

## **JOINT ACTION PLAN 2009 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 2009.

### **2. Guidelines for BA-NC Co-operation in 2009**

#### **2.1 Objectives**

The overall objective of the BA - NC co-operation is to promote a democratic, socio-economic and cultural development of the Baltic Sea Region, to promote a comprehensive approach towards the challenges of the region and to act as a vocal advocate of its specific challenges and possibilities.

BA – NC cooperation aims at enabling joint approaches to the opportunities and challenges of globalisation. Energy and climate change, sustainable development, international security, the changing economic environment, labour market and social welfare, education and culture, innovation and research are among the fields which will be addressed by Presidiums and Committees of the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council.

There are three overarching priorities for Nordic-Baltic parliamentary co-operation in the coming period. They should serve as a backdrop for the identification and choice of cooperation activities between committees:

- **The EU Baltic Sea Strategy and the Northern Dimension;**
- **Promoting relations with EU's new neighbours;**
- **Climate change and its consequences.**

## 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 2009, the BA and the NC will also continue to promote co-operation between the committees of the Nordic and the Baltic parliaments. The idea of launching a series of joint seminars between the committees of the Nordic and the Baltic parliaments was initiated some years ago by deliberations between the Speakers of the Nordic parliaments and the President of the Nordic Council. The main goal of this initiative is to bring together representatives from sectoral committees of the national parliaments and relevant committees of the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council in order to address topical issues of joint interest and to intensify parliamentary cooperation. Two seminars have been conducted so far: one on Energy in 2007, and one on Labour Market issues in 2008. At the NB8 Speakers meeting in Jurmala in August 2008, it was unanimously agreed that subsequent joint committee seminars should be organised on an ad hoc basis, if and when a topical issue of joint interest emerges. It is fundamentally important that the national parliaments and their committees are the owners of the seminar initiative, and that the proposal to arrange a seminar should come from them. The Nordic Council has announced its willingness to act as a coordinator of the seminars.

#### 4. Priority Issues in BA-NC Cooperation in 2009

The priority issues for joint activities of the Presidiums and the Committees during 2009 are listed in sub-sections 4.1 – 4.6 below.

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

The Presidiums have designated two main priorities in their cooperation in 2009:

- The EU Baltic Sea Strategy and the Northern Dimension;
- Promoting relations with EU's new neighbours.

The emerging EU Baltic Sea Strategy embraces several areas, such as environment, economy, culture and security. Many of these will be addressed in the cooperation between BA and NC committees. From an overall point of view, it is important that the EU Baltic Sea Strategy is closely coordinated with the Northern Dimension, and the Presidiums aim at following the development of the Strategy with this in mind, considering possibilities and the feasibility of providing joint input to the process.

As for promoting contacts and cooperation with EU's new neighbours, Presidiums aim at furthering the contacts with the political establishment and opposition in Belarus which were started by two seminars in 2007 and 2008. Cooperation with EU's new neighbours can also be seen within the context of a wider conception of international security, in which the threats against society and its integrity consist of a complex compound of military, political, economic, social, environmental and other components. Presidiums will consider a suitable format of addressing the issue of a comprehensive international security concept.

Furthermore, Presidiums will 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 are thus ready to assume a coordinating role in the preparation and execution of the joint committee seminars described in Section 3 above.

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

During 2008 both committees have focused on issues related to the vocational education and training, relations between the labour market and education as well as creative industries.

The overarching aim of cooperation in 2009 is to focus on **innovation, research and creative industries**. Innovation, research, new technologies are significant resources to promote dynamics of sustainable development. Orientation on innovation, research, knowledge based society needs relevant capacity of education systems. Therefore parliamentary cooperation of both committees in the fields of **life long learning** and **adult education** is of particular importance to strengthen comprehensive competitiveness of the region.

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

During 2008 both committees cooperated on energy saving, energy efficiency, household waste treatment and renewable energy resources. In June 2008 both committees accomplished a joint study

tour to Belarus and Ukraine with special focus on the aquatic environment influencing the Baltic Sea environment and the situation of radioactive contamination after the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986. Implementation of the decisions of the BSPC working group on combating eutrophication in the Baltic Sea were also one of the main tasks of both committees.

The overarching aim of cooperation in 2009 is to focus on sustainable energy and climate solutions by special emphasis on **energy security, safe and sustainable energy supply and energy scenarios**. Jointly with the BA Economic Affairs, Informatics and Communications Committee and the NC Business and Industry Committee both committees will focus on **sustainable and environmentally friendly transport and infrastructure development**. In 2009 **bottle and can recycling deposit and the EU Common Fisheries Policy** will be included into the cooperation agenda of both Committees. Both Committees will be active partners in the BSPC Working Group on Energy and Climate change by focusing on **energy saving and efficiency issues, renewable energy sources and elaborating policy directions for climate mitigation**.

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

In 2008 creative industries, Baltic – Nordic labour markets and labour forces mobility were main priority issues on the agenda of both committees.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2009 is to concentrate on **transport policy and infrastructure**. The main goals of cooperation in this field is to outline and develop policy solutions for better transport infrastructure among Baltic - Nordic countries and climate friendly solutions to transport policy and infrastructure. By working with this priority cross-committee (cross-sectoral) approach will be applied, namely, the BA Environmental Protection and Energy Committee and the NC Environment and Natural Resources Committee will be involved.

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

In 2008 the two committees have focussed on elaboration of recommendations to fight the trafficking in human beings. Both Committees were 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 in April 2008 in Latvia.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2009 is to focus **on challenges and problems of the Schengen System, asylum seekers and migration policies**. Implementation of conclusions of the trilateral conference on the fight against trafficking in human beings will be also one of the main tasks of both committees.

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

In 2008 both committees focused on issues of social security, social welfare and social aspects of labour market. Both Committees were 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 in April 2008 in Latvia. Both Committees were also actively involved in discussions of the second Nordic – Baltic parliamentary seminar on labour market in April 2008 in Denmark.

The overarching aim of co-operation in 2009 is to focus **on flexibility of the labour market, social security, social welfare, challenges of the economic situation to the labour market.** Implementation of conclusions of the trilateral conference on the fight against trafficking in human beings and conclusions of the second Nordic – Baltic parliamentary seminar on labour market on labour forces migration, social security and social welfare will be also one of the main tasks of both committees.

## **5. Annual Summit 2009**

In 2009, the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly will hold the annual summit. On that occasion, reports on the activities during 2009 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 2009, and to discuss and adopt priorities for co-operation in the forthcoming year.

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