

Intervention at the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Berlin 13 June 2017

**Political seminar "Nothing about us without us - making it work!"**

Roger Ryberg, Chairman of BSSSC

Dear youth representatives from the Baltic Sea Region,

Dear participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The young inhabitants of the Baltic Sea Region are important stakeholders when discussing the BSR today and tomorrow.

We face difficult times in Europe - and the political landscape in the Baltic Sea Region is demanding - with challenges such as; citizens lack of trust in the political system, refugee crisis, reintroduction of border controls, growing extremism and xenophobia. To my mind, this calls for more dialog and better inclusion of the young generation in our political agendas.

To highlight this - the BSSSC, UBC and EuroRegion Baltic have initiated the political seminars "Nothing about us without us" - starting in Stockholm in November last year.

By our seminars, we want to underline the importance of a continuous and permanent dialogue with the young generation in the BSR - as they are at the core of social and political change and the key to any region's future economic success.

In their statement from the workshop in Stockholm the youth of the BSR, among others underlined that they want:

- real inclusion of all youth
- politics made understandable to all citizens

This should be easy - but it is never the less a demanding task.

We have a number of good models in the cities and regions around the Baltic Sea. We have many good practices and tools - that can be shared and improved - together - and further developed and implemented.

In my country - Norway - we have regional youth councils in all 19 counties. They work a bit differently - but they give a voice to the youth and they open doors for the young people;

- to lobby their interests,
- to discuss political issues on the agenda of the county councils
- to send their comments and input to papers and decisions to be made by regional politicians
- to launch topics for the political agenda

This is vital for our democracy and for the development of good, inclusive and future oriented societies.

We all know that no model fits all - and good experiences from others cannot be implemented through cut and paste. BUT- I think we all have something to share and something to learn. AND - I think we as politicians at local and regional level have to facilitate this exchange of best practices.

We have to talk about youth involvement - repeatedly!

We have to empower youth to take part and express their view!

We have to listen and to have a dialog!

AND - we have to react and act swiftly on the input we get - young people are impatient and move on to other issues and arenas if processes get too lengthy.

In Eastern Norway County Network, we have an annual meeting with our youth network "ÖstsamUng". Here the youth representatives pick a relevant topic and present it to the top regional politicians and administrative leaders. We have had

discussion on the health care system in our schools, career counseling and certification of schools as environmental friendly buildings and work environments. Concrete issues - possible to do something about - and areas where each county can make direct follow up in dialog with their youth councils.

BSSSC will continue our focus on youth involvement and we will be active to push in direction of the real inclusion of all youth in the BSR cities and regions.

At the youth conference yesterday and this morning we started to process to collect, present and share good practices and models for youth participation among the ten BSR countries. This process will continue! We need your active participation and contributions.

BSSSC wants to make "Nothing about us without us" work.

Let us cooperate to make it a reality!

I will be all in!