

Commissioner
Danuta Hübner
European Commission
200 Rue de la Loi
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Copenhagen, 27 April 2009

Dear Commissioner Danuta Hübner

It has been a pleasure for me to follow the thorough preparations of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. So far, I have been very impressed by work that you have been leading within the Commission and DG Regio.

The Strategy has raised a lot of interest on all levels and expectations are high. Also on my part, since I see the EU strategy as the best chance to combine the regional and European integration processes in a way that can reinforce both dimensions. As EU enlargement proceeds, the regional dimension of the EU can indeed contribute to making the European Union come closer to the citizens by greater awareness of local and regional differences and through more targeted cross border programmes and projects. Hopefully, the EU strategy can realize the huge potential of the Baltic Region – an objective that I tried to promote through Baltic Development Forum (BDF) over the past 10 years.

BDF has done its utmost to participate in a successful elaboration of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – even since the European Parliament launched the idea in 2006. BDF's publications and participation in regional networks have had focus on this issue.

BDF also wishes to contribute to a successful decision-making process and implementation of the Strategy. From this perspective, the 2009 BDF Summit will take place 5-6 October in Stockholm ("*Boosting Top of Europe*") and organized in association with the Swedish EU Presidency. Once the Strategy is adopted, BDF is furthermore ready to contribute in terms of stakeholders meetings and flagship projects (please see annex 1).

It will be important that the many regional stakeholders - in the broadest sense of the word - are encouraged to stay active in the process and well-informed. Only through the involvement of government and civil society structures, a stronger region - that is fully anchored inside the EU - can be built. From this perspective, I am very encouraged from reading the paper "Governance and Implementation" where you have taken these considerations on board.

At the BDF 2008 Summit, I mentioned that the BDF's Summit platform could hopefully serve as a yearly consultation venue on the EU Strategy. I would hereby like to reiterate that BDF would like to be useful in organizing a review, exchange of views on progress in the Strategy and the promotion of partnerships.

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Baltic Development Forum

The leading network for high level decision-makers from business, politics, academia and media in the Baltic Sea Region

Baltic Development Forum is a non-profit, independent and member based organisation. Its mission is to set the regional agenda by initiating and facilitating processes to build a strong, prosperous and coherent Baltic Sea Region

We are ready to use part of the Summit programme to organize a forum with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including the Commission, Parliament and parliamentary grouping, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions.

BDF possesses the largest regional network and database and has a very good working relationship with governments, NGOs, private businesses and regional organisations. BDF's political neutrality, independence, experience and regional identify would undoubtedly be helpful for such a forum.

Without the support of the governments in the region, BDF would, however, not be able to play this role. Therefore, I am also copying this letter to all the Baltic Sea Region governments hoping that they would support BDF's proposal.

Finally, I would also like to underline the need to keep Russia fully informed about the EU-process. Russia should remain a close partner, and relation should be further strengthened, not least to the Russian Baltic Sea Region provinces. Also from this perspective, BDF's platform could be useful to the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

For your information, BDF is in a close dialogue with the Lithuanian Government on organizing the 12th BDF Summit in Vilnius 1-2 June 2010 in conjunction with the meeting of the Region's Heads of Government. We hope to make Vilnius a big venue in 2010. Maybe Vilnius could also be the venue of first meeting of the forum under the EU Strategy?

I look forward to staying in contact with you on this issue.

Yours sincerely,



Uffe Ellemann-Jensen

Chairman of Baltic Development Forum