

The Political State of the Region Report: Baltic Sea Region

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- Congratulations with the report: *Christina Gestrin*
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Central Questions

- In what state is the Baltic Sea region (BSR) in 2011?
- What are the current political and economic priorities of its countries?
- What is the situation of the regional cooperation structures in 2011?
- Which issues of cooperation are most important?
- Is the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) able to tackle the region's problems and challenges and to use its opportunities?

Main Messages I

- The EUSBSR, although far from perfect, is the “new game in town” and has provided BSR co-operation with a fresh impetus.
- Its adoption and the start of its implementation have made the EU the most relevant player in the BSR.
- While the EU/Commission can act as a facilitator, the “real work” needs to be conducted by the regional stakeholders.
- The strategy still has to prove that it will be effective and sustainable, can make a difference and will be able to bind the interest and commitment of its stakeholders.
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Main Messages II

- Despite numerous problems, on average, the region and most of its countries proved economically relatively stable and resilient and seemed to have managed the crises better than other European regions.
- The BSR has every perspective to grow in economic and political importance to all the states of the region in the coming years.

Main Messages III

If it is possible to integrate Russia in regional co-operation and to create a coherent effective and efficient system of regional co-operation, the BSR has a fair chance to master its challenges and problems and to develop into an environmentally sustainable, prosperous, accessible and attractive, and safe and secure place.

Outlook I

- In the near future, the main challenge will be to retain the political commitment and interest in the region and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.
- In order to be able to achieve sustainable results and to make a difference, the initial ambitions of the strategy will have to be preserved.
- Pressure to continue the process in a positive and productive manner will have to be created by the regional actors.

Outlook II

- Once these pre-conditions are met, there might be a real chance that the strategy will stay on the EU's political agenda and could lead to concrete success and sustainable achievements in its four priority areas.
- Regional actors, including the EU, will have to consider how they will be able to accommodate the for the region relevant themes in their structures and how they could effectively and efficiently deal with them.

Outlook III

- The regional actors will have to become effective players within the implementation of the EUSBSR and will have to help creating a coherent system of regional co-operation.
- Despite numerous problems, the basis for advanced multilateral co-operation in the BSR is generally favourable and could and should be further developed and strengthened.
- To develop the region and to establish a framework for binding and sustainable regional co-operation, it has to be fed with concrete policies and stronger commitment.

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THANK YOU!