

REPORT

ACHIEVING E-QUALITY by CONNECTING the REGION
THE VI ANNUAL FORUM OF THE EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION
15-16 JUNE 2015, JŪRMALA, LATVIA

It is two months since the VI Annual Forum (AF or Annual Forum) in Jūrmala took place, and we are keen to look back at the results. Stronger integration, forming synergies, increasing the visibility, and exchange of best practices were the key tasks of the AF, and the Report will help to assess how well they were fulfilled. Firstly, the Report offers summaries of the plenaries and workshops, in order to preserve and widely distribute the great ideas discussed. Secondly, it provides an analysis of the survey results, so that the organizers of this AF receive feedback, and the organizers of the next AF can improve the quality of the event by taking into account the opinions of respondents.

PLENARY AND PARALLEL WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Monday 15 June 2015

HIGH LEVEL PANEL: COMPETITIVENESS OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Room: Main Hall

Speakers:

H.E. Ms. Laimdota Straujuma, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia

H.E. Mr. Algirdas Butkevičius, Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania

Mr. Siim Kallas, Special Adviser to Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis, European Commission

Prime Minister of Latvia noted that the Latvian EU Presidency has focused on three priorities - to make Europe more competitive, digital and engaged - that are relevant also on the regional level. Prime Minister Straujuma stressed several steps that need to be taken into account in making the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) more competitive: continuing structural reforms, developing smart growth, implementing digital agenda, improving transport infrastructure (Rail Baltica), and supporting liberal trade policy (FTAs with Japan, Canada, United States).

Prime Minister of Lithuania emphasized that the BSR is one of the most competitive regions in Europe. Prime Minister Butkevičius named several factors that play a significant role in regional integration and growth: energy security, sustainable economic development and well-functioning transport connections. Lithuanian Prime Minister also stressed the importance of implementing the Revised Action Plan of the EUSBSR, as well as praised the successful Latvian EU Presidency and expressed his government's continuous support to it.

Mr. Siim Kallas mentioned that the Baltic States have several strengths and also several weaknesses in terms of attracting investors, such as being so close to Russia and not having proper transport connections between rural and urban areas. According to Mr. Kallas, also on European level things are not moving fast enough, like transport connections between the Baltic States and Central Europe, and digital single market where several countries are fairly lagging behind the Baltic States. Mr. Kallas suggested thinking of creating a regional digital market with a special coordinator for that, as it could be achieved easier than the single digital market.

PLENARY SESSION: NEXT STEPS IN IMPLEMENTING THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Room: Main Hall

Speakers:

Mr. Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice President, European Commission

Mr. Markku Markkula, President, Committee of the Regions

Dr. Henryka Mościcka-Dendys, Undersecretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs, European Policy and Human Rights, Poland

Dr. Artis Pabriks, Member of the European Parliament

Participants of the plenary session stressed that the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is a forerunner of all macro-regional strategies and Europe is closely watching the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Our current task is to bring back Europe to the people, especially on local level and traditional national perspective should be accompanied by macro-regional one. However, we should keep in mind that the Strategy creates a framework to boost regional cooperation, but the potential of traditional cooperation in the Baltic Sea region is exhausted, we need to think wider - focus on EU-Russia cooperation and European integration for other partners.

It was also noted that in the future we should think of the situation of the sea and water quality as people living around the sea depend on it and its cleanliness. We need to cooperate more with our neighbours and stronger integration on institutional level is needed.

Role of education was mentioned, as in the future to be innovative, Europe needs to have tight interaction between businesses and top universities in Europe, while universities themselves need to be more connected to businesses and more open to outside collaboration. Cross-border cooperation in education is needed and plays a vital role.

In the end it was concluded that Strategy has set its priorities and this is what we are going to focus on, as we should maintain the three “NOs” of the Strategy also in the future.

PLENARY SESSION: A SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE BALTIC SEA REGION

Room: Main Hall

Speakers:

Mr. Carlos Moedas, Member of the European Commission

Ms. Gunvor G Ericson, State Secretary to the Minister for Climate and the Environment, Sweden

Mr. Juha Kytölä, Vice President, Wärtsilä Corporation, Finland

Dr. Fritz Koster, Director General, National Institute of Aquatic Resources, Denmark

The Baltic Sea Region is one of the most competitive regions in the world. The Baltic Sea is a vital element of the Region’s competitiveness and sustainability. The Sea plays the important historical, cultural, economic and even social role for the Baltic Sea states. Finding the balance between economic interests and environmental protection is the crucial task of all BSR projects, programmes and strategies. The Blue Growth Strategy has to be in line with the environmentally friendly maritime policy. In long-term perspective the growth of the Region’s GDP could be useless if it was accompanied by the growth of environmental and water pollution. Our ultimate goal is an improvement of well-being and reduction of the pollution of the Region at the same time. A broad collaboration between industries and the research institutes is essential to enhancing the competitiveness of the BSR.

PARALLEL THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

E-INCLUSION FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Room: Northern Foyer

Moderator: *Dr. Andrea Mairate*, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission

Speakers:

Ms. Loreta Križinauskienė, Association 'Langas į ateitį', Lithuania (was not able to attend)

Mr. Tore Langemyr Larsen, Seniornett Norge, Norway (was not able to attend)

Mr. Gerard de Nooij, Ongehinderd, Netherlands

Participants of the workshop outlined the lack of communication between governments, society and business community as one of the main reasons of social and economic imbalances in the Region. We need a constructive dialogue between people, government and companies to achieve inclusion. Inclusion is to have everybody on the board.

The workshop mainly focused on the disabled people needs and discussed possible solutions of creating a more inclusive society. Information and communication technologies (ICT) can help to improve the quality of people's life. Therefore there is a need of having the possibility for everyone to have the full access to ICT. There is a variety of available tools that could be used by national governments to reach the goal - EU structure funds, direct money grants, tax rebates, loans with under-market % rates, public procurement policy, etc.

SMART INTERNAL ENERGY MARKET - BENEFITS FOR CONSUMERS

Room: Glass Room

Moderator: *Mr. Roberto Zangrandi*, EDSO for Smart Grids, Belgium

Speakers:

Mr. Senan McGrath, ESB ecars, Ireland

Mr. Steve Mullins, PwC, United Kingdom

Prof. Dr. Jochen Kreusel, ABB/GF-SG, Germany

During the workshop a lot of attention was dedicated to smart technologies and their caused revolutionary impact on the energy market and infrastructure. Changes in the business module and the digitalization of technologies were stated as factors of great importance for the transformation of the energy market. Promotion of the share of the renewables was stressed as an important step to be done. Access to the investments, innovative solutions and alternative supplies were stated as the major challenges for the development of energy market.

New technologies will make renewable energy sources more accessible, facilitating increased share of renewables among the used energy sources. At the workshop the benefits from the electric vehicles were discussed. Among others advantages the contribution to decarbonisation and reduced costs by owning an electric vehicle were emphasized. At the same time, participants highlighted the need for development of appropriate infrastructure to raise the possibility of using those types of vehicles.

It was concluded that an important aspect for further development of the energy market is macro-regional cooperation and the need for greater integration of the suppliers.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOBILITY IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Room: Basement

Moderator: *Mr. Matthew Kott*, Uppsala University, Sweden

Speakers:

Mr. Didzis Melbiksis, Freelance Journalist, Latvia

Mr. Aleh Kliatsko, NGO 'Global Playground', Sweden

Prof. Zaiga Krišjāne, University of Latvia

Over 40 000 people are becoming refugees every day. Out of approx. 2300 people that in 17 years had sought asylum in Latvia less than 200 had been granted the status. And 4 have become citizens of the Republic of Latvia. Mr. Didzis Melbiksis analysed problems that refugees and asylum seekers face in Latvia. The main problem is the absence of integration program for refugees and the fact that there is only one asylum centre and one NGO, who works with refugees and is overloaded.

Mr Aleh Kliatsko who is originally from Belarus shared his integration experience in Sweden after becoming a student there. International students in Stockholm have founded NGO called "Global Playground". Their encouragement is to cooperate more with locals to improve the lifestyle of international young people.

Mr Matthew Kott analysed the main challenges that young Romani migrants face across Europe. Most often they lack proper documentation that proves their EU citizenship; they become victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, face racism and physical attacks; children do not receive proper education. It is important to improve social policy system to reduce marginalisation of Romani migrants and stop the circle of poverty.

Prof. Zaiga Krišjāne presented the results of the study about the migration processes in Latvia. Professor examined the influence of the EU membership and financial crisis to migration process and concluded that before the crisis migration more often could be described as an adventure, while after the crisis people more often were pushed to go because of financial problems, uncertain personal prospects and unemployment.

In conclusion, the speakers agreed that Latvia lacks integration policy experience and should learn best practices from the Nordic countries. Universities and academia should become the main actors who work with young migrants. The role of the local authorities and NGOs should be increased as well. One of the great examples is integration coach - through teaching the language young migrants are encouraged to use it doing something else (dancing, theatre, singing). To be able to host more refugees and young migrants we need to create integration programme, more NGOs, additional government money, increased role of the local authorities and universities, as well as change of attitude towards migrants.

COMMUNICATING THE EUSBSR - DIGITAL TOOLS FOR NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

Room: Main Hall

Moderator: *Mr. Tony Lockett*, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission

Speakers:

Mr. Gabriel Alvarez, INTERACT Programme

Ms. Johanna Laurila, HELCOM Secretariat, Finland

Mr. Teo Zetterman, Solna City, Sweden replaced by replaced Ms Karen Melchior

The workshop addressed the challenge to communicate the objectives, facts and successes of the EUSBSR in relation to the life of people. Concrete communication examples such as small videos with the data and maps on the Baltic Sea, the EUSBSR Webpage and place in different social media and the Solna City experience on telling stories in social media were provided and analysed by the panellists. Sharing in the audience during the Workshop revealed the possibilities of short video testimonies, brochures, annual photo competitions, etc.

It was concluded that:

- Considering the way of communicating the ideas to different audiences is of first importance, the appropriate digital tools are to be considered in accordance to that.
- Telling stories with the humour on issues that concern people and doing that by a network of “ambassadors” in social media is of the most effective approach.
- Effective communication is about the issues, not the process of the EUSBSR.
Teo Zetteman: “#EUSBSR or perhaps #WeconnectBalticSea”.
- Communication is a collective effort - people at all levels have to be involved.

In sum, the workshop concluded that there is a need to engage, train and empower “ambassadors” to share stories online about the challenges faced by the region and the people working at all levels to address these challenges.

MARITIME AND COASTAL TOURISM IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Room: Western Foyer

Moderators: *Dr. Anja Gelzer*, University of Göttingen, Germany and *Ms. Andrea Krabbe*, Ministry of Economics, Construction and Tourism, Germany

Speakers:

Dr. Monika Griefahn, AIDA Cruises, Germany

Mr. Matthieu Ballu, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission

Mr. Jens Masuch, PLANCO Consulting GmbH, Germany

The workshop focused on maritime and coastal tourism, its newest trends and successful projects. AIDA cruises informed the audience about their innovative technologies, sustainable shore excursions and climate conscious cruises, while PLANCO Consulting GmbH presented their successful “MARRIAGE” project, which aims at better marina management, marina network consolidation and water tourism marketing in the southern Baltic rim. The project was made into a cross border brand and attracted huge interest from customers, produced concrete improvements and successfully transferred the knowledge of more advanced and experienced German marinas to other marinas in South coast Baltic area.

In addition to specific presentations, representative from the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission, informed about the EU Strategy for Coastal and Maritime Tourism, the EU Integrated Maritime Policy and the policies it covers - blue growth, marine data and knowledge, maritime spatial planning, integrated maritime surveillance and sea basin strategies.

Tuesday 16 June 2015

PARALLEL THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

CULTURE AND CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Room: Western Foyer

Moderator: *Mr. Krists Avots*, Infogr.am, Latvia

Speakers:

Ms. Anu Piirisild, Estonian Academy of Arts, Estonia

Mr. Julian Stubbs, UP THERE, EVERYWHERE, Sweden

Mr. Dmitri Sarle, ArcticStartup & Arctic15, Finland

Ms. Olga Knudsen, Balticlab, Sweden

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Ms. *Mirjam Külm*, Balticlub, Sweden

There are different ways and angles how to connect regions by bringing creative minds together and combining culture and creative entrepreneurship. *Regional branding* is one of them, who asks' for perception of reality, deep research, statement of common goals, political approval by government and hard and long-term work towards a win-win situation. Standing out from the crowd (by places, architecture, people, etc.) is not just supremacy, but also a creation of your identity, which you could not just only *brand*, but on the other hand to promote movement of communities (for example #hashtag), exercise programmes who brings university students, designers, engineers, all sort of specialist together to establish prototypes of invention. There is a possibility to share, show skills, find out mutual understanding and a way how to work, to have networking and workshops. You cannot just create steering groups who talks all the time, but you have to involve people. People don't want to hear saying what to do, but need to be pushed towards. Therefore value from government as funding, availability of work space, step by step explanation of application process for funding and participation in programmes, mentorship are also very beneficial. Investment, connections for creative entrepreneurship is one of the key aspects and conferences, meetings have a good soil where to find it. Actions vs. buzz words, events and physical meeting, gain for all are actions for collaboration between cultural and creative entrepreneurs. Collaboration builds understanding, understanding builds networks, which creates a value. Fruits you will see in a few years, would it be for the state, city, people or specific communities. Today we are inventors, who have a chance for making creative things. There are a lot of challenges and opportunities, therefore - take the action!

FUNDING COMMON PRIORITIES

Room: Main Hall

Moderator: *Mr. Nicola de Michelis*, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission

Speakers:

Dr. Erik Gløersen, Spatial Foresight GmbH, Luxembourg

Ms. Iruma Kravale, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Latvia

Ms. Karin Nygård Skalman, VINNOVA, Sweden

Mr. Ladislav Simko, Office of the Government, Slovakia

During the workshop „*Funding common priorities*” the main task was to discuss the ways to improve the link between funding sources and various programs of the EUSBSR. Participants agreed that clear political commitment and responsibility is needed; close cooperation between policy coordinators and funds will help to select the right objectives and investment priorities; communication on the advantages of thinking “Macro strategy” is crucial.

Geography helps us to create unique combination between different actors and find solutions which meet the market needs. The results of cooperation must be understandable for applicants and ordinary people. We need to address people and make them interested because commitment comes when benefits are understandable and visible. Sharing the best practices and learning from each other is equally important.

IMPLEMENTING MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING IN THE BALTIC SEA

Room: Basement

Moderator: *Ms. Anita Mäkinen*, Finnish Transport Safety Agency (Trafi)

Speakers:

Ms. Angela Schultz-Zehden, s.Pro Sustainable Projects, Germany

Mr. Thomas Johansson, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, Sweden

Mr. Riku Varjopuro, Finnish Environment Institute, Finland

The workshop focused on presentation of four different projects aimed at implementing the EU Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR): Baltic SCOPE, BaltSpace, Baltic LINes and Plan4Blue (the last two currently under project application). All four projects are about fostering sustainability, pan-Baltic thinking, deeper integration and exploring and addressing various integration challenges in the BSR. It was agreed that the projects will increase collaboration and coordination among countries that are developing MSPs in the Baltic Sea, leading to their greater alignment.

It was acknowledged that MSP comprises all three objectives of the EUSBSR: save the sea, connect the region and increase prosperity. As well as it was noted that MSP is of great importance in fostering cross-border cooperation, cohesion, integration and sustainable development of the BSR. Also, specific challenges were identified that have to be taken into account when developing national MSPs, namely, underwater cultural heritage, sea-dumped chemical munitions, protected marine areas and shipping routes.

INNOVATIONS AND CROSS-BORDER INFRASTRUCTURES FOR A BETTER HEALTH CARE

Room: Glass Room

Moderator: *Ms. Egita Pole*, Ministry of Health, Latvia

Speakers:

Dr. Riitta Sauni, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland

Prof. Jan De Maeseneer, Ghent University, Belgium

Prof. Dr. Roland Trill, Flensburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Dr. Lars Lindsköld, VGR/HSA, Sweden

The workshop focused on best practices and future solutions on health care in the Baltic Sea region. It was suggested that in the future we should focus on a patient as his own health manager; therefore health literacy is seen as the key for health promoting behaviour as people aren't able to manage health by themselves. It was also noted that living environment and lifestyle changes are important. Baltic Sea region should promote more efficient health care systems through innovations and focus on sustainable health care.

NICHES MATTER MORE, BORDERS LESS - TRUE INTEGRATION OF SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Room: Northern Foyer

Moderators: *Ms. Pauli Merriman*, WWF Baltic Sea Programme and *Mr. Andris Andrusaitis*, BONUS

Speakers:

Prof. Mike Elliott, University of Hull, United Kingdom

Dr. Jana Moldanová, Swedish Environmental Research Institute, Sweden

Dr. Alf Norkko, University of Helsinki, Finland

Dr. Henn Ojaveer, University of Tartu, Estonia

Dr. Eeva Rantama, Interreg Baltic Sea Region Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat

The session addressed the critical advancements needed to further progress across the science-policy interface. An important point was how this can be used to achieve a sustainable ecosystem approach. One big idea - to protect and enhance ecological functioning and ecosystem services while at the same time delivering societal benefits.

All panellists stressed the importance of securing an effective horizontal and vertical communication between science and policy makers - as well as between stakeholders whose engagement was also noted as critical.

PLENARY SESSION: OVERCOMING BARRIERS FOR E-CONNECTIVITY - UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL FOR E-QUALITY

Room: Main Hall

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Speakers:

Mr. Urmas Paet, Member of the European Parliament

Mr. Jørgen Abild Andersen, Chairman of OECD's Committee on Digital Economy Policy, Member of Advisory Board for ICT Think Tank 'Top of Digital Europe'

Mr. Rüdiger Dorn, Director of Cloud Computing, Microsoft

Dr. Pēteris Zilgalvis, Head of Unit, Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content & Technology, European Commission

The session highlighted the importance of e-services and e-skills to provide e-quality and well-being of society in the Baltic Sea region. Participants discussed how digital services transform value chains in all sectors of economy, drive innovations and give rise to substantial gains in competitiveness and efficiency. Participants underlined that in modern world all sectors are dependent on ICT and emphasized the importance of electronic security. E-ecosystem and 4 pillars (e-infrastructure, e-applications and e-services, e-privacy, e-skills) are the main to focus on while building a model of the Baltic Sea region and further on creating a European Digital Economy and Society. Next step to achieve region integration shall be reducing the gap between demand and supply of IT specialists around the countries.

EVALUATION OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

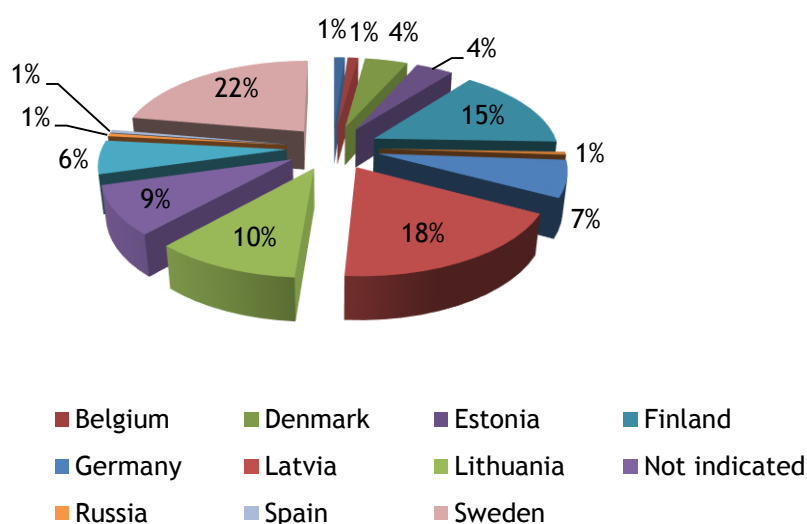
Participants were asked to fill out a hard copy of the evaluation survey during the AF, or the electronic evaluation survey after the AF. Altogether 180 (28%) of the estimated 650 participants shared their opinion about the AF.

GENERAL EVALUATION OF THE ANNUAL FORUM

NATIONALITY

Respondents represented an overall of 12 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Spain, and Sweden. The biggest share of survey participants came from Sweden (40), followed by Latvians (33), Finns (27), Lithuanians (19), Germans (12), Poles (11), Danes (8) and Estonians (7). 16 participants of the survey chose not to indicate their nationality.

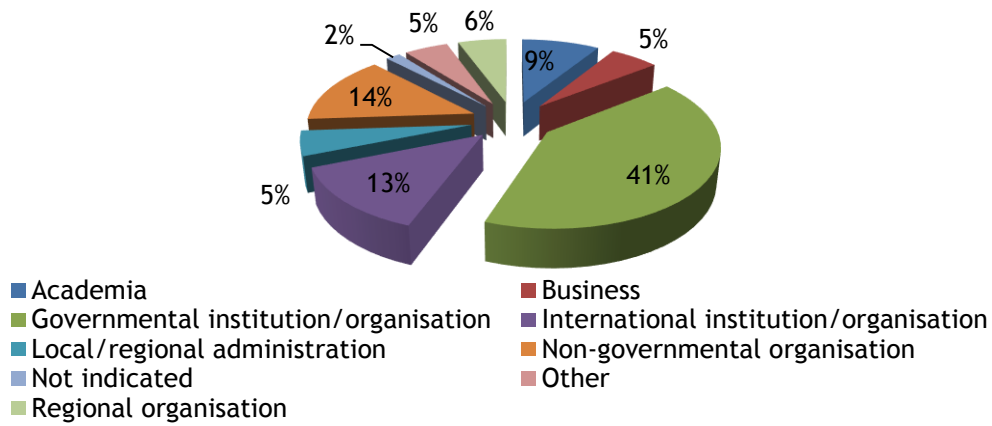
Participants of the Survey by nationality



SECTOR

From the totality of 180 respondents, an overwhelming plurality of 74 represented governmental institutions, followed by 25 representatives of non-governmental institutions and 24 representatives of international institutions. Participants from the academia (16), business (10), regional organisations (10), local or regional administrations (9) followed the suit. A totality of 9 participants responded by indicating their work field as 'other', representing local mass media, funding programmes and the education sector, with 3 choosing not to indicate their professional affiliation.

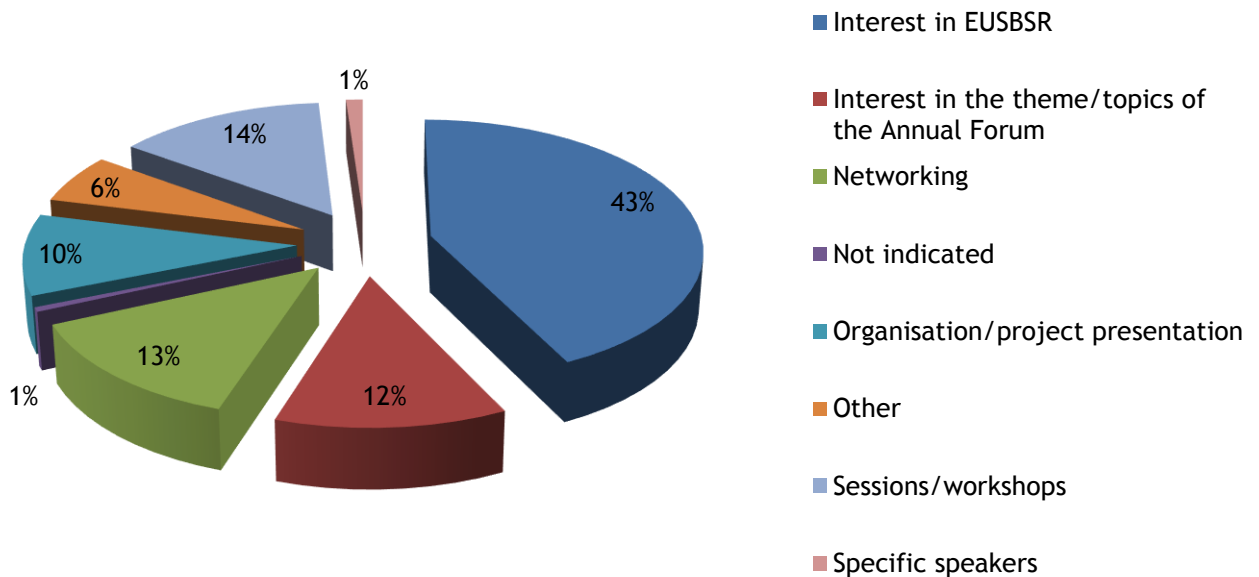
Participants of the Survey by sector



REASON FOR PARTICIPATION

Among the reasons indicated for participation in the Annual Forum, general interest in EUSBSR (77), alongside networking (24), sessions and workshops (25), and themes and topics discussed (22) attracted most participants. Organisation of the EUSBSR (18) was followed by other reasons (11), namely tourism, Priority Area Coordinators/Horizontal Action Coordination (for example, PA Nutri), representation of private sector enterprises relevant to the Baltic Sea Strategy, participation in a Steering Committee meeting, representation of think-tanks, alongside participation in the framework of study travels.

Reason for participation in the Annual Forum

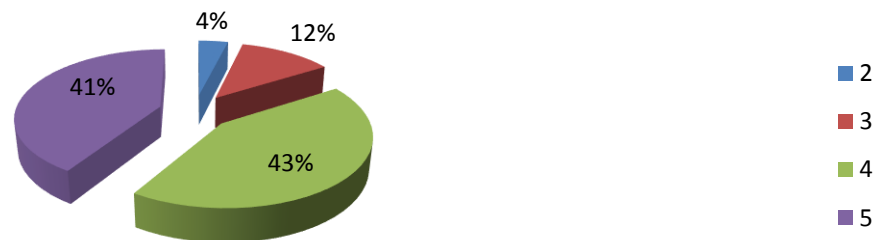


EVALUATION OF THE ORGANISATION

EVALUATION OF THE ORGANISATION OF THE EVENT (marks from 1 - poor to 5 - good)

The overwhelming majority of the participants expressed an overall satisfaction with the organisation of the event (148) by giving marks 4 and 5 out of 5.

Evaluation of the organisation of the Annual Forum



Participants expressed their gratitude to the organisers and many provided positive feedback on the coordination efforts of the team of this year's Annual Forum. Appreciation was granted to friendly volunteers, who received a special *thank you* from the attendants of the Annual Forum. The venue of *Dzintari* Concert Hall was also highly appreciated. Many participants evaluated the Networking Village positively and liked the format of it: promotional stands and direct discussions with representatives of stakeholders.

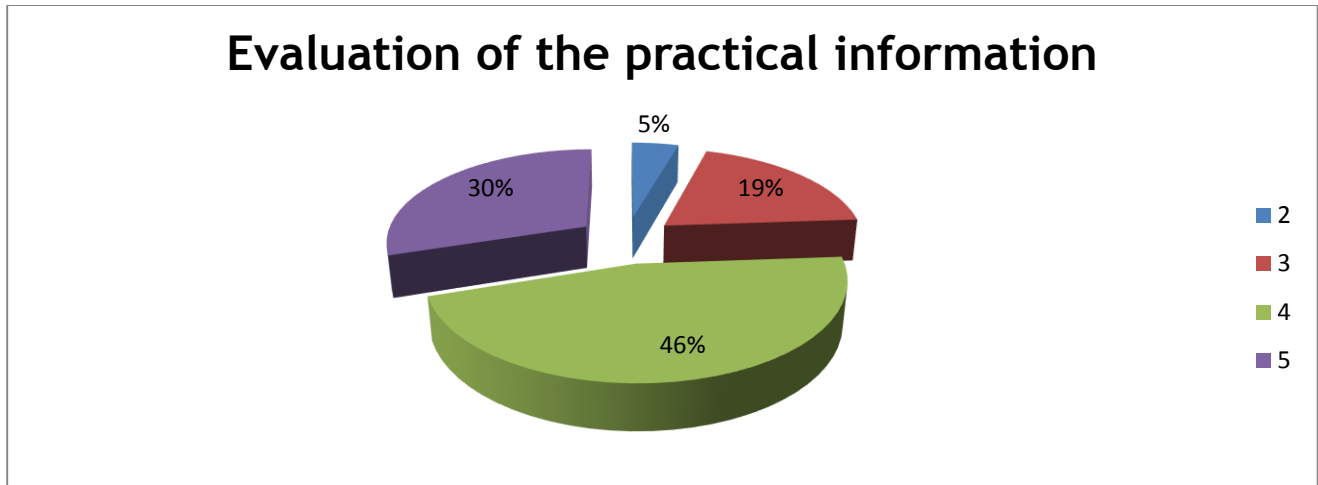
At the same time, the commentary section showed some space for improvement at the next year's AF. The most notable suggestions from participants included:

1. Enhancing interaction between the speakers at the plenary sessions, as well as the participants of event, to have a "truly interactive cooperation initiative". Workshops proved to be the centre of interest for the participants and should be kept as the primary focus of AF next year;
2. Upgrading logistics of the Annual Forum by:
 - a. making sure sufficient food and drinks are provided in all occasions, and making provisions to reduce long queues at lunch and during coffee breaks;
 - b. providing a more coherent cooperation with the hotels, proficient booking management, guidance and cooperation with the organizers of the Annual Forum;
 - c. ensuring space for conversation and exchanges in the Networking Village, or merging the workshops and networking activities;
 - d. providing facilities that accommodate the weather conditions, or include indications for adequate clothing and shoe-wear;
 - e. providing uninterrupted internet connection on grounds of the Annual Forum;
 - f. accommodating the requirements of productive discussions by holding the workshops in isolated rooms, ensuring a sufficient amount of microphones and reducing sound problems;
3. Boosting networking and interaction by providing a full list of participants with contact details, organisations represented in the Networking Village and name-tags that clearly and legibly state the names and last names of each participant;
4. Spreading awareness by broadcasting the Annual Forum live using open web tools and invite people *via* social media to watch and share their ideas. Already this year some of the sessions were broadcasted live, but organisers of the next AF could go one step further and provide web stream of the whole Annual Forum, as well as engage the viewers. The Annual Forum could team-up with digital curators

(online moderators), cooperating with moderators of the workshops and sessions for enhancement of both online and offline interaction within the Annual Forum's discussions.

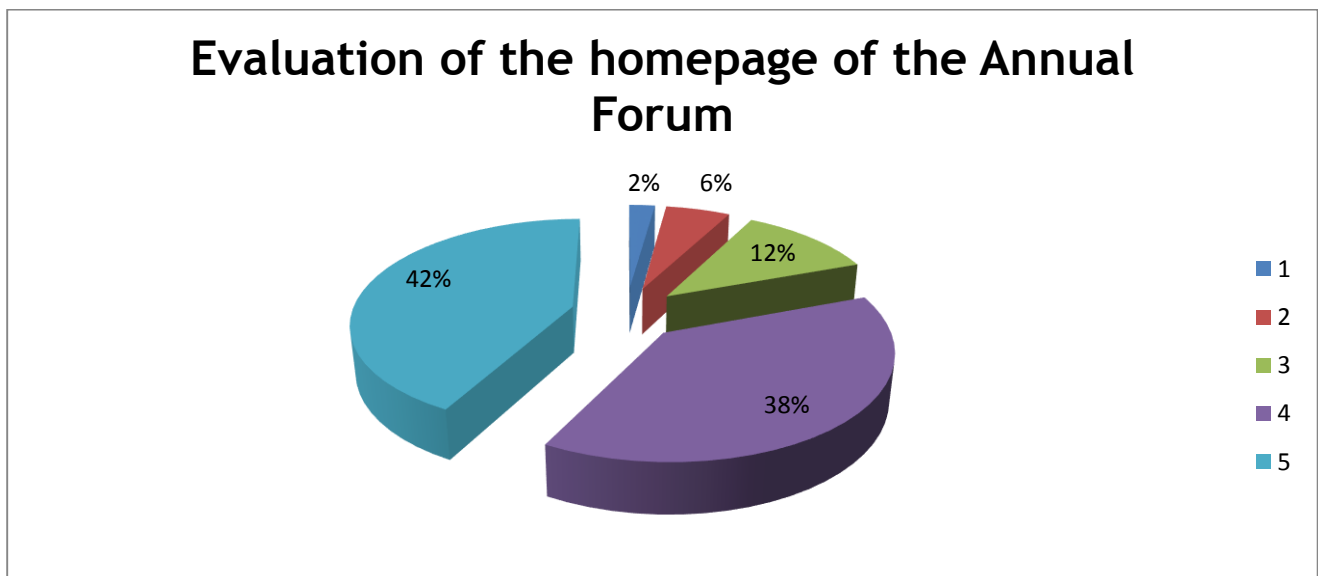
EVALUATION OF THE PRACTICAL INFORMATION PROVIDED PRIOR AND DURING THE EVENT (marks from 1 - not useful to 5 - useful)

A total of 132 participants of the Survey indicated an overall satisfaction with the information flow both prior and during the event. As illustrated by the chart below, a quarter of participants was not satisfied with the information received.



EVALUATION OF THE HOMEPAGE OF THE ANNUAL FORUM (marks from 1 - not useful to 5 - useful)

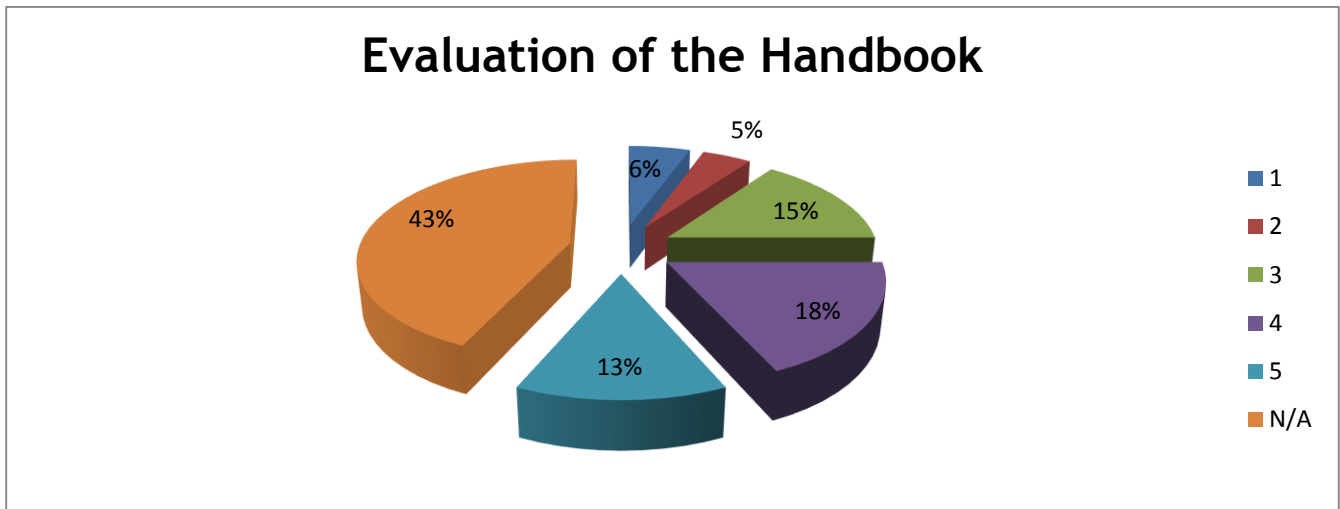
A total of 143 participants of the Survey indicated an overall satisfaction with the homepage of the event. 20 participants indicated that the homepage could be improved next year.



Participants pointed out that a blog portal could be set up to share visions and concerns prior to the event, alongside every day challenges they face regarding the implementation of the Strategy. The organizers were encouraged to promote the blog content being produced as relevant input to the upcoming Annual Forum and make use of the content as starting points for themes and discussions at the Annual Forum.

EVALUATION OF THE HANDBOOK OF THE ANNUAL FORUM (marks from 1 - not useful to 5 - useful)

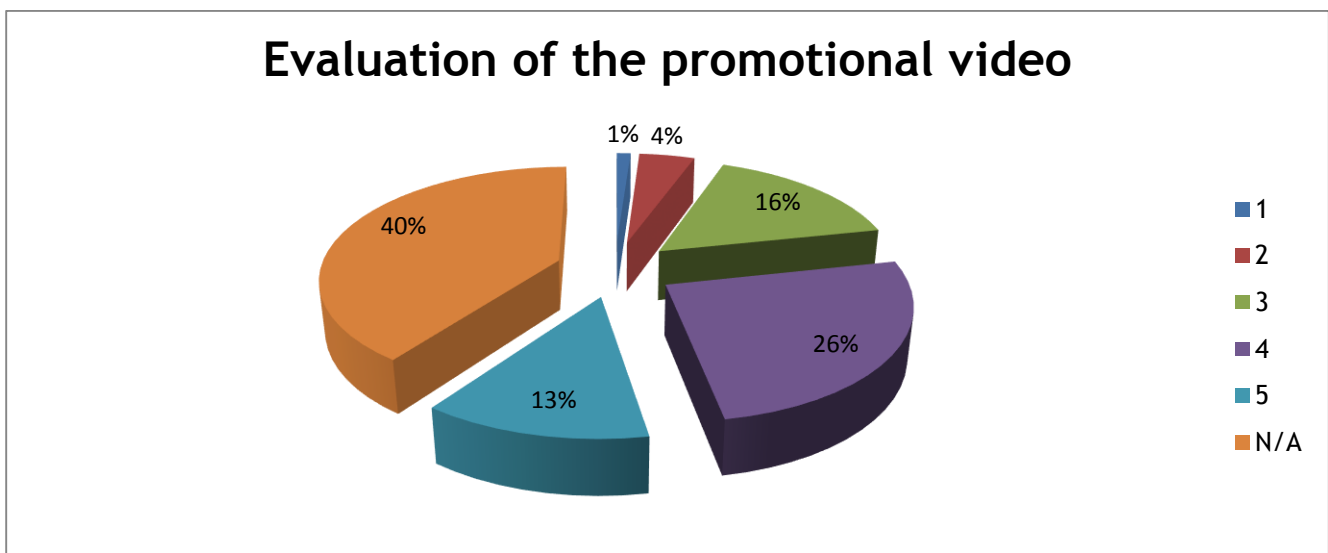
A space for improvement for the next year’s organizers is shown by the evaluation of the Handbook. 77 out of 180 participants of the Survey have indicated that they cannot evaluate the Handbook, suggesting that they have not seen or used it. Only 57 indicated an overall satisfaction with the Handbook, and 45 out of 180 participants have proven to be rather dissatisfied with the Handbook.



In the commentary section, some participants noted that a Handbook is not necessary and a detailed plan and a map of the event would be sufficient. Participants also noted that an app would be a more efficient way to navigate through the venue.

EVALUATION OF THE PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

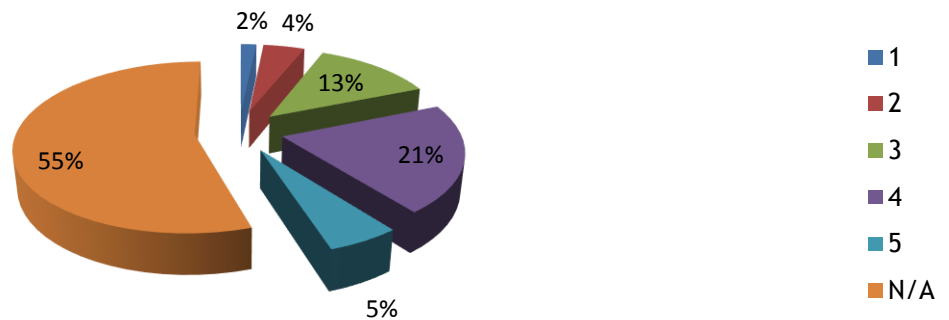
Similarly, the majority of participants admitted that they had not seen or paid attention to the promotional video (71 out of 180 participants were unable to express their opinion). A totality of 69 participants evaluated the promotional video as very useful or useful; however, 37 participants were rather dissatisfied with the content of the promotional video.



EVALUATION OF THE INFOGRAPHIC OF THE ANNUAL FORUM

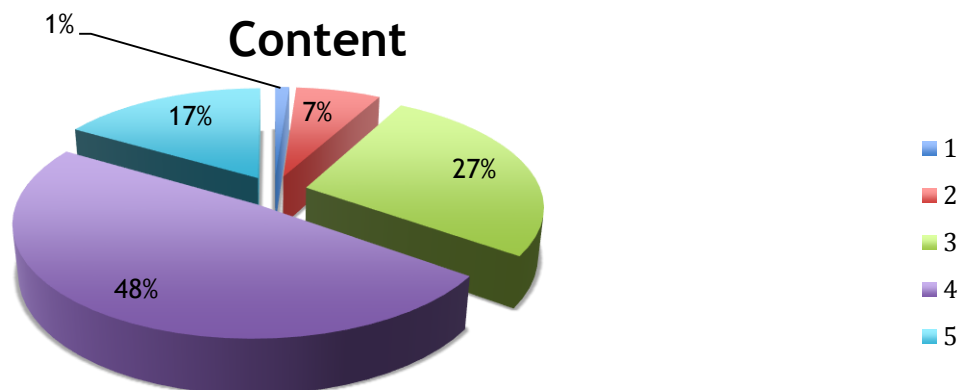
The majority of participants (98) pointed out that they are unable to evaluate the infographic of the Annual Forum. 47 participants declared they were satisfied with it, yet 50 were rather dissatisfied.

Evaluation of the infographic



OVERALL CONTENT OF THE ANNUAL FORUM (marks from 1 - not satisfied to 5 - satisfied)

Participants have graded the overall content of the AF with 3.7 out of 5, which indicates that they were generally satisfied with the substance of sessions and parallel workshops, and they found the AF valuable. Most frequently used grade was 4, nevertheless 29 respondents, i.e. 17%, valued the content by giving mark 5 out of 5. Only two people, i.e. 1%, were dissatisfied with the content, and gave mark 1.



Participants commented that “the topics raised were interesting and relevant to the EUSBSR” and that the AF attracted distinguished speakers. At the same time many participants noted that the high-level format of the event led to “a bit too general and goal/value-oriented” discussions, and politicized the Annual Forum. Participants would have liked to see more practical discussions with new ideas to improve the BSR. However, few respondents appreciated the high-level format and stated that discussions were very concrete.

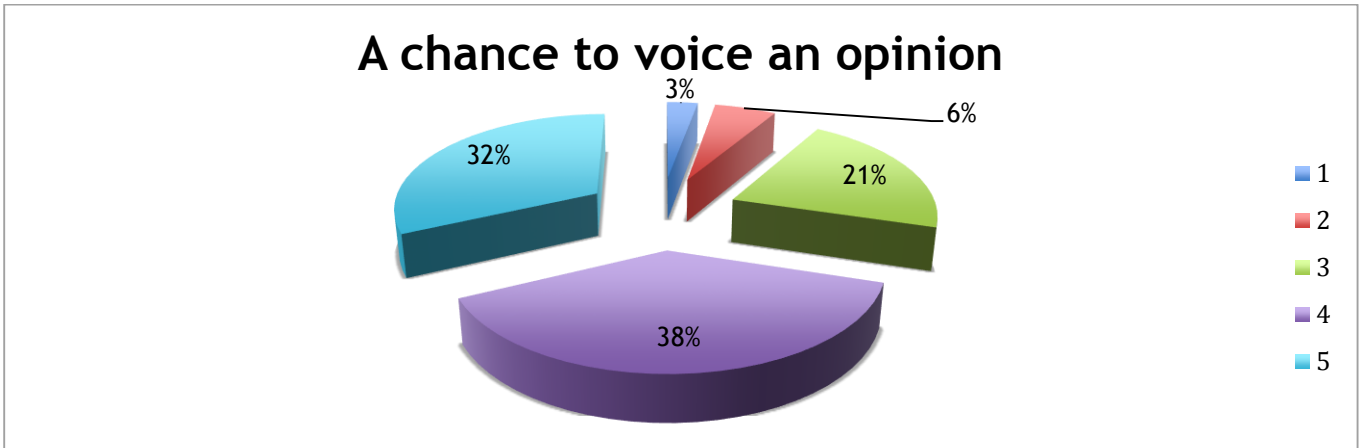
Furthermore, participants expressed their willingness to hear more about the current situation in the Baltic Sea Region - stories of real actions and projects would have been preferred instead of general statements. Some of the participants expected more attention to be paid to the revised Action Plan that was just adopted and relevant to all stakeholders.

Participants also noted that there was too little interaction among speakers at plenary sessions, since they expressed unilateral statements in a form of presentations or speeches. Next year it would be interesting to have synergy among speakers, especially in the Q&A sessions.

Meanwhile many respondents told that there were really valuable and deep discussions. Especially participants who just recently got involved in the Strategy, claimed that the AF was very informative and useful for them.

A CHANCE TO SPEAK UP (marks from 1 - poor to 5 - good)

Participants have graded their chance of voicing an opinion with 3.9 marks out of 5. A large part of participants (32%) found that the AF provided a very good chance to speak up and gave 5 marks.

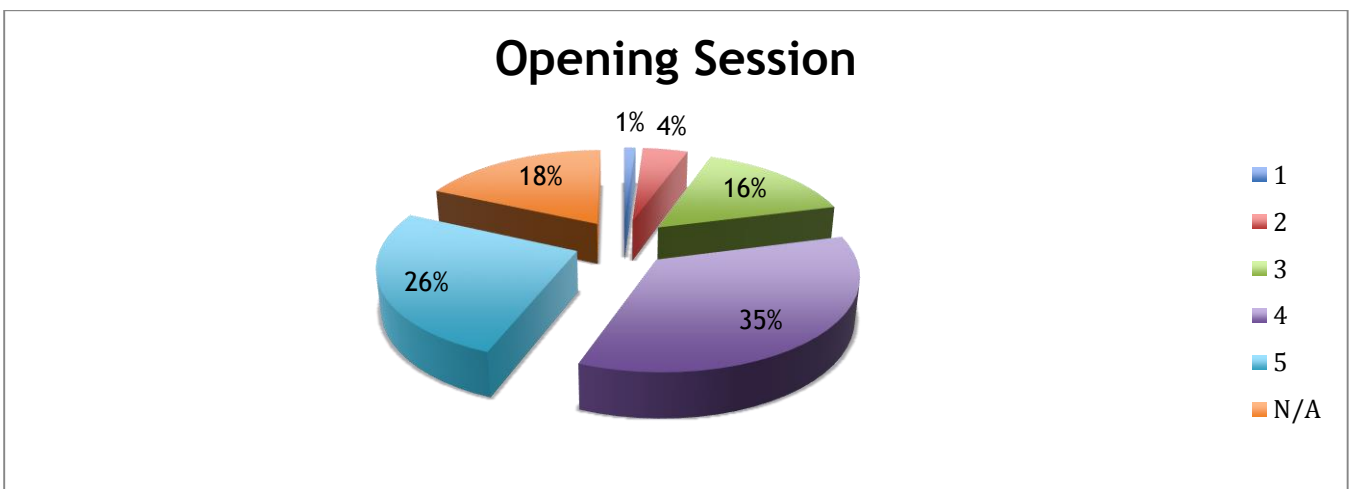


Mostly people felt that it was a “very open forum”, there was an excellent chance to speak up and that “every question had been heard”. Participants emphasised the intensive interaction between moderators and the audience. However, some were disappointed that the questions, which participants had already handed in when registering, were not raised during the sessions. Respondents also noted that in some sessions and workshops there was no time left for questions and comments from the audience, but they also understood that it was difficult to plan and predict the perfect timing.

PLENARY SESSIONS (marks from 1 - poor to 5 - good)

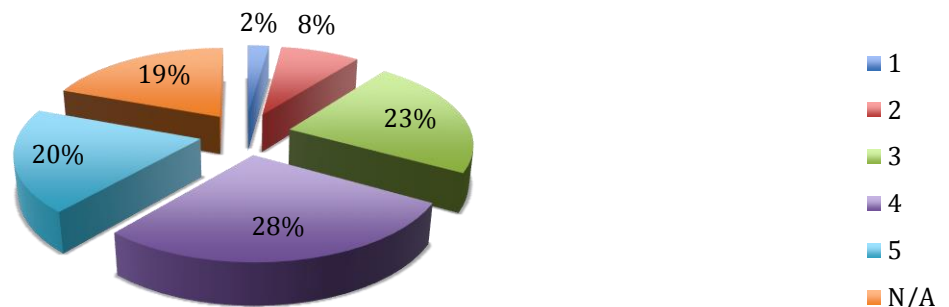
DAY 1

Opening Session was the highest-rated plenary session, to which participants gave on average 4 marks out of 5. 26% of respondents found the Opening Session good and gave 5 marks; only 1% considered it poor. The Opening Session was also the most attended one. Respondents especially highlighted the speech of HRH Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden, which was a very powerful statement about saving the Baltic Sea.



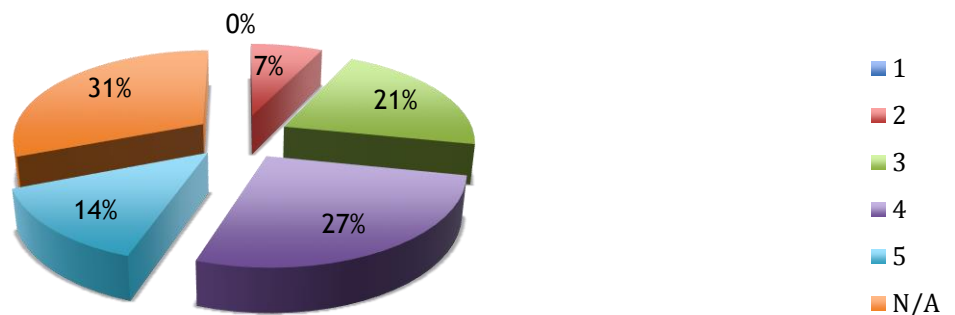
The **High Level Panel: Competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region** was a well-attended session. Respondents gave the mark of 3.7 on average, but only 4 persons, i.e. 2%, found it poor. This evaluation might support the view expressed in comments in relation to the high-level format of the AF. However, some respondents were of the opinion that high-level speakers made the Annual Forum more important and helped to communicate the Strategy to the public. It can be observed also from the previous AFs that the participants sought to have high-level speakers who would endorse the EUSBSR, engage with the audience and avoid general comments. Generally the participants do not want to have only networking and practical workshops. They are very much looking forward to seeing the high-level speakers, although some of the participants end up leaving dissatisfied, having felt distance and detachment from those speakers. Should there be not enough high-level speakers, participants would point out that the AF lacked political ownership. It's a catch-22.

High Level Panel: Competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region



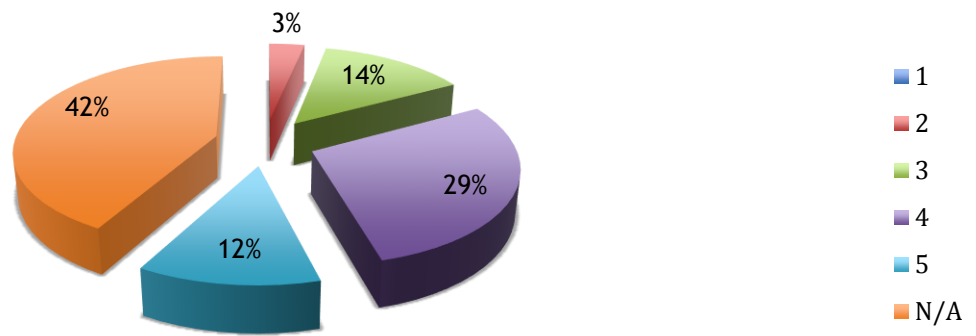
The plenary session **Next Steps in Implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** was also evaluated with an average mark of 3.7 out of 5. None of respondents regarded it as poor.

Next Steps in Implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region



The plenary session **A Sustainable Competitive Baltic Sea Region** was evaluated on average with 3.9 marks out of 5.

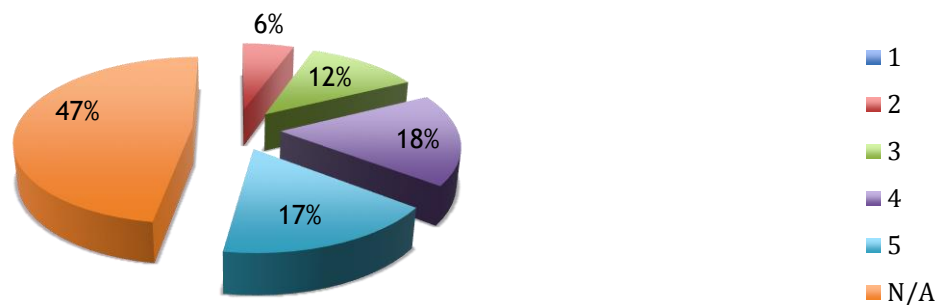
A Sustainable Competitive Baltic Sea Region



DAY 2

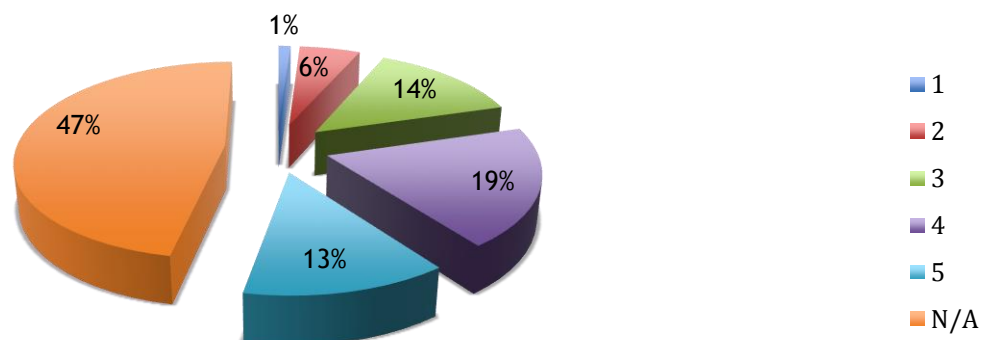
Even though the least attended, the plenary session **Overcoming Barriers for e-Connectivity - Unlocking the Potential for e-Quality** was highly valued, and none of the respondents gave it mark 1. The average was 3.9 marks out of 5.

Overcoming Barriers for e-Connectivity - Unlocking the Potential for e-Quality



The **Closing Session** was evaluated with on average 3.7 marks out of 5, and it was poorly attended, most probably because it was the very last session.

Closing Session



THEMATIC WORKSHOPS (marks from 1 - poor to 5 - good)

DAY 1

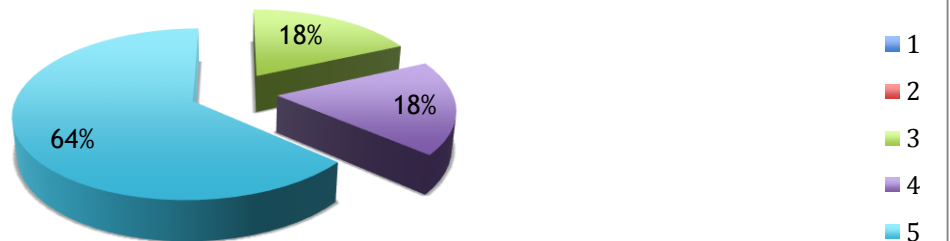
The workshop **E-Inclusion for Social and Economic Opportunities** was evaluated with 4 out of 5 on average. None of respondents gave 1 mark, and the most common mark was 5.

E-Inclusion for Social and Economic Opportunities



The workshop **Smart Internal Energy Market - Benefits for Consumers** was highly rated - mark 4.45 on average, and no marks lower than 3 were given. This, however, was the least-attended parallel session.

Smart Internal Energy Market - Benefits for Consumers



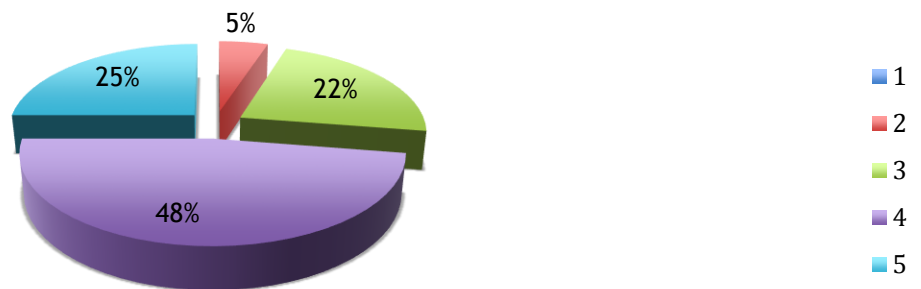
The workshop **Young People's Mobility in the Baltic Sea Region** was the lowest-rated, since on average it received 3.6 marks out of 5. As it may be understood from the comments received both at the session and in the survey, the participants would have liked to see more connection to the Baltic Sea Region. Nevertheless, 23% of participating respondents assessed the workshop as good, by rating it with 5 marks.

Young People's Mobility in the Baltic Sea Region



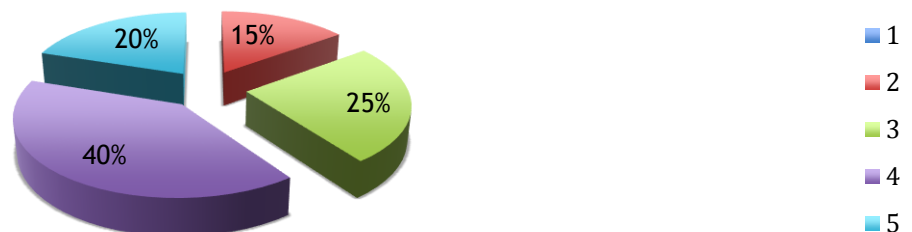
The workshop **Communicating the EUSBSR - Digital Tools for Networking and Collaboration** was evaluated with 4 marks on average. Almost half of the respondents gave 4 marks, and none assessed it as poor.

Communicating the EUSBSR - Digital Tools for Networking and Collaboration



The workshop **Maritime and Coastal Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region** received 3.7 marks on average, and similarly to the previous workshop none of respondents assessed it as poor.

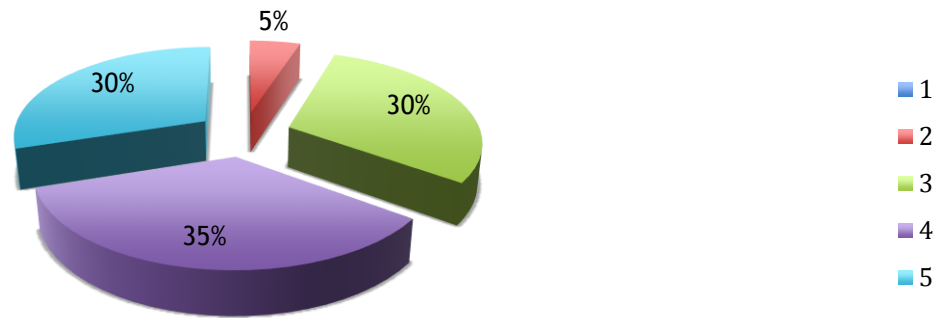
Maritime and Coastal Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region



DAY 2

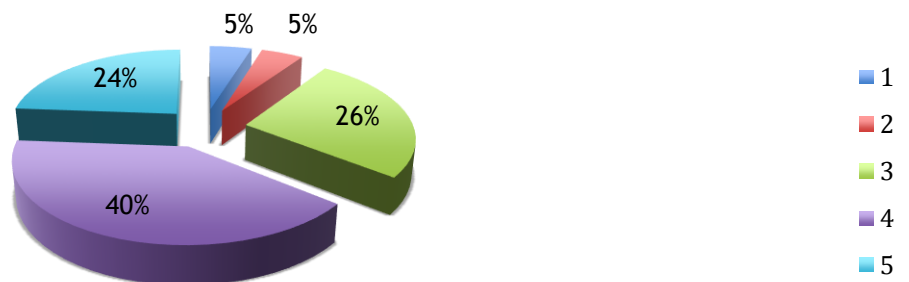
The workshop **Culture and Creative Entrepreneurship** was evaluated with 3.9 marks on average. None of respondents assessed it as poor, and 35% of the participating respondents gave it 5 marks.

Culture and Creative Entrepreneurship



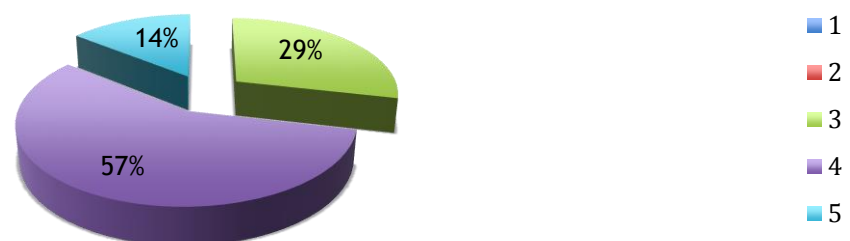
The workshop **Funding Common Priorities** was evaluated with 3.7 marks on average, and it was the most attended workshop. 5% of participating respondents assessed it as poor, but at the same time 24% found it good and gave 5 marks.

Funding Common Priorities



The workshop **Implementing Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea** was evaluated with 3.9 marks on average, out of 5. The lowest mark was 3, but the vast majority gave 4 marks.

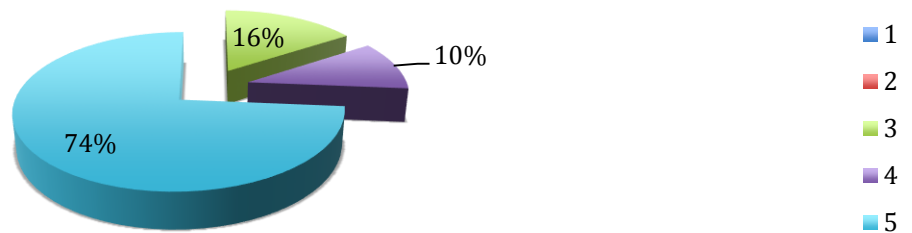
Implementing Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea



The parallel workshop **Innovations and Cross-Border Infrastructures for a Better Health Care** was the most satisfying, as respondents graded it with average mark of **4.6** out of 5. 74% of the respondents who attended the workshop found it good and gave 5 marks. No one gave less than 3 points.

In this workshop, indeed, very concrete ideas and already existing projects were discussed. Even though the time was running out, the moderator allowed for questions after each speaker, and an active debate emerged. According to the comments, this is the reason for such a high assessment.

Innovations and Cross-Border Infrastructures for a Better Health Care



The workshop **Niches Matter More, Borders Less - True Integration of Science and Knowledge** was evaluated with **3.9** marks on average, and half of the participating respondents gave 4 marks. No marks lower than 3 were given.

Niches Matter More, Borders Less - True Integration of Science and Knowledge



Overall, the workshops were valued more highly than plenary sessions. Plenary sessions were found too long, and respondents asked for more breaks. Also in the comments respondents suggested to focus on workshops, so that participants can attend more of them.

WORKSHOPS ATTENDED BY SECTOR

DAY 1

The first day of the Annual Forum attracted the most participants in workshops **E-Inclusion for Social and Economic Opportunities** (35) and **Communicating the EUSBSR - Digital Tools for Networking and Collaboration** (40). The biggest activity was shown by participants from governmental institutions or organisations. However, an overall of 62 participants did not attend any of the workshops, mostly from non-governmental institutions and international institutions/organisations, indicating that there is still space for change and mobilisation for next years' organizers. Furthermore, the predominance of governmental representatives indicates that next years' organizers should pay more attention to engaging stakeholders from all relevant sectors to the Strategy.

| Sector/Workshop attended | E-Inclusion for Social and Economic Opportunities | Communicating the EUSBSR - Digital Tools for Networking and Collaboration | Smart Internal Energy Market - Benefits for Consumers | Young People in the Baltic Region | Maritime and Coastal Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region | None | Grand total |
|--|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|-------------|
| Academia | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 14 |
| Business | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 9 |
| Governmental institution/organisation | 9 | 20 | 2 | 11 | 3 | 26 | 71 |
| International institution/organisation | 3 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 20 |
| Local/regional administration | 1 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 8 |
| Non-governmental organisation | 5 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 23 |
| Not indicated | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5 |
| Other | 9 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 22 |
| Regional organisation | 2 | | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8 |
| Grand total | 35 | 40 | 8 | 29 | 14 | 62 | 180 |

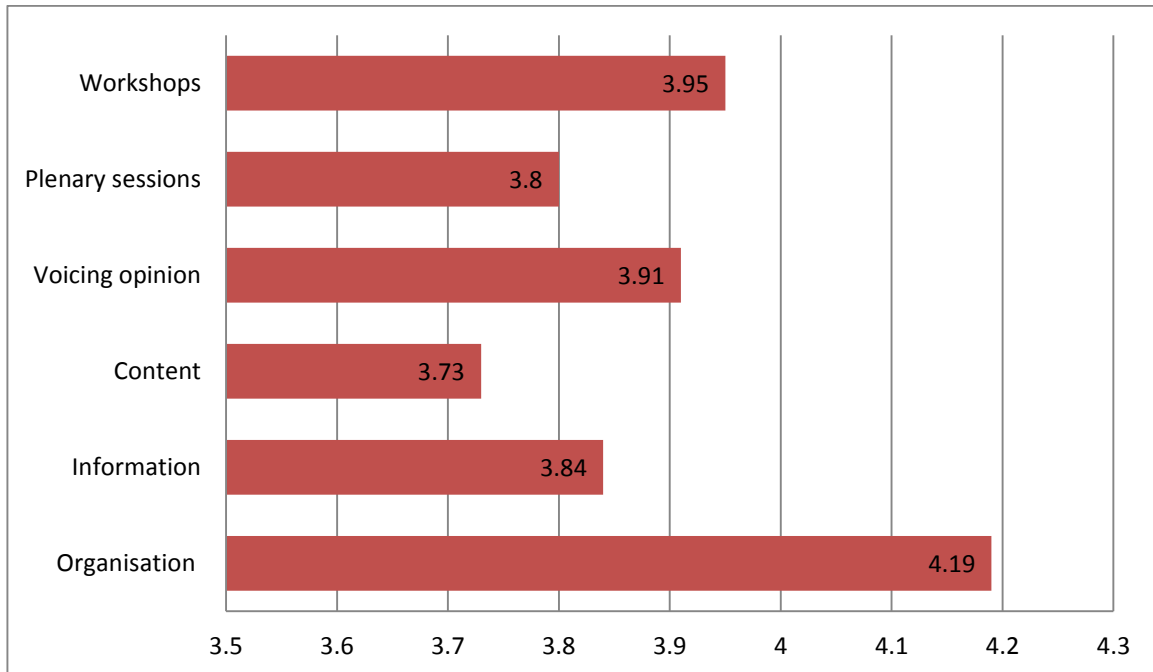
DAY 2

Similarly to the 1st day of the Annual Forum, most participants were attracted from governmental institutions and non-governmental sector. Participants were most interested in workshops **Innovations and Cross-Border Infrastructures for Better Health Care** (18) and **Funding Common priorities** (42). However, a total of 75 participants indicated they have not attended any of the workshops, mostly from governmental institutions/organisations or international institutions/organisations. The exhibited results show the potential target groups for next years' media campaign.

| Sector/Workshop attended | Culture and Creative Entrepreneurship | Funding Common Priorities | Implementing Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea | Innovations and Cross-Border Infrastructures for a Better Health Care | Niches Matter More, Borders Less | None | Grand total |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|---|----------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Academia | 6 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 16 |
| Business | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 10 |
| Governmental institution/organisation | 7 | 15 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 35 | 74 |
| International institution/organisation | 1 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 10 | 24 |
| Local/regional administration | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 9 |
| Non-governmental organisation | 1 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 25 |
| Not indicated | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Other | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 9 |
| Regional organisation | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 10 |
| Grand total | 20 | 42 | 14 | 18 | 11 | 75 | 180 |

COMPARISON OF ALL ASPECTS

When comparing the evaluation of all aspects of the Annual Forum, the **organisation** of the AF has received the best mark on average - **4.19**. This result is supported by many positive comments which are indicated in this report. The content of the AF was given the lowest mark - **3.73**.



THE ANNUAL FORUM IN ONE SENTENCE

When participants were asked to characterize the AF in one sentence, the most commonly used words were **networking, interesting, good, well, nice, meeting, useful, beautiful, great, inspiring, opportunity, informative**. Despite some suggestions for improvement in previous sections, the general characterization of the AF was very positive, and one respondent even said that it was the best AF so far.

Respondents expressed **gratitude for the well-organized event and the choice of location**. They commented that the atmosphere was very relaxing and open. Most of participants saw AF **as the meeting of colleagues and key stakeholders, and as an opportunity to build bridges**. The AF provides “a sense of the common purpose for the Baltic Sea Region” and contributes to the common vision. Participants also congratulated the opportunity for all sectors to be represented, especially in the organisation of workshops.

Regarding the substance, some participants stated that there were a lot of interesting discussions, but it was worrying as to who would take them into account and implement in an effective way. Many respondents **disliked “empty talks” and urged for concrete actions and implementation**. Participants were dissatisfied that some sessions promoted particular organisations, however, it was forgotten that the main point of the Strategy was cooperation between stakeholders. A positive aspect is that just a few respondents felt a little repetition from the last year’s AF.

To sum up, most of the responses were very warm and participants were satisfied with the AF, either because of the content, or the atmosphere and organisation. As one of the happy respondents put it: *veni, vidi, vici!*

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NEXT ANNUAL FORUM

Respondents suggested plenty of themes for the next AF. Some of them were already included in the programme of this year's AF, nevertheless respondents insisted that they had to be prioritized also in 2016. Most of the suggested themes were not included in the programme this year, or were included in a different way.

Three participants advised to **explore saving the sea more profoundly**. In particular, to discuss biological problems of the Baltic Sea, whereby specialists with insight into these problems would be invited and concrete plans for improvement would be drafted. Besides, respondents would like to see a session on **bioeconomy** in the programme.

Participants also asked to include **environment** and other related problems of it in the agenda of the next AF. For instance, it was suggested to discuss tensions between environment and agriculture.

Some respondents suggested to focus more on **the social dimension** (education and labour market), **research and culture**. It is especially relevant to discuss funding opportunities for these sectors. Likewise, respondents suggested to continue to look for **common solutions in the health sector**. For instance, to discuss the tension between health and care, patient and person, public and private. Also digitalisation, technological and social innovations were found very important for the agenda.

It was proposed to have more **interdisciplinary sessions**, as in real life problems do not divide themselves under particular topics, and usually have multiple aspects. For instance, the Annual Forum could host discussions on research and social inclusion, infrastructure and cultural integration, and so on.

There were many topics suggested that are not related to the substance of the Strategy, but rather to the process of implementation of it. 10 respondents proposed to discuss **success stories and best practices of different aspects: governance, projects, cooperation and communication**. Additional attention must be paid to the success of flagship projects. What is more, achievements of each objective and sub-objective, as well as information on general results, have to be discussed.

Participants wrote that the **role of Priority Area Coordinators and Horizontal Action Leaders** had to be addressed, especially in relation to the funding programmes.

Participants urged for more "down to earth" approach in the AF, since it is important to realize the concrete benefits for individuals from the EUSBSR, and also to know for what individuals the Strategy is the most relevant. Many respondents urged for **discussions on actual moves, strategies and concrete proposals**. They want to hear how to work with the solutions from EUSBSR in practice: anchoring projects both top-down and bottom-up. It was proposed to have workshops where ideas for new projects would be generated and the cooperation between organisations established. Cooperation was also distinguished as a separate topic, and the respondents were interested in discussions on how to increase and manage it.

On a more general level, **respondents suggested to debate the visions and scenarios for the EUSBSR**, as it is important to have one view on the future among stakeholders, and to have similar perception of the region and the Strategy.

Three participants expressed their interest in **learning more about the interaction with other EU macro-strategies**. According to them, the avoidance of overlapping is an important aspect of an effective Strategy.

Participants stated that more stakeholders from private sector (business) and from non-governmental organisations should be represented in sessions.

At last, there were a few specific topics suggested for the next AF:

- Cooperation in the sphere of ecology, agriculture, and tourism with Kaliningrad Region (because of its potential importance to the implementation of the Strategy);
- Political and economic situation in the region;
- Evaluation of relevance of the EUSBSR to the processes in the region;
- Reflection and critical thinking as a necessary tool for a sustainable future in the BSR;
- Cross-border movement of blue collars;
- Connection to the Arctic Dimension;
- Demographic change;
- Visibility of the Strategy in the Region;
- Exchanges of young people;
- Implementation of the new Action Plan.

CONCLUSION: 10 MUST-DO FOR EVERY EUSBSR ORGANIZER

The overall opinion voiced by the participants' shows that the Annual Forum is a valuable asset for inter-societal dialogue and networking. Survey results show that participants have high expectations from the AF; thus, the event has the potential to become a meeting place for public and private sector stakeholders, involve even broader crowd of professionals and build constructive problem-solving mechanisms.

To achieve even better results, the team of organizers next year can follow the following observations derived from the analysis of survey results:

1. **Less is more:** go in depth with one of the chosen topics rather than cover three topics only on the general level - a very concrete focus of discussions is recommended.
2. **More dialogue - fewer statements:** mobilise and induce participants to interact and exchange ideas in workshops and plenaries.
3. **What's in it for me:** invite more private sector professionals, businessmen, IT specialists, civil society actors and experts of the field, not only high level speakers. Make the Annual Forum a truly bottom-up event. The official positions are well known, it's time for action!
4. **What, why and how:** challenge the participants by tasking them to establish guidelines; identifying necessary actions and making nuanced suggestions for their implementation is necessary to make the Annual Forum even more relevant for stakeholders.
5. **A „democratic” approach:** use clear definitions, terms and explanations, abbreviations that can be grasped also by newcomers to the Strategy, so that everyone can fully participate.
6. **A continuum of inclusiveness:** directly include all sectors covered by the Strategy in the programme.
7. **Real-life projects:** offer an exchange of best practices and success stories of already existing projects, as well as organize workshops with an aim of starting new projects.
8. **Reaching out and opening up:** promote inter-regional connections by reaching out to neighbouring territories, regions and beyond. Exchange experience with other regions and save resources, such as time and financing.
9. **Digitalization:** make an app, simplify the Handbook, broadcast the Annual Forum live, manage social media, set up a blog portal, thus providing basis for early and follow-up cooperation.
10. **Include the younger generation:** they can provide guidance on education, student mobility, concerns of the generations to come, and visions for the future.

Organizers of the VI ANNUAL FORUM of the EUSBSR:



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF LATVIA



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