

The 2nd EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Annual Forum and the 13th Baltic Development Forum Summit

Gdansk 24-26 October 2011

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The Baltic Development Forum and European Commission together have organized the common event at Gdansk with cooperation of Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and authorities of Pomorskie Region. The 13th BDF Summit and 2nd Annual Forum on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region took place at the outstanding venue of Baltic Frédéric Chopin Philharmonic (below).



A very large Exhibition Tent had been raised next to the Philharmonic main venue and 40 stands for EUSBSR flag projects had been built and equipped. "Networking and Project Village" was prepared both for visitors and face to face presentations.

Below: Main entrance of the conference venue



Despite plenary sessions on: *New Ambitions for Baltic Sea Region Cooperation*, *Setting Targets for EU Strategy for BSR* and *Business Perspectives*, there were a number of workshops and parallel sessions organized both at Philharmonic and the Maritime Museum simultaneously. For about **700** participants from EU Baltic States and Russia choosing among as much as **45!** events according to their interest and background was really a challenge. For me interested in the environmental issues of EUSBSR – the most interesting were:

- “*Setting targets for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region*” – plenary session
- “*State of the Region Report*” – workshop

parallel sessions:

- “*Green Growth – Water*”
- “*Helsinki Commission and the EU Strategy in Synergy*”

flagship projects:

- “*Baltic Deal – Putting Best Agricultural Practices into Work*”
- “*BONUS – Science for a Better Future of the BSR*”
- “*Sustainable Management of Contaminated Sediments in Baltic Sea*”



The Polish presentation at “*Green Growth – Water*” parallel session

Some economy for sustainable development of BSR:

The conclusion of the Report "*State of the Baltic Sea Region*" (presented at the beginning for "warming-up") prepared by Christian Ketels, Harvard and prof. Gunnar Eliasson, Stockholm: "**Better than most of its peers**" – sounds very promising!

"*The collapse of world trade hit the mainly small open economies of the Region particularly hard*", the Report says, "*But their solid financial markets and macroeconomic policies also helped them to stage an impressive recovery*". This, according to prof. Ketels, still places the Baltic Sea Region "**at the top of Europe**". Many parts of the Region are among the global leaders in areas such as institutional quality, company sophistication, skills and innovative capacity, infrastructure, demand sophistication, and the openness of markets. However, the Baltic Sea Region will not be able to escape the fall-out from the second part of the crisis, with its focus shifting to sovereign debt. "*Low growth in key markets, difficulty to access capital on globally connected financial markets, and rapid shifts in currency and equity markets will reduce growth in the Baltic Sea Region*".

One of the potentials of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy is to have "*wealthy neighbors*" – i.e. Denmark, Sweden, Finland – should invest more in the former Soviet states, where "*significant elements of Soviet institutions and mentalities still linger*". A specific budget line also in future EU budgets for implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy is necessary because "*The financial framework for the strategy is not satisfactory*", partly because there is a lack of coordination between the national programs.

"Setting targets for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region"

The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Region did not initially include specific targets or objectives appropriate for evaluation. The Commission and Member States have initiated the preparation targets, both quantitative and qualitative, that reflect the aims of the Strategy and the efforts of all stakeholders and enable to focus more clearly on key objectives.

The plenary session 3 was devoted for clarification of the process. The invited panelists from European Parliament, Nordic Council of Ministers, European Economic and Social Committee and Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs have discussed and shown their view on importance, milestones and schedule of the process.

The main issues proposed for the stakeholders of EUSBSR were as follow:

- EUSBSR involves not only technical but political issues as Strategy influences social, environmental and economic changes,
- Quantitative targets as the baseline for Action Plan (2015, 2020)
- Indicators - as few as possible (3,4); facilitation of the monitoring
- Integrated indicators are invited; several layers of targets (?) are being considered
- Deadline for selection of indicators - the end of 2011; no check-lists!
- EC as the facilitator of the process of adoption of EUSBSR indicators

At the closing session the next steps in implementation of EUSBSR was shown by Dirk Ahner DG Regional Policy, EC. He pointed out the importance of clarity in partners' roles. EC would prepare the first report on EUSBSR with review of Action Plan in June 2012. This would influence the alignment for funding as the Strategy is "*the corner stone*" of Cohesion Policy. He promised the less bureaucracy to facilitate the cooperation in BSR and "*open the door*" for cooperating partners: regions, towns, NGOs, research institutions etc.