



## **Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference**

### **Strategy and Work Programme 2022 – 2023**

Adopted by the Standing Committee of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC)  
at its digital meeting on 5 September 2022

#### **1. BSPC Mission**

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

The fundamentals and core principles of the cooperation in the BSPC are

- democratic values,
- the rule of law,
- human rights,
- peaceful neighbourliness,
- respect for international law,
- a resilient civil society and robust NGOs.

The mission of the BSPC is

to raise awareness of and provide opinions on issues of current political interest and relevance for the Baltic Sea Region;

to promote and drive various initiatives and efforts to support a sustainable environmental, social and economic development of the Baltic Sea Region;

and to enhance the visibility of the Baltic Sea Region and its issues in a wider European context.

The objectives and decisions of the BSPC are geared to

initiate and guide political activities in the Baltic Sea Region, endowing them with additional democratic legitimacy and parliamentary authority with a particular focus on contributing to security, prosperity and a sound and sustainable status for its environment;

initiate all necessary measures ensuring the security of the peoples and the defence of the democratic values and democracies of its Member States.

The BSPC and its members are convinced of the need to protect free and independent media, including combatting disinformation and fake news; support and strengthen democratic institutions in the participating states; improve dialogue between governments, parliaments and civil society; strengthen the common identity of the Baltic Sea Region by means of close cooperation between national and regional parliaments with legislative powers on the basis of equality; intensify people-to-people contacts on all levels – parliaments, governments and civil society – as the backbone for peace, prosperity and the protection of the environment in the region; promote the exchange among and the inclusion of the youth and young people as a prerequisite for guaranteeing and securing the foundations of the Baltic Sea Region for future generations as well; promote equal opportunities, gender equity and diversity in our societies.

The BSPC may consider any matter of specific interest and relevance for the Baltic Sea Region, and may, if needed, give its opinion on such issues.

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

## **2. BSPC Priorities in 2022 – 2023**

At the beginning of its BSPC presidency, the German Bundestag pointed out that these were times of great change and upheaval. The world had been taken aback by the full-scale military attack and invasion being carried out by the Russian Federation against the sovereignty, independence and people of Ukraine and democratic values as a whole. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and threats to democratic security posed tremendous challenges.

In light of these circumstances, the thematic focus of the presidency of the German Bundestag 2022-2023 will be boosting resilience against adverse influences to be able to withstand future threats and better cope with current challenges.

In accordance with the 31<sup>st</sup> BSPC resolution underlining togetherness instead of divisiveness, the presidency of the German Bundestag thus considers it vital to promote good neighbourliness, peaceful coexistence and respecting the sovereign equality of all states. Adhering to fundamental values and rights is a prerequisite of cooperation. Drawing on the main theme of the Swedish presidency 2020-2022 and in line with the BSPC's principal goal to support and strengthen democratic institutions, the German Bundestag presidency will also focus on making democracies more resilient. Equally important these days is the strengthening of resilience in the digital sphere. The COVID-19 pandemic and recent cyber-attacks have exposed the vulnerability of democratic societies to conspiracy theories and disinformation campaigns. Foreign players have increasingly been using digital attacks in an attempt to destabilise and weaken democratic institutions. Mitigating the impact of the climate crisis constitutes one of the greatest challenges of our time. The German Bundestag puts the protection and preservation of the marine environment at the forefront of its presidency.

Acknowledging the importance of youth participation and following this year's highly successful Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum, the German Bundestag plans another instalment in conjunction with the 32<sup>nd</sup> BSPC in Berlin.

Including that, the priority issues for the BSPC Standing Committee in 2022 – 2023 are:

1. Intensifying cooperation between like-minded states and strengthening the principle of peaceful and reliable neighbourliness. Hence, we condemn any aggression and use of force against the territorial integrity of another state.
2. Boosting democratic resilience and promoting digital resilience: In order for democracies to prevail, it is imperative to make democratic processes more transparent and to encourage a strong and diverse civil society. While embracing the benefits of digitalisation, fake news and hate speech need to be combatted. The young generation needs to be guided and taught the appropriate way to use social media.
3. Strengthening the resilience of maritime ecosystems: Intensifying efforts to monitor and treat the problem of dumped munitions, wrecks and ghost nets in the Baltic Sea to safeguard our environment for future generations and to make the Baltic Sea region a trailblazer to solve the problem of sea-dumped munitions.
4. The German government assumed the presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) on July 1, 2022. The expansion of renewable energy in order to fight climate change whilst at the same time reducing the dependence on imported fossil fuels from Russia tops the agenda. The development of offshore wind power is key. Special emphasis is also placed on the removal of sea-dumped munitions and the intensification of youth work. The BSPC endeavours to utilise synergy effects and achieve complementarity between the two presidencies particularly in these three areas.

### **3. Objectives of the BSPC in 2022 - 2023**

The objectives of the BSPC in 2022 – 2023 are:

- to disseminate the 31<sup>st</sup> BSPC Resolution to Parliaments and Governments in the Baltic Sea Region, as well as to the CBSS and the EU, and to take initiatives and action – such as interpellations, parliamentary debate and questions to the governments - to follow up the implementation of its political recommendations;
- to disseminate the results and recommendations of the BSPC Working Groups, Rapporteurs and Observers, for instance by advocating them in the home parliaments of the BSPC delegates and through interaction with external institutions and organisations;
- to support the policies of the CBSS and to further the cooperation between the CBSS and the BSPC, for instance by sustaining contacts and cooperation between secretariats, by synchronizing priorities as far as possible, and by maintaining the interaction between working bodies of the BSPC and the CBSS, such as the BSPC Working Groups as well as the BSPC Rapporteurs and the CBSS Expert Groups and Task Forces;
- to promote - in accordance with the calls for action by the BSPC - to visibly accelerate and intensify the implementation of the updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, including continuing and enhancing national and international efforts to reduce emissions of nutrients to the Baltic Sea; for instance, by active participation in various HELCOM meeting formats;

- to support the further development of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region that is entirely in line with the Northern Dimension, including regular reporting from the European Commission;
- to further develop contacts with the Northern Dimension;
- to actively participate in and contribute to the further progress of the Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF)
- to intensify contacts with other interparliamentary organisations.

#### 4. Resources 2022 - 2023

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

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

The **host** of the 32<sup>nd</sup> BSPC, **the German Bundestag**, is responsible for the operational planning and execution of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Conference in Berlin on 27 – 29 August 2023.

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

The **BSPC Secretariat** consists of officials from the BSPC members and the Secretary General, who coordinates its work. The BSPC Secretariat is responsible for the preparation of the BSPC Standing Committee and Working Groups meetings as well as for overseeing the preparations of the Annual Conference and for content. The Standing Committee is informed about the current business in order to supervise it.

The **BSPC Secretary General** (SG) manages the overall coordination of BSPC activities, prepares the groundwork in the BSPC bodies, delivers content, provides investigative resources and is responsible for administering the BSPC Joint Financial Mechanism as well as for other administrative and organisational matters and for follow-up. The members of the Secretariat are involved in administrative and organisational questions and support this work.

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

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

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

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

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

The **BSPC Rapporteur on Sea-Dumped Munitions**, Ms Anna Kassautzki (German Bundestag) will follow the developments in this field as well as the implementation of the recommendations of the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> BSPC and will give a report at the 32<sup>nd</sup> BSPC in Berlin.

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