations of this comprehensive strategic document through the Welfare Development Plan Committee.

Regional support for creating jobs is offered to regions in Estonia where the unemployment is the highest, including Ida-Viru County, as of the beginning of 2019. The support scheme is continued for 2021-2023 from REACT-EU financed programme. In 2021, 76 workers were hired with the support, all in Ida-Virumaa.

Strong cooperation has been established between the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Social Affairs under the Youth Guarantee initiative, including various preventive and targeted support services to young people in NEET-situation (incl. youth work and labour services, career guidance services provided by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, etc. Outcomes of the Youth Guarantee initiative are observed by the initiative's working group and compared with other countries' good practices and the European Commission recommendations. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Research and Education have prepared an action plan to strengthen the Youth Guarantee to support young people in NEET-risk or -situations. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Research and Education will organise an integrated system on the local level to develop a sustainable and effective system to support young people in NEET-situation. Considering the impact the Covid-19 crisis has had on young people's access to

employment opportunities and their overall wellbeing, we have currently planned to implement ESF funds as targeted in-country measures to support NEET-youth, aiming to reach a broad range of target groups. Depending on young people's motivation, interests and needs, we encourage and support young people, including young people in NEET-situation, to engage in transnational mobility opportunities offered by EU youth programmes, such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.

Social sustainability (between generations) and social cohesion (between social groups) are priorities for the Global Estonia Programme under the Ministry of the Interior. A particular working group – focussing on youth and young adults – is an excellent example of involving viewpoints from young people to understand their relations and perspectives to interact with local community members (from various age groups and diverse profiles).

Labour market services and career counselling are available for older persons to support their employment. Also, the service of adapting to the working environment or work equipment is provided. In addition to the unemployed, labour market training is available to persons aged 50+. Active labour market participation of persons receiving a pension is also supported. They can work and receive a pension at the same time. From 2021 onwards, people can choose the most suitable time for retirement, suspend their pension if they wish, or take half the pension. The concept of a flexible pension is based on actuarial neutrality: the size of the entire pension asset is the same regardless of the time of retirement, the suspension or partial withdrawal of the pension.

A range of measures have been and are continued to be taken to tackle the gender pay gap from different angles. These include research and project-based development and awareness-raising activities. Most of these activities are a part of a longer-term process, laying a foundation for future strategies and activities to tackle the gender pay gap and its reasons. Estonia has carried out a three-year research project to uncover the reasons behind the unexplained part of the gender pay gap and provide proposals for further action. As a part of the project, a digital tool is being prepared to support employers in analysing and tackling the organisational gender pay gap.

In cooperation with the Estonian Human Rights Centre, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched 2016 the Diverse Workplace Label. This label is a quality label that indicates that the organisation is an attractive employer looking for talent to commence work, irrespective of their gender or background. Applying for and receiving the label also sends a value-based message to clients and cooperation partners. Affiliated organisations strive to promote diversity in a targeted and carefully considered way. Thus, receiving the label does not only mean that diversity is valued in words but that organisations develop and implement diversity promotion plans

Activities carried out by the Estonian Human Rights Centre to implement the label model include providing training/consultation for organisations seeking the label; developing diversity plans in partnership with label applicants; organising networking activities and the exchange of good practices; marketing and communication activities; operating an electronic information platform. As of March 2022, 148 organisations have received the label.

In anticipation of current challenges, it is important to acknowledge the broader role of **education** and understand education's personal, cultural, and societal values. Rapidly changing societies and evolving labour markets require the upgrading of existing skills. The Education Strategy 2021–2035, which sets out key educational goals for the next 15 years, is the follow-up to the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020. The strategy is based on studies and analyses, vision documents prepared by expert groups, the Estonia 2035 Strategy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

It is also the results of the work of the education strategy's working groups, feedback and input gathered through public consultations and engagement events, and the results of the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 and its mid-term evaluation.

As a culmination of the previous work, the main objective of the Education Strategy 2021-2035 is to equip the population with knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare people to fulfil their potential in personal, occupational and social life and contribute to promoting the quality of life in Estonia as well as global sustainable development. Essential to achieving the main objective, three strategic goals have been set: 1) Learning opportunities are diverse and accessible, and the education system enables smooth transitions between levels and types of education; 2) Estonia has competent and motivated teachers and heads of schools, a diverse learning environment and a learner-centred approach to learning and teaching; 3) Learning options are responsive to the development needs of society and the labour market. The organisational culture of educational institutions has to be caring, collaborative and democratic, has to support the development of key competencies (incl. media literacy, social and civic competencies) and the wellbeing of all, including better physical and mental health, diversity of views and constructive Resolution of disagreements and crises.

Since the start of the large Russian invasion in February 2022, Estonia has housed tens of thousands of Ukrainian **refugees** and belongs to the group of EU Members States where the number of Ukrainian refugees is more than one per cent of the population. Governmental institutions, local governments, NGOs and other actors have made every effort to support the war refugees, especially considering that a significant majority are women and children.

The beneficiaries of international protection can stay at the Estonian asylum centre until they find appropriate housing. Assistance is provided to the beneficiaries of international protection in finding suitable housing. In addition, the state budget covers one-time expenses related to entering a rental contract of a dwelling granted for use to a beneficiary of international protection.

The societies of the Baltic Sea region are intertwined on many levels. The Baltic Sea States share various links in public and business spheres, as well as personal contacts among their citizens. A considerable proportion of Estonian citizens have based their work and family life in different countries in the region.

To further facilitate the everyday living arrangements of such cross-border communities, Estonia prioritises identifying options for developing medical tourism in the region. The aim is to enable people to receive health treatment throughout the Baltic Sea region, an integral part of which would be trusted data-sharing solutions (such as the e-prescription service currently operational between several EU member states).

Concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU Digital COVID Certificate (EDCC) constitutes a solution for the mutual recognition and validation of approved vaccination, recovery and testing certificates by our countries. New restrictions on the free movement in the region may be required with the emergence of a new wave of COVID-19 or a new variant. It is essential that the features of the EDCC are used to mitigate the possible adverse effects of such restrictions on cross-border communities.

### **Safeguarding the Baltic Sea and our Environment, halting Climate Change and the Loss of Biodiversity**

Global, regional action and cross-border cooperation are needed to mitigate the effects of climate change, preserve and protect biodiversity and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We support and commit to reducing emissions and increasing climate resilience in crucial economic sectors, progressing with the green and digital transition.

Environmental and climate issues are cross-cutting themes for all Baltic Sea Regional cooperation formats, not only such specialised ones as HELCOM.

Estonia will continue promoting and implementing measures to support more resilient **marine ecosystems**. Currently, we are drafting a new Estonian Marine Strategy. Public hearings regarding this process are ongoing. We engage all parts of society to introduce them to the current and new measures and what is planned to be taken to regain a good ecological status of our sea area. During spring 2022, public stakeholders will have an opportunity to propose additional measures if something relevant is missing.

Along with other partners, Estonia adopted the new ambitious update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021. Being a party to the HELCOM Convention, Estonia is determined to take on all the agreed 199 actions. We increase the efforts to complete the already agreed actions to improve the marine environment of the Baltic Sea along with the new ones in the Baltic Sea Action Plan. We hope to benefit from and contribute to, for example, the development of tools for assessing the effectiveness of conservation measures, safety requirements for recycled nutrients or improved guidance on monitoring of the Baltic Sea. We also see a great value in the best available techniques and best practices to be jointly developed and used across the region. The Baltic Sea Action Plan also focuses on the sustainable utilisation of the Baltic Sea, and thus, this is one of our priorities for the coming years.

Estonia has continued to develop novel methods and tools to close knowledge gaps and advance marine conservation science within the framework of the RITA programme, Interreg Baltic Sea Programme and JPI Oceans. We have close cooperation between our marine scientists and political decision-makers. The goal is for long-term environmental decisions to be taken on scientific rationale and give us well balanced future estimates.

The most urgent and important measures need to address for Estonia is eutrophication. There is a great potential for nutrient recycling, especially in the agriculture and wastewater sectors. Therefore, we welcome the nutrient recycling strategy, which was together with the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan also adopted at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting last year. Furthermore, we are already taking national steps to reduce the nutrient influx to the Baltic Sea by calculating and revisiting the nutrient inputs from our most significant rivers. Also, we are starting a project on establishing the maximum nutrient input values, which ensure the good environmental status of the sea. We have made it our priority to find a balance between natural nutrient inputs and the increase of the nutrients from human activities.

We continuously work towards supporting innovative and sustainable technologies to be put into practice and would reduce the current high rate of eutrophication. The DAML project gives us a novel methodology to estimate maximum nutrient input loads into the Gulf of Riga. Furthermore, we continue to investigate the overall maximum allowable nutrient inputs in the Estonian sea area,

which would allow, for example, to develop sustainable aquaculture, but would not increase eutrophication.

We have successfully conducted several cooperation projects in the last years to improve the Baltic Sea environment, finalised in 2021. For example, Estonia was part of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region GRASS project, which concentrated on growing macroalgae sustainably in the Baltic Sea. The ADRIENNE project was implemented in Estonia and Russia's cross border cooperation programme. This project analysed how alternative human uses may affect diversity, functioning and services ecosystems provide in the Gulf of Finland. The Estonian Ministry of the Environment was also a partner in the Interreg Baltic Sea Region project OILSPILL, which ended in December 2021. This project was targeted to improve oil spill response capability in the Baltic Sea Region. In 2021, several training courses were arranged for volunteers and crises management authorities. The ongoing Interreg Estonia-Latvia DAML project led by the Estonian Ministry of the Environment aims to develop, test and promote a novel methodology for estimating daily allowable maximum loads to decrease nutrient load to the Gulf of Riga.

Estonia has adopted the updated HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter and is dedicated to conducting the actions agreed upon in that Plan. We have agreed to take the lead or be co-leads of several actions. Furthermore, we are currently updating our national Marine Litter plan to address the most relevant matters. Also, we are fully supporting the new ambitious global agreement at UNEA 5.2.

Estonia monitors the environmental impact caused by increased shipping in the Baltic Sea area. We are engaged in close cooperation with other Baltic Sea countries in HELCOM and through the new Baltic Sea Action Plan implementation to tackle the main concerns regarding intensifying the marine industry. We fully support modern, cleaner technological improvements in shipping. For example, our biggest cruise ship port in Tallinn city has high-end onshore power infrastructure for ships, so their air emission can be reduced to a minimum while staying in the port. Furthermore, the Port of Tallinn has joined EcoPorts, the main environmental initiative of the European port sector. In order to reduce the risks of alien species entering the Baltic Sea through ballast water exchange, Estonia has acceded to the International Ballast Water Management Convention, and it will take effect for Estonia by 2023. Together with the other Baltic States, Estonia continues to jointly develop measures to control and prevent pollution from ships, for example, designating the Baltic Sea as a SO<sub>x</sub> emission control area.

Estonia regularly monitors and assesses its coastal flooding risks due to rising sea levels and climate change. Estonia cooperates and exchanges information in the HELCOM working groups and provides knowledge regarding mitigation measures to its local authorities.

Estonia acknowledges that ammunition dumped at sea is a significant environmental concern in the Baltic Sea. This matter needs a jointly targeted approach, and we are cooperating regarding this issue within the HELCOM Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects.

**Forests** are essential for Estonia. In 2020, 51.3 % of Estonian territory was covered by forest. The share of strictly protected forests in total forest land area was 14.2 %, up from 9.6 % in 2010. In Estonia, reforestation (planting and sowing) increased by 15% in 2021 compared to 2020. Private forest owners also increased the volume of maintenance cuttings by 9%. These activities contribute to the growth of healthy and strong forests, where carbon sequestration increases, among other things.

Estonia promotes **sustainable tourism**. One of the most critical projects to improve connections with the central part of Europe is the Rail Baltic project. The European Union supports its implementation. When in use, it will create a competitive way to travel by ecologically cleaner train instead of flying. Except for Russia, other countries citizens of the Baltic Sea Region countries travel visa free to other countries of the region. Russian aggression against Ukraine led to a limiting of transport connections with it, and also there are changes in visa policies.

Estonia encourages travellers to opt for conscious choices when travelling to Estonia to take care of the surrounding nature by saving resources and consuming local produce. Estonia has several quality labels that guide tourists by picking products and services deemed sustainable. EHE label is an eco-tourism quality label given to services that value local nature and cultural heritage in rural areas. EHE label also expands to tours, culinary workshops and spas. Green Key is an international eco-label that unites hotels and guesthouses in 57 countries worldwide. The label aims to balance quality, comfort and environmentally friendly operation. Around 20 accommodation businesses are currently holding the Green Key label, including large hotels as well as small tourist farms and guest apartments. All Green Key labelled establishments are reviewed once a year.

Pure nature and environmentally friendly management are one of the main messages in Estonian tourism marketing. Estonia participates in the international Green Destination program, which Visit Estonia piloted in 7 destinations in 2020 (Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, Pärnu, Rakvere, Lahemaa, Järva County and Tartu). The program aims to make destinations act more responsibly and provide visitors with a sustainable experience.

### **Democracy, Culture and a Changing Media Landscape**

Estonia considers it important to promote elements of a common regional identity and shared values through **culture, research, education and science**. The current Culture Development Plan 2021-2030 (hereafter Culture 2030) establishes general strategic goals in Estonia's cultural policy field for the following years. Culture 2030 is in line with all strategic goals of the Estonian's long-term strategy Estonia 2035 and with strategy Document "Sustainable Estonia 21", making a significant contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

One of the issues set out in Culture 2030 is the goal to expand the availability of culture regionally. Access to culture should be guaranteed regardless of where people live. The possibility to participate in cultural life increases the general quality of life, makes the living environment more valuable and supports local community activities. Culture 2030 also states the additional contribution to digitally expanding the availability of culture.

Estonia supports and promotes **free media and open debates in society**. Estonia is one of the top-ranking countries in the World in Media Freedom indexes. Estonia has created a free media space where independent publishers can act. State also supports independent Public Broadcasting, which includes, besides Estonian language channels, Russian language Radio 4 and ETV+. It is important to stress that fight against disinformation starts with the functioning of the free and pluralist media. In relation to the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, Estonia recently decided to close transmission of some Russian state-controlled TV and internet platforms broadcasting war propaganda and disinformation.

The new Media Services Act that transposes the EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive in Estonia is valid from 25 February 2022. The new law also sets additional measures to ensure the transparency of media ownership.

In addition to the general state support measures for Public Broadcasting, Estonia has introduced additional support measures. In 2020 the Ministry of Culture opened two application rounds of COVID-19 crisis state aid for publishers to ensure the financial sustainability of daily and weekly newspapers. In 2020 the Government reduced the VAT rate for electronic publications from 20% to 9%, the same rate as paper publications. In 2022, the Government has decided to allocate additional 1.4 million euros to Estonian Public Broadcasting to strengthen the content production of English and Russian-language channels. Additional support is also foreseen for private media companies for strengthening Russian newspaper editorial boards and direct delivery with a budget of 1.3 million euros.

Strategic communication aims to ensure the support of Estonian society and its allies for Estonia's constitutional and democratic order by improving society's resilience to information influence activities. A strategic communication unit is created in the Government Office to detect and counter disinformation and organise strategic planning over the state institutions.

To this end, the strategic communication team of the Government Office ensures situational awareness and analyses what is happening in the information space and society. The Unit coordinates and develops supranational activities that increase the resilience of society. It supports representatives of all sectors (public, private, and voluntary) with sectoral competencies to increase their resilience. It also ensures the functioning of government communication during a crisis. The Unit has played a significant role during the Covid-19 crisis and the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

In 2022 a national Media Literacy White Paper will be created to highlight the field's development needs and strategic goals. Strategic goals set in the draft version of the White Paper include: 1) The importance and comprehensiveness of media education in the democratic development of society is recognised, and various institutions contribute to it nationwide; 2) High-quality media education is provided to both children and adults, which ensures media-competent citizenship as a foundation of democracy; 3) Creating a sustainable system and structure that ensures the stable development of media literacy through appropriate regulation and funding; 4) Effective cooperation between stakeholders, in which a wider circle of participants in media education develops, the division of labour and different forms of cooperation become clearer; 5) International cooperation.

To emphasise the importance of media literacy, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Education and Youth Board and the Government Office have been organising national media literacy weeks together with partners from the public, private, and third sectors. In 2022 Media Literacy White Paper will be created to highlight the field's development needs and strategic goals.

16% of schools have a media literacy (MIL) related elective course in Estonia in their school curriculum. In addition, the main aspects of this course are integrated into the national curriculum for basic and upper secondary schools to help develop media literacy across subjects. Since 2010 there has been a compulsory course in the National Curriculum for upper secondary schools "Media and Influence" (35 ACH) under the language and literature subject area.

To emphasise the importance of media literacy, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Education and Youth Board, the Government Office, and partners from the public, private and third sectors have been organising national media literacy weeks since 2019. The national week is held together with the Global Media and Information Literacy Week. During the week, young people can participate in lectures, seminars, challenges and other events related to media literacy.

Digital ethics revolves around the ethical principles that a creator applies to develop and implement digital technologies responsibly. Currently, the focus of organisations' attention is mainly on data protection and privacy, but there are other key ethical concepts relevant to organisations, for example, autonomy, non-discrimination, transparency, accountability and social justice. The 'Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence' published by the European Commission in 2019 defines that AI systems must be developed, implemented and used in a manner consistent with the ethical principles of respect for human autonomy, prevention of harm, fairness and accountability.

In December 2021, the Estonian Government adopted the Digital Society Development Programme 2030. One of its main objectives is to continue developing a human-centred Digital State according to ethical principles and fully respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. It foresees several significant activities to increase trust in digital services and their transparency, including developing the legislative environment, raising public awareness, measures to manage risks, and enhancing the capacity of developers and providers of digital services to offer human-centred and trustworthy digital services. The programme foresees that Estonia will continue to act within the EU and internationally to develop cross-border and international data exchange in a manner that allows people to have more power over their data (including through international treaties) and to promote the design, development and use of human-centred and trustworthy technology globally.

### **Home and Justice Affairs issues**

Estonia continues the support the fight against organised crime. Efficient management of organised crime, continuous monitoring, and the exchange of information with partner countries is essential for Estonia to prevent future incidents more efficiently, minimize, and prevent larger-scale damage. Estonia supports<sup>1</sup> the synchronisation of the Chairmanship in the Group of Personal Representatives of the Baltic States Heads of Government on countering organised crime with the Presidency in the CBSS.

Estonia considers the fight against any child-related crime one of its priorities. Strengthening cooperation between partners is vital. Collaboration with regional partners can be more effective in identifying and seizing criminal assets.

Victims of trafficking in human beings, including presumable, are provided with needs-based support, including housing, legal counselling, medical support, and other support services. Also, migrant women and their children who have become subject to domestic violence can access a broad spectrum of services provided by Women's Shelters.

Estonia sees relevance in adopting legal regulations and setting up national strategies which prevent and combat violence, as well as in the digital world. The Government approved in 2021

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<sup>1</sup> In the condition of without additional responsibilities for Estonia

the latest strategy for violence prevention (Violence Prevention Agreement for years 2021-2025), which includes a system of measures in the digital sphere. The digital competencies of people will be developed, and awareness of the dangers of online communication will be raised; special attention is paid to young people. Online support will be increased to prevent threats and seek help, using digital solutions and online police officers.

Fostering regional cooperation with the Baltic Sea States in civil protection is very important for Estonia. Prevention, preparedness, effective responding, and protection are essential aspects of maintaining internal security. Estonia aims towards active collaboration with regional partners in the field of civil protection, as well as crisis management. Estonia is interested in study trips and exchanging best practices about civil protection with fellow partners.

FINLAND



7.4.2022

Itämeren 30. parlamentaarikkokonferenssin suositusten seuranta: ministeriökohtaiset vastaukset

### Regarding Cooperation in the Region to

2. strengthen prosperity, safety, security and regional identity for all people in the Baltic Sea Region;

Baltic Sea region co-operation is at a turning point due to Russia's attack on Ukraine. Russia's aggressive actions have led to a response of international sanctions and the suspension of co-operation with Russia on different co-operation platforms. Many of the same measures have also been taken towards Belarus due to its support to Russia in the invasion of Ukraine. In the Baltic Sea region, co-operation with Russia and Belarus has been suspended, among other platforms, in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) has suspended its meetings due to the situation. Therefore, the situation concerning the above mentioned actions 1-2 of the BSPC conference resolution of 30 August 2021 has deteriorated as a result of Russia's actions.

8. pursue continuity in the participation of young people, promote meaningful exchange of views and ideas with, and among, young people based on dialogue and real influence and involve the youth in decision-making processes;

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is currently planning the possibilities for continuing the project-based Baltic Sea Youth Platform (BSYP) after its current temporary project funding ends in August 2022. There is consensus on the need for continuing youth co-operation under the CBSS. The CBSS action plan 2021-25 aims at the creation of sustainable format for the platform, continued utilisation of BSYP for effective engagement of youth in the work of the CBSS and other regional organisations. The BSYP will pursue the implementation of the conference resolution action 8.

9. use and fundamentally improve the possibilities of digitalisation for communication, accessible for all people, and close the digital gaps across the Region;

Finland is preparing a national digital compass during spring 2022. The draft was published for public consultation on 31 March 2022. The compass is based on the upcoming EU Digital Decade initiative, and Finland was one of the very first EU countries to publish its compass draft. Finland's digital compass is an overarching digitalization agenda and strategy for Finland. The national digital compass revolves, as in the EU framework, around four cardinal points: digital infrastructure, a digitally skilled population and workforce, the digitalisation of businesses, and the digitalisation of public services. Each point of the digital compass has been set objectives and key results as well as indicators to assess how these objectives have been reached.

The compass is based on values and principles. Among them can be found participation, equality and general education as a foundation in a society based on trust. One of the cardinal points is a digitally skilled population and workforce. Stronger digital education is needed in the changing world. Good digital skills lay a foundation and are a prerequisite for equal participation in a society which is increasingly digital. The objectives and key results for 2030 are about Finland as a digitally educated country,



digital basic skills and digital competencies. Attention is paid to e.g. education and gender gaps in the digital world.

Numerous public actions in different fields of digitalization, which are present in the digital compass too, have taken or are taking place now and will have an impact in the future. They include the parliamentary working group and roadmap for research, development and innovation activities and funding; the Artificial Intelligence 4.0 programme for the digital transformation of industry; Technology Advisory Board's report on the Finnish technology policy in the 2020s and the subsequent government resolution on technology policy; the programme for the digital capabilities and services of the public sector; regional and national digitally-relevant actions with funding from EU (e.g. ERDF and ESR) and Finnish sources; and various initiatives related to education of different levels and learning.

10. protect the vulnerable and optimally integrate those who legitimately seek protection from persecution in the Region;

The Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings (TF-THB) under the CBSS has continued its active work and regular meetings. TF-THB has worked on developing a transnational referral mechanism on human trafficking cases involving multiple states in the region. Discussions are under way on further developing and operationalising this mechanism. Most recently, TF-THB has been active in information exchange between countries related to effects on, and prevention of, human trafficking related to Ukrainian refugees. Finland is an active participant in TF-THB.

12. foster regional cooperation in civil protection, including the prevention of, preparedness against and response to natural disasters and industrial accidents, the protection of the population of the Baltic Sea States from natural and man-made emergencies which remain important issues for the BSPP;

The Civil Protection Network (CPN) of the CBSS has continued its active work in regional co-operation in civil protection. It is currently updating the priorities of its work listed in its guiding document, Joint Position, of the CPN and EUSBSR PA Secure. The recent situation in Ukraine has led to initiation of discussion regarding possibilities to support Ukraine. The project work under the CPN includes topics such as preparedness for climate change in the civil protection sector, in the recently finalised CASCADE project. There are discussions under way for a continuation project, focusing on co-operation between state authorities and non-state actors. Other currently relevant project work relates to, for example, research co-operation, development of safety culture, and capacity-building for responding to new operational environments (eg. fires in electric cars or wind power turbines). Finland is an active participant in CPN. Due to active work by Finland, CPN is starting to direct its work towards a concept of comprehensive security.

13. continue to protect children at risk, fight organised crime and manage migratory flows as fields of intense cooperation between the Baltic Sea States;

The COVID-19 pandemic as well as the crisis in Ukraine have had a major impact on the landscape of the operational activities of the Finnish Border Guard. However, regarding protecting children at risk, fighting organised crime and managing migratory flows, the Finnish Border Guard continues in its operational activity to pay special attention to vulnerable persons, for example unaccompanied minors entering Finland, taking into



account possible risks such as human trafficking. Detecting organised crime continues also to be one of the tasks of the Finnish Border Guard.

The Children at Risk (CAR) expert group under the CBSS has continued its active work. The focus of the work is currently on preventing violence towards children through the "Barnahus" model. The expert group conducts practical work, such as training. The group is currently conducting an research project on mapping and analysing different child welfare systems in the region. CAR aims at developing and distributing the so-called Barnahus model of child welfare services. Finland is an active participant in the CAR's work. The further development of the Barnahus model (Lastenasiintalo) has also been included in the Government Programme of the current government.

14. promote sustainable tourism, inter alia by improving cross-border rail transport to enable more climate-friendly travel and reduce travel barriers in the Region, for example, by easing the existing visa restrictions;

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland has coordinated and participated in the implementation of the Finland's Tourism Strategy 2019–2028 and Action Plan 2019–2023 called "Achieving More Together – Sustainable Growth and Renewal in Finnish Tourism". Sustainability is strongly involved in the strategy and action plan. A key measure in increasing the sustainability of the Finnish tourism industry is the Sustainable Travel Finland label created by Visit Finland and the deployment of related activities in tourism enterprises and areas. The label encourages tourism enterprises and areas to take environmental, cultural, social and economic sustainability into account in their own activities, product development and marketing.

Finland enhances the development of railway transportation with the aim at increasing the role of rail travelling as an alternative for flight and road travel in Finland. The connectivity of different regions in Finland by rail is supported and simultaneously continue to promote carbon-neutral travel. VR Group holds also Sustainable Travel Finland label.

18. strengthen the link between national, regional and municipal levels of Baltic cooperation by means of further encouraging collaboration between the CBSS, the BSSSC, the CPMR BSC and the UBC and inviting a wider range of territories and cities to participate in it;

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) new action plan came into force in February 2021. The implementation of the new governance structures of the action plan is under way. The aim is that the new action plan would improve the ability to conduct joint actions in the Baltic Sea region. The action plan also aims to broaden the funding used for the implementation of the strategy. The action plan continues to objective of multi-level co-operation including multiple levels of governance. In other words, the implementation of the EUSBSR action plan responds to the paragraphs 5, 18 and 22 of the conference resolution.

Finland is active in the implementation of the strategy, currently holding a co-ordinating role (Policy Area Coordinator, PAC) in 6 of the strategy's 14 policy areas (PA Bioeconomy, PA Innovation, PA Nutri, PA Safe, PA Ship, PA Tourism).

Finland is hosting the EUSBSR annual forum in Lappeenranta on 28-29 September 2022. The topics will include the use of funding in the region (paragraph 22) and co-operation between actors in the area (paragraph 18).



22. facilitate better alignment of funds and regulations among EU mainstream funds and regional and national funds for cross-border and transnational cooperation projects tackling with macro-regional challenges in social and economic dimensions;

During the programming of the period 2021-2027 EU cohesion policy mainstream programmes there has been cooperation between the different managing authorities especially between Finland and Sweden. The new article 22.3.d.vi in CPR regulation (EU 1060/2021) highlights that programme shall set out the interregional, cross-border and transnational actions with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State or outside the Union, where relevant. This means that there is a requirement for cooperation. Finland has inbuilt the cooperation to the new mainstream programme Uudistuva ja osaava Suomi 2021-2027 (Innovation and skills in Finland 2021-2027) where it is made possible in every priority. The main context for the cooperation is the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

There is also much cooperation between different Interreg-programmes in the area (cross-border, transnational and external programmes). For example, there is a network led by the Interact to facilitate cooperation between the different Interreg-programmes in the Baltic Sea Region area. The network collects both managing authorities and national authorities. The aim of the network is to better align funding, creating synergies and avoiding duplication. It also creates forum to discuss common challenges. Furthermore, there is close cooperation between the five Arctic Interreg- and ENI CBC - programmes where Finland participates (<https://www.interreg-npa.eu/arctic-cooperation/>). Also, many informal contacts and networks are functional between the cross-border and transnational programmes.

### **Regarding Democracy in a Changing Media Landscape:**

26. expand the promotion of media literacy among young people in order to enable them to think critically and evaluate information;

Higher Education Institutes' Digivision 2030 aims at making Finland a model country for flexible learning. In 2030, Finland has an open and recognised learning ecosystem that offers quality, diversity, flexibility, efficiency and suitability for the life situation and needs, thus generating better learning results. The learning ecosystem also provides a platform for research and innovation activities, benefiting society and working life extensively. In 2030, the scientific and educational activities of higher education institutions secure high level of competence of the adult population, national competitiveness and international impact.

The Library of Open Educational Resources provides open educational resources (OER) from all levels of education. The service and its OERs are available for use by teachers, learners and everyone else. It is a joint service of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education. The Library of Open Educational Resources seeks to promote the use of such resources by providing a platform on which materials produced by individuals or in the context of various projects can gain visibility and longevity. By saving educational resources in the service users can ensure that the materials will remain available for use long after the project that produced them has concluded.



30. introduce further practical support measures to strengthen pluralistic independent media in the Baltic Sea Region and to ensure their sustainability in the digital age;

THE COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the increasingly challenging situation in the media sector. Simultaneously, the crisis has increased the importance of access to diverse, pluralistic and reliable information and the diversity and pluralism of the media. The need for reliable information has increased the willingness of consumers to pay for high quality news content produced by professional journalists. Obviously, the current situation in Ukraine, as well as other major crises in our society, emphasises the importance of democratic, free and independent journalistic media content.

The basic principle in Finland is that the state does not intervene in media content through regulative measures. However, the state can create an enabling and predictable operating environment, for example by ensuring fair competition in the media sector and equal treatment of companies, and by encouraging citizens to use media content.

In December 2020, the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency granted 7.5 million euros for media companies. The objective of the state aid has primarily been to support media actors that are producing journalistic content and have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Currently, Finland does not have permanent direct financial state aid programs for journalism and media support, other than the decreased VAT level. However, the Finnish Government is currently assessing the need for a permanent media support system to ensure their sustainability in the digital age. The Ministry of Transport and Communications has commissioned an independent assessment of the possible effects of permanent media support on the media market. In addition, later this year, the Finnish Government will introduce a state aid mechanism to support distribution of newspapers. The state aid will be crucial for small local newspapers that are struggling with the digital transition.

34. support national, European and global steps to foster information and media literacy, including the implementation of the UN Resolution 75/267 on Global Media and Information Literacy Week adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 March 2021.

The National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI) has a statutory duty to promote media education and is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Media Literacy in Finland –policy. KAVI actively participates in international collaboration and represents Finland in the European Commission Media Literacy Expert Group and Safer Internet for Children Expert Group. KAVI is a member of the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) and in 2022 a member of the Subgroup 3 – Countering disinformation and strengthening democracy in the digital environment. The National Audiovisual Institute is also a member of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) and already works actively in the EPRA Media and Information Literacy Task Force. KAVI has also been active in the work of UNESCO media and information literacy work, being a member of the UNESCO MIL Alliance, formerly known as Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy (GAPMIL) .

**Regarding Safeguarding the Baltic Sea and our Environment for Future Generations, halting Climate Change and the Loss of Biodiversity to**



VALTIONEUVOSTON KANSLIA  
STATSRÅDETS KANSLI

35. send a powerful and determined signal by adopting an ambitious update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan through the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021 under the current German chairmanship and to ensure – through regular monitoring of its implementation – that its objectives are implemented in all countries of the Baltic Sea Region more quickly and consistently than before to achieve a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea and its environment by the end of the decade;

Finland contributed substantively and worked actively towards reaching an ambitious update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), and announced already during the Ministerial Meeting in Lubeck in October 2021, that it will establish a national implementation plan of the BSAP in Finland. Finland is currently in the process of developing this plan and our aim is to make it compatible with our latest national Marine Strategy, approved by our Government in December 2021 and developed in accordance with EUs Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC).

36. focus on ecological sustainability of the Baltic Sea, with increased joint structured efforts to reduce all intentional and unintentional nutrient influx into the Sea;

One of the overarching goals of the updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) is “Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication”. The plan defines maximum allowable inputs for each Baltic Sea basin. BSAP also lists several actions by which eutrophication of the Baltic Sea will decrease, focusing especially on the flux of nutrients from agriculture, recommendations of manure management, as well as innovative methods and use of buffer zones to prevent nutrient leakage from farmlands.

37. take significant steps in line with the UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the Baltic 2030 Action Plan to reduce emissions and to reach climate resilience of key economic sectors, including industry, transport and construction, as well as enhancement of natural carbon sinks, such as forests;

Finland’s government has approved a proposal for the new Climate Change Act to ensure that Finland’s carbon neutrality target for 2035, as well as other international and EU based climate objectives, will be met. In addition to the carbon neutrality target, the Climate Change Act sets emission reduction targets for 2030, 2040 and 2050. The Act lays down provisions on climate policy plans, and the reform will extend the scope of the Act to the land use sector. A target to strengthen carbon sinks will also be included in the Act. The Climate Change Act will ensure that climate work continues beyond electoral terms. The emission reduction targets are -60% by 2030, -80% by 2040 and at least -90% but aiming at -95% by 2050, compared to the levels in 1990.

To reach the emission reduction targets, the Climate Change Act lays down provisions on national climate change policy plans that aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Finland and promote climate change adaptation. The key plans are the Medium-term Climate Change Policy Plan, the Climate Change Adaptation Plan and the Long-term Climate Change Policy Plan. As a new plan, the Act introduces the climate plan for the land use sector, i.e. carbon sinks and emissions from land use will also be covered by the Climate Change Act, and the Act sets a target to strengthen sinks. The aim in all climate policy plans is to ensure sustainable development and a just transition. The Act also lays down provisions on the monitoring of the implementation of the plans, which means that the Government must follow the achievement of Finland’s climate objectives and the need for additional measures.



Finland's government has agreed on measures by which Finland will halve its emissions in the effort sharing sector by 2030 and set the course towards carbon neutrality by 2035. The measures decided in the autumn 2021 will be strengthened to ensure that the necessary emission reductions of 5.7 Mt in total will be reached. This is how Finland can achieve the emissions reduction target proposed by the European Commission for 2030 in the effort sharing sector, i.e. in agriculture, transport, building-specific heating and waste management.

On 6 May 2021, the Government of Finland made a Resolution on reducing domestic transport-related greenhouse gas emissions, i.e. the roadmap for fossil-free transport. The three-stage plan aims to halve transport-related emissions by 2030.

In particular, the plan concerns greenhouse gas emissions from road transport. The Government also made separate Resolutions on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from maritime transport and aviation.

38. acknowledge that global action and cross-border cooperation are needed to mitigate the effects of climate change, preserve and protect biodiversity and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a focus on climate (SDG13), oceans (SDG14) and biodiversity (SDG15);

Finland supports developing countries' climate action as part of our development cooperation. Funding is directed to both climate change mitigation and adaptation. Finland uses investment-based and loan-based funding to effectively accelerate private sector investments in climate solutions. Finland uses a variety of channels to provide this support, including such funds established under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), as well as bilateral development cooperation projects and CSOs' projects.

Finland's international climate finance is funding Finnish development cooperation appropriations to climate action in developing countries. International climate finance will increase nearly twofold during this government term compared to the previous term, according to the plan an increase of 93 per cent. Climate finance will reach its peak next year, and the funding is expected to rise up to EUR 249 million. After this, the planned funding will continue at an annual level of approximately EUR 200 million until 2026.

Finland's climate finance aims at responding in a balanced way to the challenges of climate change mitigation and adaptation. The aim is to slow down climate change and help people adapt to its inevitable consequences, such as extreme weather events. The funding consists of grant-based, investment-based and loan-based assistance. It is estimated that from 2022 onwards grant-based climate finance flows will be equally split between adaptation and mitigation.

Finland engages in global action to preserve and protect biodiversity especially in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Finland takes actively part in the negotiations of the Global Biodiversity Framework to support an ambitious outcome.

Finland has been promoting the participation and involvement of youth and indigenous peoples representation in Finland's CBD delegations. Facilitated exchange of views and ideas among youth as well as indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) have



been promoted through the Nordic Youth Network and the Global Youth Biodiversity Network. The youth and IPLCs (Sámi representation) are also part of Finland's national biodiversity working group and decision-making processes.

Finland has increased actions with regard to restoration of degraded ecosystems (with the so-called HELMI programme) as well as climate actions to adapt to climate change. We focus among other things on biodiversity, energy, meteorology and disaster risk management, food and nutrition security and water. Finland emphasises climate change adaptation (food security and water) as the combining factor, with growing resources.

39. promote and financially support both regional and local projects that, based on research, aim to improve and preserve the marine as well as the land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea as well as in their catchment areas;

Finland's government has launched ambitious programmes with substantial financial resources to the protection of the Baltic Sea, inland waters and ecosystems. The programmes provide project financing for targeted most effective measures. The Water protection programme 2019-2023 (69 M€) aims to enhance the effectiveness of water protection (see also answer 41), habitats programme "Helmi" 2021-2030 (423 M€) focuses on strengthening biodiversity, and the nutrient recycling programme (since 2012) has provided financing of more than 50 M€ to projects enhancing nutrient recycling. In addition, the government is committed to the removal of the last HELCOM hot spot in Finland (the Archipelago Sea), by supporting, for instance, large-scale gypsum spreading to the agricultural fields, as well as pilot projects for other innovative agricultural measures.

Finland's recovery and resilience plan has a strong green transition pillar (822 M€) which will also contribute to the Baltic Sea marine and inland environment. It allocates, for instance, 20 M€ for projects enhancing the gypsum application and investing in safe nutrient recovery and recycling from municipal wastewaters and side streams during 2021-2025.

The Baltic Sea Action Plan Fund, in which Finland and Sweden are contributors (14 M€), has since 2010 provided important financing to trigger projects and speed up the implementation of HELCOM BSAP. The Fund resources are currently near to exhaustion and additional pledges would be needed for new projects.

Transboundary pollution has been also tackled through the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership Fund (182 M€ in its "environmental window"), where Finland's contribution is 21 M€. In total 34 projects have been mobilised to environmental and energy efficiency purposes in the region.

Finland also implements the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), which, by effective coordination of actions around the region, strives to channel resources from EU programmes and other financing instruments to projects and activities saving the Baltic Sea.

40. further involve and inform the local communities in the current situation to gain support and commitment in all parts of society, including businesses and civil society in long-term work to regain a good ecological status in coastal areas and beyond;



Finland's Marine Strategy 2022 – 2027 includes a programme of measures with 63 new measures. Among these measures, there is a measure on "intensified communication about the objectives of managing the marine environment". This measure includes actions by which local communities are actively informed and fully included in the implementation of the Strategy.

41. strive for further reduction of nutrient influx into the Baltic Sea and support the development of technology and innovations that will reduce the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea;

In addition to the joint actions taken by the HELCOM Contracting Parties (see answer to paragraph 36), Finland intends to reduce eutrophication of the Baltic Sea nationally. For this purpose, Finland has several funding programmes of which the largest is the programme to enhance the effectiveness of water protection launched by the Ministry of the Environment. This programme will fund a large number of actions, covering reduction of nutrient leakage from farmlands, restoration of watersheds, and research projects. The programme aims at making Finland a world leader in effective water protection.

42. take further actions in order to reduce ship emissions in the Baltic Sea;

On 6 May 2021, the Government of Finland adopted a Resolution confirming national measures and priorities for exerting influence internationally to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from maritime and inland waterway transport. The resolution draws on the work on the Roadmap for fossil-free transport.

The Government resolution proposes a number of measures to facilitate the transition to alternative fuels and propulsion technologies in maritime transport, to support energy-efficiency improvements in existing vessels, and the development of new, low-emission vessels. In addition, the resolution highlights the importance of actively exerting influence internationally to reduce GHG emissions from maritime transport, as the greatest impact on international maritime sector can be achieved by global measures.

Finland is committed to both the EU's emission reduction targets and the targets of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for reducing emissions from maritime transport. In the proposed extension of emissions trading to maritime transport and the FuelEU Maritime proposal as part of the EU's Fit for 55 climate package, Finland has made efforts to influence the upcoming proposal in such a way that emission reductions will be achieved, while also taking into account the relative competitiveness between countries and special circumstances related to winter navigation in the northern Baltic Sea.

Due account for the special characteristics of winter navigation and ice-strengthened vessels is an absolute necessity to ensure both the safety of shipping and the relative competitiveness of ship operations in northern Baltic Sea. Finland considers this important in the context of Baltic cooperation in general.

43. continue to support investments in green hydrogen technologies in order to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide;

Finland is preparing Climate and Energy Strategy and the Hydrogen issues will be embedded into it. We don't have separate Hydrogen Strategy, as we see hydrogen to be part of the future energy systems.



Clean hydrogen technologies are supported through Hydrogen IPCEI and RRF (Recovery and Resilience Fund) and other clean energy technology support measures. There are several hydrogen projects published, the biggest being Neste Clean Hydrogen project in its' Porvoo Refinery.

Nationally, investments in green hydrogen solutions are supported e.g. through granting aid for innovative energy projects based on assessment by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, and by the Climate Fund, which can e.g. grant capital loans. As an example, P2X Solutions has received these kind of supports and aims at building Finland's first industrial scale green hydrogen production plant and methanation unit.

The Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications organized a round table in November 2021 to hear the views of various interest groups on distribution channels for alternative fuels in road transport and on hydrogen as a power source. The demands of the EU regulations currently in preparation for refueling/recharging infrastructure were also discussed in detail. This infrastructure plays a crucial role in efforts to mainstream low-emission alternative fuels.

On 17 March 2022, the Government of Finland issued a decree on infrastructure support for the use of electricity, biogas and renewable hydrogen in transport between 2022 and 2025. The aim is to promote the use of these alternative fuels in road transport by supporting investments in the charging and gas refueling network. A total of EUR 13.2 million has been reserved for the purpose as a three-year deferrable appropriation in the state budget for 2022. In 2022–2023, funding will be granted as part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan in accordance with the Sustainable Growth Programme for Finland.

While the use of hydrogen as a transport fuel has not gained wide popularity in Finland under the current market conditions, European car manufacturers invest heavily in hydrogen technology. Market introduction of several hydrogen powered lorry models is expected by 2025.

In terms of heavy goods vehicles, some national flexibility may be called for in sparsely populated areas with long distances and low traffic volumes. There are some national reservations in Finland regarding the requirements for hydrogen stations, as there is no demand for hydrogen fuel in Finland yet.

44. cooperate and exchange information with regard to risk assessment and necessary coastal protection measures due to the rising sea levels;

Scenarios for rising sea levels were developed in Finland in 2014 and the timelines of these scenarios is monitored annually. Scenarios for rising sea levels need to be taken into account in land use planning.

National land use objectives call for preparing for extreme weather events and floods and the impacts of climate change. New constructions will be located outside flood risk areas or flood risk management will be ensured in other applicable ways.

45. concerning the impacts of plastics on the environment, climate change and biodiversity, to



- a. consider that, due to the transboundary nature of marine litter and the particular vulnerability of the enclosed Baltic Sea area, prevention of plastics entering the environment by reduction of unnecessary plastics at the source and the sustainable management of plastic waste is of mutual interest;

Finland is currently in the process of updating the Plastics Roadmap that was first launched in 2018. With the slogan "Reduce and Refuse, Recycle and Replace" the roadmap points out steps towards a new, sustainable plastic economy. The Plastics Roadmap identifies measures used to reduce the harm caused by plastic waste and litter, help consumers deliver plastics to waste management, improve the efficiency of plastics recovery, recycling and product design, creating conditions for investments and innovations in the circular economy, and reducing the dependency on fossil raw ingredients by increasing bio-based and biodegradable solutions.

Already during Finland's previous Marine Strategy (2016-2021) several projects were carried out to find out the sources and pathways of plastic litter to the marine environment, and to find solutions to the problem. In the new Marine Strategy, and its Programme of Measures for 2022-2027, there are 11 different measures aiming at reducing plastics in the marine environment, including micro plastics.

- b. therefore, commit to support activation of the HELCOM Regional Action Plan against Marine Litter and measures contained therein, being part of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan, at the regional level and

Finland is committed to fully implementing the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan.

- c. support the start of negotiations on a new ambitious global agreement at UNEA 5.2 to take the next decisive step at the international level;

This objective was achieved when the resolution entitled "End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument" was approved by the UNEA-5.2 meeting in March 2022 in Nairobi. The resolution approved a mandate for an intergovernmental negotiation committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, with the ambition of completing its work by the end of 2024.

Finland is committed to engaging actively in the work of the INC and to support the objectives of the upcoming negotiations with an aim to agree on an ambitious instrument with a life-cycle approach to plastic pollution, including on the basis of HELCOM's BSAP and other relevant regional work.

46. concerning the impacts of increased shipping and cruise-ship tourism on climate change and loss of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea, to

- a. recognize that the Baltic Sea is the sea with the highest shipping levels and consists of inland water with low water exchange;
- b. acknowledge that global action and cross-border cooperation are needed to mitigate the emissions of increasing cruise-ship tourism and other shipping in the Baltic Sea;



- c. promote and accelerate the transition of ships and in particular cruise-ships away from fossil fuels towards sustainable renewable fuels in order to make shipping climate-neutral, and less polluting;
- d. take further actions in order to reduce black carbon ship emissions in the Baltic Sea, including support in technologies and infrastructure on shore power supply of harbours;
- e. support the development of technology and innovations that will further reduce the discharge of waste from ships to the Baltic Sea;
- f. support the prevention of introduction of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens in ballast water by supporting further development of technology and innovations and by stringent application of the BWM Convention and actively contributing to the experience-building phase;
- g. aim to improve and preserve the marine as well as the land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea;

In short-sea shipping in the Baltic Sea, the development of driving powers could rely on replacing both liquid and gaseous fossil fuels with biofuels, in addition to battery technology and shore-side electricity. Under the national Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Finland has supported biofuels and biogas for transport use in all modes of transport in the Baltic Sea region. Joint production of biofuels, for example with the air transport sector, could support the attainment of this objective.

The Finnish Government is currently drawing up a report on the electrification of maritime transport and the possibilities of using battery-powered vessels in short-sea shipping in the Baltic Sea as well as on the needs to develop the requisite charging infrastructure in Finnish ports. In this context, the long-term possibilities of using other alternative marine fuels, especially wind propulsion, hydrogen and biofuels in Finnish merchant shipping will also be assessed.

The Government has encouraged Finnish charterers to include not only speed or schedule related targets, but also emissions reduction goals in their charter parties. Chartering ships, which run fully on non-fossil driving powers, should be competitive in short-sea shipping in the Baltic Sea by no later than 2045.

Economic incentives for reducing shipping emissions in the Baltic Sea region were examined in a report published by the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom in May 2020. This report provided for the first time an overview of national incentive practices in different Baltic Sea states. The report indicates that national and EU subsidies as well as public loans and guarantees, in particular, have facilitated shipowners' investments in environmentally friendly technologies. In addition to these measures, tax relief and reduced fees granted on environmental grounds were found to be effective economic incentives with certain reservations.

Finland has promoted the reduction of emissions from waterborne transport in the IMO and the EU as well as at regional level in the Baltic Sea Protection Commission HELCOM, in addition to Nordic and bilateral cooperation with its closest maritime neighbors. The growth in cruise tourism in the Baltic Sea increases the need to strengthen Baltic cooperation in this field.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has for long supported the protection of northern sea areas and funded several maritime projects in which Finland has participated. In addition to official Nordic cooperation structures, close dialogue is also conducted directly between



national transport administrations. In the Baltic region and Nordic cooperation, Finland will continue actively participating in projects aimed at reducing shipping emissions and developing the distribution infrastructure for new fuels for merchant shipping.

47. concerning sea-dumped munitions, to

- d. strengthen efforts to recover and neutralise explosive ordnance in the Baltic Sea with concrete measures through multinational cooperation according to the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> BSPC Resolutions as well as the interim and final BSPC rapporteur's reports on sea-dumped munitions;
- e. bring together the different national findings, research results and data in an expert group - if possible, at HELCOM - and, on this basis, prepare concrete actions for the removal of explosive ordnance in the Baltic Sea;
- f. strive for an international donor fund in the concretisation of the financial instrument mentioned in the 28<sup>th</sup> BSPC Resolution and consider whether HELCOM could manage such funds;
- g. establish the Baltic Sea Region as a global model region for the environmentally sound, rapid and affordable salvage and decontamination and removal of explosive ordnance dumped in the sea;
- h. take all necessary measures aiming to complete the disposal and rendering harmless of explosive ordnance and other hazardous products in the Baltic Sea within the next 20 years;
- i. look at the option of including this task as a long-term ecological priority explicitly in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Finland has taken part in several international projects studying the environmental risks of chemical munitions: MERCW (Modelling of Ecological Risks related to Sea-dumped Chemical Weapons), CHEMSEA (Chemical Munitions, Search and Assessment) project, which was partly financed by the EU Baltic Sea Region Programme, and DAIMON (Decision aid for Munition Management) project. Finland will take part in such projects also in the future whenever financing is available.

Finland takes actively part in the work of the HELCOM SUBMERGED working group (Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects). The overall aim of the work of this group is to contribute to the development of an action plan and regionally coordinated actions on submerged munitions and explosives of concern in the Baltic Sea. The Expert Group acts as a knowledge hub to provide the recent information on munitions and other submerged hazardous objects in the Baltic Sea. The Expert Group also accompanies the coordination of regional activities that address the potential challenges posed by munitions and other submerged hazardous objects. The Expert Group also works towards achieving the tasks of the updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), related to munitions and other submerged hazardous objects in the Baltic Sea.

# GERMANY

*english translation will be published shortly*

30.08. 2021, 17.17

## **Entschließung der Konferenz**

Angenommen von der 30. Ostseeparlamentarierkonferenz (BSPC)

Die Teilnehmer, die gewählten Vertreter der Staaten der Ostseeregion, die am 30. August 2021 online zusammengekommen sind,

- bekräftigen erneut – mitten im derzeitigen Prozess der Bekämpfung der COVID-19-Pandemie und der Bewältigung ihrer Auswirkungen – die dringende Notwendigkeit und die Erwartung, dass alle Ostseestaaten weiterhin alle Anstrengungen unternehmen, um sicherzustellen, dass der Ostseeraum eine Region der friedlichen und engen Nachbarschaft und der intensiven Zusammenarbeit bleibt;
- unterstreichen, dass demokratische Werte, Rechtsstaatlichkeit, Menschenrechte, Medienfreiheit, eine starke Zivilgesellschaft und stabile NGOs sowie Chancengleichheit für alle die Grundlage unserer Zusammenarbeit sind;
- nutzen alle uns zur Verfügung stehenden Mittel, um mit der Regierung von Belarus zu kommunizieren, um Menschenrechte, Frieden und Demokratie in Belarus als einem wichtigen Teil des Ostseeraums und Europas nachhaltig zu gewährleisten;
- weisen darauf hin, dass enge und intensive zwischenmenschliche Kontakte auf allen Ebenen – den Parlamenten, Regierungen und der Zivilgesellschaft – das Rückgrat für Frieden, Wohlstand und Umweltschutz in der Region sind;
- unterstreichen, dass der Jugendaustausch und die Inklusion von Jugendlichen und jungen Menschen die Voraussetzung für die Garantie und Sicherung dieser Grundlagen des Ostseeraums auch für zukünftige Generationen sind;
- begrüßen das Jugendforum der Ostseeparlamentarierkonferenz, das am 28. August 2021 stattfand, berücksichtigen die Schlussfolgerungen des Forums bei der anstehenden Arbeit und fördern weiterhin die Einbeziehung junger Menschen in die Arbeit der BSPC;
- begrüßen die erneuerte strategische Vision – die Vilnius-II-Erklärung „Eine Vision für den Ostseeraum bis 2030“ – und den darauffolgenden Aktionsplan des Ostseerates, der beim Ministertreffen des Ostseerats am 1. Juni 2021 verabschiedet wurde, sowie die erneuerte „EU-Strategie für den Aktionsplan für den Ostseeraum“ und die „Schlussfolgerungen des Rates zur Umsetzung der makroregionalen Strategien der EU“ mit Stand vom 3. Dezember 2020;
- stellen fest, dass das ökologische System der Ostsee sowie die allgemeine Umwelt an Land und im Meer nicht mehr länger als separate Punkte im Zusammenhang mit anderen Faktoren wie der Wirtschaft betrachtet werden sollten. Dies ist notwendig, da die Lebensbedingungen für die Bevölkerung im

Ostseeraum vollständig davon abhängen werden, ob es uns gelingen wird, das Ökosystem der Ostsee zu erhalten und zu verbessern.

**Vorbemerkung:**

*Die Bundesregierung begrüßt die Entschließung der 30. Jahrestagung der Ostseeparlamentarierkonferenz (BSPC) vom 30. August 2021. Die Ostseeparlamentarierkonferenz leistet einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Förderung einer engen Zusammenarbeit zwischen Regierungen, nationalen und regionalen Parlamenten und der Zivilgesellschaft und stärkt demokratische Institutionen.*

*Weiterhin unterstreicht die Bundesregierung die Bedeutung des Ostseerats (CBSS), der Helsinki-Kommission (HELCOM), der EU-Ostseestrategie (EUSBSR) und der Nördlichen Dimension (ND) als tragende Säulen der Zusammenarbeit im Ostseeraum.*

*Aufgrund des russischen Militärangriffs auf die Ukraine sind die Mitgliedschaft Russlands im Ostseerat, die Förderung russischer Projekte unter der EU-Ostseestrategie und die Zusammenarbeit mit Russland in der Nördlichen Dimension suspendiert worden; die Sitzungen der HELCOM wurden bis auf weiteres ausgesetzt. Der Zusammenarbeit mit und der Beobachterstatus von Belarus wurden ebenfalls suspendiert.*

**rufen die Regierungen im Ostseeraum, den Ostseerat und die EU auf,  
im Hinblick auf die Zusammenarbeit im Ostseeraum**

den Neubeginn nach der Pandemie und das aktuelle Jahrzehnt zu nutzen, um

1. entschlossen Vertrauen unter ihren Nationen und bei allen Kooperationen aufzubauen, auszuweiten und zu vertiefen;

*Neben der bilateralen Zusammenarbeit und der Kooperation in internationalen Organisationen wie der EU, OSZE und der NATO, erstreckt sich das multilaterale Engagement der Bundesregierung im Ostseeraum insbesondere auf die Mitgliedschaft im Ostseerat, in der EU-Ostseestrategie, sowie als Teil der EU in der Nordischen Dimension (ND). Deutschland wird am 01.07.2022 die Präsidentschaft des Ostseerates für ein Jahr übernehmen und in dieser Zeit die bereits bestehende Kooperation im Ostseeraum weiter stärken und vertiefen. Hierbei liegt der Fokus auf drei langfristigen Schwerpunktthemen: Stärkung der regionalen Identität, Nachhaltigkeit und Wohlstand in der Region, sowie Sicherheit. Aufgrund der föderalen Struktur der Bundesrepublik spielen in Deutschland vor allem die norddeutschen Bundesländer Brandenburg, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern und Schleswig-Holstein eine wichtige Rolle in der Zusammenarbeit im Ostseeraum.*

2. Wohlstand, Sicherheit und regionale Identität für alle Menschen im Ostseeraum zu stärken;

*Im Juni 2020 unterzeichnete die Bundesregierung die Bornholm-Erklärung und stimmte somit der Neuausrichtung des Ostseerats entlang der drei obengenannten Themenschwerpunkte Wohlstand, Sicherheit und regionale Identität zu. Seither hat sich die Zusammenarbeit der einzelnen Partner sowohl auf nationaler, wie auch auf subnationaler Ebene in diesen drei Teilbereichen intensiviert. Dies ist insbesondere in den Arbeitsgruppen zum Schutz von Kindern, Fragen der nachhaltigen Entwicklung, der nachhaltigen maritimen Wirtschaft und der Task Force against Human Trafficking ersichtlich, in denen Deutschland jeweils durch eine nationale Kontaktperson in den zuständigen Ressorts vertreten ist. Auch über das Netzwerk des Ostseerats hinaus findet im Ostseeraum eine rege Zusammenarbeit zu den Schwerpunktthemen Wohlstand, Sicherheit und regionale Identität statt. Als Beispiele sind unter anderem die grenzpolizeiliche Zusammenarbeit im Rahmen der Baltic Sea Task Force on Organised Crime zu nennen, wie auch die subnationale Zusammenarbeit u. a. in der Union der Ostseestädte (UBC) und die Subregionale Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Ostseestaaten (BSSSC).*

3. sich bei ihrem Wirtschaftswachstum, ihrer Entwicklung und ihren Innovationen auf Nachhaltigkeit zu konzentrieren und einen guten ökologischen Zustand der Ostsee sowie einen soliden und nachhaltigen Zustand ihrer Umwelt zu erzielen;

*Die Förderung einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung ist das Leitprinzip der Politik der Bundesregierung. Wirtschaftliche Leistungsfähigkeit, der Schutz der natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen und soziale Verantwortung müssen Hand in Hand gehen, damit Entwicklungen dauerhaft tragfähig sind. Das BMUV engagiert sich in internationalen Gremien und Institutionen wie der IMO, HELCOM und OSPAR sowie in der Expertengruppe „Nachhaltige Entwicklung“ des Ostseerates, um die nachhaltige und umweltverträgliche Ausgestaltung von wirtschaftlichen Aktivitäten voranzubringen und dadurch zum Erhalt eines guten Umweltzustands der Ostsee und der Ostseeregion beizutragen.*

*Auch im Rahmen der makroregionalen Strategie der Europäischen Union für den Ostseeraum (EUSBSR) treibt Deutschland gemeinsam mit den sieben weiteren EU-Ostseeanrainerstaaten [Dänemark, Schweden, Finnland, Estland, Lettland, Litauen, Polen] die Verbesserung des ökologischen Zustands der Ostsee, die Anbindung der Region und die Steigerung des Wohlstands voran.*

*Ferner fördert das BMUV Projekte aus dem Beratungshilfeprogramm, die dies unterstützen, beispielsweise das Projekt „Rominter Heide – Vorbereitungen der*

*Einrichtung eines Biosphärenreservats im Gebiet Kaliningrad“. Aufgrund des russischen Angriffs auf die Ukraine wurden die Projektaktivitäten suspendiert.*

*Das Umweltbundesamt und das Bundesamt für Naturschutz unterhalten weiterhin im Auftrag des BMUV das Stipendiatenprogramm „Klaus Toepfer Fellowship“ sowie ein Alumninetzwerk. Aktuell nimmt daran aus der Ostseeregion eine Person aus Russland teil. Eine Suspendierung des Stipendiums ist nicht vorgesehen, da es sich hier um eine Zusammenarbeit im Bereich Aus- und Fortbildung handelt. Der Kontakt zu den uns zugewandten Menschen, insbesondere zur russischen Zivilgesellschaft sowie im Jugendaustausch soll fortgesetzt werden.*

4. eine bessere Inklusion, Wohlstand, öffentliche Gesundheit und sozialen Zusammenhalt anzustreben, jedoch auch die bestehende Kluft zwischen den Ländern des Ostseeraums durch gemeinsame Anstrengungen zu verringern;

*Seit 2009 ist die VN-Behindertenrechtskonvention (UN-BRK) in Deutschland verbindlich. Zur Umsetzung der Konvention hat die Bundesregierung den Nationalen Aktionsplan aufgelegt, der die Maßnahmen des Bundes zusammenführt.*

*Die Richtlinie (EU) 2019/882 über die Barrierefreiheitsanforderungen für Produkte und Dienstleistungen wurde von Deutschland mit dem Barrierefreiheitsstärkungsgesetz (BFSG) umgesetzt. Das Gesetz verpflichtet erstmals private Wirtschaftsakteure, Barrierefreiheitsanforderungen für eine Vielzahl von Produkten und Dienstleistungen einzuhalten. Damit fördert das BFSG die gleichberechtigte und diskriminierungsfreie Teilhabe von Menschen mit Behinderungen. Zur gleichberechtigten Teilhabe gehören auch die Prinzipien des „Design für Alle“ und die Vermeidung von Sonderlösungen für Menschen mit Behinderungen.*

*In Deutschland leistet das Kompetenznetzwerk EDAD (Design für Alle - Deutschland e. V.) einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Entwicklung einer bebauten Umwelt und von Produkten, Dienstleistungen, die besonders leicht und komfortabel nutzbar sind. EDAD ist die deutsche Mitgliedsorganisation des EIDD „Design for All Europe“ mit Partnern in 23 europäischen Staaten.*

*Der von der Bundesregierung am 26. April 2021 beschlossene Deutsche Aufbau- und Resilienzplan enthält ebenfalls Maßnahmen für eine bessere öffentliche Gesundheit.*

5. aktuelle und zukünftige Herausforderungen und Krisen durch verstärkte gemeinsame Maßnahmen zu bewältigen;

6. die Elemente einer gemeinsamen regionalen Identität und die gemeinsamen Werte durch Kultur, Forschung, Bildung und Wissenschaft zu fördern;

*Die verstärkte Zusammenarbeit zur Begegnung aktueller und zukünftiger Herausforderungen ist Bestandteil der Arbeit des Ostseerates, so hat die Bundesregierung die Zusammenarbeit mit Partnern im Ostseeraum z. B. im Katastrophenschutz verstärkt (siehe Handlungsappell 12). Die Förderung der gemeinsamen regionalen Identität und gemeinsamer Werte ist einer der Schwerpunkte der im Juni 2020 unterzeichneten Bornholm-Erklärung zur Neuausrichtung des Ostseerats. Dieser Schwerpunkt wird derzeit von der norwegischen Ratspräsidentschaft umgesetzt und unter deutscher Ratspräsidentschaft ab 01.07.2022 weitergeführt. Die Kooperation im Bereich Forschung und Wissenschaft im Ostseeraum erfolgt in erster Linie über europäische Programme wie z. B. das Europäische Forschungsrahmenprogramm Horizont Europa und ERASMUS+.*

7. entschlossen den dynamischen und verstärkten Austausch zwischen den Menschen zu betreiben und persönliche Kontakte und den persönlichen Austausch von Ideen, Erfahrungen und Ansichten auf der Grundlage aktiver Zivilgesellschaften zu erleichtern;
8. Kontinuität bei der Teilhabe junger Menschen anzustreben, einen zielführenden Austausch von Meinungen und Ideen mit und unter jungen Menschen auf der Grundlage des Dialogs und der tatsächlichen Einflussnahme zu ermöglichen und junge Menschen an Entscheidungsprozessen zu beteiligen;

*Der Koalitionsvertrag sieht die Weiterentwicklung der Jugendstrategie der Bundesregierung und einen Nationalen Aktionsplan Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung vor. Sowohl die Jugendstrategie und ihre Weiterentwicklung, also auch der Nationale Aktionsplan sind grundsätzlich beteiligungsorientiert, da Kinder- und Jugendpolitik nur unter Mitwirkung junger Menschen als Expertinnen und Experten in eigener Sache erfolgreich sein kann.*

*Im Rahmen des Bundesprogramms „Demokratie leben!“ fördert die Bundesregierung zahlreiche Projekte, die junge Menschen in ihrer demokratischen Teilhabe stärken. Die Projekte unterstützen Kinder und Jugendliche dabei, demokratische Verfahren zu erlernen und zu erleben, ihr Umfeld mitzugestalten und sich aktiv in die Aushandlung gesellschaftlicher und politischer Fragen einzubringen.*

*In der Ostseeregion engagiert sich die Bundesregierung in der Jugendarbeit insbesondere durch die Förderung des Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD) in enger Kooperation mit dem Sekretariat des Ostseerats.*

9. die Möglichkeiten der Digitalisierung, die allen Menschen zugänglich sein sollte, für die Kommunikation zu nutzen und grundlegend zu verbessern sowie die digitale Kluft in der Region zu schließen;

*Die Bundesregierung setzt sich für eine flächendeckende Versorgung mit Glasfaser und dem neuesten Mobilfunkstandard ein. Vorrang hat dabei der marktgetriebene Ausbau durch private TK-Unternehmen. Die seit 2015 bestehende und 2018 aktualisierte Bundesförderung für den Breitbandausbau setzt dort an, wo ein marktgetriebener Ausbau nicht erfolgt. Bis Ende 2021 wurden rund 9,6 Mrd. Euro an Fördermitteln zur Erschließung von rund 2,7 Mio. Anschlüssen bewilligt. Der Koalitionsvertrag setzt neue Akzente für die Förderung mit dem Ziel, effizienter und bedarfsorientierter zu fördern. Für den Mobilfunkbereich sind 1,1 Mrd. Euro an Mitteln für ein Mobilfunkförderprogramm vorgesehen, das die flächendeckende Versorgung mit mindestens 4G-Standard in Deutschland sicherstellt und zugleich die Basis für 5G legt. Daneben unterstützt das 5G-Innovationsprogramm die Erprobung von 5G-Anwendungen, um die Nutzung mobilfunkgestützter Dienste auch in der Ostseeregion zu intensivieren (u.a. Entwicklung einer Indoor-Navigationshilfe der HafenCity Universität Hamburg sowie Aufbau eines 5G-Campusnetzes in Wirtschaftshäfen der Region Vorpommern).*

*Alle vorgenannten Maßnahmen tragen dazu bei, dass das Gefälle zwischen Stadt und Land bei der Gigabit-Versorgung geschlossen wird. Hiervon profitieren dann auch Regionen, die auf deutscher Seite die Ostseeregion bilden. Zur Sicherstellung der sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Teilhabe aller Bürgerinnen und Bürger, die nicht zeitnah vom geförderten und privatwirtschaftlichen Ausbau profitieren, wurde mit dem neuen Telekommunikationsgesetz, das am 1. Dezember 2021 in Kraft getreten ist, ein Recht auf eine technologie neutrale Grundversorgung mit Telekommunikationsdiensten geschaffen.*

10. benachteiligte Menschen zu schützen und diejenigen auf bestmögliche Weise zu integrieren, die legitim Schutz vor Verfolgung in der Region suchen;

*In Deutschland wird denjenigen Menschen Schutz gewährt, die politisch verfolgt (Art. 16a GG) oder international schutzberechtigt (Zuerkennung der Flüchtlings-eigenschaft oder des subsidiären Schutzes) sind oder einen nationalen Abschiebungsschutz (§ 60 Abs. 5 und 7 AufenthG) erhalten.*

*Übergreifendes Ziel der Integrationspolitik des Bundes ist es, dass alle Menschen, die rechtmäßig in Deutschland leben, unabhängig davon, ob sie hier geboren wurden oder nicht, die eigenen Potenziale nutzen und in die Gesellschaft einbringen können. Um dieses Ziel zu erreichen, folgt die Integrationspolitik des Bundes dem Prinzip des „Forderns und Förderns“. Das integrationspolitische Verständnis der Bundesregierung*

*beinhaltet somit die Gewährung von Rechten, aber auch die Definition einer Erwartungshaltung an zugewanderte Menschen und die Gesellschaft als Ganzes.*

*Die Integrationspolitik des Bundes richtet sich auf drei zentrale Bereiche: 1) Sprache, 2) Bildung, Ausbildung, Studium und Beschäftigung sowie 3) Gesellschaft.*

*Für besondere Gruppen von Einwanderern, die eines besonderen Schutzes bedürfen, stellt die Bundesregierung spezifische Maßnahmen bereit. Dazu gehören frauenspezifische Maßnahmen genauso wie Maßnahmen für Kinder und Jugendliche, für Menschen mit Behinderungen sowie LSBTTIQ-spezifische Maßnahmen. Im Rahmen der Integrationskurse werden darauf basierend spezielle Kursarten sowie eine Lern- und Sozialbegleitung angeboten. Besondere Bedeutung misst die Bundesregierung der Integration von Frauen zu. Beispielsweise fördert die Bundesregierung bereits seit 1985 niederschwellige Maßnahmen zur Integration ausländischer Frauen und Mädchen.*

*Eine Übersicht zu Integrationsmaßnahmen bietet die „Darstellung der Maßnahmen der Bundesregierung für die Sprachförderung und Integration“ (<https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/publikationen/...>).*

*Mit der Bundesinitiative „Schutz von geflüchteten Menschen in Flüchtlingsunterkünften“ setzt sich das Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend seit 2016 gemeinsam mit UNICEF und weiteren Partnern für den Schutz von Frauen, Kindern und weiteren schutzbedürftigen Personen in Unterkünften für geflüchtete Menschen ein.*

11. Wohlstand und ökologisch stabile und solide Umweltbedingungen für zukünftige Generationen als ein Grundrecht in den Entscheidungsprozessen von heute zu erachten;

*Die Förderung einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung ist das Leitprinzip der Politik der Bundesregierung. Wirtschaftliche Leistungsfähigkeit, der Schutz der natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen und soziale Verantwortung müssen Hand in Hand gehen, damit Entwicklungen dauerhaft tragfähig sind. Das Bundesverfassungsgericht hat zudem zuletzt die Bedeutung des Klimaschutzes für die Generationengerechtigkeit herausgestellt. Die Bundesregierung engagiert sich in internationalen Gremien und Institutionen wie der Expertengruppe „Nachhaltige Entwicklung“ des Ostseerates, um die nachhaltige und umweltverträgliche Ausgestaltung von wirtschaftlichen Aktivitäten voranzubringen und dadurch zum Erhalt eines guten Umweltzustands der Ostseeregion für künftige Generationen beizutragen. So fördert das Bundesministerium für Umwelt und Verbraucherschutz durch seine „Exportinitiative Umwelttechnologien“ Projekte, die auf die Internationalisierung von „grünen“ Innovationen, Produkten und Dienstleistungen zielen. Moderne, effiziente und ressourcenschonende Technologien*

*sind Wachstums- und Innovationstreiber und tragen dazu bei, Umweltstandards zu erhöhen, Umweltwissen zu verbreiten und so ökologische Grundlagen und Lebensbedingungen vor Ort nachhaltig zu verbessern. Im Ostseeraum wird beispielsweise das Projekt bei der Deutsch-Baltischen Handelskammer in Estland, Lettland, Litauen e. V. „Kreislaufwirtschaft im Baltikum: Methodiken und Ansätze im Abfallmanagement“ gefördert (Laufzeit 01.09.2021 bis 31.08.2022). Weiterführende Information bietet die Website: <https://www.exportinitiative-umweltschutz.de/de/projekte/ahk-baltikum>.*

12. die regionale Zusammenarbeit für den zivilen Schutz zu fördern, darunter die Verhütung von und die Vorbereitung und die Reaktion auf Naturkatastrophen und Industrieunfälle und den Schutz der Bevölkerung der Ostsee-Anrainerstaaten vor Natur- und vor vom Menschen verursachten Katastrophen, die weiterhin wichtige Themen für die BSPC sind;

*Die Zusammenarbeit im Katastrophenschutz erfolgt mit den Ostseeanrainerstaaten im Wesentlichen im Rahmen des EU-Katastrophenschutzverfahrens (Beschluss Nr. 1313/2013/EU), welches 2019 und 2021 durch umfängliche Änderungen verstärkt wurde. Dies betraf insbesondere die Schaffung von EU-finanzierten Bewältigungskapazitäten (rescEU) im Bereich der Waldbrandbekämpfung, die medizinische Notfallhilfe und die Abwehr von CBRN Gefahren (Chemisch, Biologisch, Radiologisch und Nuklear). Im Mehrjahresarbeitsprogramm 2021 – 2024 sind zudem vielfältige Maßnahmen zur Förderung der Zusammenarbeit der maritimen Notfallvorsorgebehörden der Teilnehmerstaaten (inkl. Norwegen), sowie zur Bekämpfung der Meeresverschmutzung vorgesehen und finanziell hinterlegt.*

*Daneben legt die maritime Notfallvorsorgebehörde Deutschlands, das Havariekommando, gemeinsam mit seinen Partnern der Ostseeanrainerstaaten einen besonderen Fokus auf die Risiken, die sich aus dem zunehmenden Transport von Gefahrgütern für die Meeresumwelt und die Bewohner des Ostseeraums ergeben. Im August 2022 ist das Havariekommando Ausrichter der jährlichen internationalen operativen Schadstoff-unfall-Bekämpfungsübung BALEX 2022. Erstmals werden dann die Prozeduren des gemeinsamen, neu eingeführten Chemikalienunfall-Bekämpfungshandbuchs (HNS Response Manual) erprobt.*

*Deutschland ist außerdem Vertragsstaat des UNECE Übereinkommens über die grenzüberschreitenden Auswirkungen von Industrieunfällen. Im Rahmen der Pflichten dieses Abkommens findet ein Austausch z. B. mit Polen zu Aktivitäten statt, von denen bei einem Industrieunfall gefährliche Auswirkungen auf das Gebiet des Nachbarstaates*

und in der Folge z. B. durch Verschmutzung der Oder auch für die Ostsee ausgehen können.

13. fortzufahren, gefährdete Kinder zu schützen, die organisierte Kriminalität zu bekämpfen und Migrationsströme zu bewältigen als Bereiche der intensiven Kooperation zwischen den Ostseestaaten;

*Die im Mai 1996 gegründete Baltic Sea Task Force (BSTF) befasst sich im Rahmen der aktuell laufenden Präsidentschaft Norwegens (bis 30.06.2022) schwerpunktmäßig mit den Themen Menschenhandel, Cybercrime, sexuelle Ausbeutung von Kindern und Heranwachsenden über das Internet (Online-Kinderpornographie) sowie mit der regionalen Kooperation der Ostseestaaten mit Akteuren wie Interpol, Europol, dem Ostseerat (CBSS) und den Polizeien und den Zollbehörden der Ostseestaaten. Im Rahmen der regelmäßig stattfindenden Treffen des Operational and Planning Committees werden u. a. Fachvorträge gehalten und strategische Informationen zu den jeweiligen Schwerpunktthemen ausgetauscht.*

*Im Rahmen der CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings findet zudem regelmäßiger Austausch zwischen den Mitgliedstaaten zu nationalen und internationalen Bemühungen zur Bekämpfung von allen Formen des Menschenhandels statt. Diese Task Force wird unter anderem durch Deutschland finanziert. Im Rahmen des von der Task Force initiierten CAPE-Projekts, das sich auf die Bekämpfung von Menschenhandel zum Zweck der Arbeitsausbeutung konzentriert, hat Deutschland die im Juni 2021 veröffentlichte Gemeinsame Erklärung mitgezeichnet und arbeitet an dessen Umsetzung.*

14. nachhaltigen Tourismus zu fördern, unter anderem durch die Verbesserung des grenzüberschreitenden Schienenverkehrs, um ein klimafreundlicheres Reisen zu ermöglichen und Reisehindernisse in der Region zu verringern, beispielsweise durch die Lockerung der bestehenden Visabeschränkungen;

*Mit den Schieneninfrastrukturvorhaben Ausbau der Strecke Angermünde – Grenze D/PL (-Stettin) und dem Aus-/Neubau der Strecke Hamburg – Lübeck – Puttgarden (Hinterlandanbindung Fehmarnbeltquerung) fördert die Bundesregierung nachhaltigen Tourismus und klimafreundlichen grenzüberschreitenden Schienenverkehr in die Ostseeregion. Die beiden Vorhaben sind auch im europäischen Eisenbahnverkehr von großer Bedeutung: Sie verbessern die Verkehrsbeziehungen zwischen Skandinavien, Zentral- und Westeuropa. Die ABS Angermünde – Grenze D/PL (-Stettin) ist seit November 2021 im Bau, die Abschnitte der Hinterlandanbindung Fehmarnbeltquerung befinden sich derzeit überwiegend im Planfeststellungsverfahren.*

*Die Teilnehmerländer bzw. Teilnehmerregionen der BSPC mit Ausnahme der Russischen Föderation sind Teil des Schengen-Raums und unterliegen keinerlei Visabeschränkungen.*

15. Optionen für die Entwicklung des medizinischen Tourismus zu identifizieren – um den Menschen in der Region zu helfen, eine medizinische Behandlung im gesamten Ostseeraum zu erhalten, nicht zuletzt im Kontext der COVID-19-Pandemie;

*Zum Gesundheitstourismus weist das Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz (BMWK) im Rahmen der Gesundheitswirtschaftlichen Gesamtrechnung (GGR) einige Kennzahlen aus (Bruttowertschöpfung, Erwerbstätige). Für einzelne Regionen und einzelne Unternehmen mit Gesundheitsbezug spielt der Gesundheitstourismus danach durchaus eine wichtige Rolle (z. B. Kur- und Heilbäder). Daher erscheint aus regional- und strukturpolitischer Sicht eine weitere Entwicklung des Gesundheitstourismus sinnvoll, wobei hierbei die Zuständigkeit bei den Ländern gesehen wird.*

16. eine gemeinsame Lösung für die gegenseitige Anerkennung anerkannter Impf- und Testbescheinigungen zu finden, die von unseren Ländern validiert und anerkannt sind, um zur Verhütung einer neuen Coronavirus (COVID-19)-Infektion beizutragen, z.B. weil Grenzregionen aufgrund des grenzüberschreitenden Verkehrs besonders betroffen sind;

*Die Verordnung (EU) 2021/953 des Europäischen Parlaments und des Rates über einen Rahmen für die Ausstellung, Überprüfung und Anerkennung interoperabler Zertifikate zur Bescheinigung von COVID-19-Impfungen und -Tests sowie der Genesung von einer COVID-19-Infektion (DCC-VO), die am 1. Juli 2021 in Kraft getreten ist, stellt eine essentielle Erleichterung der Freizügigkeit innerhalb und außerhalb der EU dar. Durch den Delegierten Rechtsakt zur DCC-VO vom 21. Dezember 2021 wurde für Reisezwecke ein verbindlicher Anerkennungszeitraum von 270 Tagen für das Digitale COVID-Impfzertifikat der EU festgelegt. Die Neuregelung ist am 1. Februar 2022 in Kraft getreten. In einem gesonderten Durchführungsrechtsakt wurden zudem die Vorschriften für die Kodierung von Impfzertifikaten angepasst, damit Zertifikate für Booster-Impfungen stets eindeutig als solche erkennbar sind. Dies ist ein wichtiger Schritt zur Prävention vor einer COVID-19 Erkrankung bzw. eines schweren Infektionsverlaufs, um einen möglichst sicheren grenzüberschreitenden Verkehr zu gewährleisten.*

*Durch Äquivalenzentscheidungen der EU-Kommission nach der DCC-VO können digitale Impfnachweise aus Drittstaaten innerhalb aller EU-MS technisch ausgelesen werden und nach den Regelungen der DCC-VO – wie ein in der EU ausgestelltes DCC*

– anerkannt werden. Äquivalenzentscheidungen der KOM liegen mittlerweile für Island und Norwegen sowie eine Reihe weiterer Staaten vor.

*Das Digitale COVID-Zertifikat der EU ist eine Erfolgsgeschichte. DEU unterstützt deshalb den Abschluss weiterer Äquivalenzentscheidungen für Drittstaaten sowie die Fortschreibung der DCC-VO, die ansonsten am 30. Juni 2022 ihre Geltung verliert; entsprechend begrüßt wird die Vorlage von zwei Verordnungsvorschlägen zur Verlängerung der Verordnung zum digitalen COVID am 3. Februar 2022.*

17. gegebenenfalls eine Wiederaufnahme der Gipfeltreffen der Regierungschefs der Ostseestaaten zu erwägen;

*Ein Gipfeltreffen der Regierungschefs der Mitgliedsstaaten des Ostseerats fand unter Organisation des jeweiligen Vorsitzes vor 2014 alle zwei Jahre statt. Seit der völkerrechtswidrigen russischen Annexion der Krim 2014 ist das Format eines Gipfeltreffens ausgesetzt.*

18. die Beziehungen zwischen der nationalen, regionalen und kommunalen Ebene der Ostseezusammenarbeit zu stärken, und zwar durch Unterstützung der Zusammenarbeit zwischen dem Ostseerat (CBSS), der Subregionalen Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Ostseestaaten (BSSS), der CPMR-Ostseekommission und der Union der Ostseestädte (UBC) sowie die Aufforderung an eine größere Anzahl von Gebieten und Städten, sich an ihr zu beteiligen;

*Die Bundesregierung unterstützt die Bemühungen des Sekretariats des OSR für eine engere Vernetzung des Ostseerats, der Subregionalen Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Ostseestaaten (BSSSC), sowie der CPMR-Ostseekommission und der Union der Ostseestädte (UBC) z. B. in gemeinsamen Treffen wie der Teilnahme des Generaldirektors des OSR an Treffen der BSSSC und UBC, sowie umgekehrt.*

19. die finanzielle Grundlage einer praktischen Zusammenarbeit in der Region zu stärken durch die Ausweitung des Zuständigkeitsbereichs der Project Support Facility des Ostseerates, unter anderem durch die Nutzung öffentlich-privater Partnerschaftsmechanismen;

*Der Haushalt des OSR sieht für das 2022 Einnahmen aus Beiträgen für die Projekt Support Facility (PSF) in Höhe von EUR 333.333 vor. Der Anteil Deutschlands hiervon beträgt 40.000 EUR. Einer Verlängerung der PSF wird vorbehaltlich zur Verfügung stehender Haushaltsmittel angestrebt. Eine Ausweitung des Zuständigkeitsbereiches und eine damit verbundene Erhöhung der Beiträge der PSF setzt Konsens unter den Mitgliedern des Ostseerates voraus.*

*Der Nutzung öffentlich-privater Partnerschaftsmechanismen durch das Ostseeratssekretariat steht die Bundesregierung grundsätzlich offen gegenüber, sofern diese der Umsetzung der vereinbarten Ziele des Aktionsplans 2021-2025 dienen.*

20. zusammenzuarbeiten, um den Ostseeraum als eine bedeutende, wettbewerbsfähige Wissensregion mit einer exzellenten Hochschul- und Forschungsinfrastruktur zu stärken;

*Deutschland befürwortet die Stärkung des Ostseeraums als eine bedeutende, wettbewerbsfähige Wissensregion mit einer exzellenten Hochschul- und Forschungsinfrastruktur.*

*Die Unterstützung der Kooperation von deutschen Forschenden und Hochschulen mit den Ostseestaaten erfolgt in erster Linie über europäische Programme wie das Europäische Forschungsrahmenprogramm Horizont Europa und ERASMUS+. Alle Ostseeanrainerstaaten (bis auf Russland) nehmen an diesen Programmen in vollem Umfang teil und können daher von Initiativen wie bspw. der Förderung europäischer Hochschulnetzwerke profitieren. Auch die European Research Area Fellowship Maßnahme, Bestandteil des Europäischen Forschungsraum-Förderprogramms „Die europäische Innovationsunion“, trägt zur verstärkten Zusammenarbeit von Deutschland mit 13 EU-Mitgliedsstaaten Mittel- und Osteuropas (darunter Estland, Lettland, Litauen, Polen) bei. Mit dem Programm wird ein Beitrag zur wissenschaftlichen Leistungsfähigkeit und Innovationskraft Europas insgesamt und der Kooperationsfähigkeit ihrer Akteure geleistet. Die Rahmenbedingungen für gelingende Hochschulkooperationen und Studierendenmobilität werden im Bologna-Prozess gestaltet.*

*Ergänzt wird diese europäische Kooperation durch bi- und multilaterale Maßnahmen des BMBF. Beispielsweise sind Estland, Lettland, Litauen und Polen Zielländer in der seit 2004 in verschiedenen Fassungen aufgelegten BMBF-Förderbekanntmachung zur Integration der Region Mittelost- und Südosteuropa in den Europäischen Forschungsraum. Diese Bekanntmachungen unterstützen die Vorbereitung von gemeinsamen Anträgen für Forschungs- und Entwicklungsprojekte in europäischen Forschungsprogrammen.*

*Deutschland fördert darüber hinaus intensiv die gemeinsame Forschungsinfrastruktur im Ostseeraum über den Bau der Europäischen Spallationsquelle (ESS) in Lund, Schweden. Die ESS wird mit ihrer Fertigstellung die weltweit modernste Neutronenquelle darstellen und soll multidisziplinäre Forschung von der Grundlagenforschung bis zur Anwendung ermöglichen. Die ESS ist das erste europäische Großgerät, das in Skandinavien gebaut wird und unterstreicht damit die*

*zunehmende Bedeutung des Forschungsstandorts Øresund-Region (Südschweden und Dänemark).*

21. die Zusammenarbeit im Gesundheitsbereich im Ostseeraum zu fördern, um besser mit Situationen wie die derzeitigen COVID-19-Pandemie umzugehen sowie Erfahrungen und beispielhafte Vorgehensweisen in diesem Bereich auszutauschen;

*Derzeit steht die Pandemiebekämpfung selbst im Vordergrund. Im Kontext des Ostseeraums ist ganz wesentlich auch die weitere Stärkung der Rolle der EU in der Pandemiebekämpfung. Dies war auch ein Kernpunkt der deutschen Ratspräsidentschaft im Jahr 2020.*

*Zudem arbeitet Deutschland aktiv in der Ostseepartnerschaft für Gesundheit und soziales Wohlergehen (Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being, NDPHS) mit, die auch den Bereich „Gesundheit“ der Ostseestrategie der EU koordiniert. Mitglieder der Partnerschaft sind alle Ostseeanrainerstaaten (ohne Dänemark). Die Mitgliedschaft Russlands ist wegen des Angriffs auf die Ukraine ausgesetzt. Die Zusammenarbeit im Rahmen der Partnerschaft bietet Deutschland die Chance an einem Wissenstransfer in dieser Region teilzunehmen, sowie zum Austausch zu sensiblen Themen, wie z. B. HIV und Hepatitis.*

22. eine bessere Anpassung der Mittel und Verordnungen zwischen den Hauptfonds der EU sowie den regionalen und nationalen Fonds für grenzüberschreitende und transnationale Kooperationsprojekte, die makroregionale Herausforderungen sozialer und wirtschaftlicher Natur angehen, zu ermöglichen;

*Der Mehrjährige Finanzrahmen der Europäischen Union (EU) und der neue Rechtsrahmen für die EU-Regional- und Kohäsionshilfen bilden eine gute Grundlage dafür, dass die EU-Strukturfonds auch im Ostseeraum eine Schlüsselrolle für die Erreichung der wichtigsten Ziele der Förderperiode 2021-27 spielen können: den Wiederaufbau nach der COVID-19-Krise sowie den grünen und digitalen Wandel. Die grenzüberschreitenden und transnationalen Interreg-Programme fördern seit 2021 dabei verstärkt gemeinsame, auch kleinere Projekte in den Bereichen Umwelt- und Klimaschutz, sowie sozialeres und bürgernäheres Europa. Die Bundesregierung vertritt Deutschland auf EU-Ebene und koordiniert insgesamt den Austausch mit den – in Deutschland für die Regionalpolitik zuständigen – Bundesländern.*

23. die Synchronisierung des Vorsitzes über die Gruppe der persönlichen Vertreter der Regierungschefs der Ostseestaaten zur Bekämpfung der organisierten Kriminalität mit dem Vorsitz über den Ostseerat zu unterstützen, mit der am 1. Juli 2021 begonnen wurde, wobei Norwegen den Vorsitz innehatte;

*Während der deutschen BSTF-Präsidentschaft, die bis zum 30.06.2021 andauerte, wurde die Synchronisierung bzw. Angleichung der Präsidentschaft in der BSTF mit dem Vorsitz im OSR vereinbart. Demnach hat nun jeweils ein Mitgliedstaat für ein Jahr den Vorsitz im OSR sowie die Präsidentschaft über die BSTF zugleich.*

24. den Projektentwicklungsprozess und das Konzept mit dem Titel „Baltic Sea Cultural Cities and Regions (BSCCR)“ unter dem Motto „Water connects us, but culture unites us“ („Wasser verbindet uns, aber die Kultur eint uns“) mit dem Ostseerat als führendem Partner zu unterstützen, das darauf abzielt, Städte und Regionen, Menschen, kulturelle Organisationen und Fachkräfte zu verbinden, indem es die Sichtbarkeit der kulturellen Vielfalt im Ostseeraum erhöht.

*Die Umsetzung dieses Projekts fällt in den Zuständigkeitsbereich der Bundesländer.*

### **im Hinblick auf die Demokratie in einer sich verändernden Medienlandschaft**

#### **Digitalisierung, Bekämpfung von Falschinformationen, Fehlinformationen und „Fake News“ sowie der Schutz der freien Medien und der Redefreiheit**

25. ein kontinuierliches Engagement und eine ständige Verpflichtung sowie umfassende Anstrengungen und eine umfassende Unterstützung zur Stärkung des Vertrauens in die demokratischen Strukturen und Werte durchzusetzen, um Toleranz und Offenheit, Medien- und Meinungsfreiheit sowie starke NGOs als Grundpfeiler der Demokratien im Ostseeraum zu fördern;

26. die Förderung der Medienkompetenz bei jungen Menschen auszuweiten, um sie in die Lage zu versetzen, kritisch zu denken und Informationen zu bewerten;

27. das Potenzial der sozialen Medien zu nutzen, um junge Menschen zu motivieren, sich an politischen Diskussionen und Entscheidungsprozessen zu beteiligen;

*Im nationalen Rahmen ist Anfang 2020 das Bundesprogramm „Demokratie leben!“ in die 2. Förderperiode (2020-2024) gestartet. „Demokratie fördern. Vielfalt gestalten. Extremismus vorbeugen.“ sind die neuen Kernziele der 2. Förderperiode, in der aktuell über 600 Projekte unterstützt werden. Diese dienen auch der unabhängigen, kritischen Urteilsbildung und Medienkompetenz junger Menschen. Das BMFSFJ fördert bspw. das Informationsportal SCHAU HIN! ([www.schau-hin.info](http://www.schau-hin.info)), das Initiativbüro „Gutes Aufwachsen mit Medien“ ([www.gutes-aufwachsen-mit-medien.de](http://www.gutes-aufwachsen-mit-medien.de)), das Eltern und pädagogische Fachkräfte bei ihrer Erziehungsverantwortung im digitalen Zeitalter unterstützt, und das Beratungs- und Hilfeportal jugend.support ([www.jugend.support](http://www.jugend.support)).“*

*Das deutsche Engagement zur Stärkung der Medien- und Meinungsfreiheit, sowie des Vertrauens in die demokratischen Strukturen und Werte im Ostseeraum schließt drei jeweils bilaterale Gemeinsame Erklärungen mit den baltischen Staaten aus dem Jahr 2015 mit ein. Mit dem Resilienzpaket für die baltischen Staaten und dem Projekt Strategische Kommunikation antwortet das Auswärtige Amt auf die außenpolitischen*

*Herausforderungen in dieser Region. Die Bundesregierung sieht in dem Aufbau von Resilienz ggü. ausländischer Desinformation einen Beitrag zu Stärkung und Sicherung der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Stabilität in Europa und damit auch einen Schwerpunkt für die EU-NATO Zusammenarbeit.*

*Seit 2016 werden in der Region Maßnahmenpakete i. H. v. insgesamt ca. 1 Mio. EUR pro Jahr umgesetzt: Ziel ist es u. a., durch Projekte in Estland, Lettland und Litauen (auch durch Deutsche Welle und Goethe-Institut) im Medien- und zivilgesellschaftlichen Bereich den zivilgesellschaftlichen Austausch zu fördern und in der Bekämpfung von Desinformation zusammenzuarbeiten. Kern der Maßnahmen im Baltikum: (1) die Resilienz gegen Desinformation und Propaganda durch Verbesserung des Zugangs zu qualitativ hochwertigen lokalen Medienangeboten (2) die Resilienz der Gesellschaft ggü. Versuchen von gezielter politischer Einflussnahme mittels Informationen in den einzelnen baltischen Staaten zu stärken, insb. durch integrations- und demokratiefördernde Bildungsvorhaben und Zusammenarbeit im Wirtschaftsbereich; (3) unsere Unterstützung für die EU verstärkt zu kommunizieren (z. B. durch die Kampagne #EuropeUnited).*

*Angesichts der besonderen digitalen Mediengewohnheiten der Jugendlichen nehmen immer mehr der Projekte jüngere Zielgruppen in den Fokus, um ihre gesellschaftliche Beteiligung und ihre Medienkompetenzen zu stärken. So haben 2021 die öffentlich-rechtlichen Sender in Estland und Litauen mithilfe von DW Coachings zwei neue digitale Formate für Jugendliche erprobt. Auch das digitale Medienprojekt „ENTR“ der DW zielt darauf ab, durch Überwindung von Sprachbarrieren den Dialog über Schwerpunktthemen der jungen Generation zu fördern und das Bewusstsein für eine europäische Identität zu wecken. Es ist u. a. bereits in polnischer Sprache verfügbar.*

*Die Resilienz-Initiativen der Bundesregierung werden auch 2022 fortgesetzt. Es sind über 40 Projekte geplant mit Fokus auf weiteren Aufbau von Media und Information Literacy, auf Stärkung von zivilgesellschaftlicher Beteiligung und auf Vernetzung von Minderheiten und unterschiedlichen gesellschaftlichen Gruppen. Die BKM fördert auch Einzelprojekte zur Nachrichten- und digitalen Informationskompetenz durch Medienarbeit mit Kindern/Jugendlichen.*

28. rechtliche Verordnungen und nationale Strategien zu verabschieden – auch in Bereichen wie Justiz, Verteidigung, Schule, Forschung, öffentliche Bildung, Bibliothekswesen, kulturelle Institutionen, Medien, Zivilgesellschaft, NGOs und Unternehmen – um die demokratische Resilienz gegen digitale Gewalt und Straftaten über das Internet zu stärken und Online-Hassrede zu verhindern und zu bekämpfen;

*Zur Verhinderung und Bekämpfung von Online-Hassrede hat die Bundesregierung bereits zahlreiche Maßnahmen auf den Weg gebracht. Hierzu zählt insbesondere das Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz (NetzDG), welches 2017 in Kraft getreten ist und 2021 erweitert wurde. So wurden mit dem Gesetz zur Bekämpfung des Rechtsextremismus und der Hasskriminalität u. a. die Straftatbestände der „Störung des öffentlichen Friedens durch Androhung von Straftaten“, der „Belohnung und Billigung von Straftaten“ und der „Bedrohung“ erweitert und der Strafraum für öffentlich getätigte Bedrohungen und Beleidigungen erhöht. Zentrale Neuerung ist die Einführung einer Verpflichtung der unter das NetzDG fallenden Anbieter sozialer Netzwerke, dem Bundeskriminalamt als Zentralstelle bestimmte strafbare Inhalte zu melden, die sie aufgrund einer Beschwerde entfernt oder gesperrt haben.*

*Das Förderprogramm „Demokratie im Netz“ der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung hat interventiven und präventiven Charakter gegen rechtsextreme und menschenfeindliche Kommunikationsformen und versucht durch partizipative Projekte Demokratieförderung und Medienkompetenz im digitalen Raum zu stärken. Die Umsetzung der im Rahmen des Förderprogramms ausgewählten Projekte erfolgt vom 1.1.2022 bis Ende 2022.*

*Im Bundesprogramm „Demokratie leben“ werden verschiedene Maßnahmen gefördert, um demokratische Resilienz zu stärken und Online-Hassrede zu verhindern und zu bekämpfen, darunter das Kompetenzzentrum gegen Hass im Netz und der Aufbau einer Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft gegen Hass im Netz.*

*Die Bundesregierung beteiligt sich außerdem auf europäischer Ebene intensiv am Gesetzgebungsverfahren zum Verordnungs-Vorschlag der Europäischen Kommission für einen „Digital Services Act“ (DSA). Der Rechtsakt verfolgt unter anderem das Ziel, ein sicheres, berechenbares und vertrauenswürdiges Online-Umfeld zu gewährleisten.*

*Die am 8. September 2021 beschlossene "Cybersicherheitsstrategie für Deutschland 2021" bildet den strategischen Rahmen für das Handeln der Bundesregierung im Bereich der Cybersicherheit als Reaktion auf die Bedrohungslage im Cyberraum.*

29. über einen internationalen Ethikkodex für den digitalen Wandel zu diskutieren, ihn zu entwickeln und zu verabschieden;

*Die Diskussion ethischer Fragen der Digitalisierung einschließlich einer konkreten Positionierung der Parlamentarierinnen und Parlamentarier wird begrüßt. Es bestehen bereits laufende Befassungen mit ethischen Fragen der Digitalisierung in multilateralen*

*Gremien der EU, der NATO und der VN, welche durch die Diskussion auf parlamentarischer Ebene wichtige neue Impulse erhalten können.*

30. weitere praktische Unterstützungsmaßnahmen einzuleiten, um die pluralistischen, unabhängigen Medien im Ostseeraum zu stärken und ihre Nachhaltigkeit im digitalen Zeitalter zu gewährleisten;

*Sowohl die deutsche Bundesregierung als auch die Bundesländer haben als Reaktion auf die Covid-19-Pandemie zahlreiche Unterstützungsprogramme für den Mediensektor installiert, um Pluralismus und Unabhängigkeit der Medien zu gewährleisten. Im Hinblick auf die Herausforderungen, denen traditionelle Medienunternehmen seit Jahren durch den digitalen Wandel unterliegen, gibt der Ende 2020 in Kraft getretene Medienstaatsvertrag der Länder Antworten auf zentrale Fragen einer digitalisierten Medienwelt. Mit ihm werden rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen gesetzt, die Meinungsvielfalt und kommunikative Chancengleichheit gerade auch im Netz gefördert, Qualitätsjournalismus sichtbar gemacht und die Eigenverantwortung der Netzcommunity gestärkt. Erstmals unterliegen auch die großen Online-Medienplattformen und intermediäre Plattformen, wie Google, Facebook, Twitter oder Amazon einer medienspezifischen und vielfaltsbezogenen Regulierung. Siehe auch Beitrag zu Handlungsappell Nr. 27.*

31. die Förderung und Umsetzung von internationalen Normen, demokratischen Werten und Menschenrechtsgrundsätzen im globalen Informations- und Kommunikationsraum zu unterstützen;

*Die Bundesregierung setzt sich weltweit für Meinungsfreiheit, freie Meinungsäußerung und Zugang zu Information als unveräußerliche Menschenrechte und wesentliches Fundament einer freiheitlichen und demokratischen Gesellschaft ein und wird Verletzungen dieser Freiheiten kritisch aufgreifen. Hierzu zählt auch die Verteidigung eines freien und offen zugänglichen Internets, insbesondere angesichts der Zunahme von Zensur und Überwachung in autoritären Regimen. Sie wird weltweit gegen die Verfolgung von Journalistinnen und Journalisten und die Unterdrückung Oppositioneller eintreten. Besondere Bedeutung haben die Unterstützung und der Schutz von unabhängigen Medien und Medienmachern, die durch ihre Arbeit Missstände aufzeigen und gesellschaftliche Diskussionen befördern.*

*Im Menschenrechtsrat und im Dritten Ausschuss der VN-Generalversammlung verhandelt die Bundesregierung regelmäßig aktuelle Fassungen der Resolution zum Recht auf Privatheit im Digitalen Zeitalter, unterstützt darüber hinaus die Resolution „Internet and Human Rights“ sowie „New and Emerging Technologies and Human*

*Rights“ in beiden Foren und arbeitet mit der VN-Sonderberichterstatteerin zum Recht auf Privatheit, Ana Brian Nougreres, zusammen.*

32. Maßnahmen gegen den aggressiven Missbrauch der sozialen Medien als eine Form von digitaler Gewalt zu unternehmen und einen Ansatz, der die Opfer in den Mittelpunkt stellt, ins Zentrum der Maßnahmen zu stellen und dabei die sozialen Medien als ein wichtiges Instrument für das demokratische Handeln anzuerkennen;

*Deutschland hat in den vergangenen Jahren verschiedene Maßnahmen ergriffen und Projekte gefördert, um die Verbreitung von Hass und Hetze im digitalen Raum zu unterbinden und Betroffene digitaler Gewalt sowohl analog als auch online zu unterstützen. Genannt seien insbesondere:*

*Gemäß dem Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz (NetzDG) müssen offensichtlich rechtswidrige Inhalte innerhalb von 24 Stunden, alle sonst rechtswidrigen Inhalte innerhalb von sieben Tagen gelöscht oder entfernt werden. Zudem müssen große soziale Netzwerke halbjährlich über den Umgang mit Beschwerden über strafrechtlich relevante Inhalte berichten.*

*Opfern von Persönlichkeitsrechtsverletzungen im Netz wird ermöglicht, aufgrund gerichtlicher Anordnung die Bestandsdaten der Verletzer von den Diensteanbietern zu erhalten. Dies ermöglicht ein (gerichtliches) Vorgehen gegen die meist anonym auftretenden Inhalteverfasser, etwa die Geltendmachung von Schadensersatzansprüchen.*

*Ab dem 1. Februar 2022 werden die Anbieter sozialer Netzwerke dazu verpflichtet, bestimmte, besonders schwere Straftaten an das Bundeskriminalamt zu melden, das die Identität der Verletzer ermittelt und sodann die Vorgänge an die für die Strafverfolgung zuständigen Behörden weitergibt. Schließlich können Nutzerinnen und Nutzer seit dem 28. Juni 2021 Beschwerde einlegen gegen die Entscheidung eines sozialen Netzwerks, einen Inhalt zu löschen bzw. nicht zu löschen, und den Diensteanbieter so zu einer Überprüfung der getroffenen Entscheidung verpflichten.*

*Die gemeinnützige Gesellschaft HateAid ist eine Beratungs- und Anlaufstelle für Opfer digitaler Gewalt. Sie setzt sich gegen Hate Speech im Internet ein und unterstützt Personen, die zum Opfer von Hass und Hetze im Internet gemacht wurden, insbesondere durch Prozesskostenfinanzierungen sowie emotional stabilisierende Beratungsleistungen. HateAid hat bislang über 700 Personen unterstützt, die von digitaler Gewalt betroffen waren oder sind. Die Beratungsleistungen werden niedrigschwellig über E-Mail, Telefon, Social-Media-Plattformen, das Kontakt-*

*/Meldeformular und eine Chatbetreuung erbracht. Das Projekt von HateAid wird seit 2020 vom BMJ gefördert.*

*Im Oktober 2020 ist die zentrale Opferschutzplattform (Hilfe-Info.de) des BMJ im Internet gestartet. Die Plattform (auch auf Englisch verfügbar) beinhaltet Informationen zu allen opferrechtlichen Belangen nach einer Straftat, u. a. zu Hilfs- und Beratungs-möglichkeiten, finanziellen, praktischen, psychologischen und rechtsmedizinischen Unterstützungsleistungen und zum Ablauf von Strafverfahren.*

33. Maßnahmen für die Umsetzung von Ziel 16 für nachhaltige Entwicklung der Vereinten Nationen unter den Aspekten des Zugangs zu kostenlosen Informationen und der Meinungsfreiheit einzuleiten;

*Die Bundesregierung setzt sich weltweit für Meinungsfreiheit, freie Meinungsäußerung und Zugang zu Information ein und fördert dies insbesondere in den Partnerländern der deutschen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit. Im Übrigen wird auf den 14. Bericht der Bundesregierung über ihre Menschenrechtspolitik, insb. Kap. A, Ziff. 5, und Kapitel C4 verwiesen. (<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/themen/menschenrechte/menschenrechtsbericht/2422186>).*

34. nationale, europäische und globale Maßnahmen zur Förderung der Informations- und Medienkompetenz zu unterstützen, darunter die Umsetzung von VN-Resolution 75/267 über die Globale Woche für Medien- und Informationskompetenz, die von der VN-Generalversammlung am 25. März 2021 verabschiedet wurde.

*Die Bundesregierung setzt sich für die Stärkung der Informations- und Medienkompetenz ein. Sie fördert Einzelprojekte zur Nachrichten- und digitalen Informationskompetenz durch Medienarbeit mit Kindern/Jugendlichen (z.B. fragFINN, Cultures Interactives, JFF Jugend Film Fernsehen e. V) und hat 2021 die erste bundesweite Studie zum Stand der Nachrichtenkompetenz in der Gesamtbevölkerung der Stiftung Neue Verantwortung kofinanziert.*

### **im Hinblick auf den Schutz der Ostsee und unserer Umwelt für künftige Generationen sowie des Stopps des Klimawandels und des Verlusts der biologischen Vielfalt**

35. ein deutliches und entschlossenes Signal zu senden durch die Verabschiedung einer ehrgeizigen Fortschreibung des Ostsee-Aktionsplans durch das HELCOM-Ministertreffen am 20. Oktober 2021 unter dem gegenwärtigen deutschen Vorsitz sowie mithilfe einer regelmäßigen Kontrolle ihrer Umsetzung sicherzustellen, dass seine Ziele in allen Ländern des Ostseeraums schneller und

- konsequenter als zuvor umgesetzt werden, um bis zum Ende dieses Jahrzehnts einen guten ökologischen Zustand der Ostsee und ihrer Umwelt zu erzielen;
36. mit verstärkten gemeinsamen strukturierten Bemühungen zur Reduzierung aller absichtlichen und unabsichtlichen Nährstoffeinträge in die See den Schwerpunkt auf die ökologische Nachhaltigkeit der Ostsee zu legen;
  37. im Einklang mit der Agenda 2030 der Vereinten Nationen, dem Pariser Abkommen und dem Ostsee-Aktionsplan 2030 bedeutende Schritte für die Verringerung der Emissionen zu unternehmen und die Resilienz wichtiger Wirtschaftssektoren, z.B. Industrie, Verkehr und Bau, gegen Klimaänderungen sowie die Verstärkung von natürlichen Kohlenstoffpeichern, z.B. Wäldern, zu erreichen;
  38. anzuerkennen, dass globales Handeln und grenzübergreifende Zusammenarbeit erforderlich sind, um die Auswirkungen des Klimawandels zu mildern, die biologische Vielfalt zu erhalten und zu schützen sowie die Umsetzung der Agenda 2030 für nachhaltige Entwicklung mit dem Schwerpunkt auf Klimaschutz (SDG13), Ozeanen (SDG14) und biologischer Vielfalt (SDG15) zu unterstützen;
  39. sowohl regionale als auch lokale Projekte zu fördern und finanziell zu unterstützen, die auf der Grundlage der Forschung darauf abzielen, die Meeresumwelt und die Umwelt an Land sowie die Ökosysteme in der Ostsee und in ihren Einzugsgebieten zu verbessern und zu erhalten;
  40. die Gemeinschaften vor Ort in der gegenwärtigen Lage weiterhin zu beteiligen und zu informieren, um von allen Teilen der Gesellschaft, einschließlich Unternehmen und Zivilgesellschaft, Unterstützung und Engagement für den langfristigen Versuch, einen guten Umweltstatus in den Küstengebieten und über sie hinaus zurückzugewinnen, zu erhalten;
  41. eine weitere Reduzierung der Nährstoffeinträge in die Ostsee anzustreben und die Entwicklung von Technologien und Innovationen zu unterstützen, die die Eutrophierung der Ostsee verringern werden;

*Die HELCOM-Vertragsparteien haben am 20. Oktober 2021 in Lübeck unter deutschem Vorsitz den Ostseeaktionsplan für den Zeitraum 2021-2030 verabschiedet. Der Plan widmet sich umfassend allen Herausforderungen und Belastungen, denen sich das Meeresökosystem Ostsee gegenüber sieht, um bis zum Ende dieses Jahrzehnts einen guten ökologischen Zustand der Ostsee und ihrer Umwelt zu erzielen.*

*Im Fokus stehen Aktivitäten gegen Verschmutzungen der Ostsee, vor allem durch Meeresmüll sowie Eutrophierung (verstärktes Algenwachstum), die durch Überdüngung verursacht wird. Auch der Zustand und der Schutz von marinen Arten und Lebensräumen soll verbessert werden. Ziele sind u. a. eine Verringerung der Beeinträchtigung der Meeresbiodiversität durch Unterwasserlärm und die Reduzierung der negativen Auswirkungen der Fischerei, insbesondere in Meeresschutzgebieten sowie eine Minimierung der Störungen des Meeresbodens. Eine Maßnahme des Ostsee-Aktionsplans ist die Einführung des gemeinsamen Chemikalienunfall-Bekämpfungs-*

*handbuches (Joint Inter-Regional Marine HNS Response Manual) bis 2025 im gesamten HELCOM-Bereich. Deutschland kommen hierbei besondere Aufgaben zu, wie in Antwort 12 beschrieben.*

*Die HELCOM-Vertragsstaaten wollen sich verstärkt dem Problem der zunehmenden Eutrophierung widmen. Der aktualisierte Ostseeaktionsplan schreibt die quantitativen Nährstoffreduktionsanforderungen für die HELCOM-Vertragsstaaten, die Schifffahrt und Drittstaaten fort, die bis spätestens 2027 umgesetzt werden. Angesichts der besonderen natürlichen Gegebenheiten der Ostsee (Binnenmeer mit geringem Wasseraustausch und Tiefenbecken) ist die Eutrophierung als Konsequenz übermäßiger Nährstoffeinleitungen, im Wesentlichen aus der Landwirtschaft, ein besonderes Problem der Ostseeökosysteme. Da acht von neun Ostseeanliegerstaaten auch EU-Mitgliedstaaten sind, teilen sie die rechtlichen Verpflichtungen zur Bekämpfung der Nährstoffeinträge gem. Nitrat-, Wasser- und Meeresstrategie-Rahmenrichtlinie. Deutschland setzt im Rahmen des aktuellen HELCOM-Vorsitzes auch einen Schwerpunkt bei der Eutrophierungsbekämpfung. Daher soll insbesondere die zu hohe Nährstoffbelastung der Ostsee weiter reduziert werden.*

*Zusätzlich zu den im Ostseeaktionsplan enthaltenen Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung der Eutrophierung wurde eine ambitionierte Nährstoff-Recycling-Strategie verabschiedet, die auf innovative Technologien setzt. Die Maßnahmen sind auch darauf ausgerichtet, die Resilienz der Ostsee zu stärken und damit die Fähigkeit der Ostsee zu verbessern, auf die Auswirkungen des Klimawandels zu reagieren.*

*Im Rahmen der Europäischen Klimaschutzinitiative (EUKI) werden eine Vielzahl von Projekten in den verschiedenen BSPC-Staaten finanziert. Diese Projekte tragen auch zu den genannten Zielen bei - so zum Beispiel die Projekte: „Kommunen für mehr Energieeffizienz“, „INVESTIGATE – Verbesserung der nationalen Treibhausgasinventare für organische Böden und Minderungspotential“ oder „Paludikultur im Baltikum – Potenziale und Kapazitäten für den Klimaschutz durch produktive Nutzung von wiedervernässten Torfmooren“. Die EUKI dient dem Wissenstransfer zur Umsetzung der ambitionierten EU-Klimapolitik in enger Zusammenarbeit unter den EU-Mitgliedsstaaten.*

42. weitere Maßnahmen zu ergreifen, um Schiffsemissionen in die Ostsee zu verringern;

*Die Ostsee ist als Emissions-Überwachungsgebiet (ECA) ausgewiesen, in dem gemäß Anlage VI des Internationalen Übereinkommens von 1973 zur Verhütung der Meeresverschmutzung durch Schiffe (MARPOL-Übereinkommen) strengste Grenzwerte*

*für den Schwefelgehalt von Schiffskraftstoffen sowie für Stickoxid-Emissionen gelten. Zudem gelten in der Ostsee als weltweit erstes Sondergebiet festgelegte Grenzwerte für die Einleitung von Abwässern von Fahrgastschiffen.*

*Im Rahmen der Verhandlungen zum Klimaschutz in der Seeschifffahrt in der Internationalen Seeschifffahrts-Organisation (IMO) setzt sich Deutschland für die schnellstmögliche Entwicklung und Umsetzung mittel- und langfristiger Maßnahmen zur Reduzierung von Treibhausgas-Emissionen von Schiffen ein, hat sich zum Null-Emissionsziel für den Seeverkehr in 2050 bekannt, und ist ambitionierter Treiber der Verhandlungen in der IMO sowie der Umsetzung der Dossiers des EU-Legislativpakets „Fit for 55“. Mit der durch die Maßnahmen einhergehenden Einführung kohlenstoffarmer und -freier Kraftstoffe und Antriebe werden ab Mitte dieser Dekade weitere Emissionsreduktionen in Bezug auf Treibhausgase und Luftschadstoffe der Schifffahrt einhergehen. Zudem ist die Bundesregierung und auf HELCOM-Ebene an der Entwicklung weiterer Schutzmaßnahmen wie der Umsetzung des Baltic Sea Action Plans beteiligt, die ebenfalls das Ziel weiterer Emissionsreduktionen verfolgen.*

43. auch in Zukunft Investitionen in grüne Wasserstofftechnologien zu unterstützen, um die Kohlendioxidemissionen zu verringern;

*Die Bundesregierung hat am 10. Juni 2020 die Nationale Wasserstoffstrategie (NWS) verabschiedet mit dem Ziel, durch einen schnellen Markthochlauf grünen Wasserstoff und seine Folgeprodukte als Schlüsseltechnologie für die Energiewende zu etablieren. Die Umsetzung der NWS hat die Bundesregierung mit Nachdruck vorangetrieben und damit wichtige Grundlagen für Investitionen aus der Wirtschaft sowie für Forschungsinitiativen geschaffen. In der ersten Phase des Markthochlaufs ist die Förderung integrierter Projekte erforderlich, d.h. von Projekten, die die gesamte Wasserstoff-Wertschöpfungskette berücksichtigen.*

44. zusammenzuarbeiten und Informationen im Hinblick auf die Risikobewertung und notwendige Küstenschutzmaßnahmen aufgrund steigender Meeresspiegel auszutauschen;

*Die deutschen Küstengebiete sind in starkem Maße von den Folgen des Klimawandels betroffen. Ein wichtiger Einflussfaktor ist die durch den durchschnittlichen Temperaturanstieg verursachte Erwärmung der Meerestemperatur, die sich negativ auf die marinen Ökosysteme auswirkt. Der durchschnittliche Temperaturanstieg steht auch in Zusammenhang mit dem beschleunigten Anstieg des Meeresspiegels. Dieser Anstieg ist an deutschen Küsten bereits messbar und verläuft etwa entsprechend der globalen Projektionen.*

*Zwischen Bund und Küstenländern besteht seit langem eine enge Zusammenarbeit im Hinblick auf die Risikobewertung und notwendige Küstenschutzmaßnahmen. Die Risikobewertung wird zukünftig auch die Stärkung der Resilienz von kritischen Infrastrukturen gegenüber dem klimawandelbedingten Anstieg des Meeresspiegels im Blick haben. Das Thema Klimawandel ist gleichfalls als übergreifende Herausforderung fester Bestandteil des von HELCOM im Oktober 2021 verabschiedeten Ostseeaktions-plans. HELCOM hat sich erstmals mit konkreten Maßnahmen auch dem Nexus Meere/Klima zugewandt. Klimaschutz und Klimaanpassung werden künftig Prüfsteine aller HELCOM-Entscheidungen sein.*

45. im Hinblick auf die Auswirkungen von Kunststoffen auf Umwelt, Klimawandel und biologische Vielfalt

- a. zu bedenken, dass es aufgrund des grenzübergreifenden Charakters der Meeresabfälle und der besonderen Anfälligkeit des darumliegenden Ostseegebietes von gegenseitigem Interesse ist, die Eintragung von Kunststoffen in die Umwelt zu vermeiden und zu diesem Zweck unnötige Kunststoffverpackungen von Anfang an zu verringern und Kunststoffabfälle nachhaltig zu entsorgen;
- b. sich daher zu verpflichten, die Inkraftsetzung des Regionalen Aktionsplans der HELCOM gegen Meeresabfälle sowie der in ihm vorgesehenen Maßnahmen als Teil des fortgeschriebenen Ostsee-Aktionsplans auf regionaler Ebene zu unterstützen und
- c. den Beginn von Verhandlungen über ein neues ehrgeiziges globales Abkommen bei der Umweltversammlung der Vereinten Nationen UNEA 5.2 zu unterstützen, um den nächsten entscheidenden Schritt auf internationaler Ebene zu unternehmen;

*Deutschland hat sich auf europäischer Ebene für ambitionierte Umweltvorgaben im Verpackungsbereich eingesetzt und setzt diese in nationales Recht um. Das neue Verpackungsgesetz setzt u. a. EU-Vorschriften aus der geänderten Abfallrahmenrichtlinie 2008/98/EG und der Einwegkunststoffrichtlinie (EU) 2019/904 um. So dürfen seit dem 3. Juli 2021 u. a. folgende Einwegkunststoffprodukte nicht mehr in Verkehr gebracht werden: Besteck, Teller, Trinkhalme, Wattestäbchen und Luftballonstäbe sowie Getränkebecher einschließlich Deckeln und To-Go-Lebensmittelbehältnisse aus expandiertem Polystyrol. Ab 2022 ist zudem ein Pfand auf alle Einweggetränkeflaschen aus Kunststoff verpflichtend. Ab 2023 sind Lebensmittel und Getränke im „To-Go-Segment“ auch in einer Mehrwegverpackung anzubieten, die nicht teurer als die Einwegverpackung sein darf. Um das Recycling von Plastikflaschen weiter zu steigern, müssen PET-Einweggetränkeflaschen ab 2025 aus mindestens 25 Prozent Recyclingkunststoff bestehen. Ab 2030 wird sich diese Quote automatisch auf 30 Prozent erhöhen und dann für alle Einweggetränkeflaschen aus Kunststoff gelten.*

*Deutschland verschreibt sich der Umsetzung des unter seinem Vorsitz entstandenen und verabschiedeten Ostseeaktionsplans sowie des Regionalen Aktionsplans gegen die Meeresvermüllung und begrüßt die Zielsetzung, Strandfunde von Plastikmüll bis 2025 um mindestens 30% und bis 2030 um mindestens 50% zu verringern. Ebenso wie HELCOM unterstützt die Bundesregierung die Aufnahme von Verhandlungen zu einer verbindlichen Konvention gegen Meeresvermüllung und Plastikverschmutzung. Zuletzt haben 74 Staaten die gemeinsame Erklärung einer Ministerkonferenz zu diesem Thema auf Initiative von Deutschland, Ecuador, Ghana und Vietnam, unterstützt von UNEP und WTO, unterzeichnet. Darüber hinaus ist Deutschland als Mitglied der EU Co-Sponsor einer entsprechenden Resolution von Peru und Ruanda.*

46. im Hinblick auf die Folgen eines gestiegenen Schifffahrts- und Kreuzfahrttourismus für den Klimawandel und den Rückgang der biologischen Vielfalt in der Ostsee
- a. anzuerkennen, dass die Ostsee das Binnenmeer mit dem größten Seeverkehrsaufkommen und ein Binnenmeer mit einem geringen Wasseraustausch ist;
  - b. anzuerkennen, dass ein globales Handeln und grenzübergreifende Zusammenarbeit erforderlich sind, um die Emissionen eines gestiegenen Kreuzfahrttourismus und sonstigen Schiffsverkehrs auf der Ostsee abzuschwächen;
  - c. den Übergang von Schiffen, insbesondere Kreuzfahrtschiffen, von fossilen Brennstoffen auf nachhaltige, erneuerbare Brennstoffe zu fördern und zu beschleunigen, damit der Schiffsverkehr klimaneutral und umweltfreundlicher wird;
  - d. weitere Maßnahmen zu ergreifen, um die Emissionen von Ruß durch Schiffe zu reduzieren; dies beinhaltet Unterstützungsmaßnahmen in Bezug auf Technologien und Infrastruktur aus dem Stromversorgungsnetz der Häfen;
  - e. die Entwicklung von Technologien und Innovationen zu unterstützen, die das Einleiten von Abfällen aus Schiffen in die Ostsee weiter reduzieren werden;
  - f. die Verhütung der Einführung schädlicher Wasserorganismen und Krankheitserreger im Ballastwasser zu unterstützen durch die Förderung einer weiteren Entwicklung von Technologien und Innovationen und eine strikte Anwendung der Ballastwasserkonvention sowie einen aktiven Beitrag zur Phase des Erfahrungsaufbaus;
  - g. zu versuchen, die Meeresumwelt und die Umwelt an Land sowie die Ökosysteme in der Ostsee zu verbessern und zu erhalten;

*Siehe auch Beitrag zu Handlungsappell Nr. 42.*

*Deutschland ergreift bzw. unterstützt, auch in Anbetracht der besonderen hydrologischen Eigenschaften und Sensibilität der ökologischen Schutzgüter der Ostsee, ambitionierte Maßnahmen auf internationaler, regionaler und nationaler Ebene, um die Auswirkungen des Schifffahrts- und Kreuzfahrttourismus auf den Klimawandel, den*

*Rückgang der biologischen Vielfalt und die Verschmutzung, insbesondere durch Abfälle, in der Ostsee zu minimieren.*

*Ein wichtiger Bestandteil des „Fit for 55“-Pakets ist der Vorschlag der Europäischen Kommission für eine Verordnung über die Verwendung von erneuerbaren und kohlenstoffarmen Kraftstoffen im Seeverkehr (FuelEU Maritime). Sie soll einheitliche europäische Regeln festlegen für die Begrenzung der Treibhausgasintensität der Energie, die an Bord von Schiffen verwendet wird, die in europäische Häfen einlaufen, sich dort aufhalten oder aus ihnen auslaufen.*

*Die Bundesregierung begrüßt und unterstützt das Anliegen des Verordnungsvorhabens grundsätzlich, auch wenn noch fachliche Fragen zu der Verordnung zu klären sind. Das gilt auch für einen weiteren Bestandteil des EU „Fit-for-55“-Pakets, die Ausweitung des Europäischen Emissionshandels auf die Schifffahrt, nach dem der Seeverkehr ab 2023 stufenweise bis zu 100% in 2026 in das EU-Emissionshandelssystem einbezogen werden soll. Das „Fit for 55“-Paket erfordert den Beginn eines Übergangs von fossilen auf nachhaltige erneuerbare Kraftstoffe für viele Schiffstypen, einschließlich Kreuzfahrtschiffen. Die im Paket ebenfalls enthaltenen Vorgaben für die Versorgung von Schiffen in Häfen mit Landstrom unterstützt Deutschland und hat hierfür bereits Maßnahmen für den Infrastrukturausbau und eine Verbesserung der Wettbewerbsbedingungen gegenüber Bordstrom umgesetzt.*

*Deutschland und die EU unterstützen die Zielsetzung der IMO Strategie und des zugehörigen Aktionsplans, die Einträge von Abfällen durch Schiffe ins Meer bis 2025 auf Null zu reduzieren.*

#### 47. im Hinblick auf Munitionsaltlasten

- a. gemäß den Entschlüssen der 28. und der 29. BSPC die Anstrengungen zur Entdeckung und Neutralisierung von Kampfmitteln in der Ostsee mit konkreten Maßnahmen über eine multilaterale Zusammenarbeit zu verstärken;
- b. die unterschiedlichen nationalen Erkenntnisse, Forschungsergebnisse und Daten in einer Expertengruppe – falls möglich bei der HELCOM – zusammenzubringen und auf dieser Grundlage konkrete Maßnahmen zur Beseitigung von Kampfmitteln in der Ostsee zu erarbeiten;
- c. zur Konkretisierung des in der 28. Entschlüsselung der BSPC erwähnten Finanzinstruments einen internationalen Geberfond anzustreben und zu prüfen, ob die HELCOM einen derartigen Fond verwalten könnte;
- d. den Ostseeraum als eine weltweite Modellregion für die ökologisch nachhaltige, schnelle und bezahlbare Bergung, Dekontaminierung und Beseitigung von im Meer versenkten Kampfmitteln zu etablieren;
- e. alle erforderlichen Maßnahmen zu unternehmen, die darauf abzielen, die Beseitigung und Entschärfung von Kampfmitteln und anderen gefährlichen Produkten in der Ostsee innerhalb der nächsten 20 Jahre abzuschließen;

- f. die Möglichkeit zu prüfen, diese Aufgabe als eine langfristige ökologische Priorität ausdrücklich in den Ostsee-Aktionsplan der HELCOM aufzunehmen.

*Der aktualisierte Aktionsplan der HELCOM von 2021 sieht Maßnahmen zur Verringerung von versenkter chemischer und konventioneller Munition im Ostseeraum vor. Im Rahmen der HELCOM RESPONSE Arbeitsgruppe und der zugehörigen Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects (SUBMERGED) sollen Beste Umweltpraktiken (Best Environmental Practice – BEP) für eine umfassende Risikobewertung von Munition, Wracks und gefährlichen Objekten im Meer bis 2025 und Beste Verfügbare Techniken (Best Available Techniques - BAT) für ein umweltfreundliches und sicheres Management bis 2028 umgesetzt werden.*

*Im Koalitionsvertrag für die 20. Legislaturperiode wird die Absicht erklärt, unter Beteiligung der Bundesländer für die Bergung und Vernichtung von Munitionsaltlasten in der Nord- und Ostsee ein nationales Sofortprogramm aufzulegen und einen Bund-Länderfonds für die mittel- und langfristige Bergung einzurichten und solide zu finanzieren. Das genaue Vorgehen wird derzeit in der Bundesregierung diskutiert und ein Vorschlag erarbeitet.*

*Mit HELCOM und OSPAR stehen regionale Meeresschutzkooperationen zur Verfügung, welche perspektivisch zur grenzüberschreitenden Koordinierung von Maßnahmen genutzt werden können. Die Detektion und Beseitigung der Altlasten ist mit heute verfügbaren Technologien und Methoden ein kosten- und zeitaufwändiges Unterfangen mit hohen Risiken für das involvierte Personal. Es besteht weiter erheblicher Forschungsbedarf, um die Technologien wirtschaftlicher und sicherer zu machen.*

**Ferner beschließt die Konferenz,**

48. das freundliche Angebot des schwedischen Parlaments, die 31. Ostseeparlamentarierkonferenz vom 12. bis 14. Juni 2022 in Stockholm auszurichten, zu begrüßen.

HAMBURG

**Statement by the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg  
on implementing the Resolution of the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference**

The Senate welcomes the goals formulated in the Resolution. To the extent that the points listed fall within the remit of the Senate, they are in many respects already current practice.

In the following statement, the Senate takes a position on the measures that are standard administrative practice in Hamburg and are in line with the concerns of the Baltic Sea parliamentarians:

Regarding **Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region (1 – 24)**:

**With regard to paragraph 1 of the Resolution:**

There is no region with which Hamburg is more interwoven than the Baltic Sea Region. This is demonstrated, for example, by the town twinning since 1957 with St Petersburg, an increasingly intensive exchange with Polish partners, Hamburg's active contributions to the EU Baltic Sea Strategy and our intensive cooperation in the "STRING Network". Hamburg's participation in the INTERREG Baltic Sea Programme is also evidence of its networking with other Baltic Sea cities and regions. In the most recent funding period (2014–20), Hamburg players were involved in 43 INTERREG Baltic Sea projects. Hamburg has also recently become a member of the Union of the Baltic Cities (2021). The Senate will continue to expand and intensify these good relations.

**With regard to paragraph 2 of the Resolution:**

The Senate is in favour of the federal states' cooperation with the security and law enforcement authorities of other states in order to ensure security in the Baltic Sea Region. The goal of jointly strengthening the safety and security of people in the Baltic Sea Region should be characterised in particular by mutual exchange of experience and unbureaucratic operational support.

**With regard to paragraph 3 of the Resolution:**

The principle of sustainability is a central theme for the City of Hamburg, and thus Hamburg's strategy is aligned with Agenda 2030 with its 17 sustainable development goals. Attaining or maintaining a good ecological status is already legally prescribed in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

**With regard to paragraph 4 of the Resolution:**

Regarding the area of inclusion (in this case the inclusion of persons with disabilities) it should be noted that 192 states and the EU have hitherto ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). All participating states in the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference are thereby also committed to the UNCRPD guiding principle on inclusion policy. In Germany there is a national action plan at the federal level and in Hamburg a state action

plan for implementing the UNCRPD that is regularly updated and encompasses all policy areas in terms of disability mainstreaming.

“Everyone shall be able to participate without restriction in all areas of society.” This is the guiding principle of the 2017 Hamburg Integration Concept (Document 21/10281). Core elements are an intercultural opening up of the state and its services and the breaking down of discrimination. Thus in future all courses of action will be geared to granting all people living in Hamburg equal participation in the central core areas of society. Of prime importance here are: language, early and school education, training and work, housing, health and increasingly also care (in old age). The Senate also promotes social cohesion through the Hamburg Engagement Strategy (Document 21/19311). This lists numerous measures to support people living in Hamburg in volunteering for the benefit of society and good community life.

**With regard to paragraph 5 of the Resolution:**

The subject of many of the Senate’s actions and measures in the Baltic Sea Region focus on realising climate-related and environmental goals. For example, the cities and regions from Oslo to Hamburg aim to cooperate more closely on green issues. The OECD recently outlined the potential for this in a report entitled “Building the STRING megaregion as a Green Hub in the wake of COVID-19”. Many EU projects in which Hamburg is involved also contribute to implementing the European Green Deal. One example is the Horizon 2020 project MOVE21 with Oslo and Gothenburg on linking first-mile and last-mile logistics with other mobility provision. In the “Union of the Baltic Cities”, the Ministry for Urban Development is one of those working in the “Planning Cities Commission”. In the “Baltic Science Network”, Hamburg has also developed an important flagship project within the framework of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy, and here in particular within the “education” policy area that Hamburg is jointly coordinating with the “Norden Association” in Sweden. The Baltic Science Network aims to improve links between science and research ministries in the region so as to enable transnational cooperation on science policy.

**With regard to paragraphs 6 and 20 of the Resolution:**

In recent years the Senate has strategically promoted science cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region: Building on the “Baltic Sea Strategy for Hamburg as a Centre of Science” (Publication 20/10410) adopted by the Hamburg Parliament in January 2014, it has been possible to considerably expand scientific cooperation with the Baltic Sea Region. What began in 2014 as a top-down approach on the initiative of the Ministry for Science, Research, Equality and Districts has now become a most successful and multi-faceted bottom-up approach involving the intense participation of almost all significant science stakeholders in Hamburg. Hamburg is very well positioned here and is a central player in the context of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy and especially in the “education” policy area. This success is also demonstrated by the high level of third-party funding that could be acquired in this area. At present, the sciences are very well positioned with regard to Baltic cooperation:

- Policy: The Baltic Science Network (incl. BSN Powerhouse, two EU INTERREG projects totalling approx. €4 million) has developed into the leading science policy forum in the Baltic Sea Region. The Baltic Science Network is a flagship in the EU Baltic Sea Strategy and is the most important project in the Baltic Sea Council’s “Science, Research and Innovation Agenda”.
- Funding instruments: Several funding programmes and pilot projects have been established:

- “Ostsee” LFF-Seed-Money Facility (€300,000/p.a.): more than 60 funding cases (!) since 2016.
- BARI Mobility Programme: a separate BSN mobility programme for next generation scientists in the Baltic Sea Region. Active participation by DAAD, UHH, DESY, HAW.
- LaunchPad Connector: instrument for strengthening the interconnection of Eastern European science institutes with the world’s leading major neutron and photon research centres in Hamburg and Lund (European XFEL; European Spallation Source, MAX LAB IV, DESY).
- HALOS – Hanseatic League of Sciences (EU INTERREG project €36 million): intensification of scientific cooperation in the life sciences in the Öresund Region. The goal is to establish an international “Life Science Hub”. (lead: Lund + Hamburg Universities, participation by EMBL+DESY).
- HELIOS – Helmholtz–Lund International Graduate School (funding volume: €8 million): Within the scope of the HELIOS project, DESY is working with the Universities of Hamburg and Lund to establish an international graduate school in the “Photon and Nano Science” area, to run for 6 years. First institutional cooperation between Hamburg and Lund.
- Universities of Hamburg and Lund: strategic partnership; important factor in ExStrat assessment.
- HCU: University’s Greater Baltic Strategy (annual summer schools and student exchange)
- Science City Cooperation: international links between the Science City projects in Lund, Copenhagen and Hamburg (best practice learning).

**With regard to paragraph 7 of the Resolution:**

The resolution adopted here to strengthen and facilitate exchanges makes an important contribution to understanding by and between (young) people. International exchange, characterised by direct interaction with the people, culture and environment of another country, promotes personal development and the acquisition by young people of individual and intercultural skills. International exchange also enables people to better orient themselves in a globalised world. Through international experiences, values such as tolerance and awareness of diversity can be strengthened and prejudices and racism counteracted, thereby indirectly contributing to peaceful coexistence. The Senate supports youth exchanges, for instance through the German-Russian Youth Exchange Foundation in which the City of Hamburg is a partner together with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations. The foundation last year celebrated its 15th anniversary.

**With regard to paragraph 8 of the Resolution:**

The resolution adopted here is in accordance with the EU Youth Dialogue, which is a youth participation instrument within the European Union’s Youth Strategy. Young people can exert political influence through the EU Youth Dialogue. The EU Youth Dialogue enables participation by young people at the EU level and in the EU Member States. One of the major consultation and participation processes in the European Union, the EU Youth Dialogue offers young people and youth organisations an opportunity to exert a structural influence on political decision-making processes. For instance, as part of the “Take V” project, a network of youth organisations and the state youth authorities from Bremen, Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein, youth conferences have been organised since 2010 to bring young people and politicians together. The participants have the opportunity to express their opinions and thus help shape political processes.

**With regard to paragraph 9 of the Resolution:**

An increasingly digitalised world opens up new possibilities, but it also harbours risks for participation and involvement. We have to ensure that all people have access to the infrastructure and services of the digital society. Hamburg takes this responsibility into account in many ways, e.g. by explicitly integrating the perspective of society and users into all digital strategy activities or by consistently implementing principles to ensure accessibility and equality.

The Senate is of the opinion that digitalisation is “one of the biggest citizen and education projects of our age”, as the Hamburg Coalition Agreement for the 22nd Legislative Period puts it succinctly. For this reason, people must be given “smart” access to the digital world, which opens up opportunities to shape digital development at all levels.

This is where the Senate is taking action with the planned “House of the Digital World” (working title): Digitalisation will be made visible, tangible and designable in order to offer everyone the opportunity to expand their digital competence. Inspiring exhibitions, visualisations and installations will make the virtual tangible; people and technology will interact with one another.

Furthermore, the Senate’s long-term goal is to offer all services and information digitally from a single source. Central factors here are good reachability, high user-friendliness and security so that the services will be accepted and used by the public.

**With regard to paragraph 10 of the Resolution:**

The Hamburg Integration Concept of 2017 (Publication 21/10281) states that “Everyone [...] shall be able to participate without restriction in all parts of the life of society.” This also includes all those migrants seeking protection from persecution. Language support and migration counselling are among the central aspects of Hamburg’s integration policy. The fundamental responsibility for these issues lies with the federal government, but insofar as target groups are not reached by the federal government’s offers, Hamburg fills these gaps from state funds. At federal level, Hamburg advocates the improvement and expansion of existing services. Moreover, with the Hamburg Welcome Center, Hamburg has created an institution that works with many partners in a targeted fashion to integrate migrants into the workplace and supports them with e.g. skills development and qualifications as well as with job and training placement.

The Hamburg Engagement Strategy (Publication 21/19311) creates a good environment for joint engagement by civil society. In addition to offers of advice, supervision and training, a House of Engagement is being developed where volunteers can meet, share their experiences and network. Additionally, low-threshold funding options have been created so that initiatives and projects can be supported in their work for the common good – including within the scope of joint actions, festivals and events.

**With regard to paragraph 11 of the Resolution:**

The Hamburg government programme pursues the goal of developing Hamburg into a climate-friendly, resource-efficient, clean and peaceful city. It is based on the realisation that successful climate measures are an indispensable prerequisite for securing prosperity and social stability in the long term. The necessary transformation of significant areas of life both calls for

important effort from all institutions and offers great opportunities for innovation, value creation, future-proof employment and the further development of a liveable city for all in Hamburg.

**With regard to paragraph 12 of the Resolution:**

Civil protection takes in all preparatory disaster management measures (preventive civil protection) and measures to combat disasters (defensive civil protection) in addition to self-help and self-protection by the population.

The central goal of civil protection is the creation of structures for coping effectively with major hazards. In the event of a disaster, effective civil protection enables the spread of damage to be contained and normality to be restored as quickly as possible. The large and efficient network of Hamburg's civil protection is the basis for a particularly resilient and rapid relief infrastructure in the event of a disaster. The State Secretaries in the Ministry of the Interior and Sport are responsible for the coordinated management of emergency measures.<sup>1</sup>

The Hamburg River Police (WSP) has 14 specially equipped disaster control vessels at its disposal, especially for flood situations. River police stations 1–3 (WSPK) each have a radio patrol car equipped as a tracking unit. Additionally, in the event of a disaster, all of the WSP's resources can be used to respond to the situation and further vessels rapidly called in from the "Hamburg Fleet".

WSP Hamburg is also quickly in a position to provide other coastal areas with technical and manpower support, if required, in the event of a disaster.

In addition, the Hamburg Fire Brigade has a range of means at its disposal for civil protection. These are, in particular, the Analytic Task Force (e.g. sampling and analysis of dangerous substances), capacity for the decontamination of persons, firefighting and technical assistance. The Fire Brigade also has special equipment and vehicles (e.g. fire boats) for civil protection and emergency response.

There are also further organisations available for civil protection (Federal Agency for Technical Relief, the Workers' Samaritan Federation, the German Lifesaving Society, the St John's Ambulance, the German Red Cross, the Order of Malta, the German Armed Forces Hamburg Regional Command, the Sea Defences Patrol and the Hamburg Rescue Dog Squad). Some of these organisations also work across the federal state borders.

**With regard to paragraph 13 of the Resolution:**

Child protection is a public task that must be actively performed by different professional groups, institutions and organisations with different functions and tasks within a state-regulated system. The aim must be the ability to react adequately to threats to the well-being of children and young people in families or institutions, in particular to forms of physical, psychological or sexual violence as well as forms of neglect. Protecting children from violence and supporting them in growing up healthy is a central task for society as a whole.

The restrictions, limitations and various forms of lockdown have been particularly felt by families and children. We do not yet know what consequences a withdrawal from social life has had and will still have for families and for many children. For instance, the coronavirus pandemic has caused an increase in trauma-related symptoms for many victims of sexualised violence. Counselling centres have observed an increase in anxiety and feelings of

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<sup>1</sup> From Publication 22/5589: Status of Civil Protection in Hamburg

powerlessness (51%), stressful thoughts (48%), emotional instability (44%) and avoidance behaviour (33%) among their clients.

A lack of structure to the day, massive media consumption, sleep disturbances and a lack of social contact leads in some cases to an aggravation of symptoms of depression. Children and young people are usually referred to specialised counselling centres by teachers or school social workers. Because schools and kindergartens were closed, these referrals did not happen. As a result, the counselling centres reported a sharp reduction in the number of those seeking help during the lockdowns. Establishing contact with girls and boys acutely affected by sexualised violence as well as initiating appropriate interventions was almost impossible during this period. When schools and kindergartens reopened, the number of those seeking help went up. In the period March–October 2020, 41% more counselling sessions were conducted by the sexual abuse hotline compared to the previous year.

The pandemic underlines the urgent need for a holistic, crisis-proof and accessible support infrastructure for those affected. During the first lockdown, the regular support services provided by youth welfare offices, schools and kindergartens, but also psychotherapeutic services, were severely restricted from one day to the next. Specialised counselling centres provided substitute stabilisation and temporary support during the crisis: many of those affected were able to be accommodated through the rapid adaptation of counselling formats. The coronavirus pandemic makes clear how necessary an expansion of the support infrastructure for victims of (sexualised) violence is. Therapy capacity, trauma-sensitive support services and shelters need to be created. Government ministries and youth services must continue to be able to function in a crisis so that they can fulfil their duty of care. This is even more the case following the relaxation of the Covid regulations. Against this backdrop and in order to promote child protection, it is important that the representatives of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference also use their cooperation in the pursuit of generating a safe upbringing for young people in our society and to further expand and promote support structures, for child protection can only succeed if it is a joint responsibility.

In view of this development, close and effective cooperation between the Baltic Sea nations is imperative. In the Senate's view, the BSPC's call to the Council of the Baltic Sea States and in particular to the EU to address and promote the issue of managing migratory flows in the Baltic Sea Region must be endorsed.

**With regard to paragraph 14 of the Resolution:**

The Senate strongly advocates the promotion of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region. There are already direct long-distance rail connections between Hamburg and Copenhagen, and this service is to be expanded in 2022. Additionally, since this year, a company has operated a sleeper service between Hamburg and Stockholm, and an extension of the connections to Scandinavia is planned. In order to promote transnational rail traffic, the construction of the Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link between Denmark and Germany has begun. As a result of this rail link between Central Europe and Scandinavia, passengers will be able to reach their holiday destinations faster and in a more climate-friendly fashion. The rail link is scheduled for completion in 2029. The construction of the S4 (east) rapid transit line between Hamburg-Hasselbrook and Ahrensburg not only contributes to improving local transport connections in the Hamburg Metropolitan Region, it also expands capacity to carry increasing traffic on the Hamburg–Copenhagen section of the Trans-European Transport Network Scandinavian–Mediterranean Corridor.

**With regard to paragraph 15 of the Resolution:**

The main thrust of this initiative is likely to be outside the EU or EEA, where health insurance agreements for treatment abroad already exist, namely in the Baltic Sea areas of the Russian Federation. As part of its foreign marketing, Hamburg Tourismus GmbH (HHT) has undertaken various activities in previous years to increase medical tourism from the Russian Federation, including presenting a Russian-language brochure on Hamburg as a health location and distributing it locally. At present and in the foreseeable future, HHT is not planning any new foreign initiatives for strategic reasons.

Some hospitals in Hamburg have years of expertise in treating Russian patients. These hospitals and the doctors working there can be contacted direct through the hospitals' international offices, which have experience in handling international cases and the associated requirements (e.g. visa procurement, organisation of specialised interpreters). Experience has shown that hospitals in Hamburg do not desire or seek a more far-reaching, coordinated and concerted approach towards foreign countries.

**With regard to paragraph 16 of the Resolution:**

The Senate believes it makes explicit sense to develop criteria according to which vaccination certificates are mutually recognised across borders, since validated vaccination protection does not lose its effect on leaving a national territory.

**With regard to paragraphs 17 and 18 of the Resolution:**

The Senate supports efforts to strengthen links between the national, regional and municipal levels of Baltic cooperation as well as building and deepening trust and cooperation within the Baltic Sea States. Please see also the answers regarding paragraphs 1 and 5.

**With regard to paragraph 21 of the Resolution:**

Joint efforts to bridge gulfs with regard to better public health as well as exchanging best practice models so that all players can profit from the experiences of individuals in order to better handle situations are welcomed without reservation by the Senate.

**With regard to paragraph 22 of the Resolution:**

The Senate welcomes better alignment of funds and regulations among European structural and investment funds and the INTERREG programmes.

**With regard to paragraph 24 of the Resolution:**

The Senate supports the project development process in the area of cultural exchange in order to increase the visibility of cultural diversity within the Baltic Sea Region.

**Regarding Democracy in a Changing Media Landscape (25 – 34):**

**With regard to paragraphs 25, 28 and 32 of the Resolution:**

The Senate has set up a separate coordination office for the thematic focus on hate and abuse in social media (OHNe Hass: Offensiv gegen Hass im Netz – konsequent anzeigen, effektiv verfolgen = On the offensive against hate on the net – consistently report, effectively prosecute). The goal of the project is to increase the reporting rate of offences: media companies, advice centres, NGOs, interest groups and the Media Authority Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein (MA HSH), which are increasingly confronted with hate comments, are to be sensitised to report possible criminal offences. Thereby we promote freedom of the media and freedom of expression and strengthen NGOs that are committed to these issues. The effectiveness of criminal prosecution in the area of digital hate speech is also to be strengthened. In doing so, we place the victims of digital violence at the centre of our consideration, as they are more likely to have their rights respected and to find that the state takes digital violence seriously if criminal prosecution is effective.

The achievement of the formulated goals is being pursued in detail by the following measures: Stronger linking and simplified communication between law enforcement authorities and the aforementioned stakeholders can be achieved in particular by offering low-threshold digital ways to report digital hate speech accompanied by training. In addition, there is an inter-agency exchange within the framework of the “Digital Hate Speech” working group, which is now an institutional component of the Right-Wing Extremism Competence Network, as well as the provision of inter-agency and citizen-friendly information on reporting channels in the area of digital hate speech.

**With regard to paragraph 26 of the Resolution:**

The digital transformation embraces all areas of life and presents both opportunities and challenges for the education system. The targeted promotion of media literacy – more accurately of skills for life in the digital world – is represented in the Senate’s far-reaching digitalisation strategy, led by the education ministry. The strategy of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK), “Education in the Digital World”, is the guideline for action. It pursues the goal of enabling pupils to participate in a digital culture. The strategy contains a framework of skills for living in the digital world, encompassing six skills areas. Skill area 6 in particular, “analysing and reflecting”, contains skills that take in reflection on opportunities and risks of media use. The “Education in the Digital World” strategy envisages subject-integrated promotion of skills for living and learning in the digital world. It also prescribes the integration of the skills listed in the strategy into the curricula of the Länder. The education ministry ambitiously implements the KMK strategy and supports the efforts in the different areas with specialised institutions such as the Department of Media Education at the State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development and the Youth Information Centre Hamburg.

The measures implemented in Hamburg are in accord with the efforts at the European level, for instance with the “Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027”. The “Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027” envisages the extension of digital competence and skills for the digital revolution. In particular, it requires the promotion of digital skills and thus the fight against disinformation.

**With regard to paragraph 27 of the Resolution:**

With the implementation of its comprehensive digitalisation strategy, the Senate assumes responsibility for education for living and learning in the digital world. The guideline for action here is the KMK strategy "Education in the Digital World". The strategy states that the aim of all types of schools is to enable pupils to critically reflect on their own media use and to use media of all kinds in a targeted, socially responsible and profitable way. The education ministry attaches great importance to the active participation by pupils in school life and in decision processes. In addition to classical participation structures such as the student council, the education ministry also uses digital formats to involve pupils more closely in internal school discussions or political ones. For example, pupils' view on teaching and learning process are canvassed using digital survey tools at Hamburg schools. Hamburg schools also volunteer as cooperation partners in the "aula- ausdiskutieren und live abstimmen" (discuss and vote live) project. In the "aula" projects, pupils are encouraged to shape their school and their environment and to discuss these ideas democratically with digital support. The City of Hamburg has created a platform, the Hamburg Youth Server, that young people can use to inform themselves comprehensively and digitally on issues relevant to them from a wide range of topics, such as "democracy and society" or "internet and the media". Additionally, "GENZ", the online youth magazine of the Hamburg State Centre for Political Education, reports on current social issues. "GENZ" specifically addresses young people from Generation Z and calls on them to participate actively in political discussions taking place there, such as on the topic of racism.

**With regard to paragraph 29 of the Resolution:**

Digitalisation must not be applied without limits, but must be oriented towards our social and democratic values. The discussion and development of common values for the digital transformation appears to be the next step in order to give the increasing fusion of the virtual and real worlds a value-oriented framework.

The Senate thus welcomes the Data Governance Act proposed by the EU in late 2020 as well as the published comprehensive "regulatory package for online platforms" comprising the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act. In addition, the Senate considers the "Ethics guidelines for trustworthy AI" presented by the High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI HLEG) to be important and pioneering guidelines for the future use of AI.

Finally, the Senate supports the EU initiative with regard to the "Package of measures on AI" presented by the Commission in April 2021, which, in addition to a "Coordinated Plan on AI" and a "Machinery Regulation", above all includes the world's first coherent "Approach to an AI Legal Framework" (AI Regulation), which aims to promote the development and application of innovative, sustainable, trustworthy, inclusive and people-oriented AI technologies while at the same time safeguarding the security and fundamental rights of people and businesses.

**With regard to paragraph 30 of the Resolution:**

Independent, pluralistic media must be able to exist commercially and independently. The Senate therefore supports local media companies in the digital transformation in a variety of ways. These include the promotion of new business models at the interface of content and technology as well as support for education and training institutions. In view of the special importance of independent, pluralistic media for the democratic public, attention is also paid to questions of international cooperation and investigation. Most recently, Hamburg hosted the

2019 Global Investigative Journalism Conference with 1,700 journalists from 130 countries, many of them from the Baltic Sea Region.

**With regard to paragraph 34 of the Resolution:**

The Senate supports the Germany-wide “#UseTheNews” initiative. Leading players from the media, academia and the education system have come together here to respond to the threat of a digital split with regard to news and information skills. The response includes public events and training for multipliers. It will be examined whether and which of these measures and events can form part of the Global Week for Media and Information Literacy.

Regarding **Safeguarding the Baltic Sea and our Environment for Future Generations, halting Climate Change and the Loss of Biodiversity (35 – 47):**

**With regard to paragraphs 36 and 41 of the Resolution:**

The Senate has actively participated in the development of the joint programme of measures of the Federal Government and the Länder, with which a good environmental status of the German coastal and marine waters in the North Sea and Baltic Sea is to be achieved and maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. This programme of measures has been updated for the years 2022–2027 and, among other things, sets target values for the reduction of nutrient and pollutant loads. The determination of target loads of phosphorus at the limnic/marine transfer point is a decisive basis in the eutrophication context for developing and implementing marine-relevant reduction requirements inland and corresponding measures. The programme of measures is currently being coordinated.

**With regard to paragraph 37 of the Resolution:**

The Hamburg Climate Plan of 2019 sets ambitious climate targets for Hamburg with a reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 55% by 2030 (baseline 1990) and climate neutrality in 2050. These targets are further increased by a current political agreement of the parties in government (65% by 2030). The plan outlines the responsibilities and respective CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets in the sectors “transport”, “private households”, “commerce, services, trade” and “industry” and contains a large number of concrete measures to achieve the required reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030. A new climate law creates a binding legal framework for this. Extensive measures to adapt to climate change are part of the climate plan.

**With regard to paragraph 38 of the Resolution:**

See answer to paragraph 3.

**With regard to paragraph 42 of the Resolution:**

The revision of Directive (EU) 2019/883 on port reception facilities aims to significantly improve the management of ship-generated waste in ports. The directive covers waste generated during the operation of ships or during loading, unloading or cleaning and that falls within the scope of Annexes I, II, IV, V and VI of the MARPOL Convention, as well as waste caught in fishing nets. The Senate expressly supports these measures and is vigorously implementing the directive, as the introduction of a general no-special-fee system will create incentives to unload waste on land rather than at sea. This will ensure a right to unload without additional charges based on the volume of waste to be unloaded. The Senate advocates and actively supports the waste-related measures for professional and recreational shipping, among others, which are based on this and which are envisaged in the programme of measures of the Federal Government and the Länder for the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The grouping and expansion of shipping and port aspects from the 2016 programme of measures is intended to harmonise disposal options in ports, optimise the implementation of MARPOL 73/78 Annex V (Regulations for the Prevention of Pollution by Garbage from Ships) at national level and support awareness-raising in commercial and recreational shipping.

**With regard to paragraph 43 of the Resolution:**

Green hydrogen is a key element in achieving the ambitious climate goals at the European, national and Hamburg levels. With their hydrogen strategy, jointly adopted in 2019, the north German Länder are planning to establish a competitive green hydrogen industry by 2032. Until the market ramp-up for a hydrogen economy is complete and the regulatory measures are sufficient, financial support measures to compensate for the cost disadvantages for green hydrogen and its derivatives will continue to be necessary. In this context, we believe that the various funding options for the emerging hydrogen economy, which cover the entire value chain, need to be revised and significantly expanded. Concrete examples include:

- High electricity prices still represent a significant obstacle to the permanent operation of an electrolyser. This could be remedied by subsidy instruments that compensate for increased operating costs, for example Carbon Contracts for Difference (CCfD).
- In addition to IPCEI funding, extensive, multi-sector hydrogen projects should also have access to further subsidy instruments. On the one hand, only a small number of applications have been selected for funding so far, and on the other hand, further promising project ideas are constantly emerging that are also dependent on funding. From Hamburg's point of view, the focus in the future will be on projects that concentrate on the import of green hydrogen, both in terms of the required infrastructure and the processes.
- The current federal programme to promote hydrogen refuelling stations should be expanded. The promotion of hydrogen-powered trucks without a simultaneous adequate promotion of the refuelling infrastructure is incomplete and significantly limits the effectiveness of the promotion. Large mobility consumers, such as the logistics industry, would prefer to refuel their vehicles at their own depots. For this, funding opportunities with a correspondingly high funding quota must be created to enable a filling station to be operated economically in the medium/long term.
- The concrete ongoing efforts to implement the measures in the National Hydrogen Strategy to establish a "Hydrogen North" innovation and technology centre (together with Bremen/Bremerhaven and Stade) require federal support beyond the development phase – especially by means of sustainable finance.

**With regard to paragraph 45 of the Resolution:**

Transboundary marine litter is increasingly being recognised as a global problem. EU Directive 2019/904 of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment was enacted to combat the unnecessary leakage of plastic products into the oceans. The Directive is based on research into what kind of litter is found most frequently on the beaches of the European Union – and thus also on the Baltic coasts. The EU Directive thus concentrates on single-use items as well as on fishing gear that contains plastic, and on products made of oxo-degradable plastic. The single-use plastic products covered by measures under this Directive are estimated to represent around 86% of the single-use plastics found, in counts, on beaches in the EU. Other plastics are subject to a labelling and reduction obligation. In Germany, the directive was implemented into national law through an amendment to both the Circular Economy Act and the Packaging Act as well as the Ordinance on the Ban on Single-Use Plastics and the Ordinance on the Labelling of Single-Use Plastics. All regulations came into force on 3 July 2021. The Senate hopes that these new regulations will also result in a noticeable reduction of the leakage of plastics into the Baltic Sea. In addition, mandatory (provision of) reusable packaging for food and beverages as of 2023 as stipulated in the Packaging Act will in all likelihood also lead to a reduction in the volume of disposable packaging.

At the 14th Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention in May 2019, a change in the classification of plastic waste and a stricter regulatory environment for the transboundary shipment of this waste were also agreed. This is intended to improve control and monitoring and to promote their environmentally sound disposal in the long term. This is welcomed and supported by the Senate. Since the amendments came into force on 1 January 2021, only pre-treated and unmixed plastic fractions may be exported to third countries outside the waste control procedure, provided that the receiving countries agree in principle and environmentally sound treatment is ensured. All other plastic waste (such as mixtures) is subject to prior written notification and consent or per se to the export ban to third countries. The aforementioned decision to amend the Basel Convention was also adopted at OECD level and implemented in Regulation (EC) No 1013/2006 on shipments of waste. Both entered into force on 1 January 2021.

Lastly, in 2019 and 2020, the Commission contacted the countries to which the OECD Decision does not apply in order to obtain clarity on the national procedures relating to the new plastic entries under the Basel Convention. The Commission published the responses of the countries concerned on 21.10.2021 in Regulation (EU) 2021/1840. This regulation will enter into force on 10.11.2021. Due to the implementation of the decisions at the level of the Basel Convention, the OECD and the EU, the quality of the waste eligible for export and thus their recyclability will increase significantly. However, this will not automatically lead to a desirable reduction in export volumes. In the Senate's assessment, the stricter export conditions for the transboundary shipment of plastic waste under the aforementioned legal norms are of particular importance for the Pacific region. Even before the new regulations came into force, the Senate called on Hamburg producers to take into account the internationally agreed quality requirements when trading in plastic waste. In addition, at the request of the Senate, this waste stream in the port of Hamburg is being given special attention by the monitoring authorities.

**With regard to paragraph 46 of the Resolution:**

With regard to paragraph 46.b.:

Global action and transnational cooperation are extremely important for the success and achievement of measures to reduce the emissions from shipping. Maritime shipping contributes a relevant share both of worldwide CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and of local NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>x</sub> and fine particulate matter emissions.

Currently, existing regulations are not suited to effectively curbing them. Consideration is being given at the EU, federal and Hamburg levels to how these ship emissions could be reduced. Shoreside power is an effective technology for reducing emissions at berth. The creation of a level playing field in European port cities is an important factor in the project to develop shoreside power in the Port of Hamburg. To prevent competitive disadvantages for ports that offer shoreside power, it is essential to create a level playing field, at a minimum between European ports. The reduction of emissions can only succeed here if the same regulations apply to all ports as of a certain date.

In the Senate's view, there is also a need for clearer prevailing conditions for shipping companies, to which they can adjust, in order to avoid competition developing between ports that would disadvantage environmentally friendly ports. From a technical point of view, it is therefore necessary to introduce Europe-wide emission limits at berth for greenhouse gas emissions for all ships. With regard to air quality, the responsible authorities should be able to prescribe the use of shoreside power from renewables, provided the berth and the ship are equipped for it, if compliance with the legally stipulated air pollution thresholds requires the reduction of emissions from ships, on the basis of the polluter principle. The use of alternative technologies in these cases is only possible if the demands of air pollution control are met. Biofuels are also subject to strict sustainability and CO<sub>2</sub> criteria. Compliance with emission limits through the purchase of emission certificates should not be an option.

With regard to paragraph 46.c.:

The transition from fossil fuels to sustainable, renewable fuels is worth promoting for the entire shipping industry and is in line with Hamburg's goals. It is hard to fathom why cruise ships are singled out here. Container ships cause a large proportion of emissions from shipping. In addition to sustainable, renewable fuels, the required transition should include, in particular, the supply of ships with renewable power for the time they spend at berth.

Increasing the uptake of renewable and low-carbon fuels in the fuel mix as well as alternative energy sources in maritime traffic in the whole of the EU is one of the goals of the European Commission's "Fit for 55" package that is currently out for consultation. The Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the use of renewable and low-carbon fuels for maritime transport (FuelEU Maritime, BR Publication 721/21) included in this package aims, among other things, to introduce uniform rules for limiting the greenhouse gas intensity of energy consumed on board a ship calling at, berthed in or departing from ports in the territory of a Member State. Part of the "Fit for 55" package is also a regulation concerning the development of infrastructure for alternative fuels (AFIR, BR Publication 709/21), that is to include a commitment by Member States to provide a minimum shoreside power supply for seagoing container and passenger ships.

In order to make shipping climate-neutral and more environmentally friendly, the Senate is working, among other things, to introduce Europe-wide emission limits for greenhouse gas emissions at berth for all ships. By granting a discount on port dues for the use of environmentally friendly power or Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), the Senate is also providing an impetus for the use of environmentally friendly ships.

With regard to paragraph 46.d.:

By promoting the massive expansion of shoreside power systems for container and cruise ships, the Senate is already making an important contribution to the reduction of ship emissions while at berth and is playing a pioneering role in the field of alternative energy supply. The use of renewable power from these plants could completely avoid CO<sub>2</sub> and pollutant emissions from ships while they are at berth in the sense of “zero emissions at berth” and contributes to compliance with defined air pollution limits as set out in clean air plans, thus promoting climate-neutral and environmentally friendly shipping as a whole.

However, the investment by ports in shoreside power plants depends on a corresponding demand as well as the possibility of financing the investment and operation of the plants. From a technical point of view, incentives are therefore necessary so that it is worthwhile for ports to offer a supply of renewable energy as soon as possible. For this reason, the Senate is pushing for the acceleration of the development of alternative technologies, especially shoreside power plants, and is advocating the creation of a suitable state aid environment by waiving state aid approvals for shoreside power investments and the creation of permission for operating subsidies for shoreside power supply.

With the discount granted on port dues for the use of environmentally friendly power or Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), the Senate is also providing an impetus for the use of environmentally friendly and soot-free propulsion. Please see also the answers regarding paragraph 42.

With regard to paragraph 46.e.:

See answer to paragraph 42.

With regard to paragraph 46.f.:

The Senate makes an active contribution to preventing the spread of invasive species in Hamburg by implementing and strictly applying the Ballast Water Convention.

**With regard to paragraph 47 of the Resolution:**

There is a recognisable hazard potential associated with the sea-dumped munitions in the German North and Baltic Seas. Current scientific findings suggest that, taking into account the progressive corrosion of the munition casings, the burden on the marine environment from escaping pollutants will continue to increase in the future. Furthermore, sea-dumped munitions also pose a risk to shipping and to activities in the marine environment involving ground contact, as well as to affected sectors of the economy. This was again stated by the Conference of Environment Ministers (UMK) at its meeting on 22.4.2021. The report “Munitions Pollution of German Maritime Waters – Inventory and Recommendations” from 2011 is currently being fundamentally updated by the Federal/State Working Group on the North and Baltic Seas (BLANO). The Senate supports the UMK’s plan to use this update as a basis for focusing more closely on ways of solving the problem and creating a suitable knowledge base for the necessary introduction of orderly salvage and disposal.

LATVIA



*Latvijas Republikas ārlietu ministrs*  
*Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia*

Rīga, 29 March 2022

**Mr Jānis Vucāns**  
**President of the Baltic Assembly**

**Mr Aadu Must**  
**Vice President of the Baltic Assembly**

**Mr Andrius Kupčinskas**  
**Vice President of the Baltic Assembly**

**Secretariat of the Baltic Assembly**  
[agnija.antanovica@baltasam.org](mailto:agnija.antanovica@baltasam.org)

Distinguished Members of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly,

It is my honour to reply to your letter No. 1/0122 - 04 of 11 January 2022 concerning questions on the implementation of the Resolution of the 30<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

Please find enclosed answers submitted by the respective line ministries of the Republic of Latvia.

I would like to use this opportunity to assure you that I support the continuation of cooperation among the countries of the Baltic Sea Region in accordance with the decisions of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and the Council of the Baltic Sea States to suspend cooperation with Russia and Belarus.

*Enclosed: Annex on 21 (twenty-one) page.*

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Edgars Rinkēvičs".

Edgars Rinkēvičs  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Annex

## Answers to the Questions regarding the Implementation of the Resolution of the 30<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

### Answers provided by the Ministry of Welfare

#### *13. Continue to protect children at risk, fight organised crime and manage migratory flows as fields of intense cooperation between the Baltic Sea States*

Latvia highly appreciates the work of the Expert Group on **Children at Risk** (CAR) within the Council of the Baltic Sea States, particularly in promoting the progress on **Barnahus** model in Europe and beyond. The established PROMISE network ensures support to adopt Barnahus model as a standard practice for providing child victims and witnesses of violence rapid access to justice and care.

Latvia has started participation in the PROMISE network, benefiting from the regular exchange of information, experience and knowledge. Moreover, within the EEA grants programme, the Ministry of Welfare is implementing a project "Support for Barnahus implementation in Latvia". The overall goal of the project is to ensure multi-disciplinary and interinstitutional cooperation for children victims or witnesses of violence thus improving the system of protection of children's rights.

Now, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the CAR expert group is addressing the concerns arising for children in **Ukraine** and refugee children from Ukraine, particularly stressing the importance of coordinated measures and initiatives for refugee children and families to ensure registration, identification, protection, guardianship, shelter, family support, etc. to prevent the risks of separation, trafficking and exploitation.

The protection and support for the refugees from Ukraine, most of whom are women and children, are regularly discussed now among the social affairs ministries of the Baltic States and Poland at the ministerial and expert levels. A particular attention is paid to the coordination of activities and exchange of experience, with a focus on social assistance and services offered to people fleeing war in Ukraine as well as the specific situation of the unaccompanied minors.

#### *4. Strive for better inclusion, prosperity, public health and social cohesion while also decreasing existing gaps between BSR countries by joint efforts*

There is a good expert-level cooperation on the issues of **disability policy and social services** in the Baltic and Nordic region, with the involvement of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Latvia appreciates the exchange of good practice that has taken place in previous years and continues in 2022, contributing to further policy developments aimed at improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities and seniors.

As regards promotion of **employment**, Latvia has a particularly close cooperation with Lithuania and Estonia. Since 2015, the co-operation between the public employment services (PES) of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania has taken place on the basis of a co-operation agreement between the PES of the Baltic States. The agreement provides for partnerships in exchange of information, competences and good practice, as well as in the field of employment services. Seminars, study visits, good practice sharing and training events are organised annually for the staff of the three national agencies.

Every year, PES from all three Baltic States mutually decide on the priority topics of cooperation. In 2021, the focus was on exchange of experience in the field of human resources and internal communication strategy, IT solutions and their use in the daily

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work of employment services, as well as support for disadvantaged groups (six online events). In 2022, the discussions focus on the issues of management and sustainable workforce, the role of employer's counsellors and cooperation with various partners, seasonal work, communication strategies and methods of reaching various target groups and labour market integration of vulnerable groups, particularly ethnic minorities.

Additionally, at the EU level, Latvia's PES takes part in **the European Network of Public Employment Services** (recently, the focus has been on the measures addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and providing support to clients) and **EURES network**. In 2021, cooperation and information exchange with EURES partners from Estonia and Lithuania took place in the area of mapping of the classification of occupations according to the pillar of the European classification of occupations.

***9. Use and fundamentally improve the possibilities of digitalisation for communication, accessible for all people, and close the digital gaps across the Region***

Both hard and transversal skills are of great importance in today's labour market, especially, for being able to contribute to the digital and green transitions. However, **digital skills** stand out as particularly important, and this is also one of the priorities of the Latvian Government with a particular focus on the lower skilled.

Latvia's PES implements **the Future skills initiative** that was launched in 2021 and provides Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) via online learning platforms for registered unemployed as well as for the people at risk of becoming unemployed (employed persons facing barriers on the labour market, persons with disabilities, low-skilled, aged 50+, etc.). In 2021, the priority training areas were as follows:

- Business;
- Computer science;
- Data science;
- Information Technology;
- Professional language learning;
- Management along with specifically defined transversal skills (e.g. communication and collaboration skills, learning abilities and methods, self-organization and time management etc.).

Besides new initiatives, Latvia's PES continues to provide **reskilling and upskilling** offers to its clients, such as vocational and informal learning based on labour market demand and evidence-based analyses.

**Answers provided by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development**

***9. use and fundamentally improve the possibilities of digitalisation for communication, accessible for all people, and close the digital gaps across the Region***

Latvia's National and Local Government Unified Customer Service Centers ecosystem.

During the campaign "My Latvija.lv. Do it Digitally!" the network of digital agents was developed and more than 6000 professionals in all regions of Latvia were trained in order to promote the development of digital skills among citizens and entrepreneurs, thereby improving their competitiveness and facilitating their everyday life, thanks to the opportunities provided by digital transformation and technologies.

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**31. support the promotion and implementation of international norms, democratic values and human rights principles in the global information and communicative space**

To ensure Latvia's digital transformation in compliance with international norms and global information and communicative space, the Digital Transformation Guidelines 2021-2027 was developed. It defines the national priorities in digital skills and education, digital security, ICT innovations development and commercialization, connectivity, and public administration.

**22. facilitate better alignment of funds and regulations among EU mainstream funds and regional and national funds for cross-border and 6 transnational cooperation projects tackling with macro-regional challenges in social and economic dimensions;**

During 2019-2021 the national responsible authorities of Latvia (the Ministry of the Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia); Estonia (the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Estonia) and Lithuania (the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania) agreed to initiate the programming process of Interreg programmes 2021-2027 under European Territorial Cooperation Goal taking into account the new legislative proposals (Regulations) for the Cohesion Policy.

As a result, in 2021-2027 both bilateral internal cross-border cooperation programmes between Baltic neighboring countries (Estonia-Latvia and Latvia-Lithuania) will be continued, as well as cooperation between Latvia and Estonia in a framework of quadrilateral Central Baltic cross-border cooperation programme will be sustained. Besides, the close cooperation with border region of Russian Federation will be supported by bilateral cross-border cooperation programme (Latvia-Russia) under Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument.

Moreover, transnational (Baltic Sea Region programme) and interregional (Interreg Europe, URBACT) cooperation format will be also available for the joint cooperation projects with other EU countries.

The principle of the coherence and continuity of cooperation is agreed to be followed to utilize the added value of effective interaction between countries that has been successfully established in the previous periods. The agreement to focus new Interreg programmes on environmental challenges and social dimension has been reached and incorporated into Interreg programme documents submitted in 2021/to be submitted in 2022 for the approval of the European Commission.

Finally, the contribution of Interreg programmes to the implementation of the EU Strategy for Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and its Action Plan identifying the main joint challenges and cooperation needs in the region as well as alignment of Interreg funds with mainstream operational programmes were evaluated and highlighted in new programming period.

**35. send a powerful and determined signal by adopting an ambitious update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan through the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021 under the current German chairmanship and to ensure – through regular monitoring of its implementation – that its objectives are implemented in all countries of the Baltic Sea Region more quickly and consistently than before to achieve a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea and its environment by the end of the decade**

Latvia actively participated in the updating process of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and fully supported adoption of the updated BSAP at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021. Latvia considers that regional cooperation is crucial for the successful implementation of the BSAP. We are committed to implement the agreed actions of the updated BSAP nationally and jointly. The specific deadlines support integration of measures into national policy planning documents. In this regard,

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the Draft Environmental Policy Guidelines for 2021-2027 (the main environment policy planning document in Latvia) envisages several relevant courses of action supporting the updated BSAP.

**36. focus on ecological sustainability of the Baltic Sea, with increased joint structured efforts to reduce all intentional and unintentional nutrient influx into the Sea;**

**41. strive for further reduction of nutrient influx into the Baltic Sea and support the development of technology and innovations that will reduce the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea;**

Regarding eutrophication and nutrient inputs to the sea, the Draft Environmental Policy Guidelines for 2021-2027 envisages further improvement of wastewater collection and treatment; accordingly, a support from the EU funds for the modernization of wastewater treatment plants and the development of sewage sludge management (treatment) infrastructure is planned. It is to be hoped that the measures provided for in the Strategic Plan of the Common Agricultural Policy for Latvia will contribute to the reduction of diffuse pollution from agricultural activities; however, due to voluntary nature of these measures it is not always easy to target them towards the most impacted waters. HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021 adopted amendments to the Helsinki Convention concerning the prevention of pollution from agriculture. These amendments, as well as the updated BSAP actions in agriculture sector, when implemented, will minimize inputs of nutrients, enhance reaching of nutrient reduction targets for Latvia. The Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia is also taking measures to encourage more people to transfer wastewater to centralized sewerage systems, which ensures their proper treatment, by means of regulation, a loan program for local governments and informative support to local governments that are in charge for registration and supervision of de-centralised wastewater collection and treatment systems.

**37. take significant steps in line with the UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the Baltic 2030 Action Plan to reduce emissions and to reach climate resilience of key economic sectors, including industry, transport and construction, as well as enhancement of natural carbon sinks, such as forests**

Latvia is currently developing a Latvia's Climate Law with the aim of providing basis for further development of national climate policy, setting conditions related to regulation on greenhouse gas emissions as well as embedding the importance of adaptation to climate change. The Latvia's Climate Law will include the climate neutrality target by 2050 and a target to enhance climate resilience. Latvia is committed to reach climate neutrality by 2050, and it has been included in the Latvia's climate neutrality strategy for 2050.

**38. acknowledge that global action and cross-border cooperation are needed to mitigate the effects of climate change, preserve and protect biodiversity and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a focus on climate (SDG13), oceans (SDG14) and biodiversity (SDG15)**

HELCOM plays an important role as a regional environmental policy maker and as a trusted partner beyond the region's borders. Latvia considers the updated BSAP as an important contribution to the United Nations Agenda 2030, in particular, its sustainable development goal 14, as well as to the post-2020 Biodiversity Framework. Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention have used the water and ocean related goals and targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework for updating the BSAP. Latvia and other HELCOM Contracting Parties have agreed to coordinate the regional implementation of ocean-related SDGs in the Baltic Sea using the HELCOM platform.

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The Latvia's Environmental Education fund is implementing the Blue Flag programme as well as other environmental projects for sea and coastal problems in Latvia.

The Draft National Environment Policy Guidelines 2021-2027 foresees to improve the conservation status of habitats and species, to finalize the network of protected areas (Natura 2000), to develop plans for invasive alien species, to restore ecosystems including free flow of rivers.

The Nature Census project<sup>1</sup> has finalized field seasons of mapping the distribution and quality of the EU protected habitats of Latvia's inland area.

**The Nature Conservation Agency with partners are implementing the EU LIFE project "Optimising the Governance and Management of the Natura 2000 Protected Areas Network in Latvia"<sup>2</sup> (2020-2028).** During the project, it is planned to develop innovative approaches to solving topical nature protection issues and to implement the priority action framework of Natura 2000. Another challenge for the project is to find ways to adapt to climate change and mitigate its negative effects. In addition, the project will strengthen cooperation between responsible state institutions, scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations, and companies.

*39. promote and financially support both regional and local projects that, based on research, aim to improve and preserve the marine as well as the land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea as well as in their catchment areas;*

*46. concerning the impacts of increased shipping and cruise-ship tourism on climate change and loss of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea, to*

*a. recognize that the Baltic Sea is the sea with the highest shipping levels and consists of inland water with low water exchange;*

*b. acknowledge that global action and cross-border cooperation are needed to mitigate the emissions of increasing cruise-ship tourism and other shipping in the Baltic Sea;*

*c. promote and accelerate the transition of ships and in particular cruise-ships away from fossil fuels towards sustainable renewable fuels in order to make shipping climate-neutral, and less polluting;*

*d. take further actions in order to reduce black carbon ship emissions in the Baltic Sea, including support in technologies and infrastructure on shore power supply of harbours;*

*e. support the development of technology and innovations that will further reduce the discharge of waste from ships to the Baltic Sea;*

*f. support the prevention of introduction of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens in ballast water by supporting further development of technology and innovations and by stringent application of the BWM Convention and actively contributing to the experience building phase;*

*g. aim to improve and preserve the marine as well as the land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea;*

The Nature Conservation Agency with partners are implementing the EU LIFE project "Research of marine protected habitats in EEZ and determination of the necessary conservation status in Latvia"<sup>3</sup> (2020-2025)<sup>3</sup>. The project focuses on establishing a comprehensive system for the protection of marine resources, developing criteria for assessing marine habitats and improving monitoring methodologies for assessing marine protected habitats and species. It is planned to submit proposals for the establishment and inclusion of new marine protected areas in the Natura 2000 network, as well as to develop a scientifically based coastal fisheries management plan, including proposals to reduce by-catches of seabirds and mammals. The project also envisages the development of a single management plan for all existing and newly established marine protected areas, also assessing the potential of marine habitat ecosystem services.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.skaitamsdaba.gov.lv/public/eng/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://latvianature.daba.gov.lv/en/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://reef.daba.gov.lv/public/eng/>

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Biodiversity, marine litter, and underwater noise are the key focus areas of HELCOM BLUES project<sup>4</sup>, along the effectiveness of measures geared towards good environmental status of the Baltic Sea and data accessibility. Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology is a project's partner.

*45. concerning the impacts of plastics on the environment, climate change and biodiversity, to  
b. therefore, commit to support activation of the HELCOM Regional Action Plan against Marine Litter and measures contained therein, being part of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan, at the regional level and  
c. support the start of negotiations on a new ambitious global agreement at UNEA 5.2 to take the next decisive step at the international level*

Latvia considers that HELCOM Regional Marine Litter Action Plan can be an inspiring example of the role of regional organisations in global processes, including those towards a new global legally binding instrument on marine litter and plastic pollution. Latvia along with other EU Member States supported the adoption of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2., 28.02.-02.03.2022.) resolution on set-up of an intergovernmental negotiation committee to draft a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution.

The Latvia's National Waste Management Plan 2021 - 2028 includes several measures for reduction of marine litter. Also deposit system (in force from February 2022) will contribute to reduction of sources of waste entering the sea. Latvia is supporting a range of different research projects concerning plastic and micro-plastic pollution. LIFE IP project "Waste to Resources Latvia - boosting regional sustainability and circularity" foresees a range of activities also concerning minimisation of plastic waste.

In addition, at the beginning of 2022 Latvia adopted a new Cabinet Regulation No. 28 "Regulations on the Procedures for Reporting on Plastic Products and Criteria for Classification of Those Products". It requires annual reporting to the Commission on certain plastic products placed on the market and collected waste, including plastic-containing gears (nets, cords, floats, etc.) and their waste thereby helping to identify both potential pollution from the fishing gears placed on the market and to collect data on fishing gear waste (both separately collected in ports and as pollution collected from water bodies).

#### 28<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference resolution

*3. continue cooperation within the framework of the Northern Dimension, crossborder cooperation programmes between EU member states and Russia as well as Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme, and actively engage in developing new generations of these programmes for the future;*

#### 29<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference resolution

*5. Continue political dialogue and practical cooperation within the framework of the Northern Dimension Policy and its partnerships; put forward the implementation of cross-border cooperation programmes between the EU member states and Russia as well as the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme, and actively engage in developing the new generation of these programmes for the period of 2021-2027; encourage broader involvement of all partners in various formats of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region;*

During the period 2014-2020 Latvian partners cooperated with more than 4000 neighbouring partners in more than 505 projects supported by 9 Interreg programmes and securing more than 124 million euro of EU funding for activities in Latvia and jointly. The implemented measures addressed such common issues as employment and

<sup>4</sup> <https://blues.helcom.fi/>

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labour mobility, educational and social inclusion, entrepreneurship and transfer of innovations, efficient management of environmental resources and protection of natural/cultural heritage, promoting low-carbon economy, interconnecting transport networks, improving security of border regions, increasing institutional capacity and public administration efficiency, etc.

For example, in cross-border cooperation Latvian and Lithuanian fire and police services border municipalities installed observation equipment to prevent organized crime and improve the safety of citizens. While another project aims at modernization of road infrastructure in Latvian-Lithuanian border regions. Whereas Interreg Estonian-Latvian programme actively supports business initiatives for creation of joint products and marketing activities in medical, IT, food industry, as well as modernization of historic center in twin cities Valga and Valka and development of quality services in 12 small port networks on Eastern coast of Baltic Sea. In partnership with partner countries along the EU's external borders direct investments are foreseen for development of infrastructure at border crossing points and reconstruction of cultural heritage objects.

In addition, transnational cooperation projects under Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme promotes institutional capacity and performance of Latvian partners in such areas as research and innovations, efficient management of natural resources and sustainable transport. Besides, Latvian project partners prove the capacity to use macroregional strategic framework in project generation process and are involved in implementation of more than 55 flagship projects of European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

More information on project results could be found on [www.interreg.lv](http://www.interreg.lv).

### 29<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference resolution

*33. establish a two-year Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity - based on the decisions of the BSPC Standing Committee - to submit a first report at the 30th BSPC – with particular focus on the need for joint and cross-border cooperation-enhanced solutions to preserve the biodiversity inherent to the entire Baltic Sea region and to mitigate the effects of climate change with special emphasis on*

- *the state of policies and strategies concerning climate change and biodiversity in the Baltic Sea region;*
- *best practices in addressing the interlinked challenges of biodiversity and climate change with a specific focus on the Baltic Sea;*
- *innovations and measures to tackle climate change and preserve biodiversity;*
- *climate change adaptation and challenges for science, technology and the economy*
- *ensuring efficient and environment-friendly transport and energy supply solutions concentrating its attention on the environmental side of climate change and biodiversity as well as on innovation, technology and further economic aspects;*

The implementation of the measures included in Latvia's Plan for adaptation to climate change to 2030 (adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2019) is ongoing, including measures linked to nature-based solutions and the conservation of biodiversity.

### **Answers provided by the Ministry of Transport**

- 14. promote sustainable tourism, inter alia by improving cross-border rail transport to enable more climate-friendly travel and reduce travel barriers in the Region, for example, by easing the existing visa restrictions*

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About cross-border railway line "Rīga-Tartu" - the movement of passenger trains between the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Estonia is provided by diesel trains starting from April 26, 2008. Currently, there are two pairs of diesel trains running daily on the Rīga-Lugaži-Valga route, and four pairs of diesel trains on the Valga-Tartu route every day.

With the co-operation of the railway passenger transport companies of both countries, it is planned to synchronize the train timetables of the Rīga-Tartu cross-border railway line, ensuring convenient transfer from one country to another.

*37. take significant steps in line with the UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the Baltic 2030 Action Plan to reduce emissions and to reach climate resilience of key economic sectors, including industry, transport and construction, as well as enhancement of natural carbon sinks, such as forests*

At present, 23 electric units and 18 diesel units are used daily to ensure passenger transport. As part of the upgrading of rolling stock, a contract between AS "Pasažieru vilciens" and Shkoda Vagonka a.s. has been concluded for the supply of 32 new electric units. It's planned to put them into service in 2022-2023.

In the transport priority framework, it is planned to make significant investment in the railway infrastructure of the Rīga metropolitan area. It is planned to ensure or improve zero emission railway infrastructure for 81 km track length in three railway lines, including railway electrification (catenary replacement ensuring future migration to 25kV electrification, increase of overall electrified line length) and related actions (construction of electrified double track, improvements in station track layouts, station reconstruction). For example, to reduce the travel time and enable the city / suburban railway function development (lines Bolderāja – Vecāķi, Bolderāja – Sigulda), there will be railway infrastructure investments in the sections Rīga – Bolderāja and Rīga – Zemitāni, including technical upgrades to facilitate future migration to 25kV electrification. Significant change is planned in the Bolderāja route. Railway line Zaslauks – Bolderāja is nine km long that connects Zaslauks station with Bolderāja and Daugavgrīva district. The Bolderāja line is single track, is not electrified and currently only has freight traffic. With Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) investments a complex service network solution will be enabled in which the railway will be the backbone (Rīga – Bolderāja with outlook to Daugavgrīva), providing service with battery powered rolling stock on the lines Sigulda – Rīga – Bolderāja and Bolderāja – Rīga - Vecāķi.

Thereby the double tracking and electrification of the line is envisaged. The RRF investments in Rīga – Tukums line are related with improvements of the existing electrified railway line – reconstruction of the catenary (section Tornakalns – Zaslauks – Priedaine), enabling migration to 25kV electrification. The investments will facilitate improving the maximum speed on the electrified line and enable the construction of the Rail Baltica 25 kV electrification.

It must be noted that the biggest part of the Rail Baltica line in Rīga will be constructed in the right of way of the existing railway infrastructure and therefore the construction and infrastructure improvements must be evaluated, designed and implemented taking into account the mutual interests. The RRF and European Union Structure Funds' investments are intended for purchase of nine BEMU (battery electric multiple unit) rolling stock (in addition to RRF funding Latvia will earmark funding from European Union Structure Funds for purchase of two BEMU), which may be increased to 14 (by

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five more units) to extend service offer or service area. Additional scope of five BEMU units are expected to be a purchase option the initiation of which shall be dependent on future developments and financial and technical conditions. In addition, a procurement option (optional scope) of electric multiple unit (EMU) or other zero emission rolling stock to replace fully or partially current diesel multiple unit (DMU) rolling stock as well as to extend service offer.

The main source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Latvian transport is road transport therefore developments and concrete actions in transport sector will change also mobility habits, for example, less using private cars and more public transport, concerning cargo shift to rail will be an important direction. Rail transport will be a backbone. Rail transport can make a major contribution.

Rail Baltica – a new fast, conventional European standard gauge (1435 mm) double-track electrified and ERTMS-equipped railway line connecting Tallinn with the Lithuanian/Polish border is part of the European Union's North Sea – Baltic TEN-T core network with strong geopolitical significance providing synergies between the TEN-T network and the defence needs. The expected impact of the project is multifaceted:

- (i) improved connectivity providing for further economic and social cohesion between Baltic States and Europe
- (ii) ensured modal integration and interoperability
- (iii) improved safety (newest generation ERTMS used to control the train movement).
- (iv) positive impact on the environment and climate change mitigation (fully electrified).
- (v) facilitated modal shift in passenger and freight traffic from road to rail (reduction of transport related GHG).

Up to 85% of the eligible costs of the Rail Baltica project are financed by the European Union (Connecting Europe Facility, CEF), with 15% co-financing from the national budgets of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania.

Under MFF 2014-2020 the project has secured 382.4 MEUR (including national co-financing) for the implementation of Rail Baltica project activities in Latvia. Signing of the next financing agreement (CEF8) under the new MFF2021-2027 is expected in the 2nd half of 2022.

Rail Baltica project has made significant progress in Latvia: implementation of the project is in progress, all critical path activities are ongoing - the main line of Rail Baltica is being designed, the key infrastructure objects are being developed, construction has started on the Rail Baltica Central Railway Hub in Riga (November 2020) and on the Rail Baltica Railway Station at the international airport Riga (June 2021). Currently preparatory work is ongoing for the start of massive construction on the Rail Baltica main line in Latvia. In November 2021 international tender for the Rail Baltica main line construction was launched with expected start of construction in 2023.

Timely implementation of the Rail Baltica project activities are closely linked to timely and sufficient availability of financing. To complement CEF financing, the project is looking also for other financing opportunities - in January 2022 the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia submitted application for financing under the CEF2 Transport Military mobility envelope (CEF-T-2021-MILMOB) and is also looking for

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financing opportunities under the Three Sees Investment Fund and private capital for commercialization activities enabled by the Rail Baltica project.

#### Answers provided by the Ministry of Economics

##### ***3.) focus on sustainability in its economic growth, development and innovation and to reach a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea and a sound and sustainable status for its environment.***

Having adopted the mission-oriented approach to define, develop and implement the new nation-brand of the Republic of Latvia, the country has recently launched mission: "Sea 2030" ("Jūra 2030"). The unifying element of the Sea 2030 mission will be the restoration of natural water cycles and generally, the health of the Baltic Sea. The mission will unite various industry sectors and contributors to produce innovative solutions for the mission's target industry. Moreover, the outcomes of the mission will be also applicable to other seas and oceans worldwide and transferable to other industries.

The main goal of the mission is to address the issues of climate change, pollution, and the circular economy by creating an environment for the creation of innovative projects and ensuring sustainability, while positioning Latvia as an innovative and forward-looking country that offers its unique solutions. The mission will be an opportunity for new forms of cooperation and innovation, building on existing economic competencies and those that will be developed in the future. As a result, Latvia aims to attract global cooperation partners, investors, and supporters.

To accomplish the clean water mission, the new economy and governance model will be built locally – in the Baltic Sea region. This approach will help create the conditions to clean up the world's most polluted and endangered sea.

The budget of the project is EUR 4 million for a three-year period; it will add EUR 128 million to the existing investment plan and create 4,500 new jobs.

##### ***15.) identify options for developing medical tourism – to help people in the region to receive health treatment throughout the Baltic Sea region, not least in the context of the COVID19 pandemic.***

Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia together with Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Latvian Investment and Development Agency, the Association of Health Care Employers and the Latvian Health Tourism Cluster participates in the Coordination Council of Health Care Export Services organized by the Ministry of Health. Coordination Council of Health Care Export Service annually updates the list of strategic markets for health export services, monitor the implementation of the plan. For providing targeted state support for the development of health export services, priority is given to activities related to the most strategically important markets. Data on health care services received by foreign patients in Latvia are collected and analysed annually. Purposeful and coordinated work is being invested for achieving the trust of foreign residents in the health care services provided by Latvian medical institutions and medical personnel.

##### ***16.) strive for a joint solution for the mutual recognition of approved vaccination and testing certificates that are validated and recognised by our countries to aid in the prevention of a new coronavirus infection (COVID-19), not least because border regions are particularly impacted on due to cross-border traffic.***

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In autumn 2021, Latvia faced a problem that Covid-19 vaccinated travellers from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were allowed to use their vaccination certificates for entering in Latvia, but not for receiving services, as the vaccines were not registered by European Medicines Agency. In Latvia most of the catering services, events, shopping malls were available in “green mode” only – that means only for persons with valid COVID-19 vaccination or recovery certificate (not required for children under the age of 12). Therefore, the industry had to cope with a situation that a fully vaccinated business partner or a participant of conference can enter in Latvia but is not allowed to visit the conference venue or meeting or a restaurant, even though is having a vaccination certificate.

Ministry of Economics in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Interior, the National Health Service organized a workgroup that created a system to provide short-term Covid-19 certificates for guests arriving from the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada (available from November 25th, 2021). The short-term certificates are issued by tourism information centres that have a cooperation agreement with the National Health Service on the processing of personal data and the issuance of relevant short-term certificates. The short-term certificates are valid equivalent to the Latvian Covid-19 certificate, but only in the territory of Latvia. The short-term certificate is valid for 30 days from the date of issue and is revoked afterwards.

***22.) facilitate better alignment of funds and regulations among EU mainstream funds and regional and national funds for cross-border and transnational cooperation projects tackling with macro-regional challenges in social and economic dimensions.***

Europe is currently experiencing a period of significant changes and challenges that have been significantly affected by both Covid-19 and Russian aggression in Ukraine and its consequences. The rapid pace of technological development, globalisation, automation, decarbonisation, new and digital technologies - all of which affect jobs, industry and services, business models, the economy and society as a whole.

Ministry of Economics will focus on achieving climate goals and promoting digital transformation, as well as reducing inequalities by using Recovery and Resilience fund and EU investments 2021.-2027. By 2029, Ministry of Economics is expected to use the total amount of aid grants of EUR 1.50 billion.

Development of the Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) (bioeconomy, biomedical and biotechnology, smart materials and energy and ICT), in cooperation with the public and private sector and scientific institutions, is essential, and Latvia therefore call on Lithuania and Estonia to consider the exchange of competences within the national RIS3 strategy. All areas of RIS3 specialisation should also take into account environmental and climate issues, including the European Green Deal course.

The most successful way to achieve a faster and more sustainable digital transformation of companies is to strengthen the capacity of companies to manage change and to provide specialized support tailored to the individual digitization needs of companies. At the same time, it is essential to support the use and integration of technology and public services in business processes and to strengthen the capacity to create smart services for sustainable economic growth, social well-being and human capital development. Given that the majority of SMEs in Latvia, it is necessary to stimulate SMEs to use advanced technologies and new innovative business methods, thus

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implementing the digital transformation in companies and promoting their competitiveness.

The main challenges today are linked to the deployment of smart and sustainable technologies and the increasing impact of digitalisation on businesses and global competitiveness. Ministry of Economics has always sought to emphasise that competitiveness today depends on the ability of entrepreneurs to engage in processes and to transform themselves in line with market requirements, which are determined by the demand for goods and services and the supply of digital skills-based economy with high added value.

By cooperating, developing new and improving existing digital services, the Baltic States can become a model for the European Union's digital transformation.

Ministry of Economics sees good cooperation between European Digital Innovation Hubs in the Baltic States through networking with internationally recognised experts, participating in cross-sectoral innovation and taking over good practices.

Cooperation project: Ministry of Economics has participated in the Baltic Sea Interreg BSR project "InnoCape" which finished on 31.12.2021. The project addresses the competitiveness of the Baltic Sea region through Industrial 4.0 and Digital Innovation Hubs (DIH) as contributing factors to digital innovation. The consortium consists of 9 DIH of the Baltic Sea region (Finland, Sweden, Norway and the Baltic States, from Latvia – ICT cluster) and 3 public authorities (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia). Participation in this project has allowed the development of the Latvian DIH concept and its capabilities to be strengthened, using the acquired knowledge (bottom-up) approach, and the development of guidelines for the strategic development of DIH.

***37.) take significant steps in line with the UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the Baltic 2030 Action Plan to reduce emissions and to reach climate resilience of key economic sectors, including industry, transport and construction, as well as enhancement of natural carbon sinks, such as forests.***

Work continues to promote further increase in renewable energy and energy efficiency in various ways, including:

- a) implementation and further review of the National Energy and Climate Plan in the context of the "Fit for 55" package. The updated draft plan once developed will be timely consulted with the Baltic States.
- b) ongoing work on updating national legislation governing issues related to energy production from renewable energy sources, use of sustainable transport fuels and improving energy efficiency in the context of latest developments in the EU Legislation.
- c) dismantling administrative barriers hindering implementation of sustainable energy production from renewable energy sources with a view to significantly increase wind and solar energy production in Latvia.
- d) work on cross-border off-shore wind cooperation with Estonia in the framework of so called ELWIND project etc.

***41.) strive for further reduction of nutrient influx into the Baltic Sea and support the development of technology and innovations that will reduce the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea.***

*See information / comments on point 3.*

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**43.) continue to support investments in green hydrogen technologies in order to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide.**

Currently, a round of technical research is needed during the next several years to evaluate the possibility of modernizing existing gas infrastructure to work with hydrogen. If modernization is possible, there exists an opportunity to receive the European Union's co-funding for the project in the future. Furthermore, given that Latvia only supports the so-called green hydrogen (hydrogen produced from renewable energy sources), current investments into renewable energy in both Latvia and the Baltic region can be partially considered as investments into the hydrogen-related industry – for example, the Latvian-Estonian wind park project ELWIND.

**46. concerning the impacts of increased shipping and cruise-ship tourism on climate change and loss of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea, to**

**e. support the development of technology and innovations that will further reduce the discharge of waste from ships to the Baltic Sea.**

Latvia has launched a mission with a nation-wide importance and global-scale benefit – Mission Sea 2030. The Baltic Sea is valuable source of health and biodiversity in the region, yet it is one of the most polluted seas in the world. By proactively taking on this challenge, Latvia is going to vividly innovate, connect industries, develop technologies and collaborate internationally to create circumstances for the restoration of the Baltic Sea in long-term. The country's ultimate ambition is to drive the emergence of solutions to help improve the health of seas and oceans all over the world. The overall goal of the mission is to address the issues of climate change, pollution and the circular economy. This will be attained by creating environment – playground - for sustainable global scale innovations in many industries with legal support instruments for innovations to happen.

**Answers provided by the Ministry of the Interior**

5. Since 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference which took place on August 30, 2021, taking into the account the spread of COVID - 19 pandemic, as well as epidemiological safety measures for the containment of the spread of COVID - 19 infection, the State Border Guard ensured cooperation with the Baltic States (Lithuania and Estonia) and Poland.

The Baltic States and Poland are also cooperating both at the level of the Ministers of the Interior and at the level of institutions to coordinate joint action in the fight against the hybrid attacks carried by the Republic of Belarus on the European Union's external Border. Prompt exchange of information in the field of illegal migration is ensured by using the National Coordination Centers as national contact points. In addition, bilateral and multilateral meetings were organized, mostly in a remote manner, incl. within the framework of the Action Plan of the Border Guard Sub - Committee of the Baltic Council of Ministers for year 2021.

It should be noted that in August, 2021, upon the request of the State Border Guard, officials of the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board provided support to the State Border Guard in combating illegal migration. In addition, in the 2nd half of 2021, on the basis of mutual agreement between the Prime Ministers of the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Poland, as well as chiefs of border guarding agencies of both countries, a reconnaissance visit in November, 2021 was organized in Poland and in December, 2021 in Latvia. In 2022, mutual exchanges of the border guard groups are planned, with the aim of providing assistance and ensuring the exchange of best

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practices and experiences in border management and coping with the crisis of illegal migration.

In response to changes in the situation on the Latvian - Belarusian state border, the State Border Guard has agreed with the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board to exchange information on third - country nationals (eg. Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Afghanistan) with the EU residence permits (Sweden, Finland) who enter Estonia from the Scandinavian countries through ports and their country of destination is not Estonia (*secondary movement*).

10. In order to ensure compliance with paragraph 10, the plan of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs to provide accommodation for persons with special needs at the accommodation centre for asylum seekers "Mucenieki" was approved on 17 September 2021.

13. The State Border Guard continues to actively participate in the activities under the Action Plans of both Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation and the Border Guard Sub - Committee of the Baltic Council of Ministers, as well as takes part in other bilateral and international events.

#### **Answers provided by the State Fire and Rescue Service of Latvia**

Paragraph 13 of the Resolution of the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference calls for the continued protection of children at risk, the fight against organized crime and the management of migratory flows in the fields of intense cooperation between the Baltic Sea States.

With the aim of improving the safety of children and youth, SFRS of Latvia has been participating in the project "Youth Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience" (*ChyResilience*) led by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (furthermore-CBSS) since November 2020. The planned duration of the project is November 2020 - May 2022. The purpose of the research is to structure and enable cross-country analysis of the role of children and youth in building resilient societies across the Baltic Sea Region. Within the framework of the project, focus group discussions with children and young people on safety issues were successfully conducted, as well as interviews with experts whose work is related to the improvement of the safety of children and young people. The summarized results have been sent to the partners for conclusions.

Paragraph 12 of the Resolution of the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference calls to foster regional cooperation in civil protection, including the prevention of, preparedness against and response to natural disasters and industrial accidents, the protection of the population of the Baltic Sea States from natural and man-made emergencies which remain important issues for the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

In an effort to improve cooperation in the field of civil protection, SFRS of Latvia has been participating in the "Pan-Baltic Cross-Sectoral Innovation in Societal Security" (*BALTInnoSEC*) project since October 2021. The aim of the project is to explore the possibilities of creating a framework for a civil protection network, focusing on the risks specific to the Baltic Sea region. The duration of the project is October 2021 - March 2023. Due to the pandemic, the project is overdue and at an early stage.

With regard to paragraph 12 of the Resolution of the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference calls for foster regional cooperation in civil protection, should be mentioned trilateral and bilateral cooperation with Lithuania and Estonia. In 2021, the Operational Agreements between the State Fire and Rescue Service of the

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Republic of Latvia and the Estonian Rescue Board and the Cooperation Agreement between the State Fire and Rescue Service of the Republic of Latvia, the Fire and Rescue Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania and the Estonian Rescue Board were signed which improves cooperation in the field of civil protection and rescue works. Important co-operation in the field of civil protection has taken place with the Fire and Rescue Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, taking over the experience in the field of early warning cell broadcasting system. The implementation of such a system is currently taking place in Latvia and it allows notifying people in the danger or catastrophe zone via mobile phones of the threat and necessary action.

Paragraph 18 of the Resolution of the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference calls for the strengthening of the link between the national, regional and municipal levels of Baltic cooperation by means of further encouraging collaboration between the CBSS, the Baltic Sea Cultural Cities and Regions, the Baltic Sea Commission and inviting a wider range of territories and cities to participate in it.

In an attempt to improve cooperation between state-level actors, municipalities and volunteers. SFRS of Latvia plans to participate in the project "Volunteers and Local Authorities - Baltic Sea Region Network" (*VOALA*) from September 2022. Aim of the project is to create a joint network of volunteers and local institutions in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) to strengthen the region's resilience to natural and man-made disasters. The planned duration of the project is September 2022 - February 2024. SFRS of Latvia has signed a letter of partnership and is awaiting a response on its acceptance.

Paragraph 35 of the Resolution of the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference calls for a powerful and determined signal by the adoption of an ambitious update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan through the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021 under the current German chairmanship and to ensure - through regular monitoring of its implementation - that its objectives are implemented in all countries of the Baltic Sea Region more quickly and consistently than before to achieve a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea and its environment by the end of the decade.

SFRS of Latvia has applied for "HELCOM BALEX DELTA 2022" oil and chemical spill recovery exercise in the Baltic Sea. The exercise will be conducted northerly in the port of Rostock on August 23 to 25, 2022. The first planning meeting will take place in early April, at which the SFRS of Latvia membership format will be decided.

#### Answers provided by the Ministry of Culture

**Regarding Cooperation in the Region to use the restart after the pandemic and the current decade to**

**4. strive for better inclusion, prosperity, public health and social cohesion while also decreasing existing gaps between BSR countries by joint efforts.**

On January 18, 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the **Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines for the development of a cohesive and civically active society for 2022-2023**. There are three main directions in the Plan: National identity and belonging; Democracy culture and inclusive citizenship; Integration.

The general principle of implementation of the activities laid out in the Plan is inclusive participation, which enables everyone to participate in public administration and ensures a broad representation of society in all its diversity, that is the basis for

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acquiring knowledge and skills, expanding national identity, Latvian language, social responsibility, solidarity, and responsibility.

In 2021 Latvia has developed the Plan for the implementation of measures of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022-2023.

**10. protect the vulnerable and optimally integrate those who legitimately seek protection from persecution in the Region**

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia is an institution in Latvia in the area of integration delegated by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (hereafter – AMIF). Within the framework of AMIF an activity “**Support measures for beneficiaries of international protection (refugees and persons with alternative status), reception and accommodation in Latvia**” (hereafter – Activity) is implemented. The goal of the activity is to promote the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into society by providing training courses and information tailored to the needs of beneficiaries of international protection on rights and obligations in various spheres of life.

Within the framework of the activity implementation of the following measures is supported:

- Integration courses (Programme is 20-40 hours long, there are 2 levels of the Programme available);
- Since 2018 – Latvian language courses (Programme is 80-120 hours long);
- Events for intercultural communication, co-operation with the local community, as well as cultural, sports, and recreational events, involving persons in need of international protection as lecturers.

In 2021, 149 persons have attended integration courses, and 58 persons have attended Latvian language courses.

In addition to the measures that are implemented within the framework of the Activity, the AMIF funding is also provided to the activity “Establishment of a national level coordination system to provide support for the participation of immigrants who have received the right to reside in Latvia”. Within this activity in 2016, the Information Centre for Newcomers (ICI) was established. ICI has five offices – one in the capital city, others in regions. ICI provides free of charge consultations for newcomers on topics such as: employment, migration (residence permits, visas), rights of tenants (issues related to housing), family law (family reunification, divorce, inheritance matters, etc.), legalization, and recognition of education documents, starting a business (issues related to entrepreneurship, etc.).

ICI also provides psychological consultations and interpretation services both orally and in writing. Interpretation services are available in the following languages: Dari, Farsi, Pashto, Urdu, Arabic, French, Kurdish, Punjabi, Chinese, Turkish, Uzbek, Hindi, Tamil, Spanish, Sorani, Bengali, Vietnamese, Tigrinya.

**Regarding Democracy in a Changing Media Landscape:  
Digitalisation, Combating Disinformation, Misinformation and “Fake News”  
as well as Protecting Free Media and Freedom of Speech, to**

**25. enforce constant engagement and commitment as well as strong efforts and support to strengthen confidence in democratic structures and values, to promote**

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**tolerance and open-mindedness, freedom of media and expression as well as robust NGOs as cornerstones of the democracies in the Baltic Sea Region;**

On February 5, 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society 2021-2027. One of the three main areas of action set out in the Guidelines is the culture of democracy and inclusive civicness and three actions are envisaged:

1) Promoting citizens' acquisition of skills in democracy and knowledge needed to tackle global and contemporary challenges;

The plan implementing the guidelines aims to promote cooperation and trust between different groups of society, to promote awareness-raising about democracy and civil society, and to improve citizens' knowledge about participation. The Youth Policy Guidelines for 2021-2027 and the Regional Policy Guidelines for 2021-2027 will also contribute significantly to this task.

2) Strengthening the development and sustainability of civil society through the creation of a civic culture and the development of inclusive civicness;

The plan foresees the continuation of the State budget NGO Fund programme. The plan also provides for other measures to promote citizens' cooperation, participation and interpersonal trust, support for NGOs at regional level, co-financing for participation in international projects and promoting volunteering. At the same time, the introduction of the participation budget in local government will provide an opportunity for citizens to determine how part of the municipal budget is spent. The participation budget is one of the opportunities to promote public participation in municipal activities, including by promoting cooperation between the two parties. Similarly, the participation budget will reduce citizens' feeling that the municipality does not provide sufficient feedback, as the method provides for targeted communication and cooperation with municipal residents.

3) Building a high-quality, secure and inclusive space for democratic participation and information.

In order to provide high-quality information, the plan encourages research on the development of a cohesive society and democracy. It envisages actions for the development of media and digital skills, promotes the availability of reliable legal information and promotes public involvement in policy-making activities. The plan recognises the important role that public service media, commercial media and non-commercial media play in building a high-quality, secure and inclusive democratic engagement and information space. The overall strategic objective of the public electronic media is to strengthen Latvia's democratic order, freedom of expression and the feeling of Latvian citizens that they belong to Latvia, to preserve Latvian language and national culture.

The 2019 National Security Concept has a whole section on the prevention of the threat posed to Latvia's information space, underling that "Democracy is able to function if citizens take decisions on the basis of information provided by media that is pluralistic and diverse. This applies equally to electronic media and the printed press. Thus, the information space of Latvia is characterised by democratic principles such as freedom of the press and the prohibition of censorship. [...] Measures to support the media environment should aim at strengthening peoples' confidence in the independent media as an important democratic institution and a defender of the public interest."

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Following the principles of democracy in the development of policy planning documents, the Ministry of Culture involves all relevant stakeholder as well as representatives of NGOs. In the development of the Plan for the implementation of measures of the Roma Strategic Framework for 2022-2023 both Roma and non-Roma NGOs were included in the working group developing the Plan.

Ministry of Culture also has three advisory councils:

- Council for monitoring the implementation of the guidelines for the development of a cohesive and civically active society (includes 6 NGO representatives);
- Advisory Council of Representatives of Minority Non-Governmental Organizations (will include 16 NGO representatives, the selection of representatives is ongoing);
- Advisory Council for the Promotion of Roma Participation (will include at least 6 NGO representatives, the selection of representatives is ongoing).

In addition, Ministry of Culture has monthly informal meetings with NGO representatives from the Council for the Implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation between Non-Governmental Organizations and the Cabinet of Ministers.

**26. expand the promotion of media literacy among young people in order to enable them to think critically and evaluate information;**

Various activities have been implemented to promote media literacy among young people and pupils, as well as the media literacy of teachers, youth workers, librarians and other professionals in contact with young people. For example, teaching materials for the development of critical thinking among young people were prepared, and several trainings were organized for teachers and librarians and youth specialists.

**30. introduce further practical support measures to strengthen pluralistic independent media in the Baltic Sea Region and to ensure their sustainability in the digital age;**

As part of media support programs, funding was provided to media companies for the production of journalistic content. The funding available for the program was 1 400 000 euro. Support was also available to reduce the effects of Covid-19. The media were able to receive financial support to cover various operational expenses. The total funding for the program was 3 200 000 euro.

At the same time, support for the delivery of subscribed printed media continued and VAT was reduced from 12% to 5% for printed media and from 21% to 5% for digital content and subscriptions.

**31. support the promotion and implementation of international norms, democratic values and human rights principles in the global information and communicative space;**

Latvia is an active participant in the work of the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Media and Information Society. The CDMSI advises the Committee of Ministers and takes part in standard-setting activities on all questions within its area of expertise, including freedom, independence, pluralism, and diversity of media; safety of journalists; support for professional journalism, protection and promotion of human rights, in particular freedom of expression.

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**34. support national, European and global steps to foster information and media literacy, including the implementation of the UN Resolution 75/267 on Global Media and Information Literacy Week adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 March 2021.**

As part of World Media Literacy Week, several discussions among experts and decision-makers were organized. Also, trainings and seminars were held for students, teachers, and youth workers.

**Answers provided by the Ministry of Defence**

Baltic States continue to meet on regular bases in different formats, including Military Committee and Ministerial Committee, and many others, to discuss Baltic Sea regions development, safety and security. During these meeting in 2021 Ministers approved a project that will help to enable cross border military cooperation, tackling the current and future challenges and crisis. The working title of the project is cross border employment. The project will allow the Baltic States to better prepare themselves for any possible contingency, and to provide military assistance to each other in a speedy and seamless manner. First drafts of the legal framework will be presented during the Ministerial Committees Spring meeting.

Baltic state defence cooperation on all levels – Ministerial, Chief of Defence, Armed Forces, expert – has helped to enable different projects that strengthen regional defence, information sharing, procurement and others.

Latvian MoD continues to work on strengthening and broadening the knowledge of the youth about national defence, resilience and civic engagement by implementation of the National Defence Course. The National Defence Course consists of several modules where students are taught a range of theoretical and practical skills. Those modules are:

- Security and defence of a nation-state, role of civil society and civil engagement;
- Resilience in crises, leadership and command;
- Skills and competencies for defence.

The National Defence Course is an integral part of the secondary education curriculum. The main document specifying its content is the State education standard. The State education standard is developed by the Ministry of Education and Science and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. Currently, in the State education standard the National Defence Course is categorized as a special course, meaning that it is voluntary course, but starting from 2024-25 school year this course will be mandatory for all secondary school students. The Parliament of the Republic of Latvia passed a law on the National Defence Course and Cadet Force. This law came into force on 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2021.

At the moment each secondary school voluntarily decides on introducing the National Defence Course in their curricula. In the academic year 2020/2021 it was taught in 69 schools, in the academic year 2021/2022 it is taught in 97 schools. Additionally, students can engage in extracurricular activities (summer camps). Participation in those camps is voluntary.

Baltic States continue the cooperation within the Baltic Defence College – a unique professional military education institution that educates military officers and civilian government officials from the Baltic States, their allies, and partners at the operational and the strategic level. The Baltic Defence College organizes two major

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academic conferences of the College, the Annual Conference on Russia and the Annual Baltic Military History Conference.

**Answers provided by the Ministry of Health**

**15. identify options for developing medical tourism – to help people in the region to receive health treatment throughout the Baltic Sea region, not least in the context of the COVID19 pandemic;**

The Ministry of Health is the responsible institution for carrying out the support measures to promote the development of medical tourism. In order to ensure the comprehensive development of medical tourism and mutual cooperation between all the parties involved, the Coordination Board for Health Export Services has been established for the implementation of coordinated measures. The Coordination Board for Health Export Services has developed an action plan with tasks to be carried out within a certain period of time with the aim of promoting the development of medical tourism. The Latvian Tourism Marketing Strategy 2018-2023 identifies medical tourism as one of the tourism priorities.

**16. strive for a joint solution for the mutual recognition of approved vaccination and testing certificates that are validated and recognised by our countries to aid in the prevention of a new coronavirus infection (COVID-19), not least because border regions are particularly impacted on due to cross-border traffic;**

COVID-19 vaccination, recovery and testing certificates issued by all three Baltic States comply with interoperability requirements set by *Regulation (EU) 2021 on a framework for the issuance, verification and acceptance of interoperable COVID-19 vaccination, test and recovery certificates (EU Digital COVID Certificate) to facilitate free movement during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Thus, they are mutually validated and recognised in each of our countries.

**21. foster collaboration in healthcare in the Baltic Sea Region in order to better handle situations like the current COVID-19 pandemic as well as to exchange experience and best practices in this area;**

During the period of COVID-19 pandemic, three Baltic health ministers have regular meetings for the exchange of information regarding the response measures in health sector. Competent health institutions also maintain regular contacts with their Baltic counterparts. Close consultations among the Baltic States at the level of experts and politicians have been very useful for exchanging information on the planned measures to limit COVID-19, as well as mitigation or lifting these measures. Regular contacts between respective departments of ministries help to clarify positions before meetings of European Union, World Health Organisation and other international organisations. On the basis of Article 4(6) of the *Agreement between the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Estonia and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Estonia on mutual assistance in the provision of emergency medical assistance in the border area* (15 November 2010), the State Emergency Medical Service of Latvia, the Estonian Emergency Response Centre and the Estonian Health concluded a cooperation agreement on requesting and providing mutual aid for ambulance assistance in border area. In order to update this Agreement, Latvia has submitted its proposals for the provision of emergency medical assistance in the border area and the documents subordinate thereto. Estonian representatives are currently preparing the final version of the Agreement in order to advance it for signature.

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Currently both emergency medicine services continue to provide emergency medical assistance in the Latvian-Estonian border area in accordance with the provisions of the Cooperation Agreement concluded on 15 November 2010. Similar agreement between Latvia and Lithuania was concluded 3 October 2018.

On 9 March 2022, a contract was concluded for the provision of X-ray and ultrasound examinations between hospital "Vidzemes slimnīca" and Valga City Hospital, thus Valka residents can receive ultrasound and X-ray services at Valga Hospital. Since hospital "Vidzemes slimnīca" does not provide these services within the framework of the agreement on the provision of urgent medical assistance point services in the city of Valka, until now the residents of Valka could not receive these services in the immediate vicinity.

Baltic countries are organizing joint procurement of appropriate medicines and vaccines; respective trilateral agreement of 2012 is now updated and ready for signing.

LITHUANIA

**FOLLOW-UP OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE 30<sup>TH</sup> BALTIC SEA  
PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE**

**Republic of Lithuania**

We support the goal to grant protection status to at least 30% of the marine area of the Baltic Sea of which at least 1/3 will be under strict protection. The goal is in line with the EU Biodiversity strategy 2030 and draft post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be adopted in 2022. Marine protected areas cover up 18.2% (MPA) of the entire marine area of Lithuania. We have researched natural values in our marine waters quite well, therefore, we believe that most of the mandatory protected areas have already been identified. However, according to research data, even in protected areas, the seabed is disturbed by trawling. It is very important to focus not on the size of marine protected areas. Rather we should focus on the strengthening of protection and restoration of marine ecosystems, integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning, implementation of control measures and effective management of MPA's in order to reach a consensus in the region on the limitation of human economic activities not only in the territorial sea, but also in the EEZ.

Lithuania applies specific economic instruments for sustainable use of natural resources. These include **licence fees on recreational fishing and payments for commercial fishing quotas**. Licence fees on recreational fishing generated EUR 1.8 million in 2020 and EUR 1.7 million in 2021 and revenues are allocated to Environment Protection Support Programme. From 2016 the fishing opportunities (quotas) allocated to Lithuania are subject to a system of transferable fishing concessions (long term of 15 years rights-based allocation of quotas system). Rights-based approaches to fisheries management have shown potential for promoting biologically sustainable and economically viable fisheries and were proved as a good tool to achieve the balance between the fishing capacity of the fishing fleet and the fishing opportunities. The basis for calculation of transferable fishing concessions are historic catch levels.

**BSPC would appreciate it if you would report on the further implementation of the demands and measures in addition to the statements made in the past two years.**

**1. Dėl regioninio bendradarbiavimo pasibaigus COVID-19 pandemijai  
(Regarding cooperation in the region to use the restart after the pandemic)**

COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the close and indisputable links between human health and the health of animals, plants, and whole ecosystems. We admit taking urgent actions to protect and restore of biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems and their services is critical to prevent or reduce the future health crises.

The project IFE OrgBalt “**Demonstration of climate change mitigation potential of nutrients rich organic soils in Baltic States and Finland**” has started in 2019 and will be finished in 2023.

Activities and measures of this project are focused to:

- Improve the knowledge base for the assessment, monitoring, projection and implementation of effective climate change mitigation measures in the management of nutrient rich organic soils;
- Enhance the capacity of national and local authorities to apply the obtained knowledge in practice in the TCM climate zone;
- Contribute to the demonstration of innovative climate change mitigation technologies, systems, methods and instruments that are suitable for being replicated, transferred or mainstreamed for management of nutrient rich organic soils in TCM climate zone in Europe and beyond its borders;
- Contribute to sustainable land use, agriculture and forestry by creation of tools and guidelines for implementation of climate change mitigation measures in nutrient rich organic soils, as well as socio-economic analysis of the initiated actions.

### **3. Dėl Baltijos jūros ir mūsų aplinkos išsaugojimo ateities kartoms, klimato kaitos stabdymo ir bioįvairovės praradimo (Regarding safeguarding the Baltic sea and our environment, halting climate change and loss of biodiversity)**

Regarding halting loss of biodiversity, Lithuania already banned cod fishing in the Lithuanian marine waters. It is planned to monitor impacts of fishing on biodiversity as well as to take control and enforcement measures and to oblige the fishing industry to use more environment-friendly and effective deterrent tools preventing bycatch of wintering seabirds and marine mammals. It is very important to continue clearing fish migratory routes in rivers that are important for fish spawning. In Lithuania was started the free flow river projects with recent successful demolition of the Salantai dam which led to 46 km of freed river flow.

Lithuania has adopted the National Waste Prevention Program, which emphasizes the reduction of the amount of plastic packaging waste and its impact on the environment. The deposit system for single-use packaging of beverages was successfully introduced in Lithuania in 2016. 93 % of the plastic packaging of beverages participating in the deposit system was collected in 2019. At the beginning of 2019 Lithuania banned a free of charge distribution of lightweight plastic bags at the points of sale. And we will continue our efforts to prevent plastic litter in the frame of EU and global initiatives.

According to the updated Baltic Sea action plan for biodiversity, Lithuania committed to implement the following main actions:

- By 2030 establish a resilient, regionally coherent, effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected system of HELCOM marine protected areas (MPAs),
- By 2022 come to a common understanding of the Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) criteria and their use in HELCOM, based on definitions agreed in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the EU, and define how OECMs can support the coherence of the Baltic Sea marine protected area (MPA) network.
- By 2030 strengthen the management of the Baltic Sea marine protected area (MPA) network by introducing key elements into management efforts, to increase effectiveness of protection, including by providing support to Baltic Sea MPA managers through capacity building,
- By 2026 nationally ensure that marine protected area (MPA) management plans and/or measures are legally binding and ensure appropriate structures are in place to enforce compliance,
- Develop, implement and share information on effective management measures,
- Ensure that by 2030 the HELCOM marine protected area (MPA) network provides specific protection to species and biotopes listed as regionally threatened or near threatened in the HELCOM Red Lists,
- By 2022 specify knowledge gaps on all threats to the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise population, and by 2023 for the western Baltic population, including by-catch and areas of high by-catch risk, underwater noise, contaminants and prey depletion
- Maintain an updated map of the sensitivity of birds to threats such as wind energy facilities, wave energy installations, shipping and fisheries,
- By 2023 and onwards with new findings use the maps on sensitivity of migratory birds to threats in environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedures with the aim to protect migratory birds against potential threats arising from new offshore wind farms and other installations with barrier effect,
- Develop and coordinate monitoring and assessment methods for specified representative coastal fish species, populations and communities, assess the state of the coastal fish community and implement management measures to maintain or improve the status of coastal fish species.
- Update the HELCOM Red List Assessments, including identifying the main pressures and underlying human activities affecting the red listed species,

- Develop, implement, and enforce compliance with ecologically relevant conservation plans and other measures, limiting pressures from human activities for threatened and declining species,
- Map ecosystem services and the present and potential spatial distribution of key ecosystem components, protect them including habitat forming species
- Develop and by 2026 start implementing a HELCOM Action Plan for habitat and biotope restoration, including regional targets, a prioritized list of actions, and an associated implementation toolbox,
- Develop a roadmap to fill gaps and, by 2030 develop and fully operationalise a set of indicators fulfilling HELCOM's needs, including the need to provide a regional platform for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

In order to reduce the impact of climate change on the shores of the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Spit a Coastal Zone Management Program for the period 2021–2030 is being prepared. The project will assess the effectiveness of the Baltic Sea shore management measures and the condition of the shore. Based on the existing coastal monitoring and newly conducted research, the current condition of the Curonian Spit and the mainland part of the Baltic Sea coast is currently being evaluated. The studies will provide recommendations on the optimal coastal management measures, taking into account the compatibility of the coastal protection measures applied in other countries and the economic assessment of the proposed coastal management measures. Experts from foreign countries whose shore management measures affect the shores of Lithuania, or which may be affected by the shore management applied in Lithuania will be consulted in the preparation of the program. Based on the results of the research, a Coastal Zone Management Program for the period 2021–2030 will be developed to preserve or restore the inherent characteristics of the coast and increase its resilience to the effects of climate change.

We welcome the updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and support proposed actions to reduce the pollution from agriculture. Lithuania strongly commits to reduce the use of mineral fertilizers by enabling strict regulation, promotion of ecological farming, implementation of HELCOM Nutrient recycling strategy and cooperation, and awareness raising of farmers.

Lithuanian Parliament adopted a National Climate Change Management Agenda on June 2021. The Agenda sets short-term (until 2030), medium-term (until 2040) and long-term (until 2050) goals relating to climate change mitigation as well as targets for individual sectors, which use fossil fuels, pollute the atmosphere with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and have the biggest impact on climate change. The main goals include an 85 % reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 and a 100-percent reduction by 2050, compared to 1990.

The National Energy and Climate Action Plan of Lithuania is currently under revision. To have an open, effective dialogue for updating the Plan 5 Decarbonisation Working

Groups are being set by sectors: agriculture and forestry, energy, industry, transport and the waste-circular economy.

### Answers by the Ministry of the Interior

#### Political cooperation

In 2021, with the start of a hybrid attack by the Belarussian regime on the European Union, when thousands of innocent and fraudulently lured to Belarus migrants were pushed from Belarus to neighboring countries – Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, a new format for regular meetings of the **Ministers of the Interior of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland** have emerged, in which Ministers discuss and coordinate joint actions.

This close cooperation has once again demonstrated the collective resilience of our region to threats and halted the flow of irregular migration and the hybrid attack itself.

Today, the Ministers continue to work actively facing a real military attack on our neighbour – Ukraine. Ministries intend to continue to cooperate and maintain close contacts at both the political and operational levels.

#### Institutional cooperation

**The Lithuanian Police** has been developing regional cooperation at both strategic and tactical levels in a number of formats and channels. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of these formats remained high and all activities were consistently maintained and developed. Taking into account the situation during the pandemic, the planned means of direct contact were replaced by means of telework, therefore the existence of the pandemic did not substantially change the work of the Lithuanian Police in the fight against organized crime and cross-border crime. No new formats of cooperation in the field of criminal police have been developed, while the existing formats have been considered as efficient and sufficient.

In 2021, the Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau, in cooperation with Latvia, carried out 11 international operations, 8 of which were successfully completed. The Netherlands, Malta, France, the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Romania and Bulgaria also took part in these operations.

In 2021, the Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau in cooperation with Estonia carried out 3 international operations, 1 of which was successfully completed. One operation was carried out together with Finland. In 2020, 5 international operations were carried out in cooperation with the Estonian Police, 4 of which were completed successfully.

Two operations on drug trafficking and smuggling of drugs and psychotropic substances have been launched and are still ongoing. Relevant criminal information is regularly exchanged via INTERPOL, Europol and SIRENE channels:

<b>LATVIA:</b>		<b>ESTONIA:</b>	
Notices received	1369	Notices received	469
Notices sent	1255	Notices sent	424
New cases started	782	New cases started	265
Cases initiated by Latvia	357	Cases initiated by Estonia	110
Cases initiated by Lithuania	332	Cases initiated by Lithuania	114

In July 2021 with the onset of irregular migration crisis in Lithuania, a decision was made to seek assistance from the Member States on the basis of EU Council Decision No. 2008/615/JHA (PRUM Agreement) on secondment of police officers to Lithuania for the purpose of carrying out joint activities on the border between the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Belarus, including operational tasks at the Schengen border related to increased flows of irregular migrants. On 25 August 2021, an agreement was signed between the Lithuanian Police and the National Police of Poland on cooperation in carrying out a joint operation in Lithuania.

A request for assistance was sent to the Latvian State Police on 26 November 2021. As the situation related to irregular migration had stabilized, the assistance was no longer needed thus not provided.

On September 3-4, 2021, a meeting of the heads of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian police and border guard services took place. An agreement on bilateral cooperation in the field of border protection was signed between the **State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (SBGS)** and the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board, which provides for faster and easier use of additional forces to manage the challenges posed by migration.

The SBGS participates in the activities of the Border Guard Subcommittee of the Committee of Senior Officials of the Baltic Council of Ministers. Action plans are drawn up each year to implement the planned measures.

The SBGS participates in the activities of the Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation (BSRBCC) Forum. Annual action plans are drawn up for meetings of the countries participating in the Forum, as well as for seminars and exercises to ensure security in the Baltic Sea region.

The SBGS regularly exchanges criminal intelligence information via EUROPOL SIENA, or directly with the Border Guards of the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Estonia. Criminal intelligence activities are also carried out at the request of the law enforcement authorities of these countries, and such requests are submitted to the law enforcement authorities of these countries.

### **Combating disinformation**

On February 24, 2022, a state of emergency was declared in the Republic of Lithuania. The current situation in countries neighbouring with Ukraine and Baltic States creates extremely favorable conditions for the conduct of hybrid attacks and provocations of any kind against Lithuania on the instructions of the Russian and Belarusian authorities and poses a threat to the seriousness of society and public order.

The Lithuanian Police has identified possible violations of the Law on Public Information of the Republic of Lithuania regarding the dissemination of sensitive

information and is taking all possible measures to prevent the dissemination of sensitive information.

The police applied to the domain administrators for immediate termination of access to certain foreign websites in the Republic of Lithuania. The list (<https://lenta.ru/>, <https://ria.ru/>, <https://ria.ru/lenta/>, <https://www.rbc.ru/>, <https://www.rt.com/>, <https://kremlin.ru/>, <https://en.kremlin.ru/>, <https://smotrim.ru/>, <https://tass.ru/>, <https://tvzvezda.ru/>, <https://vsoloviev.ru/>, <https://ltv.ru/>, <https://www.vesti.ru/>, <https://online.sberbank.ru/>, <https://zakupki.gov.ru/>, <https://lt.sputniknews.ru/>, <https://baltnews.ru/>, <https://sputniknews.ru/>, <https://regnum.ru/>, <https://iz.ru/>, <https://eadaily.com/>, <http://lebionka.blogspot.com/>, <http://ausra.info/>, <https://www.rubaltic.ru/>, <https://politexpert.net/>, <https://tsargrad.tv/>, <https://rg.ru/>, <https://vz.ru/>, <https://www.tvr.by/>, <https://dziennik-polityczny.com/>, <https://ru-an-info.livejournal.com/>, <https://cont.ws/@Chervonec001>, <https://cont.ws/@Colonel-Cassad>, <https://cont.ws/@who-who>, <https://cont.ws/@rustik8448>, <https://www.rbth.com/>, <https://vk.com/public77836574>, <https://nikolaiarhep.livejournal.com/>, <https://vk.com/againstthewest>, [https://vk.com/the\\_face\\_of\\_war](https://vk.com/the_face_of_war), [https://vk.com/evropy\\_net](https://vk.com/evropy_net), <https://bb.lv/>, <https://vk.com/opvnato>, <https://rusonline.org>, <https://vk.com/public172944148>, <https://www.fondsk.ru/>, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/>, <https://iarex.ru/>, <https://www.ritmeurasia.org/tag--litva-1152>, <https://criticismoflife.wordpress.com/>, <https://vk.com/natowar> and more) of these sites has been agreed with the Internet Media Association and other law enforcement and intelligence agencies. This list may be revised at any time and similar steps taken to block such foreign portals.

The police also asked the Office of the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics to evaluate and provide a list of Lithuanian websites that disseminate propaganda or misinformation as soon as possible. Upon receipt of this information, the domain administrators will be repeatedly contacted regarding the blocking of Lithuanian websites and the issue of possible liability for them will be resolved.

**The Fire and Rescue Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania** actively cooperates with the relevant authorities of the fire and rescue services of Latvia and Estonia. Every year, a meeting of Directors General of Rescue Services of the Baltic States is organized in one of the countries. These meetings aim to discuss the development of fire and rescue services and future perspectives for close and fruitful cooperation.

Representatives of fire and rescue services also share best practice and experience of each country. Moreover, there is a regular exchange of information about changes being made and carried out in the services, accounting of working time, remuneration, organization of the service matters and other issues. Officers of fire and rescue services exchange and analyze country fire statistics annually in order to ensure fire prevention and improve safety indicators.

### **Regional development**

The Republic of Lithuania together with other Baltic Sea countries participates in the European Territorial Cooperation programmes.

1) One of the most important and the biggest programme is **Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme**. This programme has carefully been aligned with the **EUSBSR** (European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region) and its **action plan** in order to maximize benefits for the BSR citizens.

In *2014-2020* the main cooperation themes: innovation, sustainable use of natural resources including clear waters; sustainable transport. The Programme supports 140 transnational projects with over than 1 740 partners from all countries of the Baltic Sea Region and beyond (13 countries). 163 Lithuanian partners are involved in the projects.

For the new *2021-2027* programming period the main aim of Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme: to put into practice innovative, water-smart and climate-neutral solutions through transnational cooperation for the benefit of the citizens across the Baltic Sea region. Programme's budget is 250 984 823 EUR. The new Programme will focus on the transition towards greener and more resilient societies and economies. Thematic Programme objectives will be: Resilient economies and communities; Responsive public services; Sustainable waters (including climate change); Blue economy; Circular economy; Energy transition; Smart green mobility.

Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme (*2021-2027*) document is submitted to European Commission for approval. First open calls for projects are open from 8 February, 2022, before the adoption of the new Cooperation Programme. More information on Programme's website: <https://interreg-baltic.eu/>.

2) For the new *2021-2027* programming period the main **aim** of **Interreg Latvia and Lithuania Programme** supports sustainable and modern/ up-to date solutions for joint growth and development, attracting travellers and tourists visiting and observing our natural and cultural values, making local inhabitants willing to stay as well as welcoming new-comers to come and build their future in the border area. The main cooperation fields: (1) the demographics, territory and governance, (2) the nature and climate, (3) the social inclusion and (4) tourism. It is expected to submit Programme's document to European Commission for approval as soon as possible. More information is on Programme's website: <https://latlit.eu/>.

#### Answers by the Ministry of Education and Science

- On 8 June 2018 the agreement on automatic recognition of academic qualifications was signed by ministers of Education and Science of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Under this agreement secondary and higher education diplomas obtained in the three Baltic States are automatically recognized. The agreement itself makes it easier for Lithuanian students to start studies in other Baltic countries and vice versa, for Latvian and Estonian students to start studying in Lithuania. The Agreement increases academic mobility, exchange of contacts, makes higher education system more open and international.
- The Nordic and Baltic countries continue to strongly support the Nordic-Baltic Programme for International Co-operation in Education (NordPlus, <https://www.nordplusonline.org/>). The NordPlus programme focuses on educational innovation, quality assurance, dissemination of good practice through projects, mobilities, networks and covers all levels of education, from

early childhood education to adult education. The programme also contributes to the promotion of the Nordic languages and culture, mutual Nordic-Baltic linguistic and cultural understanding, shared values as well as establishment of a Nordic-Baltic education area. There are five sub-programmes under Nordplus – Junior, Higher Education, Adult, Nordic languages and Horizontal. The Nordplus Higher education sub-programme is a mobility and network programme in the higher education sector which aims to create a collaboration between the institutions that participate in the programme through exchanges, good practices and innovative results. The programme supports collaboration between higher education institutions and other organizations of the participating countries.

- One of former successful initiatives was the rotating Baltic Summer Academy, a series of summer seminars organized jointly with the Council of Europe and the Norwegian European Wergeland Center. During the Academy, school teams (teachers, students, school administration, community representatives) from the three Baltic States had the opportunity to participate in trainings and working groups on democracy, human rights and citizenship development. Dissemination of the results of the projects implemented by the school teams in the communities promoted a stronger knowledge and understanding of the importance of democratic culture, citizenship and human rights.

#### **Answers by the Ministry of Justice**

In spring of 2021, the Parliament of Lithuania took the initiative and established the working group to specifically tackle the problem of abusive litigation, also known as Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPP). The following draft laws have been prepared:

- the amendment to the Code of Civil Procedure provides a new possibility of early dismissal of the claim if a court establishes that this claim may be categorized as SLAPP;
- the amendment to the Criminal Code revises the criminal liability for defamation, in order to strengthen the protection of journalists and other disseminators of public information from unjustified prosecution.

These draft laws are still under consideration in the Parliament.

# MECKLENBURG- VORPOMMERN

*Annex*

**STATE PARLIAMENT OF MECKLENBURG-VORPOMMERN**  
**8<sup>th</sup> electoral term**

**Printed paper 8/609**  
**12 April 2022**

**STATEMENT**

**by the State Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern**

**Regarding the Implementation of the Resolution**  
**Adopted by the 30<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference**

Forwarded together with the letter from the Head of the State Chancellery from 8 April 2022.  
The Ministry of Science, Culture, Federal and European Affairs is the lead ministry.

**Statement by the State Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Regarding the Implementation of the Resolution Adopted by the 30<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (Online, 30 August 2021)**

In the following statement, the State Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern reports on the implementation status of the resolution adopted by the 30<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, which took place on 30 August 2021 in a digital format due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Herewith the State Government fulfils the request of the State Parliament to submit the respective report by 31 March 2022.<sup>1</sup>

The statement only covers those areas, which are within the competence of the State Government or are viewed to possess overriding importance for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

The participants, elected representatives from the Baltic Sea Region States, assembling in digital form on 30 August 2021, call on the Governments in the Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS and the EU,

<b>Regarding Cooperation in the Region to</b>		
use the restart after the pandemic and the current decade to		
<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Resolution Text</b>	<b>Statement by the State Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern</b>
1	be committed to building, expanding and deepening trust between its nations and in all its collaborations;	According to the Coalition Agreement 2021–2026, the coalition partners of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern are committed to the European idea. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern desires to be a state of good neighbours and partners. The aim is to strengthen activities in Europe and thus also in the Baltic Sea region. Regional partnerships in the Baltic Sea area, especially with Poland, provide a significant contribution towards this goal. On 3 March 2022, the partnership agreement with the Leningrad Region was suspended until further notice. In view of the brutal invasion of Ukraine, there is no longer any room for cooperation between Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and the Leningrad Region.
2	strengthen prosperity, safety, security and regional identity for all	The Baltic Sea Region offers far-reaching opportunities for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and is more than just a geographical region.

<sup>1</sup> See [Landtagsdrucksache 8/109](#) from 1 December 2021 in conjunction with [Landtagsdrucksache 6/4498](#) from 15 September 2015.

	<p>people in the Baltic Sea Region;</p>	<p>The Baltic Sea simultaneously represents an economic area, an ecosystem, a cultural spot, a research environment and a transport hub. Similar to the times of the Hanseatic League, strong alliances with partners from the Baltic Sea region secure advantages and successes for the state.</p> <p>Thanks to the international access to innovative and competitive partners, the state's development can progress even further. At the same time, other Baltic Sea states benefit from the development of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Be it cooperation in marine research, health industry, organic farming, biotechnology or other sectors: all neighbouring states benefit from knowledge and technological exchange in the long term. Baltic Sea states account for approx. 30 percent of the state's foreign trade. Five out of ten most important trading partners come from the region. That is why the State Government supports innovative concepts at home, as well as exchange with other states in the region.</p> <p>The Baltic Sea is one of the busiest seas in the world. Baltic Sea coastal states are heavily dependent on shipping and its safety. Maritime emergencies could greatly affect the state, other Baltic Sea coastal states and above all – the fragile ecosystem. To minimise the risks of crime and other dangers and to be able to react adequately in case of emergency, the State Government relies on exchange with other Baltic Sea states. Joint concepts are being developed in order to ensure that open borders remain secure.</p> <p>The State Government is actively committed to preserving and strengthening the regional identity of all people in the Baltic Sea region. This plays a particular role within the framework of the state's partnerships with the Baltic Sea countries Poland, Finland and Sweden. Partner regions present their regional traditions, offers and products at the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Days (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern-Tage).</p>
3	<p>focus on sustainability in its economic growth, development and</p>	<p>Achieving good environmental status in the Baltic Sea is the ultimate goal of the <u>HELCOM</u> Baltic Sea Action Plan and the <u>EU Marine</u></p>

	<p>innovation and to reach a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea and a sound and sustainable status for its environment;</p>	<p><u>Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)</u>. Within the scope of its responsibilities, the state is working towards achieving this goal in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMU), which is Germany's lead ministry in this area.</p> <p>In order to implement the Regional Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization 2021-2027 (<u>Regionale Innovationsstrategie zur intelligenten Spezialisierung 2021-2027</u>), international cooperation between the industry and the academic community in the field of industry-related research should be strengthened with a special focus on the identified action areas (renewable energy-hydrogen technologies; medical technology and biotechnology; mechanical and plant engineering). To this end, project initiatives at the level of centres of excellence should be put forward through the implementation of suitable formats, such as delegation trips, workshops and professional congresses. The aim is to initiate collaborative industry-science research projects with international participation.</p> <p>Maritime spatial planning for the coastal sea of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is integrated into the State Spatial Development Programme (<u>Landesraumentwicklungsprogramm (LEP)</u>). This Programme is committed to the guiding principle of sustainable spatial development, which reconciles the social and economic requirements of a given area with its environmental functions. The LEP will be updated starting in 2022, also with a view to reviewing, updating or revising the provisions for the coastal sea.</p>
4	<p>strive for better inclusion, prosperity, public health and social cohesion while also decreasing existing gaps between BSR countries by joint efforts;</p>	<p>The progressive realisation of inclusion and equal participation is an enrichment for our society. The State Government follows the guiding principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) "nothing about us without us" in all measures and in all areas of society (day care centres, schools, training and labour market). The State Government's goal is to further promote the self-determination and co-determination of persons with disabilities. This includes the</p>

		<p>implementation of the State Government's Action Plan 2.0 for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the regular holding of the Day of Persons with Disabilities, the endeavour to make public information understandable and comprehensible for all people, and improvements in the area of accessibility and access to the labour market.</p> <p>The State Government is committed to a just social policy that takes all people into account, that opens opportunities, social participation and perspectives, strengthens the personal responsibility of each and every individual and specifically focuses on those who require help. The State Government therefore financially supports Non-statutory Welfare organisations providing diverse services for all situations in life in particular.</p> <p>All people have the right to easily accessible and high-quality medical services. Ensuring high quality, accessible and long-term financially viable healthcare is central to the provision of public services and lies at the heart of well-being in all regions. For this reason, the State Government is also committed to maintaining basic, standard and maximum inpatient care.</p>
5	tackle current and future challenges and crises through increased joint action;	<p>In the Baltic Sea region, the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern maintains regional partnerships with the Polish Voivodeships of West Pomerania and Pomerania as well as with the region of Southwest Finland. The partnership with the Leningrad Region was suspended until further notice on 3 March 2022 (see item no. 1).</p> <p>In addition, the state cooperates with the southern Swedish province of Skåne. Political talks as well as professional exchanges and projects shape this cooperation and are also planned for the new legislative period. The Voivodeships of West Pomerania and Pomerania are currently the main focus of international cooperation. It is further planned to deepen cooperation with Scandinavian regions.</p>

		<p>Here, the membership of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) and the Baltic Sea Commission provides a framework for information exchange and joint activities, both in the Baltic Sea region and with EU institutions.</p>
6	<p>promote elements of a common regional identity and shared values through culture, research, education and science;</p>	<p>Baltic Sea regional identity and commonly shared values are part of the intellectual foundation of the universities in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and also influence their priorities in teaching and research. The state's universities are well-connected within the Baltic Sea region and are involved in numerous collaborations with partners from the region. One current and particularly relevant example is provided by the Interdisciplinary Centre for Baltic Sea Region Research (IFZO) at the University of Greifswald.</p> <p>The state promotes regional identity and exchange in and with partners from the Baltic Sea region through numerous events and formats.</p> <p>The Usedom Music Festival, for example, is one of the most important and successful projects on the local cultural landscape, attracting more than 13,000 guests annually, and having developed into a considerable economic factor on the island of Usedom. The joint initiative "Baltic Youth Philharmonic" of the Usedom Music Festival and the Nord Stream AG is of particular importance in this regard. The orchestra brings together 70 talented music students from the entire Baltic Sea region. With the founding of the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic in 2008, the most talented musicians from Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden were brought together from the onset.</p> <p>However, it can be assumed that due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting developments, the "Baltic Youth Philharmonic" initiative will either be suspended, continued without Russian participation or even terminated. No further information was available at the time this statement was being finalised.</p>

		<p>The cultural festival "PolenmARkT", on the other hand, focusses on cooperation with Poland. Originally limited to Greifswald, it expanded to rural Vorpommern starting in 2017. In 2022, the festival will be held for the 25th time. As part of the largest festival of Polish culture in Germany, readings, film screenings, lectures and discussion events are organised in schools, day-care centres, cultural institutions and other public places. Conducted in cooperation with the "polenmarkt e.V." association, it serves to promote Polish culture on the German side of the border region and has received the Cultural Promotion Award from the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in November 2017. In 2011, the jury of the "Pomerania Nostra" awarded its prize to Polenmarkt e. V., thus honouring the association's volunteer members' commitment to the promotion of Polish culture.</p> <p>The largest annual festival of northern European culture in Germany – "Nordischer Klang" – offers a colourful mix of inter- and transcultural as well as cross-disciplinary projects. It is organised since 1991 by the "Kulturverein Nordischer Klang e.V.", which is associated with the Department of Finnish and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Greifswald. The festival offers stimulating, communicative cultural experiences, music, stage art, exhibitions, readings, films, children's programmes and lectures from the five Nordic countries, but also from the other countries bordering the Baltic Sea, and offers broad horizons and exciting inspirations from the modern, cosmopolitan North.</p> <p>The sites of the German Oceanographic Museum Foundation – the Oceanographic Museum and the OZEANEUM in Stralsund – combine museum culture with scientific and research projects as well as educational goals in a cross-border and crosslinking way. Through annual thematic special exhibitions and in numerous natural science projects, the museum acts as an initiator and mediator for the interests of the Baltic Sea region.</p>
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		<p>Practical cultural cooperation takes place in the state-supported Künstlerhaus Lukas in Ahrenshoop, which provides funding for professional artists in the fields of visual arts, literature, dance and composition through residency scholarships. Ahrenshoop invites guests from partner institutions in Northern Europe. Up to seven scholarship holders can live and work here simultaneously. Such art and cultural institutions as the Baltic Centre for Writers and Translators in Visby/Gotland (Sweden), the Grafische Werkstatt Odense (Denmark) or the artists' centre MoKs (Estonia) count among the partners in the international exchange programme.</p> <p>Along with Schleswig-Holstein, the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern represents the Federal Republic of Germany in the "Baltic region heritage committee" (BRHC), alongside Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden. The BRHC essentially comprises three working groups. Here, the State Conservator represents the State Office for Culture and Monument Preservation in the working group "20th Century Built Heritage", which deals with cultural heritage from the post-war period.</p> <p>In the field of education, the aim of day care in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is to support all children individually and to strengthen their individual competences. This also includes appreciative handling of linguistic and cultural diversity as well as learning and practicing tolerance and respect. Common values and traditions of living together must be democratically conveyed and filled with practical meaning in everyday educational life. The state promotes this process on two levels. On the one hand, through their thematic and conceptual incorporation into the educational concept for children of up to ten years old as well as the educational plan for the state's day care facilities and day care centres. On the other hand, through state support for model projects such as "Living Multilingualism!" of the Regional Office for Education, Integration and Democracy.</p>
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	<p>Furthermore, the promotion of a common regional identity and common values is a cross-disciplinary task that, within the education sector, is specifically implemented through framework plans. Since 2019, general education framework plans have been continuously revised and now explicitly integrate task areas identified in the School Act in everyday teaching. These task areas are included as crosscutting themes in all framework curricula and are thus already an obligatory part of teaching. Cultural education is part of these crosscutting themes and is therefore implemented as a central instrument in regular lessons and is also interlinked with respective skills and competences.</p> <p>Framework plans explicitly demand that cultural education is made a tangible experience, e.g. through lessons at extracurricular locations in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and other countries, or through participation in (bi- and multinational) projects or regional, supra-regional and international competitions.</p> <p>In specific terms, the promotion of regional identity shows its effects in interculturality and is reflected in such crosscutting themes as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education for tolerance and acceptance of diversity,</li> <li>• Intercultural education,</li> <li>• European education and</li> <li>• My homeland - my modern Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.</li> </ul> <p>The state programme "My homeland - my modern Mecklenburg-Vorpommern" occupies a special place since it is featured in all framework plans as a separate chapter and thus emphasises the importance of pupils' connection with their natural, social and cultural environment as well as the preservation of the Low German language. A variety of subject-specific suggestions are given for the practical implementation of the program in order to bring the regional landscape, literature, art, architecture, culture, music and the Low German language to life. The state programme strengthens the</p>
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	<p>originality of typical regional elements in the overall context of historical and cultural heritage and thus simultaneously strengthens the tourism industry in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, as foreseen by the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).</p> <p>In secondary schools, the subjects of geography, social studies, history, "work, business and technology" (AWT), economics, information technologies/media education as well as Low German, Polish and Swedish are central in terms of focussing on the Baltic Sea region, regional understanding and cooperation.</p> <p>The cross-border INTERREG project "Learning the Language of the Neighbour from Kindergarten to School Graduation – Living and Learning Together in the Euroregion Pomerania" (<u>Nachbarspracherwerb von der Kita bis zum Schulabschluss – gemeinsam leben und lernen in der Euroregion Pomerania</u>) offers another opportunity to acquire both intercultural and socio-cultural skills through language learning. Many schools and kindergartens from the German-Polish border region take part in this project. The district of Vorpommern-Greifswald, the University of Greifswald and the Regional Office for Education, Integration and Democracy Mecklenburg-Vorpommern e. V. (Regionale Arbeitsstelle für Bildung, Integration und Demokratie Mecklenburg-Vorpommern e. V., RAA M-V) count among the project partners. The project runs until 30 June 2022.</p> <p>The project essentially aims at establishing and expanding neighbouring language teaching and intercultural education until school graduation. The introduction of the following comprehensive measures, among others, will help to strengthen language skills, also for the cross-border labour market:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the implementation of neighbouring language teaching in all age groups, with special attention to older pupils from the fifth grade upwards;</li> <li>• various training courses for teachers, young people and parents,</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the development of an innovative programme for online tandem teaching;</li> <li>• methodological support for educational institutions in the introduction of Polish language teaching; and</li> <li>• a broad awareness-raising campaign for neighbouring language teaching.</li> </ul> <p>The publication of new learning materials and project results on the German-Polish e-platform allows reaching a broad circle of project beneficiaries in the funding area. Secondary schools are currently working on digital teaching formats, in which agreed topics would be discussed and presented in parallel lessons at tandem schools.</p> <p>State-funded associations (including Deutsche Jugend in Europa - Landesverband MV) and youth work projects support young people in their exploration of their cultural origins and future opportunities in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.</p>
7	be committed to pursuing vibrant and enhanced exchanges between its people and facilitate, broaden and deepen personal contacts and the face-to-face interaction of ideas, experiences and views based on active civil societies;	<p>The State Agency for Civic Education in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) supports exchange projects such as regular student MUN-conferences (Baltic Model United Nations, BALMUN) or the annual "PolenmARkT" events.</p> <p>For further information, please refer to item no. 6.</p>
8	pursue continuity in the participation of young people, promote meaningful exchange of views and ideas with, and among, young people based on dialogue and real influence and involve the youth in decision-making processes;	<p>Children and young people are the future and an important part of today's Europe. The decision of the European Union to declare this year the "European Year of Youth" is therefore expressly welcomed. The State Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern believes that children and young people should be given a greater say and participation in social decision-making processes. This includes lowering the voting age to 16. At the state level, a law on the youth participation should be introduced and participation opportunities for young people should be reflected in the State Constitution. In addition, the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has set up a</p>

		<p>commission of enquiry on "Being young in MV".</p> <p>Children and young people have a right to participation and involvement. This right is reflected not only in (inter-)national regulations, but also in various provisions of state law, e.g. in the Constitution of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the Daycare Facilities Support Act (Kindertagesförderungsgesetz) and the School Act (Schulgesetz). The empowerment of children and young people with regard to their position in society and participation in all decisions affecting them is indispensable for successful growth.</p> <p>In order to support young people in exercising their rights of participation and to sensitise politics and administrations to the participation of young people, the state, together with districts and independent cities, promotes the Child and Youth Participation Network Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligungsnetzwerk Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) (see also item no. 27).</p> <p>Section 4 of the Daycare Facilities Support Act (KiföG MV) sees the involvement of children and parents as a central component of successful education and development. In particular, children are guaranteed the right to participation corresponding to their age and development stage in § 23 KiföG MV. Relevant institutions, day care centre administration as well as the responsible pedagogical staff are required to involve them in all matters concerning children. This applies equally to day-care centres and is the basis of democratic decision-making.</p> <p>Furthermore, there are many opportunities to promote and strengthen democratic participation, especially at school and in the classroom. Strengthening democratic participation in schools is part of a holistic approach to civic education, which on the one hand, is subject-specific (teaching) and on the other hand, makes schools a place for practical co-determination. This approach is based, among other things, on the recommendations of the 16<sup>th</sup> Child and Youth Report of the</p>
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		<p>Federal Government on "Promoting Democratic Education in Childhood and Adolescence" (2020).</p> <p>Based on the recommendations on "Intercultural education and upbringing in schools" (2013) and "Democracy as a goal, subject and practice of historical-political education and upbringing in schools" (2018) of the Standing Conference of State Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, various democratic educational concepts have been developed and tested on different levels in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Participatory school structures and methods have been successfully implemented, as shown through the work of the winners of the German School Award stemming from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The increasing integration of democratic educational topics into training for teachers and instructors also promotes a democratic school and teaching culture.</p> <p>In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, democratic education in schools requires and is reflected in the broad inclusion of extracurricular cooperation partners with a variety of projects and offers. This also includes further-reaching topics, such as historical-political education (especially memorial work), European education or education for sustainable development (ESD). The "Political Education Unit", currently under development in the Ministry of Education and Daycare Facilities for Children, will qualitatively and quantitatively develop this area of work in a systematic manner. The State Agency for Civic Education (Landeszentrale für politische Bildung) represents an important partner in this regard.</p> <p>The State Agency for Civic Education Mecklenburg-Vorpommern accompanies project-related formats of youth participation such as youth parliaments and organises relevant thematic events, e.g. the Annual Congress on Civic Education 2022 on the topic of <u>"Youth.Power.Politics. - Political education and participation of children and young people."</u></p>
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9	<p>use and fundamentally improve the possibilities of digitalisation for communication, accessible for all people, and close the digital gaps across the Region;</p>	<p>According to the current Coalition Agreement 2021–2026, the State Government's goal is to expand the digital infrastructure with fibre optics and mobile telephony to reach even the most remote and industrial areas.</p> <p>In order to implement the nationwide broadband expansion, optical fibre is to be laid in every region and every municipality and as close to homes as possible, with the connection of rural areas playing a particularly important role. For this purpose, the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, together with the Federal Republic of Germany, is providing more than 1.8 billion euros to financially support broadband expansion in 130 project areas in the state. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the coverage of households with gigabit-capable networks has already been significantly improved in 2018 to mid-2021. By mid-2021, 53.3 percent of households were covered by the networks. This constitutes an almost 40 percent increase since 2018. Currently, the majority of the projects have already reached the construction phase, so that state-wide coverage with a gigabit-capable network can be achieved in the foreseeable future.</p> <p>In addition, adequate mobile radio coverage throughout the state is intended to improve mobile voice and mobile data use and thus increase the competitiveness of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, improve quality of life and strengthen rural areas.</p> <p>Gaps in coverage will be closed through the construction of a public radio mast infrastructure in the long term. The state has provided funding for the planning, construction and subsequent maintenance of this mast infrastructure, which will be owned by the state. The masts will be leased to commercial mobile radio providers for the construction and operation of their transmitters. The programme is implemented with the help of the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Radio Mast Infrastructure Company (Funkmasten-Infrastrukturgesellschaft Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), which was specially created for</p>
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		<p>this purpose, works for the state and is controlled by the state.</p> <p>Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is undergoing a digital transformation process. The State Government views the holistic, participative and socially and economically inclusive implementation of this process as an important task. The Office for Digitalisation and International Affairs (Stabsstelle für Digitalisierung und Internationales, SDI) has therefore taken on the task of coordinating and shaping this process within the framework of the "digitalesMV" platform. To this end, the SDI works closely with various stakeholders, such as the members of the Digitalisation Advisory Board, the Digitalisation Ambassadors and the expert groups established within the framework of the Advisory Board.</p> <p>In order to actively advance and shape digitalisation in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, a comprehensive, regional approach is being pursued. So-called digital innovation centres were initially established at university locations. These digital innovation centres fulfil the task of acting as regional focal points for businesses, academic institutions and administrations and providing information and advice at the regional level. A special focus lies on supporting entrepreneurs and founders, who provide important impulses with their digital ideas.</p> <p>The regional digital innovation centres have already assumed their work at the following locations: Greifswald, Neubrandenburg, Rostock, Schwerin, Stralsund and Wismar.</p> <p>Together with two selected co-working spaces in rural areas, the digital innovation centres form the so-called Digital Innovation Space.</p> <p>Through various event formats, the State Government, together with the Digital Innovation Space MV, would like to encourage local stakeholders to participate in shaping the digital transformation. In addition to advisory and networking formats, the programme also includes specialist events and special formats such as 3D printing workshops, design thinking "Meet&amp;Discuss&amp;Create" and hackathons.</p>
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10	protect the vulnerable and optimally integrate those who legitimately seek protection from persecution in the Region;	Around the world, many people are seeking protection and assistance as a result of wars, humanitarian disasters and persecution. The State Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern advocates a cosmopolitan

		<p>community that not only offers protection and assistance, but also good life prospects. The state, the Federal Government and the EU must see immigration as an opportunity to strengthen social, economic and cultural performance of our society. The State Government will work to ensure the successful integration and participation of refugees. Specifically, it will introduce an Integration and Participation Act that creates sustainable support structures for refugees and promotes intercultural openness (especially in public administration).</p>
11	<p>consider the prosperity and an ecologically stable and sound environmental condition for future generations as a fundamental right in today's decision-making processes;</p>	<p>Please refer to the statement contained in item no. 3.</p>
12	<p>foster regional cooperation in civil protection, including the prevention of, preparedness against and response to natural disasters and industrial accidents, the protection of the population of the Baltic Sea States from natural and man-made emergencies which remain important issues for the BSPC;</p>	<p>The existing good and trusting cooperation with the Republic of Poland in this area will be continued.</p> <p>As part of its cooperation with the Federal Government and other German coastal states, the state also cooperates with Baltic Sea countries within the framework of the Central Command for Maritime Emergencies (Havariekommando) and the Helsinki Convention (HELCOM), as well as through bilateral and trilateral agreements in the field of combating pollution accidents in the Baltic Sea.</p>
13	<p>continue to protect children at risk, fight organised crime and manage migratory flows as fields of intense cooperation between the Baltic Sea States;</p>	<p>Children and young people have a right to healthy and violence-free upbringing in the society. They must be protected from abuse and violence. To this end, the state will support measures that contribute to strengthening child welfare (prevention) and/or counteract further damage to child welfare (e.g. psychosocial process support). Specifically, the state will initiate a State Child Protection Act that creates conditions for safe upbringing, strengthens the exercise of their rights, and makes a tangible contribution to improving interdisciplinary networking, further conceptual development</p>

		<p>and the qualification of child protection specialists.</p> <p>The Mecklenburg-Vorpommern State Police and the State Council for Crime Prevention (Landesrat für Kriminalitätsvorbeugung, LfK) are actively involved in child protection. Current examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>The 11th State Crime Prevention Day - "Leave no child alone - child protection concerns us all!?" on 04 June 2021.</u></li> <li>- <u>Founding of the LfK's Working Group on Volume crime – Cybergrooming.</u></li> <li>- <u>Support for the creation of a <u>Childhood House</u> in Schwerin</u></li> <li>- <u>Planned implementation of CTC – "Communities That Care" in MV<sup>2</sup></u></li> <li>- <u>Participation in the "Trau dich!" ("Don't be Afraid!") initiative for the prevention of sexualized violence against children, which promotes further training of teachers and pedagogical specialists and networking between schools and the social welfare system<sup>3</sup></u></li> <li>- <u>Police prevention and victim protection services or services with the active involvement of state police:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>State police,<sup>4</sup> <u>online reporting "Netzverweis", the "Wir in MV – fit und sicher in die Zukunft" ("We in MV - fit and safe into the future") initiative, media scouts, media guides,</u></u></li> <li>- <u>Police crime prevention program of the federal states and the Federal Government (nationwide)<sup>5</sup></u></li> </ul> </li> <li>- <u>Participation in the implementation of the federal cooperation concept "Protection and assistance in trafficking and child exploitation cases" in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern</u></li> <li>- <u>Participation of the LfK in the Working Group on Child Protection under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health and Sports of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.</u></li> </ul>
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<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.ctc-info.de/>.

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.multiplikatoren.trau-dich.de/initiative/landeskooperationen/trau-dich-verstetigung-und-lizenzerwerb-den-bundeslaendern/trau-dich-verstetigung-mecklenburg-vorpommern/>.

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.polizei.mvnet.de/Pr%C3%A4vention/Kinder/>.

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.polizei-beratung.de/startseite-und-aktionen/>; <https://www.xn--polizei-irdich-3ob.de/>; <https://www.polizei-beratung.de/themen-und-tipps/sexualdelikte/missbrauch-verhindern/>.

		For further information, please refer to the statement contained in item no. 23.
14	promote sustainable tourism, inter alia by improving cross-border rail transport to enable more climate-friendly travel and reduce travel barriers in the Region, for example, by easing the existing visa restrictions;	<p>Sustainable tourism the focus of the State Tourism Concept of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the Coalition Agreement 2021–2026 of the State Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.</p> <p>The transnational <u>INTERREG</u> project <u>MARA</u>, in which the state is the leading partner in a consortium of 12 full partners from the Baltic Sea region, aimed at improving or further developing the accessibility of tourist regions or tourist destinations by public transport or by alternative forms of mobility (e-bike sharing, call-a-bus, ferries, etc.) using digital analysis and application modules. Thus, the Ludwigslust-Parchim transport authority and the University of Tartu developed evaluation tools that show cell phone movement patterns and compare them with public transport/ferry bus timetable offers in order to identify areas for re-evaluation and further development.</p>
15	identify options for developing medical tourism – to help people in the region to receive health treatment throughout the Baltic Sea region, not least in the context of the COVID19 pandemic;	The healthcare industry is an important and forward-looking sector with considerable growth potential. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern will continue positioning itself as a health region nationally and internationally. The marketing of medical tourism is part of this.
16	strive for a joint solution for the mutual recognition of approved vaccination and testing certificates that are validated and recognised by our countries to aid in the prevention of a new coronavirus infection (COVID-19), not least because border regions are particularly impacted on due to cross-border traffic;	In principle, no additional restrictions such as testing and quarantine requirements should apply to persons with a valid EU digital COVID certificate, regardless of their departure point within the EU. The harmonisation of the validity periods of vaccinated and convalescent certificates throughout the EU would be desirable.

18	strengthen the link between national, regional and municipal levels of Baltic cooperation by means of further encouraging collaboration between the CBSS, the BSSSC, the CPMR BSC and the UBC and inviting a wider range of territories and cities to participate in it;	<p>The State Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern actively promotes cross-level cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. It is involved in the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and supports networking activities of actors from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in cooperation projects in the Baltic Sea region.</p> <p>In addition, the northern German coordination of Baltic Sea affairs with the Federal Foreign Office and the states of Brandenburg, Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein is an integral part of exchange and cooperation with regard to the activities of the aforementioned bodies.</p>
20	cooperate in order to strengthen the Baltic Sea Region as an important competitive knowledge region with an excellent higher education and research infrastructure;	<p>The State Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern welcomes this aspiration.</p> <p>Please also refer to the comments contained in item no. 6. Non-university research institutions (including the German Aerospace Center in Neustrelitz, the Max Planck Institute for Plasma Physics in Greifswald, the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research in Warnemünde, and the Leibniz Institute for Atmospheric Physics in Kühlungsborn) have also been pursuing and maintaining thematic collaborations for decades.</p>
21	foster collaboration in healthcare in the Baltic Sea Region in order to better handle situations like the current COVID-19 pandemic as well as to exchange experience and best practices in this area;	<p>Safe health care includes, in particular, the close and cross-border coordination of rescue services. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has already concluded a relevant cooperation agreement to with its neighbour Poland.</p>
22	facilitate better alignment of funds and regulations among EU mainstream funds and regional and national funds for cross-border and transnational cooperation projects tackling with macro-regional challenges in social and economic dimensions;	<p>According to Article 22 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (Common Regulation on the European Structural and Investment Funds), each programme (EF-RE, ESF+, INTERREG) must present a summary of the most important challenges with a view to macro-regional and sea basin strategies (e.g. EUSBSR). The expected contribution to the respective macro-regional strategy must be described for each specific supported objective. These requirements were taken into account in the</p>

		<p>description of the new programmes. In this respect, synergies and complementarities between the main funds and funds for cross-border and transnational cooperation projects addressing macro-regional challenges have been identified and described. These approaches should be actively pursued in the programme implementation process.</p> <p>As far as the BSPC demand for a "better alignment of funds and regulations" is concerned, the specific content and the proposed instruments remain unclear. Blanket transfers of funds to INTERREG programmes that address macro-regional challenges or amendments to regulations that provide for the mandatory use of funds in this area should not be possible.</p>
23	<p>support the synchronisation of the Chairmanship in the Group of Personal Representatives of the Baltic States' Heads of Government on countering organised crime with the Presidency in the CBSS, which started on 1 July 2021, the incumbent Chair of both structures being Norway;</p>	<p>The state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern participates in the Operative Committee (OPC) of the Baltic Sea Task Force on Organised Crime (BSTF OC). The state regularly participates in OPC meeting in coordination with the Schleswig-Holstein State Criminal Police Office, most recently on 17 November 2021 online at the invitation of the Norwegian police (Council Presidency OPC 2021/2022). From the German perspective, however, the main responsibility lies with the Federal Criminal Police Office.</p> <p>The following priority issues were discussed during the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparation of an accountability report on the activities/projects during Norway's presidency;</li> <li>- Exchange of strategic information, operational experience as well as the initiation of joint projects;</li> <li>- Combating human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, combating child pornography, cybercrime and current regional crime priority issues;</li> <li>- Presentation of the Analysis Point Phoenix (Trafficking Human Beings) and Europol's support options;</li> <li>- Presentation of an analysis portfolio by Interpol.</li> </ul>

		The next OPC meeting will take place on 20-21 April 2022 in Oslo, Norway.
24	support the project development process and concept with the title "Baltic Sea Cultural Cities and Regions (BSCCR)" under the motto "Water connects us, but culture unites us" with the CBSS as Lead Partner aimed at connecting cities and regions, people, cultural organisations and professionals by increasing the visibility of the cultural diversity within the Baltic Sea Region.	Actors from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern take part in multifaceted activities in the field of cultural exchange and cooperation. For further details, please refer to the comments contained in item no. 6.
<p><b>Regarding Democracy in a Changing Media Landscape:</b></p> <p><b>Digitalisation, Combating Disinformation, Misinformation and "Fake News" as well as Protecting Free Media and Freedom of Speech, to</b></p>		
25	enforce constant engagement and commitment as well as strong efforts and support to strengthen confidence in democratic structures and values, to promote tolerance and open-mindedness, freedom of media and expression as well as robust NGOs as cornerstones of the democracies in the Baltic Sea Region;	The state programme " <u>Strengthening Democracy and Tolerance Together!</u> " provides the framework for the relevant activities of numerous associations, initiatives and institutions in all parts of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and their state support. These include associations and clubs that are active in the areas of sport, culture, firefighting, disaster control and rescue services, work with the senior citizens, women or youth, as well as numerous other initiatives of dedicated people. The projects of the state-wide advisory network allow them to benefit from competent and well-connected advisory and support structures. The State Government supports civil society involvement through extensive funding.
26	expand the promotion of media literacy among young people in order to enable them to think critically and evaluate information;	The development of media literacy is one of the central goals of the strategy for education in the digital world of the German Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs. Media literacy forms the basis of social participation and evaluation of the influence of digitalisation on our society. It also allows individuals to become aware of their responsibility for their own media actions (both

	<p>as content consumers and as creators) and to reflect on them critically.</p> <p>The State Agency for Civic Education of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern promotes media literacy through publications and materials, thematic events and support for school newspaper competitions and citizens' newspapers.</p> <p>Teaching media competence as an essential element is one of the legally defined tasks in the area of early childhood education. The chapter on "Media and Digital Education" of the educational concept for children aged 0–10 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern provides more detailed information on this topic.</p> <p>In addition, the state promotes further education and training and organises thematic conferences for educational professionals and day care workers. The most recent expert conference was organised in cooperation with the University of Rostock, the Greifswald Media Centre and the Neubrandenburg University of Applied Sciences and took place online on 31 January 2022.<sup>6</sup> More than 100 professionals from all over Mecklenburg-Vorpommern gathered to discuss topics such as "opportunities and challenges of media education in daycare facilities", "digital media in the living environment of small children" and "digital media in daycare facilities: what do we know about learning effects?". Due to the need for a professional discussion on the use of digital media, further events will be organised in the future.</p> <p>Furthermore, every school in the state is currently developing a media education concept (MBK), which would show, among other things, the contribution of individual subjects to the acquisition of media competences. The <u>"Digital Competences" framework plan</u>, which entered into force in 2018, provides the basis for this.</p> <p>In addition, in 2019, computer science and media education has been established as a continuous, one-hour subject from grade 5 to grade 10 in the timetables of all secondary</p>
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<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.medienbildung-mv.org/>.

	<p>school types following the demand of the coalition.</p> <p>The activities of the Ministry of Education and Daycare Facilities for Children Mecklenburg-Vorpommern form an integral part of the interministerial framework agreement on the promotion of media literacy, which has set the goal of promoting media literacy in all phases of life, starting from early childhood to senior citizens' education.</p> <p>The Corona pandemic and the resulting temporarily restricted operation of universities, revealed the significance of "education in the digital world" and the need for basic digital equipment as well as didactic and technical skills for the teaching staff. Universities in the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern have done an outstanding job and could quickly convert to online teaching.</p> <p>In order to better master the challenges of digitalisation, universities will receive an additional 40 million euros for studies and teaching, for infrastructure and administration. Furthermore, universities involved in teacher education will benefit from a special programme with an additional 5 million euros to develop innovative digital structures, formats and teaching materials and/or teacher education offers.</p> <p>Two junior professorships for media education were also established at the universities of Greifswald and Rostock. Their task would consist in the systematic teaching and developing media competences and media didactic skills of future teachers.</p> <p>Moreover, the 9-million-euro programme "Digital Teaching" provides additional support to universities for digitalisation of studies and teaching.</p> <p>Furthermore, the amendment of the State Higher Education Act (LHG) has provided a secure state-wide legal framework for digital examinations for universities in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.</p> <p>Media competence teaching is also a central element of extracurricular education and thus one of the tasks and services of child and youth welfare, especially in the area of (open)</p>
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		<p>youth work. The new State Youth Plan therefore introduced "strengthening media competence and media safety" as a separate funding priority area from 2022 onwards. Digital participation of children and young people and (in view of advancing mediaisation) and strengthening of media competence and media safety should be given more consideration in the future. Furthermore, future targeted projects are to be initiated to strengthen the abilities and skills of children and young people in the use of media and their contents in an informed, responsible, safe, self-determined and creative manner and in accordance with their own goals and needs.</p> <p>The Ministry of Social Affairs, Health and Sport supports further training for full-time and voluntary staff in youth welfare through the "fit for media pedagogy" further training series. Serving as important contact persons for many young people, they can convey media competences to young people in versatile and needs-oriented ways.</p>
27	<p>use the potential of social media to motivate young people to participate in political discussions and decision-making processes;</p>	<p>In recent years, social media have developed into a central pillar of social and political communication. The State Government aims to use this potential. The departments of the State Government therefore entertain an active social media presence. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram offer the opportunity to inform people about issues specific to the Baltic Sea region and to communicate with young people on these issues.</p> <p>The State Agency for Civic Education of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern provides extensive information developments and offers in the fields of politics and history through its presence on social media.</p> <p>The "Digital Youth Participation" element of the "Child and Youth Participation Network Mecklenburg-Vorpommern" project informs young people, multipliers as well as representatives from politics and administration about the digital possibilities of target group-oriented and process-oriented participation of young people. Social media and the various</p>

		possibilities they offer are an important part of the project.
28	adopt legal regulations and national strategies – including areas such as the judiciary, defence, schools, research, public education, the library system, cultural institutions, media, civil society, NGOs and business – to strengthen democratic resilience against digital violence and criminal offences via the Internet and to prevent and combat online hate speech;	<p>This issue has been frequently discussed at the conferences of justice ministers and state secretaries of justice over the years and in different forms. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has repeatedly supported proposals aimed at improving the fight against online or internet-enabled crime, especially hate crime. Most recently, the Act to Combat Right-Wing Extremism and Hate Crime, also supported by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, came into force. Among other things, it contains stricter penalties and extensions in the area of substantive criminal law. Furthermore, the law also includes the obligation of social networks under the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) to report punishable postings to the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) in certain serious cases starting from 1 February 2022, so that criminal prosecution is made possible. In order to be able to quickly identify perpetrators, social networks will then have to inform the BKA not only of the hate posting but also of the IP address and port number last assigned to the user profile. In addition, victims of threats, insults and stalking can now more easily have their personal information blocked in the civil register. This protects their addresses from disclosure.</p> <p>In order to be able to cope with the resulting increase in the volume of new criminal proceedings, the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern State Criminal Police Office has taken organisational measures with the state police. In addition, at the level of the Conference of Interior Ministers of the Länder (IMK), the intention is being advanced to also enforce the reporting and notification obligation under NetzDG for messenger services such as Telegram, which enable group communication. The Mecklenburg-Vorpommern State Police and the State Council for Crime Prevention (LfK) are also actively involved in the advisory network <u>Democracy and Tolerance MV</u> and <u>Medienaktiv in MV</u>.</p> <p>Current examples of police prevention and victim protection services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State police: <u>hotline against extremism</u>;</li> <li><u>online reporting centre Netzverweis</u> and</li> </ul>

		<p><u>Helden statt Trolle</u> ("Heroes instead of trolls");</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Police crime prevention programme of the Länder and the Federation (nationwide).<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
32	take measures against the aggressive misuse of social media as a form of digital violence and put a victim-centred approach into the focus of action whilst protecting freedom of speech and recognizing social media as an important tool for democratic action;	Please refer to the comments contained in item no. 28.
<p><b>Regarding Safeguarding the Baltic Sea and our Environment for Future Generations, halting Climate Change and the Loss of Biodiversity to</b></p>		
35	send a powerful and determined signal by adopting an ambitious update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan through the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021 under the current German chairmanship and to ensure – through regular monitoring of its implementation – that its objectives are implemented in all countries of the Baltic Sea Region more quickly and consistently than before to achieve a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea and its environment by the end of the decade;	The revised HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan was adopted on 7 October 2021 at the HELCOM Ministerial Conference in Lübeck organised under the German Presidency (Federal Ministry for the Environment, BMU). It includes 199 measures that are to contribute to achieving the ambitious environmental goals by 2030. In order to monitor consistent implementation, a relevant procedure is to be set up as early as possible. Within the scope of its responsibilities and possibilities, the state is involved in the implementation under the leadership of the BMU.
36	focus on ecological sustainability of the Baltic Sea, with increased joint structured efforts to reduce all intentional and	This area lies within the Federal Government's scope of responsibilities. The state participates in the implementation within the scope of its competences and possibilities. The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the EU

<sup>7</sup> See also: <https://www.polizei-beratung.de/startseite-und-aktionen/>; <https://www.xn--polizeifrdich-3ob.de/> and <https://www.polizei-beratung.de/themen-und-tipps/gefahren-im-internet/>.

	unintentional nutrient influx into the Sea;	Nitrates Directive are especially relevant for the state.
37	take significant steps in line with the UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the Baltic 2030 Action Plan to reduce emissions and to reach climate resilience of key economic sectors, including industry, transport and construction, as well as enhancement of natural carbon sinks, such as forests;	<p>In the resolution of the Conference of Construction Ministers from 18/19 November 2021 on the topic of "Heat Turnaround in the Building Stock - Aligning the Legal Framework in the Building Sector with GHG Emissions and Climate Neutrality by 2045", the German federal states explicitly commit to national and European climate protection goals and emphasise the importance of the building sector in achieving these goals. In order to implement this, a fair distribution of the burden between the Federal Government, the federal states and the municipalities as well as between residents and property owners is necessary.</p> <p>Within the framework of social housing development, the state supports construction measures with the aim of optimising energy consumption, reducing emissions caused by buildings and increasing energy efficiency. The provision of subsidies for the refurbishment of the existing housing stock and for the creation of rented flats for occupancy is intended to contribute to maintaining socially acceptable housing costs while taking economic efficiency into account. The task in promoting the modernisation of the housing stock is to upgrade those flats and houses that have not been renovated or have only been partially renovated in terms of energy efficiency in a qualitative, demand-oriented and sustainable manner. Taking into account the potential for energy savings in the building stock, funding is provided primarily for structural measures to save heating energy, such as thermal insulation measures and the modernisation or renewal of heating systems in residential buildings. By providing funding for new construction, the aim is to create as many social housing units as possible with a high energy standard so that households in the lower and middle income groups can also afford adequate climate-friendly housing standards in the future.</p>

	<p>According to the draft of the Administrative Agreement on Social Housing 2022, the Federal Government will provide an additional 1 billion euros in financial assistance to the federal states, which must contribute their own share of the funding, under the 2022 Emergency Climate Protection Programme. These additional funds are to be used for energy-efficient new construction or for the energy-efficient modernisation of social housing. In order to fulfil the mandate of ensuring affordable rents in the social housing segment, these additional funds must be used to close the gap that arises between higher construction costs for stronger climate protection in housing construction and the capped rents for eligible tenants. These federal funds must be complemented by the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.</p> <p>Reducing emissions and strengthening the resilience of the building sector to climate change is of great importance in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's urban development policy. The following measures allow urban development to contribute to climate protection, climate adaptation and to stopping climate change in the long term:</p> <p>a. EU programme "ERDF", funding period 2021–27 – Promotion of energy efficiency measures</p> <p>Within the framework of the ERDF funding period 2021–2027, the granting of subsidies for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions of community facilities in the upper and middle centres is planned.</p> <p>b. Federal-Länder urban development funding – in the future, it will focus even more strongly on climate protection:</p> <p>Building on the National Urban Development Policy and the "New Leipzig Charter" from 30 November 2020 on sustainable urban development adopted by the ministers responsible for urban development in the federal states, climate protection is seen as a cross-cutting task within the implementation of sustainable and integrated urban development</p>
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		<p>in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. One of the goals of the "New Leipzig Charter" is a climate-neutral, green city with short distances, mixed uses, access to green and leisure areas, high environmental quality, climate-neutral energy supply, the implementation of energy efficiency measures, CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral buildings and sustainable land use. The New Leipzig Charter refers to European and international agreements such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Union's Green Deal. The "Memorandum on Urban Resilience" on the future viability of cities of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, for Building and the Home Affairs (BMI) from May 2021 also demands that, among other things, environmental justice and adaptation to the consequences of climate change be integrated even more strongly into urban development planning and funding instruments in the future. The guiding principle here is the compact, green and mixed city.</p> <p>Against the background of the increasing importance of climate relevance and the aforementioned guiding objectives, the topic is also becoming increasingly important in urban development funding. Since 2020, Article 3(2) of the Administrative Agreement on Urban Development Promotion (VV Städtebauförderung) has made the implementation of measures that promote climate protection or adaptation to climate change, in particular by improving green infrastructure (e.g. the urban green space), a funding requirement for new overall measures.</p> <p>Urban development measures for climate protection or climate adaptation have been anchored as a cross-cutting task in all three funding programmes (Living Centres, Social Cohesion and Growth, and Sustainable Renewal) since the VV Städtebauförderung 2020 and are eligible for funding. Among them: energy-efficient building refurbishment, soil unsealing, land recycling, climate-friendly mobility, use of climate-friendly building materials, creation/maintenance or expansion of green spaces and open spaces, connecting green and open spaces, greening of building areas, increasing biodiversity.</p>
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		<p>Even though climate protection measures were already supported through urban development funding before, the change in the programme structure after the completion of the 2020 programme has laid the foundation for gearing urban development funding – also in the future – even more strongly towards climate relevance and thus climate protection.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>Climate protection continues to be a priority of the federal state within the federal-state urban development funding, so that starting from the programme year 2022 onwards, climate protection measures and measures to improve green infrastructure, among other things, will be stipulated as mandatory funding conditions for the inclusion of both new overall measures and continued overall measures.</p> <p>c. User guide to the integrated urban development concepts (IUDC) in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (IUDC Guide) with special attention to climate protection:</p> <p>The Ministry of the Interior, Building and Digitalisation of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is currently developing a user guide for integrated urban development concepts (IUDC) in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The preparation and updating of integrated urban development concepts by the municipalities in the state are, according to the VV Städtebauförderung (urban development funding regulations), among other things, a prerequisite for applying for financial assistance from federal and state urban development funding programmes.</p> <p>The topics of climate protection and climate adaptation are of particular importance for the strategic considerations of each municipality in urban development, which are to be presented in a comprehensive manner in the IUDC.</p> <p>Thus, current measures, for example climate adaptation strategies and climate protection concepts, statements on the use of renewable energies, environmentally friendly modes of</p>
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<sup>8</sup> The Federal and State Governments also underscore their joint efforts in this regard by signing an annually recurring and adjusted (if needed) administrative Agreement on urban development funding.

		<p>transport as well as measures or areas of nature and water protection, are to be listed in the IUDC.</p> <p>The state also actively supports this objective through a reforestation programme and a timber construction campaign (carbon storage in used wood and thus potential savings in the energy sector).</p> <p>The EU and the Federal Government have developed important targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector. At the level of the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, it will therefore be important to consider these targets in the state Climate Protection Act (announced in the coalition agreement) through the introduction of state-specific annual reduction targets for transport in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Constitutional Court.</p> <p>Within the framework of the cross-border INTERREG project "The islands of Usedom/Wollin as Islands of Renewable Energy" ("die Inseln Usedom/ Wollin als Inseln der erneuerbaren Energien"), an energy portrait of the islands was drawn up and proposals were worked out in consultations with e.g. municipalities, businesses and associations on the more intensive use of renewable energy and the creation of a self-image or brand of "the islands of Usedom/Wollin as green islands". The Ministry of Economics, Infrastructure, Tourism and Labour of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is also involved in this project conducted under the leadership of the Regional Planning Office of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship.</p>
38	<p>acknowledge that global action and cross-border cooperation are needed to mitigate the effects of climate change, preserve and protect biodiversity and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a focus on climate (SDG13).</p>	<p>The state supports these objectives. The main responsibility lies with the Federal Government. The state is involved in their implementation within the scope of its competences and possibilities.</p>

	oceans (SDG14) and biodiversity (SDG15);	
39	promote and financially support both regional and local projects that, based on research, aim to improve and preserve the marine as well as the land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea as well as in their catchment areas;	Within the scope of its competences and possibilities, the state promotes local science-based projects, which aim to improve or maintain the condition of the waters in the Baltic Sea catchment area.
40	further involve and inform the local communities in the current situation to gain support and commitment in all parts of society, including businesses and civil society in long-term work to regain a good ecological status in coastal areas and beyond;	The state conducts regular public and dialogue events with the civil society and associations.
41	strive for further reduction of nutrient influx into the Baltic Sea and support the development of technology and innovations that will reduce the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea;	<p>Within the scope of its responsibilities and possibilities, the state will continue to reduce nutrient inputs into the Baltic Sea. The use of new technologies in agriculture, wastewater management, energy production and transport plays an important role here.</p> <p>Research that supports these implementation requirements is being carried out at the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research in Warnemünde (holistic research on the protection and sustainable use of the Baltic Sea, including coastal zone research and policy advice), at the University of Rostock, at the University of Greifswald (estuarine and peatland research, including the WETSCAPES excellence project) and at Leibniz ScienceCampus Phosphorous Research.</p>
42	take further actions in order to reduce ship emissions in the Baltic Sea;	International environmental regulations are of decisive importance for worldwide maritime shipping. The preliminary strategy of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the European Commission's "Fit for 55 Package" are further sharpening ship-related

		<p>requirements, for example through the inclusion of an obligation to use shore-side electricity and stricter GHG limits for energy consumption in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. The Federal Government and the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern implement the requirements relating to voyage and port stay. Correspondingly, ship-related discharges (e.g. wash water from exhaust gas purifying systems) and waste dumping are to be further reduced.</p> <p>As part of the current amendment to the Act on the Disposal of Ship-generated Waste and Cargo Residues in the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the definition of ship-generated waste is being expanded to include waste in accordance with Annex VI of the MARPOL Convention, in particular residues in the form of sludge and run-off water from wastewater treatment systems. In addition, passively fished waste is now classified as ship-generated waste. This means that these types of waste are now also covered by the obligation to unload in port.</p>
43	continue to support investments in green hydrogen technologies in order to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide;	<p>The implementation of the Regional Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation 2012–2027 also includes, among other things, Action area 1 "Renewable Energy - Hydrogen Technologies." Within this action area, projects/initiatives receive the best possible support. In addition to product and process developments, pilot and demonstration projects as well as a hydrogen application centre are to be supported.</p> <p>One contribution to the support of green hydrogen technologies lies in the establishment of a hydrogen transfer office tasked with creating synergy effects through the connection of projects and project partners and generating new projects/project ideas. For the current INTERREG funding period, the development of transnational project applications that focus on linking hydrogen activities in the Baltic Sea region is planned.</p>
44	cooperate and exchange information with regard to risk assessment and necessary coastal	Communication with the state of Schleswig-Holstein and with Poland on coastal protection measures takes place in relevant bodies.

	protection measures due to the rising sea levels;	
45	<p>concerning the impacts of plastics on the environment, climate change and biodiversity, to</p> <p>a. consider that, due to the transboundary nature of marine litter and the particular vulnerability of the enclosed Baltic Sea area, prevention of plastics entering the environment by reduction of unnecessary plastics at the source and the sustainable management of plastic waste is of mutual interest;</p> <p>b. therefore, commit to support activation of the HELCOM Regional Action Plan against Marine Litter and measures contained therein, being part of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan, at the regional level and</p> <p>c. support the start of negotiations on a new ambitious global agreement at UNEA 5.2 to take the next decisive step at the international level;</p>	<p>Germany (under the leadership of the Federal Environment Ministry) has transposed the EU's Single-Use Plastics Directive into a national regulation. The input of plastics into the environment is to be prevented by means of reducing consumption, marketing restrictions, product requirements, labelling regulations, measures for extended producer responsibility, separate collection and awareness-raising measures.</p> <p>As a coastal state, the State Government is aware of its shared responsibility for the protection of the Baltic Sea and has submitted a catalogue of relevant measures to Committee on Agriculture of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in 2021.<sup>9</sup></p> <p>Germany has also signed the HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP Marine Litter). The state will participate in its implementation within the scope of its competences and possibilities.</p> <p>The Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde is looking into the effects of microplastics in the sea and the possibilities for its reduction. For example, the long-term project MikrOMIK will for the first time allow to analyse the distribution of potential sources and sinks of microplastics in the Baltic Sea. It will also allow to determine the role of microplastics as a substrate for specific microbial populations and their functions, and to assess the health risk posed by microplastics as a vector for pathogenic microorganisms throughout the Baltic Sea. For further information, please refer to the comments contained in item no. 41.</p>
46	concerning the impacts of increased shipping and cruise-ship tourism on climate change and loss of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea, to	In accordance with the goals of the Clean Shipping Priority Area (PA SHIP) within the framework of the EUSBSR, a grey water disposal plant was built in Rostock-Warnemünde in 2014 and a shore power plant in 2021 with additional funding from the State

<sup>9</sup> See: [Printed paper 7/5604](#) on reducing plastic waste "Saving the Baltic Sea – Reducing Plastic Waste" from 25 November 2020.

<p>a. recognize that the Baltic Sea is the sea with the highest shipping levels and consists of inland water with low water exchange;</p> <p>b. acknowledge that global action and cross-border cooperation are needed to mitigate the emissions of increasing cruise-ship tourism and other shipping in the Baltic Sea;</p> <p>c. promote and accelerate the transition of ships and in particular cruise-ships away from fossil fuels towards sustainable renewable fuels in order to make shipping climate-neutral, and less polluting;</p> <p>d. take further actions in order to reduce black carbon ship emissions in the Baltic Sea, including support in technologies and infrastructure on shore power supply of harbours;</p> <p>e. support the development of technology and innovations that will further reduce the discharge of waste from ships to the Baltic Sea;</p> <p>f. support the prevention of introduction of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens in ballast water by supporting further development of technology and innovations and by stringent application of the BWM Convention and actively contributing to the experience-building phase;</p> <p>g. aim to improve and preserve the marine as</p>	<p>Government. With its "Green Cruising Strategy", the Rostock-based cruise line "AIDA" is also successfully implementing environmental goals. Through ship design, the use of LNG and other measures, energy consumption in the hotel, catering and leisure areas and thus the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the latest cruise ships in the AIDA fleet, have been considerably reduced.</p> <p>Furthermore, there is already an administrative agreement between the Federal Government and the states on the granting of financial aid for the construction of shore-side power plants, which the State Government is working to implement in cooperation with ports and their owners.</p> <p>The implementation of the Regional Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation 2021–2027 includes, in addition to the "Renewable Energies" Area, a focus on "Mechanical and Plant Engineering" in Action Area 3. In order to reduce and avoid emissions, alternative drive systems are to be designed and developed in the "Mechanical and Maritime Engineering" competence centre. In particular, synfuels causing low or zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are to be used. Environmental protection, the preservation of natural resources and recycling are also the focus of the measures eligible for funding in the implementation of the state's guideline for the promotion of research, development and innovation.</p> <p>In addition, reference is made to the research on large engines at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Ship Technology at the University of Rostock. A hydrogen infrastructure is being built up and gradually put into operation at the professorships for Technical Thermodynamics and Piston Engines and Internal Combustion Engines in a research network in which FVTR GmbH (a spin-off of the University of Rostock) is also involved.</p> <p>The designation and safeguarding of Natura 2000 areas (on land and in the Baltic Sea) would contribute to the preservation and improvement of biodiversity.</p>
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	well as the land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea;	
<b>Concerning sea-dumped munitions, to</b>		
47	<p>a. strengthen efforts to recover and neutralise explosive ordnance in the Baltic Sea with concrete measures through multinational cooperation according to the 28th and 29th BSPC Resolutions as well as the interim and final BSPC rapporteur's reports on sea-dumped munitions;</p> <p>b. bring together the different national findings, research results and data in an expert group - if possible, at HELCOM - and, on this basis, prepare concrete actions for the removal of explosive ordnance in the Baltic Sea;</p> <p>c. strive for an international donor fund in the concretisation of the financial instrument mentioned in the 28th BSPC Resolution and consider whether HELCOM could manage such funds;</p> <p>d. establish the Baltic Sea Region as a global model region for the environmentally sound, rapid and affordable salvage and decontamination and removal of explosive ordnance dumped in the sea;</p> <p>e. take all necessary measures aiming to complete the disposal and rendering harmless of</p>	<p>With regard to the demands contained in this resolution item, it is referred in principle to the Federal Government or to the Federal Ministry for the Environment. The Ministry for Climate Protection, Agriculture, Rural Areas and the Environment, which is primarily responsible for cooperation with HELCOM in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, works in close coordination with the Federal Government within the framework of the Federal/State Working Group on the North Sea and Baltic Sea (BLANO) and its expert group "Ammunition in the Sea" and involves the responsible ministries of the state.</p> <p>The expert group mentioned in point b) already exists at HELCOM within the RESPONSE Working Group.</p> <p>The topic of ammunition contamination will also be addresses by the CdS AG Nord on 31 March 2022 in preparation for a subsequent Conference Northern Germany (Konferenz Norddeutschland, KND). The conference will vote on the following draft resolution supported by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The heads of government of the northern German Länder regard the removal of sea-dumped munitions in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea as a national task that requires a nationwide effort.</li> <li>2. From the point of view of the heads of government of the northern German Länder, the implementation of the announced immediate programme for the salvage and destruction of explosive ordnance is a first important step, which must be followed by further steps. They ask the Federal Government to implement the emergency programme</li> </ol>

<p>explosive ordnance and other hazardous products in the Baltic Sea within the next 20 years;</p> <p>f. look at the option of including this task as a long-term ecological priority explicitly in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.</p>	<p>as quickly as possible and to provide the funds promised for this purpose. The northern German Länder will support the Federal Government through their respective ministries in the preparation of further steps.</p> <p>3. The northern German Länder request the Federal Government to ensure a regular exchange of information on the state of affairs and the further procedure within the framework of the Federal/State Working Group on Explosive Ordnance Disposal (BLAG Kampfmittelräumung) of the Conference of Ministers of the Interior and the Expert Group on Munitions in the Sea of the Federal/State Working Group on the North Sea and Baltic Sea (BLANO EK MiM).</p> <p>4. The heads of government of the northern German Länder reiterate their demand that the competences and responsibilities for dealing with sea-dumped munitions be examined at the national level and, if necessary, regulated jointly with the Länder.</p> <p>5. The heads of government of the northern German Länder request the KND chair to ask the Federal Government to submit a progress report on the implementation of the emergency programme ahead of the next meeting in spring 2023.</p>
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NORWAY



Storingsrepresentant Himanshu Gulati  
Stortinget

Oslo, 31. mai 2022

Jeg viser til ditt brev av 2. februar d.å. om resolusjonen fra den 30. parlamentariske østersjøkonferansen (BSPC) som ble avholdt digitalt under det svenske formannskapet ledelse den 30. august 2021.

Norge tillegger samarbeidet i Østersjøregionen stor betydning. Vi har nå som kjent for tredje gang formannskapet i rådet, i perioden juli 2021 – juni 2022. Etter Russlands angrep på Ukraina vedtok øvrige medlemmer av Østersjørådet å suspendere Russland fra videre deltakelse i rådets arbeid. Samtidig ble også Belarus som er observatørstat, suspendert. Russlands utenriksminister Sergei Lavrov meddelte den 17. mai at Russland trekker seg fra rådet. Vi tolker det som at Russland nå verken vil eller kan overholde de grunnleggende prinsippene for samarbeid, som har ligget til grunn for Østersjørådet siden oppstarten i 1992.

Etter suspensjonen og nå også Russlands oppgivelse av medlemskapet, lå det an til avholdelse av det første formelle møtet i Østersjørådet siden 2013. Det fant sted i Kristiansand 24. - 25. mai. Jeg vedlegger til orientering den erklæring som vi da vedtok.

De vektlegginger som BSPC gjør i sin resolusjon fra august 2021 samsvarer godt med de syn og prioriteringer vi selv har, både i regional sammenheng og internasjonalt. Vedlagte kommentarrapport på engelsk gir en oversikt over norsk tilnærming til de viktigste temaene som omhandles i resolusjonen.

Med vennlig hilsen

Anniken Huitfeldt

**Norwegian comments to the resolution adopted by  
the 30<sup>th</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC)  
on 30 August 2021**

The Baltic Sea Region is Norway's closest neighbourhood, and includes many of our most important political, economic and military partners. Cooperation in the region accelerated after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and significant and positive results have been achieved in the ensuing years and decades.

However, the illegal, unprovoked and brutal war launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine has dramatically altered the situation. The suffering of civilians is difficult to describe, and the level of destruction is beyond comprehension. Norway condemns Russia's aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. We also condemn Belarus' role in the war.

Russia's actions constitute an intolerable violation of international law, peace and security. The war in Ukraine will have global and long-term consequences. It challenges the rules-based international order. Russia presented a false narrative and a number of lies as pretexts for the war. And now Russian authorities do everything in their power to hide the truth from their population, including on atrocities being committed by the Russian armed forces.

Norway supports the action taken to suspend the Russian member parliaments, member delegations and Russian observer institutions from the work of the BSPC.

A similar position was adopted on 3 March 2022 by the members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, regarding the suspension of Russian participation in CBSS meetings, projects and other activities. Similarly, Belarus as observer state has been suspended. Russia formally withdrew their membership in the CBSS on 17 May 2022.

While Russia and Belarus through their illegal actions have placed themselves firmly on the outside of the Baltic Sea Region cooperation family, Norway sees a strong purpose in strengthening and deepening cooperation with the other partners. Norway participates in practically all regional cooperation formats, including in the Interreg Baltic Sea Programme and projects under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Norway – in cooperation with Iceland and Liechtenstein - promotes economic and social cohesion and development in the region through the EEA and Norway Grants schemes.

Norway is strongly committed to cooperation and cohesion among the countries of the Baltic Sea Region. This is also reflected in our presidency programme of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) in 2021-22, including the aims of:

1. *Accelerating cooperation on the green transition, with an emphasis on innovation and best practice in industry, sustainable transport, clean energy and the circular economy;*
2. *Fostering regional identity and cooperation, working with young people, civil society, and city and subregional authorities across the Baltic Sea Region;*
3. *Supporting the current mandates on civil protection, children at risk and trafficking in human beings, with a strong focus on organised crime and cybercrime.*

The Norwegian Government attaches great importance to interparliamentary cooperation in various formats, including the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. The Government views the annual conferences as a key forum for discussing the opportunities and challenges facing the region and appreciates the opportunity to comment and reflect on the resolutions that are regularly issued.

The 30<sup>th</sup> BSPC Conference Resolution was adopted before Russia's renewed violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity on 21 and 24 February 2022. We regret Russia's gross departure from the vision *that the Baltic Sea Region must remain a region of peaceful and close neighbourly cooperation, based on international law, mutual understanding, trust, democratic values, the rule of law, human rights and equal opportunities for all.*

Aside from the catastrophic effects of the Russian aggression, the content of the 30th BSPC Conference Resolution harmonizes very well with the policy which Norway pursues both in bilateral relations in the region and in multilateral cooperation formats. We highlight the overall importance of UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets. Cooperation on the implementation of the Paris agreement on climate change is an overriding priority.

We support the emphasis made by the BSPC on democracy, rule of law, human rights, free media, a strong civil society and robust NGOs, equal opportunities, inclusion of youth, and close contact and cooperation on all levels. We find that the Vilnius II Declaration - a Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2030 - expresses very well our ambition for a safe, balanced and equitable development of the Region.

The cooperation formats available and the very large political, financial and technical resources now being mobilized for post-pandemic recovery, green and digital transition, will undoubtedly yield unprecedented results, and increase the Region's global standing and competitiveness. The Norwegian government supports the notion that we must be in the forefront of transformation, including developing and defending the ethical aspects of digitalization and fostering effective information and media literacy.

In the context of the covid pandemic and recovery we recognize the importance of both intra-European and global coordination and cooperation. Norway strongly supports international action, not least through ACT-Accelerator and COVAX. Mutual recognition of approved vaccines and other health products as well as vaccine/travel certificates remains

our aim, on the condition that trust, access to information and quality can be built or maintained based on the highest ethical, medical and administrative standards among certifying authorities.

We support the measures to improve the environmental health of the Baltic Sea basin, as we ourselves are concerned about the health of the Skagerrak, North Sea, Norwegian Sea and polar sea areas. The ocean is among the top issues of Norwegian political and practical attention. We support strong international action and commitments against marine litter, plastics and illegal fishing, and we are proponents of a sustainable management of the ocean including through integrated ocean management plans.

The Norwegian government supports decarbonization in industry, transport and construction as a key instrument to achieve the goals we have committed to in the Paris Agreement. Green shipping is high on our agenda, including fossil-free marine propulsion where Norway is a global leader and participates in relevant programs under the aegis also of the CBSS and EUSBSR. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) has great prospects in managing emissions from hard-to-abate sectors like the production of cement and steel, and waste incineration. The Norwegian CCS full-chain demonstration project Longship includes the infrastructure needed to permanently store CO<sub>2</sub>. Northern Lights is now building the transport and storage infrastructure in Longship with excess capacity to enable storage of CO<sub>2</sub> volumes from other European projects. Norway supports green hydrogen technologies, but also the production of blue hydrogen with CCS.

Norway supports the BSPC focus on sea-dumped munitions, including dumped chemical weapons substances. Norway has similar challenges in our adjacent ocean areas and is a proponent for deepened international cooperation. Within the CBSS we promote cooperation with HELCOM and JPI Oceans (EU Joint Programming Initiative Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans) for better coordination and possible pilot action for clean-up and recovery.

Norway attaches great importance to the inclusion of Russia in trust-based and effective cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. We hope that cooperation can be resumed on all levels, if, and when Russia accepts the fundamental principles of international law, which is a prerequisite for any honest and durable cooperation.



## Declaration

### 19<sup>th</sup> CBSS Ministerial Session, Kristiansand, Norway

25 May 2022

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) – consisting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden, and the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy – met for its 19<sup>th</sup> Session in Kristiansand at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway. This was the first regular meeting of the Council since 2013.

1. The Council noted that Russia on 17 May 2022 had decided to withdraw as a member of the CBSS, and recalled that Russia already on 3 March had been suspended from participation in CBSS work and activities together with observer state Belarus. Russia has violated the very foundation of cooperation by its unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against democratic and sovereign Ukraine. Belarus has been involved in this unjustified military aggression in an enabling role. The Russian aggression is entirely incompatible with the cooperative model of international relations in the Baltic Sea Region, has a long-term negative impact on regional security, and is contrary to the rules-based international order. The Council's relations with Russia and Belarus will remain severed until cooperation under the fundamental principles of international law has become possible again.
2. We stand with Ukraine, an observer state to the CBSS. We deplore and recognise the enormous suffering and sacrifice by the people of Ukraine in the courageous defence of their sovereignty and freedom and the common values that Europe stands for, such as democracy, human rights and peace. Our support to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity is unwavering. We continue to support democratic Ukraine's legitimate struggle and are ready to engage in a strong partnership of cooperation and reconstruction.
3. There cannot be impunity for war crimes. Russia and its accomplice Belarus bear full responsibility for the war of aggression. We support all efforts to ensure full accountability such as the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine by the United Nations Human Rights Council, the work of the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and the investigation opened by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court into the situation in Ukraine.
4. This year the Council marks its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. At the foundation in 1992 the CBSS reflected the aspirations of a new beginning, where confrontation and division of the past was replaced by partnership and cooperation following the demise of the Soviet Union. EU and European Economic Area integration, cooperation and cohesion have been the main driving force for the Region's rapid development. The CBSS has been

a bridge between EU and non-EU members and has pursued strong policies and projects for the benefit of the entire Region. The CBSS has adapted to developments and changing circumstances affecting the Region and will continue to do so in the future.

5. We reaffirm the validity of the Vilnius II Declaration adopted on 1 June 2021, - a shared Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2030. We emphasise the values which have made our countries globally attractive, with open societies where citizens enjoy freedom, prosperity and the rule of law. We highlight the role of young people and civil society and their participation in decision-making processes. Strong cooperation against organised crime and trafficking in human beings, for the protection of vulnerable women and children, and in the field of civil protection has become ever more important in the present situation.
6. Climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest is our collective goal. We will scale up actions to ensure a green transition of the global economy, including accelerating green energy development, and decarbonising the heavy industry, transport and construction sectors. We strive to reduce emissions from agriculture and ensure a healthy marine environment in the Baltic Sea and our other ocean areas. We will enhance collaboration on the circular economy and renewable energies, diversify our energy supplies and rapidly reduce our dependency on fossil fuels. We will increase cooperation to phase out our use of Russian gas, oil and coal as soon as possible. The European Green Deal and RePowerEU will ensure speed and direction. We will continue the close cooperation on these and other priority issues in the European Economic Area.
7. The CBSS is a platform for both political dialogue and practical cooperation. We emphasise close interaction with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and other cooperation formats and programmes in the Region which reinforce and strengthen our common agenda. The Baltic Sea Region has a strong and well-functioning multi-level governance structure. Promoting a coherent system of cooperation networks leading to better synergies will remain important.
8. The Council thanked Norway for its 2021-2022 CBSS Presidency and recognised the Permanent International Secretariat in Stockholm for its effective contribution to CBSS work and activities. The Council welcomed Germany as incoming Presidency from July 2022.

POLAND

**Information on activities carried out by Polish institutions  
in order to implement Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) Resolution  
Adopted by the Digital 30<sup>th</sup> BSPC on 30 August 2021**

**Regarding Cooperation in the Region**

Poland is a coastal state, which works actively together with partners in the **Baltic regional context**. Before the Russian aggression in Ukraine the regional structures: **the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and Northern Dimension** were the platforms used both for the cooperation for the benefit of the broad region and its inhabitants, as well as a cooperation tool with Russia, e.i. to promote people-to-people contacts. These regional structures helped to enhance the resilience of economies and societies after Covid-19, the improvement of environmental health of the Baltic Sea or better engagement of young people in the future state of our region and the neighbourhood. The work crossed the state borders, engaged EU and non-EU countries and regions bordering the Baltic Sea, and partners from supranational to local levels, including parliaments. In 2021 Poland took active part in formulation of the Vilnius II Declaration, adopted by CBSS Foreign Ministers on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2021, which presents the goals of the region by 2030 and which was accompanied by the CBSS Action Plan for the years 2021-2025 – an effective tool to implement these goals through political and practical cooperation.

The unprovoked aggression committed by Russia against Ukraine forced the Foreign Ministers of ten CBSS Member States and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to decide in a declaration of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2022 to suspend Russia's participation in the CBSS. Due to Belarus' involvement in Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the declaration also suspends this country from participating as an observer state in the activities of the Council. All partners from these two countries have been stopped with an immediate effect from participating in any of the CBSS activities. CBSS has at the same time decided to continue the cooperation without Russia.

The other regional fora (HELCOM, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and VASAB), followed the decision to suspend Russia's and Belarus' participation in the common work.

As for **common regional identity and values in activities in the area of culture, research, education and science**, it can be stated that an integral part of geographic education in Poland is regional geographic education. Acquiring geographic knowledge about "small homeland" and one's own region, and reducing geographic knowledge to "here and now", gives education a specific dimension that can be easily translated into practical activities in the student's everyday life. This is of particular importance in the era of empowerment of local communities, and the formation of emotional ties between the student and his / her place.

Poland strives to **strengthen young people's participation, promoting meaningful exchanges of views and ideas with and among young people**. The requirements of "Knowledge about Society" subject in school include, among others, the following skills:

- explaining the basic regularities of social life, including the functioning of social groups and the local and regional communities as well as the ethnic and state community, increasing one's own local, regional, ethnic and civic identity, arguing the legitimacy of civic attitudes - incl. responsibility, concern for the common good and tolerance, communicating on matters of social life, including public life, and discussing and presenting own arguments on selected issues, presenting national and ethnic minorities living in Poland, a group using the regional language and groups of migrants (including refugees) and locating the place of their residence;
- presenting the rights of ethnic minority groups, justifying that it is possible to reconcile different socio-cultural identities (regional, national / ethnic, state / civic, European);

- recognizing the manifestations of xenophobia, including racism, chauvinism and anti-Semitism, and justifying the need to oppose these phenomena, presenting the goals and forms of activities of non-governmental organizations active in the local community and region;
- demonstrating that activities of this type lead to the fulfilment of various needs, presenting goals and examples of activities of social organizations associating young people in Poland;
- explaining the idea of volunteering and presenting forms of volunteer activity, presenting forms of citizens' influence on the decisions of local government authorities, examples of implementing local initiatives of residents financed from civic budgets and projects undertaken by youth commune / city councils.

When making efforts to **ensure young people's participation in the decision-making process**, Poland respects the right of young people to self-organization and participation, and the right to freedom of expression. For this purpose, entities representing young people at all levels, from local to regional and domestic, are established.

Youth councils with an advisory voice operate at ministries, including: the Children and Youth Council at the Ministry of Education and Science, the Youth Climate Council and the Ecological Council at the Minister of Climate and the Environment, as well as the Youth Council at the Minister of Justice.

An example of local solutions in Poland may be **youth councils at local government units**. On June 23, 2021, the amendment to the act on commune self-government, the act on poviats self-government, the act on voivodship self-government and the act on public benefit activity and voluntary work entered into force, which introduced the legal framework for the functioning of youth councils and assemblies at the poviats and voivodships level and improved the existing provisions on youth councils of municipalities. The aim of the act was to institutionally strengthen youth councils and assemblies at local government units, which ensures that youth councils at local government units function more efficiently with the possibility of increasing their impact on local communities. Thanks to the changes, young people have gained wider opportunities to engage in public and civic life.

In 2021, the "Ambassador of the Young Generation" competition was launched to award young people involved in social and civic activities, as well as organizations that support this activity.

In 2021, the Government Plenipotentiary for Youth Policy organized nationwide consultations on the Strategy of the Republic of Poland for the Young Generation, aimed at involving young people in decision-making processes so that they could decide about their future. During the consultations, young people could freely present their problems and propose solutions to them. Nearly 30 thousand young people from all over Poland participated in the consultations.

The Ministry of Education and Science conducts permanent cooperation with youth organizations as part of the National Working Group for EU Youth Dialogue, whose members are representatives of the Youth Initiatives Foundation, the Council of Children and Youth of the Republic of Poland at the Ministry of Education and Science and the Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation. The Ministry is also disseminating information on CBSS initiatives aimed at young people by providing relevant information to the above-mentioned organization.

The European Social Fund - Projects co-financed by the European Social Fund under the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development 2014-2020 (POWER) are in line with the objectives listed in the BSPC resolution (especially point 7 on **vibrant and enhanced exchanges between people**). Under POWER, Priority Axis IV (Social Innovation and Transnational Cooperation) numerous projects are implemented regarding mobility and transnational cooperation. These projects are implemented, among others, with partners from EU countries in the Baltic Sea region.

The European Funds for Social Development 2021-2027 Programme (FERS), currently under consultations with the European Commission, will also include objectives of the BSPC resolution.

Projects and calls for proposals under transnational cooperation, financed under FERS and implemented in transnational cooperation with EU countries from the Baltic Sea region, will focus on such areas as labour market for all, use of resources resulting from longer life, activities for active and healthy ageing to meet the challenges of demographic change and support for migrants.

**Protection of the vulnerable and optimal integration of those who seek protection from persecution in the Region is also high on the agenda.** Poland actively supports people fleeing persecution and seeking international protection. In connection with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, on February 24, Poland implemented a number of solutions aimed at the best possible support for people fleeing the war.

There are 8 border crossing points at the Polish-Ukrainian border which are fully operational. Since 24 February **2 542 797** persons entered to Poland from Ukraine, **1 897 713** declared that they are fleeing due to the armed conflict (as of 7 April).

Persons coming from Ukraine are referred immediately after crossing the border to the competent reception points at the border and in the country, where they receive detailed information on the possibility of legalizing their stay in Poland, temporary accommodation, hot meals, basic medical care and a place to get a rest.

There are 40 reception points (as of 7<sup>th</sup> April) that handled **708 920** evacuees; 148 information points; refugees accommodated in the organized accommodation centers – 280 793 throughout Poland there are 5 244 such places operating right now. Refugees are also transported free of charge to prepared and free accommodation.

On 7 March 2022 the government adopted a bill on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with an armed conflict in the territory of that state, which was signed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March by President Andrzej Duda. The new solutions apply retroactively from February 24, 2022.

The act enables Ukrainian citizens who have crossed Polish border since the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022:

- recognize their stay as legal for 18 months,
- free access to the Polish labour market,
- medical care,
- access to education,
- social assistance.

The act provides for assigning a PESEL number to Ukrainian citizens who came to Poland in connection with the war. This solution will allow for the implementation of a number of public services for these people. For this purpose, a special procedure for obtaining a PESEL number is provided for, upon an application containing a basic data. It is an informal procedure that allows to obtain a PESEL number without the need to show the legal basis for its possession. In order to facilitate access to public online services, it is anticipated that Ukrainian citizens will be able to obtain a trusted profile with the assignment of a PESEL number.

A citizen of Ukraine may benefit from free assistance of the poviats labour office or voivodship labour office, including support in finding a job, primarily through job placement and through career counselling. One of the institutions dealing with professional activation is the "Green Line" Information and Consultation Center of Employment Services. It is a modern online employment office - open to anyone, at any time. It is an internet portal and a helpline where all the necessary information is available about the assistance provided by 16 voivodship, 340 poviats labour offices and the Voluntary Labour Corps. The portal also offers a job search engine as well as information, advice and videos on how to search a job.

Students from Ukraine have the right to continue their education in Polish schools. Children and adolescents aged 7-18 will benefit from education and care under the same conditions as Polish students. It is enough for the parents to report to the facility and fill in the relevant documents. In a

situation where a given school will not have a place for a Ukrainian student, the commune will send him or her to another institution in its area.

For students who do not speak Polish to the extent that they can study, the school head will be able to organize additional Polish language classes. There may also be a preparatory section within the school where teaching is tailored to the student's abilities and needs. The student may also use the help of a Ukrainian speaking person employed as a teacher's assistant, as well as take advantage of additional compensatory classes (in the scope of teaching subjects) organized by the body running the school.

The Ministry of Education and Science has prepared a set of guidelines and recommendations that will help teachers and school educators to talk about students' emotions and inform about the current situation in Ukraine. The document also includes tips on supporting children from Ukraine.

In the area of **civil protection** The National Headquarters of the State Fire Service has taken up the below mentioned actions:

- Representatives of the National Headquarters of the State Fire Service (KG PSP) participated in the Steering Group Meeting for the **PA SECURE of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** (EUSBSR). These are regular interactive meetings. In 2021, amendments were made to the Joint Position on Enhanced Cooperation in the Area of Civil Protection to which the body agreed to (they are planned to be adopted by the Directors-General of Civil Protection in 31 Maj-1 June 2022).

The countries exchanged lessons learned on the COVID-19 pandemic reaction, as well as support to other countries. The PA SECURE plan of 2021 activities was presented: EUSBSR webinar for Polish stakeholders organised by the Polish MFA, 2<sup>nd</sup> EUSBSR PA SECURE sub-group meeting on volunteerism in BSR and the plan of the next events.

New projects proposals were presented: Inclusive crisis communication – on establishing effective communication targeted to different vulnerable groups, CASCADE II – continuation of the CASCADE project on risk assessment due to environment changes.

- The Deputy Chief Commandant of The State Fire Service was representing Poland on the **Directors General of Civil Protection** virtual meeting in the Baltic Sea Region (BRS) organized by the Lithuanian Presidency in the CBSS. The VTC summarised the status of implementation of activities and projects in which entities from Poland are also involved (incl. the National Headquarters of the State Fire Service, the Main School of Fire Service and the Scientific and Research Centre for Fire Protection - National Research Institute).
- Representative of the KG PSP took part in the virtual meeting of the Senior Experts of the **Civil Protection Network**. Moreover, KG PSP represented Poland at the VTC 'Counteracting threats and regional cooperation', where experiences and activities of the Baltic Sea States (BSS) crisis situations were presented. Part of the VTC was presenting the product of the completed CASCADE project – a kit for estimating risks connected with climate change, in which the Main School of Fire Service took part, available here: <http://www.cascade-bsr.eu/toolbox>.
- During last year's edition of the **Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue** programme, a representative of KG PSP presented the cooperation conducted by the EU countries of the Baltic Sea Region within the framework of PA SECURE, disaster risks identified in the region and referred to the role of children and young people in building the region's resilience.

BALTInnoSEC – a project of an innovative approach to foster regional, cross sectoral cooperation in civil protection was developed by the State Fire Service and acquired funding from the Swedish Institute. The project is scheduled to end in February 2023. Project Partners: International Affairs Uni Department for Rescue Services, Finland, Laurea University of Applied Science, Finland, Hamburg Fire and Rescue Service, Germany, The State Fire and Rescue Service

of Latvia, Fire and Rescue Department of Lithuania, The Main School Fire Service (SGSP), Poland, The National Headquarters of The State Fire Service of Poland (KG PSP), Poland, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), Sweden.

- Other projects:

NEEDS project brings together higher education institutions and practitioner organisations, working with societal security in the Baltic Sea Region – in order to address the skills gap and mismatch between the societal security education and the knowledge needs in the field. It also aims to strengthen transnational cooperation and dialogue between Higher Education Institutes, practitioners, and experts in tackling these issues. Project Partner: The Main School of Fire Service.

ChYResilience - the aim of the project is to map youth participation in resilience building in the Baltic Sea Region and formulate a set of good practices on how to engage children and youth in resilience building. Project Partners: [The Scientific and Research Centre for Fire Protection – National Research Institute](#).

In the field of combating organized crime (i.e. **counteracting trafficking in human beings**) Poland has implemented a number of comprehensive measures, the aim of which is, inter alia, efficient diagnosis of cases of trafficking in human beings, constant monitoring of this phenomenon, providing support and protection to victims, conducting trainings or proposing legislative changes. In Poland, there is a coordinated system of support and care for victims of human trafficking, ensuring a specialist offer of assistance and a uniform procedure in such cases.

On November 17, 2021, the new National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings for 2022-2024 (NAP) was adopted by the Council of Ministers. It is the government's plan for the next three years and defines the state's policy in this regard. As part of the new NAP, an action was adopted - analysis of the need to create an act on counteracting trafficking in human beings.

The most important element of the National Reference Mechanism is the public task entitled *Running the National Intervention and Consultation Centre for victims of trafficking in human beings* (NICC), entrusted to non-governmental organizations. NICC aims to provide direct support and protection to victims/presumed victims of trafficking in human beings. The Minister of the Interior and Administration entrusted two non-governmental organizations - the La Strada Foundation and the Po MOC for Women and Children Association Mary Immaculate (selected in an open tender competition) with the implementation of the above-mentioned public task. 1,100,000 PLN was allocated for the realisation of the task.

In terms of **raising public awareness of the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings**, the following were organized:

- an information campaign called "Human trafficking is a crime!" addressed mainly to foreigners;
- an information campaign called "Don't trust implicitly. Do not become a victim of human trafficking" targeting mainly refugees from Ukraine;
- an information alert was developed for people crossing the border from Ukraine, which contains comprehensive information about potential threats and possibilities of assistance;
- printing of posters with indicators of identification of victims of trafficking in human beings for the Border Guard and Police.

On **broadening the knowledge and raising the qualifications** of representatives of institutions and organizations involved in preventing trafficking in human beings:

- on behalf of the Ministry of Interior and Administration, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) prepared and conducted training entitled "Identification and support of victims

of trafficking in human beings. The role of the aviation industry” for the cabin crew of LOT Polish Airlines;

- on behalf of the Ministry of Interior and Administration, the Polish Bank Association conducted workshops on financial flows in the crime of trafficking in human beings for Border Guard and Police officers;
- the representative of the Ministry of Interior and Administration spoke at trainings for social welfare workers and staff of crisis intervention centres, for candidates for consular positions, for labour inspectors, for directors and teachers of schools in the Masovian Voivodship and for employees of the Board of Education;
- The Ministry of the Interior and Administration, together with the Central Border Guard Centre in Koszalin, organized workshops for Police officers, Border Guard officers and prosecutors on cooperation in the prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking in human beings, exchange of experiences, best practices and analysis of jurisprudence in cases of trafficking in human beings.

As part of **improving the effectiveness of the activities** of institutions responsible for prosecuting the crime of trafficking in human beings:

- guidelines for labour inspectors were developed along with an accompanying list of indicators for identifying potential victims of trafficking in human beings for forced labour;
- representatives of the Ministry of Interior and Administration took part in the development of "Procedures for dealing with minor foreigners when crossing the border".

Updated by the Trafficking Victims Support Group:

- algorithm of conduct of law enforcement officers in the event of disclosure of a crime of trafficking in human beings;
- algorithm of identification and procedure towards a minor victim of trafficking in human beings for a Police and Border Guard officer;
- procedure for the employees of the Office for Foreigners examining applications for international protection in the case of preliminary identification of a foreigner as a victim of trafficking in human beings.

In 2021, the Kantar Studio, commissioned by the Ministry of Interior and Administration, conducted a quantitative social research on social awareness of the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings and made a comparative analysis to the state measured by the research carried out in 2010 and 2015.

*The Act of 12 March 2022 on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict in the territory of that country* tightened the penalties provided for in the Criminal Code for committing the crime of trafficking in human beings. For committing the offense under Art. 189a of the Penal Code, the court will impose a penalty of deprivation of liberty for a term from 10 to 15 years or a penalty of 25 years imprisonment.

The Polish Central Bureau of Investigation of the Police as part of a long-term priority in the area of **ensuring public order and safety in the Baltic Sea region**, i.e. Safe Region, still participates in the works of the **Baltic Sea Task Force (BSTF)**. The BSTF is one of the networks of Police representatives and law enforcement officials from the Baltic Sea region who are responsible for information exchange and organization of joint operations, mainly law enforcement ones, which target organized criminal groups that specialize in drugs, human trafficking, illegal arms trade, economic crimes and traditional crimes. The activities in the Baltic Sea region and meetings devoted to the cooperation of Baltic countries are operational (Operational Committee – OPC) and strategic (Task Force). Due to the pandemic, many of the planned activities had to be called off.

On 24 June 2021 an online strategic meeting took place, which summed up the German presidency in 2019-2021 operationally supported by the Polish Police, including the Central Bureau of Investigation of the Police, along with the Polish Border Guard and the National Revenue Administration.

On 17 November 2021 a meeting was held, the first under the Norwegian leadership, of the Operational Committee in an on-line form, during which the priorities of the Norwegian Police were presented. The meeting was attended by the representatives of the Bureau of International Police Cooperation of the Polish National Police HQ. The main focus was placed on human trafficking, cybercrime, sexual exploitation of children and the youth and Interpol and Europol regional cooperation.

As part of the German presidency in the **Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation (BSRBCC)** many initiatives were organized (i.e. a meeting of the BSRBCC Secretariat, expert meetings, seminars, joint operations) in 2020-2021. Due to the pandemic situation, the annual BSRBCC Chiefs' Conference scheduled for 07-09.12.2021 in Lübeck/ Germany could not be organized.

As for the **collaboration in healthcare** in the Baltic Sea Region Polish Ministry of Health participated in the **Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS)**.

NDPHS as a cooperative effort of nine governments, the European Commission and eight international organisations provided a unique platform for taking concerted action in the field of health and social wellbeing, to strengthen collaboration and coordination of international activities in the Northern Dimension area by bringing together experts to learn from each other and to develop joint activities.

From November 28, 2019 to December 31, 2021 Poland took role of the Chair country. During this time, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both the NDPHS Secretariat and members of 7 expert groups active within the NDPHS worked remotely, and the meetings were transferred to online platforms organized by the Secretariat.

Based on contributions from expert groups, the NDPHS Secretariat received funding from the EU for the project "More Impact Together by Empowering Northern Stakeholders" (MITTENS)". During the chairmanship of the NDPHS, the representative of PL chaired the work of a specially appointed steering group supervising the execution of this project.

The Polish Minister of Health invited the ministers of all the NDPHS countries to a meeting on 28 November 2021 to discuss the conclusions of the "Connecting minds across the ages" conference. The conference on active and healthy aging preceding the meeting of ministers was based on the activities identified in the AgeFlag project carried out within the NDPHS.

During this conference the Minister of Health of Poland handed over the chairmanship of the Partnership to the Minister of Health and Social Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden from January 1, 2022.

After Russia's attack on Ukraine it was decided that the NDPHS partners will continue activities without the Russian Federation.

The programmes financed from Cohesion Policy (ERDF, ESF + and CF) for 2021-2027 will contain references to macro-regional strategies, including the **EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region**. It results directly from the provisions of the general regulation (Regulation 2021/1060 of June 24, 2021). Article 22 (1) 3 letter a, points out that the description of the challenges should include: "macro-regional and sea-basin strategies if Member States and regions participate in such strategies". The introduction of such a provision results from the intention of "embedding" macro-regional strategies in the area of structural funds.

In addition, in 2021-2027, the ERDF will continue to finance cross-border, transnational and trans-regional programmes under the European Territorial Cooperation. An example of a transnational

programme is the INTERREG Baltic Sea Region 2021-2027, which will be implemented in 8 EU Member States, including Poland.

As for the cooperation in the **area of culture** the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage participated actively in the work of **Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture and PA Culture of the EUSBSR**, where it has focused on promoting the elements of **common regional identity and values**.

**In the framework of PA Culture** the Ministry has undertaken:

- Regular contact with project partners, especially with the Ministry of Justice, European Affairs and Consumer Protection of the German Federal State of Schleswig-Holstein and Adam Mickiewicz Institute.<sup>1</sup>
- Internal working meetings with the partners. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic all of them took place remotely. The aim of the meetings was to discuss the coordination of ongoing activities including the events' organization, preparations of reports and applications.
- Organization of the Steering Group of the Policy Area Culture meetings for the EUSBSR members states, extended by the participation of the other organizations interested in the issue, the Secretariat of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Northern Dimension Partnership for Culture, Ars Baltica.
- Organization of workshops on the CCI (cultural and creative industries) reconstruction after the crisis caused by the pandemic, in the hybrid formula.
- Development of multi-sectoral recommendations for the reconstruction of the CCI sector on the basis of good practices of the Baltic Sea region countries.
- The Policy Area Culture played an active role during the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum of the EUSBSR. Additionally, the project partner organized a workshop on possible forms of support for the combating climate crisis by the cultural sector.

The activities in the framework of the **Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture** included:

- Running a website that serves as a contact point and a newsletter about the CCI sector initiatives in the region and the European Union.
- Preparing opinions on the development and potential of creative sectors in the region, in collaboration with the Northern Dimension Institute at Aalto University in Finland.
- Announcing of the annual recruitment for the Cultural and Creativity Program.
- Conducting its own projects that bring together representatives of networking organizations and organizations from the CCI sectors of the NDPC countries (<https://ndpculture.org/projects/>).

### **Regarding Democracy in a Changing Media Landscape**

Poland is committed to protection of the **freedom of opinion and expression and the freedom of the media** worldwide. From the Polish perspective these freedoms are tightly interlinked with other freedoms (like freedom of religion or belief and of peaceful assembly and association) which are crucial for a free, inclusive and lively public debate in the pluralistic and democratic societies.

Poland is firmly convinced that protection of freedom of expression online is growingly pivotal in all societies across the globe, especially – but not only – as the times of the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered prompt shift towards partial or full digitalization of many areas of life. A reliable and unbiased information is a key factor for development and upholding of democratic standards in contemporary societies across the world.

<sup>1</sup> On the 1st of January 2022 the Polish coordinator of the Policy Area Culture was changed. The Adam Mickiewicz Institute, which is supervised by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland, was indicated as the Polish coordinator. The second coordinator has been invariably the Ministry of Justice, European Affairs and Consumer Protection of the Land of Schleswig-Holstein.

Poland focuses its activity in multilateral fora on promotion of the freedom of expression **online** and on **countering disinformation**. In this context it is important to underline that Poland is a member of the core group of the UN Human Rights Council resolution on *Role of States in countering the negative impact of disinformation on the enjoyment and realization of human rights*. This resolution, tabled this year for the first time, was consensually adopted by the Council at the 49 session of this body (28 February 2022 – 1 April 2022). Moreover, Poland has co-sponsored recent UN Human Rights Council initiatives concerning the freedoms in question, incl. the resolution adopted at 48 session of the Council (13 September – 11 October 2021) entitled *The right to privacy in the digital age* and those adopted at its 47 session (21 June – 14 July 2021): *New and emerging digital technologies and human rights* and *The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet*. Poland also undertakes efforts to uphold the respect for the mentioned freedom in the statements regularly delivered in international fora, including the Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly (III Committee).

Poland fully **supports the independent mandate of international organizations** dedicated to the freedom of opinion or expression and the freedom of the media, including e.g. the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

**Since 2015 Poland is member of the Freedom Online Coalition**. We see our participation in the coalition as a tangible proof of our commitment to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms online. At the latest high-level meeting of the Freedom Online Conference, i.e. its 2021 yearly conference in Helsinki on 3 December 2021 Foreign Minister of Poland, Prof. Zbigniew Rau, underlined the need to uphold the **protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the digital sphere** as the world rapidly moves online in many areas of life.

**Security and integrity of the information space** have been addressed in the National Security strategy adopted by Poland in 2020. Disinformation was listed as one of the non-military elements of activities below the threshold of war launched to destabilize the structures of Western states and societies as well as creating divisions among allied countries.

Key goals outlined in the strategy include building capabilities to protect the information space or increasing social awareness about the dangers of manipulating information through education in the field of information security. Importantly, one of the measures taken to counteract disinformation is to build the capacity and procedures for cooperation with the news and social media, with the **involvement from citizens and non-governmental organizations**. On cybersecurity aspects, the National Security Strategy is complimented by the Cybersecurity Strategy of the Republic of Poland for 2019-2024 where resilience to disinformation is to be built through developing public awareness towards the safe use of cyberspace.

To **enhance resilience to accelerating disinformation trends deriving from the situation on the Polish-Belarussian border**, an **ad hoc StratCom working group** was formed within the Prime Minister's Office, under the aegis of **Ministry of the Interior and Administration**. This cross governmental chain laid ground for future cooperation, now transformed into a network resembling an agile management war room scheme. Experts are engaged in **early detection** of disinformation as well as **evaluation of recurring narratives**. This allows for a quicker communication flow as well as a swift and coordinated response, based on a **whole of the government** approach. The group is regularly supplied with **daily monitoring of the infosphere** and receives **alerts on emerging trends**, both **domestic and foreign**. Cross organizational contacts are facilitated by the presence of subject matter experts and analysts from renowned research centres, such as NASK National Research Institute.

Simultaneously, hybrid threats are being monitored regularly by the **Government Crisis Management Team (RZZK)**. The group meets on a regular basis to discuss current challenges, including exposure to disinformation.

Early detection and countering disinformation capabilities are strengthened by various units dealing with disinformation that operate within administration. For instance, a dedicated **StratCom unit has been set up structure within MFA** and is operational since 2019. Matters of disinformation remain the area of interest within **Ministry of Defence, Government Security Centre** and **National Security Bureau**. **Intelligence community** is also involved in dealing with foreign information manipulation threats, as appropriate.

Poland is actively involved in various international platforms dealing with disinformation. We participate in a number of bilateral and multilateral consultations on this matter. This allows for analytical knowledge exchange and raises awareness of narratives aimed at various states as well as initiatives measured to fight disinformation.

Being aware that disinformation warfare has largely moved to social media platforms and alternative channels of communications, Poland encourages strengthening resilience to disinformation appearing in social media through awareness campaigns and media education. An increasing stress is being put on **media literacy in school curriculum** to ensure resilience and conscious media use is encouraged as early as possible.

In order to ensure resilience to disinformation aimed at democratic processes, **the National Research Institute NASK** together with the then **Ministry of Digitization** and computer security incident response teams (CSIRT) from the Ministry of National Defense and the Internal Security Agency (ABW), launched a website *BezpieczneWybory.pl*, a knowledge base and collection of reliable reporting on elections.

Since 2020 Poland has been taking part in works on the **draft EU Act on Digital Services**, which will be main EU regulation establishing rules of content management by digital (online) platforms (in particular- their obligations in the field of fighting against harmful content).

In 2020-2021 Poland actively participated in works on the **Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a temporary derogation from certain provisions of Directive 2002/58 / EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the use of technology by number-independent interpersonal communication service providers** for the processing of personal data and other data for combating online child sexual abuse, which provided a valuable tool to improve the protection of children against online sexual abuse (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R1232>);

Moreover, **Polish National and Research Computer Network – National Research Institute (NASK-PIB - supervised by PM's Office) has been taking proactive measures to fight aggressive misuse of social media and supporting victims**, including: education and awareness activities, research activities as well as exchange of best practices with national institutions in the other states and with international institutions. These activities are addressed to various groups of recipients, i.e. children, young people, parents and guardians, as well as teaching staff. Public and private sectors are involved in these activities, with great support from non-governmental organizations. The key action has been participation in the Safer Internet Program of the European Commission since 2005. As a part of the programme NASK launched **Dyżurnet.pl - the point of contact to report illegal content on the Internet**, especially related to the sexual exploitation of children.

In the context of Russia-Ukraine war:

NASK-PIB periodically prepares a **"Report on disinformation in Poland in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine"** in order to assess the phenomenon of Internet disinformation concerning the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The Report examines the dominant themes, motives and forms of online disinformation in the above context; contains a list of malicious profiles on social networking sites; and formulates conclusions regarding the improvement of the effectiveness of the fight against disinformation.

On February 27th on the initiative of Poland, the prime ministers of Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Poland sent a letter to the leaders to the authorities of large internet platforms (Google, Twitter, Meta, Youtube), urging platforms to limit the Russian government's "mass disinformation campaign" during the Kremlin's ongoing offensive in Ukraine.

On March 16, 2022, Janusz Cieszyński, Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister and the Government Plenipotentiary for Cybersecurity, and Mykhailo Fedorov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Digital Transformation of Ukraine, signed a joint letter to Meta and Twitter on counteracting Russian disinformation.

During the informal meeting of EU Member States' ministers for digital affairs on March 8-9, 2022 in Paris and Nevers Poland signed the "Joint appeal by EU ministers responsible for digital and electronic communications to the digital sector".

The Draft Act amending the Criminal Code and certain other Acts (parliamentary print no. 2024), which is currently being examined by the Sejm Committee, provides for the following amendments within the scope of Point 28 of the Resolution of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference:

1. The Draft Act makes the commission of a hate crime on the grounds of nationality, ethnicity, race, political beliefs, religion, or lack of religious belief, a statutory aggravating circumstance.
2. Article 256(1) of the Criminal Code would see a more severe punishment (up to three years of imprisonment) for the crime consisting in the public propagation of Nazi, communist, fascist, or other totalitarian regimes, or incitement to hatred on the grounds of national, ethnical, racial, political, or religious differences, or lack of religious belief.
3. Article 256(2) would introduce a new crime consisting in the public propagation of Nazi, communist, or fascist ideology, or ideology inciting to violence so as to affect political or social life.
4. The Draft Act also broadens the objective features of the crime under Article 190a(2) of the Criminal Code. Worded as it is now, it criminalises an act where a person impersonating another person uses that person's image, other personal data, and other data used to publicly identify them to inflict material or personal damage to them. The new provision would exclude the deliberate nature of the crime, meaning it would be committable with conditional intent, i.e., with the offender accepting that it might be committed, but not wanting it.

The aforementioned changes aim at making democracy more resilient to **cyber-harassment** and cybercrime on the Internet, and at preventing and combating **online hate speech**.

#### **Regarding Safeguarding the Baltic Sea and our Environment for Future Generations, halting Climate Change and the Loss of Biodiversity**

Poland participates in international actions dealing with **hazardous materials on the bottom of the Baltic Sea**. Representatives take an active part in the meetings of the Member States Expert Group on Integrated Maritime Security and Surveillance (MSEG MSS) and the Working Party on Maritime Issues (WP EUMSS).

Within the framework of the work of the Friends of Presidency for the EU's Maritime Security Strategy (FoP EUMSS) a representative of Poland contributed to the preparation of the Council conclusions on maritime security, which also include relevant provisions concerning the problem of sunken chemical weapons, conventional weapons and hazardous materials on the seabed.

The Maritime Border Guard Unit, while performing statutory tasks related to the protection of the state border at sea and supervising the operation of Polish maritime areas, undertakes many activities listed in the Resolution, i.e. **actions to counteract and combat threats related to marine pollution and activities related to hazardous materials** lying in the maritime areas of the Republic of Poland.

The Marine Environment Protection Division in the Ministry of Infrastructure heads the national HELCOM Secretariat and coordinates the work related to the implementation of tasks of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission) in Poland. The individual actions are carried out by other ministries in accordance with their competences.

Within the **HELCOM**, joint patrols are carried out using vessels of the Maritime Border Guard Unit. The employees of the Chief Inspectorate for Environmental Protection (GIOŚ) and Maritime Offices participate in these activities which aim is to control compliance with the regulations on the protection of the marine environment, as well as to conduct research on the quality of the marine environment, supervision and assessment of its condition. For this purpose, GIOŚ employees, among others, take samples of sea water in designated areas of internal waters and the territorial sea. The results of the inspection are reported to the Marine Unit of the Border Guard.

In 2020, 16 exits of the Border Guard patrol vessels with GIOŚ staff were completed, while there were no exits in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, Border Guard vessels and aircrafts are included in the system of detecting and combating pollution of Polish maritime areas (10 patrol vessels and 3 aircrafts of the Border Guard are designated for the cooperation with the Maritime Search and Rescue Service to overcome threats and pollution of the marine environment).

Speaking at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, Poland stated that international cooperation in the Baltic Sea region to **protect the marine environment** is always topical and necessary. Marine pollution and other forms of degradation of the marine environment are limitless and sunken hazardous objects, in particular wrecks and conventional and chemical weapons, continue to pose a serious threat to the marine environment. He also informed that the risks posed by hazardous objects on the bottom of the Baltic Sea are currently being assessed in Poland. This does not alter the fact that coordinated, harmonized regional measures are also needed. Joint initiatives under HELCOM can undoubtedly help to find appropriate solutions for the whole of the Baltic Sea.

Poland suggested, that, in the context of achieving the objectives and tasks of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), a joint effort should be made to address the problems of the Baltic Sea, which certainly includes the problems of ground-based hazardous objects.

Poland has taken measures aimed at disposal and rendering harmless of explosive ordnance and other hazardous products in the Baltic Sea.

The Interdepartmental **Team for Risks Arising from Hazardous Materials Deposited in the Maritime Areas** of the Republic of Poland was established in 2021. The Team chaired by the Minister of Infrastructure, also included other ministers (e.g. National Defence, Interior and Administration, Climate and Environment, Education and Science, Development and Technology, Foreign Affairs, Health), regional administration offices, maritime offices and state services (Fire, Police, Border Guard). The team met in July, October and November 2021. Since activities dealing with the subject of **sunken hazardous objects** carried out in previous years by various ministries and units could be a valuable basis for the continuation of work on this issue, the Team recognized the necessity to review and aggregate the available information and data.

As a result of the work carried out, the Team developed the following recommendations for the Council of Ministers:

- 1) appointment by a new order of the Prime Minister a team for hazardous materials located in the maritime areas of the Republic of Poland, whose task would be, in particular, to coordinate the cooperation of ministries whose competences include activities related to monitoring and neutralizing threats caused by sunken hazardous materials;

2) securing sufficient funding to support the team's work and to carry out the operation of examining and neutralizing the two most endangering wrecks in the marine environment: Franken and Stuttgart;

3) commissioning the team to prepare a draft of regulations of a special nature addressing comprehensively issues related to the possible reduction of risks stemming from hazardous materials sunk in the maritime areas of the Republic of Poland.

The report on the work of the Team was submitted to the Chancellery of the Prime Minister and adopted by the Council of Ministers on in January 2022. The adoption of the report together with the recommendations contained therein opens a new stage of government administration's activities in the field of hazardous materials deposited in the maritime areas of the Republic of Poland.

At the 5th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2) held on February 28-March 2 this year in Nairobi the resolution entitled **End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument** was adopted. It provides for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) with a mandate to prepare a global, legally binding agreement on plastics. Poland supported the work to establish INC in line with the Government's Position of June 25, 2020 to the New EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy for a Cleaner and More Competitive Europe.

Ministry of Climate and Environment does not carry out activities directly related to the Baltic Sea area. Activities in area of forestry are carried out as part of regular activities of three regional directorates of the State Forests, covering the Baltic Sea coast (in Szczecin, Gdańsk and Olsztyn). Sustainable forest management carried out by all regional directorates of the State Forests contributes to **strengthening the sustainability of economic growth, rural development and achieving good and sustainable ecological condition of forest ecosystems located on the Polish coast**. The activities of the State Forests in coastal areas are also important for sustainable tourism. Forests also play an important role in achieving climate resilience and act as a CO<sub>2</sub> sink.

# SCHLESWIG- HOLSTEIN

**Annex 1:****Report of the State Government on the Implementation Status of the Resolution adopted by the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in August 2021**

On October 28, 2021, the Schleswig-Holstein State Parliament called on the State Government (Drs.19/3360 new) to implement the resolutions of the 30th digital Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in its areas of responsibility.

In a letter dated January 6, 2022, the President of the State Parliament requested that the Minister of European Affairs submit a report on the already implemented decisions and the planned implementation of the decisions by March 30, 2022. This report to the President of the State Parliament will also be attached to the Baltic Sea Report.

**With regard to cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, preamble and paragraphs 1 - 24****MJEV (Ministry of Justice, European Affairs and Consumer Protection):**

Baltic Sea policy is always also peace policy - Schleswig-Holstein adheres to this concept even in times of the Russian attack on Ukraine, which is in violation of international law.

On this premise, Schleswig-Holstein has been actively involved in Baltic Sea cooperation in many of the areas mentioned in the preamble and in paragraphs 1-24. This can be seen in the attached Baltic Sea Report 2022.

The commitment outlined in the Baltic Sea Report will be continued as resolutely as before by the MJEV and the entire state government, but without Russian partners, who have been suspended from many cooperation contexts for the purpose of complete sanctioning.

Beyond the ongoing activities in the departments, the state government has initiated a process of "re-accentuating" Schleswig-Holstein's Baltic Sea policy since March 2021 (see Baltic Sea Report Ch.1). One result of this process is the Baltic Sea Policy Action Concept 2030, which precedes the Baltic Sea Report 2022. The Action Concept addresses and describes numerous planned projects, activities and objectives of the state's policy for the Baltic Sea region for the coming years, which expressly correspond to the demands of the resolution adopted by the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (see Baltic Sea Policy Action Plan 2030).

To that end, Schleswig-Holstein uses the existing organizations and networks (e.g. BSSSC, CBSS), which now continue their work without Russia towards a sustainable, inclusive, safe, peaceful and competitive Baltic Sea region.

Re individual paragraphs:

**Paragraph 6:** Schleswig-Holstein continues its commitment as co-coordinator for the policy area of culture of the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy, thus contributing in a responsible role towards promoting a regional identity and maintaining common values.

**Paragraph 8:** Baltic Sea youth cooperation is of central importance for Baltic Sea policy. Schleswig-Holstein strongly supports such cooperation at many levels (see Baltic Sea Cooperation Action Plan 2030 and Baltic Sea Report Ch. 5.8).

**Paragraphs 17 and 18:** Schleswig-Holstein will actively support the German presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States in 2022/23 together with the northern German states (see Baltic Sea Report Ch. 1.3). Schleswig-Holstein has offered the Federal Foreign Office to host a possible meeting of foreign ministers in Schleswig-Holstein as part of the German presidency.

Schleswig-Holstein is committed to strengthening relations and continuous exchange between the bodies and institutions of Baltic Sea cooperation, particularly within the framework of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC), but also at other levels.

**Paragraph 22:** As a member of the German delegation in the Monitoring Committee of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Program and within the framework of the chairmanship of the German Committee, Schleswig-Holstein always advocates that the various funding instruments be better coordinated and used in line with the macro-regional strategies of the EU. Coordination between MJEV and the ERDF managing authority in MWVATT (**Ministry of Economic Affairs, Transport, Employment, Technology and Tourism**) took place at the beginning of the new funding period in 2021 (see Baltic Sea Report Chapters 2.2 and 2.3) and will be continued during the entire funding period.

**Paragraph 24:** Schleswig-Holstein is actively involved in the development process for the project "Baltic Sea Cultural Cities and Regions" with the Council of Baltic Sea States as its lead partner. The MJEV is participating as a project partner in a project application to the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Program to be submitted by the end of April.

**MWVATT** (**Ministry of Economic Affairs, Transport, Employment, Technology and Tourism**):

**Paragraph 14:** Regarding the demand for improving cross-border rail transport in order to enable climate-friendly travel and to reduce obstacles to travel in the region, there is one positive and one negative example from the point of view of MWVATT:

Positive example: Expansion of the railroad line Niebüll - Tønder (- Esbjerg)

- The company Norddeutsche Eisenbahn Niebüll GmbH is investing almost 11 million euros in the renovation and expansion of the tracks between Niebüll and Tønder in Denmark.
- The state of Schleswig-Holstein is financing the lion's share with just under 9.3 million euros.
- Among other things, the control and safety technology will be upgraded to the European Train Control System (ETCS) standard.
- This will enable trains to travel at speeds of up to 120 km/h in the future instead of the previous maximum of 80 km/h.
- Implementation of the project is planned in two stages. First, the track alignment will be changed to allow the higher speed. Then the new control and safety technology (ETCS) will be installed.
- Without the ETCS, it would no longer be possible to offer continuous journeys between Niebüll and Esbjerg in the future, because trains from Esbjerg would no longer be allowed to enter Niebüll station.

Negative example: Even in the future, long-distance trains from Copenhagen to Hamburg will not stop in Schleswig

- The trains of the long-distance line Copenhagen - Hamburg have been running via Padborg since December 2019 and will do so until the Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link becomes operational.
- In order to enable the border police to execute their tasks on the IC trains from Copenhagen to Hamburg, the original plan was to have the German federal police (BPOL) board the trains in Padborg (Denmark) and disembark in Schleswig.
- This would have meant that the stop in Schleswig could also have been used by passengers.
- Regarding the boarding of the BPOL in Padborg with required equipment (esp. service weapons), the President of the Federal Police Headquarters (BPOLP) already held talks with his Danish counterpart in spring 2019 to create a legal basis.
- At the end of August 2020, the Danish authorities provided information that the process, including the draft agreement, had been submitted to the competent Ministry of Justice for evaluation.
- However, according to the current assessment of the Danish Ministry of Justice, the conclusion of a formal intergovernmental agreement (!) is necessary.
- The Danish side has promised to send a revised draft to the BMI (Federal Ministry of the Interior) at the beginning of the year. However, this is not yet available to the BMI.
- It is, therefore, still not possible to forecast when such a German-Danish administrative agreement might be concluded, especially considering that this depends essentially on the final choice of the form of the agreement and the accompanying review and process steps.
- In view of the fact that the Danish side is likely to wish to conclude a formal intergovernmental agreement, however, the process will accordingly take more time.
- In addition, the result of the Danish review of the extent to which Danish national legislation needs to be adjusted in this context still is pending. If such an adjustment were necessary an additional step in the process would be required.
- As a result, the Copenhagen-Hamburg trains have now been running for more than two years without a stop in Schleswig and will presumably continue to do so for a longer period.

**MILIG (Ministry of the Interior, Rural Areas, Integration and Equality):**

**Paragraph 18:** As the Ministry responsible for municipal affairs, the MILIG supports municipalities with an action program Digital Model Municipalities<sup>1</sup>. This includes, among other things, funding for nine model municipalities to create digital strategies and digital prototypes and the establishment of a Digital Municipality SH network to improve knowledge transfer in the area of digital services of general interest. In the process, an international exchange between municipalities in digitization is also to be supported under the caption SH.X.digital. SH.X.digital is geared toward the exchange and cooperation of municipalities in the Baltic Sea region.

Independent and larger cities in Schleswig-Holstein are to be the basis of such cross-border cooperation. They are meant to take smaller municipalities with them on their way into the digital

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.schleswig-holstein.de/DE/Landesregierung/Themen/Digitalisierung/DigitaleKommune/digitaleKommune\\_node.html](https://www.schleswig-holstein.de/DE/Landesregierung/Themen/Digitalisierung/DigitaleKommune/digitaleKommune_node.html)

age. Under the SH.X.digital label, the aim is not only to exchange ideas and develop new joint solutions, but also to pool positions in order to better hold one's own against globally active private companies or to exert greater influence on European funding opportunities and regulations in the area of digitization.

In terms of content, the focus will be on issues and solutions relating to open data and open data platforms, specialized procedures in the cloud, possible uses of AI and LoRaWAN, as well as digital strategies and digital prototypes for smart cities on the basis of the Smart City Charter<sup>2</sup> in general and for the areas of citizen services, mobility, climate protection and energy transition in particular.

In addition to the state government, various municipalities and institutions in Schleswig-Holstein, such as the Association of Cities and Towns, the information technology network ITVSH and the Schleswig-Holstein Chamber of Commerce and Industry, have indicated their willingness to participate in SH.X.digital.

The implementation of SH.X.digital is to build on existing structures and instruments, including the good contacts with Danish partners, the activities of the Smart and Prospering Cities Commission of the Union of Baltic Cities (UBS) and the funding opportunities for transnational cooperation in European cities and municipalities within the framework of the new Interreg B programming period or Baltic Sea Region 2021 to 2027.

In addition to organizing workshops and events, a direct exchange of municipal administrative staff in the Baltic Sea Region within the framework of job shadowing is being considered in order to boost the transfer of knowledge in a more personalized way.

**MBWK (Ministry of Education, Science and Cultural Affairs):**

**Paragraph 20:** The goals and demands for the area of science and research correspond to the plans and the already ongoing activities of the universities and are supported by the MBWK. To this end, Schleswig-Holstein promotes the close cooperation of universities and research institutions in the Baltic Sea region. Young people in particular are involved here, as most exchanges take place at student level. Common values and regional identity are strengthened in the process. It is a mutual goal to develop the Baltic Sea Region into an important and competitive knowledge region with excellent science and research infrastructure. With their basic research, the universities contribute equally to the development of environmentally friendly techniques, methods of climate and marine protection as well as sustainable development.

**With regard to democracy in a changing media landscape, digitization, combating misinformation, false information and "fake news," and the protection of free media and freedom of speech (paragraphs 25-34)**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/themen/bauen/wohnen/smart-city-charta-kurzfassung-de-und-en.html>

**State Chancellery:**

**Paragraph 25:** Together with the other states that are party to the North German Broadcasting Corporation (NDR), i.e. Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein completely revised the NDR state treaty as of September 1, 2021. In the process, also for the purpose of promoting tolerance and openness, among other things the importance of regional and minority languages in the states party to the treaty was emphasized more strongly in the programming of the public broadcaster NDR, and it was also expressly stipulated that the NDR's programming should not only promote a sense of shared identity within Germany, but additionally within Europe as well.

In order to strengthen trust in independent public broadcasting as a pillar for guaranteeing media and opinion diversity, which is a necessary prerequisite for a lively democratic discourse throughout society, the transparency of the meetings of the NDR Broadcasting Council and the NDR broadcasting councils at the state level was enhanced by requiring them in principle to be held in public. In addition, clear regulations have been made for free access to information by any natural person or legal entity based in Germany vis-à-vis the NDR.

**Paragraphs 26 and 27:** Currently, €150,000 is allocated annually to the public-access channel Schleswig-Holstein Offener Kanal for project funding. Although this does not only fund projects exclusively for young people, it does fund projects for young people as well. A further grant of €200,000 is paid to the Offener Kanal, with the aim of strengthening extracurricular media literacy education.

The Schleswig-Holstein Media Competence Award is held annually, which is also intended to provide an incentive for successful media education work. Here, too, not only but also projects for and by young people are honored.

Schleswig-Holstein's media literacy strategy is currently being developed. This strategy takes a broad target group approach and thus also includes young people. A definitive part of this strategy shall be dealing with FakeNews, as well as deepfakes, etc.

Furthermore, a project is currently being prepared and developed through project funding from the State Chancellery via the Schleswig-Holstein Offener Kanal that deals with deepfakes in a preventive manner. In particular, the recognition of deepfakes is being promoted here. This project is intended to playfully point out the risks of deepfakes and raise awareness for them. The target group is explicitly young people. A VR application is being developed for this purpose.

The above-mentioned media literacy strategy is to include political participation as well and shall promote media literacy in this area.

**Paragraphs 30 and 31:** In response to the COVID 19 pandemic, both the federal and state governments in Germany have launched support programs for the media sector to ensure pluralism and independence of the media. For the purpose of sustainably safeguarding media diversity and thus ensuring the formation of individual and public opinion even in times of crisis, Schleswig-Holstein has made budgetary resources available in 2020 and 2021 respectively via a hardship fund of the State Chancellery for equity payments to support private broadcasting in Schleswig-Holstein in fulfilling its special social function, in order to compensate for situations threatening the existence of radio broadcasters in Schleswig-Holstein resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The State Media Treaty (MStV), which came into force on November 7, 2020, is intended to meet the growing challenges of digital change in Germany, including for traditional media companies, and to provide up-to-date answers to key questions in a digitized media world. The MStV creates a legal framework that aims, among other things, to promote diversity of opinion and equal opportunities for communication, especially online, to make quality journalism visible, and to strengthen the responsibility of the online community. For the first time, the major online media platforms and intermediaries, such as Google, Facebook, Twitter and Amazon, will be subject to media-specific and diversity-related regulation in Germany. These nationwide regulations will also be adapted on a state-specific basis for offerings geared (only) to Schleswig-Holstein via the State Treaty on Media Law in Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein (MStV HSH).

**MSGJFS (Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Youth, Family and Senior Citizens):**

**Paragraphs 26 and 27:** Take Five is a network formed by youth organizations and the supreme state youth authorities of the northern German states of Bremen, Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein. Since 2010, the network has been organizing the Take Five for Europe Youth Conferences in order to bring young people and politicians into an exchange on youth policy within the framework of an EU youth dialogue. Participants are given the opportunity to voice their opinions and thus discuss, initiate and help shape processes at the European level. The venue alternates between the different parties to the agreement.

Having been postponed because of the Corona virus, the next youth conference will take place from July 1-3, 2022 in Bad Segeberg in Schleswig-Holstein.

The 18th Baltic Sea Youth Media Camp - organized by the state youth council Landesjugendring Schleswig-Holstein e.V. in cooperation with the public-access channel Offener Kanal Schleswig-Holstein - will take place from August 12-22, 2022. About 30 participants from different countries of the Baltic Sea region and Germany will take part in the camp. The participants can expect an introduction to and work with various media, exciting excursions focusing on media as well as their own live broadcast on television and radio. The participants will receive comprehensive information about the part the media play in state and society in general and in the northern German states of Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg, and will deal with the media situation in different European countries. Through a creative examination and handling of media, participants will acquire new competencies for dealing with media.

**MBWK (Ministry of Education, Science and Cultural Affairs):**

**Paragraph 26:** The IQSH (Schleswig-Holstein Institute for Educational Quality Development) supports schools and teachers in Schleswig-Holstein in implementing the respective subject requirements for all students. Media literacy is incorporated in the general part of the subject requirements at the primary level or in the supplement to the subject requirement media literacy.

Since the conclusion of the 2016 KMK (Conference of Ministers for Cultural Affairs) strategy "Education in the Digital World", the IQSH has deployed increased resources in this field and has

been providing comprehensive support to schools through the Schleswig-Holstein-wide program "Future School in the Digital Age" since the 2021/22 school year.

**MJEV (Ministry of Justice, European Affairs and Consumer Protection):**

**Paragraphs 28 and 32:** Implementing a pertinent order from the Attorney General of February 8, 2021, every public prosecutor's office in Schleswig-Holstein has set up a special department to combat hate crime, in order to address the increasing significance of "hate speech" on the Internet and the rising number of proceedings in this area.

The public prosecutor's offices are supported in their activities by the central office "Combating Hate Crime on the Internet," which was established at the Office of the Attorney General on January 4, 2021. The central office performs coordinating and steering tasks, thereby ensuring effective and uniform prosecution of relevant criminal offenses by the local public prosecutor's offices.

**MELUND (Ministry of Energy, Agriculture, the Environment, Nature and Digitalization):**

**Paragraph 29:** A discussion of this issue is necessary. It should be pointed out that comparable activities and legislation have already been effected within the European Union. If necessary, this should be considered in the implementation, see e.g. Digital Service Act.

**With regard to protecting the Baltic Sea and our environment for future generations and halting climate change and biodiversity loss (paragraphs 35-47)**

**MELUND:**

**Paragraph 35:** The updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) was successfully adopted at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in Lübeck in October 2021. The conference was hosted jointly by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, which is responsible for HELCOM, and Schleswig-Holstein as the venue for this international Baltic Sea protection conference.

The BSAP contributes to the implementation of the requirements stipulated by the European directives on marine and water protection and in particular the EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) at the macro-regional level. In Germany, the BSAP is realized, inter alia, through the program of measures taken to implement the MSFD with very similar objectives for the Baltic Sea.

**Paragraphs 36 and 41:** Efforts to reduce nutrient inputs to the Baltic Sea are part of HELCOM's BSAP as well as the German MSFD Program of Measures and the management plans and programs of measures for the 3rd management period of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD).

**Paragraph 37:** Efforts to reduce emissions are part of the HELCOM BSAP as well as the German MSFD program of measures and the management plans and programs of measures for the 3rd management period of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Biological climate protection measures - a priority of the state government - are expected to save more than 700,000 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents per year by 2030 with the help of nature conservation measures. For example, drained moors are to be re-wetted, new natural forests created

and additional grassland developed. This combination will help protect the climate and biodiversity in Schleswig-Holstein.

**Paragraph 38:** Addressing the dual crisis - climate change and biodiversity loss - determines action on climate protection, marine protection and biodiversity in Schleswig-Holstein, including the state biodiversity strategy Kurs Natur 2030, the program for biological climate protection, and the programs of measures and management plans for implementing the EU's water and nature conservation directives.

**Paragraph 39:** As an example from Schleswig-Holstein, the project "Model Region Schlei" can be mentioned, which was also presented within the HELCOM framework as a best practice example. The project is implemented as a joint effort of the responsible districts of Schleswig-Flensburg and Rendsburg-Eckernförde and the Ministry for Energy, Agriculture, the Environment, Nature and Digitalization of the State of Schleswig-Holstein (MELUND, departments "Nature Conservation" and "Water Management, Marine and Coastal Protection") and is located in the above-mentioned region. The project focuses on the conservation and development of biodiversity, the reduction of nutrient inputs into the Schlei firth and biological climate protection, and in particular on the synergy effects between these areas.

Various funding opportunities are available in Schleswig-Holstein for further similar projects, including through the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) under the EMFAF.

**Paragraph 40:** Schleswig-Holstein attaches great importance to open and transparent communication and public participation, e.g. in the context of the implementation of EU directives. The public is regularly informed about the state government's plans, inter alia as part of the steps to implement the MSFD, and has the opportunity to participate in the drafting process by submitting comments or actively participating in dialog forums and working groups. The same applies to the participation formats of the WFD and the Natura 2000 directives in Schleswig-Holstein.

**Paragraph 42:** Measures to reduce ship emissions are taken in accordance with EU legal requirements (mainly the Sulphur Directive, the Port Reception Facilities Directive, but also the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Water Framework Directive) and global requirements (IMO/MARPOL).

One important measure in Schleswig-Holstein is the construction of shore-side power facilities. In Kiel, three electric hook-ups are already available for cruise ships, and in Lübeck, planning is underway for two such facilities at Skandinavienkai.

**Paragraph 43:** The state government promotes H2 projects in SH and supports larger projects in applications for federal and EU funding.

**Paragraph 44:** Schleswig-Holstein, just as other coastal regions around the world, must prepare for a greatly accelerated rise in sea levels as a result of man-made climate change. To this end, the state government will draw up an "Overall Strategy for the Development of the Baltic Sea Coast 2100" (SO2100) by the end of 2024. The aim of this strategy, which is to be drawn up jointly by players involved in coastal protection, tourism and nature conservation, is a Baltic Sea coast that is sustainably adapted to the consequences of climate change in the long term, on the one hand through ecosystem-based protection measures and, on the other hand, through climate-adapted forms of use. As part of the HELCOM cooperation, the SO2100 project is conducted as a best practice

example on climate adaptation and presented at HELCOM meetings and events such as the "HELCOM Stakeholder Conference 2022".

**Paragraph 45:** The key building block for implementing HELCOM's Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter in Germany and Schleswig-Holstein is the corresponding measures in the German MSFD Program of Measures for the Implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Numerous measures are incorporated in the latter to achieve the goal of "seas free from degradation by litter".

Investigations of land-based litter inputs into the oceans have detected not only cigarette butts but also certain single-use plastic products. The EU has responded to this with the Directive on reducing the impact of plastics on the environment (RL (EU) 2019/904). With the single-use plastic ban regulation (EWKVerbotsV) and the Single-Use Plastic Labeling Ordinance (EWKKennzV), the European Single-Use Plastic Directive has been transposed into German law. Some of the directive's objectives were also implemented in the German Packaging Act (VerpackG). For example, disposable plastic cutlery and plates, drinking straws, stirrers, and also to-go packaging for food and beverages made from certain plastics were banned (EWKVerbotsV). Certain disposable plastic items must be labeled to make consumers aware that these items must not be littered or disposed of down the toilet because they contain plastic that is harmful to the environment. To this end, the product must be labeled with the symbol of the ban in combination with a turtle (EWKKennzV).

**Paragraph 46 c and d:** Shipping must also contribute to achieving climate neutrality in the transport sector, even if it is only responsible for a small proportion of transport-related GHG emissions. In particular, emissions must be reduced in ports and sensitive natural areas such as the Baltic Sea.

This can be done by improving energy efficiency on board a ship and devices to reduce emissions, but also by switching to the use of alternative fuels. These points are addressed in the EU Fit for 55 package. A gradual reduction of limits for the annual average greenhouse gas intensity is intended to achieve greater energy efficiency and the increased use of clean energy sources. Requirements for the use of shore-side electricity are to be established, and the AFIR (Regulation on the Development of Alternative Fuels Infrastructure) will create an important and comprehensive framework for the development of a sustainable transport infrastructure of the future, taking into account the various energy sources for all modes of transport.

Shore-side power facilities have already been built and are in operation in Schleswig-Holstein. In Kiel, three connections are available for cruise ships as well as hook-ups at the Norway and Sweden Quays, and in Lübeck, planning is underway for two facilities at the Scandinavia Quay. In addition, the first all-electric ferry has been put into service in Kiel for operation on the Kiel Fjord in 2021.

**Paragraph 46 f - g:** The measure on the development and establishment of an early warning system for non-indigenous species and decision guidance for emergency measures included in the new MSFD Program of Measures 2022-2027 will actively contribute to gaining experience as well as to achieving the Baltic Sea protection goal as far as preventing the introduction of alien species is concerned. All in all, the German MSFD program of measures serves to improve or restore the status of the North Sea and the Baltic Sea and to achieve an overall good environmental status of the seas.

**Paragraph 47:** Within the framework of the German HELCOM Chairmanship, efforts were made to ensure that the work of the ad hoc SUBMERGED Working Group is continued. This has been achieved

by the adoption of the Terms of Reference for a SUBMERGED Expert Group. This expert group will meet for the first time on April 21, 2022. The assessment of the ammunition contamination of the Baltic Sea developed by the working group, taking into account current scientific knowledge, will be finalized during the initial meeting. A key task of the expert group will be to advise the HELCOM working groups on all issues related to munitions contamination in the Baltic Sea and on how to deal with the resulting challenges. In addition, discussion of possible joint plans for further action has been written into the Terms of Reference. This includes discussion of possible funding instruments.

The Baltic Sea-wide cooperation in this subject area is already being closely observed outside Europe. Cooperation with the BSPC and the Council of the Baltic Sea States will be able to set a further milestone here. For the German presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States from July 2022 to June 2023, Germany has also included the topic of munitions in the sea on its agenda. Schleswig-Holstein is contributing to this by providing expert advice to the departments responsible for shaping the Presidency.

Germany has decided to tackle the environmentally compatible salvage and disposal of ammunition waste within the framework of an immediate action program initiated by the federal government. Schleswig-Holstein is contributing to the design of this program with the expertise of the Special Office for Munitions in the Sea (MELUND). At the same time, the experience gained from this program will be incorporated into the deliberations of the SUBMERGED expert group.

**MWVATT** (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Transport, Employment, Technology and Tourism):

**Paragraph 46 c-f:** The EU Commission adopted the "Fit for 55" package of measures on July 14, 2021. The northern German coastal states will have to implement the far-reaching measures together with ship owners and port operators if the proposals are also adopted by the Council and EP after what is expected to be a lengthy negotiation process. Both the German government and the state government have already launched support measures to achieve climate neutrality and increase the environmental friendliness of shipping and ports.

Shore-side power facilities have already been built in the ports of Kiel and Lübeck, and more are being planned for the coming years. The electricity consumption of the ports for ships, vehicles and IT is already increasing and will continue to rise, this poses challenges for the local public utilities, especially since this electricity is to be generated in a climate-neutral way.

The Directive (EU) 2019/883 "on port reception facilities for the discharge of waste from ships" has been transposed into the state law on ports on schedule. The international "Ballast Water Convention" has been incorporated in the respective state law on ports.

Sweden



Regeringskansliet

2022-05-03  
UD2021/18560

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## Uppföljning av rekommendationer antagna på den 30:e Parlamentariska Östersjökonferensen (BSPC) 2021

Nedan följer Regeringskansliets samlade återkoppling på rekommendationer antagna på den parlamentariska Östersjökonferensen (BSPC), genomförd digitalt, den 30 augusti 2021.

### Regarding Cooperation in the Region to use the restart after the pandemic and the current decade to

**1. be committed to building, expanding and deepening trust between its nations and in all its collaborations and 2. strengthen prosperity, safety, security and regional identity for all people in the Baltic Sea Region;**

Fostering mutual understanding, building trust, ensuring stability and safety, promoting prosperity and people-to-people contacts remains the main purpose of the CBSS cooperation. The cooperation is an example of what can be achieved when nations meet and cooperate on concrete issues as equals. This type of practical and people-centred cooperation on concrete issues is even more important in times of instability. In response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Russia was suspended from the CBSS on 3 March 2022 together with the CBSS observer state Belarus, for taking part in the aggression.

**3. focus on sustainability in its economic growth, development and innovation and to reach a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea and a sound and sustainable status for its environment;**

Sweden is active in Helcom and has been deeply involved in the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, BSAP. The plan encompasses c. 200 actions. Several of the actions support a sustainable economic growth and development, with the goal to reach a good ecological status in the Baltic Sea.

One new key area in BSAP is a strategy for nutrient recycling to decrease dependence of mined fossil-based sources of phosphorus and enhance and improve the use of recycled nutrients from regional sources.

**4. strive for better inclusion, prosperity, public health and social cohesion while also decreasing existing gaps between BSR countries by joint efforts;**

Sweden is applying multiple joint efforts together with the other BSR countries to improve inclusion, prosperity, public health and social cohesion. By being an active and committed member of the NDPHS, Sweden is striving for efficient mitigation of the consequences of the pandemic. Sweden is the host of the Secretariat of the NDPHS, situated in Stockholm, with Sweden currently (2022-2023) also being the Chair. Swedish experts are actively involved in the work of the NDPHS Expert Groups and plays an important role in exchanging experiences with other BSR countries.

**5. tackle current and future challenges and crises through increased joint action;**

During the Lithuanian Presidency of CBSS, the Fire and Rescue Department of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania organized an expert meeting on the topic "COVID-19 Outbreak: Challenges for Civil Protection and Lessons Learned". The meeting was conducted as one of activities within the CBSS Civil Protection Network the March 17, 2021, in online format. The meeting aimed to exchange experiences and best examples of COVID-19 management. Some conclusions:

- political leadership important
- one reliable channel key for communication to the public
- revision of legal basis needed, a lot of legal acts in force
- homeworking environment (home is the safest place)
- increasing role of volunteer organisations
- magnitude of tasks to sustain social order not possible without society inclusion
- preparedness for new crises

Sweden has taken an initiative to start cooperation on crisis communication, with a focus on communication to vulnerable groups in the society during the crisis. An application for the financing of seed-money project has been prepared and submitted to the Swedish Institute and waiting for the decision. MSB participated in EU project CASCADE (Community Safety for Supporting Climate Adaptation) finalised the 30 June 2021. The project aimed at improving the capacity to understand, evaluate and handle current and future climate-related risks at local level with a focus on the special conditions prevailing in the Baltic Sea region.

It also aimed at increasing capacity for disaster risk reduction by local authorities in the region. So-called toolboxes with various tools that municipalities in the Baltic Sea countries can use in their climate adaptation work have been developed. On 27 October 2021, MSB arranged a much-appreciated seminar with a broad participation from the Swedish stakeholders. The seminar aimed at spreading the CASCADEs results to the Swedish stakeholders.

Crisis management authorities in the region have developed an application for the CASCADE II follow-up project. The project aims partly at the implementation of the CASCADE results in the Baltic Sea countries and partly at the development of support for the municipalities in their work with plans for climate adaptation. The application was submitted to the Interreg Baltic Sea Program, information on decision is expected before the summer.

**6. promote elements of a common regional identity and shared values through culture, research, education and science and; 7. be committed to pursuing vibrant and enhanced exchanges between its people and facilitate, broaden and deepen personal contacts and the face-to-face interaction of ideas, experiences and views based on active civil societies and; 8. pursue continuity in the participation of young people, promote meaningful exchange of views and ideas with, and among, young people based on dialogue and real influence and involve the youth in decision-making processes;**

Promoting regional identity is an important part of the Baltic Sea Action Plan 2021-2025, welcomed by the Foreign Ministers and high-level representatives in June 2021. Actions focus on strengthening ties with stakeholders on culture and higher education, supporting the Annual Baltic SEA NGO Forum and fostering active and meaningful participation by young people. Work is currently ongoing to create a sustainable format for the Baltic Sea Youth Platform to effectively engage the youth in the CBSS and other regional organisations.

**9. use and fundamentally improve the possibilities of digitalisation for communication, accessible for all people, and close the digital gaps across the Region;**

Sweden is engaged in various cooperation formats on digitalisation in the Baltic Sea region. For example, in the Nordic Council of Ministers and in the Nordic-Baltic co-operation. The Nordic ministerial declaration Digital North 2.0 seeks to strengthen and increase digital mobility, inclusion, and integration between the Nordic countries. The Nordic-Baltic ministers responsible for digitalisation have agreed to enable secure and trustworthy digital services across borders, through the Nordic-Baltic Cross Border Digital Services Programme

**10. protect the vulnerable and optimally integrate those who legitimately seek protection from persecution in the Region;**

Sweden has a long history of protecting vulnerable people. The NDPHS – Northern Dimension of Health and Social wellbeing – has started the implementation of a project MITTEN – More Impact Together To Empower Northern Stakeholders - which will strengthen cooperation on the prioritized topics health and active ageing, digitalization, mental health, integrated care, health literacy, HIV, TB and Associated Infections, harm caused by alcohol and illicit drug use, challenges related to cannabis and novel nicotine products, remote services and primary health care and social care, occupational safety and health, and antimicrobial resistance.

**11. consider the prosperity and an ecologically stable and sound environmental condition for future generations as a fundamental right in today's decision-making processes;**

The objective of Helcom's Marine Strategy Framework Directive is to protect the sea as a resource. The prosperity of future generations is dependent on functioning eco-systems in the sea. The recently updated Helcom BSAP and the marine directive support the regulating functions of the sea to mitigate the effects of climate change and to preserve valuable eco-systems.

**12. foster regional cooperation in civil protection, including the prevention of, preparedness against and response to natural disasters and industrial accidents, the protection of the population of the Baltic Sea States from natural and man-made emergencies which remain important issues for the BSPP;**

See reply to p 5.

**13. continue to protect children at risk, fight organised crime and manage migratory flows as fields of intense cooperation between the Baltic Sea States;**

The protection of children at risk is highly prioritized by Sweden. The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare plays a key role in this issue by providing local support to particularly vulnerable areas. Additional targeting efforts are also being aimed at preventing young people from turning to organized crime. Collaboration measures between school, healthcare and social services are especially prioritized.

**14. promote sustainable tourism, inter alia by improving cross-border rail transport to enable more climate-friendly travel and reduce travel barriers in the Region, for example, by easing the existing visa restrictions;**

In order to improve cross-border rail transport, Sweden is investing in night trains to Europe to improve the opportunities to travel collectively with little climate impact. The Swedish Transport Administration is commissioned to carry out a procurement, with the ambition of establishing night train traffic between Malmö-Brussels and Stockholm-Hamburg, starting no later than 1 August 2022.

**15. identify options for developing medical tourism – to help people in the region to receive health treatment throughout the Baltic Sea region, not least in the context of the COVID19 pandemic;**

The work and collaboration between Sweden and the Baltic Sea States is continuously ongoing and highly prioritized. This has been further proven by the COVID19 pandemic as the virus transcends country borders and acts as a joint concern.

**16. strive for a joint solution for the mutual recognition of approved vaccination and testing certificates that are validated and recognised by our countries to aid in the prevention of a new coronavirus infection (COVID-19), not least because border regions are particularly impacted on due to cross-border traffic;**

Securing access to vaccine against covid-19 is a high priority for the government. The vaccines against Covid-19 were made widely available during early 2021. Sweden has been working actively with a vaccination strategy primarily targeting the oldest and most vulnerable. With the increased vaccine supply Sweden has eventually achieved a high degree of vaccination across the whole population. Additionally, Sweden has implemented the EU-covid certificate and other measures taken on the European level.

**17. reconsider a resumption of the Baltic Sea States Summits of the heads of governments if possible;**

There is currently no plan to hold a summit.

**18. strengthen the link between national, regional and municipal levels of Baltic cooperation by means of further encouraging collaboration between the CBSS, the BSSSC, the CPMR BSC and the UBC and inviting a wider range of territories and cities to participate in it;**

Much of the strength of the CBSS cooperation lies in its ability to function in a multilevel manner. Close interaction between stakeholders at national, regional, and local level is at its core. In the Baltic Sea Action Plan sustainable development, children and youth at risk and civil protection, are particularly mentioned as important areas of closer cooperation.

**19. reinforce the financial basis of practical cooperation in the region by enlarging the scope of the CBSS Project Support Facility, inter alia, by using public-private partnership mechanisms;**

External financial support is important to increase concrete results of the CBSS collaboration. The Project Support Facility is one of the CBSS financial instruments available in this respect. Using a public-private partnership mechanism could be valuable to explore further to broaden the scope of activities and concrete output.

**20. cooperate in order to strengthen the Baltic Sea Region as an important competitive knowledge region with an excellent higher education and research infrastructure;**

The Nordic and Baltic countries are brought together by contacts in trade, culture, languages, religion, and education. This makes the region unique. The Swedish Government sees internationalisation of higher education as very important. International collaboration between higher education institutions is crucial to promote the quality of education and research. Sweden has a long-standing cooperation with all its neighbouring countries, including in the Nordic Council of Ministers. Sweden is, together with the countries in the Nordic-Baltic region, an active member of the Bologna Process.

The Swedish Government's Research and Innovation Bill outlines the direction of Sweden's research policy over the years 2021-2024. Resources have increased considerably to tackle major societal challenges and safeguard free research. The aim is for Sweden to be one of the world's foremost research and innovation countries and a prominent knowledge nation. Research and innovation are needed to restart the economy and build skills, competitiveness, and welfare.

**21. foster collaboration in healthcare in the Baltic Sea Region in order to better handle situations like the current COVID-19 pandemic as well as to exchange experience and best practices in this area;**

The COVID-19 pandemic and its effects have been a major challenge globally. In the BSR region the NDPHS collaboration has been vital to assess the effects of Covid and to improve for the future. The NDPHS has throughout the year been an important platform in exchanging experiences between different countries. Sweden has as vice chair of the NDPHS been a catalyst for the ongoing work and sharing of experiences.

**22. facilitate better alignment of funds and regulations among EU mainstream funds and regional and national funds for cross-border and transnational cooperation projects tackling with macro-regional challenges in social and economic dimensions;**

The new generation of European programmes for interregional cooperation (Interreg) around the Baltic Sea have undergone the last stage of programming. Sweden has in these processes argued for synergies between the Interreg programmes and other regional or macro-regional cooperation formats and strategies.

**23. support the synchronisation of the Chairmanship in the Group of Personal Representatives of the Baltic States' Heads of Government on countering organised crime with the Presidency in the CBSS, which started on 1 July 2021, the incumbent Chair of both structures being Norway;**

The Baltic Sea Task Force (BSTF) gathers 2-3 times a year. Partly in an operational format (OPC), where customs and police authorities meet, and partly in a strategic format once a year with the national representatives, for the Swedish part International Chief Negotiator Anna-Carin Svensson.

Information is shared between the parties during these meetings, such as presentations and reports regarding of the national situations, trends, assessments, implemented initiatives etc. At each strategic meeting, conclusions are also adopted that summarizes the activities and provides a strategic focus for the future. However, BSTF does not conduct specific projects or actions. Instead, it can be seen as a forum for discussions and exchange of experiences.

**24. support the project development process and concept with the title “Baltic Sea Cultural Cities and Regions (BSCCR)” under the motto “Water connects us, but culture unites us” with the CBSS as Lead Partner aimed at connecting cities and regions, people, cultural organisations and professionals by increasing the visibility of the cultural diversity within the Baltic Sea Region.**

Sweden works actively to promote human rights and freedom of expression both offline and online. The cultural sector is crucial in this work to promote collaboration and exchanges between actors within the cultural sphere. The UNESCO collaboration as well as the Baltic, Barents and NDPC partnerships are important platforms to develop these important tasks.

**Regarding Democracy in a Changing Media Landscape:**

**Digitalisation, Combating Disinformation, Misinformation and “Fake News” as well as Protecting Free Media and Freedom of Speech, to**

**25. enforce constant engagement and commitment as well as strong efforts and support to strengthen confidence in democratic structures and values, to promote tolerance and open-mindedness, freedom of media and expression as well as robust NGOs as cornerstones of the democracies in the Baltic Sea Region;**

Sweden has continued to work actively and globally with the cross-cutting foreign policy initiative “Drive for Democracy” since 2019. This initiative aims to promote and strengthen human rights, including labour rights, democracy, and the principles of rule of law worldwide, also has a specific focus on freedom of expression and media freedom. The Drive aims to strengthen free and independent media and democratic voices, as well as facilitate access to information and communications technology for the full enjoyment of human rights.

Sweden works actively to promote human rights and freedom of expression both offline and online. Sweden was part of the core group which initiated the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution on the promotion, protection, and enjoyment of human rights on the internet which was presented and adopted by consensus during the June Human Rights Council sessions in 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2021. Sweden is also part of the core group which initiated the resolution on Freedom of opinion and expression, which was presented and adopted at the Human Rights Council session in June 2020.

Through Sweden’s strategy for development cooperation on the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, Sweden supports several projects and organisations working for freedom of expression and media freedom around the world. These include organisations such as UNESCO, Internews, Association for Progressive Communications, World Association of News Publishers, and International Media Support. Moreover, Sweden promotes the development of a vibrant and pluralistic civil society that operates from a rights perspective to increase the respect for human rights and to promote global sustainable development. For example, Sweden’s government agency for development cooperation (Sida) provides support for Article 19, an organisation working with freedom of expression and the right to information in a broad sense. Article 19 conducts advocacy and normative work for policies and legislation and their implementation at national, regional, and international level. In terms of support for civil society, the Article 19 has as a thematic area in its strategic plan to protect and strengthen the democratic space for civil society.

Sweden also participates in and works through the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC), a coalition of 34 countries. FOC aims to promote a free and open internet, human rights, support for actors in repressive environments, strengthen the dialogue with the IT-industry on corporate responsibility and promote coordination and cooperation within the UN system. The Council of Europe is an important norm-setting body in the field of human rights and the full enjoyment of human rights on the internet. The Council of Europe works to define, among other things, users' rights and states' obligations online based on human rights.

**26. expand the promotion of media literacy among young people in order to enable them to think critically and evaluate information;**

Sweden works with media literacy among young people through the government agency The Swedish Media Council. The Council's major task is to promote the empowerment of minors as conscious media users and to protect them from harmful media influences. The Council also runs the Swedish Safer Internet Centre together with the child's rights organisation Bris. Even though children and young people are the main target group, the Council also reaches out to parents, social workers, educators, media, organisations, and actors in contact with children. Since 2018, the Swedish Media Council also coordinates the national efforts of media literacy and heads a multistakeholder network as well as mapping policy development and implementation initiatives.

The Swedish Media Council is also tasked by the Swedish Government to inform young people about copyright and has highlighted both ethical and legal questions regarding copyright and how young people use and find information on the internet.

**27. use the potential of social media to motivate young people to participate in political discussions and decision-making processes;**

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has been commissioned to develop and disseminate models for how municipalities can work strategically, across sectors and in the long term to strengthen young people's knowledge of local democracy, develop young people's democratic skills and competences, and promote participation and strengthen participation in democracy. Stockholm University has been tasked with strengthening secondary school students' knowledge of the challenges and opportunities of democracy and contributing to an increased interest in democracy issues, especially among students from non-student backgrounds.

The Agency for Youth and Civil Society allocates funds for democracy-building activities.

MUCF has been given the task of allocating funds to non-profit associations and foundations for measures aimed at increasing knowledge of democracy and strengthening individuals' ability to participate in democracy and its decision-making processes.

**28. adopt legal regulations and national strategies – including areas such as the judiciary, defence, schools, research, public education, the library system, cultural institutions, media, civil society, NGOs and business – to strengthen democratic resilience against digital violence and criminal offences via the Internet and to prevent and combat online hate speech**

It is important that no one is excluded from the public debate due to threat and hatred. In 2017 the Swedish Government adopted a National Action Plan named “Defending free speech” to address threats and hatred against journalists, elected representatives and artists. The overall aim is to safeguard an active democratic debate and avoid self-censorship. Increased knowledge, awareness about the situation and measures contributing in developing policy’s and routines for handling threats and hatred are important. The Action Plan aims at strengthening three main areas: measures for deeper knowledge of threats and hatred, support for those exposed, and strengthen the work of the judicial system.

On 1 January 2020 a special ground for more severe penalties for offences committed against elected representatives was introduced (in Chapter 29, Section 2, point 9 of the Swedish Criminal Code). According to the new provision the courts, as aggravating circumstances when assessing penalty value, in addition to what applies for each specific type of offence, should give particular consideration to whether the offence was committed against a person on grounds of them or a family member having held office as an elected representative at central, municipal or regional level, in the Sami Parliament or in the European Parliament (prop. 2018/19:154 Brott mot förtroendevalda).

In May 2020 the Government commissioned a public inquiry to, inter alia, consider whether there is a need for stronger protection under criminal law for persons exercising their freedom of expression, in particular within journalism, and how such stronger protection should be designed. The inquiry submitted its report in February 2022 (*En skärpt syn på brott mot journalister och utövare av vissa samhällsnyttiga funktioner* SOU 2022:2). The inquiry proposes, inter alia, a new special ground for more severe penalties for offences committed against journalists (in Chapter 29, Section 2 of the Swedish Criminal Code).

According to the proposed provision the courts, as aggravating circumstances when assessing penalty value, in addition to what applies for each specific type of offence, should give particular consideration to whether the offence was committed against a person on grounds of them or a family member having engaged in a news service or other journalism. The proposal is now subject to the mandatory referral process, providing relevant stakeholders an opportunity to submit their views on the report and its conclusions.

**29. debate, develop and adopt an International Code of Ethics for the digital transformation;**

On EU level, in May 2016, the European Commission agreed with Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube on a “*Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online*” to prevent and counter the spread of illegal hate speech online. Since then, further platforms have announced their participation to the Code of Conduct. Another recent initiative on EU level, regarding disinformation, is the *Code of Practice on disinformation*, agreed on by online platforms, leading social networks, advertisers, and advertising industry.

**30. introduce further practical support measures to strengthen pluralistic independent media in the Baltic Sea Region and to ensure their sustainability in the digital age;**

Sweden implements different types of press and media subsidies with the aim to help the Swedish media sector in their challenges in the modern media landscape. The Swedish Press and Broadcasting authority is responsible for distributing these subsidies. There is also an independent board responsible for deciding upon the distribution of the subsidies to keep the Swedish Government at arm’s length from. The subsidies have different aims and purposes to support both print media in their operational management as well as in the transformation to a digital format. One subsidy is especially aimed at supporting local journalism to secure local news coverage across Sweden.

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Swedish government decided to start an inquiry in how to modernize media subsidies and make them more suitable for the digital age and to sustain a pluralistic media landscape in Sweden. The inquiry will present its results on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June of this year and the new scheme for state support to media will go into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2024.

Sweden is committed to supporting diverse and independent media and strong public service broadcasting along with increased support to media actors. Protection of and respect for freedom of expression and the media is a cornerstone of Sweden's foreign policy. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law can only be ensured through free and independent media. Sida's partners include, for example, Internews, the Fojo Media Institute, Article 19, UNESCO and Reporters Without Borders.

Sweden will continue the process to prepare for support in 2022 to The International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM), in addition to our support to freedom of opinion and expression, media freedom and free flow of information worldwide, as well as encourage other smaller donors to come on board.

**31. Support the promotion and implementation of international norms, democratic values and human rights principles in the global information and communicative space;**

Human rights, democracy, and the principles of rule of law are areas to which Sweden is very dedicated. Sweden promotes and protects human rights norms and principles in the global information and communicative space. The same human rights, responsibilities and obligation granted upon individuals and states of the physical world must also apply in the digital world. In February 2022 Sweden participated in the Global Conference for Media Freedom in Tallin, organised by the Estonian Ministry of foreign Affairs together with the Estonian Institute for Human Rights. Sweden is now a member of the Media Freedom Coalition which is a platform used to further our involvement in the international efforts to strengthen media freedom and the safety of journalists.

During the Swedish Chairpersonship of the OSCE in 2021 freedom of expression and media freedom were clear priorities. In May 2021, Sweden, together with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), organized the Stockholm Conference on Media Freedom in the OSCE Region. Promotion of freedom of expression and access to free, open, and safe internet and other information and communication technology (ICT) are priorities in our development cooperation, which is an important tool to increase knowledge and participation, while combatting poverty and oppression. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has worked with ICT for over 25 years, and supports the full exercise of human rights online, efforts to bridge the digital divide, as well as human rights defenders' security as part of the freedom of expression.

In terms of Swedish commitments for the Year of Action of the Summit for Democracy, we shall continue to pursue our work on Digital Technology as a means for human rights, in collaboration with partners such as Access Now, Article 19, Digital Defenders Partnership, Civil Rights Defenders, Defend Defenders and Frontline Defenders. We will also continue to be an active and engaged member of the Freedom Online Coalition and view it as an important platform to discuss protection and promotion of human rights online.

**32. take measures against the aggressive misuse of social media as a form of digital violence and put a victim-centred approach into the focus of action whilst protecting freedom of speech and recognizing social media as an important tool for democratic action;**

In 2017, The Swedish Crime Victim Authority was commissioned by the government to produce educational and information material to support participants in the democratic dialogue who are exposed to, or risk being exposed to threats and hatred. The assignment was part of the government's action plan to strengthen the work of preventing and dealing with threats and hatred against people who participate in the democratic dialogue. The commission resulted on the website [tystnainte.se](http://tystnainte.se) that provides information and advice to people exposed to threats and hatred in the public debate, for example on the Internet and in social media. The website also aims to help public employees and those active in civil society organizations to support those exposed to threats and hatred. Following the launch in May 2019, the Crime Victims Authority carried out two information campaigns to disseminate information about [tystnainte.se](http://tystnainte.se). Moreover, the authority informed about the website via e-mails, lectures and meetings, posts on social media and through contacts with journalists.

In 2020, the Swedish Crime Victim Authority was commissioned to further disseminate the educational and information material produced to support people who are exposed to, or risk being exposed to, threats and hatred in the public conversation. In the new assignment, the government pointed out that target groups who are particularly vulnerable, have little knowledge of the support that exists and that are not covered by other initiatives are important to reach.

As part of the work to reach more people, the website [tystnainte.se](http://tystnainte.se) was translated into English. The authority conducted a campaign for the website via digital advertisement on various social media and websites. The website was also presented at external events and the authority broadcasted lectures on threats and hatred. In addition, information about [tystnainte.se](http://tystnainte.se) was disseminated via e-mail.

**33. initiate measures for the implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 under the aspect of access to free information and freedom of expression;**

Access to information is not only a basic human right, but also an important tool for promoting the rule of law and ensuring other rights as well as goals under the SDGs. It is therefore an enabler for sustainable development in areas such as health, environment, addressing poverty and fighting corruption. As part of its role in the protection of the right to seek and receive information, UNESCO has been designated by the UN General Assembly as the custodian agency for global monitoring of Indicator 16.10.2.

Sweden is a strong supporter of the work of UNESCO, through support to its Communication and Information sector.

Sweden chairs the International Program for the Development of Communication since 2017 and highlights topics regarding freedom of expression and media freedom, access to free information and the safety of journalists. Sverige is also an important donor to the UNESCO Multi-Donor Programme for Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists and through this also funds the global report World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are fundamental prerequisites in making the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) a reality, not least SDG 16, although a goal in itself as an enabler for other SDGs and the entire 2030 Agenda.

Sweden provides core support to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) an intergovernmental organisation that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. IDEA produces high-quality knowledge and analysis through studies, handbooks, databases, and other publications, as well as organizes seminars and conferences and policy influence through dialogue, along with project support for democratic reforms at regional and country level. The organisation works with all aspects to ensure inclusive democracies, this includes tracking progress on SDG 16 with global state of democracy indices. For several years, Sweden has also supported Civil Rights Defenders' Emergency Fund for Human Rights Defenders. The fund can, for example, provide legal aid or temporarily relocate people, as well as offer security trainings and help with physical and digital security solutions.

**34. support national, European, and global steps to foster information and media literacy, including the implementation of the UN Resolution 75/267 on Global Media and Information Literacy Week adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 March 2021.**

In 2022, the Global Media and Information Literacy Week will be highlighted in Sweden through a national MIL conference in Gothenburg October 26-27. Region Västra Götaland and the University of Gothenburg are main hosts, and the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO are involved as collaborating partner. Access to information, online as well as offline, is a human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone can, "seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers". Sweden works in several ways to tackle disinformation and support free and independent media as a counterweight for access to information. We also support initiatives to improve media and information literacy and fact checking.

Sweden is a major donor to UNESCO through Sida, contributing to UNESCO's normative and operational work for freedom of expression with the overall goal of creating conditions for free and independent media, free and independent cultural life, diversity, and security for journalists on a global level.

**Regarding Safeguarding the Baltic Sea and our Environment for Future Generations, halting Climate Change and the Loss of Biodiversity to**

**35. send a powerful and determined signal by adopting an ambitious update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan through the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021 under the current German chairmanship and to ensure – through regular monitoring of its implementation – that its objectives are implemented in all countries of the Baltic Sea Region more quickly and consistently than before to achieve a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea and its environment by the end of the decade;**

In Helcom, Sweden has strived for an ambitious level of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and Sweden is committed to implement the measures in BSAP decided at the Ministerial meeting. A project for the implementation of BSAP has been set up at SwAM, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management. SwAM will coordinate the initial national work for all involved national agencies and propose a structured plan for the implementation and for follow up of the activities. Sweden is also actively engaged in Helcom's working and expert groups to implement the joint actions that are shared between the parties of Helcom.

**36. focus on ecological sustainability of the Baltic Sea, with increased joint structured efforts to reduce all intentional and unintentional nutrient influx into the Sea;**

Sweden will continue with a structured work to reduce the nutrient loads to the Baltic Sea. Since 2019, several eutrophicated watersheds and coastal areas have engaged catchment officers to facilitate and accelerate the mitigation of land-based sources. Financing of measures have also been significantly increased since 2017 and it has resulted in a big number of actions and efforts. The new measures in the eutrophication segment in the updated BSAP will promote a structured effort to reduce nutrient loads to the sea, especially from the agricultural sector that is the main source. Sweden has also developed and managed the scientific work with modelling of nutrients in the Baltic Sea basin and is still leading this work. This work is a basis for the quantitative reduction goals to achieve good environmental status and fundamental for the development of the actions related to Eutrophication in the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

**37. take significant steps in line with the UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the Baltic 2030 Action Plan to reduce emissions and to reach climate resilience of key economic sectors, including industry, transport and construction, as well as enhancement of natural carbon sinks, such as forests;**

Sweden has encouraged inclusion of climate actions in the BSAP and Helcom has also taken concrete actions to reduce the climate impact by planning for more digital meetings and less physical meetings. In Helcom and BSAP the “ocean-climate nexus” i.e., the mutual dependence and connection between climate and the sea is now specifically addressed. Sweden is also active in Helcom working group on green technology and alternative fuels for shipping.

**38. acknowledge that global action and cross-border cooperation are needed to mitigate the effects of climate change, preserve and protect biodiversity and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a focus on climate (SDG13), oceans (SDG14) and biodiversity (SDG15);**

The actions in the updated BSAP are developed and aligned with the global process of marine protection. In the Baltic Sea area, the well-functioning cooperation in Helcom is fundamental for agreeing on descriptions of the environmental state of the sea and for the development of concrete action plans and follow up on actions.

**39. promote and financially support both regional and local projects that, based on research, aim to improve and preserve the marine as well as the land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea as well as in their catchment areas;**

A campaign to construct and restore wetland ecosystems and to rewet peatlands was launched 2018 with financing from the government. Since 2019, several eutrophicated watersheds and coastal areas have engaged catchment officers to facilitate and accelerate the mitigation of land-based sources in catchment areas. Finance for local projects, where municipalities and organisations can apply for funding, has been substantially enhanced and expanded since 2018 and the number of successful projects has increased to improve water related ecosystems. Since 2017, special funding is also allocated in Sweden to develop and strengthen existing marine protected areas. Since 2010, Sweden has also been the biggest contributor to the Baltic Sea Action Plan Fund to speed up the implementation of the BSAP in the region.

**40. further involve and inform the local communities in the current situation to gain support and commitment in all parts of society, including businesses and civil society in long-term work to regain a good ecological status in coastal areas and beyond;**

Helcom arranges stakeholder conferences and observers representing different non-governmental organisations and stakeholders participate frequently in various Helcom working groups as well as at the Helcom Heads of delegation meetings.

New web-based tools such as story-maps and map-viewers are developed continuously in Sweden and in Helcom to facilitate the access to data and to describe complex environmental assessments in a more pedagogic way to make it more accessible. This is one part to facilitate and support the commitment in all parts of the society.

**41. strive for further reduction of nutrient influx into the Baltic Sea and support the development of technology and innovations that will reduce the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea;**

One new key area in BSAP is a strategy for nutrient recycling to decrease dependence of mined fossil-based sources of phosphorus and enhance and improve the use of recycled nutrients from regional sources. The objective is to reduce the losses of nutrients to the Baltic and to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions. Increased support since 2018 through funding of local projects (LOVA) has resulted in testing and development of innovative measures for recycling of nutrients from lakes and to immobilise the release of legacy phosphorus from contaminated sediments in lakes and coastal areas. The updated program of measures for the Marine strategy framework directive also includes new measures to deal with legacy phosphorus in sediments.

**42. take further actions in order to reduce ship emissions in the Baltic Sea;**

Sweden continuously stands for a progressive voice in negotiations within HELCOM, the EU and IMO striving for regional or global incentives for reducing ship emissions, such as regulations, support for transitions and innovations. Nationally, Sweden finances several schemes of support for innovations in this field, through for example, the Transport Administration, the Swedish Energy Agency and Vinnova - the authority for innovations. Sweden also has lower tax on electricity for ships in port, supporting the use of fossil free energy.

**43. continue to support investments in green hydrogen technologies in order to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide;**

Sweden promotes the production of fossil-free hydrogen. In Sweden hydrogen will play a key role towards a fossil-free process industry, for example the production of fossil-free steel. The Swedish government supports the industrial sector's transition to zero emission through the Industry Leap which has granted support to e.g., the Hybrid project.

Sweden is part of the initiative BEMIP, that aims to support transnational cooperation for energy market connectivity in the Baltic region. The Swedish TSO has an ongoing assignment on connection costs to improve the conditions for offshore wind power.

The Swedish government has recently decided on national marine plans that enable 20-30 TWh of new energy production and a supplementary assignment that aims to point out additional areas for energy production, such as offshore wind power, to enable an additional 90 TWh.

**44. cooperate and exchange information with regard to risk assessment and necessary coastal protection measures due to the rising sea levels;**

See reply to p. 5.

**45. concerning the impacts of plastics on the environment, climate change and biodiversity, to a. consider that, due to the transboundary nature of marine litter and the particular vulnerability of the enclosed Baltic Sea area, prevention of plastics entering the environment by reduction of unnecessary plastics at the source and the sustainable management of plastic waste is of mutual interest;**

Sweden have adopted an action plan for marine litter. In the updated program of measures for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Sweden now has measures to reduce the supply of plastic both from sources at land as well as sea-based sources. Sweden has also been active in HELCOM and OSPAR to develop mitigation actions and to set quantitative targets for marine litter.

**b. therefore, commit to support activation of the HELCOM Regional Action Plan against Marine Litter and measures contained therein, being part of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan, at the regional level and;**

The Helcom Regional Action Plan against Marine Litter and the related measures are one of the main tasks on the agenda in Helcoms working group Pressure. In Sweden the implementation of the measures is included in the project for the implementation of BSAP that has been set up at SwAM, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management mentioned under point 35.

**c. support the start of negotiations on a new ambitious global agreement at UNEA 5.2 to take the next decisive step at the international level;**

Sweden welcomes the decision made at the UNEA 5.2 to start the negotiation on legally binding instruments on plastic pollution.

**46. concerning the impacts of increased shipping and cruise-ship tourism on climate change and loss of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea, to**

**a. recognize that the Baltic Sea is the sea with the highest shipping levels and consists of inland water with low water exchange;**

Helcom has been a precursor on setting strict requirements for reduced emissions of sulphur and nitrous oxides from ships. Sweden works actively to reduce the environmental impact from ships within the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and are in favour of development of policies to reduce the emissions of metals and polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) from scrubbers. In the updated program of measures for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Sweden now has measures to reduce emissions from scrubbers on ships, to reduce emissions of PFAS and from tank cleaning.

**b. acknowledge that global action and cross-border cooperation are needed to mitigate the emissions of increasing cruise-ship tourism and other shipping in the Baltic Sea;**

Sweden continuously stands for a progressive voice in negotiations within the EU and IMO striving for regional or global incentives for reducing ship emissions, such as regulations, support for transitions and innovations. Work continues also in HELCOM, CBSS and Nordic Council of Ministers to improve cross-border cooperation in the regional aspect.

**c. promote and accelerate the transition of ships and in particular cruise-ships away from fossil fuels towards sustainable renewable fuels in order to make shipping climate-neutral, and less polluting;**

Nationally, Sweden finances several schemes of support for innovations in this field, through for example, the Transport Administration, the Swedish Energy Agency and Vinnova - the authority for innovations.

Sweden also has lower tax on electricity for ships in port, supporting the use of fossil free energy. Several ports also have differentiated fee-system supporting ships doing an effort to minimize impact on climate and environment.

**d. take further actions in order to reduce black carbon ship emissions in the Baltic Sea, including support in technologies and infrastructure on shore power supply of harbours;**

Sweden has lower tax on electricity for ships in port, supporting the use of fossil free energy on ships. Sweden also continuously supports and enforces the Baltic Sea SECA and NECA, including solutions that also lowers the black carbon emissions. See also reply on 46 c.

**e. support the development of technology and innovations that will further reduce the discharge of waste from ships to the Baltic Sea;**

Sweden finances several schemes of support for innovations for various environmental developments, through for example, the Transport Administration, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and Vinnova - the authority for innovations. A specific scheme (LOVA) can be applied for through local authorities for smaller actors such as marinas wanting to improve their port reception facilities for recreational vessels.

**f. support the prevention of introduction of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens in ballast water by supporting further development of technology and innovations and by stringent application of the BWM Convention and actively contributing to the experience-building phase;**

Work is ongoing to follow the international work on the BWM convention and to implement the convention, mainly through the Board of Transports.

**g. aim to improve and preserve the marine as well as the land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea;**

The Maritime Spatial Planning is a tool for dealing with conflicts between maritime activities and effects on the marine environment. The first Maritime Spatial Plans were decided in February 2022 in Sweden. A work is ongoing at Swedish national authorities to look at increased consideration for protection of marine areas related to waterways for ships.

**47. concerning sea-dumped munitions, to a. strengthen efforts to recover and neutralise explosive ordnance in the Baltic Sea with concrete measures through multinational cooperation according to the 28th and 29th BSPC Resolutions as well as the interim and final BSPC rapporteur's reports on sea-dumped munitions;**

Sweden works actively with measures to avoid trawling in areas with known dumped munitions. Swedish authorities cooperate with corresponding agencies in neighbouring countries to recover and neutralise explosive ordnance. Several projects have been performed to find sea-dumping sites and to make risk assessment of those areas.

**b. bring together the different national findings, research results and data in an expert group - if possible, at HELCOM - and, on this basis, prepare concrete actions for the removal of explosive ordnance in the Baltic Sea;**

There is an expert group in Helcom specifically dedicated to this task, Environmental risk of Submerged Objects (EG submerged). They work with identifying areas with dumped mines and shipwrecks that may pose an environmental risk. There are two new measures in the updated BSAP addressing sea-dumped munitions the Baltic Sea and Sweden works already actively to remove or eliminate explosive ordnances.

**c. strive for an international donor fund in the concretisation of the financial instrument mentioned in the 28th BSPC Resolution and consider whether HELCOM could manage such funds;**

The BSAP-fund, managed by the Nordic Investment Bank and NEFCO was initiated by Sweden and Finland 2010 as a tool to finance projects for the BSAP. Sweden and Finland have contributed with funding and are actively seeking support for the involvement of more countries in HELCOM. Sweden considers that this instrument has served well and would benefit for the contribution to support the updated BSAP as well.

**d. establish the Baltic Sea Region as a global model region for the environmentally sound, rapid and affordable salvage and decontamination and removal of explosive ordnance dumped in the sea;**

Helcom works with regional development and close regional cooperation in this area that could serve as a global model.

**e. take all necessary measures aiming to complete the disposal and rendering harmless of explosive ordnance and other hazardous products in the Baltic Sea within the next 20 years;**

See answer above on 47 a, b and c.

**f. look at the option of including this task as a long-term ecological priority explicitly in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.**

There is now a measure in the updated BSAP – to maintain the assessment on hazardous submerged objects (including munitions and wrecks) and to regularly update the information.