

Briefing Paper

For the 2011/12 German Presidency of the Council of the
Baltic Sea States

**Creating a Coherent Framework for
Baltic Sea Cooperation**

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Executive summary

'Coherence' is a term often used rather ambiguously. As it is procedural in character, coherence not only refers to bringing about consistent results, but also to the ways other actors are being integrated into policy-making processes. Hence this policy paper explores several of the main institutions and policy frameworks in the context of Baltic Sea Cooperation (BSC) – the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Northern Dimension (ND), the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) – and assesses the potential for furthering coherence in a set of important policy areas, including energy, environmental and cultural cooperation. The policy brief encourages the EU and other partner countries to draw regional actors closer to the decision-making process and to utilise their potentials as platforms within a coherent system of regional cooperation.

1. Baltic Sea Cooperation (BSC) and the challenge of coherence

Baltic Sea Cooperation (BSC) has grown tremendously over the past few decades, in particular in the aftermath of the Cold War. Today it spans across various policy sectors, involves a wide range of private and public actors from the European, national, sub-national and local levels and encompasses both state and non-state actors. Some political observers have called BSC an 'institutional nightmare', others a 'positive mess'. Owing to institutional and policy overlap and coordination problems, all actors face the challenge to create an effective and efficient system of BSC in which tangible, efficient and sustainable results can be produced and the problems and challenges the region is facing can be dealt with effectively. It is toward this background that the German Presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) for the year 2011/12 has proposed as one of its priorities to foster "a coherent framework" (Foreign Ministry of Germany 2011: 3 and 9) for cooperation among the various fora in the Baltic Sea region (BSR).

The five 'Cs', or defining 'coherence'

The elusive quest for coherence is one of the recurrent themes of political life – at both the domestic and international level. Moreover, it is one of the most frequently bemoaned shortcomings in international cooperation. This particularly holds true today in times of economic crisis and scarce financial resources triggered by the European sovereign debt crisis. Yet, with the sole exception of totalitarian regimes, all forms of political pluralism are exposed to the challenge of co-

herence. In complex systems of international cooperation, such as the one in the BSR, incoherence is almost the natural state of affairs. The term 'coherence', however, has remained rather vague and ambiguous, in particular as it tends to be used interchangeably with other concepts such as 'coordination' or 'consistency'. Moreover, it carries some emotional 'baggage' as, in principle, all policies and actions are desired to be coherent. Perhaps it is best conceptualized as actions and actors 'being structurally harmonized'. From that angle, coherence represents a high stage of structural harmonization based on factors such as 'coordination, comprehensiveness, completeness, continuity and consistency' (five 'Cs') in terms of policies and actors. To give an example: While 'consistency' refers to the character of an outcome [...], which is logically compatible with another or not, 'coherence' goes beyond and specifies the quality of a process, in which ideally the single entities involved join together in a synergetic procedural whole (see Gebhard 2011: 106). Hence, whereas coordination is an important pillar within the overall concept of coherence, coherence itself is more than just coordination. Coherence has a more positive connotation than coordination which sometimes is understood as something that 'scares' people off since everyone wants coordination, but nobody wants to be 'coordinated'.

Coherence: Two types, two dimensions

One can distinguish between two types (thematic/policy and actor) and two dimensions (horizontal and vertical) of coherence: First, while thematic/policy coherence refers to structural harmonization of a policy, actor coherence refers to the degree of unity within an actor or an institution. Second, horizontal coherence refers to coherence between different international policies and actors (for example, 'coordinator' role for CBSS in BSC) whereas vertical coherence refers to coherence between international and national policies and actors (for example, 'leadership' role for CBSS in BSC).

In sum, coherence is a twofold concept embracing concrete results on the one hand and the ways consistent results are being achieved on the other. Coherence should not only be reduced to its output dimension, but rather be conceived as a process embracing both the output and input dimension of a political process. With regards to the latter, coherence also refers to ways other actors and stakeholders are being integrated into the policy-making process.

2. Coherence and the institutional framework for Baltic Sea Cooperation

Baltic Sea Cooperation (BSC) is both institutionally and thematically thick. The institutional framework of the BSR is complex and involves many different layers, formats, constellations and levels. Relevant regional cooperation structures in Northern Europe include the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Northern Dimension (ND) of the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), Nordic Cooperation – Nordic Council (NC) and Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), Baltic cooperation, Nordic-Baltic Cooperation (Nordic-Baltic 8/NB 8), informal cooperation among the EU members of the region (Nordic Baltic 6/NB 6 and NB 6 plus Poland and Germany), the Arctic Council (AC) and the Barents-Euro Arctic Council (BEAC). Several bodies operate on parliamentary, trans-governmental (sub-national or local elements cooperating internationally) and transnational (non-state and non-governmental actors cooperating internationally) levels, for example, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Cooperation (BSSSC), the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) and several Baltic Sea NGO networks. Several specialised organisations add to the picture, such as the Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation (BASREC) and the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) that promotes cooperation concerning the protection of the maritime environment.

In this context, the focus will be on 1) the CBSS, 2) the ND and 3) the EUSBSR as the main overarching structures of BSC as well as 4) Nordic cooperation/the Nordic Council of Ministers as a structure that also has a potential for fostering cooperation in the BSR:

- 1) Since 1992, the **Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)** provides a platform for the political multilateral dialogue on common regional issues and for the coordination among all the states of the region at the highest political level. Its broad mandate has again been emphasised by the reform process between 2007 and 2010. Lithuania's then Foreign Minister, Usackas (Balticness Autumn 2009: 4), claimed that 'the political dimension of the CBSS should remain strong. Its broad membership, comprising all Baltic Sea countries, is the CBSS's biggest advantage, providing it with a strong position in the region's political landscape' (*ibid.*). 'The CBSS is still able to create an environment for a better understanding among participating countries and could provide a natural platform for EU relations with Iceland, Norway and Russia' (*ibid.*). The CBSS deals with concrete joint regional

challenges, problems, opportunities and interests stressing the high-political side not more than necessary. Such pragmatic functional regional cooperation could have a positive impact on high-political levels where the cooperation between EU member states and Russia is more difficult. Involving Russia and the EU (European Commission/European External Action Service) as equal members and being involved in the ND and the EUSBSR, the CBSS could provide a platform for cooperation at the intersection of EU internal and external policies. In this respect, the CBSS has a potential to foster coherence and cohesion in a horizontal manner. The CBSS plays a particularly important role in integrating Russia in regional cooperation and provides a relevant link between Russia and the EU. In this respect, the South Eastern Baltic (SEBA) modernisation partnership and the Northwest Strategy of Russia in which the CBSS is closely involved also have an important function. Russia itself has called to ensure the independence of the CBSS vis-à-vis the EU (see Makarychev 2012: 9). Russia will assume the one-year CBSS Presidency on 1 July 2012. The country has taken on an active approach toward BSC and in its CBSS Presidency programme strives for coherence and continuity with previous and future CBSS presidencies (Lanko 2011).

The CBSS has outstanding expertise in issue areas such as civil security (for example, children at risk and trafficking in human beings, radiation and nuclear safety), maritime economy and sustainable development. It therefore has good perspectives to maintain its leading position among Baltic Sea organisations and cooperation networks within those issue areas and to contribute to related projects within the ND and the EUSBSR. Also issues that are not explicitly covered by the EUSBSR, for instance culture, Baltic Sea identity¹ and region branding, could be highlighted and utilised as the further trademarks of the CBSS. The current German CBSS Presidency aims at making the CBSS strong and fit for the future so that it will be able to remain a “pioneer of regional cooperation and a symbol of the regional identity” (Hoyer 2011: 4).

1) Whether a fully-fledged Baltic Sea identity exists, shared by all its riparian countries, seems to be a rather abstract and philosophical question. Perhaps identity could therefore be understood in a more pragmatic and flexible manner. Challenges and problems that affect more than one country and require a joint solution create a certain notion of identity among states and people and so do the institutions that deal with those issues. A certain notion of a regional identity in terms of jointly recognising and dealing with common problems, challenges and opportunities could contribute to coherent, effective and consistent cooperation.

- 2) The **Northern Dimension (ND)**, in turn, has a (much) wider geographical focus than the BSR and also includes the Barents Sea and the Arctic. The ND was restructured in 2006, functioning as the Northern Dimension of the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland since 2007 and involving the three non-EU members on an equal footing (see Archer and Etzold 2008). The four regional councils – CBSS, Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), Arctic Council (AC) and Barents-Euro Arctic Council (BEAC) – act as ND partners (see Alto et al 2011; Herolf 2010). Four ND partnerships, the ND Environmental Partnership (NDEP), largely funded by international financial institutions, the ND Partnership for Public Health and Social Wellbeing (NDPHS), and the fairly recently established ND Partnerships on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL) and Culture (NDCP) are the most visible activities within the ND. Several prospects of creating coherence through the ND to regional cooperation in the BSR and beyond can be identified, for example in the areas of transport and energy (see below). There is a strong link between the ND and the CBSS, underpinned by a close partnership between the permanent CBSS Secretariat and the Secretariat of the NDPHS which are located within the same premise. The relationship between the CBSS and NDPHS is a good example for the division of labour as the CBSS does not have a working structure in the area of health of its own. Cooperation between other ND partnerships and the CBSS, for example in the cultural field, however, could still be improved.
- 3) In recent years, the probably most significant change in BSC, however, has been the launch of the macro-regional **EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region (EUSBSR)** (see Schymik 2011). The EUSBSR focuses on environmental sustainability, economic development, accessibility and safety and has identified 15 priority areas along those lines. The strategy can be seen as an expression of the fact that EU membership shifted from a marginal to a dominant paradigm in the region since the 1990s, implying the opportunity to conduct regional cooperation, at least in parts, within an EU context, rendering the cooperation more result-oriented and legally binding. The launch of the strategy has provided post-enlargement Baltic Sea cooperation with a fresh impetus and incentive. One of the objectives of the strategy is to improve coordination of activities and, in a nutshell, coherence. The EUSBSR offers an opportunity for the regional organisations and the EU to enhance their cooperation and to create synergies. The European Commission ensures overall coordination of the strategy and facilitates the involvement of

relevant stakeholders (European Commission 2012: 6). Thus, the EUSBSR provides the regional organisations with the opportunity to embed their activities into a wider strategic design and broader institutional framework, while the EU might be able to benefit from the regional experiences and expertise that these bodies have accumulated over time. Cooperating more closely “would be a way forward in shaping the political space and would not threaten their identities” (Antola 2009: 11). Hence, the Council of the EU encouraged the member states to further investigate the “synergy effects between the EUSBSR and multilateral cooperation structures and networks within the Baltic Sea Region ... through better coordination and effective use of communication channels and fora related to EUSBSR and Baltic Sea Region to provide increased efficiency of intervention within macro region” (Council of the European Union 2011: 5).

Two years into the implementation of the strategy, it probably is too early to judge whether the ambitious goals of increasing cooperation and creating synergies have been achieved, but there are some promising signs. Currently, regional actors such as HELCOM are in the process of becoming important implementation partners and coordinators of parts of the strategy. The CBSS is in a good position of providing a cooperation platform between the strategy and third countries. As the latest EUSBSR implementation report of the European Commission indicated, “the strategy is fostering the development of new inclusive networks, as well as increased cooperation and a better division of labour for existing networks”, and, “provides a common reference point for the many organisations in the Baltic Sea Region” (European Commission 2011: 3). ‘Reference point’ is indeed a more appropriate term for describing the strategy than ‘framework’ as the latter might be understood too narrowly, taking into account that there are several frameworks for BSC already. The EUSBSR as a reference point for BSC could also more easily be accepted by non-EU-members, such as Russia, Norway and Iceland, which, owing to its EU-internal character, cannot become fully involved in the strategy but should naturally be included in any major framework of BSC.

- 4) The **Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM)** has been established as an inter-governmental organisation in 1971, fostering the cooperation between the governments of the five Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. It is one of the eldest regional organisations in Northern Europe. Naturally, Nordic cooperation keeps focusing on the Nordic area

(“Norden”) but has opened up and became more ‘international’- and Europe-focused in recent years. The BSR and Norden’s adjacent areas have even become priorities of Nordic cooperation. The NCM plays a strong role in the implementation of the ND and the elaboration and implementation of the EUSBSR, attempting to contribute with its expertise and experience to the strategy’s success, mainly in the areas of research, innovation and energy. According to the European Commission (2012: 6) the continued dialogue with the NCM “will ensure a more coordinated use of human and financial resources”. Owing to its expertise, experience and financial and human resources, the NCM is in a good position to contribute to the creation of a coherent system of regional cooperation in Northern Europe and the BSR.

3. Creating coherence across policies

Whether the creation of more coherence is required and useful in regional cooperation depends to a great extent on the specific issue area. In some areas of cooperation, a comprehensive and complementary institutional landscape that, however, is not overly coherent in terms of streamlining and coordinating efforts of various actors might do the trick better than an overly coherent and rational one as some issue areas are so complex that every little could help. Forced coherence could have an artificial character and rather hamper than foster the cooperation. In other areas, however, there is more need to connect existing structures as there either is a potential risk to create negative overlap and duplicating structures or this has already happened. Again in other fields of cooperation, the various structures have already established well-functioning cooperation, an effective division of labour and coordination mechanisms.²

- 1) In the cooperation within the area of **civil security** (for example, civil protection and nuclear & radiation safety) any harmful overlaps did not become evident; the coordination level is overall good. The relevant CBSS

² We are drawing on the outcome of workshop sessions on civil security, energy and economic development, environment, and education and cultural cooperation during the conference ‘Baltic Sea Cooperation – A Model for Coherence?’, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik and Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin, 1-2 December 2011, on conference papers and on statements of conference participants. We are grateful to Pertti Joenniemi (University of Eastern Finland), Pami Aalto (University of Tampere), Arild Sæther (University of Agder), Kristine Kern (University of Wageningen), Marko Joas (Åbo Akademi University), Hiski Haukkala (University of Tampere), Mia Crawford, Jan Lundin and Christer Pursiainen (CBSS Secretariat), Andrea C. Bayer (Ars Baltica Secretariat) and Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues (IBEI) for their input, in particular to the sections on civil security (Pursiainen), energy (Aalto), environment (Crawford, Kern and Joas) and culture (Sæther and Bayer).

structures maintain good working relationships with their counterparts on other levels. The CBSS Expert Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety (EGNRS), for example, cooperates efficiently with other related regional cooperation arrangements such as HELCOM and there is a clear division of labour with HELCOM in the area of environmental monitoring. The Baltic Sea Civil Protection Network provides a direct link between the CBSS and Nordic cooperation. The CBSS has a coordination function in civil security related projects within the EUSBSR. If there were problems within this field of cooperation, they were technical in nature, sometimes relating to arrangements with non-regional actors such as the UN or the EU. Shaping the function of an umbrella coordinator within or across sectors does not necessarily provide added value.

- 2) Another case in point is **energy**. It is difficult to imagine more coherence to be created in Baltic Sea energy cooperation within the CBSS framework owing to systemic problems and limited achievements of Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation (BASREC). The EUSBSR could have a role in intra-EU coordination of 'small' and 'new' (renewable energies, energy efficiency etc.) energy fields. Any effort to improve coherence in energy cooperation in the BSR could best be directed to the latter. Good chances for cooperation within the 'small' energy field exist through the ND and the NDEP in particular, as a result of their linkages with the wider EU-Russia framework. Work through these bodies could be combined with the sizable NCM research and funding in this field, while BASREC could be brought closer to their actions in order to create more critical mass. Iceland could be taken in through the ND to work on geo-thermal energy, while Norway is capable of helping to develop CCS (Carbon Dioxide and Capture Storage) and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) shipping. Utilising the CBSS secretariat to increase policy planning and cooperation capacity could also be considered. A concrete step into this direction could be to re-establish a permanent secretariat of BASREC (currently, the rotating BASREC presidency covers the secretariat function) as an independent unit within the permanent CBSS Secretariat. Manned with distinguished experts in the energy field, this Secretariat could help re-establishing BASREC as an important actor within the field of energy cooperation. The CBSS could provide a political function within energy cooperation. For example, the CBSS has adopted a declaration on energy security in the BSR at its extraordinary ministerial session in Plön on 5 February 2012 (see CBSS 2012). The declaration stresses the sig-

nificance of a political dialogue on energy cooperation and energy security on the highest level and affirms the need and paves the way for closer political cooperation in this important field.

- 3) In **environmental** BSC, an institutional complex has developed that includes Baltic 21/CBSS, HELCOM, the EUSBSR, BSPC, trans-governmental organisations such as the BSSSC and UBC and various environmental NGO networks. This institutional overlap does not have negative consequences. The current situation is characterized by synergies between HELCOM and the EUSBSR and by a division of labour between Baltic 21 and HELCOM, for example in the area of climate change adaptation. CBSS/Baltic 21 have a particular responsibility for the latter, while HELCOM mainly focuses on the maritime environment. The environmental focus of the EUSBSR apparently is on biodiversity and eutrophication. CBSS and HELCOM could cooperate even more closely, for example, in the form of establishing a joint environmental maritime working group. Also stakeholder participation has improved considerably. From an environment and sustainability point of view, the region is much more coherent than it used to be only a few years ago. The launch of the EUSBSR and the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), the CBSS reform with its long-term priorities and the integration of Baltic 21 into the core structures of the CBSS, have served as united forces of coordination and coherence among actors. However, the environmental governance of the BSR requires new leadership concepts and styles. Individual leadership is still important, but needs to be completed by organizational leadership, thus one organisation/actor taking the lead more clearly in terms of providing a platform for other actors and coordination of activities. Leadership within networks has to be based on cooperation and requires additional skills such as coaching, facilitating and mediation. This also applies to other areas of BSC.

- 4) In the field of **cultural cooperation**, there still appears to be a need for creating platforms for a) the exchange of information and knowledge both between project leaders and organisations such as Ars Baltica, NDPC, CBSS, NCM and b) the presentation of projects and best practice results that the BSR has to offer. In the opinion of cultural stakeholders, it might be useful to organise back-to-back meetings of the steering groups of, for example, NDPC, the CBSS Senior Officials Group for Culture (SOGC) and Ars Baltica.

Also common conferences and workshop days could be useful, where project leaders and stakeholders can meet, learn from each other and develop new ideas for cooperation, aiming on utilising better what is already existing. According to stakeholders, reducing the number of (cooperation) structures in the cultural field to a manageable size could make sense as they all deal with the same or similar issues and partly involve the same persons and staff. As also the financial means are limited, they could possibly be more efficiently used with fewer cooperation structures. A concrete step into this direction could be to merge the secretariats of *Ars Baltica* in Rendsburg and the NDPC (currently located within the NCM Secretariat in Copenhagen). Overall, there is a strong need for improvement in both the flow of information and in the dialogue between the different projects and the political level as well as between the various stakeholders in the field of cross-cultural cooperation.

- 5) In the field of **science and education** there are some examples in which various actors cooperate with each other. In the EuroFaculty project Pskov, the CBSS takes a lead role but the project is also supported by the NCM. More such projects along those lines could be conducted as overall the Eurofaculty concept has been fairly successful. The European Humanities University in Vilnius, a Belorussian university in exile, is a fairly successful joint endeavour of the NCM and the European Commission and involves also various other organisations and foundations.
- 6) Efforts to establish sustainable cooperation in the area of **maritime affairs** are closely related to EU advances to establish an integrated maritime policy for the European Union. In 2009, the CBSS established an Expert Group on Maritime Policy. The group aims at “positioning of the Baltic Sea region as a European model region for maritime best practice and for a balanced co-existence of a successful maritime economy and adequate protection of the marine ecosystem” (CBSS 2009: 2). The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) has been engaged in this field with a working group for integrated maritime policy, operating between 2009 and 2011. A similar working group operates under the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Cooperation (BSSSC). These groups have different recipients but are cooperating with each other. Therefore their activities have a complementary effect. There are several concrete projects that are carried by several actors. A project such as *Clean Baltic Sea Shipping* “is dedicated to substantiate the goals and

strategies of several organisations like HELCOM, CBSS and BSSSC” (Clean Baltic Sea Shipping 2012).

4. Conclusions, recommendations and summary

In general, creating cohesion and keeping a variety of cooperation structures do not necessarily have to be contradictory. Creating more coherence does not automatically have to imply making existing cooperation structures redundant or merging them with each other. In specific cases, the latter might be useful, in others rather not.

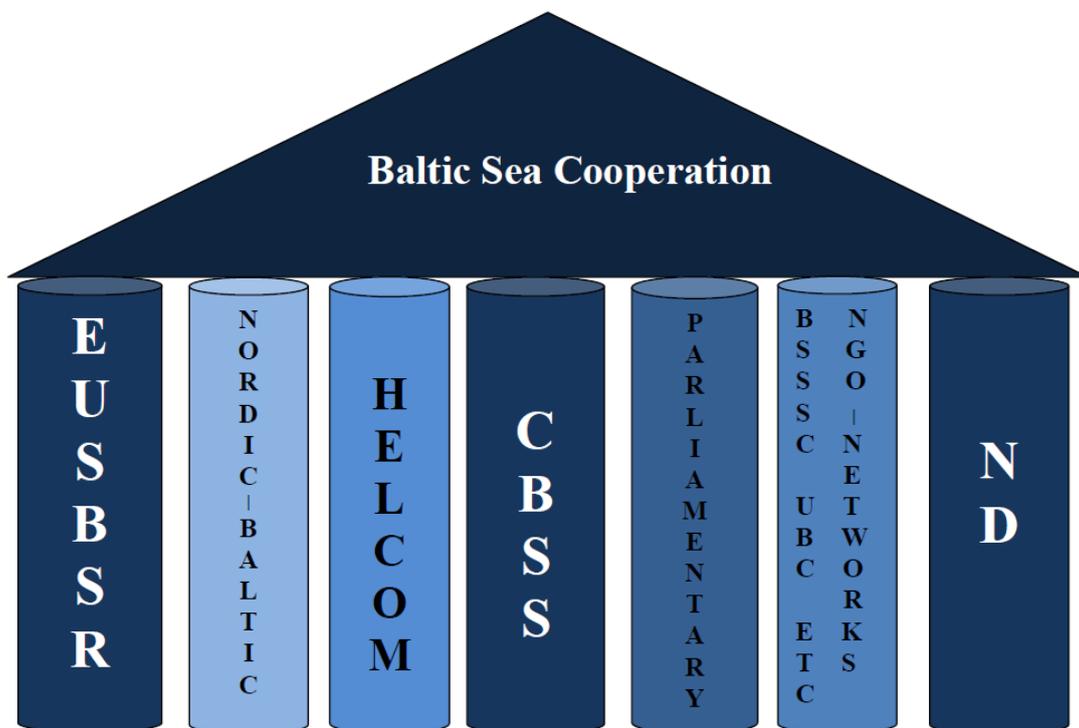
- 1) It is possible that different actors exist along each other as long as their activities complement each other. As long as the individual institutions have a specific enough purpose, are able to contribute to overall cooperation efforts and are useful for their members, they should maintain a ‘right to exist’ – even in times of financial hardship. In such a case, creating coherence would primarily imply to increase the exchange of information and the coordination of activities as well as to foster an effective if not “smart” division of labour. This could lead to comprehensiveness, completeness, continuity and consistency, in particular with an eye on achieving concrete and consistent results. The dissolution of international institutions and frameworks for cooperation, if not supported by all members, may trigger even higher tangible and intangible costs. It is necessary to keep non-EU members, in particular Russia, involved in regional cooperation through as many different platforms on various levels as possible. The more functioning and each other complementing platforms for cooperation with Russia there are, the better and the more fruitful, complementary and comprehensive the exchange and the cooperation could become.
- 2) For several BSR countries, merging the CBSS with the ND would be the wrong signal, in particular as the implications of such a move have been and are completely unclear. The CBSS integration into the ND is not a realistic option as the ND has a wider geographical scope and as some countries of the region do not regard themselves as Northern, in particular Poland and Germany. Moreover, this would compromise these countries’ recent efforts to become more actively engaged in BSC. It also speaks against utilising the ND as an overarching framework and coordinator for any activity in any area of BSC. It might impede the cooperation if the fairly con-

crete concept of BSC would be imbedded into a wider and therefore vaguer concept. For cooperation in the different issue areas, different structures could be used as the overarching and coordinating one, depending on which one is the most appropriate and capable in taking on such a role in the respective field (see above). This would also ensure an effective division of labour.

- 3) It strikes that in several areas of the regional cooperation all or most of the various structures of BSC run working groups (for example, environment and maritime policy). This could be interpreted as an unnecessary duplication of structures; some call indeed for joining forces. However, it can also be seen as a contribution to coherence and comprehensiveness as these groups include different stakeholders (national government officials, sub-state officials, MPs, local representatives, NGO representatives) and have different recipients on various levels, involving an impressive number of different actors in the cooperation. Nonetheless, the interaction and coordination of the activities of these different structures on the various levels within this multi-level governance system will have to be ensured.
- 4) Coherence can be improved if, for example, one actor provides the platform within a specific field of cooperation and acts as a facilitator for the cooperation (such as the European Commission in the case of the EUSBSR). Which actor will be in charge of providing the platform and acting as facilitator for the concrete cooperation depends on the specific issue area and could differ from issue area to issue area (see above). It, however, will be of importance that the various keepers of the platforms and facilitators permanently keep in touch to ensure coherence.
- 5) Regionalisation, decentralisation and transparency in the decision-making processes could be further promoted and enhanced. In this respect, the European Parliament, national parliaments, regional parliamentary organisations as well as civil society actors (both national and trans-national) should be more strongly involved and hence play a stronger role in this coherent system of regional cooperation. Regional challenges could be directly tackled where they emerge by those actors that will be most directly affected by them with the possible support of other actors on different levels. Such an approach has the potential to enhance the subsidiarity of foreign policy and its democratisation. It could facilitate establishing a three-layered democratic system in terms of decision-making and policy implementation (see Jutila and Tikka 2009: 39): European - regional – national. More subsidiarity in foreign and regional policy would provide the still

primarily intergovernmental BSC with a stronger democratic backbone. Generally, the BSR, because of its dense institutional network, has a potential to develop the concepts of network governance, multi-level governance (effective vertical interaction among various international actors and among international and national actors) and subsidiarity (see Filtenborg, Gänzle and Johansson 2002) further and make them work in an effective and efficient manner on a regional level.

Figure 1: “The Baltic Sea House”



Summing up, perhaps the BSR can be thought of as a house of which general Baltic Sea cooperation dealing with the joint problems, challenges and opportunities of the region forms the roof. The various structures of regional cooperation including the different levels are the pillars that carry and support the roof. The EUSBSR and the ND provide the outer support posts, one representing the EU’s internal dimension of BSC, the other standing for the EU’s external dimension including Russia and also forming the touch point of the BSR and BSC with the outside world, i.e. wider Northern Europe and even beyond. The CBSS, including non EU-members and being based at the intersection of EU internal and external policies (see 3.1), forms the support pillar right in the centre of the house. The surrounding, slightly thinner, pillars – Nordic/Baltic/Nordic-Baltic cooperation, HELCOM, parliamentary cooperation (BSPC, NC), trans-governmental and transnational cooperation (for

example, BSSSC, UBC, NGO-Networks), all also involving non EU-member states or actors from non-EU-member states - complement and stabilise the construct. All these pillars of BSC are needed, perhaps some more and some less, as if one breaks away the whole construction becomes unstable and might collapse. Together all the pillars form a coherent, comprehensive and stable whole.

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