**7th Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region - Vision 2030**

**Seminar Report**

Title of Seminar: **Walk the talk – implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in the Baltic Sea Region**

Name of Seminar Organiser: CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Development –Baltic 2030 in cooperation with the CBSS Icelandic Presidency and the Prime Minister’s Office of Sweden

Name of Seminar Rapporteur: Halyna Kovalchuk

Date: 9 November 2016

Time:

Venue:

**SUMMARY:**

The Baltic Sea region has a great potential to become a pilot region to realize the 2030 Agenda as a cooperative effort. With the adoption of the CBSS Declaration “Baltic 2030: Renewing the Commitment to Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region” the Baltic Sea Region countries reaffirmed their commitment to increase the speed as regards to achieving sustainability for the Baltic Sea Region and agreed to elaborate an Action Plan on sustainable development to contribute to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This session of the conference provided a **useful opportunity for peer learning, sharing of best practices and fruitful discussion of the 2030 Agenda.**

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the essential part of Nordic countries’ development. For instance, **Sweden** has launched an ambitious initiative to become one of the world’s first fossil-free welfare countries. Swedish actors are given the opportunity to call attention to how they are contributing to climate change work. The initiative brings together actors from the business sector, municipalities, regions and organisations from across the country. Sweden keeps promoting inclusive and innovative networking and continues to search for and establish synergies for sustainable development. **Poland** defines Baltic Sea Region as of a high priority and advocate a full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for member countries. Responsible development with a wide public consultation process can pushing national polices beyond economic goals but towards more comprehensive sustainable development in every dimension. **Iceland** is also committed to working together in the region to implement the SDGs, share experiences and establish regional architecture of connections with focus on sustainable development in technologies and education. “*We need to change our attitude and habits so let the younger generation teach us*” – highlighted Stefán Haukur Johannesson, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Iceland. As the solution for the Baltic Sea Region, Dr. Günther Bachmann, General Secretary of the German Council for Sustainable Development, Germany, suggested to create several mini hubs for the Baltic regional cooperation to boost implementation of the 2030 Agenda: “*Do not educate ideas, bring people with their visions and practices*”.

According to Gilles Gantelet, Head of the SDG Strategy Unit, European Commission, there is an urgent necessity of cohesive policies, regionally integrated approaches and a new management to implement sustainability. Communication and political will is the key to make work the European Union Strategies on sustainable development. As a concrete step, the EU has started the work to include SDGs into the 2030 Energy Strategy. “*Even when plans may not work out, keep planning and you will operationalize ways to integrate sustainability*” – Gilles Gantelet.

The last session of the discussion was dedicated to UN efforts to adjust SDGs for policymaking. In their quest for sustainable development countries confront the need to harmonise policies in the economic, social and environmental dimensions. In doing so, it is critical to identify the inter-linkages that influence trade-offs and synergies across these dimensions. UN-DESA and partners have developed a suite of tools to address the complex interrelations underlying sustainable development. Mark Howells professor of KTH (KTH), on behalf of Diana Alarcón Chief, Development Strategy and Policy Unit, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, presented as well an interactive platform for policy analysts. This platform, to the extent possible, makes available the data and model codes to promote further research and policy dialogue. Moreover, UNDESA's 'Modelling Tools for Sustainable Development Policies' help countries to understand how SDGs are linked and elaborate integrated approaches to implement sustainability in economies. “*The models provide a politically neutral message, difficult message, but it is a clear message addressed to all countries*” – Mark Howells.