



**10th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy of Baltic Sea Region
12-13th of June 2019
Gdańsk, Poland**

SUMMARY REPORT

Seminar: Lifelong Learning for Smart Specializations

Time: Thursday, 13 June 2019, 13:15 - 14:45

Changing demographic patterns has a strong impact on socio-economic development in the Baltic Sea Region and these changes accelerate regional disparities. Smart specialisation focused on lifelong learning is a tool to tackle demographic and economic challenges.

The aim of the seminar was to raise the awareness on the flexible lifelong learning pathways as a solution for building small and medium-size enterprises' (SMEs) capacity for learning and change to boost the transition to sustainable business models in the Baltic Sea Region countries. The seminar addressed the need for the SMEs to build their ability to learn and change in the transforming markets. There is a growing need to focus on lifelong learning as an instrument for the development of society and regions.

The seminar focused on the following central themes:

- The Gap of Competences for the Recent Economy;
- SMEs and Innovation Perspective in Lifelong Learning;
- Creating Competence with a Finnish Touch;
- Future Skills.

The seminar consisted of two main parts. First - introductory presentations, and second - a panel discussion.

Ms Joanna Bochniarz, President of Center for Innovative Education (Poland), presented the topic on future skills, emphasizing the skills the workforce will need in the nearest future. The most important skills are critical thinking, creativity, people management, coordinating with others, emotional intelligence, service orientation, etc. At the same time, Ms Joanna Bochniarz pointed out that lifelong learning should be included into the development strategy of each SMEs. **Mr Ugnius Savickas**, Expert from Lithuania, talked about the gaps of competences for the recent economy. He believes the recent economy products need to create meaning, some sort of memory for consumers, but the highest-value economic offerings are experiences. A new economic era in which all businesses must orchestrate memorable events for their customers, and that memory itself becomes the product of the experience. At the end of his presentation he mentioned the ability to adapt to different situations and the acquisition of new skills as being very important. **Ms Ilona Platonova**, Expert and Innovation Broker at Vidzeme Planning Region (Latvia), gave overall introduction by SWOT analysis of lifelong learning management in eight Baltic Sea Region countries in line with analysis of Seed Money project "BSR SMART LIFE". She pointed out that SMEs have higher skills deficiencies than large companies, and SMEs often have challenges to attract and retain talent and that lack of skills limits their development. **Ms Annemari Sinikorpi**, Communication Coordinator and **Ms Anna Alto**, Project Manager from JAMK University (Finland), introduced with JAMK University of Applied Sciences and admitted that Finland



needs a lifelong learning policy where the development of skills and competencies is seen as a long-term investment and a source of well-being. In turn, **Mr Esa Kokkonen**, Priority Area *Innovation* Coordinator of European Union Strategy for Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) (Finland), gave an overall introduction on EUSBSR Policy Area *Innovation*, S3 and SMEs actions and strategic goals and how the actions are related with the needs of SME's.

Mr Anders Bergström was invited to join the discussion panel. Since 2013, Anders Bergström holds the positions as Policy Area Coordinator for PA *Education* and Horizontal Action Coordinator for HA *Capacity* under Baltic Sea Region strategy.

SMEs account for 99% of all companies in Europe. Challenges SMEs are facing is lack of skilled workforce, increasing costs of workforce and business transfer challenges. Greater attention should be paid to the learning process in the work environment **and the lifelong learning should be included in the development strategy of each SME.** However, **SMEs needs are underrepresented in discussions about education.** The current situation shows, SMEs and individuals tend to choose different training. Therefore, in the recruitment phase, those people who will use their skills for SMEs should be selected. Compulsory recruitment rate should be introduced so only "fit for market" training is provided by the public funds. At the same time, the training programmes of adult education for SMEs should be flexible, short-term and oriented to the needs of SMEs, and useful for the economic development of the regions. Introduced with existing best practices on how SMEs can learn together and not waste time, such example as the Biobord platform was developed and is piloting in RD12CluB project partnership that connects rural bioeconomy entrepreneurs with talent, expertise, peers, support and consumers to boost business development and innovation. A collective understanding was reached that the qualitative dialogue among all parties involved (such as local, regional and national government bodies, private sector organizations, and institutions offering educational services) is needed to local, regional and at Baltic Sea Region scale to link lifelong learning education and needs of SMEs.