

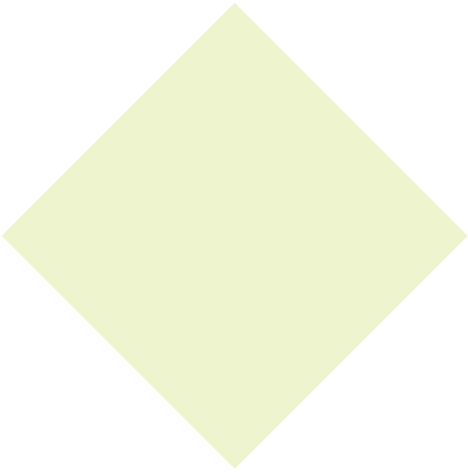
**UBC**

UNION  
OF THE BALTIC  
CITIES



# POLICY PASSPORT

UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES



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# HOW TO USE THE PUBLICATION

The aim of the document is to present an overview of the key policy priorities of the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) on different conferences, meetings and similar events where UBC is being represented. The purpose of the document is not only to raise awareness of the findings and results being done by the member cities in above-mentioned fields but also to strengthen future engagement between policy makers and development practitioners in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and beyond.



## ABOUT UBC

UBC is one of the leading network of cities in the Baltic Sea Region with member cities from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden.

“UBC is a dynamic platform made 30 years ago, that will work on the better future of citizens and leaders in the cities. This year has brought with it not only the global pandemic but also changes within the UBC structure and organisation. During 2021, we strived to make these changes a concrete reality, so that we can even better serve the needs of our member cities. The cities are smart, but they become even smarter within UBC cooperation”, states UBC President Mantas Jurgutis.

# KEY UBC'S POLICY AREAS

Hereby you will find current UBC positions related to the following topics:

- URBAN AGENDA FOR EU

- SOCIAL COHESION IN THE CITIES BEYOND 2020

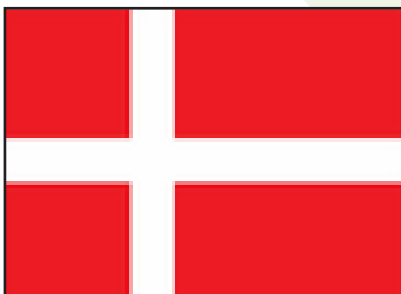
- RESILIENT CITIES BEYOND 2020

- CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNTIL 2030

In addition, this document aims to serve as a framework in advancing cities as inclusive, diverse, creative, democratic and safe hubs, where active citizenship, gender equality and participatory policy making are promoted.

UBC's long term goal is to promote cooperation and exchange of experiences between cities in BSR to advance and deliver sustainable urban solutions and quality of life, and so to bring added value for them. Promoting cities as drivers for smart, sustainable, green and resource-efficient growth will stay the key UBC priority.

# UBC MEMBER CITIES



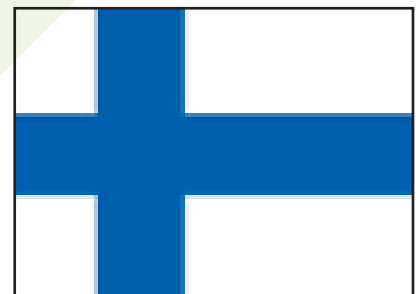
## **DENMARK**

AARHUS, GULDBORSGSUND, KOLDING,  
NÆSTVED



## **ESTONIA**

ELVA, TARTU, HAAPSALU, PÄRNU,  
RAKVERE, TALLINN



## **FINLAND**

ESPOO, HELSINKI, JYVÄSKYLÄ, KEMI,  
KOTKA, LAHTI, MARIEHAMN, PORI,  
PORVOO, TURKU, VAASA

**GERMANY**

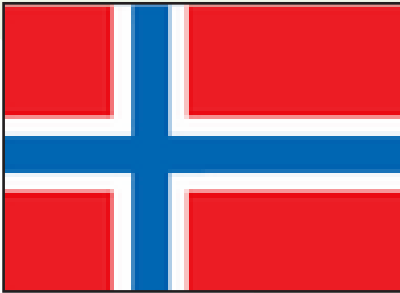
GREIFSWALD, HAMBURG, KIEL,  
ROSTOCK

**LATVIA**

CĒSIS, JĒKABPILS, VALMIERA, RĪGA,  
LIEPĀJA, JŪRMALA, JELGAVA

**LITHUANIA**

GARGŽDAI, JONAVA, KAUNAS,  
KLAIPĒDA, PALANGA, PANEVĒŽYS,  
ROKIŠKIS, TAURAGĒ

**NORWAY**

ARENDALE, KRISTIANSAND

**POLAND**

DARŁOWO, ELBLĄG, GDAŃSK, GDYNIA,  
KOSZALIN, MIELNO, PRUSZCZ,  
GDAŃSKI, REDA, RUMIA, SEJNY, Sopot,  
SŁUPSK, USTKA

**SWEDEN**

GÄVLE, GOTLAND, KALMAR, KARLSKRONA,  
LINKÖPING, LULEÅ, MALMÖ,  
ÖREBRO, SÖDERHAMN, TRELLEBORG,  
UMEÅ, VÄXJÖ

**UKRAINE**

VILNYANSK (ASSOCIATED)

# URBAN AGENDA FOR EU

The Urban Agenda for the EU acknowledges the polycentric structure of Europe and the diversity (social, economic, territorial, cultural and historical) of Urban Areas across the EU. Furthermore, the Urban Agenda for the EU acknowledges the importance of Urban Areas of all sizes and contexts in the further development of the European Union.

A growing number of urban challenges are of a local nature, but require a wider territorial solution (including urban-rural linkages) and cooperation within functional urban areas. At the same time, urban solutions have the potential to lead to wider territorial benefits. Urban Authorities therefore need to cooperate within their functional areas and with their surrounding regions, connecting and reinforcing territorial and urban policies.





## KEY OBJECTIVES THE **URBAN** AGENDA FOR THE **EU**

# 1

The Urban Agenda for the EU aims to realise the full potential and contribution of Urban Areas towards achieving the objectives of the Union and related national priorities in full respect of subsidiarity and proportionality principles and competences.

# 2

The Urban Agenda for the EU strives to establish a more effective integrated and coordinated approach to EU policies and legislation with a potential impact on Urban Areas and also to contribute to territorial cohesion by reducing the socioeconomic gaps observed in urban areas and regions.

# 3

The Urban Agenda for the EU strives to involve Urban Authorities in the design of policies, to mobilise Urban Authorities for the implementation of EU policies, and to strengthen the urban dimension in these policies. By identifying and striving to overcome unnecessary obstacles in EU policy, the Urban Agenda for the EU aims to enable Urban Authorities to work in a more systematic and coherent way towards achieving overarching goals. Moreover, it will help make EU policy more urban-friendly, effective and efficient.

The challenges with regard to safety and security in public spaces are many. They include access to good quality and non-segregated basic services (such as education, health and social care, and law enforcement), societal resilience and community empowerment and enhancing the protection of buildings and infrastructure. Urban authorities, who are familiar with local challenges, are amongst the most important players when it comes to ensuring that actual and perceived security issues are addressed.

Culture and cultural heritage are vital assets for regional competitiveness and social cohesion and help to shape the identity of cities and regions. Furthermore, cultural participation has a significant impact on residents' quality of life, contributing to their wellbeing and sense of belonging. Cities are perceived as laboratories of cultural innovation; they play a key role in enabling citizens and communities to benefit from culture and cultural heritage, while simultaneously mobilising stakeholders and authorities to act in support.

Cities are centers for driving positive change and development, supporting the move towards a sustainable society. Many of the challenges we face today – social segregation, air pollution, provision of affordable housing, and climate change – are being tackled in cities.

# UBC's POSITIONS IN THIS AREA

## UBC

stands for good urban governance at various levels of administration (local, regional, national) and between different actors (elected officials, civil servants, citizens' groups etc.). This fosters civic engagement and ensures inclusive participation in integrated planning and public finance management.

## UBC

strives for green and resilient cities through the sustainable use of natural resources and protection and enhancement of natural capital (energy efficiency and biodiversity in cities), and the transition towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient and circular economy. This reduces the risk of and vulnerability to natural disasters and the ecological, economic and health impacts of pollution.

## UBC

insists on the social dimension of urban development through inclusive and safe cities in order to better address urban poverty, security, inequalities, forced displacement, migration and social exclusion.

## UBC

stands for prosperous and innovative cities with a focus on sustainable growth and job creation, fostering a responsible business environment and making it attractive to invest in the 'green economy' and in clean technology.

# SOCIAL COHESION IN CITIES

beyond 2020

## POST COVID-19 TIMES

The aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic is marked by detrimental effects deeply affecting all pores and aspects of society, most markedly employment prospects, social security, health and safety, as well as certain groups such as youth as a particularly vulnerable one. The crisis has raised new challenges, bringing a number of problematic issues to the surface, some of which are an increased number of disadvantaged citizens, new temporary unemployment, health issues, communication, and psychological environment. The problem with equal accessibility to information related to health for everyone paired with the lack of regional analyses emphasize a pressing need for evidence-based policies as well as the need to provide better exchanges between cities. Even though the digital shift has eased communication and opened new virtual spaces to be explored, many local organizations are faced with a multitude of challenges to survive and serve. Nevertheless, one of the main challenges remains addressing vulnerable communities and strengthening inclusion initiatives putting into the spotlight the unemployed, youth, families with small children as well as rural areas.

## EUROPEAN CONTEXT 2021-27

A glance at the European policies and priorities for 2021-27 reveals a New Cohesion policy framework with one of its 5 priorities (where the EU is best placed to deliver) being a more Social Europe, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare. In addition, the European Strategy for Baltic Sea Region, as the first macro-regional strategy in Europe, now more than ever stands out as a solid bridge between the countries bordering the Baltic Sea, one of its three main pillars being connecting the region.

With respect to the increased efforts for reinforced social cohesion emerging in the post-Covid19 world, among the main external trends that UBC should address are: IT and digitalisation, and cyber-security, Emergency and crisis response capacities (as it is essential to be prepared for changes); and Health issues (all aspects). Furthermore, the future of the Baltic Sea and industries related to the Baltic Sea will be put in focus, especially with a view to ecological, economic and social problems. European values, EU Innovation and Regional Strategies as well as Challenges to democracy, Migrations and other impediments to Social cohesion will be top of the list. This also involves issues such as (youth) unemployment, ageing of population and citizens' engagement. Finally, one of the trends to be addressed will be preventing urban sprawl – urbanisation on the rural areas adjacent to the city.

# UBC's POSITIONS REGARDING VULNERABLE GROUPS

UBC stands for cohesive policies contributing to social inclusion of vulnerable groups regardless of their belief, color of the skin or sexual orientation. For those who are in need UBC should show solidarity through inclusive city policies such as involvement in democratic processes, access to employment, etc.

UBC supports the targeted approaches in addressing the needs of each specific vulnerable group and encourages the use of new technologies and innovative solutions

UBC stands for respect of human rights in dealing with the integration of immigrants and refugees

UBC stands against populism, radicalisation and nationalism and promotes living in a stable, safe and democratic Europe

UBC calls for greater cooperation between EU, regional and national stakeholders to increase the access to mainstream services and opportunities to vulnerable groups acknowledging the key role cities play in this process

# UBC's POSITIONS REGARDING YOUTH

UBC

promotes and supports raising awareness about mental health issues of young people, reducing stigma and provision of direct support to any young person with mental health problems

UBC supports special measures to empower young people at risk (in particular, NEET young people)

UBC works on provision of modern youth work and youth counselling services in the cities that take full advantage of digital technologies and are available regardless of young people's geographical location

UBC

supports and stands for the development of youth employment initiatives specifically addressing first-time job seekers and long-term unemployed young people

UBC

promotes the development of space and opportunities for youth political participation that ensure representation and considering of young people's voice during the decision-making process.

# UBC's POSITIONS REGARDING EDUCATION AND CULTURE

UBC promotes basic skills education initiatives (reading and writing, math, IT) as a tool for greater employability and social cohesion. UBC also encourages the cooperation and exchange of good practices in the European and regional context on this subject

UBC promotes the cities' engagement in BSR in increasing the attractiveness of the VET education amongst the young people as an important aspect in a balanced employment market and social cohesion. UBC also encourages cities to look for innovative curricula and teaching approaches.

UBC advocates for a greater recognition of Member Cities' role in shaping common BSR identity through culture and the promotion of socially cohesive policies in the manner of cross-sectoral cooperation from grass-root to policy level

UBC works with its members in promotion and enhancement of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) in order to address the need for future skills needed for development of European societies

# RESILIENT CITIES

beyond 2020

During times of uncertainty, such as those we are living through now, resilience is crucial to overcoming challenges and quickly adapting to the current situation. New city services are needed in order to address especially health matters and support citizens in dealing with a challenging reality. As collaboration and knowledge sharing are the strongest tools to fight the COVID-19 crisis, communication has taken a digital tone and shifted almost completely towards virtual spaces. However, local organisations are struggling to remain of service to their targets, as evidently security, health, planning, and financing are experiencing the most extreme effects. Furthermore, the numbers of disadvantaged citizens, those temporarily unemployed and people experiencing both physical and mental health issues, among whom youth are particularly vulnerable, are increasing rapidly. All of this points to an undeniable necessity to provide better exchanges between cities in dealing with the new reality. Moreover, appropriate spatial planning and spatial development is becoming crucial to increasing cities' capacities for resilience measured by their effective governance, economy, society and environment.





The UBC's role in supporting and facilitating the exchange of experiences and dissemination of knowledge in this matter needs to be strengthened. It is more than needed to search for possibilities of practical activities to encourage member cities to be more active within the UBC network. It can be said that the corona pandemic has made the central challenges for cities, regions and countries visible like in a burning glass. The modern city is globally connected and internationally dependent. In a complex and uncertain world, cities have now more than ever the responsibility to ensure the protection of people, to offer regional identity and enable the societal and economic transformation to a knowledge driven society.

Resilience is top of the European priority list for 2021-27, as the EU is set to promote Europe's recovery, leveraged by the climate and digital transitions. Furthermore, resil-

ience is embedded in virtually all of EU's major policies, as evident from the New Cohesion policy framework, its cornerstones being Regional development investments, Smarter Europe (innovation, digitisation, economic transformation) a Greener, carbon free Europe and a more Connected Europe (with strategic transport and digital networks). From a regional perspective, the role of the European Strategy for Baltic Sea Region should be stressed, as it is to act as a beacon to the countries bordering the Baltic Sea in the quest for resilience in years to come.

Considering the current challenges, in order to contribute to ensuring effective cities' preparedness and crisis response, some of the main external trends that UBC should address are: digitalisation and cyber-security as well as emergency and crisis response capacities (adaptability to changes). Along these lines, priority should be given to the support of health systems in tackling health issues. Furthermore, focus should be put on climate change and threats to environmental sustainability (how to ensure sustainable future/Green Deal) SDG 2030, and, accordingly, to the future of the Baltic Sea and industries related to the Baltic Sea, and the regions ecological, but also economic and social problems. In addition, issues to be addressed are Challenges to democracy; European values, EU Innovation and Regional Strategies as well as the Migrations.

# UBC's POSITIONS REGARDING NEW CITY PLANNING, FUNDING, NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND INNOVATIVE CITY SERVICES



UBC works on empowering cities to prepare and adapt their policies and services in becoming a modern, resilient cities

UBC stands for innovative and solution-oriented city policies that empower citizens, their engagement and resilience of cities, especially in the post-covid period

UBC works and promotes a common position between the cities in BSR in order to have stronger say in the policy dialogues and debates on resilience

UBC stands for common goals and priorities for stakeholders in the BSR in order to create innovative initiatives and empowers the cities in increasing their resilience in the future

UBC proactively supports the implementation of the EUSBSR as a key strategy for the UBC to build the cities' capacity for resilience and provide practical know-how

UBC builds alliances with similar networks and strategic partnerships in order to promote capacity building and assistance to cities in development of policy and grass-root solutions for greater resilience in the 21st century

# CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNTIL 2030

UBC cities will be climate-smart, providing a good ground for the green economy to grow, while being resource-efficient and sustainable in all their activities as well as protecting the environment and water- bodies in the Baltic Sea Region. They will increasingly be known as global forerunners to create a high-quality living environment for their inhabitants.

UBC aims at is achieving a low-emission and resource-wise Baltic Sea Region through smart city planning, capacity-building and sharing of best practices. At the same time the network will continue to work for more efficient use of water resources and more efficient water treatment. By working together, using the potential of the member cities and the network, good results can be achieved.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNTIL 2030

Sustainable Development cannot be created by single actors – and global, massive challenges, like climate change and biodiversity loss affect everyone and need to be tackled in a cooperative and collaborative way. Therefore, these issues are at the core of UBC’s sustainability activities – climate change has severe impact on all levels of urban life and every action a city takes has impact on the climate, in one way or another.

Besides intense cooperation and collaboration within the network and between actors in the Baltic Sea region, UBC is active in taking part in European and international activities and has established well-functioning partnerships throughout the years such as:

- The strategic cooperation with the world’s leading organization on voluntary climate reporting, the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) started in 2015 after the COP 21 meeting in Paris. Since 2017 there is a mutual Memorandum of Understanding and UBC members are actively disclosing their efforts for a transformation to become fossil-fuel free;
- In 2021, 7 UBC cities were able to get into the CDP A-list cities. These cities were awarded for their ambitious work and best results in tackling the impacts of climate change.

In 2010 UBC signed the Covenant of Mayors, a European initiative, which brings together thousands of local governments

voluntarily committed to implementing EU climate and energy objectives, as a support organization, actively promoting and activating its members to sign and develop Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs). UBC is also a member of Energy Cities, a European organization comprising local & regional authorities, as well as other stakeholders working on sustainable energy issues.

velopment Goals aiming at mainstreaming their fulfillment through activities in all UBC bodies. UBC also sees a great potential in the European Green Deal - as a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.

On the global level, UBC commits to the UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable De-



# UBC's POSITIONS REGARDING CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNTIL 2030

UBC Cities want to take the leadership in becoming climate-smart, decreasing their greenhouse gas emissions and using renewable energy sources efficiently.

The UBC will continue to proactively support the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. Only by approaching the challenges connected to the changing climate holistically, can the UBC Member Cities realize a truly sustainable development.

UBC aims to work with partners for increased action and mobilization on climate adaptation. By using its extensive network and partnerships, UBC advocates for climate adaptation and civil protection, establishing good practices that are relevant in the European context.

The cities' civil protection perspective should be mainstreamed into their work on climate change adaptation, by also including the perspective of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Thus, the UBC advocates for the harmonized policies and a wider discussion on adaptation and civil protection, while acknowledging the role and strengthening the capacities of local authorities.

UBC aims to support the Green City Accord - a movement of European mayors committed to making cities cleaner and healthier. It aims to improve the quality of life of all Europeans, and accelerate the implementation of relevant EU environmental laws. By signing the Accord, cities commit to addressing five areas of environmental management: air, water, nature and biodiversity, circular economy and waste, and noise

UBC strongly supports the European Green Deal by taking its key objectives on its own agenda particularly in creating effective and efficient mechanisms to further develop green urban economies, climate-smart cities and sustainable urban ecosystems.

UBC continues to support the Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, which brings together thousands of local governments voluntarily committed to implementing EU climate and energy objectives. The Covenant of Mayors was launched in 2008 in Europe with the ambition to gather local governments voluntarily committed to achieving and exceeding the EU climate and energy targets. UBC joined as a supporter in 2010 and has since then promoted the initiative actively among its member cities

UBC promotes regional strategic partnerships within the EUSBSR in order to build the common voice of the BSR in the European discussion on green agenda and to create a low/emission region

Sustainable development scenarios are strongly dependent upon a substantial shift in societal preferences to high-density, environmentally-friendly city living. Strong planning regulations are required to achieve the targeted residential densities of city areas while protecting and enhancing the green and blue spaces that are needed for climate adaptation, health and wellbeing.

# ANNEX:

## EUROPEAN STAKEHOLDERS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the voice of regions and cities in the European Union (EU). It represents local and regional authorities across the European Union and advises on new laws that have an impact on regions and cities (70% of all EU legislation).

<https://cor.europa.eu/en>

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is the voice of organised civil society in Europe. The EESC issues between 160 and 190 opinions and information reports a year. It also organises several annual initiatives and events with a focus on civil society and citizens' participation such as the Civil Society Prize, the Civil Society Days, the Your Europe, Your Say youth plenary and the ECI Day.

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/about>

The Council of the Baltic Sea States is an intergovernmental organisation guided by its 10 Member States and the European Union. Consisting of 11 members – the 10 Member States of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden, plus the European Union – the CBSS supports a global perspective on regional problems.

<https://cbss.org/about-us/>

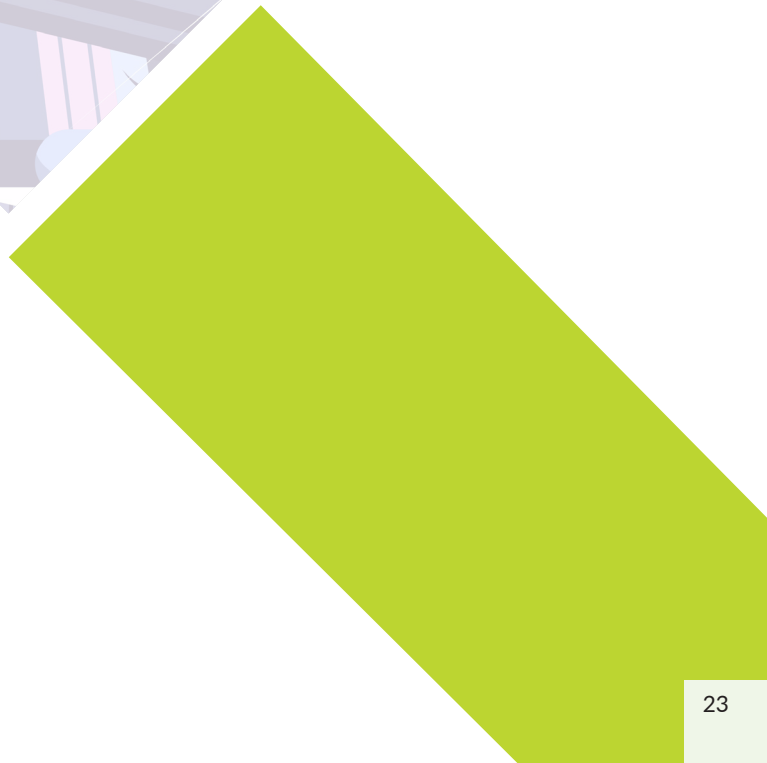
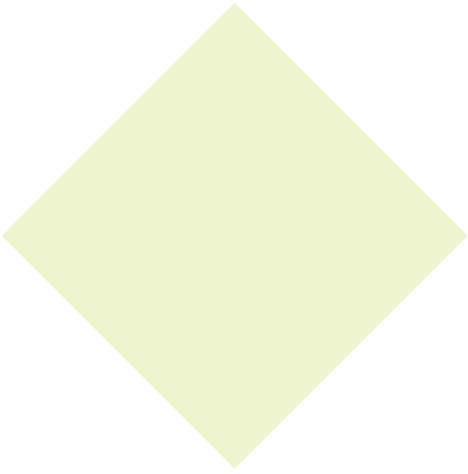
INTERREG BALTIC SEA REGION: The Programme covers an area of around 2.9 million km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 80 million inhabitants. It stretches from central parts of Europe up to its northernmost periphery, comprising European metropolitan areas, while major parts of the programme area are counted as rural.

<https://interreg-baltic.eu/about/>

Baltic Sea Strategy Point (BSP): The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is the first Macro-regional Strategy in Europe. The Strategy was approved by the European Council in 2009 following a communication from the European Commission. It is managed by Baltic Sea Strategy Point (BSP)

<https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu>







# POLICY PASSPORT

UNION OF BALTIC CITIES