

Speech by Mrs Marie-Louise Rönnmark, UBC 1st Vice-President

at the 3rd Structured Dialogue Meeting

Brussels, 17 November 2005

Decentralised cooperation and neighbourhood policy- security and external relations.

President Barroso and President Straub,

Participants of the 3rd Structured Dialogue Meeting,

Union of the Baltic Cities would like to underline the importance of developing and maintaining a secure and safe Baltic region. The Baltic Sea, one of the few inland seas within the EU requires a special approach. The inland sea is characterized by the mix of old and new EU-members. Big differences exist in terms of environmental, economic and social conditions, for example mortality rates are still considerably worse than the EU median in some new member states 66 for men in Latvia and Estonia, compared to Sweden ' s 78.

The proximity to the Russian Federation also requires special considerations. Since there is a noticeable tension between Russia and the Baltic States due to the earlier historical development it would be most desirable that these political differences are reduced.

Cross-boarder co-operation presents a favourable tool for sharing knowledge and implementing best practise. This need for an open-minded as well as unlimited international co-operation should be recognized and not restricted by a 150-km maritime boarder since this would eliminate cooperation across the Baltic Sea, and fail to achieve the objectives of the European Cohesion Policy in jointly finding solutions to common problems and benefiting from an overall coherent European policy proposed by the European Commission.

Other pressing security issues are also found within the environmental-, economical- and social sectors, like the pollution of the Baltic Sea, the need to renew the energy market with non-fossil sources of energy, matters involving organized crime, human- and drugs trafficking are all serious and heavy risks.

Furthermore Interreg is EU's instrument to realize an over-all coherent policy and to create conditions on a concrete level for the local and regional development programmes to be imbued with the main objectives expressed in the Lisbon- and Gothenburg Agendas. In the new proposal for a constitution, the subsidy policy is made clearer. Local and regional authorities are proposed to get an increased responsibility in their main activities.

The proposal to move almost all municipal responsibility areas from the "transnational" to "the cross border" part of the future Interreg makes the cross Baltic co-operation impossible within the municipal responsibility fields and counteract the cohesion policy aim as well as the subsidy aim of the proposal for a new constitution.

All municipal and regional projects and networks that have been created in the Baltic Sea Region during the last 15 years indicate the great need of instruments for municipal and regional projects at the same time as they in concrete actions have the support from the EU' s aims of peace and security in the region. To prevent such projects during the future structural fund period would considerably reduce the EU's legitimacy in the region and make the creating of a "People's Europe " more difficult. The foundation of the European Union must in peoples minds be based upon the conception of peace, being the foundation stone of security, empowering people in general to identify with being citizens of the EU and involved in the EU - effecting the everyday life of us and our neighbours.

Now Dear President Barroso, will the EC enable organisations like the UBC and regional and local authorities to actively take part in the formation and implementation of the European Cohesion- and European Neighbourhood Policy?

Marie-Louise Rönmark
UBC 1st Vice-President