



ASSOCIATION FOR COOPERATION WITH NORDIC COUNTRIES  
"NORDEN"



**XI BS NGO FORUM**  
**“Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in the  
Region of Baltic Sea”**  
**16-17 April 2013, St. Petersburg, Russia**

**Final Statement**  
**WORKING GROUPS:**  
**Results and recommendations**

**1. Multicultural Societies – challenges and solutions**

The region of the Baltic Sea is a multicultural society; its problems cannot be solved without respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms. At the same time, a critical analysis of the experience of identity policy in the region is needed in order to make use of best practices to strengthen the processes of integration in the communities of the region. The active work of NGOs to disseminate the values of a multicultural society among such groups as teachers, university students, and school children should play a special role in this process.

The NGO representatives are concerned by the inspections of Russian NGOs working with foreign partners. These checks are perceived as an act of pressure on independent civil society that does not meet the long-term interests of building civil society and democracy in the Russian Federation. Recently adopted laws, in particular the law on so-called “gay propaganda” seriously complicate the situation of sexual minorities in Russia, who are also part of the modern multicultural society.

Cooperation among NGOs in Baltic Sea region, permanent information and best practices exchange will make its contribution to the strengthening of traditions of

tolerance, combating the threat of radicalism, extremism and xenophobia.

## **2. Social Inclusion, Basic Demand of Modern and Stable Society in the Baltic Sea Region**

1. The problem of social inclusion/exclusion is very relevant for the countries of the Baltic Sea. It is necessary to devote the closest possible attention to all aspects of this problem, and namely: researching changes in social policy; identification of people, groups, and communities at risk of exclusion; prevention, the development of mechanisms and programs promoting inclusion.
2. It is necessary to develop international cooperation on all levels. In order to do this, we should constantly monitor the activity of NGOs with the aim of creating a base of data from working organizations and finding examples of best practices, creating accessible information resources for specialists. The exchange of experience between specialists in the form of conferences, educational trips, and joint projects is the best way to cooperate.
3. In conditions of limited financial and organizational resources, it is necessary to support and initiate long-term evidence-based programs, using ratified conventions and taking into account development strategies of the Northwest Region of the Russian Federation, the countries of the Baltic Sea and the European Union.
4. In conditions of growing migration in the countries of the Baltic region, it is necessary to devote special attention to the development and exchange of experience in the sphere of teaching languages and the cultural and social integration of migrants, especially children and youth.
5. It is extremely important to strengthen and develop NGOs, raise the level of participation and decision-making in the sphere of social policy and lawmaking, raise the NGOs' knowledge in the spheres of management, fundraising, cooperation with business, and visibility. It is also necessary to develop the market of services provided by NGOs in supporting inclusion and counteracting exclusion.
6. Promoting inclusion means fighting exclusion. We should be very cautious in defining excluded groups because of the significant risk of stigmatizing people or groups.
7. In conditions of growing unemployment, especially among youth, it is necessary to initiate programs for groups balancing on the border of poverty and social risk, as these groups are seldom included in both public assistance programs and project carried out by NGOs.
8. The presented experience of successful project on social inclusion shows the importance of an individual approach, creative and nonstandard solutions, the development of inclusive technologies and a high degree of personal participation, empathy, and a desire to help.

### 3. Environment unites people: Challenges of Climate Change and Healthy urban planning

**Considering** the fact that environmental and climate challenges are becoming more and more serious and irreversible, the current and future effects are more disastrous for people and nature;

**Taking into account** significant anthropogenic impact on climate change and nature degradation, e.g. ecologically poor business practices and consumer mentality;

**Keeping in mind** special sensitivity of the Baltic Sea nature;

**Stating that** some urban environments have a negative impact on nature and health, accumulate ecological problems and become uncomfortable and dangerous for people;

#### **We apply to Governments with proposals**

- Stop subsidies for fossil fuel and nuclear energy and use it for supporting renewable energy
- Adopt joint target – “Baltic Sea region – the model area for priority development of renewable energy”
- Develop and adopt national targets on the rate of managed forest CO<sub>2</sub> absorption as a part of national/international GHG commitments
- Establish new protected areas especially in the coastal areas and in the regions where protected areas were not established in the last decades
- Officially recognize threats and long-term negative effects on environment from nuclear energy; recognize that climate change mitigation long-term strategy cannot lean on nuclear energy
- Officially recognize priority of healthy urban development
- Elaborate criteria based on best practices; develop and adopt standards and spatial planning regulation focused on healthy solutions (green zones, walking/cycling paths, environmentally friendly transport, energy efficient buildings, waste treatment, etc.).
- Support NGO awareness raising activities aimed at better environment, changing consumer mentality and peoples’ behavior to more environmentally friendly way

**We agree** that it is necessary to **join Baltic Sea NGO efforts** in the following actions:

- Creation a sense of common responsibility and common activity for the protection of global climate, and the environment of the Baltic Sea and its vulnerable ecosystems; taking an active role in educating people and raising public awareness at local level
- Participation of NGOs in short and long-term planning of energy sector development and economic strategies to secure the principles of sustainability
- Involvement of citizens in the development of cities and local settlements from early stages of urban planning to guarantee healthy environment, e.g. building recreation areas and routes for cycling, Nordic walking and other socially healthy activities; creating friendly recreation environment for people with special needs
- Empowering people for participation in municipal management in all areas of social life; raising their awareness and capacity
- Exchange of experience in promoting environmentally friendly solutions and technologies
- Support ecologically oriented mass media and social networks
- Organize the session on eco-communication in the next BS NGO Forum