

REPORT FROM THE PANEL DISCUSSION*

The panelists:

Mr Knud Andersen, Speaker of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation
Mr Anders Engstrom, President of the Union of the Baltic Cities
Mr Wolf-Rudiger Janzen, President of Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association
Mr Dan Nielsen, Chairman of the Committee of Senior Officials of CBSS
Mr Rudolf Niessler, Head of the Unit, DG XVI, European Commission
Mr Olof Salmen, President of the Nordic Council
Mr Pierre Schori, Minister of International Development Cooperation of Sweden
Mr Hannu Tapiola, President of CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Rapporteur: Mr Juhan Janusson

Anders Engstrom

Now we will start the discussion if we need cooperation and coordination and how we can cooperate. Of special interest is the cooperation between government, regional and local level. This conference is called "Baltic Sea Cooperation Forum". There are about 50 organisations present here. If you believe more close cooperation in the Baltic Sea area is needed - what can we do to support a closer cooperation?

Dan Nielsen

In an EU context, it is the national responsibility not to have legislation which can stop the local and regional initiative to build up institutions. It is local responsibility to decide about investment in environmental facilities, electricity, transport facilities. So there is need for both coordination between levels and certainly for cooperation and for understanding.

Wolf-Rudiger Janzen

Our problem is to promote this region inside and outside EU, and within the BSR. We need to discuss how we should do it but not discuss how quick we can do it and to find out what we know of each other and what we are doing. What is the result of conferences? How do we get results which will bring us forward and not only reports of conferences, adding it to the many papers that we have already?

Anders Engstrom

We must have more information between the organisations about what kind of project we are carrying out but also when we start new projects or when we have conferences.

Pierre Schori

BSR is a dynamic region with a good potential. But I see two risks here which we should avoid. The non-EU member countries concentrate much efforts on getting into Brussels. Firstly we should not forget the existing regional cooperation. It is a good way of preparation for Brussels. Secondly, speaking of the regional cooperation, it may not be too bureaucratic. We have many structures, many organisations developing and it is very important to get BSR citizen involved in it. Student exchanges and scholarship which are part of Visby programme can be filled by the scholarship exchanges when

the young people get know each other. We can break down cultural and mental walls. I believe also special focus of those who are not involved now - young people must be involved.

Anders Engstrom

We have talk about better cooperation and coordination but I do not know if we have been talking about new structures, having an umbrella organisation. Other organisations must not come to us and listen what can we do.

Fritz Lucke

Cooperation is a wonderful word but I have impression that all of us have different meaning what cooperation is. This must be clarified. Do we have to include parliamentarian and can we discuss BSR policy with those who are representing the citizens?

Olof Salmen

The parliamentarians in the Nordic Council think the best to do is to put special pressure on people who decide on money, efforts and help. Many organisations forget the parliamentarians. It is necessary to help our friends in the BSR to make priorities. It can not be good if we make the priorities for them. After the Nordic Council had discussion in Moscow we sat together and said O'K now we can start. And now you can see the results.

Rudolf Niessler

Perhaps I can add that the improvement of cooperation mechanism. It is very important to think about the technical system and developing a long time perspective for the cooperation. I am referring to what the EU has undertaken in the last years, in the context of European spatial development perspective. This is the direction that should improve the mechanism of cooperation between member states, regions and countries. This should be a basic consistent objective which should be applied in more detail for the forthcoming program.

Cooperation should be based on objectives, a regional development plan and institutions. This is not a question on having an efficient system of administration but on having good system of cooperation.

Michael Bouteiller

We agreed that the question must be remarked. We agreed that the decision making process must be quicker. But where are the instruments? They are in the developed regions. Why do we have no projects that are strong and financed by the states in the region? Why don't we have any parliamentarian group or commission for subregions in Brussels? And what is the option ?

Olof Salmen

In the Nordic Council we have noticed the growing need for cooperation in Brussels. We must together see if we can find common solution. As an example, Denmark has been member of EU. After Finland and Sweden become member of EU, they do not speak to Denmark, they go straight to Brussels. We need more discussion and negotiation between ourselves if we like to influence the EU programs.

Wolf-Rudiger Janzen

The last 5 years we have put the BSR on the map in Europe. The first very successful step is ended. Now is time for the next step. I have two examples of this. One example is when make public relation for the BSR, we have no brochure or folders where we can tell other countries and regions how important our region is. We have no money to finance such brochure. The other example are the EU programmes, the Small Baltic Facilities Programme, the Interreg - very good programs but I agree with the SBFP should have more money. But there is complicated bureaucracy and application process.

Mr Pierre Schori

In the governments we have other structures, special budgets and many projects. You haven't in your organisation sorted out this problem. Because what is needed is not only meetings. You should discuss in working groups and try solve at least at the next meeting. It can only be done by union of efforts and concentrated action.

Knud Andersen

I agree that Baltic Sea Cooperation on any level do not have concentrate information policy. I think the question is linked to the question of establishing the secretariat of BSSSC.

Anders Engstrom

I think that we could not solve all the question. I would only like to stress that during this panel discussion we have noticed that we need information about different organisations and what is going on. The Baltic Sea Alliance via Internet can give information. But we also need other complement. Secondly we must define what we mean with cooperation and in November when we meet it will be probably our first question. And do not work too bureaucratic - that was also an advise from the panel. But on the other hand we all agreed about that the BSSSC secretariat and it is not the same as the big bureaucratic organisation. Thank you very much for participation in this panel discussion.

** The notes are based on tape-recording, but significantly shortened by the rapportuer*