



## FINLAND'S CBSS PRESIDENCY 2023-2024

Finland will hold the presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, taking over from Germany. Finland aims to complete and implement the reforms of the CBSS's activities that were agreed upon during the German presidency so that the CBSS can work effectively and respond to the changed circumstances in the region.

During its presidency, Finland aims to strengthen both the political dimension and the practical cooperation of the CBSS. The cross-cutting themes of the presidency will be **comprehensive security, crisis preparedness and resilience**.

The CBSS can increase stability, cohesion and cooperation in the Baltic Sea region by providing an agile forum for **political discussions** on topical issues. In addition to the Foreign Ministers, other ministers and political actors may convene in this forum.

**Practical cooperation** during the presidency will be based on the three long-standing and interlinked priorities of the CBSS: *Safe and Secure Region, Sustainable and Prosperous Region* and *Regional Identity*. All three priorities remain essential, and Finland will strive to promote them all during its presidency. The CBSS will complement its activities by collaborating with other actors in the Baltic Sea region.

During the presidency, special focus will be given to the strengths of the CBSS while also addressing the impact of serious crises to our region – such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, climate change and biodiversity loss. Therefore, security-related issues will be emphasized. We will support Ukraine and, where possible, involve the Ukrainian authorities, researchers, non-governmental organisations and other parties in our cooperation.

For years, the CBSS has been a strong and recognised forum for practical cooperation in the priority area of *Safe and Secure Region*. Its working groups and expert networks each produce unique added value for the Baltic Sea region.

The *Civil Protection Network* of the CBSS will extensively deal with civil protection, which involves planning and preparing for civil defence and interfacing the roles of various actors. The CBSS will also seek more knowledge about early warning systems, probable developments in such systems, and better cross-border exchange of information. Good practices and operating models will be sought to mitigate the consequences of climate change.

The CBSS's *Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings* (CBSS TFTHB) and *Expert Group on Children at Risk* (CAR) will cooperate more closely during the Finnish presidency. They will gather and share the best practices to prevent and combat child trafficking and violence

against children, and to assist and support victims. They will also produce research data and know-how from the field to use as a basis for decision-making and action planning.

One more objective is to increase the Baltic Sea States' expertise in receiving refugees from Ukraine due to Russia's invasion and supporting them in settlement and social integration. This and prevention of social exclusion are key in ensuring a functioning and cohesive society. There are various reasons for people to immigrate, and processing their reception fluently and supporting them in settlement and social integration will help prevent and combat work-related exploitation and trafficking in human beings.

Security in the Baltic Sea region will be fostered by seeking synergies between the CBSS and the *Baltic Sea Region Border Control Cooperation (BSRBCC)* forum. Finland will hold the presidency of the BSRBCC in 2024.

Regarding the *Sustainable and Prosperous Region* priority, Finland will foster dialogue and exchange of information between researchers, societal actors and citizens. This effort will be launched at the Baltic Sea Science Congress (BSSC) to be hosted by Finland in Helsinki from 21 to 25 August 2023. The Baltic Sea Region Forum on Sustainable Tourism will take place in Oulu, Finland, on 4 and 5 June 2024.

Finland will continue with multi-disciplinary dialogue to seek solutions and operating models for mapping and solving the risks posed by underwater munitions and wrecks dumped in the Baltic Sea.

The *Expert Group on Sustainable Maritime Economy (EGSME)* will continue to chart clean transport corridors (green shipping corridors as defined in the Clydebank Declaration) and bring together actors to promote sustainable maritime transport and cruise tourism in the Baltic Sea region. The Expert Group will work in close cooperation with the PA Ship and PA Safe Policy Areas of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

To advance the *Regional Identity* priority, Finland will focus on young people. Their participation in society is important. It is also important that the new youth forum of the Baltic Sea region becomes a functional platform that serves the needs of young people and promotes their opportunities to exert influence. Finland wants to strengthen the young generation's European identity and increase their voter turnout in the European Parliament elections of 2024.

Sharing intangible and tangible cultural heritage is very significant in strengthening regional identity. The regional identity of the Baltic Sea arises and develops further from the work of the inhabitants and the countless cooperation networks in the region. It is important to pursue constructive cooperation with regional actors.