



Baltic Sea
NGO Network



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XVI Baltic Sea NGO Network Forum

“Strengthen NGO participation in the Baltic Sea Region”

17-18.05.2018 Uppsala, Sweden

Final Statement

The XVI Baltic Sea NGO Forum took place on 17-18.05.2018 in Uppsala. The Forum is a platform for wide, cross-sectorial dialogue and was organised for the second time in Sweden.

The Uppsala Forum brought together over 80 representatives of civil society organisations (CSO). The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and public authorities participated.

The Baltic NGO Network work in line with the long-term priorities of the CBSS, priorities of the Swedish Presidency of CBSS 2017-2018 and the EUs strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Action Plan. The network represents a resource of knowledge, local anchoring and involvement of citizens. To utilize the full potential and in order to make the network contribute to solve joint challenges in the region, concrete commitments and mutual actions are needed. The NGO network supports a closer and continued contact with CBSS. This could encompass regular consultations, a focal point in the CBSS Secretariat, joint actions and follow up.

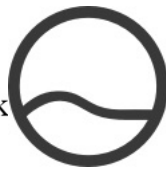
The focus of the XVI Baltic Sea NGO Forum was “Strengthen NGO participation in the Baltic Sea Region”.

The Forum participants discussed the importance of wider and deeper inclusion to ensure possibilities for NGOs to influence and participate in decision-making in all countries around the Baltic Sea. It aims at strengthening the democratic processes in the Baltic Sea Region.

The format of the Forum included: Presentations, panel discussions and workshops regarding the following themes:



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1. Capacity building
2. Education and Employability
3. Human Rights and Sustainable Development
4. Youth

Open discussions on the challenges for the development of a civil society resulted in the proposals from the workshops which form the base for the future work and for keeping dialog alive all year around e.g. by the help of better communication, prepared by the Coordination Committee (CC), and to be discussed in the Networks national platforms and at the upcoming Forum in Latvia.

The members of the Forum agreed on the need to strengthening the capacity by a possible formalization of an association and asks the CC to take the question further.

Core recommendations from the workshops:

- In order to develop the participation of the civil society in the region the network will invite the Baltic Sea Parliamentarian Conference and other bodies to intensify future cooperation.
- Create a youth component within the Baltic Sea NGO Network in order to enhance youth participation. Reach out to other bodies, like Baltic Sea State Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) for joint effort in strengthening integration of a youth perspective.
- Creation of an anti poverty network within the Baltic Sea Region in order to prevent spreading of poverty (include a social dimension).
- In order to improve stability and mutually trustful relationship in the Region, not the least with Belarus, the NGO Network urges stepping up transnational people to people contacts. The Network would welcome joint actions with CBSS in this respect.
- Sustainable development and Human rights are crucial questions to The NGO network. The Network wants to be full member of the CBSS expert group for Sustainable Development. This will ensure that important discussion and perspective of the Forum will be reflected both in the expert group and in the Network as well.
- Entrepreneurship training for people 55+ designed by NGO's based on best practices in the respective countries.
- Mainstreaming of gender equality in all efforts of the Network.