

RESOLUTION
of the 40th Session of the Baltic Assembly

The Baltic Assembly,

having convened for its 40th Session on 4-5 November 2021 in Vilnius, Republic of Lithuania, **having discussed** the results of the Lithuanian presidency of the Baltic Assembly, cooperation in crisis mitigation, energy security cooperation and joint activities in addressing challenges near the external borders of the European Union,

reiterating the importance of joint activities in the Baltic region, especially during times of crisis, and **welcoming** regular and successful coordination between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers aimed at strengthening security and welfare of the region,

highlighting the need to improve and enhance Baltic cooperation to overcome external and internal crisis-imposed challenges that the Baltic States face and **acknowledging** the need for a long-term strategy for reopening the Baltic region,

stressing the need to strengthen and broaden defence cooperation of the Baltic States and with the partners in Nordic and Benelux countries to withstand complex security threats with an emphasis on the current challenges in maintaining the security of the external border of the European Union and in the changing cybersecurity threat landscape, and **emphasizing** the significant role of Allied deterrence and defence posture in the region, especially the importance and necessity for the permanent U.S. presence,

reiterating that the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 should focus on investments promoting security, competitiveness and connectivity and provide sufficient funding for cohesion and agriculture, energy and transport projects such as the Rail Baltica project and synchronisation of electricity networks of the Baltic States with the continental European network, **reaffirming** our readiness to continue monitoring the implementation of the Rail Baltica project, **emphasising** that the funding of the European Commission allocated to the Member States in the scope of the Recovery Plan for Europe must be invested wisely and in line with digital agenda and European Green Deal guidelines,

emphasising our strong support for the active role of the European Union in conflict resolution as well as in continuing to deliver practical solutions to its citizens,

stressing the pivotal role of the Baltic States as free and democratic countries in supporting other people's efforts and aspiration for freedom, democracy, rule of law and civil society, and the plurality of information, considering, in particular, the current situation in Belarus;

underlining firm belief that the Baltic States ought to stand united in condemning violence and human rights violations committed in Belarus and **reaffirming** the readiness of the Baltic States to continue supporting and developing the entire Eastern Partnership region, **supporting** the Crimea Platform and its goal to establish peace and address the challenges caused by Russia's occupation of Crimea and **urging** like-minded countries and organisations to join in their support for the Platform,

calls on the parliaments and governments of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania, as well as the Baltic Council of Ministers:

regarding the defence cooperation of the Baltic States:

- to reconfirm the commitment of the Baltic States to prevent the region from being flooded with electricity produced at the Ostrovets nuclear power plant;
- to support initiatives that are strengthening the single airspace corridor from Poland to Estonia and solving military mobility challenges in the Suwalki Gap;
- considering the significance of resilient societies in strengthening security situation, to evaluate the corresponding security threats in the Baltic States and to construct a practical response to increase the resilience of the Baltic society;
- to enable the potential of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence and to attract funding for enlarging the cyber defence exercises in the Baltic States thus improving the cyber defence capacity in the region;
- to facilitate intergovernmental negotiations and continue establishing common and well-functioning system for joint military procurements along with conducting a further analysis on possible acquirement of a common multiple launch rocket system;
- to develop military mobility infrastructure and procedures and raise awareness of European and transatlantic partners regarding the military mobility and military mobility infrastructure capabilities, taking into consideration also the strategic importance of Rail Baltica;
- to improve cross-border coordination to effectively enhance cooperation in cybersecurity;
- to continue strengthening Command and Control structure in the Baltic region;

regarding cooperation in the field of disaster prevention, preparedness and response, crisis management and civil protection:

- to develop the concept for a comprehensive security model of crisis preparedness coordination in the Baltic States;

- acknowledging the importance of preparedness to respond to a wide range of potential emergencies, including radiological and nuclear incidents, and considering the proximity of the Belarusian Ostrovets nuclear power plant to the external border of the EU, to support Baltic States' initiatives to develop and host rescEU CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear) capacities centres in Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania;

- to revise the crisis management approach in the Baltic States during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to identify effective practices as well as errors in Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania to ensure learning from each other's experiences;

- to prepare a long-term strategy of the Baltic States ensuring coordinated actions in addressing the challenges posed by COVID-19 and future crisis;

- to maintain regular communication and exchange of information between the relevant institutions of the Baltic States in the field of disaster prevention, preparedness and response, crisis management and civil protection;

- to set up a working group of the Baltic States to elaborate on the possibility to unify capabilities and competencies of the national security institutions regarding information and communications technology innovations;

- to strengthen the capacity of the police services of the Baltic States in fighting cyber-crime;

- to ensure implementation of the Agreement on Cooperation in Disaster Response in the Baltic States, which was ratified by the national parliaments in 2018 and discuss within the framework of 3B working group the possibility of concluding operational agreements;

- to eliminate gaps regarding civil protection and disaster preparedness in cross-border cooperation of the Baltic States;

regarding external border control and management:

- to prepare a plan of the Baltic States for effective implementation of border checks during crisis situations, including seeking ways to solve issues, such as inadequate road infrastructure in the border regions and insufficient human resources;

- to establish an early warning procedure about the closing of the Baltic borders reducing the risk of uncoordinated activities and ensuring the continuation of the daily lives of citizens in the border areas;

- to implement common standards to improve situational awareness and increase reaction capability at external borders of the Baltic States based on the requirements of the European Border Surveillance System;

- to evaluate successes and failures of the agreement of the Baltic States to lift travel restrictions and ensure free movement of the residents by land, sea and air or the so-called “Baltic bubble” agreement;

- to intensify cross-border cooperation of the Baltic States, including addressing challenges posed by the spread of COVID-19, as well as the situation in Belarus and the hybrid attacks to Latvia, Lithuania and Poland carried out by Alexander Lukashenko’s regime;

regarding the cooperation in the health care sector:

- to prepare a joint long-term plan for addressing the health crisis created by COVID-19 thus ensuring efficient coordination of planned activities and measures, the exchange of information and estimation of potential impact;

- to evaluate and draw conclusions about the vaccination strategies, their execution and crisis communication;

- to evaluate the possibility of joint actions to improve the physical and mental health of the Baltic population;

- to start discussions about a joint system for addressing shortages of medicine in the Baltic States efficiently and timely;

- to find a joint solution on strengthening the capacities of the food laboratories in the Baltic States;

- to encourage joint Baltic projects supporting risk-based and science-based decisions about food safety;

- to discuss the possibility of introducing common food labelling principles in the Baltic States;

- to elaborate a common Baltic strategy encouraging responsible use of antibiotics and preventing the spread of antibiotic resistance in the region;

- to agree on a new partnership agreement between the Baltic States introducing a systemic approach for cross-border joint procurements in the health sector;

- to eliminate obstacles to 3B common E-Health network and ensure compatibility of systems and proper health data exchange;

regarding cooperation in the social sector:

- to evaluate and draw conclusions about the impacts of COVID-19 to poor and vulnerable groups in the Baltic societies and to discuss possible cooperation areas;

- to compare the gaps in social protection systems of Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania and to identify common problems that can be addressed regionally;

regarding the economic cooperation of the Baltic States:

- to look for the opportunities to deepen the interconnection of the Baltic economies that will ensure faster post-pandemic recovery;
- to jointly develop alternative market-based funding sources to foster immediate recovery of the economies of the Baltic States;
- to intensify the exchange of experience and discussions about the prospects of joint initiatives supporting entrepreneurs and civil society of the Baltic States;
- to increase the cooperation of the Baltic States within the Three Seas Initiative improving energy, transport and digital connectivity of the region;
- to intensify implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the ministers of finance of the Baltic States in January 2018 and use the Accelerator Fund of the European Innovation Council to create a pan-Baltic capital market;
- to speed up the unification of regulatory framework for covered bonds to facilitate foreign investments in the Baltic region;
- to work on attracting financial support for the Baltic Innovation Fund 2 from private investors;
- to evaluate the possibility of interlinking the Baltic initiatives for the Recovery and Resilience Facility of the European Union, including in the area of digital transformation;
- to continue highlighting the importance of the EU funding in completion of the large-scale strategic projects of the Baltic States, such as Rail Baltica and synchronization of the electricity networks with the continental European network;
- learning from the successful cooperation of the Nordic states in the tourism sector, to elaborate a plan to deepen the cooperation of tourism sectors of the Baltic States;
- highlighting the importance of widening social security package to address the short-term labour market challenges caused by the COVID-19 crisis, to discuss possible joint measures to address long-term labour market challenges (such as skill mismatch and structural unemployment) in the Baltic States;
- based on the positive experience and results of the Baltic Innovation Fund I and II, to start negotiations about the development of the Baltic Innovation Fund III;

regarding the digital cooperation of the Baltic States:

- to enhance the cooperation of the Baltic States via joint projects within the “Digital Innovation Network” of the Baltic Sea Region, the European network of Digital Innovation Hubs and Connecting Europe Facility to increase the interconnection of the Baltic States;

- to further develop the cooperation of the Baltic States in the three major focuses of digital transformation of the EU – cross-border digital services, data exchange and eID recognition;
- to boost investments in digital transformation aimed at scaling up the unicorn start-ups of the Baltic States;
- to create a format for regular exchange of experience and knowledge about digital transformation in the Baltic States;
- to evaluate the possibility of developing joint Baltic business incubators of the European Space Agency;
- to enhance the usage of electronic signature between the Baltic States;
- to facilitate moving towards a digital single market of the Baltic States by identifying and eliminating legislative and administrative obstacles;
- to agree on 3B common data standards, lists of data to exchange and ensure digital data exchange and interoperability via already existing different platforms or seeking a common platform;
- aiming to reduce the administrative burden to citizens and businesses to start negotiations about the Single Digital Gateway areas most relevant in a wider 3B and Baltic – Nordic context in order to ensure cross-border services, data exchange and realisation of *Once Only Principle*, (cross-border KYC; e-CMR; ID documents data verification for AML purposes);
- to introduce e-invoicing in the Baltic States;
- to agree on a common regional approach and overcome obstacles in using Real-Time Economy;

regarding cooperation in clean energy transition and development of renewable energy projects:

- to start discussions about unified green taxes and subsidies to facilitate clean energy transition and prevent “fuel tourism” in the Baltic States;
- to formulate investment priorities to reduce CO2 emissions in the Baltic States;
- to evaluate the necessity of the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania to join the London Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter;
- to formulate a joint Baltic view on the role of carbon capture, utilisation and storage in achieving climate neutrality by 2050;
- to implement a study about the geological structures suitable for storage of CO2, hydrogen and other energy carriers;
- to formulate a common approach in prohibiting the usage of coal in the Baltic States;

- to start discussions about a common platform for planning hydrogen mobility in the Baltic States;

- to analyse possibilities to establish a joint waste packaging system in the Baltic States;
- to launch joint projects to recycle used textiles, especially synthetics by involving researchers and businesses;

- to agree on a common approach and measures to eliminate “waste tourism”;

- to agree about a regional approach of the Baltic States in regard to development of renewable energy projects;

regarding the common electricity and gas market of the Baltic States:

- to carry out joint measures to ensure maximum resilience of the electricity system of the Baltic States that are needed to deter any unwelcomed activities and threats about the intention to disconnect the region from the IPS/UPS power system;

- to elaborate a joint plan on capacity building for the protection of the Baltic electricity market after 2025;

- to join the forces of the Baltic States in the implementation of the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism aiming to improve the competitiveness of the Baltic importers and ensuring just transition eliminating energy poverty;

- to continue the joint efforts of the Baltic States in elaborating a solution on improving existing electricity trade regime with third countries, including reaching an agreement about the regional transmission tariff;

- to elaborate a joint plan to facilitate the transition in the gas sector, including the repurposing of the existing gas infrastructure and understanding the future role of hydrogen in the current gas infrastructure;

- to continue coordination of activities towards a common regional electricity and gas market of the Baltic States;

- to continue the technical implementation of synchronization of the Baltic electricity networks with the continental European network;

regarding the implementation of the Rail Baltica project:

- to continue implementation of the Rail Baltica project by ensuring timely implementation, efficient infrastructure management and preventing an increase in the total expenditure of the project;

regarding new partnerships in education, science and research:

- to evaluate the possibility to launch a joint Baltic research call for the projects regarding COVID-19;
- to jointly prepare a map of the Baltic research cooperation that could help to evaluate and improve research cooperation;
- to create a mechanism for efficient use of the research equipment acquired in the Baltic States;
- to review the current cooperation of the Baltic States in space-related research and to identify possible joint activities and projects;
- to start discussions about a joint Baltic space strategy defining areas and actions of cooperation in the long-term;
- to encourage the cooperation of the Baltic States within the European Space Agency and its projects;
- to develop a coordinated approach of the Baltic States for common challenges in increasing scientific capacity and excellence in the Baltic research area;
- to enable potential the cooperation with the CERN provides to the development of science, research and technology in the Baltic States and allocate corresponding financial support within the State budgets which should be equal on the national level to the amount of membership paid to the CERN;
- to consider a possibility to establish CERN Internship Programme for the students of the Baltic States;

regarding cultural cooperation and minimizing environmental footprint:

- to review the Statute of the Baltic Culture Fund and to allow granting funding for the projects implemented in the Baltic States;
- to investigate the possibilities of creating an institution of the Baltic Culture Fund that would work as a legal umbrella body issuing the grants;
- to create a format for the exchange of best practices in reopening the cultural sector in the Baltic States;
- welcoming positive developments in the cultural cooperation of the Baltic States and appreciating implemented and ongoing cross-cultural projects, to establish joint web-based platform about cultural events of the Baltic States in national languages and English thus facilitating cultural exchange, international branding and cultural communication of the Baltic States;

- considering the impact of climate change, underlining the importance of the joint approach and emphasizing the need to promote environmental awareness-raising among the public, to agree about a set of principles and requirements to be applied when organising joint bilateral or trilateral cultural events of the Baltic States to minimize environmental footprint;
- to agree about the common approach of the Baltic States by moving towards refusal of fireworks, balloons, plastic confetti and other environmentally harmful activities;
- based on the approach of the Nordic countries, to explore possibilities to apply international marketing and communication strategy for the Baltic region.

Vilnius, 5 November 2021