



# Final Conference Proceedings

*compiled by Aalto University Team*

## Output 5.6



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*This output has been developed based on the reflection papers provided by the Smart Up BSR project partners. The final report is a result of reiterative process in the project. Regional lessons learned are based on pilot implementation processes that constituted the innovation ecosystem experiences of Smart Up BSR partners.*



## 1. Introduction

The focus of the Smart-Up BSR has been on supporting regional development and innovations, including encouraging the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 implementation in the Baltic Sea Region.

Smart Specialisation work has shown that innovation and development policies in the Baltic Sea Region have led to high performance and have brought prosperity on varying grounds, either through science, knowledge and economy, or digitalisation, logistics and harbour developments. Smart Specialisation has contributed in a positive way to the focus and prioritisation of innovation strategies and policies and impacted to the innovation performance of the regions. However, the study concludes that inter-regional collaboration, economic transformation and implementing SDGs, are not yet a norm in the Baltic Sea Region.

Smart Specialisation helps regions to use their strengths to boost growth and prosperity. Yet, many regions lack methods or institutional frameworks to implement it successfully. The Smart-Up BSR project takes a look into how regions work to align their ecosystems with Smart Specialisation initiatives to ensure the growth of their businesses and the wellbeing of their citizens.

We attempt to look behind the scenes at how regions embed Smart Specialisation Strategy creation and implementation in their regional, economic, and spatial development policies. By working with nine regions in each of the Baltic Sea Region countries we have intended to get an insight into how Smart Specialisation Strategy affects the future prospects of the regions.

## 2. Aims of the Conference

Aims of the conference were to generate discussion between high-level policy makers, actors and legislators, to inspire and empower audience, while highlighting the importance of European level collaboration, co-creation and strategic foresight. Topics of the discussion were focused specifically to highlight the means and future possibilities for executing regional Smart Specialisation strategies to accelerate the sustainable economic transformation for future prosperity. Conference also highlighted the action performed regionally under Smart-up BSR and gave the floor for regional pilot actions.

As per the structure of the conference, the morning part gave an overview to the context, state of play and recent developments followed by an interactive, moderated discussions. The agenda on the afternoon focused on specific examples of the partners discussed issues and aim to learn from the experience gathered so far. Panels were also followed by an interactive, moderated discussion – between the panellists and with a wider audience. This conference also acted as the stage for launching a main contribution to the European Smart Specialisation Policy, by launching the book for helping understand the Smart Specialisation contributions in the Baltic Sea Regions.

### Key issues to focus

- How the Baltic Sea Region innovation performance will be turned to smarter and greener cross-regional solutions?
- How do Smart Specialisation strategies and processes drive sustainable and cross-regional economic transformation?
- How to make the Baltic Sea macro-region meaningful for youth, citizens, businesses etc.?

### 3. Sessions and panels

The morning part gave an overview of the context, state of play and recent developments followed by an interactive, moderated discussion. The agenda of the afternoon focused on specific examples of the partner regions, discussed issues that helped to learn from the experiences gathered so far. The key-note speeches set a high-level context to what regional action means for the future of a sustainable Europe and set the tone for the aims of the conference. The panels which followed illustrated the vast work that the Baltic Sea Region that has been affected by Smart Specialisation implementation and opens the path to achieve new goals.

This conference also acted as the stage for launching the main contribution of the collective efforts by the partners of the project towards the European Smart Specialisation Policy, by launching the book entitled: **Sustainable Baltic Sea Region – Towards Economic Transformation by Smart Specialisation Strategies**. The publication presents an understanding of the Smart Specialisation contributions in the Baltic Sea Regions.

Sessions during the conference gathered themes of *Sustainable Economic Transformation in the Baltic Sea Region, Leadership & Innovation – Future invented with Youth in the Baltic Sea Region, Experienced Insights – How to Move Forward to Actions*, and the *Future of Smart Specialisation and the Baltic Sea Region*. Complemented by opening remarks of Commission VP Maros Sefcovic on Strategic Foresight in Europe, European Committee of the Regions VP Markku Markkula's remarks on ? and JRC B3 director Alessandro Rainoldi's remarks on the impact of Smart Specialisation in Europe.

Agenda:

**10.00 Opening Remarks**

**10.30 Policy Discussion on 'Sustainable Economic Transformation' in the Baltic Sea Region**

**11.20 Launch of the Book 'Sustainable BSR Towards Economic Transformation by Smart Specialisation Strategies'**

**11.35 Virtual coffee break**

**11.50 Panel on 'Leadership & Innovation – Future invented with Youth' in the Baltic Sea Region**

**12.40 Introduction to 'BSR Strategic Instruments for Sustainable and Entrepreneurial Capacity Building'**

**13.20 Closing Remarks on the Future of Smart Specialisation and the Baltic Sea Region**

**13.35 Virtual Cocktails**

## 4. Speakers

The virtual event brought together speakers from the EU and the Baltic Sea Region and the Member States. The conference was directed towards a discussion on applying Smart Specialisation and science, technology and innovation in order to achieve SDGs, to respond to the development challenges and to contribute to the post-crisis's recovery and resilience in a sustainable and knowledge-based manner.

The speakers described practical best examples of the cities and regions they are proud of – cities that have found functioning solutions in the field of digitalisation, inclusive society, sustainable development, climate, circular economy, active healthy aging and city-driven regions as examples.

Speakers were invited to join the panel sessions from all partner areas. To extend the societal and policy reach of the conference, speakers like Mr. Šefčovič and Mr. Markkula with vast EU experience and responsibilities were invited to deliver their contributions to the conference.

### 10.00 *Opening Remarks*

**Maroš Šefčovič**, Vice President, Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight, European Commission

**Markku Markkula**, Former President, European Committee of Regions (CoR)

**Alessandro Rainoldi**, Head of Unit, Territorial Development, Joint Research Centre, European Commission

**Hosted by Taina Tukiainen**, Professor, Aalto University

### 10.30 *Policy Discussion on 'Sustainable Economic Transformation' in the Baltic Sea Region*

**Monika Matusiak**, Senior Policy Officer, Territorial Development, Joint Research Centre, European Commission

**Reinar Kneifel-Haverkamp**, Director General for European and International Affairs, Ministry of Finance and European Affairs of the State of Brandenburg, Germany

**Gunars Ansins**, Deputy Chair, Development and Cooperation of Liepāja City Council, CoR Member, Latvia

**Steen Bording Andersen**, Aarhus City Council Member, CoR Member, Denmark

**Sari Rautio**, Vice Chair of the Board, Association of Finnish Municipalities, CoR Member, Finland

**Moderated by Markku Markkula**, Former CoR President, President of the Board, Helsinki Region

### 11.20 *Launch of the Book 'Sustainable BSR Towards Economic Transformation by Smart Specialisation Strategies'*

**11.35 *Virtual coffee break***

**11.50 *Panel on 'Leadership & Innovation – Future invented with Youth' in the Baltic Sea Region***

**Inge Relph**, Executive Director, Global Choices

**Wiktor Sawaryn**, Gdansk Youth Council & **Jonna Rönn**, Finnish Youth Agenda 2030

**Satu Haapanen**, Chair of Education and Culture Board, City of Oulu, CoR Member

**Tomasz Szymczak**, CEO, Inkubator STARTER

**Igor Kuprienko**, Head of Project Development, ITMO University

**Marianne Ping-Huan**, Professor, Aarhus University

**Moderated by Taina Tukiainen**, Professor, Aalto University, Finland

**12.40 *Introduction to 'BSR Strategic Instruments for Sustainable and Entrepreneurial Capacity Building'***

**12.50 *Experienced Insights – How to Move Forward to Actions***

**Ramojus Reimeris**, ex-Managing Director, Strata, Lithuania

**Tuija Hirvikoski**, Former President, ENOLL

**Patrizia Busolini**, Policy officer, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, EC

**Martin Brynskov**, Professor and Chair of OASC

**Moderated by Taina Tukiainen**, Professor, Aalto University, Finland

**13.20 *Closing Remarks on the Future of Smart Specialisation and the Baltic Sea Region***

**Alessandro Rainoldi**, Head of Unit, Territorial Development, Joint Research Centre, European Commission

**Markku Markkula**, Chair of the Board, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region



## 5. Contributions

A detailed overview of the panels and speakers' topics is provided below.

In this event, we attempted to look behind the scenes at how regions embed Smart Specialisation strategy creation and implementation in their regional, economic, and spatial development policies. By working with nine regions in each of the Baltic Sea Region countries we have intended to get an insight into how Smart Specialisation Strategy affects the future prospects of the regions.

The focus of the Smart-Up BSR has been on supporting regional development and innovations, including encouraging the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 implementation in the Baltic Sea Region.

Smart Specialisation work has shown that innovation and development policies in the Baltic Sea Region have led to high performance and have brought prosperity on varying grounds, either through science, knowledge and economy, or digitalisation, logistics and harbour developments. Smart Specialisation has contributed in a positive way to the focus and prioritisation of innovation strategies and policies and impacted to the innovation performance of the regions. However, the study concludes that inter-regional collaboration, economic transformation and implementing SDGs, are not yet a norm in the Baltic Sea Region.

The morning part gave an overview of the context, state of play and recent developments followed by an interactive, moderated discussion. The agenda of the afternoon focused on specific examples of the issues discussed and aimed at learn from the experiences gathered so far.

This conference also acted as the stage for launching a main contribution to the European Smart Specialisation Policy from a Baltic Sea Region perspective in form of a publication which will also be linked to the JRC S3 platform.

### Description of the *Plenary Sessions*

#### **Session 1: 10.00 – 10.30 EEST Opening remarks (30 minutes)**

**Aim of the session:** This opening session discusses topics on **European Union and Baltic Sea** level to **inspire and empower the audience**. The discussion highlights the importance of **European level collaboration, co-creation and strategic foresight**. The discussion is guided via following questions: What the future of Europe and Baltic Sea Region? What is the role of strategic insight? How the move to sustainable economic transformation in




Europe and Baltic Sea Region? What is the direction for the Baltic Sea Region in the 21st century? What we can learn from Baltic Sea Regions' best practices?

After The moderator explained briefly the agenda of the day, a short introduction about the Smart-up BSR was given, and the session was opened with an introduction of the speakers.

EU Commission Vice-President Šefčovič was welcomed with the following words: Vice-President Šefčovič you have a spectacular career and mandate for Europe – You are responsible for European Foresight. Thus, we would like to hear your thoughts about Europe and Baltic Sea Region, you have just published the report of Strategic Foresight.

Vice-President Šefčovič

- introduced the report of strategic foresight, the priorities and the new approach of making,
- talked about the green deal, sustainability and resilience and
- emphasised the importance of innovative initiatives like batteries.

	<p><b>Session Moderator</b>  <b>Taina Tukiainen, Professor, Aalto University</b>, is a Finnish internationally recognized professional, advisor and cabinet member in topics of sustainability, innovations and corporate venturing. These capabilities she has put to use in academia and industry, a combination latest recognized and valued as a Professor of Practice.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b>  <b>Maros Šefčovič, Vice President, European Commission for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight</b>, is a Slovak diplomat and politician. Previously, Mr. Šefčovič has been the Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Administration, and Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth and later, for Energy. He also ran for the office of the Slovakian president in 2019.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b>  <b>Paula Lehtomäki, Secretary General, Nordic Council of Ministers</b>, is a Finnish Politician. Ms. Lehtomäki is a former State Secretary for the Prime Minister, Minister for Environment and Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland.</p>

	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Markku Markkula, Vice President, European Committee of the Regions</b>, is a Finnish politician. Mr. Markkula was the President of the CoR in 2015-2017. He is also the chair of Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council board and the chair of Espoo city board. Mr. Markkula is also a former MP and a recognised expert on life-long education.</p>
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Paula Lehtomäki, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, long-term politician in Finland and Nordics was not able to attend and present how do you see Nordic Council of Ministers acts in this context in the Baltic Sea.

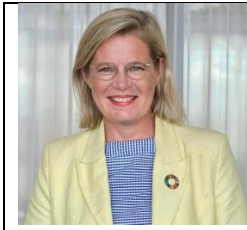
Markku Markkula, Former President, European Committee of the Regions, responded to the opening speeches from the cities and regions point of view.

***Session 2: 10.30 – 11.20 Policy discussion on ‘Sustainable Economic Transformation’ in the Baltic Sea Region (50minutes)***

**Aim of the session:** This discussion focused on aiming higher and discussed the role of policy and political decision- makers and decision-making and how they can or should commit to the deeper European and Baltic Sea collaboration and cocreation and what kind of support mechanism are needed to do so. This discussion was a deeper dive into the topics of smart specialisation and sustainable economic transformation. The discussion emphasised regional and action-based examples which inspired and empowered the audience. The discussion was guided via following questions: What is the role of strategy, policies and political decision makers in sustainable economic transformation? What is the value of international and cross-regional collaboration? How to survive post-Covid-crisis recovery? What we can learn from Baltic Sea Regions’ best practices?

The speakers described practical best examples of the cities and regions, which they are proud of – in the field of digitalisation, inclusive society, sustainable development, climate, circular economy, active healthy aging and city-driven region as an example

	<p><b>Session Moderator</b></p> <p><b>Markku Markkula, Vice President, European Committee of the Regions</b>, is a Finnish politician. Mr. Markkula was the President of the CoR in 2015-2017. He is also the chair of Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council board and the chair of Espoo city board. Mr. Markkula is also a former MP and a recognised expert on life-long education.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Alessandro Rainoldi, Head of Unit at the B3-Territorial Development unit of Joint Research Centre, European Commission in Sevilla, Spain.</b> Rainoldi is a world-renowned specialist and a published author and researcher in Smart Specialisation.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Reinart Kneifel-Haverkamp</b>, Director General for European and International Affairs, Ministry of Finance and European Affairs of the State of Brandenburg, Germany</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Silje Kraam</b>, Director, Economic Development in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Estonia</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Gunars Ansins</b>, Deputy Chair, Development and Cooperation of Liepāja City Council, CoR Member, Latvia</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Steen Bording Andersen, Chair, Culture Committee of City of Aarhus</b> is a Danish politician. He is also a member of the European Committee of Regions and City Councillor at the City of Aarhus.</p>



**Speaker**

**Sari Rautio, Vice President, Association of Finnish**

**Municipalities**, is a Finnish politician. She is also a member of the Committee of Regions and the chair of board in City of Hämeenlinna.

Mr. Rainoldi, the head of unit of territorial development, JRC, EC to describe the status and future of smart specialisation presented the status and future of Smart specialisation and importance of role of cities and regions, policy and political decision-makers.

Mr Kneifel-Havelkamp presented how Brandenburg is dealing with smart specialisation and sustainable economic transformation; and described concrete action of Smart Specialisation cases in Brandenburg.

Ms Kraam was not able to present due to a governmental negotiation.

Mr Ansins presented Latvia and Liepaja Smart Specialisations and sustainable economic transformation with concrete examples.







Mr Bording Andersen joined us from the notorious Aarhus library and presented about Aarhus city & sustainable economic transformation with concrete examples from Aarhus city sustainable economic transformation best cases.

- Ms Rautio presented the Finnish Association of Municipalities point of view- how can we aim higher concrete examples of several Finnish cities of how they aim higher as political decision-maker and how they to commit to the deeper Europe/Baltic Sea collaboration.

**Session 3: 11.50 – 12.40 Panel on ‘Leadership & Innovation – Future invented with the Youth’ in the Baltic Sea Region (50 min)**

**Aim of the session:** This discussion emphasised how to ‘lead and govern’ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, how to attract the different communities, identities and youth, how to create the ‘wellbeing’ and ‘belonging’. ‘The discussion was a deeper dive into topics like ‘youth, education and culture’ ‘entrepreneurial mindset’ and ‘Future invented with Youth’. The main inspiration was the response on how to ‘commit to act’. The speakers discussed their best practices and actions done. The Baltic Sea is a diverse region with different cultures, languages and opinions, but it is bound together by long-standing traditions for collaboration. The discussion was guided by following questions: What makes the Baltic Sea Region so special place to create a change? How have we managed to turn our

diversities into strengths? What does the future look like in one of the most innovative macro-regions in the world?

	<p><b>Session Moderator</b></p> <p><b>Taina Tukiainen, Professor, Aalto University</b>, is a Finnish internationally recognized professional, advisor and cabinet member in topics of sustainability, innovations and corporate venturing. These capabilities she has put to use in academia and industry, a combination latest recognized and valued as a Professor of Practice.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Inge Relph, Executive Director, Global Choices</b>, is a known strategist, policy innovator, advisor and a business executive, who sees a significant opportunity for the financial sector to drive a new wave of systemic change and to collaborate to achieve the Environmental and Social Development Goals.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Satu Haapanen</b>, Chair of Committee for Education and Culture, City of Oulu, Vice President, CoR, former MP.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Wiktor Sawaryn</b> is a Member of the Youth Council in the City of Gdansk, Poland.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Jonna Rönn</b> is a Member of the Finnish Youth Agenda 2030-group and a student in the University of Helsinki.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Tomasz Szymczak, President and CEO of Gdansk Entrepreneurship Foundation, Inkubator STARTER.</b> He holds</p>



	a PhD in international economics and is an experienced executive in international aviation.
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Igor Kuprienko, Head of Project Development Division, being a lecturer at ITMO.</b> Igor is an experienced expert in innovation, youth involvement and smart and sustainable economics and works with students Entrepreneurial and Digital Generation Clubs at ITMO.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Marianne Ping Huang, Associate Professor in the University of Aarhus, Denmark.</b> Prof. Ping Huang is specialised in communications, culture and digital humanities.</p>

Ms Relph, Executive Director of Global Choices, referred to topic to tell her experiences and examples of from Arctic Sea and Greenland collaboration referred to Baltic Sea. 'Our mission is to be a spearpoint, inspiring and driving a new way of thinking of ourselves as Global Citizens, using collective intelligence to make strategic choices to protect and restore the Global Commons, prioritizing the Arctic and Antarctic. We cannot plant ice.

Ms Haapanen, the Chair of Education and Culture of Oulu, former MP, Member of CoR related to the importance of strategic foresight and acting as presented in earlier presentations and asked what we can do and how commit to act? What is the role of youth? How to educate in 21<sup>st</sup> century?

Ms Jonna Rönn Finnish Youth Agenda 2030 Member and Mr Wiktor Sawaryn, Youth Council Member, Gdansk and Ms Jonna Rönn, , described the practical examples of what's done in your initiatives and how the 'Future will be invented with Youth' and how the Baltic Sea collaboration can take place and what it could mean.

Mr Tomasz Szymczak, CEO of Gdansk Entrepreneurship Foundation described the Gdansk initiatives and what is the role of youth, what is the role of international collaboration in commercialisation of innovations and how to create 'entrepreneurial mindset'.


Mr Kuprienko described the initiatives in ITMO university like students Entrepreneurial and Digital Generation Club and what is the role of international/ Baltic Sea collaboration and presented an impressive video of ITMO future plans.

Ms Ping Huang based on her experience, how to ‘lead and govern’ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, how to attract the different communities presented on the identities that create the ‘wellbeing’ and ‘belonging’ and ‘commitment to act’ and how the ‘Future will be invented with Youth.

**Session 4: 12.50 – 13.20 Experienced Insights - How to Move Forward to Actions (30 min)**

**Aim of the session:** This discussion focused on how to move forward to actions. The session inspired and empowered both participants and audiences towards cross-regional action and cocreation. Based on the book launch which took place before this panel, Smart Specialisation work has shown that innovation and development policies in the Baltic Sea Region have led to high performance and have brought prosperity on varying grounds, either through science, knowledge and economy, or digitalisation, logistics and harbour developments. Smart Specialisation has contributed in a positive way to the focus and prioritisation of innovation strategies and policies and impacted to the innovation performance of the regions. However, the study concluded that inter-regional collaboration, economic transformation and implementing SDGs, are not yet a norm in the Baltic Sea Region.

As this conference marked the main output of the Smart-Up BSR project and the project is wrapping up, this session showed the excitement at the prospects of continuing to move forward. The panellists discussed what are the best lessons learned and what are the next steps. What are our strengths? How can we make the SDG’s implementation and Economic transformation reality in the future of the Baltic Sea Region?

	<p><b>Session Moderator</b>  <b>Taina Tukiainen, Professor, Aalto University</b>, is a Finnish internationally recognized professional, advisor and cabinet member in topics of sustainability, innovations and corporate venturing. These capabilities she has put to use in academia and industry, a combination latest recognized and valued as a Professor of Practice.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b>  <b>Ramojus Reimeris, ex-Managing Director, Strata</b>, is a Lithuanian researcher and innovation policy expert, and a renowned author of multiple policy documents in Lithuania and the European Union.</p>



	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Tuija Hirvikoski, Former President, ENoLL, Director, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland</b> is a Finnish higher education and living lab expert. She is the former president of European Network of Living Labs ENoLL.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Patrizia Busolini, Policy Officer, DG MARE, European Commission</b>, is a multilateral expert in European research and policy. Latest, she is working on Sea Basin Strategies and Maritime Regional Cooperation.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b></p> <p><b>Martin Brynskov, Associate Professor at the University of Aarhus, Denmark &amp; Chair, OASC</b> is a researcher and expert in Smart Cities, Digital Urban Transition and Interaction Technologies.</p>

**Mr Reimeris**, who is the author of *"Scientific Lithuania 2030"* (2011), *"Smart Specialization"* (2015), and an expert of the EC presented based on his wide experience exciting thoughts on the main achievements of Smart specialisation strategy creation in Lithuania.

**Ms Hirvikoski, former President ENoLL** presented based on her concrete experiences several recommendations on where to direct future focus and how to move forward to actions.

**Ms Busolini, DG MARE**, presented recommendations about maritime regional strategies and collaboration and how to move forward in the Baltic Sea Region.

**Mr Brynskov, Professor and Chair of OASC** presented based on his extensive experience a passionate future outlook and recommendations, on how to aim higher and achieve even better results.

**Session 5: 13.20– 13.35 Closing remarks of Future of Smart Specialisation and the Baltic Sea Region**

**Aim of the session:** This closing session of this event discussed what is the future of smart specialisation and how to move forward in Europe and Baltic Sea Region. What are the best lessons learned and what are the next steps.

	<p><b>Speaker</b> <b>Alessandro Rainoldi, Head of Unit at the B3-Territorial Development unit of Joint Research Centre, European Commission in Sevilla, Spain.</b> Rainoldi is a world-renowned specialist and a published author and researcher in Smart Specialisation.</p>
	<p><b>Speaker</b> <b>Ossi Savolainen, Regional Mayor, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, Finland.</b> He is also the former Director of the city of Hyvinkää in Uusimaa Region.</p>

Mr Alessandro Rainoldi presented the closing remarks of the future of the Smart Specialisation.

Mr. Markku Markkula replaced Mr. Ossi Savolainen, Regional Mayor, Helsinki-Uusimaa for the closing remarks of the future of the Baltic Sea Region

Finally, the participants in the different location celebrated together with virtual cocktails

## 6. Book Launch

### **11.20 Launch of the Book ‘Sustainable BSR Towards Economic Transformation by Smart Specialisation Strategies’**

The authors, Taina Tukiainen and Patrizia Hongisto had great pleasure in inviting the partners and the international expert audience to receive this new book which was just out of press and stated: “We believe this book will contribute to bringing the Baltic Sea Region together. As we have been inspired by the people we have been working with when writing this book, we believe it will inspire new thoughts for action in many of us working for the development in the Baltic Sea region”.

The book is entitled

**BALTIC SEA REGION, TOWARDS ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION BY SMART SPECIALISATION STRATEGIES.**

The book was introduced with the wish is that it would be a tool and inspiration on how to achieve the joint success of the regions and cities of the Baltic Sea Region. Below are the thoughts of the authors as they were presented in the book launch.

#### **Motivation and Inspiration**

In this morning’s panels we have been discussing future opportunities of the Baltic Sea Region. The book we are now launching will resonate with the thoughts we have been raising.

The book’s aim is to invite each of us, as family members of the Baltic Sea Region, to be guests at nine of the Baltic Sea regions. These regions have shared their work, their strategies, what is important to them in terms of policies and in terms of actions.

Many regions and countries in the Baltic Sea have been intensely working to speed up sustainable economic transformation. In this book, we have looked behind the scenes at nine Baltic Sea regions - representing each Baltic Sea Region country – and have looked at how they have implemented Smart Specialisation.

It has been inspiring for us in writing this book, to reflect on how regional organisations have been paving the way to economic transformation – and it will be inspiring for each region to read what other regions have done to activate Smart Specialisation.

Also, in the book, we want to know about SDGs in the Baltic Sea Region. As we heard this morning we all want to know how SDGs have been embedded in the regional policies in order to become sustainable regions in concrete terms.

In short, by working together with the nine represented regions we have intended to get an insight into how Smart Specialisation Strategy and sustainability, affect the future prospects of the BSR regions.

## **How the book was done**

The book tells strategy stories describing the process of how a region arrived at their strategy and how they revised it. In the book, we wanted to create an overview of the spearheads each region has chosen and what the themes in the strategies mean for each region.

For us, it was exciting how for regions with strong maritime and logistics industries, research, sustainability and digitalisation started to play a bigger and bigger role. In some regions this brings huge changes. But we could also feel the excitement of grasping new opportunities.

One question that really emerged in our writing, while engaging with the regional strategy stories, is: What have regions done together?

How can they become stronger together, and how can they prepare themselves to make jointly use of the new opportunities?

While compiling the stories and the data, we saw how much aspiration each region has, but also how they are looking for the human capital, the experts, the talents to make things happen. We began to understand the need for capacity building.

## **Analysis and What it all means**

Regions display a variety of ways for tackling very similar issues, but also very different contexts. The analysis looks for ways in which regions can balance their economic development strategically.

Therefore, through the analysis we get closer to the regions and their work. We also are triggered to examine the balance in the strategies and in the actions, in the policies and what they mean for the people in those regions.

When you read the book you may feel as intrigued as we were about the tensions in the diversities – at different levels, regionally, nationally, between responsibilities, between policies, and implementing actions.

The analysis leads to a major finding in our book is. This is the realisation of how sustainability could be driving economic transformation. We arrived at the conclusion that SDGs embedded in the strategies would make this transition easier.

Also we were intrigued by the incredible attempts to engage many stakeholders and be inclusive, especially in the revision processes and in balancing the spearhead themes both in strategy and action. This is an advantage in future prospects for cross-regional collaboration.

## **Key Messages and conclusion**

We have concluded that when Baltic Sea Region learn to work together, they can benefit from common issues as well as from diverging issues.

We hope - through our book – that we can show a path for future success: By working across regions at all levels of governance. Regions need to work towards balance that can benefit at levels of action. Collaboration will create stronger clusters, increase opportunities for SMEs, include a thriving population, and turn policies into action.

We are more and more convinced that actions towards sustainability will foster the future of the Baltic Sea Regions. Our book on Smart Specialisation strategies shows that regions need to focus more on sustainability.

The Baltic Sea Region has Power houses based on strong research and innovation. But other regions are gearing up - and with capacity building for action they will move forward.

We believe the Baltic Sea Region can maintain their course towards sustainable transformation through collaboration. This cross-regional collaboration is vital for the future balance in the Baltic Macro-Region.

We have learned that building the capacity of those who steer the action will project the Baltic Sea Region into the future.

Link to the pdf file of the book: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FS03\\_F1-4DEG7QRS4YMEh5\\_5momeqo7-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FS03_F1-4DEG7QRS4YMEh5_5momeqo7-/view)

#### **12.40 Introduction to 'BSR Strategic Instruments for Sustainable and Entrepreneurial Capacity Building'**

*(this part had to be left out due to time constraints, however these items will be part of a separate future book launch)*

Through our study we observed that it is a competitive advantage for regions to build on their capabilities.

Therefore, we decided to follow-up our study looking at Capacity building tools.

We would like to emphasise that instruments for capacity building are important to better build on regional innovative activities. But also, capacity building can leverage inter-regional opportunities.

While there are several instruments for capacity building, in our upcoming study we focus on three specific ones: the use of the Regional Strategy Diamond, the Organisational Innovation Competency Set, and the experience of Innovation Camps.

As strategic capacity building tools the Regional Strategy Diamond indicates the importance of **intentionally pursuing balance**.

Balance between priorities and scope, balance between policies and actions. Balance in the ways to achieve sustainable and entrepreneurial economic transformation in the regions.

We found that strategic instruments gain importance because regions need the increase capabilities to face the challenges / they are pushed to change, to make choices, and they need the expertise to implement those choices.

In combination, these instruments we looked at can increase the efficiency in the **implementation of regional change**.

Capacity building includes the ability to recognise how interdependent social and economic transformations are.

Capacity building has a crucial role in resolving challenges and opportunities in a regional specific way, but also to bring together various common needs and find joint approaches in the Baltic Sea Region.

Capacity building is needed to reinforce cooperation and engagement within and between regions to co-create new practices and entrepreneurial capacity.

The need for capacity building is made particularly evident when innovation is steered at different levels. Actors are locally and regionally connected and they operate at different scales, (regionally, nationally or internationally).

If we are looking for place-based action - In this context the application of specific tools to balance action is crucial: why? because we need to ensure action and correction of action.

The aspect of correcting strategies and correcting action is important as a path to sustainable and entrepreneurial economic transformation.

We are going to see the proposed, and other, strategic capacity building tools applied virtually and physically.

We have found they are essential for inter-regional collaboration,

through active engagement of different stakeholders. they allow macro-regional collaboration.

Many regions see the importance of the right strategic tools for their region for the implementation of UN SDGs and Green Deal.

The report is going to be made available soon on our website, but also a launch will follow.

Link to the pdf file of the book: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11kBWe-ITOTJoGtiRSRN4P010HqG01L ?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11kBWe-ITOTJoGtiRSRN4P010HqG01L?usp=sharing)

## 7. Summary

The conference brought together not only the partners of the Smart-Up BSR project, but also a noteworthy number of participants from public, private, academia, science, youth and NGO's, thus increasing the significance of the Smart-Up BSR project amongst its stakeholder regions. By having the chance to introduce the key policy guide of the project, Smart-Up BSR increased the interest towards the regional pilots and success stories in the core of the project.

The conference was held over Zoom as a webinar and was therefore very easily accessible for different participants at various level of governance, offering the possibility to attract an even wider and more international audience than with a physical conference. Live streamed from a view to the Baltic Sea, the conference acted as a great summary to the Smart-up project.

The focus of the Smart-Up BSR project activities has been on supporting regional development and innovations, including encouraging the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 implementation in the Baltic Sea Region. This was taken into account with the theme of the conference, as the transition in the Baltic Sea Region is hoped to be not only economical but also sustainable.

## 8. Conclusion

The Smart-up BSR final conference “Baltic Sea Region – Towards Sustainable Economic Transformation” concluded the project successfully. With around 20 speakers from 10+ countries, opinions, experiences and feedback were heard widely, reflecting the diverse community of the Baltic Sea Region.

The launch of the policy guide “Sustainable Baltic Sea Region Towards Economic Transformation by Smart Specialisation Strategies” drew a lot of attention from the participants, with clear wishes to have the book available for review. We expect that with the raised attention, the book will find its way to more places for decision-making, thus answering to the need for more researched, reliable information.

Feedback from the audience was reassuring, as the work done by the Smart-up BSR is perceived as valuable, not only due to the reports and releases, but as concrete actions in the regions and the ability of the project partners to reflect and share the knowledge gained. Capacity building is a key element of the Smart-up BSR project, which was well communicated throughout the process. The conference played its part in empowering local community, as the production was carried out by members of a local youth community.

As the project wraps up, we are excited to discuss how to move forward. What are the best lessons learned and what are the next steps? What are our strengths? How can we make the SDG’s implementation and Economic transformation reality in the Baltic Sea Region? There is a sure demand for any answers for these questions – which is why the overwhelming encouragements from speakers about making sure that action around Smart Specialisation action is continued after Smart-up BSR-project are heard loud and clear.

YouTube link to the conference replay:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=JMdmxs8Wjsl>



## ANNEX – Pictures from backstage





