



Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue 2023

Young ideas for enhanced subregional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region



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Introduction

DURING THE BALTIC SEA YOUTH DIALOGUE 2023, organised for the 10th time by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and funded by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, 21 young people from across the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) gained valuable insights into the collaboration on regional and national level in the BSR.

The primary focus was on enhancing collaboration among subregions and reaping the benefits thereof.

The BSYD 2023 took place in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein, which, as of January 2024, assumed the chairmanship of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC). Hosted at the Academy Center Sankelmark, a venue previously used for the 2018 Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue.

The academy has a focus on BSR matters and therefore offered the perfect location to facilitate an effective collaboration with the CBSS, the state of Schleswig-Holstein, and Academia Baltica—all supported by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

Throughout discussions, activities, and excursions, participants delved into national and regional level collaboration, received expert advice from the academy and practitioners, and engaged in conversations about contemporary security and environmental challenges. They contemplated the future landscape of collaborative efforts and the mutual benefits for all parties involved.

Consequently, participants put forth suggestions on how various regions within the BSSSC could better leverage this network.

These suggestions were developed by the participants with the resources provided to them. The project's framework did not allow for an in-depth examination of individual regions, yet the participants were tasked with analysing the key elements of the regions through their own research.

The next crucial step involves decision-makers in the Baltic Sea Region reviewing these ideas and viewing them as a starting point for further discussions. This document serves as an external perspective, offering suggestions for decision-makers to consider and develop further.

The bottom line of the ideas is that collaborative efforts in the Baltic Sea Region have the potential to benefit the environment, enhance security and strengthen democracies.

The ideas presented in this document highlight the potential for positive changes for regions already engaged or who could potentially engage in the BSSSC.

The engaged young experts envision a future where the Baltic Sea Region on all levels is more united, growing, and collaboratively working for the benefit of all.



Denmark

There is currently no Danish representation in the BSSSC. Therefore, the ideas presented here are general ideas on how to approach Danish regions and show the potential of macro-regional collaboration for the regions in Denmark.

These are:

- ✧ Networking opportunities associated with BSSSC participation hold appeal for Danish regions. For example, Denmark is already strongly interconnected with the Swedish Skåne region through the Malmö-Copenhagen area. Further relevant Danish regions for Baltic Sea cooperation encompass **Sjælland, Lolland, Fyn, and Bornholm** which could profit from enhanced collaboration with several BSR countries.
- ✧ Leveraging diplomatic relations, especially through the '**German-Danish Friendship**' can yield substantial benefits for relevant Danish regions involved in Baltic Sea cooperation.
- ✧ An initial assessment is required to determine if one or two Danish regions are willing to independently cover participant costs, targeting **Danish youth** through social media platforms in Denmark, in collaboration with **BSSSC or CBSS Youth Events**.
- ✧ To address challenges in local government activity, consider a reversed approach. Conduct **online campaigns in Danish cities** or engage with **youth councils** to involve them in BSSSC cooperation. Connect with **Danish experts** aligned with BSSSC working groups through research and network-building.
- ✧ Initiate the process by organising more **events in Danish regions**, beginning in major cities like Copenhagen or Aalborg, and promote them on social media.
- ✧ Establish contacts with **Danish youth organisations**, the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF), or other BSR regional organisations. Building relationships with prominent Danish youth organisations can help disseminate information effectively to interested individuals.
- ✧ **Promote initiatives and seek synergies with Baltic Sea related events** already happening in Denmark. For example, utilising Folk Baltica as a great example for German-Danish collaboration or the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference taking place in Denmark in 2024.

Estonia

In Estonia, the Põlva region is already engaged in the BSSSC. Therefore, the ideas presented focus on how the potential of the network could be utilised by the region and how the region could exchange best practices with other regions in the BSR. These ideas could be transferred to other regions in Estonia. The paragraph furthermore encompasses ideas for enhanced youth engagement in the region.

PÕLVA

Natural Resources and Environmental Stewardship:

Põlva boasts abundant natural resources, encompassing pristine landscapes, forests, and lakes. The region's commitment to environmental conservation aligns well with the Baltic Sea Region's emphasis on sustainability. Põlva can actively contribute to collaborative efforts aimed at preserving the Baltic Sea ecosystem and promoting eco-friendly practices, thus enhancing the region's environmental resilience.

Cultural Heritage and Tourism:

Põlva's cultural heritage, traditions, and distinctive attractions make it an attractive destination for tourists. By showcasing its cultural richness within the Baltic Sea Region collaboration, Põlva can draw international visitors, stimulate the local economy, and foster cross-cultural understanding. This cultural exchange can significantly contribute to the overall cultural vibrancy of the Baltic Sea Region.

Recommendations for Efficient Utilisation:

- ✦ **Develop Sustainable Tourism Initiatives:** Põlva can collaborate with other Baltic Sea Region partners to formulate sustainable tourism initiatives. By promoting eco-tourism and responsible travel practices, the region can attract environmentally conscious visitors, aligning with the broader sustainability goals of the Baltic Sea collaboration and bolstering its economic prosperity.
- ✦ **Participate in Cross-Border Projects:** Active involvement in cross-border projects within the

Baltic Sea Region can heighten Põlva's visibility and fortify its connections with neighbouring regions. Projects related to environmental protection, renewable energy, and cultural exchange offer valuable opportunities for collaboration and knowledge-sharing, positioning Põlva as a key contributor to the region's progress.

- ✦ **Invest in Education and Innovation:** Strengthening partnerships with educational institutions and fostering innovation is pivotal to leveraging Põlva's potential within the Baltic Sea Region. Collaborative research and development initiatives, particularly in areas such as sustainable agriculture or environmental technologies, can position Põlva as a hub for innovation and education in the region, thereby contributing to the region's intellectual capital.

Potential Weaknesses:

- ✦ **Limited Connectivity:** Addressing potential challenges related to transportation and infrastructure is crucial to enhancing Põlva's connectivity with other Baltic Sea Region partners. Improving transportation links and digital infrastructure will facilitate smoother collaboration and active participation in joint initiatives, fortifying Põlva's integration within the broader regional network.
- ✦ **Capacity Building:** Investing in the capacity building of local businesses and organisations will empower them to actively participate in multinational projects. Training programs and workshops can enhance the skills necessary for effective collaboration within the Baltic Sea Region framework, ensuring that Põlva's entities are well-equipped to contribute to the region's sustained growth and prosperity.

Enhancing Youth Engagement and Baltic Sea Region Collaboration: Practical Recommendations

- 1. Establish Youth Forums and Advisory Boards:** Initiate dedicated platforms, such as youth forums or advisory boards, providing young individuals from Põlva with opportunities to express their opinions, share ideas, and address concerns. These forums act as direct communication channels between the youth and decision-makers involved in Baltic Sea Region initiatives, fostering a more inclusive and participatory approach.
- 2. Promote Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs:** Encourage and facilitate exchange programs designed to connect young people from

Põlva with their counterparts in other Baltic Sea Region countries. These programs may encompass educational exchanges, internships, and cultural immersion experiences, fostering a sense of shared identity and collaboration among the youth.

- 3. Integrate Youth Perspectives in Policy Development:** Embed youth perspectives in the policy-making process at both local and regional levels. Establish mechanisms that actively involve youth representatives in contributing their insights on issues crucial to Baltic Sea Region collaboration, including sustainability, environmental protection, and other key areas. This inclusive approach ensures a diverse range of perspectives in policy development, enhancing the overall effectiveness of initiatives.

Finland

Two Finnish regions are already engaged in the BSSSC: Uusimaa and Southwest Finland, the BSYD participants furthermore explored the potential of the collaboration for an additional region, the Lapland region. Even though this region might not be formally part of the network, closer collaboration could be explored to strengthen the network and the region alike.

UUSIMAA

Leveraging Economic Opportunities:

Baltic Sea Region cooperation can open new economic opportunities for Uusimaa by fostering collaboration with neighbouring countries. Enhanced trade relations, joint investments, and streamlined business partnerships can contribute to the economic prosperity of the region. Special emphasis on sectors like technology, innovation, and sustainable industries can position Uusimaa as a hub for cross-border economic activities.

Joint Infrastructure Projects:

Collaborative infrastructure projects within the Baltic Sea Region can improve connectivity and transportation networks, benefitting Uusimaa. Projects such as the Rail Baltica initiative and other cross-border transport endeavours can boost trade, tourism, and economic ties, contributing to Uusimaa's overall development. Shared initiatives can address existing challenges, such as the lack of train connection eastwards, improving accessibility and regional integration.

Environmental Sustainability:

Baltic Sea Region cooperation often involves joint efforts towards environmental sustainability. Uusimaa, with its stable energy supply from nuclear power, can contribute to and benefit from shared initiatives focused on green energy and sustainable practices. Cross-border environmental projects can address common challenges and promote resilience against environmental threats.

Cultural and Educational Exchanges:

Promoting cultural and educational exchanges within the Baltic Sea Region can enhance the resilience of Uusimaa's citizens by fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse perspectives. Student exchanges, collaborative research programs, and cultural initiatives can contribute to a more interconnected and resilient society.

Tourism Development:

Baltic Sea Region cooperation can play a role in the development of sustainable tourism in Uusimaa. By collaborating on marketing campaigns, cultural events, and joint tourism initiatives, the region can attract a broader range of visitors. This can not only boost the local economy but also diversify the tourism sector, making it more resilient to external shocks.

Research and Innovation Collaborations:

Building strong ties with research institutions and innovative hubs across the Baltic Sea Region can accelerate technological advancements and knowledge-sharing. Collaborative research projects can attract talent to Uusimaa, stimulate innovation, and enhance the region's resilience by diversifying its economic base.

In summary, Baltic Sea Region cooperation has the potential to catalyse Uusimaa's prosperity and enhance the resilience of its citizens. Through economic collaboration, infrastructure development, environmental sustainability, cultural exchanges, tourism initiatives, and research collaborations, Uusimaa can position itself as a vibrant and resilient hub within the broader Baltic Sea Region.

Background and further information

Uusimaa - Population Centers and Infrastructure: Uusimaa comprises 26 municipalities, with Greater Helsinki hosting approximately 1.5 million people. Besides Helsinki and its two large border municipalities, Espoo and Vantaa, noteworthy towns include Porvoo, Loviisa, Hyvinkää, and Hanko. Key roads in the region include the E18 from west to east, as well as the E12 and E75 heading north. There are railway connections

northwards and westwards from Helsinki, and major ports in Helsinki, Loviisa, and Hanko. Hanko, particularly, serves as a significant cargo port with robust connections to Germany and Poland. In Vantaa, Helsinki International Airport, the most important airport in Finland, is situated.

Possibilities & Challenges

Uusimaa is already the most prosperous region in Finland, boasting abundant resources. Helsinki, the capital, houses several universities, including the globally renowned University of Helsinki. It serves as the financial and cultural hub of Finland. Tourism in Uusimaa primarily centres around Helsinki, and to a lesser extent, Hanko and Porvoo. The infrastructure, including public transportation in Helsinki and neighbouring municipalities, is of high quality. Uusimaa benefits from a stable energy supply, with a nuclear power plant located in Loviisa.

Challenges include the absence of a train connection eastwards, potentially limiting the development of eastern Uusimaa. There's an ongoing divide between western Uusimaa, Helsinki, and eastern Uusimaa in domestic debates, particularly concerning Swedish minority politics. Western Uusimaa's train connections have also been a topic of debate.

Proposed Solutions:

- ✧ **Focus on Developing the Helsinki-Tallinn Hub.** The Helsinki-Tallinn connection is already a significant hub, facilitating work for many Estonians in the Helsinki region and boosting tourism on both sides. A suggested train tunnel between Helsinki and Tallinn is a financially and technically realistic project, potentially achievable in 15-20 years with sufficient political will. This tunnel could also link Finland to continental Europe through the Rail Baltica project, given the shared eastern European rail gauge.
- ✧ **Establish a Train Connection in Eastern Uusimaa (Helsinki-Vantaa-Sipoo-Porvoo-Loviisa).** Re-establishing a rail connection in eastern Uusimaa, connecting Helsinki to Loviisa and Porvoo, is proposed. This could significantly benefit these cities, especially in terms of tourism and economic connectivity. The use of electric trains fueled by green energy from reusable sources is suggested, with new routes planned around nature conservation areas.
- ✧ **Ensure Continued Vocational Education Opportunities in Uusimaa's Medium-Sized Towns.** Presently, Uusimaa offers excellent opportunities for vocational education and applied sciences studies in various medium-sized towns. Laurea University of Applied Sciences, with campuses in Porvoo, Lohja, and Hyvinkää, among others, provides

such opportunities. Ensuring ongoing support and potential expansion of these educational offerings will attract international students and contribute to the region's overall development.

LAPLAND

Economic Collaboration:

Encouraging economic collaboration within the Baltic Sea Region can open up new markets for Lapland. By fostering trade relationships, Lapland can tap into the diverse economies of neighbouring countries, attracting investments and facilitating the export of its unique products, such as those related to the thriving tourism industry. Joint economic initiatives can contribute to the overall economic resilience of Lapland.

Infrastructure Development:

Baltic Sea Region cooperation can support infrastructure development projects that benefit Lapland. Improved transportation links, such as roads and railways connecting Lapland to neighbouring regions, can enhance accessibility and promote economic activities. Collaboration on joint infrastructure projects, aligned with sustainable development goals, can contribute to the overall resilience of Lapland's communities.

Environmental Sustainability:

Lapland's natural beauty is a significant asset, and collaboration with Baltic Sea Region countries on environmental sustainability initiatives can help preserve and protect these resources. Shared efforts in sustainable tourism practices, wildlife conservation, and renewable energy projects can not only contribute to the well-being of Lapland's environment but also attract eco-conscious tourists, contributing to the region's prosperity.

Cultural and Educational Exchanges:

Promoting cultural and educational exchanges within the Baltic Sea Region can strengthen Lapland's societal resilience. Increased collaboration on educational programs, student exchanges, and cultural events can create a more interconnected community. This not only enhances the quality of education but also fosters mutual understanding and cooperation among citizens in Lapland and neighbouring regions.

Tourism Promotion:

Baltic Sea Region cooperation can facilitate joint marketing efforts to promote Lapland as a year-round tourist destination. Collaborative campaigns highlighting cultural experiences, outdoor activities, and sustainable tourism practices can attract a broader audience. This can lead to increased tourism revenue, creating a more robust and diversified economic base for Lapland.

Research and Innovation Networks:

Engaging in joint research and innovation networks within the Baltic Sea Region can boost Lapland's capabilities in various sectors. Collaborative projects in technology, environmental sciences, and sustainable development can contribute to local innovation and create opportunities for residents. This can, in turn, enhance the region's adaptability and resilience to economic and environmental changes.

In summary, Baltic Sea Region cooperation provides a platform for Lapland to not only expand its economic horizons but also to build resilience among its citizens. Through collaborative efforts in economic development, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, cultural exchanges, tourism promotion, and research, Lapland can strengthen its position within the broader Baltic Sea Region and ensure a sustainable and resilient future for its communities.

Background: Lapland, Finland

Lapland is the largest region in Finland by size, with a population of about 180,000. It is sparsely populated, featuring three major towns: Tornio and Kemi by the coast, and Rovaniemi in central Lapland. Southwestern Finland is the country's third-largest region by population, with Turku as its main centre. Turku, Finland's fifth-largest city, is accompanied by smaller towns such as Salo and Uusikaupunki. Uusimaa, hosting the capital Helsinki along with Espoo and Vantaa, is Finland's most populous region.

There are 21 municipalities in Lapland, mostly in sparsely populated rural areas. Major roads include the E75 between Kemi-Tornio and the Norwegian border, the E8 along the Finnish-Swedish border towards Norway, and the E63 towards the Kuusamo region southwards. Train tracks run along the coast, towards the Russian border, and along the Swedish border. Lapland has international airports in Kemi, Rovaniemi, Kittilä, Ivalo, and Enontekiö, with the latter three serving as tourist destinations. Major ports are located in Kemi and Tornio.

Strengths and Challenges of Lapland

Lapland's strengths lie in its tourism sector, societal connections to the Swedish border regions, and hydroenergy production. Successful tourist destinations include Santa Claus Village, Levi Ski Resort, Lapland's national parks, Ranua Zoo, and cultural tourism related to the Sami people. However, challenges include unemployment, migration to southern Finland, and inadequate public transportation. Despite being a tourist hotspot, limited job opportunities outside tourism contribute to rural population decline.

Proposed Solutions for Lapland's Challenges:

- ✧ **Joint Public Transportation Consortium with Norrbotten Region (Sweden):** Propose the creation of a joint regional public transportation consortium between Norrbotten and Lapland to establish reliable connections between Swedish and Finnish border municipalities. This initiative aims to enhance border connectivity and provide dependable public transportation in rural areas.
- ✧ **Commuter Trains along the Coast:** Suggest the implementation of commuter train lines between Oulu and Tornio to connect rural coastal municipalities with economic hubs. This would facilitate commuting and potentially transform these rural areas into clusters of suburbs for the Kemi-Tornio area and Oulu.
- ✧ **Collaboration with Swedish and Norwegian Universities:** Advocate for collaboration with Swedish and Norwegian universities to address the issue of young people leaving rural municipalities for study or work. Propose initiatives such as establishing university campuses or internship agreements in Lapland's rural municipalities, allowing students to study in their home regions and encouraging career opportunities locally.

These proposals aim to address challenges, promote regional connectivity, and sustain the prosperity of Lapland and its residents.

SOUTHWESTERN FINLAND

Background: Southwestern Finland - Population Centres and Infrastructure

Southwestern Finland is Finland's third-largest region by population. The main population centre is Turku, Finland's fifth-largest city, which also includes smaller towns such as Salo and Uusikaupunki.

There are 27 municipalities in Southwestern Finland, with Turku as the largest one without comparison.

It is combined with surrounding municipalities such as Kaarina, Naantali, and Raisio. Greater Turku hosts about 330,000 people. Other noteworthy towns include Salo, Uusikaupunki, and Loimaa. The main roads are the E63 between Turku and Tampere, the E18 between Turku and Helsinki, and the E8 between Turku and Vaasa. Other roads are generally of good quality and suitable for heavy traffic. Two railway connections exist northwards towards Tampere and eastwards towards Helsinki, both starting from Turku. There are two ports in Southwestern Finland, Uusikaupunki and Turku, with the latter being one of Finland's most important ports. The only international airport is also located in Turku.

through data utilization and becoming a Wise City. This transition aims to empower both citizens and businesses for sustainable growth across various realms.

Possibilities & Challenges

The possibilities of Southwestern Finland include its financial, academic, and cultural hub, Turku, along with a thriving tourism industry and a well-developed infrastructure. Turku hosts two excellent universities, has good ferry connections to Sweden (and possibly to the southern Baltic too), and is a hub for start-ups and the biotech industry in Finland. Southwestern Finland also boasts a robust tourism industry, both in well-established sightseeing in the Turku region and in its beautiful archipelago sea.

Proposed Actions:

- ✧ **Modernise the Current Train Connection:** Suggest modernizing the coastal train connection between Turku and Helsinki to ensure better connectivity with rural areas, including the Uusimaa region. The modernization would enhance its role as a connector between Southwestern Finland and Uusimaa, promoting tourism and economic activity.
- ✧ **View Stockholm-Åland-Turku as a Future Hub:** Highlight the importance of shipping as a key element in economic cooperation between the Stockholm region, Åland, and Southwestern Finland. Emphasize the potential of electric airplanes for future transportation, particularly in the context of a one-hour flight time between Stockholm and Turku.
- ✧ **Green, Sustainable, Smart, Wise, and Carbon-Neutral Interconnected Hub:** Envision the area as a green interconnected hub, supporting plans for a high-speed train tunnel between Stockholm and Turku. Propose legislative measures for mandatory electronic flights in short-distance flights when capacity allows, combined with a continued focus on green shipping. This could position Stockholm-Åland-Turku as a region with great potential.

In addition, mention Turku's active pursuit of transforming into a forward-thinking, intelligent, and environmentally responsible city by 2030, focusing on enhancing well-being, productivity, and sustainability

Germany

Two German regions are actively engaged in the BSSSC. The chairmanship 2024-2026 is held by Schleswig-Holstein, which has great potential to enhance the network and profit from the BSR collaboration. The second region in the BSSSC is Brandenburg: with its focus on youth collaboration, the region enriches the collaboration and could probably utilise the exchange between BSR regions even further. Several ideas are presented in the following paragraphs.

SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

Challenges

Renewable Energy:

Schleswig-Holstein should continue its pioneering efforts in renewable energy by investing in cutting-edge technologies, expanding its green energy initiatives, and implementing policies that promote sustainable practices throughout the region. This commitment will not only contribute to environmental stewardship but also reinforce Schleswig-Holstein's position as a leader in renewable energy.

Ship Production Industry:

To position itself as a global leader in ship production, Schleswig-Holstein should strategically foster the growth of its shipbuilding industry. This involves fostering innovation, investing in research and development, and establishing international partnerships to ensure the industry remains at the forefront of technological advancements. By doing so, the region can strengthen its economic resilience and global competitiveness.

Tourism Sector:

In order to maximize its potential as a tourist destination, Schleswig-Holstein should elevate its tourism sector. This can be achieved by intensifying marketing efforts, highlighting the region's unique attractions, and diversifying its offerings to appeal to a broader range of visitors. A well-executed tourism strategy will not only boost the local economy but also enhance the region's reputation as a desirable travel destination.

Education Prioritisation:

To address educational challenges effectively, Schleswig-Holstein should prioritize investments in its education system. This includes reducing the student-to-teacher ratio, increasing per-pupil expenditure in public schools, and implementing comprehensive educational reforms. By placing education at the forefront of its agenda, the region can ensure that its future generations receive a high-quality and equitable education, fostering long-term social and economic development.

Utilising the Baltic Sea Region cooperation:

- ✦ **Renewable Energy:** Baltic Sea Region cooperation can be leveraged to share best practices, research, and technological advancements in renewable energy. Collaborative projects, joint investments, and knowledge exchange initiatives can accelerate the development and adoption of sustainable energy solutions. Cross-border partnerships can facilitate the efficient sharing of renewable energy resources, promoting a more interconnected and resilient energy grid.
- ✦ **Ship Production Industry:** Baltic Sea Region cooperation can foster collaboration in shipbuilding innovation, research, and workforce development. Joint initiatives can include shared research and development centres, standardized regulations for the maritime industry, and coordinated efforts to address environmental challenges related to ship production. By working together, the region can strengthen its shipbuilding sector, share expertise, and collectively navigate global market trends.
- ✦ **Tourism Sector:** Collaborative efforts within the Baltic Sea Region can enhance the tourism sector by promoting cross-border travel, joint marketing campaigns, and shared cultural events. Developing cohesive tourism packages that highlight the diverse attractions of the entire region can attract a broader range of visitors. Cooperation can also focus on sustainable tourism practices, ensuring that the industry contributes positively to local communities and the environment.
- ✦ **Education Prioritisation:** Baltic Sea Region cooperation in education can involve the sharing of best practices, resources, and educational strategies. Joint initiatives can include teacher exchange programs, collaborative research projects, and the development of standardized educational frameworks. By aligning educational goals and strategies, the region can collectively address challenges such

as reducing the student-to-teacher ratio, increasing per-pupil expenditure, and implementing effective educational reforms.

In summary, Baltic Sea Region cooperation provides a platform for addressing shared challenges by fostering collaboration, information exchange, and joint initiatives. By leveraging the strengths of each participating country, the region can collectively work towards sustainable solutions that benefit all involved parties. The challenges of renewable energy, ship production, tourism, and education can be effectively tackled through a coordinated and cooperative approach.

BRANDENBURG

Economic Growth and Innovation:

Collaboration with neighbouring regions in the Baltic Sea enhances economic prospects for Brandenburg, fostering innovation and job creation. Participating in joint research initiatives and developing sustainable practices positions Brandenburg as a hub for technological advancements, contributing to overall economic growth.

Cultural Exchange and Tourism Boost:

Engaging with neighbouring regions facilitates cultural understanding and educational exchanges, attracting more visitors to Brandenburg. The region's cultural richness, historical landmarks, and scenic landscapes become key attractions. Cooperative marketing efforts contribute to tourism growth, supporting local businesses and enhancing Brandenburg's economic landscape.

Brandenburg's Advantages:

- ✧ **Strategic Geographic Location:** Brandenburg's central location near Berlin and the Baltic Sea makes it a pivotal point for trade and connectivity, strengthening its regional significance.
- ✧ **Cultural Heritage:** With a wealth of historical and cultural assets, Brandenburg has become an appealing destination, contributing to tourism and fostering cultural ties with neighbouring regions.
- ✧ **Innovation Focus:** Brandenburg's commitment to research and innovation, particularly in sustainable practices, establishes it as a leader in forward-thinking solutions within the Baltic Sea Region.
- ✧ **Efficient Connectivity:** Well-developed transportation infrastructure ensures the smooth movement of people and goods, enhancing regional integration and supporting economic activities in Brandenburg.

Latvia

Latvia's regions are actively involved in the BSSSC. The recommendations and ideas presented focus on the Riga area and the Vidzeme region.

RIGA

Considering Latvia's digitalization and innovative culture, establishing a hub for innovation and digital advancement focused on youth collaboration could be a transformative idea for Riga. With quality universities fostering the growth of young individuals, Riga has the potential to become a dynamic centre for youth-driven initiatives and projects.

Riga's strategic geographical location positions it as a key entry point to the Baltic Sea. Leveraging this advantage, hosting onsite events in Riga is strongly recommended due to its easy accessibility. Drawing more people to Riga not only enhances the local environment but also brings in diverse ideas and projects to benefit the entire region.

As the most urban area in the country, with a significant portion of the population residing in or around Riga, the youth presence in the region is substantial. Numerous opportunities for youth involvement in various activities would be available, yet the full potential is not reached.

There could be an exchange program beyond Riga to involve youth from organisations across the Baltic Sea Region. Emphasising the active participation of youth rather than solely involving adults who work with them is crucial. Fostering connections among Riga's youth and their peers in the Baltic Sea Region can create a vibrant network of collaboration.

Youth participation:

Youth participation could potentially be enhanced through the implementation of more programs focused on teaching children about the benefits and possibilities of active involvement from a young age. The reality is that children can be taught to be proactive contributors to their communities and regions. Consequently, it is probable that if more children grow up learning about the myriad possibilities that await them in 5 or 10 years, it can empower them to explore and identify areas where they would like to participate and be actively involved.

VIDZEME

The Vidzeme region faces considerable economic inequality, potentially limiting youth access and knowledge about participation in cooperative programs. However, Vidzeme holds the opportunity to harness Baltic Sea Region collaboration, using it as a platform to promote cultural exchange programs and tourism initiatives. This could spotlight its picturesque locations, drawing visitors from other Baltic Sea Region countries.

Prioritising sustainable development is pivotal. By addressing regional inequality through the implementation of sound economic policies, Vidzeme can increase opportunities for individuals residing outside urban centres. This, in turn, would enable a more effective utilization of Baltic Sea Region collaboration.

To disseminate knowledge about Baltic Sea Region Cooperation in Vidzeme, collaborative efforts involving the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) can be established with businesses, organizations, universities, and local institutions. Such partnerships aim to promote and raise awareness about CBSS-organised events among the people in the Vidzeme region, fostering greater regional engagement.

Lithuania

Lithuania the recommendations focus on the region of Kaunas, however, they can be transferred to further regions as well.

KAUNAS

Kaunas presents a unique opportunity for increased engagement in Baltic Sea Region collaboration. With numerous historical buildings requiring urgent renovation, adopting state-of-the-art construction methods becomes imperative for achieving maximum efficiency. This not only supports Kaunas in its journey towards environmental sustainability but also ensures the creation of contemporary, accessible structures.

Baltic Sea cooperation can serve as a catalyst for this transformation by providing expertise, technology, and streamlined procurement procedures through parliamentary discussions. This collaborative effort opens doors for Kaunas to embrace environmentally friendly practices, potentially becoming carbon-neutral in the long term.

Moreover, Kaunas' rich history, spanning from the Second World War to the Soviet era, offers a valuable cultural and historical context. This heritage becomes a compelling draw for the cultural and historical education of young people and attracts tourists from the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). By enhancing its offerings and embracing collaboration, Kaunas not only preserves its historical legacy but also unlocks significant cultural and economic opportunities through increased tourism.

Norway

Norway is a very active contributor to the Baltic Sea Region collaboration. The ideas in this paragraph are mostly focusing on the Oslo region but can be transferred to further regions such as the Viken County Council and Eastern Norway County Network.

OSLO

As Oslo is a highly sought-after place to live, the region experiences increased pressure on its infrastructure. Both the housing and public policy industries are significantly impacted by the high population density.

Drawing inspiration from the experiences of other Baltic Sea States, such as Poland, where it is popular to move outside of the city and reconnect with nature, Oslo could consider a similar approach. Organising a social campaign could effectively promote the advantages of living outside the city, particularly in rural areas. This campaign aims to reshape people's perceptions of the countryside, potentially encouraging some to consider relocating.

In the context of Baltic collaboration, Norway possesses substantial expertise in sustainability and has made visible impacts on the environment. This presents an excellent opportunity for other Baltic Sea States to learn from Norway's experiences, such as producing less waste per person and implementing practical solutions for reducing emissions.

Norway could potentially serve as a mentor in environmental issues within the Baltic Sea Region. Simultaneously, engaging in the Baltic dialogue could offer Norway valuable insights into other cultures.

However, it's worth noting that during our research, we found that Norwegians can be somewhat reserved, making it challenging for newcomers to integrate into society.

Therefore, promoting Baltic cooperation in Norway could generate more interest in learning about other cultures. Initiatives like young people/students/experts exchanges specifically within the Baltic Sea Region could facilitate cultural understanding and integration for newcomers.

Poland

The past two chairmanships of the BSSSC were held by Polish regions, the Pomeranian and West Pomeranian regions. Therefore, it seems that these regions have a lot of knowledge to share on how Baltic Sea Region collaboration can elevate the region and showcase their potential.

WEST POMERANIA AND POMERANIA

Situated in a breathtaking landscape abundant with resources and tourism gems, including a stunning coastline, lush forests, picturesque lakes, and rejuvenating thermal spas, West Pomerania and Pomerania are not just beautiful regions but also actively engaged in Baltic Sea Region cooperation. The economic prerequisites and strategic geographical location of these regions have positioned them as vital contributors to collaborative efforts.

Already demonstrating a strong commitment to Baltic Sea Region cooperation, West Pomerania and Pomerania have actively participated in various initiatives promoting sustainable development. The regions recognize the value of their abundant tourism resources as a powerful attractant for fostering collaborations that align with sustainable practices.

In addition to being blessed with natural beauty, these regions also boast a vibrant economic landscape. Leveraging their economic prerequisites, West Pomerania and Pomerania can serve as dynamic hubs for workshops and conferences within the Baltic Sea Region cooperation framework. Their active involvement and commitment underscore the importance they place on regional collaboration, making them key players in the shared goals of the Baltic Sea Region community.

The strategic geographical location of West Pomerania and Pomerania further enhances their role in cooperation, providing a gateway for effective interaction and exchange. As these regions continue to actively participate and contribute, their commitment to Baltic Sea Region cooperation stands as a testament to the mutual benefits derived from collaborative initiatives in this vibrant and strategically significant part of Europe.

Youth participation:

In the West Pomeranian region, as in the broader context of Poland, engaging youth actively can pose a challenge. There appear to be two distinct groups of young people: those with limited interest in participation

and another group so actively involved that time constraints become a factor. It is suggested that local youth councils, particularly those with Baltic Sea Region experience, take the lead in organizing presentations or lectures in schools and universities. The goal is to showcase the opportunities that Baltic collaboration offers to the youth.

Furthermore, it is recommended that participants in Baltic Sea Region activities consider it a responsibility to present information about the cooperation in their respective schools or workplaces. This proactive approach could contribute to raising awareness and generating interest in Baltic collaboration. These efforts aim to inspire individuals to explore and potentially join in the collaborative initiatives.

Sweden

Several Swedish regions are showing increased interest in engaging in Baltic Sea Region collaboration. The BSSSC network and the regions could profit from enhanced collaboration and knowledge-sharing, several ideas are presented below.

The regions of Stockholm, Skåne, Kalmar, and Dalarna in Sweden hold unique opportunities for active engagement and collaboration within the Baltic Sea Region.

In Dalarna, known for its picturesque landscapes, collaborative efforts can focus on initiatives aimed at preserving the Baltic Sea and its ecosystems. This could involve joint ventures in environmental monitoring, conservation projects, and sustainable development practices. Given Dalarna's distinct natural beauty, the preservation of these landscapes becomes crucial for maintaining the region's identity and ensuring the well-being of its inhabitants.

In addressing shared challenges like the refugee issue, the establishment of a platform for information and data sharing across regions, including Dalarna, could foster a better understanding of regional dynamics and migration flows. Such collaboration facilitates coordinated responses and contributes to a collective effort within the broader Baltic Sea Region.

Moving beyond Dalarna, the regions of Stockholm, Skåne, and Kalmar can also actively participate in collaborative endeavours. Joint initiatives could be directed towards promoting tourism and cultural exchange programs. This might include collaborative marketing campaigns and the development of cultural events, benefiting not only the individual regions but also creating a positive and mutually reinforcing environment for the Baltic Sea Region as a whole.

In targeting increased youth participation, employing advertising methods, especially through social media platforms, emerges as a swift and effective strategy. Utilising social networking sites is key to engaging youth and encouraging their active involvement in collaborative initiatives across Stockholm, Skåne, Kalmar, and Dalarna regions.

