



IMPLEMENTING THE EU BALTIC SEA STRATEGY

Focus on Business

The Hamburg Institute of International Economics' study addresses the opportunities and challenges that the upcoming Polish EU presidency will need to consider.

On Monday, June 20, 2011, IHK Nord (the Association of Northern German Chambers of Commerce and Industry), and the Hanse-Office (the Joint Representation of Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein to the EU), co-hosted a high-level discussion on potentials and challenges of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). In the elegant premises of the Hanse-Office, the keynote speaker **Dr. Silvia Stiller**, research director at the Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI), presented an analysis of the Baltic Sea region's development perspectives. The high-level panel, which comprised German MEPs **Gesine Meißner** and **Knut Fleckenstein**, Chairman of the Baltic Sea Forum and former German federal minister of transport **Kurt Bodewig**, and **Anders Lindholm** (European Commission, DG REGIO) discussed her findings. **Joanna Held** from the Polish Permanent Representation to the EU presented the upcoming Polish EU presidency's priorities with regard to the EUSBSR. **Dr. Mary Papaschinopoulou** (IHK Nord) moderated the discussion.



Dr Silvia Stiller, research director at the HWWI, presented her recently published study.

The event sought to highlight the current challenges of the strategy, which is now in the critical phase of its implementation.

Dr Stiller focused on trade, innovative capacity, demographic trends, and

the economic impact of the cities in the Baltic Sea Region. The region's overall trade and de-

velopment outlook is positive. However, increasing infrastructure investments are crucial in order to strengthen this development. Further, due to the high potential of knowledge-based structural change, research and development activities, cross-border integration, and cluster building are highly relevant business factors. Last but not least, it will be necessary to address demographic change and the increasing demand for a skilled labour force, which is crucial for a well-functioning cross-border labour market. Most cities in the Baltic Sea region will keep on growing and serve as the motor for economic development, Dr. Stiller concluded.

Anders Lindholm presented the European Commission's work on supporting innovation and funding, labour migration and the promotion of environmentally friendly technologies. The EUSBSR can best facilitate



Anders Lindholm from DG REGIO explained the different fields the EU Commission is working on.

this effort by coordinating the numerous grass root initiatives in the region.

MEP Knut Fleckenstein reminded the audience that the discussion about regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area has been ongoing for over 20 years. He stressed the need for transparent mechanisms for action, clearly defined tasks, and responsibilities for the EUSBSR. Fleckenstein also stressed that Russia plays a very important role for the entire region and that it should be further involved in the activities.



The panel from left to right: Mr. Kurt Bodewig (Chairman of the Baltic Sea Forum and former German federal minister of transport), Knut Fleckenstein (MEP), Gesine Meißner (MEP) and Dr. Mary Papaschinopoulou (Moderator, IHK Nord).

MEP Gesine Meißner expounded on the need to enhance the visibility of the EUSBSR in the region. The EUSBSR as well as the Integrated Maritime Policy can make a considerable contribution to growth in the maritime sector. Furthermore, she sees the need to increase the attractiveness of "blue jobs" in the region. MEP Meißner emphasised the great potential for SMEs in sectors such as tourism and innovative technological solutions.

The chairman of the Baltic Sea Forum and former German federal minister of transport, Kurt Bodewig, pointed out the necessity for enhanced involvement of business if EUSBSR objectives are to be achieved. He put forward the idea of an annual assessment of the EUSBSR's implementation. Kurt Bodewig thanked Dr. Still-er for her study, which for the first time takes into account the important role of SMEs in promoting innovation in the region.

Joanna Held stated that Poland focuses its Presidency on improving the EUSBSR's governance, including relevant implementation mechanisms. Poland wants to introduce clear policy targets to help measure EUSBSR's results in different sectors, such as transport, environment and R&D. Poland's overall objective is to reach an agree-



Joanna Held (Polish Permanent Representation to the EU) offered insights on the priorities of the Polish presidency with regard to the EUSBSR.

ment among Member States on necessary changes to the strategy by November 2011.

The many regional representations in attendance concluded that further concrete thematic analysis of the EUSBSR has to be undertaken for its successful implementation.



The event took place at the Hanse-Office and was very well attended.

Dr. Mary Papaschinopoulou (IHK Nord)
Dr. Lars Friedrichsen (Hanse-Office)

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