

## **Strategy for Cooperation between the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly for 2011**

### **1. Guidelines for Cooperation between the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly in 2011**

The NB8 Wise Men Report and the EU Baltic Sea Strategy are those strategic policy documents which have been taken as basis for setting up the agenda for cooperation between the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly. The overall objective of the NC-BA cooperation is to promote comprehensive and integrated approach for sustainable development of the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Better coordination of policies, comprehensive and effective actions in different fields of mutual interest are especially needed to meet global challenges, promote growth, prosperity and stability of the integrated Nordic and Baltic region. Both partners will focus their activities on the strengthening of the NB8 cooperation thus sustaining the NB8 concept regionally and globally.

The cooperation between the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly should become more pragmatic and result oriented. Priority must be given to initiatives where the mutual benefits for the countries and citizens are the greatest. Closer framework of cooperation with the standing committees of the Nordic and Baltic national parliaments will be developed. The effectiveness of the cooperation will be enhanced by continuing constructive cooperation with the governmental partners – the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Baltic Council of Ministers.

### **2. Priority Issues in Cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council in 2011**

#### **2.1. Developing common Baltic – Nordic sustainable energy strategy<sup>i</sup>**

Nordic - Baltic countries should strive to develop long-term strategy for energy policy which guarantees diversification of energy suppliers, improves interconnections energy grids, reduces the emissions of greenhouse gases, maintains economic competitiveness, and promotes sustainable development and transition to a low-carbon society. Nordic and Baltic countries should intensify cooperation on energy by setting more ambitious goals and developing deeper integration. The development of a proposal for a common Nordic-Baltic energy strategy should be based on increasing energy efficiency, in particular in the housing sector, greater reliance on renewable energies and greater investment in research and development in new green technologies. In addition, the Baltic Nordic countries should cooperate in order to support the broader European and Global effort to address the climate change issue.

#### **2.2. Human capital and knowledge based and innovative economies<sup>ii</sup>**

Nordic and Baltic countries have close political and economic cooperation however there would be a need for more common initiatives stimulating closer cooperation in developing human capital which is the basis for strengthening the competitiveness of the region and the key strategic instrument for ensuring success in the global economy. The Baltic and Nordic countries have to coordinate and mobilise efforts to develop knowledge-based, creative and efficient economy by increasing investments in the R&D, knowledge-based and creative industries, implementing reform of all

aspects of education (incl. professional education), tackling demographic challenge and ageing of population, reforming labour market, increasing labour productivity and securing flexicurity. There is a need to develop common Nordic and Baltic information space by intensifying academic exchange and uniting resources for innovation and research. Information exchange between the Nordic and Baltic countries, as well as coordinated dissemination of information about the region as a whole brings social, economic and political benefits to all the citizens of the region. Intensified academic exchange should be used to unite resources for research that leads to innovation.

### **2.3. Common actions against illegal import of goods and cross border crime<sup>iii</sup>**

The new threats such as financial instability, environmental degradation, energy dependency, organised crime and terrorism, are the various forms of internal and external insecurity. Globalisation has also increased the sense of vulnerability by dissolving the boundaries between internal and external forms of security. Weak cooperation on law-enforcement can jeopardise efforts to combat terrorism, organised crime and trafficking in human beings. All security risks are interlinked. The Nordic and Baltic countries should increase internal and external security by coordinating actions against human trafficking, smuggling of persons and illegal substances, money laundering, corruption, ensuring social cohesion, providing coordinated assistance and support to the EU neighbouring countries by expanding a space of democracy, justice and civil society.

### **2.4. Development of transport and infrastructure in the region<sup>iv</sup>**

Well functioning transport and infrastructure system is one of the factors which increase the competitiveness of the countries and regions. The Nordic-Baltic region has been characterised by low accessibility in the whole Europe. Baltic and Nordic countries have to focus their cooperation on the development of well developed and integrated transport and infrastructure system within the region as well as between the region and neighbouring countries. By developing cooperation in this field it should be taken as the basic principle that countries have to find climate friendly solutions towards transport policy and infrastructure.

### **2.5. Towards integrated and stable financial markets of the Nordic and Baltic countries<sup>v</sup>**

The lessons of the current financial crisis show the lack of coordination of financial supervision in the Nordic and Baltic countries. Most of the countries have been engaged with short term actions to overcome consequences of the global economic and financial crisis. We highly appreciate the establishment of the Working Group<sup>1</sup> on Cross-border Financial Stability, Crisis Management and Resolution (established on 17 August 2010), the conclusions of which with regard to ensuring financial stability will be closely monitored. It is necessary to continue measures to overcome the current crisis. However, this should be connected to the medium and long-term vision on the development of the financial sector. Nordic and Baltic financial markets are closely interlinked which means that there is a need for more integrated approach in their supervision.

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<sup>1</sup> Cooperation Agreement on Cross-border Financial Stability, Crisis Management and Resolution between relevant Ministries, Central Banks and Financial Supervisory Authorities of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden.

## **2.6. Health care and social policy<sup>vi</sup>**

Health is a basic human value and it is the foundation for the quality of life as well as for personal well-being. Health care is an essential part of public health. To ensure sustainable growth and to strengthen competitiveness it is necessary to provide relevant health care, sufficient availability of primary health care services, promote birth-rate and decrease mortality rate, decrease alcoholism and other addictions. Strengthening Nordic – Baltic efforts to develop a common vision of joint health projects and identifying common challenges in the health care sector and developing common vision for problem solution both in the social sector and the health care will ensure the improvement of society's welfare and health.

## **3. Annual Summit 2011**

The next annual summit of the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly is planned to be held in January 2012.

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<sup>i</sup> Field of activities for Baltic Assembly Environmental Protection and Energy Committee and the Nordic Council Environment and Natural Resources Committee as well as Business and Industry Committee

<sup>ii</sup> Field of activities for the Baltic Assembly Education, Science and Culture Committee and the Nordic Council Culture, Education and Training Committee and the BA Economic Affairs, Informatics and Communications and the NC Business and Industry Committee

<sup>iii</sup> Field of activities for the Presidiums of the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council and the BA Legal Affairs and Security Committee and the NC Citizens' and Consumer Rights Committee

<sup>iv</sup> Field of activities the Baltic Assembly Economic Affairs, Communications and Informatics Committee and the Nordic Council Business and Industry Committee

<sup>v</sup> Field of activities the Baltic Assembly Economic Affairs, Communications and Informatics Committee and the Nordic Council Business and Industry Committee

<sup>vi</sup> Field of activities The Baltic Assembly Social Affairs Committee and the Nordic Council Welfare Committee