

RESOLUTION
of the 33rd Session of the Baltic Assembly

The Baltic Assembly,

having convened on 23–24 October 2014 in Tallinn, the Republic of Estonia, for its 33rd Session;

having discussed the cooperation among the Baltic States, the progress achieved in implementing regional transport and infrastructure projects, the cooperation in defence and security, as well as issues related to the Eastern Partnership initiative of the European Union and digital signatures;

emphasising that the Baltic Way is a significant historical event which constitutes a part of our collective memory and should be cherished by our nations, as well as **extending gratitude** to our people and international society for their support to our aspirations for freedom and statehood;

expressing concern about the situation in Ukraine, **acknowledging** the attempts of the Ukrainian government to implement constitutional, regional and economic reforms, and **acknowledging** the right and obligation of Ukraine to uphold the rule of law and protect its citizens on its territory;

noting that by introducing the euro as of 1 January 2015 Lithuania will take a logical step towards closer integration into the European Union, increase confidence in its economy and contribute to a long-term well-being of the state, and **acknowledging** that introducing the euro will facilitate regional economic growth and competitiveness, increase the volume of investments and exports, reduce currency-exchange-related costs, and ensure greater resilience of the region to economic shocks;

believing that the upcoming Latvia's presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2015 will facilitate sustainable growth, competitiveness, welfare of all European nations and initiatives of the Eastern Partnership;

recognising the need to focus on joint growth-facilitating initiatives such as digital single market, innovation development, coordinated measures in promoting Baltic exports and attracting foreign direct investments to the region;

regarding infrastructure and transport:

acknowledging that integration in the single market of the European Union is of utmost importance for Baltic economies and the lack of proper land transport infrastructure connections with other Member States of the European Union prevents people and businesses of the Baltic States from taking advantage of all benefits of the European Union, particularly those offered by the single market;

believing that the *Rail Baltic/Rail Baltica* project will not only remove barriers to the free movement of the population and goods of the Baltic States, but also connect, by means of an environmentally friendly transport infrastructure connection, the Baltic Region and the capitals of the three Baltic States with the rest of Europe;

appreciating the support of the European Union, which is to be allocated from the Connecting Europe Facility and is to cover 85 per cent of costs, and its expected contribution to development of efficient transport infrastructure projects;

stressing the importance of a strong support from the parliaments and governments of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania and their commitment for implementation of the *Rail Baltic/Rail Baltica* project;

welcoming successful conclusion of negotiations of the *Rail Baltic/Rail Baltica* Task Force and signing of the Shareholders' Agreement on establishing the joint venture of the *Rail Baltic/Rail Baltica* project;

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

- to jointly prepare and submit the *Rail Baltic/Rail Baltica* project application for funding of the Connecting Europe Facility and start building the railway line;
- to continue negotiations with Finland and Poland on their involvement in the North Sea-Baltic TEN-T Corridor in order to link it with the railway line constructed in the framework of the *Rail Baltic/Rail Baltica* project;

regarding energy sector:

underlining that long-term cooperation must be oriented towards developing a single Baltic energy policy and strategy;

reiterating that future energy needs of the Baltic States can be met in an efficient manner only subject to the implementation of regional projects and creation of regional energy market;

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

- to seek for alternative sources of energy supplies, promote the use of energy from renewable sources and implement joint projects, thereby reducing dependence on one energy supplier;
- to analyse Baltic energy markets (energy systems, management of electricity capacity, trade in electricity) in order to identify flaws of separately operating markets, to evaluate benefits of common energy markets and to reduce costs for energy consumers;
- to continue developing electricity and gas interconnections;
- to urge discussions on scenario selection and implementation of the synchronous interconnection of power systems of the Baltic States with European Continental Networks and de-synchronisation from the IPS/UPS system, giving priority to a scenario whose implementation would be least dependant on third-country influence;
- to take a coordinated position regarding the functioning of the Baltic gas market and to elaborate regional gas market regulations;
- to foster cooperation among project stakeholders that would allow potential investors to prepare and evaluate the Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant project, while constructively solving the outstanding issues of the implementation of the project;
- to take action to facilitate the implementation of the decision of the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators of 11 August 2014 on the cross-border cost allocation for the Gas Interconnection Poland-Lithuania (GIPL) project in order to integrate the isolated gas market of the Baltic States into the EU market and to ensure proper EU financial support;

regarding cooperation in health sector:

reiterating the need to promote implementation of the Partnership Agreement on Joint Procurements of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices and Lending of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices Procurable Centrally, and the Declaration on Cooperation in Organ Transplantation signed by the Baltic States, as well as to urge Latvia and Lithuania to sign an agreement on cross-border cooperation in the provision of ambulance services in the Lithuanian-Latvian border area;

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

- to develop an action plan for coordinated implementation of the Cross-border Healthcare Directive;
- to develop an action plan for introducing single E-Health system that would link Baltic healthcare systems (legal and organisational aspects, content and technical standards, as well as data exchange);
- to commence negotiations on expert level about specialisation of medical centres of the states;

regarding education, science and innovation:

appreciating the ongoing mutual cooperation in the field of education within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia on Closer Cooperation in Higher Education, Research and Innovation signed in November 2012;

welcoming the creation of the Baltic Bonus scheme aimed at encouraging researchers and research institutions to come up with joint project applications;

emphasising that competitive economies require *inter alia* developed, coordinated and efficient vocational training, higher education and science;

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

- to develop an action plan on closer cooperation and establishing regional networks in higher education, research and innovation;
- to draft coordinated higher education policy and to discuss opportunities to elaborate joint marketing strategy for education sector aimed at increasing competitiveness and accessibility of education to citizens of other countries;
- to start negotiations on specialisation of expensive higher and vocational education study programmes;
- to develop an action plan for cooperation in research and innovation and coordination of relevant policies, as well as to develop joint smart specialisation strategy;
- to develop an action plan for allocating grants and developing special exchange programmes for neighbouring countries;
- to consider ways to provide support for innovative start-ups through pan-Baltic venture capital funds (such as the BIF) or joint accelerators;

regarding food safety:

welcoming the existing formal and informal cooperation among experts in food and veterinary safety and **emphasising** the need to increase coordination of action and information exchange among the relevant services;

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

- to identify ways to increase funding for institutions dealing with food safety and quality;
- to commence negotiations on establishing joint laboratories, joint procurement of equipment, as well as options for reducing costs of food and environmental pollution analyses;

regarding safe societies and defence:

recognising the complexity and dynamism of security environment, as well as the need to strengthen collective defence together with allies;

emphasising that traditional threats are complemented with new challenges;

acknowledging the need to develop coordinated approach towards civil security;

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

- to increase the share of GDP allocated to defence;
- to strengthen the military cooperation of the Baltic States through enhancement of joint capabilities and ensuring of the support of the host country for the allied forces deployed in the region;
- to continue increasing cooperation in cyber security, including establishment of parliamentary cyber security groups that can be used to address challenges in the cyber security field;
- to enhance cooperation in the area of defence of critical infrastructure;
- to develop strategic communication capabilities that can help protect against information attacks and hostile propaganda, also information tools and channels used in civil emergencies;
- to identify gaps in strategic response capacity and determine available resources, as well as to determine opportunities to exchange civil protection and emergency management personnel, and to develop networking between training centres;
- to integrate science and technology in Baltic security strategies;

regarding development of regional networks:

being aware that Northern Europe has been the most dynamic region in Europe for several years and that interest of other regions in developing closer political and economic cooperation with this region is increasing;

emphasising the need to develop a joint cluster that would conduct an active dialogue and work closely with the EU institutions, as well as European partner organisations and countries;

calls on the Baltic Council of Ministers:

- to agree on cooperation plan for strengthening relations among parliaments and governments of the Baltic States, the Nordic countries and the Visegrad countries in order to better coordinate policies and measures in different fields of mutual interest;
- to agree on cooperation plan with the GUAM Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development, thus increasing support to the GUAM countries in their European and transatlantic aspirations.

Tallinn, 24 October 2014