

RESOLUTION
of the 38th Session of the Baltic Assembly

The Baltic Assembly,

having convened for its 38th Session on 28–29 November 2019 in Riga, Republic of Latvia;

having discussed the results of the Latvian presidency of the Baltic Assembly, security and defence cooperation, the implementation of joint energy and transport projects, cooperation in education and research, and cooperation of the Baltic States in medicine;

stressing the firm belief that coordinated actions of the Baltic States strengthen the region, improve our ability to address the challenges of a rapidly changing world and provide security, stability and prosperity for our citizens;

welcoming the close cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers in the coordination of joint actions aimed at the strengthening of security, developing transport and energy infrastructure projects and defending common interests in the European Union;

underlining the need to strengthen and broaden defence cooperation of the Baltic States in order to withstand complex security threats;

highlighting the need to agree on a common approach of the Baltic States towards the discontinuation of seasonal changes of time and introduce the same system in all the Baltic States;

underlining the need to continue comprehensive discussion at the highest level about greater integration of the three Baltic economies and the creation of a single regional market of the Baltic States;

emphasising our strong support for a strong, stable and united European Union that focuses on delivering practical solutions to its citizens;

reiterating that the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021–2027 should focus on investments promoting security, competitiveness and connectivity and provide sufficient funding for cohesion and agriculture, energy and transport projects, such as the Rail Baltica project, and the synchronisation of electricity networks of the Baltic States with the continental European network;

congratulating Estonia on the achieved goal of being elected for the position of a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2020–2021;

strongly opposing the decision of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to restore the voting rights of the Russian delegation in the organisation;

calls on the parliaments and governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the Baltic Council of Ministers:

in regard to the defence cooperation of the Baltic States:

- to strengthen the coordination of actions in regard to the synchronisation of the national defence plans of the Baltic States;
- to develop air surveillance and air defence capabilities of the Baltic States;
- to continue the development of a thorough exchange of the entire maritime surveillance data and ensure maritime data interoperability by eliminating all legislative and IT obstacles;
- to discuss the possibilities of joint operational military deployments;

in regard to the Eastern Partnership countries:

- **to coordinate the development and technical assistance efforts aimed at building a network of friends of the Eastern Partnership countries;**
- to provide expertise in order to increase competitiveness and growth and to implement good governance reforms;
- to retain the focus of the EU member states and other international stakeholders on Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine regarding developments in these countries, their European integration and economic support to them;
- to promote the idea of building a belt of successful EU-associated countries in the Eastern Partnership states using all available platforms;
- to strengthen cooperation and coordinate efforts between the EU and other international stakeholders in providing support to the reform efforts and European aspirations of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine;
- to harmonise common support mechanisms and representation channels for the EU-associated countries of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine;

in regard to external border control and management:

- to implement the Agreement between the Governments of the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania on the maintenance of the Latvian-Lithuanian border and the activities of border guard representatives;
- to sign the Agreement between the Governments of the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Estonia on the maintenance of the Latvian-Estonian border and the activities of border guard representatives;
- to sign the Agreement on cross-border cooperation between the State Border Guard of the Republic of Latvia and the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board;
- to start negotiations among the relevant institutions about joint procurements to meet the needs of border guards;
- to submit a common position of the Baltic States in regard to the funding for external border control and management in the EU Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027;
- to agree on joint projects for the management of the external border by using the available EU and EEA funding;
- to start the unification of means of communication (transmitters etc.);
- to allocate additional funding from the state budgets of the Baltic States for external border control and management;

in regard to joint procurements in the military sector:

- to continue negotiations about joint procurements in the military sector in the Baltic States, based on the positive experience of the Benelux and Nordic countries in regard to joint military procurements (economic benefits, increase of military efficiency);

- to analyse the legal, administrative and procedural aspects of joint procurements of the Baltic States in the health care sector in order to evaluate the implementation of the same model in joint military procurements;
- to agree on a list of simple procurement items;
- to introduce a Baltic standard and standardisation for simple military procurements;
- to start negotiations of the Baltic States about the establishment of joint management and maintenance systems and repair services for military equipment in the region;

in regard to cooperation in the field of disaster prevention, preparedness and response, crisis management and civil protection:

- to agree on an operational agreement and procedures in 2019, following the Agreement on Cooperation in Disaster Response in the Baltic States which was ratified by all three parliaments in 2018;
- to ensure continuous exchange of information and experience among the Baltic States;
- to develop a transnational action plan for cooperation in case of evacuation (uncontrolled movement) of population;
- to eliminate gaps in regard to civil protection and disaster preparedness in the Baltic States;
- to build the crisis management capacity and develop joint emergency plans in border regions;
- to elaborate and implement joint transnational measures aimed at raising public awareness, especially of youth, in regard to civil protection and crisis management and to introduce civil defence in the educational programmes of the Baltic States;
- to start specialised training of doctors in order to enhance their readiness to work in crisis and emergency situations;
- to carry out joint exercises for health care service providers;
- to carry out research on hospitals and medical doctors in the Baltic States based on common methodology to ascertain the overall situation in the Baltic region;
- based on the positive experience in the joint procurement of vaccines, to start negotiations among relevant authorities of the Baltic States about joint procurements of medicine necessary for crisis management;

in regard to the common gas market of the Baltic States:

- to continue the coordination of activities towards developing a common regional gas market of the Baltic States;
- to continue targeted coordination of activities to ensure the joining of Estonia, Latvia and Finland in the single-entry tariff area in 2020 and to invite Lithuania and Poland to join the area in the near future;
- to continue the coordination of activities towards developing a regional gas market by developing common tariff-setting methodology, common balancing rules and an IT platform;
- to continue working on the implementation of the regional gas infrastructure projects and meet the agreed deadlines for the commissioning of these projects (Balticconnector – 2019; GIPL – 2021; the enhancement of Inčukalns underground gas storage – 2025);
- to carry out calculations for pricing the EU-funded interconnection projects after commissioning;

in regard to the common electricity market of the Baltic States:

- to continue the coordination of activities towards developing a common electricity market of the Baltic States;
- to continue the technical implementation of synchronization of the Baltic electricity networks with the continental European network;

- to launch an information campaign for the societies of the Baltic States about the synchronization of the Baltic electricity networks with the continental European network;
- to develop a regional solution in regard to the regional transmission tariff for electricity trade with third countries;

in regard to the development of renewable energy projects:

- to elaborate a regional approach of the Baltic States in regard to the development of renewable energy projects;
- to establish a joint wind park venture of the Baltic States and look for funding opportunities from the Connecting Europe Facility and other financial support sources;
- to carry out an analysis of energy storage in case of energy excess;

in regard to the implementation of the Rail Baltica project:

- to take an active role in the discussions on the next multiannual financial framework to ensure stability of financing for the completion of the Rail Baltica project as an important part of the TEN-T Core Network and a catalyst for economic and social benefits;
- taking a targeted approach, to implement the Rail Baltica project in accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreement and Implementing Decision of the Commission, thus strengthening the partnership with Finland and Poland, securing timely implementation, defining an efficient railway infrastructure management, respecting the set timeline, preventing an increase in the total expenditure of the project;

in regard to circular economy:

- to harmonise taxes among the Baltic States in regard to circular economy;
- to adopt hydrogen technology strategies of the Baltic States by coordinating the strategies with each other;
- to identify opportunities and start cooperation to create a common packaging deposit system;
- given the importance of climate change, to agree on a joint coordinated approach to change daily habits and minimise climate change;

in regard to cooperation in the area of the digital market:

- to develop Cyber Regulations of the Baltic States;
- to create a regional approach in regard to the development of artificial intelligence, blockchain technology and other new technologies;
- to create a common digital infrastructure for all Baltic States, including e-governance projects in various sectors;
- to research and implement opportunities to jointly apply for different European Union funds regarding the public sector digitalisation;

in regard to joint science and research projects of the Baltic States:

- to promote joint scientific publications and research projects of the Baltic States with a special focus on social sciences and humanities;
- to develop a set of actions to stimulate the development of joint projects among researchers of the Baltic States on topics of global and regional significance;
- to start consultations among the Baltic States about the development of the coordination platform and mechanisms similar to NordForsk to facilitate Baltic cooperation in research and research infrastructure;
- to start the coordination of research policies of the Baltic States, develop a consolidated approach to the cooperation vision and strategy in regard to research, and implement activities in strengthening the capacity for research policy coordination;
- to start the mapping of research cooperation in the Baltic States;

- to develop joint initiatives for medium-term and long-term science and research projects in the Baltic States;
- from now on, to intensify cooperation in the EU policy format in the Horizon Europe programme and to ensure higher joint participation of higher education and research institutions in Horizon Europe projects;
- taking into account that the Memorandum of Understanding on Closer Cooperation of the Baltic States in Higher Education, Research and Innovation is in force until 31 December 2020, to start a review of the previous cooperation experience and develop a new cooperation vision and strategy by formulating priorities and objectives, areas and topics for the cooperation of the Baltic States in education, research and innovation;

in regard to joint higher education study programmes:

- to foster the interest of higher education and research institutions in developing and implementing joint higher education study programmes in the Baltic States;
- based on the approach of the Nordic countries, to develop joint Baltic PhD programmes;

in regard to cooperation in vocational education and training:

- to continue the coordination of activities in regard to joint vocational education and training programmes in bilateral and trilateral format;

in regard to the implementation of the Agreement between the governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania regarding automatic recognition of academic qualifications concerning higher education:

- to develop and adopt the necessary operational procedures to ensure smooth and efficient implementation of the Agreement between the governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania regarding automatic recognition of academic qualifications concerning higher education;

in regard to the Baltic Culture Fund:

- to provide funding for translation and publishing of works of the Baltic Assembly Prize winners for literature and stipulate it as a predefined project of the Baltic Culture Fund;

in regard to the cooperation of the Baltic States in the exchange of organs for transplantation:

- to start the coordination process in regard to the drafting and conclusion of the Latvian-Lithuanian agreement in regard to cooperation in organ exchange in emergency cases and creating a common waiting list for transplantation;
- to continue the coordination of activities among the Baltic States in regard to the exchange of living donor organs;
- to develop an action plan among the relevant authorities of the Baltic States in regard to joint training, research and exchange of experience among transplantation experts;
- to ensure the membership of Latvia in the FOEDUS international organ exchange platform;
- to improve laboratories, standards, diagnostics, data security and logistics for organ transplantation in Latvia and Lithuania to ensure joining the largest organ exchange organisations;
- for more efficient and targeted cooperation of the Baltic States in exchange of organs for transplantation, to establish a certified tissue compatibility laboratory and develop diagnostics in Latvia;
- to develop joint lists of hypersensitive patients with acceptable HLA incompatibility;
- to launch a social campaign for the people of the Baltic States about organ donation in order to create a positive public attitude;

in regard to the cooperation of the Baltic States in the health care sector:

- to continue joint procurements of medicine, to develop a strategy and publish a plan of joint procurements, and to harmonise the list of joint procurements (vaccines, chemotherapy drugs, medicine for rare diseases, etc.);
- to simplify negotiation procedures in regard to launching new joint procurements;
- to introduce a strategic project management approach in joint procurements of medicines;
- to start the coordination of measures in regard to a joint approach towards producers of medicine and medical devices;
- to immediately start negotiations on the list of possible joint procurements of medical supplies for hospitals (for example, syringes, gauze bandages, etc.);
- to launch a common market research strategy within the framework of joint procurements in health care;
- to start expert level consultations on a joint approach towards producers of medicine and medical devices;
- welcoming intense and targeted cooperation of the Baltic States in regard to rare diseases, to develop an Action Plan for the Baltic States on cooperation in regard to rare diseases, based on the approach of the Nordic countries;

in regard to the digital agenda and networks in social and health care:

- to eliminate legislative, technological and infrastructure obstacles to a common E-Health network of the Baltic States;
- to draft a plan for solving challenges of cross-border movement of health data and cross-border health care;
- to analyse the cooperation experience of Nordic and Benelux countries in regard to the development of digital agenda and networks in social and health care;
- to analyse the experience of the Nordic Innovation, an organization under the Nordic Council of Ministers, in promoting cross-border trade and innovation in health care;

calls on the European Union member states, the European Parliament and the European Commission:

in regard to the EU 2021–2027 MFF and the EU Cohesion Policy:

- to maintain the Cohesion Policy as the main EU investment policy with sufficient funding;
- in order to ensure smooth transition and continuous process of convergence, the support for EU regions should be focused on the less developed regions and reduced gradually, not drastically;
- to secure smooth transition of cohesion envelopes and co-financing rates as a precondition for sustaining real convergence, growth, jobs, investments and competitiveness through the implementation of the Cohesion Policy across the EU;
- increased flexibility between the Cohesion Policy funds would make an optimum contribution to achieving the strategic priorities of the EU, its member states and regions, while seeking maximum synergy with other available resources;
- acknowledging the importance of the contribution of the European territorial cooperation goal (INTERREG) to Cohesion Policy, to preserve all its main elements of cooperation and ensure its sufficient financing;

in regard to the EU 2021–2027 MFF, improving connectivity, and the Connecting Europe Facility:

- to ensure sufficient and sustainable contribution to the development of the missing energy networks between the Baltic States and the rest of Europe;
- to maintain the transfer of a sufficient proportion of the Cohesion Fund to the Connecting Europe Facility transport part in order to complete the *Rail Baltica* project as the missing railroad link between the Baltic States and the rest of Europe;
- within the next budgetary framework, to utilize the EU instruments for improving military mobility in order to meet the security-related requirement objective regarding the dual usage of transport infrastructure in the Baltic region and other parts of the European Union;
- in order to ensure the best possible use of different EU budget instruments, the complementary possibilities of the CEF-Energy and other relevant EU programmes should be in synergy;

in regard to the EU 2021–2027 MFF and the EU Common Agricultural Policy:

- to ensure sufficient financing of the Common Agricultural Policy to meet the ambitious targets of this policy;
- in order to create a level playing field and equal competition conditions for farmers across the EU single market, to achieve significant external convergence of direct payments of the Common Agricultural Policy starting from 2021;
- in comparison to the current 2014-2020 financial framework, to ensure a more gradual reduction of EU co-financing rates and, accordingly, a less steep increase of rates of own contribution required.

Riga, 29 November 2019