



JOINT RESOLUTION

Meeting of Employers' Organisations of the Baltic Sea region **"THE ROLE OF EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION"**

12 May 2008 Riga, Latvia

1. Representatives of Employers' Organizations of the Baltic Sea countries met in Riga on 12 May 2008, under the chairmanship of Ms Elina Egle, Director General of Employers' Confederation of Latvia, to discuss the Role of Employers' Organizations in Economic Development and Global Competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region.
2. The meeting was organised by the Employers' Confederation of Latvia in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the Representation of the European Commission in Latvia.
3. Representatives of the following eight organisations participated at the meeting: Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, Confederation of Finnish Industries, Employers' Confederation of Latvia, Estonian Employers' Confederation, Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, Polish Confederation of Private Employers Lewiatan, Confederation of Danish Industry, and Confederation of Icelandic Employers. The representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, the European Commission (EC), the European Parliament (EP), and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Business Advisory Council of the CBSS also attended the meeting.
4. The framework of the meeting was the work of the CBSS, Latvia's Presidency at the CBSS from July 2007 to June 2008 and the 7th Baltic Sea States Summit to take place on 3-4 June 2008 in Riga. As one of very challenging tasks the Latvian government has undertaken to contribute to the development of the new EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and a reform of the CBSS.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

5. The purpose of the meeting of 12 May 2008 in Riga was to enhance co-operation among the participating organisations in their joint efforts to foster growth and prosperity in the region, and to develop **recommendations to policy makers**, in particular concerning the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region to be elaborated by the EC and the reform of the CBSS.
6. During the meeting various issues related to the economic growth of the Baltic Sea Region and its global competitiveness were discussed, including competitiveness of enterprises, availability of human capital, the role of social dialogue, good governance and partnership, the role of the EU in the development of the region and cooperation with Russia.

INSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES

7. The participating organisations recognised that the existing policies in the region (The Baltic Sea Region initiative, Northern Dimension policy, European Neighbourhood policy, and External dimension of the Council of the Baltic Sea Region etc.) have contributed to improving political and economic cooperation, to some extent have supported development of functioning business environment and economic growth and prosperity in the region.
8. The participating organisations recognised that the existing regional organisations and institutions (Baltic Assembly, Baltic Council of Ministers, Council of the Baltic Sea States, Nordic Council and Council of Ministers etc.) have helped strengthening political, social and cultural cooperation, serving as a forum for information exchange, consultations and networking, have contributed to the elaboration and presentation of a common position of the region on different issues at different forums. However, the organisations also noted that the existing structures were also considered complex, and institutions have to be reviewed for use of effective synergies to work out practical solutions to common challenges in the region.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

9. The participating organisations recognized that one of the main challenges for business community of the region to be competitive on the world scale is the need for better use of available resources (human, capital etc.). The participating organisations noted that there is need for:
 - Development of communications, transport networks and other infrastructure;
 - Harmonisation of laws, regulations and procedures towards the EU acquis and for their proper implementation;
 - Bigger input in development of knowledge and innovation in the region;
 - Deeper cooperation in the energy market;
 - Promotion of all kinds of contacts between people, business communities, etc.
10. In order to promote rapid implementation in the Baltic Sea area of the goals set in the EU Lisbon strategy, and to present solutions to regional challenges and to promote development of favourable business environment in the region, the representatives of the participating organisations recommend the following measures for joint strategies:
 - Deep analysis of the work of current institutions in the region;
 - Co-ordination of different policies and actions of different institutions in the region;
 - Consolidation of resources by redefining regional institutions, their missions, tasks and priorities or by merging organisations and their functions, taking full account of the need to adapt to a new environment following the three EU enlargements since 1995.

RELATIONS BETWEEN EU MEMBER AND OTHER BALTIC SEA COUNTRIES

11. In order to further improve business environment in the region, the organisations agreed on the following recommendations:
 - co-operation among neighbouring countries should be enhanced;
 - closer cooperation with northwestern Russia and further efforts creating a common economic space between EU and Russia is required.

EUROPEAN UNION BALTIC SEA STRATEGY

12. The participating organisations took note that the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region is expected to be elaborated by the EC by June 2009. In this regard the organisations recommend to policy makers that this Strategy should focus on:
- Making sure the Strategy does not duplicate other initiatives and policies and, where appropriate, contributes to consolidation and coordination within the region;
 - Examination of the possibilities offered by the EU for enhanced regional cooperation in the region;
 - Deeper market integration by lifting all kinds of barriers to trade and investment and ensuring better functioning of the labour market;
 - Development of transport infrastructure and promotion of deeper integration in the energy sector by developing diversity of energy supplies and transnational energy networks;
 - Environmental issues, including farming and maritime safety.

ROLE OF BUSSINES ORGANIZATIONS

13. For the purpose of ensuring further economic growth, the organisations jointly recommend that the Employers Organisations of the region should be:
- Involved in formation and programming of all relevant Baltic Sea region policies on a systematic basis both at the level of national governments and at the level of regional institutions when appropriate;
 - Involved in economic and social policy formation and programming process on a systematic basis according to national procedures;
 - Consulted by national governments when decisions are taken on policies affecting the future of the region.

FINAL PROVISIONS

14. The participating organisations agreed that the Joint resolution should be circulated widely and submitted by the Chairperson, on their behalf, to the EC and to the national governments of the countries represented at the present meeting.
15. The participants express their appreciation to the Employers' Confederation of Latvia and to the authorities and institutions of the Republic of Latvia, for their successful efforts and excellent hospitality demonstrated in the organisation of this meeting.
16. The organisations agreed to consider all possible ways and means to ensure the continuity of the work accomplished during their meeting on 12 May 2008 in Riga.

Signed by

On behalf of Employers' Organisations of the Baltic Sea region participating at the meeting

Ms Elīna Egle, Chairperson of the Meeting.

Riga, 12 May 2008.