



## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum of Euroregion Baltic Stakeholders successfully held in cooperation with South Baltic Professionals project

**Members of the Euroregion Baltic and representatives of other important stakeholders involved in the ERB cooperation met on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2014 in Gdańsk, Poland for the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum of ERB Stakeholders entitled “Labour mobility, higher education and youth cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region – addressing common challenges”. The event was organized jointly with the South Baltic Professionals project and hosted by the Office of the Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship.**

Following the welcome words of the host and the two organisers, Ms Kamila Wojsznis, European Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Poland, gave an insight into the cooperation within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and preparations for the Polish Presidency at the Council of Baltic Sea States. Further Ms Małgorzata Dehmel-Gomerska of the Gdynia City Hall, a project partner of South Baltic Professionals, presented some selected project activities and shared her experience with the participants regarding levers and barriers to geographical mobility. Another keynote speech was given by Mr Igor Kaniecki, Joint Technical Secretariat, South Baltic Cross-border Cooperation Programme, who informed about the South Baltic Programme 2014-2020. In doing so, he highlighted that the Programme would boost regional development through „soft cooperation” between local and regional actors. The increased durability and replicability of project results are of major importance for future Programme.

The plenary session was followed by three parallel workshops. The **first workshop titled „Creating a stable network and interactions among stakeholders involved in labour mobility”** addressed the need to clarify details for a cooperation of skilled EURES advisers in the South Baltic. The workshop was moderated by Mr Johnny Winther Holbech from the Regional Municipality of Bornholm who is also the Leader of the ERB Task Force on Labour Mobility. Further three keynote speeches were given as an input to the workshop: Ms Dominika Butkiewicz, Joint Technical Secretariat, South Baltic Cross-border Cooperation Programme presented results of educational and labour mobility projects within the current South Baltic Programme and gave an overview of new cooperation possibilities with respect to labour mobility in the upcoming Programme. Then Ms Mirosława Kaniszewska from the Solidarność Trade Union presented information on the activities of the Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF). In the third presentation, Ms Mareike Korb, Project Manager of the South Baltic Professionals project, focused on an action plan and recommendations on labour mobility prepared in course of the project. During the discussions, the potential added value of creating a stable network and interactions among stakeholders in the South Baltic Region was discussed, concrete tasks for cooperation and how durable structures for networking and exchange could be organized. It was highlighted among others that structures for EURES differ in each country (e.g. Poland: regional level of influence; Denmark: more centralised system). Further the reform of EURES influences the work, future possibilities and scope of actions.

The **second workshop “Internationalisation of universities and mobility tools”** was moderated by Prof. Jacek Bigda, Medical University of Gdańsk. Two presentations were given during the panel – by Prof. Kazimierz Musiał from the University of Gdańsk about general situation of internationalisation in the Baltic Sea Region and by Prof. Arturas Razinkovas-Baziukas from the University of Klaipėda which was more specific, and focused on the Lithuanian example. Several conclusions were made i.e. internationalisation is not only the way to gain students from abroad, we should look at it from a broader perspective, it will not work if it is considered as the way for survival in crisis period. If it is a kind of development strategy, it could work in long-term period. It would bring change of



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thinking (within academic society, students and society in general) and could give people a chance to cooperate and gain international experience. Competitiveness and cooperation between higher educational institutions in the regions are both present and there is a need to develop them in a proper and balanced way.

Ms Agnieszka Mróz from the Morena Association, moderated the third workshop „**Youth Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region**”. The idea for the workshop was to discuss regional aspects of youth cooperation with particular focus on examples of institutionalised solutions outside the ERB. Since the establishment of the ERB Youth Board back in 2007, the problem of youth cooperation remained one of the most important aspects of ERB work. At the same time the Baltic Sea Region is very active in this area with many youth organisations striving towards finding common solutions to the challenges faced by young people. In the course of the workshop experts presented different initiatives and actions supporting the development of youth cooperation. The first presentation was delivered by Ms Akko Karlsson and Mr Jan Martinsson, both representing the Regional Council in Kalmar County. The presentation focused on the project entitled SYPERB – Strategic Youth Policy in EuroRegion Baltic, which aims conducting a knowledge-based analysis of socio-economic conditions of youth in the ERB, that would be then used for developing sustainable youth-related policies tackling important youth issues. The second presentation was presented by Ms Małgorzata Ludwiczek who works as the Coordinator of the BSSSC Working Group on Youth Policy. In her presentation Ms Ludwiczek gave an overview of BSSSC activities with respect to youth cooperation, focusing on the importance of practical aspects such well-functioning youth structures and availability of EU funds for youth projects. Finally, Mr Niels Chresten Andersen from the Regional Municipality of Bornholm talked about the regional specificity of youth cooperation on Bornholm, stressing the need for direct dialogue between young people and local and regional politicians on issues of importance such education, economic growth policies and intercultural dialogue. In his view any successful youth cooperation should be demand-driven, institutionalised, anchored in relevant regional policies, visible and well-managed when it comes to organisational and communication aspects. During the ensuing discussion participants presented their opinions on the main challenges of youth cooperation including the separation of the youth cooperation from other important social issues and the need to treat it as any other policy which should also be integrated with broader social strategies in the regions. Also, the main challenges were identified such as the cultural differences among young people in their approach to work and the need to change ways of thinking in order to become more socially aware and active.

This year's Forum actively engaged stakeholders in discussions on overlapping issues of labour mobility, education and youth cooperation. Although being different in their approaches to defining and tackling problems at hand, all these important social issues, especially in the context of the cross-border cooperation of the South Baltic area, can be jointly addressed based on the common challenges such as the need for a more in-depth dialogue among actors, or to overcome different social, legal and mental barriers hampering the development of the regions. Also, this year the Forum was held in cooperation with the South Baltic Professionals project and consequently more focus was put on the issues of labour mobility. For the project this event offered a great opportunity to share project results achieved so far, e.g. the specially designed South Baltic Job Portal: [www.sb-professionals.eu/](http://www.sb-professionals.eu/), and get inspired for new joint actions in the future.

**All presentations from the event are available for download [here](#)**