



## **Baltic Sea Labour Forum Work Programme 2012/2013**

The Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF) aims at promoting social dialogue, tripartite structures and cooperation as crucial elements of sustainable economic growth and social development in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). The BSLF work programme will focus on commonly agreed working fields which are important for the positive development of the labour markets in the Baltic Sea Region. The second round table shall adopt the work programme for 2012/2013.

Within the Baltic Sea Labour Network the social partners have joined forces and carried out studies and pilot projects in different working areas. On one hand the results show that the labour markets in the BSR are affected by many challenges like for example high mobility rates. On the other hand it became clear that the social partners can offer a lot of expertise and practical advice since different approaches do exist across the region. The method of working together through social dialogue will therefore be continued in the BSLF.

### **The overarching objectives of the BSLF work programme are:**

- Identifying main common challenges for the labour markets in the BSR
- Putting commonly identified problems on BSLF's agenda in order to develop joint solutions
- Creating a base for issuing joint opinions and recommendations to decision-makers





## 1. Mobility of labour in the Baltic Sea Region

The Baltic Sea Region (BSR) has a high mobility rate which is predicted to increase, due to free movement of the labour force over the next years. Care must be taken to safeguard fair competition for enterprises in order to secure a sustainable social development of the whole BSR.

The aim sought by BSLF is to ensure that norms, responsibilities, conditions, rules and labour relations in each country are the same for foreign and domestic business and employees.

Special attention will be paid to the border regions since they have to deal with many inter-related aspects of labour force mobility. The existing information centres, which offer information to commuters and migrant workers, could complement the efforts of the BSLF.

### 1.1 Working conditions

A commonly identified problem is the circumvention of rules and labour relations in the economy of the Baltic Sea countries, which has negative consequences to fair competition on the labour market, the position of employees, the general tax morale and credibility of the entire tax function.

It is necessary to safeguard fair competition for enterprises, based on respect for industrial and labour relations as well as decent working conditions and fair treatment of workers. The BSLF members acknowledge that fair economic competition is conducive to a successful and sustainable business environment, and ensuring that norms, responsibilities, conditions, rules and labour relations in each country are equitable and appropriate for foreign and domestic business and employees.

#### **The BSLF could pursue this aim by**

- Establishing a working group in order to identify joint priorities for actions in this field and to develop a common work plan.



## **1.2 Cross-border mobility**

Another problem is the existence of barriers for commuters in the Baltic Sea Region (for example problems in the fields of taxes, labour law and social insurance). Although the existing information centres are aware of these problems, they do not have enough resources to work on these issues. Examples from other regions show that a network of information centres would help to draw special attention to the needs of the border regions. So far there is no structured cooperation between the cross border centres.

The lack of statistics especially on migration is a fundamental problem in this field. With a weak statistical support for decision makers, it is difficult for e.g. politicians to take well informed decisions. There is a special need to find out how many people are working across borders in Europe.

The recommendation of labour market strategies by the BSLF requires sufficient, sound and comparative data and information. Some scattered sources are available but no systematic approach exists so far. It is vital to develop common indicators as otherwise the data is not comparative. There are rapid changes in the mobility of the region's labour force and to be able to tackle the challenges stemming from this rapid change the ability to develop management activities and strategies is needed.

The BSLF could actively support the establishment of a network for the information centres. A common approach for cross border labour market monitoring could be developed. The network could also identify main barriers for commuters in the Baltic Sea Region.

### **The BSLF could pursue these aims by**

- Establishing a network for the information centres
- Establishing a working group:
  - Identifying main challenges for the border regions
  - Identifying main barriers for commuters in the Baltic Sea Region.
- Organizing a seminar/conference in cooperation with Hello Norden:
  - Analyzing mobility in the South Eastern Baltic Area and in the North West Russian area.





## 2. Youth unemployment

Especially young people between 15 and 24 have lower participation rates in the labour market. Youth unemployment has strong negative impacts for societies and labour markets alike due to the risk of rising poverty amongst youth as well as a lack of skilled and trained labour in the Baltic Sea Region. Especially missing practical experience and mismatches between education and qualifications that the labour market demands currently pinpoint which in turn makes labour market integration more difficult.

Special attention should be paid to the transition management from school to workplace and occupational safety and health issues. This includes early economic education in schools as well as cooperation between schools and enterprises and other measures such as mentoring and apprenticeships. A comprehensive approach is needed in order to analyse, which qualifications are needed and how to support the personnel development of pupils and students.

### **The BSLF could pursue this aim by**

- Establishing a working group:
  - Analysing the most important fields of action (based on existing reports etc.)
  - Exchanging experiences on different practical attempts
  - Pooling best practice examples in the Baltic Sea Region

