



Press Release

The Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF) concludes its annual Round Table meeting in Helsinki on 1 November

BSLF calls for strengthened cross-border cooperation to facilitate mobility of labour in the Baltic Sea Region: BSLF Action Plan on Cross-Border Mobility handed over to the Finnish Foreign Minister

Labour mobility in the Baltic Sea Region has increased remarkably during the past decade. Labour mobility has many benefits both for workers and enterprises, but it also poses challenges. Therefore it is necessary to further improve cooperation between the Social Partners, governmental institutions and the Baltic Sea States regarding mobility of labour.

The Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF) was established in 2011. BSLF is a tripartite forum for Social Dialogue between trade unions, employers' organizations, and governmental and parliamentary institutions throughout the entire Baltic Sea Region. At present, 28 member organizations and 9 observers are participating in the BSLF.

Today, the BSLF Round Table in Helsinki adopted an Action Plan on Cross Border Mobility. The main purpose of the Action Plan is to convey background information and analyses on cross border mobility; to encourage and support practical cooperation activities among the BSLF members; and to present recommendations to the governments of the Baltic Sea Region and the CBSS concerning cross-border mobility.

Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs **Erkki Tuomioja** received the Action Plan at the Round Table and welcomed the concrete co-operation plans of the BSLF: *"the Baltic Sea Region has economic potential which we have not yet fully taken advantage of. When planning the ways to find new methods we have to take international competition and more globalized markets into account. These can bring entirely new challenges that we have to face. We should address these challenges through close cooperation and agreements between all the Social Partners."*

The Round Table meeting highlighted the necessity of timely, accurate and comparable information on labour mobility. This is a basis both for practically useful statistics and for the development of strategies and actions.

Liga Mengelsoņa, Director General of the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, addressed in her contribution some of the challenges connected to the increased level of mobility: *"the massive outflow of the Latvian labour force has had a negative impact on the Latvian economy and its social system. To meet these future challenges for Latvia and other source countries, we need even more cross-border co-operation and develop common industry policies in the Baltic Sea Region."*

In addition to mobility, the BSLF Round Table devoted extensive attention to the pressing issue of youth unemployment. This is a serious and persistent challenge in the Baltic Sea Region, and the Round Table stressed that it must be tackled with concrete actions by the Social Partners and the governments.

Igor Kovalchuk from the Russian Federation of Labour underlined the need for concrete measures from all stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region in fighting youth unemployment: *"from the trade union side we challenge all stakeholders to provide for special measures so that young people who have graduated from high school can enter working life. We need also to create a vocational education system based on public-private partnership in order to involve the youth into the qualified workers ranks."*

The joint and consolidated recommendations of the BSLF members regarding cross-border mobility and youth employment can be found in the unanimously adopted Round Table Resolution:
www.bslf.eu/downloads

The Presidency of the BSLF follows a rotation scheme. In 2013, the Presidency has been shared between Russia and Finland. In January 2014 Estonia will take over the Presidency.

The Council of Baltic Sea States Secretariat (CBSS) currently hosts the BSLF Secretariat. Further information can be found on the BSLF website: www.bslf.eu

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