

EU –Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

2nd Stakeholder Conference in Rostock-Warnemünde, 5-6 February 2009

Workshop 2: Territorial Cohesion in the Baltic Sea Region. Friday 6 February at 9.45 a.m.

Comment by Ms. Pauliina Haijanen, Member of the Board of the Regional Council of Southwest Finland, Member of the Committee of the Regions of Europe

I want first to point attention to **prosperity** or economy as a common, important objective of our Baltic Sea strategy. Safeguarding and enhancing economic development has lately – for the reasons we know well – been especially emphasized. In the whole Baltic Sea Region, in the whole Europe and in the whole world we have to face the hard challenge: how can we turn the present downward-trend back to a long-term economic growth?

I think the key to this is how we can maintain and strengthen our already accumulated specialization and competitiveness, how we can continue our success on a solid basis.

In our Baltic Sea Strategy we must target on safeguarding the continuous functional conditions for our top industry in the whole Baltic Sea Region. From the viewpoint of the whole Baltic Sea Region the keywords are: successful business firms and clusters, research and development on the most important branches as well as innovations. Co-operation in these can be increased inside the Baltic Sea Region and also elsewhere. Not only the metropolises must be developed, but the whole region, especially the cities and sub-regions that have the best present and future development potentials. On the basis of what we have in our own region, we know that top functions can succeed also in surprisingly small cities. As an example I want to mention some strengths of our own region Southwest Finland, namely the shipyard of STX Europe in Turku, which is building the biggest cruisers of the world, ICT –industry with a top Nokia factory in Salo, our car factory Valmet Automotive producing now Porsche Boxsters and Porsche Caymans in Uusikaupunki, medical industry like Bayer Schering Pharma in Turku, and wide subcontracting industry, research and development connected with all of these. It is vital for us to keep these strengths and enhance them. In the whole Baltic Sea Region this is a question of both maximizing our competitiveness and promoting regional cohesion.

Secondly, I want to pay attention to the **accessibility** of the Baltic Sea Region. We must confess that the Baltic Sea Region lies outside the biggest central areas of Europe. Anyway, it has an important geographical and political situation and big development potentials. The realisation of potentials requires, e.g., an improvement of the accessibility of the region.

The Baltic Sea Region can, on the basis of its situation and economy, significantly connect East and West, functioning as an open gateway between them. In this context we must notice the great transport corridor connecting Middle Europe, Scandinavia, Finland, Russia and Asia. We should aim at a high-level and well-functioning transport corridor connecting different modes of transport, especially land and sea transports with each other in an efficient and environment-friendly way. In the Baltic Sea Region we should generally aim at a balanced, polycentric regional model, where the traffic is running well and free capacity can easily be utilized.

By utilizing also regional ports we can avoid the congestion of the biggest central ports, growing environmental problems and guarantee also good connections to the hinterlands of the ports. I can mention as an example that the ports of Southwest Finland, especially Turku, offer competitive alternatives, especially in transports between East and West. Also in air transports, especially in cargo transports, Turku offers competitive alternatives, land areas and services.

It is important to intermediate the opinions of Baltic Sea regions and cities to the top of the European Union. This conference is a good example of it and we welcome it warmly.

In the Committee of the Regions the new Interregional Group “Baltic Sea Regions” has in its Joint Position Paper on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, dated on 1 December 2008, proposed a three-level hierarchical model of **governance**, where the European Commission would chair a wide, consultative Baltic Sea Forum and secondly, a decision-making body representing national, regional and local levels. The European Commission would be the top level. This proposal could form a basis for creating the governance. The most essential practical question may be, what organisation would be, as a secretariat, responsible for the practical work and who would finance that. I will leave this to you to think about it.