DRAFT PROGRAMME updated 25.11.2026

Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation

Hosted by European Committee of the Regions

Withstand, Sustain, Retain: Strengthening Regional Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region

A BSSSC seminar at the European Committee of the Regions

Date: 9 December 2026, 14:00–17:00
Venue: Rue Belliard 99–101, Brussels (Conference Room JDE 70, 7th floor)

Organised by: Vidzeme Planning Region (Latvia) on behalf of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC)
Hosted by: the European Committee of the Regions

Event description

The Baltic Sea Region faces an increasingly complex set of pressures at once - geopolitical tension and hybrid threats, demographic decline and labour shortages, climate impacts, and widening territorial disparities. Regions and cities are expected to respond to all of them, yet often with shrinking populations and limited resources.

The seminar approaches regional resilience through three interconnected capacities:

- **Withstand:** the capacity to absorb shocks to vital functions such as the economy, services, communications, infrastructure, security, and the environment, and to the values of democracy, freedom, independence, and social trust.
- **Sustain:** the means to keep investing and adapting through cohesion policy and the building of competitiveness.
- **Retain:** the ability to keep people, talent, and investment in the places that need them.

A resilient region is one that can take a hit, keep investing, and keep its people. And in the Baltic Sea Region all three are under pressure at the same time.

Two ideas anchor the discussion. The upcoming EU strategy "**Right to Stay**" aims to counter demographic decline so people can build their futures where they call home. The principle of **"do no harm to cohesion"** sets the guardrail against a post-2027 budget that would weaken the very instruments regions depend on.

The European Committee of the Regions is hosting the event but is not responsible for its content.

> ***In the Baltic Sea Region, the right to stay depends on security and is delivered through cohesion, so the next EU budget must do no harm to cohesion. In fact, security and regional development shall reinforce each other.***

The two parts follow this logic in turn. **Part I (Withstand)** looks at the shocks themselves and what is moving in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions to help regions absorb them. **Part II (Sustain & Retain)** turns to the instruments. Which are cohesion tools that keep people and investment in place, and how regions can defend them in the post-2027 negotiations.

The seminar will produce a set of recommendations from the Baltic Sea regions on how the EU can strengthen territorial resilience across Europe. These will form a BSSSC contribution to the updated EUSBSR Action Plan under the Danish Presidency and to the negotiations on the EU's post-2027 budget.

Participants

BSSSC Board members, representatives of Baltic Sea regions in Brussels, pan-Baltic cooperation institutions (CBSS, BSPC, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, VASAB, Euroregion Baltic), members of the European Committee of the Regions from the Baltic Sea Region, and members of the European Parliament.

Programme

14:00–14:15	**Opening and framing** **Dr. Inese Suija-Markova**, Chair of the BSSSC Board and Chair of the Vidzeme Planning Region Development Council, Latvia (W) *Defines resilience as three capacities (withstand, sustain, and retain) and sets out the throughline for the event.*
14:15–14:20	**Welcome address** **Mr. Jānis Rozenbergs**, Member of the European Committee of the Regions and host of the BSSSC seminar, Latvia (M)
PART I "WITHSTAND": Absorbing the shock: security, infrastructure, and social trust *Guiding question: what shocks now test the Baltic Sea Region, and what is moving in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions to help regions absorb them?*	
14:20–15:05	**Keynote #1 (20 min)** • Member of the European Parliament (tbc)

The European Committee of the Regions is hosting the event but is not responsible for its content.

	The macro threat picture and what legislative efforts are moving in the European Parliament that will affect the sub-regions of the Baltic Sea Region. **Keynote #2 (20 min)** • **Mr. Arnoldas Abramavicius**, Councillor of the local government council, Zarasai District Municipality Council, Member of the European Committee of the Regions (COTER; CIVEX), Lithuania (M) *What is moving in the Committee of Regions?* Followed by Q&A with the floor.
15:05–15:20	**Networking break**
PART II — SUSTAIN & RETAIN · Resilience through cohesion and cross-border cooperation *Guiding questions: which cohesion instruments have most effectively let people stay and thrive, and what must the post-2027 budget protect? What is required of regions to defend their interests in the negotiations, and where are the regional leverage points?*	
15:20–16:40	**Panel discussion** **Moderator:** Dr. Inese Suija-Markova. **Opening intervention (3 min) by** BSSSC Youth Representative: "What would make someone my age stay in the region?" **Panellists:** • **Ms. Sabrina Repp,** Member of the European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development (REGI), Germany (W) *The right to stay, demographic decline and youth retention in Baltic coastal and rural regions, and the EP/REGI line into the negotiations.* • **Ms. Wioletta Dunin-Majewska,** Head of Unit, European Commission, DG REGIO.D.4 (Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania) (W) *How the instruments perform on the ground and what the post-2027 architecture changes for the Baltic Sea Region sub-regions and municipalities. Where are the regional leverage points?* • **Mr. Thomas Wobben,** Director for Legislative Works (COTER, ECON and SEDEC), European Committee of the Regions, Germany (M) *The "do no harm to cohesion" anchor - the case against centralization in the post-2027 budget, and where the regional leverages lie.*
16:40–17:00	**Conclusions** Rapporteur synthesis (rapporteur to be designated), followed by recommendations from the Baltic Sea regions on the EU's role in strengthening territorial resilience across Europe.

The European Committee of the Regions is hosting the event but is not responsible for its content.

	Dr. Inese Suija-Markova, Chair of the BSSSC Board and Chair of the Vidzeme Planning Region Development Council, Latvia (W) *Recommendations framed as a BSSSC contribution to the updated EUSBSR Action Plan under the Danish Presidency and to the EU post-2027 budget negotiations.*

The European Committee of the Regions is hosting the event but is not responsible for its content.