



BASTUN Estonian Presidency 2014–2015

Work Plan for 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015

1 BASTUN Estonian Presidency

BASTUN works as a trade union forum for information exchange, discussion and definition of common interests in the Baltic Sea region. In addition to international trade union cooperation, BASTUN has a representative role in various international bodies and working groups, which include a wide range of political dimensions. BASTUN follows and disseminates information on international projects.

The Presidency and the Secretariat form a preparation and executive body. The BASTUN Spring and Autumn meetings function as a forum for discussion and collective decision making. The Presidency in cooperation with the Secretariat represents the network when needed, acts as a chairman at the BASTUN meetings and implements the Presidency Work Plan.

The Estonian Trade Union Confederation EAKL will hold the BASTUN presidency from the beginning of July in 2014 until the end of June in 2015. Mr. Peep Peterson, President of EAKL, will be the chairperson of BASTUN during the Estonian Presidency.

During the Estonian presidency:

- The BASTUN Autumn Meeting will be organised as a high level meeting in Tallinn on November 19th 2014 in connection with the board meeting of the Council of Nordic Trade Unions.
- BASTUN will closely follow the work of the Forum for Social Dialogue in the Baltic Sea region as observer.
- A BASTUN Spring meeting will be organised in spring 2015. The date will be communicated during autumn 2014 after having consulted the member organisations.
- The Work Plan for the Estonian presidency 2014-2015 will be introduced at the spring meeting 2014 in Tuusula/Finland.
- BASTUN will provide interpretation (English-Russian) for the official meetings when needed.

2 Priorities of the Estonian Presidency

BASTUN's priorities reflect the political and social situation of the Baltic Sea region. The network follows political discussion and aims to keep relevant issues for trade union movement on the agenda. The presidency sets its political priorities for the presidency period.

The Estonian presidency sets the following priorities:

- Organising as a prerequisite for powerful and successful trade unions in the Baltic Sea Region – special focus on the Baltic Organising Academy.
- Smart solutions as a way to tackle challenges related to the mobility of labour and to combat social dumping.
- Structural changes in economy and training needs of labour.

2.1 Organising as a prerequisite for powerful trade unions in the Baltic Sea Region

When looking at countries in the Baltic Sea Region, one cannot oversee the fact that there are huge differences between countries both in structures of the labour market and in trade union power. In addition to historical differences and, perhaps the most distinguished difference is the difference in unionization rate and the collective agreement coverage.

Organising lies at the very heart of the trade union movement. Recruiting members is a prerequisite for exercising trade union power, both at the negotiation table and in society as a whole.

Hardly anywhere else in the world is the gap in unionization rates as steep as it is between the Nordic and the Baltic countries. The rate slumps from about 70 per cent to less than 10 per cent.

In the Nordic countries the high unionization rate has led to industry-specific collective agreements, regulated industrial sectors, and extensive influence on those aspects of legislation and social security that bear importance to wage-earners. In the Baltic countries, on the other hand, the labour market is characterized by a low degree of organization and the lack or weakness of collective bargaining agreements.

Union-free Baltic countries would be a threat to the trade union movement in the entire Baltic Sea region. Due to the transnational interdependence and the increased mobility of workforce, breaking the Baltic countries' vicious circle of declining unionization is in the best interest of the entire Baltic Sea trade union movement. The trade union movement's ability to improve the living and working conditions of Baltic workers benefits all the labour markets of the entire Baltic Sea Region.

The Baltic Organizing Academy (BOA) is a multinational, multisectoral organizing program whose purpose is to develop unions capable of organizing and growth in the Baltic countries. The

program creates a framework for the participating unions in which they can collect resources from a variety of sources, develop organizing strategies and campaigns, and to train and coach capable staff and volunteers. In other words, the BOA aims to create infrastructure and skill capacity necessary for organizing work in its target countries Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia.

EAKL has been involved in BOA since the very start and appreciates the support it has received from trade unions actors throughout the Baltic Sea Region. BOA has already showed positive results: in the target companies there are now new local union structures, elected shop stewards and tested activists as well as new trade union members.

The Estonian presidency will focus on organising issues with special regard to the BOA- process which the largest-ever effort undertaken to promote trade union organizing in the Baltic countries.

During the Estonian presidency:

- A BASTUN-high level meeting will be organised on the 19th November 2014. EAKL plans to focus on organising and aims to present the Baltic Organising Academy, both in theory and in practise. The meeting will gather trade unions representatives from across the Baltic Sea region who can exchange views and best practices as well as discuss strategies on organising.

2.2 Promoting smart solutions as a way to tackle challenges related to the mobility of labour and to combat social dumping

The more integrated Baltic Sea Region has brought new possibilities to wage-earners and our economies but has also created new challenges. While mobility is on the increase, leading to more dynamic labour markets and more possibilities for the economies, workers are potentially at risk of exploitation when working in another country. Especially in vulnerable sectors such as the construction and transport sector, workers run risk of not being treated equally with the local workforce.

The Estonian presidency wants to promote constructive and concrete solutions to the abovementioned challenges. These could be based on best practices already in place around the Baltic Sea Region, such as electronic registers and ID-cards for all employers at work-sites combined with enforced control mechanisms and enhanced legislative measures such as joint and several liability measures.

During the presidency, all member organisations of BASTUN are asked to share their experiences on how the issues of incoming and outgoing workforce are dealt with and whether

there are any specific issues that need to be highlighted. The network could examine whether the biggest challenges lie with posted workers or with workers exercising their right to free movement.

2.3 Structural changes in economy and training needs of the labour force

Although Europe has left the peak of the crisis and entered a more stable recession in 2014, many countries continue to feel the impacts of the financial crisis, including high levels of debt and unemployment. Combined with sluggish economic growth and cuts in public expenditure in many countries this has led to increased income inequality and political instability. Corporate taxes have been cut, in many countries throughout the Baltic Sea Region, revealing the ongoing competition for attracting investments. At the same time, unemployment continues to be on a high level, precarious jobs, and more and more countries are finding it difficult to live up to their citizens' expectations, especially since the onset of the financial crisis.

At the same time the globalised economy has been undergoing structural changes for the past years. While many employers move simpler manufacturing work to countries outside Europe, the Baltic Sea Region must step up in investing in research and development as well as education and life-long-learning. It can no longer be the assumption that wage-earners perform the same kind of work or work in the same sector throughout their entire working career.

A skilled work-force is therefore a prerequisite to master the challenges ahead.

BASTUN would like to draw attention to the joint skills strategy by the ILO and the G20. While these goals are universal in their nature, they can be seen as valid even in the Baltic Sea Region.

The first goal is broad availability of quality education as a foundation for future training. Easy access for education for all is an essential foundation for a sound labour force.

The second goal is building solid bridges between the worlds of work and training providers in order to match skills provision to the needs of the labour market. This is often done best at the sectoral level where the direct participation of employers and workers together with government and training providers can ensure the relevance of training.

The third goal is continuous workplace training and lifelong learning enabling workers and enterprises to adjust to an increasingly rapid pace of change.

The fourth goal is anticipating and building competencies for future needs. A dialogue between employers and trainers, coordination across government institutions, labour market information, employment services and performance reviews are steps to an early identification of skill needs.

The fifth goal is ensuring broad access to training opportunities, for women and men, and particularly for those groups facing greater difficulties, in particular youth, lower skilled workers, workers with disabilities and workers in rural communities.

Enhancing skills and developing working life is a joint venture where trade unions must engage in a constant dialogue with public state actors, the education system, employers and researchers. This is particularly important for developing the competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region and raising know-how and trust of employees and preparing them for a labour-market, where learning skills and adaptation are increasingly required. The trade unions must be bold and protect the interests of their present and future members. Preparing them for the future and safeguarding the availability of a skilled workforce is perhaps one of the most fundamental preconditions for a sustainable labour market.

During the Estonian presidency, BASTUN will together with the Council of Nordic Trade Unions and other actors exchange views and work for a continuous enhancement of skills in working life and improvements in the work environment.

3 Cooperation within the trade union movement

BASTUN cooperates and organises different actions with all trade union organisations that have interests in the Baltic Sea region. Through the cooperation, the network helps its member organisations to get their voice heard in international discussions within the trade union movement.

The most important cooperation partners are: European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), Pan-European Regional Council (PERC), the Council of Nordic Trade Unions (NFS) and some of the Nordic sector trade union confederations, namely Nordic IN, Confederation of the Nordic Bank, Finance and Insurance Unions (NFU), Nordic Transport Workers' Confederation (NTF), Nordic Federation of Building and Woodworkers (NBTF), Nordic Hotel, Restaurant, Catering and Tourist Confederation (NU HRCT). BASTUN also cooperates with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and also with other foundations when needed.

The Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Union (BKDP) represents the Belarusian free trade unions. The BKDP is a strategic partner of BASTUN since 2006. BASTUN works for coordinating international support given to the Belarusian free trade union movement. The support includes financial and political dimension.

During the Estonian Presidency:

- BASTUN will participate in trade union discussions in terms of Baltic Sea affairs.
- BASTUN will influence political processes in terms of Baltic Sea issues in cooperation with ETUC, NFS and PERC and Nordic sector trade union confederations.
- BASTUN meetings and activities will be open to different trade union actors. The aim is to maximize the coordination and information exchange between different trade union actors.

- BASTUN will follow the discussions on strategic planning of international support to the Belarusian free trade unions
- BASTUN continues the work of keeping the Belarusian free trade unions on the political agenda in national and international context.

4 Trade union influence

One of the BASTUN's main tasks is political and social influencing. The basic principle is that the network acts in all forums that are relevant in terms of the political processes concerning joint interests. Besides political influencing BASTUN follows, coordinates and takes part in projects that have a social or political impact on the region.

4.1 International interest representation and contacts to other actors

There are various international actors that coordinate and define actions and goals within the Baltic Sea region. These international organisations and bodies are channels for BASTUN to follow and influence political processes. In addition to the ones listed beneath, BASTUN keeps its eyes open and is mapping possible alliances with other organisations and stakeholders.

4.1.1 Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

From BASTUN point of view there are three main roles of cooperation with CBSS in 2014-2015:

- 1) As a partner and as a secretariat for the Forum for Social Dialogue for the Baltic Sea Region.
- 2) As an initiator of a process to create an information point for migrant workers in the Baltic Sea Region. Among others the CBSS publish in October 2013 a study on [Exploitation of migrant workers in Finland, Sweden, Estonia and Lithuania](#).
- 3) As a provider of expertise and training in terms of trafficking and forced labour exploitation.

During the Estonian presidency:

- BASTUN will continue to follow the work of the Baltic Sea Labour Forum as an observer and promote trade union interests.
- BASTUN will participate in the relevant meetings of the CBSS and represent trade unions of the Baltic Sea region.
- BASTUN secretariat will maintain close contact with the CBSS secretariat.

4.1.2 Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC)

BASTUN is active in parliamentary cooperation in the Baltic Sea region when the BSPC has labour market, counter-trafficking/forced labour exploitation and social issues on its agenda.

During the Estonian presidency:

- BASTUN will assist the BSPC and CBSS in continuing to develop a tripartite forum for social dialogue in the Baltic Sea region.
- BASTUN will possibly participate in the 23rd Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Olsztyn on 24-26 August 2014.
- BASTUN secretariat maintains contacts to key persons in BSPC's political framework (BSPC's chair and secretariat).

4.1.3 Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)

Finland has the presidency until the end of 2015.

During the Estonian presidency:

- BASTUN representation in the BEAC is flexible. The secretariat and other interested member organizations may participate when needed.

4.1.4 Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) and Nordic Council (NC)

The NCM and NC work with Baltic Sea issues and are important actors in the Baltic Sea region. BASTUN has not direct representation in the NCM or the NC. Trade unions are represented by the Council of Nordic Trade Unions.

During the Estonian presidency

- BASTUN will follow the NCM and the NC through the NFS.
- Relevant information will be distributed through the network

4.1.5 European Union (EU)

BASTUN's main context regarding any contact to EU institutions is the policies of the Northern Dimension and Baltic Sea region. In this connection relations to the EU institutions are relevant.

During the Estonian presidency:

- BASTUN will maintain relevant contacts to the Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and other EU institutions.
- BASTUN will follow and influence the implementation of the "Baltic Sea Strategy" and engage in discussion for any follow-up, especially in terms of financing.

4.2 Project Activities

One of BASTUN's tasks is to support and coordinate joint international projects that have a social or political impact on the region. The projects are an operational tool to influence social development of the Baltic Sea region.

During the Estonian presidency:

- BASTUN will keep track on the trade union projects in the Baltic Sea region, with a special regard to the Baltic Organising Academy, which has already showed positive examples in raising organisation rate in Estonia and Lithuania.