

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE WORKSHOP ON HORIZONTAL ACTIONS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Acknowledging importance of successful implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) one of the workshops in the First Annual Forum for the EUSBSR was aimed to discuss horizontal actions defined.

Horizontal actions discussed highlighted several issues to be more developed for efficient and effective implementation of the EUSBSR.

During the workshop there were given brief presentations on the complementary actions - developing integrated maritime governance structures in the Baltic Sea Region, building of a regional identity, developing and completing maritime and land-based spatial planning as well as funding of the EUSBSR. Main messages and questions discussed under different actions during the workshop are presented below.

Key issues raised during the presentation of the action "Developing integrated maritime governance structures in the Baltic Sea Region" were:

- to develop effective maritime governance involvement of regional actors is crucial;
- more integrated approach in the maritime policy within the Member States is needed;
- external dimension of the EUSBSR should be strengthened;
- good cooperation initiatives are already started and shall be continued;
- cooperation between different stakeholders and linkage of different policy areas would support holistic approach in developing integrated maritime governance.

The question on alignment of funding to actions and projects to support implementation of the EUSBSR was mentioned under several actions presented. Key messages identified:

- there are several funding sources available to support implementation of actions and projects within the EUSBSR;
- European Investment Bank and Nordic Investment Bank have taken several activities to support the projects;
- need for the Trust Fund for Technical Assistance is acknowledged and actions are already started to establish such fund;
- there are different approaches taken to align funding of the operational programmes to the EUSBSR's implementation; current activities started should be continued in future;
- common efforts to network different funding sources to support implementation of the EUSBSR are needed;
- current projects funded by the International Financing Institutions present more efficient and effective use of existing funds.

Under the action "Build a regional identity" current achievements in drawing of common vision of the Baltic Sea Region were presented. As the key messages could be mentioned:

- BaltMet Promo project aims to join forces in promoting the Baltic Sea Region on a global scale and it focuses on defining of common values for the Baltic Sea Region;
- there are several activities, networks and organisations working on branding of the Baltic Sea Region;
- several sectors supporting attractiveness of the Baltic Sea Region are identified; those are greentech, cleantech and renewable energy, ICT and digital industry, life sciences and biotechnologies, logistics and maritime industry. During discussions other values were mentioned by audience, such as gender equality, culture and common history;
- it was admitted that common interests and ability to pursue the interests is crucial to build the regional identity;

- cultural and human dimensions should be respected and “people to people” contacts shall be appreciated;
- communication on current achievements in implementation of the EUSBSR could support building of regional identity.

“Development and completion of maritime and land-based spatial planning” was another action presented and discussed during the workshop. Key messages identified:

- two pan-Baltic organisations - VASAB and HELCOM are taking joint measures to support coordinated future development of the Baltic Sea Region;
- there are several experiences in the Member States on land-based spatial planning; maritime spatial planning is a new task for the Member States;
- coherence between different sectoral policies and actions is needed in land-based and maritime spatial planning;
- role and importance of equal partnership and cooperation with strategic partners of the Baltic Sea Region (non-EU Member States like the Russian Federation) was highlighted;
- territorial dimension should be integrated into the Priority Areas of the EUSBSR.

Referring to the brief report on the actions presented and discussions held during the workshop, several proposals or recommendations for the future implementation of the EUSBSR could be mentioned:

- 1) Horizontal actions defined in the EUSBSR should be seen complementary to the actions and the projects implemented under the Priority Areas.
- 2) Integration between the Priority Areas, the actions and the projects should be strengthened.
- 3) Cooperation with non-EU Member States as the equal partners for implementation of the common priorities defined should be supported; cooperation within Northern Dimension framework should be strengthened.
- 4) Involvement of regional and local level actors and the society as such is crucial for success of the EUSBSR; importance of “people to people” contacts should be acknowledged.
- 5) Media strategy of the EUSBSR is missing; visibility and publicity measures should be taken to present current achievements, outcomes and benefits of the EUSBSR.
- 6) Networking activities in implementation of the EUSBSR should be supported in its different levels; networks of dialogs are needed.
- 7) Common efforts should be directed to support alignment of funding to the actions and the projects implemented under the EUSBSR.

The discussion was appreciated by the audience and several new ideas to improve the EUSBSR implementation were mentioned. Key conclusions presented should be taken into account to support effective and efficient implementation as well sustainability of the EUSBSR.

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