



8th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Berlin 13 – 14 June

Seminar: Cooperation with Belarus

Time: Tuesday, 13 June, 17:00 to 18:30 hours, Visitor Center, Federal Foreign Office

Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus, Oleg Kravchenko, expressed a strong interest in deepening cooperative relations with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. He underlined that Belarus is an active promoter of connectivity and outlined the priorities of the current Belarusian Presidency of the Central European Initiative (CEI). Oleg Kravchenko called for closer cooperation between the CEI and the EU. He stressed that there is a significant potential for active cooperation with tangible results.

The representative of the European Commission, Michael Ralph, Adviser for Coordination and Policy Dialogue with the Eastern Partnership and Russia (DG REGIO), welcomed the opportunity to take stock of the involvement of Belarus partners in the strategy to date and agreed that there are many possibilities to develop this further and explicitly mentioned environmental policies and regional development as examples of promising areas. He also recalled that for the EU democracy and human rights remain central to cooperation with Belarus and stressed the importance of supporting people-to-people contacts, such as through university cooperation.

Anne Quart, State Secretary for European Affairs and Consumer Protection of the Ministry of Justice, for European Affairs and Consumer Protection, Land Brandenburg strongly endorsed a cooperative approach between Belarus and the Strategy. Referring to an established opinion of the Committee of the Regions, she called for a full inclusion of local and regional authorities in that process.

The seminar then explored two areas of promising interaction between Belarus and the Strategy. Kari Hyppönen, President of the Baltic Sea Region University Network, and Olga Malashenkova, Deputy Head of the Faculty of International Relations of the Belarus State University gave an overview of already existing partnerships of Belarusian universities in the Baltic Sea region. Both clearly described the advantages of dense university networks as a means for developing a platform for new ideas, projects and activities.

Irina Bondarchuk, Chief Specialist of the Department of Environmental Regulations and Marjukka Porvari, Director of Clean Baltic Sea projects, John Nurminen Foundation informed about common projects and challenges in the fight against the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. There was an agreement that a stronger inclusion of Belarus in these

efforts would be highly beneficial for all sides. It was highlighted that the high level of expertise in Belarus is a positive element on which to build. It may be useful to examine ways to further strengthen the incentives for a sustainable sewage treatment.