

RESOLUTION
OF THE 35th SESSION OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY

The Baltic Assembly,

having convened for its 35th Session on 27–28 October 2016 in Riga, Republic of Latvia;

having discussed policy initiatives and legislative proposals regarding the cooperation of the Baltic States, the implementation of priorities of the Latvian presidency of the Baltic Assembly, the security situation and challenges, domestic policy developments and the socio-economic situation, support for the EU Eastern Partnership countries;

underlining the enormous need for the Baltic States to be united in addressing joint challenges and threats and seizing opportunities for growth and welfare of our region;

unequivocally condemning all acts, methods and practices of terrorism, radicalisation and glorification of violence, and **reiterating** our preparedness to develop relevant measures to prevent and combat terrorism through increased cooperation and solidarity;

highly appreciating the decision taken at the NATO Warsaw summit including to establish and deploy to the Baltics and Poland battalion-sized multinational battlegroups, and **highlighting** the necessity to continue working on increasing defence budgets and improving the combat capacity of the national armed forces;

taking note regarding the decision of the people of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, and **affirming** confidence in the common values of the European Union, **emphasises** that the European Union is the framework of our common political and economic future;

congratulating Latvia for the achieved goal of joining the OECD; **emphasising** the wish to see Lithuania follow the same path shortly;

emphasising the urgent need for continuous global, multi-dimensional and long-term responses to deal with the migration and refugee crises, strengthening of our external border, intensification of efforts regarding readmission and the fight against migrant smuggling and emergence of new migratory routes;

expressing the need to strengthen strong media in the region, **highlighting** the need to raise awareness and demonstrate assertiveness through institutional and political communication, academic research, social media campaigns, civil society initiatives, media literacy and other useful actions to stand against disinformation and propaganda, which constitute part of hybrid warfare, and **convinced** that the adoption

of measures to provide the target audience with adequate and compelling information about issues of public interest is an efficient strategy to counteract anti-EU propaganda;

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

regarding the migration and refugee crisis:

- to improve the capacity of the Baltic security services to combat terrorism and organised crime, as well as to prevent possible security risks linked to admitting and integrating asylum seekers distributed among EU member states;
- to foster inter-agency cooperation on the Baltic level by establishing joint investigation teams and providing mutual assistance in cases of migrant smuggling;
- sharing of know-how, information and exchange of best practices among the relevant authorities of the Baltic States regarding their experience as well as in staff training.

regarding cooperation of law-enforcement institutions:

- reinvigorate the fight against terrorism and organised crime through, *inter alia*, cooperation with the relevant authorities from Belarus and Russia;
- to form an *ad hoc* group of experts under the auspices of the Baltic Council of Ministers in order to explore the possibilities of organising regular tactical exercises for the Baltic law-enforcement agencies and establishing a joint master's programme for the staff of Baltic law-enforcement agencies with both national and EU funding;
- to place greater focus on investigating organised crime networks not only on a national, but also regional level;
- to coordinate joint measures of the relevant law-enforcement institutions to decrease the proportion of the “shadow economy” in the Baltic States by detecting possible legislative gaps that can be used for tax avoidance, exchanging information and agreeing on general to fight against tax fraud;

regarding closer cooperation of border guard services:

- to elaborate and finalise 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 finalise the “Joint Patrol Agreement between the State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, the Police Department under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, the State Border Guard of the Republic of Latvia and the State Police of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Latvia”;
- to ensure continuation of the operational cooperation of state border guard services of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in combating cross-border crime;
- to explore the possibilities to harmonise penalties in national legislation for organising illegal movement of persons across state borders;

regarding the demographic situation in the Baltic States and state policies for family support:

- to send our societies a clear signal about the sustainability and longevity of our national family support policies. Even the worst economic downturn should not be used as an excuse for cutting back on family support;
- to improve national policy regarding work/study-life balance in order to provide both parents with the opportunity to work part-time whilst sharing parental responsibilities and retaining eligibility for state support;
- to promote an equal involvement of both parents in childcare, allowing parents to take care of their child for a longer period (until the child reaches the age of three), providing parents with a choice regarding early childcare alternatives, and ensuring *de facto* availability of childcare options after the end of the childcare leave;
- to build on the experience of neighbouring countries and research of specialised institutes by adopting the best and most effective family support policy mechanisms.

regarding protection of the rights of children of citizens of the Baltic States residing abroad:

- to ensure that the competent authorities inform the public about the differences in legislation, traditions and culture in the countries to which families with children move;
- to ensure significant clarifications and improvements to Brussels II¹ in order to align the understanding of the regulation throughout the member states;
- to ensure immediate exchange of information about cases involving nationals residing abroad and to promote the maintenance of links with diaspora;
- to establish a system for the consular services to ensure exchange of information and implement preventive measures of awareness building about the differences in laws, traditions and culture of other countries.

regarding cooperation in the energy sector:

- to develop a united position regarding the development of the Astravets nuclear power plant;
- to promote public-private partnership in regard to low-carbon economy and develop long-term policies, so that not only the state but also the private sector is involved in the low-carbon economy.

regarding transport and infrastructure:

- to promote enhanced involvement of Poland and Finland in the *RailBaltic/RailBaltica* project;
- to underline the need for long-term support for the *Rail Baltic/RailBaltica* project;
- to continue small and medium scale road infrastructure projects, develop cross-border infrastructure projects by using the EU cross-border cooperation program INTERREG;

¹ Regulation, known as Brussels IIa or sometimes Brussels II - Council Regulation (EC) No 2201/2003 of 27 November 2003 concerning jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in matrimonial matters and the matters of parental responsibility, repealing Regulation (EC) No 1347/2000

- to intensify coordination of activities in introducing common and similar types of intelligent transport traffic information systems in all three states;
- to rebuild infrastructure in border regions.

regarding economic cooperation:

- to take a coordinated approach in promoting the exports of the Baltic States and attracting foreign direct investments to the region;
- to have more active coordination of tax policies, as well as to ensure the stability and predictability of tax systems;
- to follow the initiative of the European Commission in identifying obstacles in cross-border cooperation;
- to adjust the existing legislation and share information on promotion of “start-up” environment in the region;
- to establish a Joint Digital Hub for promoting and harmonising digital initiatives in order to foster and further digital solutions;
- to foster trilateral consultations of the Baltic States about the next EU multiannual financial framework.

regarding cooperation in education and research, technology transfer and innovation:

- to foster introduction of automatic recognition of diplomas and degrees in the Baltic States, thus achieving the goals set by the European Union for 2020;
- to ensure rational and efficient use of scientific infrastructure of the Baltic States;
- to elaborate measures for strengthening the humanities within the framework of the 100th anniversary of the Baltic States;
- to develop an action plan for cooperation regarding expensive higher and professional education programmes;
- to promote gender equality in scientific careers and decision-making and integrate a gender dimension in research content;
- to develop the idea of using libraries as business support mechanisms in municipalities of border regions.

regarding cooperation in the health sector:

- with an active and targeted approach, to implement the Partnership Agreement on Joint Procurements of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices and Lending of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices Procurable Centrally;
- 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;
- to continue consultations on expert level about specialisation of medical centres in the Baltic States.

Riga, 28 October 2016