

Opening speech Mr. Roger Ryberg, Chairman of BSSSC

10th EUSBSR Annual Forum 2019 in Gdansk, Poland

Excellences, Prime Ministers, Ministers, Ambassadors, representatives of the European Commission, Marshal Struk,
Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation - I hereby wish you all very welcomed to the 10th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). BSSSC was partner in organising the very first Annual Forum in Tallinn back in 2010 - and we are delighted again to be part of preparing and executing this important event.

The EUSBSR has since it was launched 10 years ago been an important platform and framework the Baltic Sea Region cooperation at all levels - and guiding the work of the BSSSC. The BSSSC's aim is to advocate the interests of sub-national level and raise the voice of youth within the framework of the strategy.

Representing the partner country Norway – I am proud to show the commitment and interest of Norway in the Baltic Sea Region cooperation through our partnership in this year's EUSBSR Annual Forum.

The Norwegian Government as well as the cities and regions have focus on circular economy and the need to change into a greener society. Clean and sustainable oceans is a key priority area for Norway, and Prime Minister Solberg has discussed this with high-level politicians in Europe and globally over the past years. And - in 2019 Oslo is the European Green Capital.

In the BSSSC – we see the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects - and recognizing their inter-linkages - to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions.

The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are our joint global action plan for a better future - a framework for political actions on all levels to face multiple challenges.

The report “*Baltic 2030: Bumps on the Road – How the Baltic Sea States are performing on the SDGs*” was commissioned by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and published in June last year. It shows that despite good performance overall in the SDG Index and Dashboards Report - compared to other regions in the world - the Baltic Sea Region is currently far from sustainable. The main challenging performances were identified in SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production, in SDG 13 - Climate Action and in SDG 15 - Life on Land.

So choosing “Circular and sharing economy” as basis for the 10th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR is therefore natural and logical.

There is a necessity to raise awareness on how an innovative circular economy can bring us closer to reaching several of our key targets in the EUSBSR. The important role that local and regional authorities, business sector, academia and NGOs have in this process should not be underestimated.

We need to stimulate knowledge development, peer reviews, exchange of good practises and mutual learning among actors in the Baltic Sea Region - and beyond. A best practises report on circular economy is therefore one of BSSSCs contributions to this forum. We hope you will find it inspiring.

Involving youth into our work is a key priority for BSSSC.

Together with Union of Baltic Cities and EuroRegion Baltic, BSSSC has promoted the inclusion of youth into the EUSBSR already at several Annual Fora - under the headline “Nothing about us without us”! In 2019, we have stepped up this effort and have arranged a Baltic Youth Camp close to Gdansk for around 100 young people in the days leading up to this Annual Forum. AND, several young people are contributing to this Annual Forum’s programme – both in plenary and parallel sessions. I can assure you that BSSSC will continue to advocate for a fixed role for the youth-voice within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

Working cross sectors, cross generations and levels of governance are important to achieve the ambitious goals of the EUSBSR. Only when working together we can make a difference.

I wish you two fruitful days here in beautiful Gdansk - and may the sessions and seminars stimulate and inspire vivid discussions and exchange of ideas – in support of a more sustainable Baltic Sea Region – making use of all available capacities.

Thank you!