

POLICY Area CULTURE!



The workshop on culture and BSR identity at the virtual BSSSC Annual Conference on September 30th brought together 30 people to discuss and further develop the initiative “Baltic Sea Cultural Cities”, which is strongly supported by PA Culture. The session was moderated by Dr. Kaarina Williams from the Council of Baltic Sea States and Stefan Musiolik, PA Culture Co-Coordinator.

Here are some conclusions from the cultural session:

- *Connecting Citizens & Cities through Culture* is the guiding principle of the project initiative *Baltic Sea Cultural Cities*. This view was shared by the participants of the Workshop. It was consensus, that culture is the easiest way to bring people together and gives us power even in the time of pandemic.
- The initiative Baltic Sea Cultural Cities, which is still in its seed money phase, is of particular interest for the youth. Young people feel especially inspired by the initiative. They delivered a firework of ideas how to fill the idea with life. For example, young people from Kaliningrad voted for a *Baltic Sea Streets Festival*, including sports, street food, open air concerts and cinema, street art competitions, a bike race through BSR countries and much more.
- A working group of the Baltic Sea Youth Platform dedicated to the project, developed the idea of a *Baltic Sea Crocodile Festival*, an intergenerational and inclusive festival for all BSR citizens, taking place every year in different BSR countries. The Youth Platform is ready to include interested youngsters to further accompany the initiative. Thus, sustainable youth involvement is secured. Furthermore the project partners indicated their will to invite young interested young people to project partner meetings.
- Furthermore, within the workshop project partners of the initiative underlined the economic benefits of the envisaged label *Baltic Sea Cultural City*. For example, the head of the administration of Cesis Municipality (Latvia) illustrated the spill over effects of cultural assets and a vibrant cultural life on the economy. A lively creative sector can stop the shrinking of cities and regions.
- The project initiative is in its seed money phase led by the CBSS Secretariat and gets strong support from the BSSSC and the Union of Baltic Cities. Representatives of the Baltic Sea Cultural Center Gdansk, the cities of Kaunas/Latvia and Kiel/Germany, the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia/Finland, Oblast Kaliningrad and Land Schleswig-Holstein are involved in the project. Interested cities and regions are welcome to join in.
- Next step of the project is to ensure financing for the main project.