

RESOLUTION
of the 37th Session of the Baltic Assembly

The Baltic Assembly,

having convened for its 37th Session on 25–26 October 2018 in Vilnius, Republic of Lithuania;

having discussed the results of the Lithuanian presidency of the Baltic Assembly, progress in regard to the implementation of joint projects of the Baltic States, domestic policy developments, foreign and defence cooperation and future development of the European Union;

underlining that close regional cooperation of the Baltic States ensures a politically and economically strong and united Region and delivers practical results for the people of our countries;

highly appreciating close reciprocity between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers in coordination of common positions and actions aimed at strengthening partnerships and boosting competitiveness for growth and welfare of the Region;

highlighting the importance of signing of *A Declaration to Celebrate 100 Years of Independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Renewed Partnership* on 3 April 2018 by the Presidents of the United States of America, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania;

highly appreciating the signing of the *Agreement on the Automatic Recognition of Diplomas and Degrees in the Baltic States* on 8 June 2018, which will increase labour mobility and openness of higher education systems;

welcoming the signing of the *Political Roadmap on the synchronisation of the Baltic States' electricity networks with the continental European network* on 28 June 2018, which sets the framework for practical implementation of full synchronisation;

recalling the need to strengthen parliamentary and governmental cooperation of the Baltic States to ensure full integration of the Baltic States energy market and infrastructure with the rest of Europe;

stressing the firm belief that the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 shall promote achieving of a uniform level of development of all EU member states, provide sufficient funding for cohesion and agriculture, connect Europe with modern energy and transport links and ensure funding for strategic projects, including synchronisation of electricity networks and the *RailBaltica* project, as well as counter security challenges and provide support to Eastern neighbourhood countries;

emphasising that the Baltic States expand and deepen defence cooperation and fulfil their commitments with regard to the strengthening of defence capabilities of the NATO Alliance with a full responsibility by allocating 2% of GDP to defence;

stressing that the NATO Brussels Summit marks a further milestone after the Wales and Warsaw Summits in strengthening defence cooperation and successful adaptation to changing security environment;

congratulating Lithuania on the achieved goal of joining the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

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

in regard to the cooperation in the field of security and defence:

- to elaborate the regional security strategy of the Baltic States by focusing on military and hybrid threats, fight against terrorism and disaster prevention and preparedness;
- to expand cooperation in regard to the harmonisation of national defence plans of the Baltic States and the simplification process of Allied military movement (air, land, maritime);
- to establish NATO headquarters in the Baltic States;
- to sign *Agreements between the governments of the Republic of Latvia, Republic of Estonia and Republic of Lithuania on the maintenance of Latvian-Estonian and Latvian-Lithuanian borders and activities of border guard representatives;*
- to continue negotiations of the Baltic States about joint procurements in the military sector;

in regard to the Baltic information space:

- to strengthen exchange of news, develop joint bilateral and trilateral programmes and projects among state-funded mass media of the Baltic States;
- to develop an action plan of strategic communication of the Baltic States;

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

- after ratification of the *Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Estonia, the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on Mutual Assistance and Cooperation in the Field of Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and*

Response, to elaborate and adopt necessary operational agreements and procedures to ensure smooth and efficient cooperation of the Baltic States;

- to develop an action plan among relevant authorities of the Baltic States in regard to joint trainings for disaster prevention, preparedness and response;

- to agree about cooperation formats of the Baltic States by using the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and European crisis management system and information sharing tools and jointly apply for EU funding of joint projects;

- to coordinate information campaigns and public awareness campaigns of the Baltic States in regard to disaster prevention, preparedness and response;

- to eliminate the gaps in regard to civil protection and disaster preparedness in the Baltic States;

- in the field of crisis management, to ensure continuous exchange of information and experience among the Baltic States, develop crisis management capacities and elaborate joint emergency plans in border regions as well as to carry out joint exercises for health care service providers;

- to start negotiations among relevant authorities of the Baltic States about joint procurements of necessary medicine for crisis management;

- based on the research *Readiness of Latvian Healthcare Institutions for Disaster Management*, to carry out the same research for hospitals and medical doctors in Lithuania and Estonia in order to acknowledge the overall situation in the Baltic Region;

in regard to the support for the Eastern Partnership countries:

- to continue provision of political and economic support for reform processes in the Eastern Partnership countries;

- to elaborate an action plan of the Baltic Assembly in regard to the Eastern Partnership countries which could be promoted to the Western partners;

in regard to the synchronisation of the Baltic electricity networks with the continental European network:

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

- to launch an information campaign for societies of the Baltic States about synchronization of the Baltic electricity networks with the continental European network;

in regard to the regional gas and electricity market:

- to carry on targeted coordination of activities towards developing of the common regional gas and electricity market of the Baltic States;
- to commence negotiations among relevant stakeholders of the Baltic States about additional primary reserves for regional electricity generation adequacy after 2025;
- to commence negotiations among relevant stakeholders of the Baltic States about joint investments and common support schemes into joint projects of renewable energy;
- to analyse experience of other EU member states in regard to the sale of ‘green bonds’ as long-term obligations and examine options of introducing the same approach in the Baltic States;
- to continue pursuing the national targets, coordinate approaches and measures of the Baltic States in regard to the implementation of the Energy Package of the European Commission “Clean Energy for all Europeans”;
- to coordinate positions and approaches of the Baltic States regarding Article 3.2 of the EU Internal Electricity Market Directive;
- to present a joint request to Belarus to comply with all internationally agreed norms, highest international safety standards and transparency in regard to the Astravyets nuclear power plant;
- to launch comprehensive dialogue among relevant stakeholders of the Baltic States in regard to the harmonised Baltic approach on the consumer issue;

in regard to transport and infrastructure:

- with an active and targeted approach, to continue the implementation of the *Rail Baltica* project thus securing timely realisation, respecting the set time line and preventing increase in total expenditures of the project;
- to elaborate and implement joint actions to ensure continued EU support and funding at the highest permissible EU co-funding rates for the *Rail Baltica* project in the next EU multiannual financial frameworks;
- to reach an agreement on infrastructure management model of the *Rail Baltica* project in the first half of 2019;
- to continue strengthening partnership with Finland and Poland in regard to the *Rail Baltica* project;
- to introduce a unified tolling system in the Baltic States;

in regard to the foundation of the Baltic Culture Fund:

– welcoming decisive actions and political commitment by the Ministries of the Baltic States in regard to the swift implementation of the initiative and recommendation of the Baltic Assembly to establish the Baltic Culture Fund especially in connection with the centennial anniversary of independence of our countries, to ensure that the Baltic Culture Fund will be operating from 1 January 2019;

– to elaborate and adopt the Regulations on the Baltic Culture Fund to ensure efficient and transparent procedures of the Fund;

– to provide funding to the Baltic Culture Fund for the development of cultural initiatives and new cultural projects within the Baltic States thus supporting the mutual interest of the Baltic States in upholding their national identity and self-esteem as well as to promote and reinforce Baltic achievements in culture;

– to provide funding for translation of works of the Baltic Assembly Prize winners for literature;

– to ensure the involvement of the national parliaments and the Baltic Assembly in the work of the Baltic Culture Fund to ensure efficient and transparent work as it is attested by the Nordic Culture Fund;

in regard to the cooperation in the field of education and research:

– to formulate a joint vision and approach of the Baltic States in regard to further cooperation and development in the field of research and education;

– to accelerate cooperation of the Baltic States in regard to joint higher education and vocational training programmes;

in regard to the digitalisation and protection of cultural heritage:

– to elaborate uniform systems and common criteria for digitalisation and online accessibility of cultural materials and digital preservation;

– to raise public awareness about the implications of illegal detectorism;

– to launch negotiations among the national libraries of the Baltic States to maintain a network for preservation of cultural heritage;

in regard to the cooperation of the Baltic States in the health care sector:

– to finalise all internal procedures among the relevant ministries of Lithuania and Latvia in order to sign, during this year, an agreement on cross-border cooperation in the provision of ambulance services in the Lithuanian-Latvian border area;

- to agree about the list of possible joint procurements of vaccines for the next period;
- to start consultations about joint approaches towards producers of medicine and medical devices;
- to immediately commence negotiations about the list of possible joint procurements of medical supplies for hospitals (for example, syringes, bandage gauzes, etc.);
- to find a solution for a transitional period concerning cooperation of the Baltic States in exchange of organs for transplantation;

in regard to the cooperation in the field of reduction of alcohol consumption:

- with a targeted approach and without delay, to implement agreed decisions stated in the *Memorandum of Intent on Cooperation in Reduction of Alcohol Consumption, Smoking and Tackle Morbidity Trends Related to Nutrition*;
- to coordinate activities of relevant institutions of the Baltic States in regard to the implementation of European and global action plans and other strategic documents in regard to alcohol policies;
- to elaborate a specific action plan for cooperation of the Baltic States in reducing alcohol-related harm for the people of the Baltic States;
- to foster cross-border cooperation of municipalities of the Baltic States in developing community-based prevention;
- to strengthen direct contacts of relevant experts and intensify exchange of information on policies and best practices among the Baltic States;
- welcoming the current framework of cooperation, to strengthen joint measures and intensify coordination of activities among law-enforcement institutions of the Baltic States to fight against smuggling of alcohol and tobacco in the Region;
- to organise meetings of the tax experts of the Baltic States at least four times a year to ensure regular exchange of information among the Baltic States;
- to ensure exchange of information among relevant stakeholders, especially in the process of elaborating new policies, action plans and taxation;
- to elaborate joint measures against the challenge of ‘cosmetic spirit’ in the Region;
- to promote involvement of NGOs and civil society in educating people of the Baltic States about the harmful impact of alcohol use;
- to organise joint social campaigns in the Baltic States to raise public awareness thus strengthening public support and understanding (for example, ‘O degree’, campaigns against drunk driving, etc.);

- to elaborate joint proposals of the Baltic States for a European action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol beyond 2020;
- to promote joint research projects in this field among the Baltic States;

in regard to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the EU Climate and Energy targets 2030:

- to start exchanges in regard to the preparation of integrated national energy and climate plans in the context of regional cooperation enshrined in the proposal for the EU's Energy Union governance regulation;
 - to enhance exchange of experience and best practice for the implementation of climate and energy targets till 2030, including the transposition of EU legislation and implementation of requirements;
 - to elaborate joint priorities and common interest projects for the EU Multiannual Financial framework for the period 2021-2027 in relation to mainstreaming climate objectives into different sectoral economic development programmes;
 - to cooperate in presenting achievements of the Baltic States regarding the implementation of climate and energy policy at the UNFCCC (COP24) conference in Katowice, Poland;
 - to ensure cooperation in preparing long-term low emission strategies in the Baltic States;
- to start harmonisation of pollution tax rates for vehicles in the Baltic States;

in regard to the consequences of climate change for agriculture and climate smart agriculture: challenges and opportunities in the context of the Paris Climate Change Agreement:

- to enhance exchange of experience and best practice on sustainable and climate resilient agriculture and forest land management to increase carbon dioxide absorption potential and decrease greenhouse gas emissions in the land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector;
- to ensure cooperation and experience exchange in preparing Forest Reference Levels for the period 2021-2030;
- to extend cooperation on application of sustainable, innovative technologies used for farming and agriculture practices;

in regard to the discontinuation of seasonal changes of time:

– to formulate and agree on a common approach of the Baltic States in regard to the discontinuation of seasonal changes of time and introduce similar time arrangements in the Baltic States.

Vilnius, 26 October 2018