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| **Summary report**  **Summary report** | **8th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Berlin 13 – 14 June** |

**Seminar: Connectivity of skills and competences for smart specialization as driving force for sustainable development in Baltic Sea Region**

**Time:** Wednesday, 14 June, 10:45 to 12:15 hours, Besucherzentrum 1

TheSeminar was organized within “BSR Smart Life” (BSR Lifelong Learning for Smart Specialization) - new flagship initiative on lifelong learning in Action 4 “A society of longer lives” of the PA Education Action Plan, initiated by Vidzeme Planning Region (Latvia).

The seminar focused on connectivity of skills and competences for smart specialization in the Region of the Baltic Sea. Nowadays we need to speak about lifelong learning as an instrument for the development of society and the state, including the regions. Education at all ages must be meaningful, with the guarantee that acquired knowledges will be necessary and useful for the economic development of the regions, and will not conflict with the interests of the person as well.

**The seminar focused on the following central themes:**

* Lifelong Learning in the Global Knowledge Economy: skills and competences of the future economies;
* Workforce availability in the Federal State of Brandenburg in comparison to the Baltic Sea Region;
* Lifelong Learning as a driving force for regional development and specialization;
* Lifelong learning in the digital age.

**Mr Olli-Pekka Hatanpää**, Planning Manager at Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council (Finland), presented implementation of the Smart Specialization Strategy of Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, emphasizing that lifelong learning education is an essential element for sustainable development in the region. **Ms Maija Kāle**, Adviser at Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Latvia pointed out the importance of lifelong learning in the digital age, emphasizing women's role in this process. Senior Manager at Brandenburg Economic Development Board from Germany **Mr Daniel Porep** presented the trends of employment in Europe. Data shows an increasing population and increasing workforce with high activity rates in Scandinavia, but contrary situation in Western and Eastern Europe where a decreasing workforce and a steady employment level will collide soon.

Reductions are affected by decline of population and aging society, as well as the incompatibility of labor force knowledge and skills. **Mr Ugnius Savickas**, an expert from Lithuania, mentioned in his presentation the skills that for workforce will be valuable in the nearest future. The expert pointed out that labor market players need to cope with a new challenge: lack of mutual communication skills between employers and employees. The leaders of companies and organizations must be those who motivate employees to expand their competencies.

The dialogue is essential for all parties involved (such as local, regional and national government bodies, private sector organizations, and institutions offering educational services) to reach long-term cooperation. Similarly, the participants agreed that greater attention should be paid to the lifelong learning process in the work environment. A collective understanding was reached that business managers and human resources managers should be the ones that encourage their employees to further their skills and competences.

Also, the labor market players themselves must now strengthen the skills they need for the labor market today and tomorrow, to be more competitive in the labor market. The ability to adapt to different situations and the acquisition of new skills are very important. The most important skills are effective communication skills, cooperation skills, empathy, intuition, critical and complex thinking, emotional intelligence, creativity, etc.