

Baltic Science Network: Press Release for the BSN Website

Baltic Science Network Final Conference



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The research and science cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region holds a tremendous potential and interest among a diversity of actors. The Final Conference was a prominent occasion which brought interested stakeholders, key decision-makers and influential thinkers together to debate what is the agreed way forward for the Baltic Science Network, as well as what nuances remain to be tapped into to hone feasible collaborative initiatives.

On 22 February 2019, the University of Latvia hosted the Baltic Science Network Final Conference as part of its [centenary celebrations](#). Baltic Science Network Final Conference took place shortly after the [CBSS High Level Meeting on Science](#). The public gathering was an important milestone not only for the project. It was also one of the components of the [Latvian CBSS Presidency](#).

The attendants of the Baltic Science Network Final Conference were greeted by a group of the heads of delegations of the CBSS High Level Meeting. Dr. Eva Gumbel, Deputy Minister of Science, Research and Equalities of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg paved the way for subsequent presentations by outlining in her welcoming remarks that the CBSS gathering

was concluded with an endorsement of the [Joint Statement of the High-Level Meeting of the Representatives of the Ministries for Science of the Council of the Baltic Sea States](#).

Valdemaras Razumas, Vice-Minister of Education, Science and Sport of Lithuania, presented the financial commitment to a mobility programme, welcomed more focus on coordinated research policies and encouraged to develop the Baltic Science Network as a sustainable transnational structure. He showed recognition to the research commissioned by the Baltic Science Network by welcoming further work along the lines of a geographical and, most importantly, functional proximity. The two concepts were presented during the [Baltic Science Network Tallinn seminar](#) held under the auspices of the Estonian EU Presidency and were revisited in one of the conference's sessions.



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Anders Ødegaard, Head of Office of the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science, invited the audience to look at the challenges faced by the Baltic Sea Region as a smaller scale example of those issues that the EU is wrestling with. He expressed full support for science as an inseparable component of the collaborative ties in the Baltic Sea Region. He invited to continue exploring how the European context and such major funding schemes as the EU Framework Programme might help to support joint aspirations.



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Boris Zhelezov, Deputy Director of the Department of the International Cooperation at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, confirmed the important role of the Council of the Baltic Sea States. He offered some additional insight to the attendants of the meeting about the existing patterns of the collaborative ties in higher education and science. Erasmus+ was among the examples of the already functioning working networks which offer possibilities for further cooperation.

Sebastian Skuza, Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland, recognised the potential of the Baltic Science Network extension phase. Baltic Science Network was praised for showing a good way how to start thinking in a macro-regional way. The potential of transforming Baltic Science Network in a Policy Area or a Horizontal Action of EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region was suggested for further consideration.

Three sessions provided a content-rich insight into the intricacies of the state of research collaboration, as well as the key factors which should be strengthened to further advance the scientific excellence and continue efforts launched with the Widening Participation measures in the Baltic Sea Region. Among the presenters was **Riitta Mustonen**, Director of Development at the University of Turku, who explained in more detail how Baltic Science

Network has tailored specific instruments to solve the persistent challenges characterising the researcher mobility in the Baltic Sea Region. **Christian Müller**, Deputy Secretary General of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), invited to pay attention to the changing patterns of mobility and obtain an expertise in these processes. Outbound mobility trend is steady. Inbound mobility is changing in terms of the countries of origin represented by the students. Regions are developing intra-regional mobility with full appreciation of its convenience in terms of such factors as costs, language, feeling of safety and cultural distances. A lot of future potential is captured by the intra-regional academic mobility. **Eneli Kindsiko**, Lecturer at the University of Tartu, invited to raise awareness regarding the mobility options not only among the research administrators, but also among the supervisors of students.



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The concluding panel titled “Widening Participation in the European Research Area” offered new insights in the complexity of research collaboration. A certain level of internationally competitive excellence must be combined with a continued implementation of the widening measures, mobility of researchers and teaching staff should not be neglected, as well as streamlining of the application process is sought after, e.g., by vetting applications, application support and continuous provision of seed money for applications.

Josephine Them Parnas, Senior Advisor & Leader of the EU Policy Team of the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education, stressed that one of the key EU successes has been the establishment of a convenient framework with in-built incentives to deliver scientific excellence. An alteration of the incentives' mechanism would pose a risk of harming the overall EU competitiveness.

Aleksander Dańda, Director of the Department for Science at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland, elaborated that one way how to avoid a negative framing that there is no excellence in the EU-13 would be to rename “sharing excellence” to “widening participation”. Some successful examples have been already shown by the implementation of such measures as Teaming and ERA Chairs.

Attendants of the Baltic Science Network Final Conference were introduced to the most recent findings crafted by the project with an offer of reports “[The Baltic Sea Region – A Science Powerhouse](#)” and “[Baltic Science Network Learning Experiences](#)”, as well as some other informative items presented by the Baltic Science Network, Baltic TRAM and other actors from the Baltic Sea Region.



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The conference was concluded with inspiring remarks that the end of the project has unleashed a much more thorough thinking on the multi-level governance characterising the Baltic Sea Region. The multifaceted implications of the thinking spurred by the Baltic Science



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Network remain to be seen. In the meantime, one of the immediate spin-offs and practical continuations of the Baltic Science Network is the Hanseatic League of Science ([HALOS](#)).