

# **JOINT ACTION PLAN 2008 FOR BALTIC ASSEMBLY - NORDIC COUNCIL COOPERATION**

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## **1. Aim**

The overall aim of this Action Plan is to provide a framework and a general direction for co-operation between the Baltic Assembly (BA) and the Nordic Council (NC) in 2008.

## **2. Guidelines for BA-NC Co-operation in 2008**

### **2.1 Objectives**

The overall objective of BA-NC co-operation is to promote a democratic, socio-economic and cultural development of the Baltic Sea Region within the framework of the New Northern Dimension Policy, to promote a comprehensive approach towards the challenges of the region and to act as a vocal advocate of its specific challenges and possibilities. There are two overarching themes for Nordic-Baltic parliamentary co-operation in the coming period. They should serve as a starting-point for the identification and choice of cooperation activities between committees:

- **Sustainable and safe energy policy**
- **Labour market and social affairs**

## **2.2 Modes of co-operation**

The general drive should be towards flexible, targeted and result-oriented modes of co-operation. Practical co-operation activities should be feasible and have a reasonable chance of successful execution. The following criteria could be used when considering possible joint co-operation activities. The activities should:

- prioritise issues that warrant cross-committee approaches;
- be based upon a joint analysis of possible co-operation issues;
- be agreed upon, prepared and carried out jointly;
- be of relevance for the regular work of committees;
- have a clear and agreed division of responsibilities;
- have a true joint ownership and be built upon a commitment by all participants;
- provide added value to Nordic-Baltic parliamentary co-operation;
- consider participation of MPs from a wider regional base;
- give feedback to standing committees of Nordic – Baltic national parliaments;
- to the extent possible, be coordinated with activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Baltic Council of Ministers.

The Presidiums and Committees of the BA and the NC regularly attend each other's sessions, meetings, conferences and similar events. Moreover, the Presidiums and Committees occasionally arrange their own meetings within the overall framework of such joint activities. It is common for representatives of both organisations to deliver a speech or to make other contributions during the events. However, it should be emphasised that an invitation to attend a meeting should not in itself be understood as a request for more substantial contributions as regards planning, preparation or participation in the event. Such deeper commitments require prior discussions and agreements, in accordance with the criteria above.

## **3. Joint Seminars between the Committees of the Baltic and the Nordic Parliaments**

In addition to the planned co-operation between the BA and the NC in 2008, the BA and the NC will also promote co-operation between the Nordic and the Baltic parliaments. The project of launching a series of joint seminars between the committees of the Nordic and the Baltic parliaments was initiated by deliberations between the Speakers of the Nordic parliaments and the President of the Nordic Council. It is fundamentally important that the seminars are based on a genuine commitment from the national parliaments and their committees.

In 2007, progress as regards the organising of seminars was achieved in two main ways: Firstly, all involved partners agreed on four main priority issues for Nordic and Baltic countries (i.e. energy and climate changes, free movement in the labour market, trafficking in human beings, and local government); Secondly, the first Baltic – Nordic parliamentary seminar took place in Oslo in November 2007, addressing energy and climate changes. The second Nordic – Baltic parliamentary seminar is planned to the first half of 2008 with labour market issues as main theme. During the NB8

meeting of Speakers, it was agreed that the purpose and results of these two seminars should be assessed.

#### 4. Priority Issues in BA-NC Cooperation in 2008

The priority issues for joint activities of the Presidiums and the Committees during 2008 are listed in sub-sections 4.1 – 4.6 below.

##### 4.1 The Presidiums of the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2008 is to maintain and develop long-term co-operation in the Baltic-Nordic region, and to develop the network of contacts with other parliamentary actors in the Baltic Sea Region. The Presidiums should promote an intensified feedback between the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council on the one hand, and the national parliaments of the Baltic and the Nordic countries on the other. The Presidiums will thus continue to assume a leading and driving role in the preparation and execution of the Joint Seminar Series described in Section 3 above.

The Presidiums have an overall responsibility for supporting the implementation of the New Northern Dimension Policy and the EU neighbourhood policy, for instance by sharing experience of democratic institutions, regional cooperation and sustainable development, and by promoting the establishment of a Parliamentary Dimension of the New Northern Dimension Policy. Presidiums will also aim at developing contacts with parliamentary bodies of neighbouring countries, i.a. the Parliamentary Assembly of the GUAM<sup>1</sup>, and to continue to develop their cooperation as regards relations to Belarus, based i.a. on the experiences from the seminar on the role of politicians in changing societies, held in October 2007.

##### 4.2 The Baltic Assembly Education, Science and Culture Committee and the Nordic Council Culture, Education and Training Committee

During 2007 both committees have focused on issues relation the higher education, cultural heritage and creative industries.

The overarching aim of cooperation in 2008 is to develop long-term cooperation in the field of **creative industries**. The main goal of cooperation in this field is to outline and elaborate models and formats for further development of creative industries and for improvement of conditions for development of this sector in the Baltic – Nordic region. By working with this priority cross-committee (cross-sectoral) approach will be applied, namely, the BA Economic Affairs, Communications and Informatics Committee and the NC Business and Industry Committee will be involved. Another

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<sup>1</sup> GUAM is a regional Group of four states - Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. This cooperation was established on concurrence of positions on many issues of the present-day international relations. History of GUAM started on October 10, 1997 when in Strasbourg, at the margins of the Council of Europe Summit, the presidents of Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine adopted a Joint Communiqué stating about the establishment of the GUAM consultative forum.

priority issue will be **relations between the labour market and education** (development of human resources in Baltic – Nordic region).

#### **4.3 The Baltic Assembly Environmental Protection and Energy Committee and the Nordic Council Environment and Natural Resources Committee**

On 26 January 2007, the two committees signed a new Memorandum of Understanding supplementing the previous Memorandums of Understanding of 2003 and 2005. Both committees agreed to focus on issues such as combating eutrophication in the Baltic Sea and on sustainable and safe energy supply from a European perspective. This Memorandum will serve as framework basis for cooperation between both committees also for next year.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2008 is to concentrate on energy saving, energy efficiency, household waste treatment and renewable energy resources. These issues will also be discussed within a Baltic Sea Region perspective as well as a European perspective. A study visit to Denmark concerning energy efficiency issues is planned for 2008. Implementation of the decisions of the BSPC working group on combating eutrophication in the Baltic Sea will be also one of the main tasks of both committees, as well as the following up of the implementation and realization of the Helcom Baltic Sea Action Plan. Both Committees will be active partners in the BSPC Working Group on energy and climate changes, expected to start operating in early 2008.

#### **4.4 The Baltic Assembly Economic Affairs, Communications and Informatics Committee and the Nordic Council Business and Industry Committee**

In 2007 Baltic – Nordic labour markets (labour market relations, mobility and flexibility) was one of the main priority issues on the agenda of both committees.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2008 is to concentrate on **creative industries** (jointly with the the Baltic Assembly Education, Science and Culture Committee and the Nordic Council Culture, Education and Training Committee

#### **4.5 The Baltic Assembly Legal Affairs and Security Committee and the Nordic Council Citizens' and Consumer Rights Committee**

In 2007, the two committees have focussed on trafficking in human beings, illegal and legal migration and Schengen System.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2008 is to continue a discussion on the issues of trafficking in human beings, illegal and legal migration, and fight against terrorism. Both Committees will be involved in organising of the trilateral conference of the Baltic Assembly, the Nordic Council and the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council on fight against trafficking in human beings, to be held on 24 – 25 April 2008 in Latvia.

#### **4.6 The Baltic Assembly Social Affairs Committee and the Nordic Council Welfare Committee**

In 2007 both committees focused on issues of domestic violence (under the European campaign against domestic violence).

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2008 is to consider social security and social welfare as well as social aspects of labour market. Both Committees will be involved in organising of the trilateral conference of the Baltic Assembly, the Nordic Council and the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council on fight against trafficking in human beings, to be held on 24 – 25 April 2008 in Latvia.

#### **5. Annual Summit 2008**

In January 2009, the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly will hold the annual summit. On that occasion, reports on the activities during 2008 will be submitted, and priorities for the following year will be adopted. The purpose of the summit is twofold: to present reports from presidencies on the work and achievements of the work in 2008, and to discuss and adopt priorities for co-operation in the forthcoming year.

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