

Building bridges, securing participation, strengthening the region

Co-operation in the
democratic Baltic Sea Region



Preamble

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Recommendations of the Co-operation Council
to the State Government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for a
State Strategy for Co-operation in the democratic Baltic Sea Region

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The countries, regions and cities of the Democratic Baltic Sea Region can look back on historically grown overarching traditions and identities. Over the centuries, a common cultural space has emerged in which, especially since the Hanseatic era, close networking and trusting co-operation have proven their worth and through which the sense of belonging among the Baltic Sea countries has grown. Today, the democratic Baltic Sea Region is firmly anchored in the European Union and, on the basis of a stable set of values, has committed itself to the task of promoting a peaceful existence in the Baltic Sea Region through shared fundamental values and joint action.



In the democratic Baltic Sea Region, we are facing major tasks for the future that we can only solve together. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern wants to seize the opportunities and further expand our Baltic Sea co-operation. Our goals: democratic and peaceful co-existence, a clean environment and innovations through strong science and economy. **Bettina Martin**



Freedom and equal participation of all people in the Baltic Sea Region is the foundation for innovation and prosperity. **Dr. Anja Mühr**

Model region with potential

The democratic Baltic Sea Region is one of the most competitive and dynamic regions in the world. At the same time, its adaptability and unique resilience make it a model region for coping with the rapid changes and major crises and challenges of our time.

Unlocking potential

This is especially true in the current turning point in history, which is a response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and by which the region is particularly affected. The people in the Baltic Sea Region are facing up to these challenges. Security policy is being reoriented. The focus is on democratic values. Securing a sustainable independent energy supply is also being tackled together against this background.

Characteristic of the joint activities in the region is also the growing willingness to take responsibility for the Baltic Sea as a highly sensitive ecosystem. It has become a central driving force for co-operation. For example, dealing with ammunition waste in the Baltic Sea is a topic of overriding relevance, also

in the EU context. Equally important are an innovative health economy, the promotion of digitalisation and the development of a sustainable economy, which are given special attention in the present recommendations for a co-operation strategy of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the democratic Baltic Sea Region.

Partner in demand

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is a German gateway to the Baltic Sea Region. With its ports, good infrastructure, sustainable energy production, innovative health industry and globally renowned maritime research, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern as a cosmopolitan federal state has important prerequisites for close co-operation with partners in the Baltic Sea Region.



Strong democracies and resilient societies

Baltic Sea Region comprises some of the most stable democracies in the world, where the active and free participation of the people living there is of paramount importance. Many of the countries have a long democratic tradition, others have undergone solid democratic transformation processes in the recent past. They all share the conviction that human rights, democratic participation and the rule of law are the foundations of freedom, peace, stability and prosperity.

The members of the Co-operation Council are convinced that the challenges of the Baltic Sea Region can only be met together and that opportunities and potentials can only be used in the best possible way in co-operation. Numerous personalities from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern are politically

and professionally active in various Baltic Sea organisations. Personal exchange and co-operation within the framework of international organisations, networks and projects between the actors are the linchpins for further strengthening the Baltic Sea Region as a free, participatory and peaceful region.



Photo: Adobe Stock

Baltic Sea co-operation and participation as a mission

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has fundamentally changed co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region. Against this current geopolitical background, co-operation can only take place without Russian participation.

Co-operation Council takes up work

Democracy and co-operation thrive on active participation. Against this background, numerous actors in the region, including the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, are realigning co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region. To this end, the state government established the MV Co-operation Council for the democratic Baltic Sea Region (CoC) on 31st May 2022. It began its work with its constituent meeting on 24th June 2022. As an

advisory body to the state government, it developed the present recommendations for co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region and proposed projects.

The Co-operation Council is presenting its recommendations with this report. These are primarily addressed to the State government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which is redefining the priorities of the state's Baltic Sea policy and co-operation with its new Baltic Sea Strategy and creating the political conditions for its implementation. In order to place this process on a broad social basis, however, the report also addresses the public, who is invited to participate in an open social discourse on goals.



The work of the Co-operation Council (CoC)

The Assignment

The Co-operation Council advises the state government on the preparation of the Baltic Sea strategy for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. To this end, it prepares a report within one year with recommendations for action and proposed measures for the state government. It also supports the state government during the implementation process of the strategy.

The members

The CoC is composed of 29 personalities from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern with professional expertise and practical knowledge from the fields of politics, business, science, infrastructure, volunteering, youth (association) work, sports, education and culture. The members of the Council work on a voluntary basis. Chairpersons: Minister Bettina Martin, Dr. Anja Mihr

The work process

Kick-off meeting with Minister President Manuela Schwesig on 24 June 2022 in Wismar; six plenary sessions as well as ten thematic workshops, also involving external experts, some of them from other Baltic Sea countries.

Phase 1: Exchanging knowledge and developing ideas (June - August 2022)	Phase 2: Consolidating results into guidelines, fields of action, measures (September 2022 - February 2023)	Phase 3: Developing recommendations (March - May 2023) Submission of recommendations to Minister President Manuela Schwesig on 25th May 2023 in Greifswald
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Goals and target groups

The Co-operation Council proposes contributing to further strengthening the democratic Baltic Sea Region as a European model region through improved framework conditions and targeted measures in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Its proposals include cross-border participation and the joint development of potentials for sustainable social, economic, scientific and free cultural development. This development can only succeed if the democratic states and regions of the Baltic Sea Region focus on co-operation.

The focus is on three key objectives that are groundbreaking for the democratic Baltic Sea Region:

Peace,
Democracy
and participation

Expanding encounters from all areas of society, especially from education, science, culture and business, across borders and generations. Strengthening a regional and international culture of welcome.

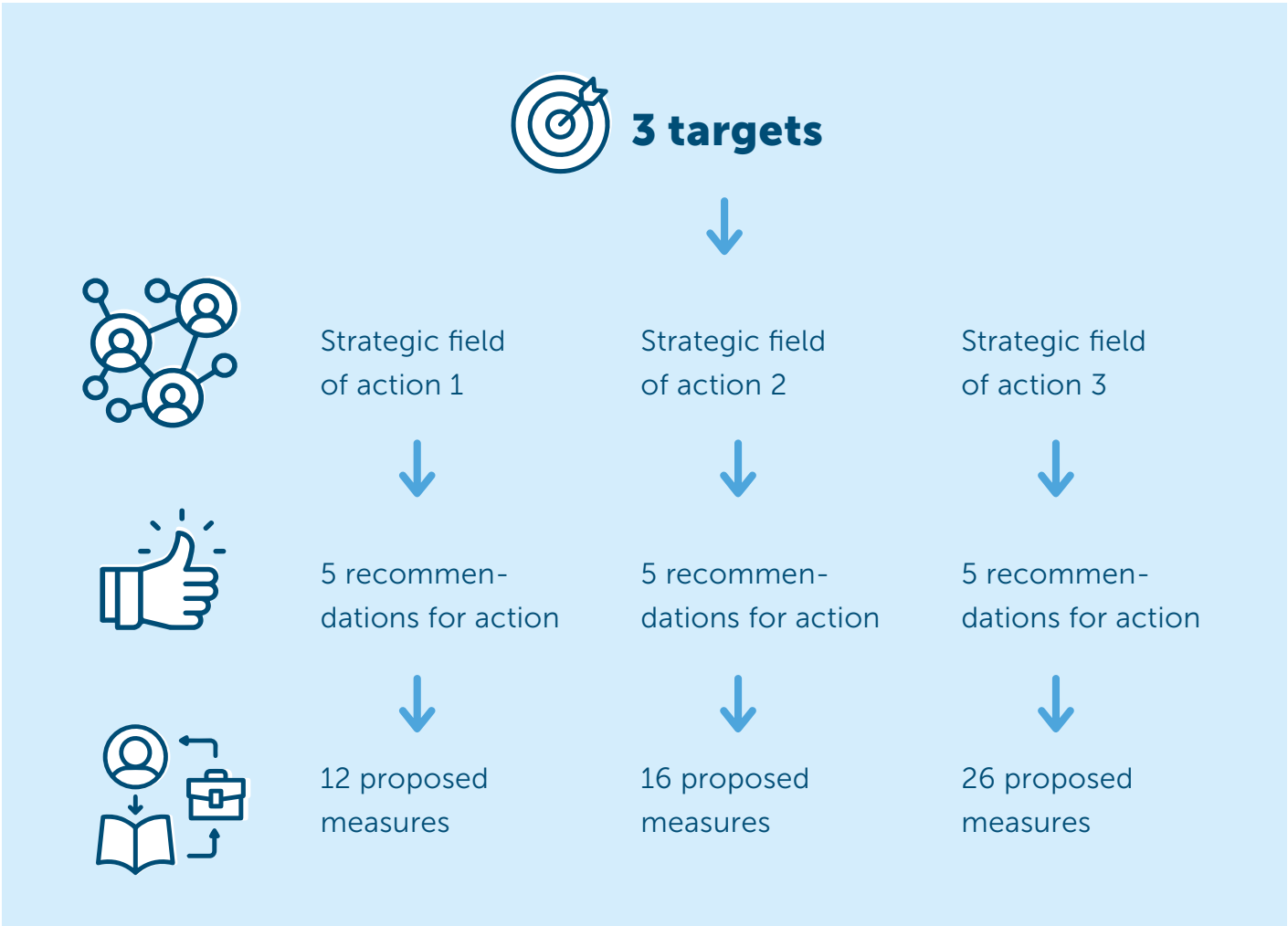
Sustainability,
environmental and
climate protection
and the switch to
renewable energies

Finding common solutions for a healthy and liveable environment for future generations, focusing on the protection of the Baltic Sea, the preservation of cultural heritage and sustainable economic cycles.

Sustainability,
prosperity and
health

Promoting mutual learning and exchanging knowledge and innovations, strengthening economic and scientific co-operation, ensuring sustainable and reliable energy and health care and expanding co-operation in digitalisation.

The following recommendations for action are intended to contribute to the achievement of these goals. Its successful implementation depends on the one hand on the strategic orientation of the State Government, on the other hand, on the acceptance, ability and active participation of different **target groups from business and science, education and culture, municipalities and associations as well as civil society volunteering and especially the young generation.**



Strategic fields of action and recommendations

In order to implement the above-mentioned goals, the Co-operation Council recommends three strategic fields of action:

1

Improving the framework conditions for co-operation

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern already works closely with its partners in the Baltic Sea Region in many areas. However, it deserves to be better recognised for its potential as a co-operation partner in the Baltic Sea Region. Existing formats of co-operation and encounters in the areas of education, science, culture and business should be strengthened in personal exchanges and digitally, and resources should be pooled and advisory services expanded.

2

Building bridges and putting people at the centre

Good co-operation only succeeds with motivated people who can act freely and on an equal footing. Cross-border encounters in civil society, voluntary work, sport, youth and culture create mutual understanding and trust and thus strengthen the stability of democratic societies in the Baltic Sea Region. The common history of the Baltic Sea Region, its cultures, landscapes and traditions form central points of contact and encounter. Linguistic and intercultural competences are to be promoted in kindergartens and schools through appropriate resources.

3

Generating sustainability, innovation and creating value through cross-border co-operation between science and business

Changed geopolitical framework conditions, climate change and the pollution of the Baltic Sea require a joint accelerated expansion of sustainable infrastructure as well as innovative and knowledge-based solutions. A special focus is on the expansion of renewable energies – on land and at sea. Demographic change also promotes the need for innovative and digital developments that must be cross-generational and intergenerational, for example in the health industry and for rural areas.



The three strategic fields of action are underpinned by recommendations and concrete proposals for action in the following.

1

Framework conditions for co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region

Good co-operation includes a targeted and tailored selection of co-operation areas as well as access to funding programmes in the State, at federal and EU level. Personal and digital opportunities for encounters, education and information can expand intercultural competences. Co-operation works better when it is supported by many. A focus should therefore be placed on improving the corresponding framework conditions – whether digitally or materially.

Set priorities and develop potential in a targeted manner

In the state's future Baltic Sea Strategy, thematic priority areas for Baltic Sea-related co-operation should be named in which particularly great opportunities lie through intensified co-operation. Existing forms and contents of co-operation should be taken into account and the potentials of co-operation analysed.

The Co-operation Council recommends the following topics for this purpose:

Bioeconomy	Innovative science projects	Renewable energy production, storage and transport, in particular via cross-border connection of offshore plants and value creation	Health economy	Digitalisation, robotics and artificial intelligence
Strengthening cultural exchange and opportunities for civil society encounters, especially in the fields of youth, gender equality and sport.	Strengthening the exchange between science/business with international partners	Clean and healthy Baltic Sea	Internationalisation, especially in the areas of education and language skills	Securing the demand for skilled workers
	Sustainable tourism	Protecting the Baltic Sea Region's cultural and natural heritage	Strengthening cultural networks and participation	

Concrete proposals for measures to set priorities

- 1 Setting thematic priorities for the implementation of co-operation measures in the Baltic Sea Region and identifying suitable co-operation partners in these areas.
- 2 Analysing technical policy strategies and action plans of the state government in the priority areas with regard to their relevance for the topics of the Baltic Sea and Baltic Sea co-operation should be included in a state strategy for Baltic Sea co-operation.

Priorities should be aligned with the existing state strategies for regional development. These include the state's Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS) 2021 - 2027, the Master Plan for the Health Economy MV 2030, the Industrial Policy Concept MV 2030 and the Cultural Policy Guidelines for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.



“ The Baltic Sea Region is a valuable source of impetus for our country across all sectors and especially for the health economy – so let's get started! **Lars Bauer**



“ The co-operation of Baltic Sea Region companies with other companies and research institutions is of enormous importance because it leads to new growth opportunities and increased internationality through synergy effects, the sharing of innovations and know-how. **Steffi Groth**

Increasing visibility

Co-operation is only possible if potential partners know about each other and can find each other. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and its actors should therefore become even more visible as co-operation partners in the Baltic Sea Region. The state's own strengths can be highlighted and political and thematic priorities for co-operation can be clearly identified.

Proposed measures to increase the visibility of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern:

- 3 Development of an international advertising strategy for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the Baltic Sea Region through which the prioritised co-operation topics of the State are presented.
- 4 Establishment of a digital and multilingual information service about Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to support contacts in the Baltic Sea Region.

Using connection points, creating new formats

The various established bodies, co-operation structures and formats in the Baltic Sea Region, of which Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has been an active member for many years, can serve as connection points for co-operation. These include meeting and cultural formats, as well as economic co-operation, municipal, university and school partnerships or bilateral or international societies and women's associations. In addition, there are numerous connection points in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern as a basis for co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region. In the future, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern should play an even more active role in these bodies as well as in networking.

New formats should also be further developed and expanded, especially for the state's future topics.

Proposed measures, to strengthen points of contact:

- 5 Establishment of a new format “Baltic Sea Days” as an interdisciplinary and public-oriented framework for larger and smaller events in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on current developments in the fields of art, culture, science, economy, the environment and strengthening democracy in the Baltic Sea Region. The aim could be to organise such a format in rotation with other regions of the Baltic Sea Region.



“ Make even better use of what already exists, make existing strengths and potentials visible. Dare to try something new! **Dr. Marek Fialek**

Selected organisations and formats of Baltic Sea co-operation

➔ Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is active here

Council of the Baltic Sea States Promoting political co-operation

The Council of the Baltic Sea States, with its secretariat in Stockholm, has been promoting political and economic co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region since 1992. It includes the EU countries on the Baltic rim: Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Sweden and also Iceland, Norway and a representative of the EU.

Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) Co-operation for the protection of the Baltic Sea

The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) was established in 1974 with the Convention of the Baltic Sea States and the European Union for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea – updated in 1992.

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and Southern Baltic Sea Parliamentary Forum Multi-level parliamentary co-operation

The **Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference** brings together national and regional parliaments with legislative competences from the Baltic Sea region. The Mecklenburg-Vorpommern state parliament has been involved in the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference since 1991. The **Southern Baltic Sea Parliamentary Forum** was founded in 2004 on the initiative of the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern state parliament. Members of the parliaments of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg and the representative bodies (Sejmiks) of the Voivodeships of West Pomerania, Pomerania and Warmia Masuria work together here. The Regional Council of Skåne has an observer role.

CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Co-operation between regions in the Baltic Sea Region and the EU

The Conference of Peripheral Coastal Regions (CPMR) brings together more than 150 regions from 24 European Union countries and beyond. The member regions work together in geographical commissions under the umbrella of the CPMR.

Regions of Finland and Sweden and municipalities in Estonia and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern are represented in the Baltic Sea Commission.

The country's regional partnerships in the Baltic Sea Region

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has regional partnerships with the Voivodeships of West Pomerania (1991) and Pomerania (2001) as well as with Southwest Finland (2000). The country maintains friendly relations with the Skåne region.

Szczecin Metropolitan Region

The development and design of the Szczecin Metropolitan Region is a joint cross-border project which a wide variety of actors on the German and Polish sides are working together on. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Brandenburg have maintained a joint office for the Szczecin Metropolitan Region in Anklam since 2019.

ScanBalt Baltic Sea Network for the Health Economy and Life Sciences

ScanBalt is the leading network for interregional co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region in the fields of pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and medical technology.

Chambers of Commerce Abroad The international network of Chambers of Commerce and Industry

The Chambers of Industry and Commerce in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern work closely with the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad in the Baltic Sea countries on issues relating to the foreign business of companies.



“Trust and friendship grow through many years of co-operation and that unites the Baltic Sea Region.”
Beate Schlupp

6 Greater **public involvement in scientific research and Baltic Sea research programmes** ("Citizen Science"). The biennial Baltic Sea Science Day, the Baltic Sea Science Conference, the Baltic Earth Conference or the activities of the German Marine Research Alliance could offer connecting points of contact. The establishment of participatory science centres should be explored in order to bring technical and scientific, social science and humanities know-how about the Baltic Sea to the public. Examples include the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research in Warnemünde and the Ocean Technology Campus in Rostock, which is currently under development. The museums could also be used as forums for the broad-based communication of scientific research.

7 **Systematic collection and analysis of relevant events and co-operation formats** in the EU, the Baltic Sea Region and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in the priority areas. The development of Baltic Sea-related activities, tools and formats should be evaluated over time.

Acting in a network

International co-operation projects are often very complex and require the continuous and long-term commitment of public and private actors. A close exchange between experienced and inexperienced actors can be helpful here, as can targeted advisory services, including on EU funding programmes, and low-threshold support programmes offered by the state. It should be clarified at an early stage what goals are being pursued with the co-operation, what added value could result from the co-operation for the partners involved and what opportunities could arise for regional development. To support this, the state government should develop a set of instruments to

optimally accompany co-operation projects from their initiation to their implementation and utilisation. Representatives from the countries of the Baltic Sea Region could also be involved.

Proposed measures to promote networked action:

8 **Bundling of competencies and orientation of advisory services to promote Baltic Sea co-operation in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern** in order to promote the mutual exchange of information and experience as well as subject-specific formats and, in particular, to facilitate the expansion of co-operation. For this purpose, the following three elements are proposed:

Expansion of the **network of actors in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern who are involved in Baltic Sea co-operation** (projects, networks, organisations) through regular personal contact and events. In this context, the establishment of a **database** with actors from the fields of **civil society and voluntary work** interested in an exchange in the Baltic Sea Region should be considered ("Engagement Finder International"). The support of the "Ehrenamtsstiftung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern" and "Kultur Land MV" could be examined for this purpose.

Expansion of **digital information** on relevant funding instruments, advisory services and activities on Baltic Sea co-operation, taking into account the existing offer on the state's Europe portal www.europa-mv.de.

Establishment of **regional advisory centres for Baltic Sea co-operation and funding advice** (EU, federal and state level), which provide support with programme advice, development of project approaches and consortia through to funding. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of businesses, voluntary work and civil society, as well as the special characteristics of rural areas. Personal contact is necessary to lower entry thresholds, clarify expectations of co-operation and point out ways to achieve this. Funding advice should also include the provision of contacts to the relevant EU authorities. Examples include the advisory services offered by the South Baltic Contact Point (set up in the Interreg context) or the EEN MV (European Enterprise Network).



■ *Mecklenburg-Vorpommern can benefit immensely from the traditionally close networking and sharing of resources in the Baltic Sea Region.* **Dr. Wolfgang Blank**

Together with other regions of the Baltic Sea Region, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern should work towards communicating and promoting its common interests well to EU institutions in Brussels.

In addition to the EU countries along the Baltic Sea rim, Norway is also a natural partner for Baltic Sea co-operation due to its historical self-image, its membership in the European Economic Area and the Council of the Baltic Sea States and its participation in many EU funding programmes. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Norway have a wide range of relations, especially in scientific co-operation and cultural exchange.

9 The state government should offer an award for special commitment and outstanding projects in Baltic Sea co-operation (Baltic Sea Co-operation Award) in order to increase the visibility of commitment and successful activities and to highlight the importance of Baltic Sea co-operation for the development of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The award could be presented during the Baltic Sea Days (see proposed measure 5).

10 Examine and, if necessary, adjust state funding for Baltic Sea co-operation with regard to their appropriate funding, target orientation, flexibility and ease of procedures. Examples of this are grants to the state youth associations, funding for children's and youth camps and for international youth work in the state youth plan. In concrete terms, possibilities could be examined to extend the lead times for applications, to standardise the accounting modalities and to facilitate access for new and young applicants. For associations, low-threshold resources should be created along the lines of the State Agency for Civic Education's micro-projects (up to 500 euros) and, if necessary, further financing offers. Attention should also be paid to the sustainability of funded measures beyond the actual duration of projects.

Raising the profile of the Baltic Sea Region as an EU model region

Against the background of the current geopolitical situation, the co-operation of the democratic Baltic Sea countries is part of EU integration and an expression of living co-operation between EU member states.



■ *Eight out of nine countries bordering the Baltic Sea are EU Member States - that and so much more connects us to this great region.* **Mandy Kröppelien**

Proposed measures to raise the profile of the Baltic Sea Region:

11 Communicating the close links between Baltic Sea co-operation and EU integration in schools and to the interested public.

12 Better representation of the common interests of the Baltic Sea Region towards EU institutions, for example the state government should feed the Baltic Sea-related concerns into the design of EU policies and funding programmes at an early stage together with other regions. Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, participation in the Conference of Peripheral Coastal Regions (CPMR) and in particular in the Baltic Sea Commission, in the Intergroup on Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas in the European Parliament and in the Committee of the Regions provides numerous opportunities for the Baltic Sea Region to influence EU institutions

2

Building bridges and placing people at the centre of co-operation

People are at the centre of Baltic Sea co-operation. The recommendations in this section therefore aim at how people in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern can be supported and encouraged to co-operate across borders.

It is important to sustain an international culture of welcome and encounter in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, to build up knowledge and skills and to shape international co-operation. In addition, there is the development of a common understanding of similarities as well as country-specific differences in the Baltic Sea Region. Connections between history, customs and traditions, art and culture should play a central role. The competences and experiences of multipliers and contact points could flow into this.



Shared cultural heritage means above all the recognition of different perspectives on this heritage: on positive developments and successes as well as on guilt and trauma.
Professor Cordelia Heß

Highlight common history, culture, art and landscape

In its history, its cultural and artistic diversity and its landscapes, the Baltic Sea Region exhibits many similarities between the bordering states. This gives rise to a variety of points of contact for the development of connections. Examples include redbrick Gothic architecture, castles and manor houses and the spa architecture.

Museums, historical and political places of remembrance, living traditions, folklore and active art scenes that are jointly reflected in artistic creation, film festivals and music events can point the way to a closer exchange.



Historic preservation is climate protection. For a Baltic Sea Region of such cultural investments in the future!
Professor Kilian Heck

Numerous well-respected events and meeting places in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern also offer themselves as connection points for the targeted development of contacts in the Baltic Sea Region.



Showing and communicating contemporary art combined with science from and for the Baltic Sea Region can be an important stimulus for our country.
Dr. Jörg-Uwe Neumann

Proposed measures to highlight common history and culture:

13 Strengthening co-operation between institutions and places of culture, archaeology and landscape conservation in the Baltic Sea Region, highlighting the common cultural heritage in the Baltic Sea Region and thus increasing visibility as a forward-looking model region in the sense of a showcase. To this end, it is important to promote the broad-based communication of history and research co-operation, for example within the framework of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Baltic Sea Region Research (IFZO) or the Research Centre for Manors in the Baltic Sea Region to strengthen cross-border museum and exhibition co-operation and to link up the preservation of historical monuments.

14 Make remembrance policy and remembrance culture visible across borders and strengthen the preservation of monuments. The landscape of monuments in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is as diverse as it is disparate and, precisely because of this, makes an important contribution to the democratic Baltic Sea Region. Scientific and remembrance institutions such as museums should be internationally visible and networked in order to open up the cultural heritage that unites the regions of the Baltic Sea Region, which is also conflict-ridden in places, in a transnational dialogue. The monument landscape



Scientific and remembrance institutions such as museums should be internationally visible and connected in a transnational dialogue in order to open up the cultural heritage that unites the Baltic Sea Region, but which can also be conflict-ridden.
Dr. Ruth Slenczka

consists equally of monuments which document the secular, sacral, artisanal, industrial and scenic character of the state. But it also includes monuments to a violent past which must be preserved and further developed in the form of international memorials and places of learning about forced labour, expulsion and war.

In addition, joint projects could record this monument landscape, for example through mapping or 3D modelling of ground monuments in the Baltic Sea Region or the international networking of underwater archaeology. In addition, the cross-border cultures of history and remembrance, which are shaped by many different perspectives, should be cultivated and the landscape cultures of the Baltic Sea Region, for example the moors, should be made the subject of discussion.

15 Promote new formats in the cultural sector and tie in with existing established formats; For example, one could think of a cultural regulars' table as part of the festival "Nordischer Klang". Other possible formats include the polenmArkt, the MV Music Festival or the Usedom Music Festival. In rural areas, everyday culture and regional customs such as the state harvest festival offer connecting points for an exchange with other Baltic Sea countries. It could be used as an opportunity to invite foreign delegations to discuss issues of sustainable rural development and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

16 A possible starting point for expanding Baltic-related film co-operation is the FiSH Film Festival, which takes place annually in Rostock's city harbour and presents the film scene of the countries on the Baltic Sea rim point and co-operates with the November Festival (Sweden), the Next Film Festival (Denmark) or the Nordic Youth Film Festival (Norway). Other film festivals with Baltic Sea contacts are the MV Filmkunstfest in Schwerin, dokART (Eastern European focus) or the Rostock QueerFilmFest

Expand cross-border school co-operation

At school, the foundations are laid for awakening interest in other cultures and foreign languages sustainedly and at an early stage. Commonalities as well as diversity can be elaborated as a traditional "characteristic" of the Baltic Sea Region. Low-threshold exchange and meeting formats should be offered for personal contacts and experiences. Companies from the education sector could be included here, especially in upper grades and in the further education sector, also with a view to the targeted development of skilled workers in the Baltic Sea Region.



Educating across borders, bringing young people together, breaking down prejudices – for a common future!
Franziska Jende

Proposed measures for school co-operation:

17 Promoting school partnerships in the Baltic Sea region and providing incentives for joint projects, for example through bi- or internationally oriented measures for pupils. The topics can be diverse – from the history of the Baltic Sea region viewed from different perspectives to the cultivation of customs and traditions to Baltic Sea-related topics from the fields of biology, geography, health or ocean research and climate change in the Baltic Sea Region.

18 Strengthen bilateral co-operation and cross-border mobility of pupils and teachers: this includes, for example, study and school group trips in the Baltic Sea region, the promotion of multilingual online school newspapers for the Baltic Sea Region with reports from different countries and also facilitating legal framework conditions for traineeships abroad for pupils.

19 Make the school landscape in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern more international by facilitating the integration of foreign teachers, by making it easier to recognise foreign qualifications, by making job shadowing possible or by awarding contracts with an adapted scope of teaching, by further developing an international school location in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern or by better co-ordination of dual qualifications such as the qualification for university entrance (Abitur) in Germany and Poland in order to avoid double burdens for pupils.

20 Making visible and expanding capacities in the area of foreign languages, including the languages of neighbouring countries at schools and universities by means of an interactive map and strengthening foreign language facilities. Consolidating existing language projects, e.g. neighbouring language acquisition from nursery school to school-leaving certificate – living and learning together in the Euroregion Pomerania and strengthening ties between the University of Greifswald and the partner university in Szczecin.

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“ The democracy of the Baltic Sea Region is its greatest asset. In voluntary work, the democratic power of the individual unfolds for the community –as firm as a rock in troubled waters.
Dr. Adriana Lettrari

Establish a culture of exchange

A culture of mutual exchange, visits, travel and mobility in the Baltic Sea Region is fundamental for trust and the strengthening of democratic values. Civil society engagement, town twinning and international encounters have a high degree of peace- and democracy-building potential and can make an important contribution to tolerance and solidarity. For this reason, particular importance should be attached to the exchange and co-determination of actors in business, science, education and sport in the Baltic Sea Region, especially in the current situation. Associations and cultural workers who are involved in networking to spread the idea of co-operation should receive targeted support.



“ Art and culture are the wind for the sails that are needed to move our heavy ship across borders in a lighter and more meaningful way.
Katharina Husemann



“ A colourful and lively ribbon must be stretched across the Baltic Sea from citizen to citizen, from person to person.
Dr. Heike Müller

Proposed measures for a culture of exchange:

21 Establishment of a fund for encounters and international mobility for voluntary work, associations, artists and cultural workers. For example, rental payments for group accommodation when inviting groups from abroad to Mecklenburg-Vorpommern should also be eligible for funding (see proposed measure 10).

22 Better linking of voluntary engagement with corporate activities (Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Volunteering), which are oriented towards the Baltic Sea Region. Agricultural enterprises can also be actively involved, especially in rural areas.

23 Establish a digital Baltic Sea Parliament event format in which politicians exchange views with engaged citizens in the form of a debate on Baltic Sea-related issues. Such a format could also be held with partners from the Baltic Sea Region and on specific issues. Due to the digital format, it may also be possible to further reuse statements in social media and other events.

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Strengthen sports encounters

Around 300,000 people in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern are active in organised sport. Contacts with other Baltic Sea countries are established precisely through sporting events which should be expanded. The Baltic Sea Youth Games as a superordinate format for young people aged 13 to 15 from the Baltic Sea countries, which are organised at intervals of several years in different countries, are an outstanding example of this.

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Proposed measures for the expansion of sports encounters:

24 Establishment of a new cross-country and cross-disciplinary sports festival similar to a music festival in which sports are offered for mixed national groups to participate in and under the supervision of trainers from the Baltic Sea countries. This sports festival could also be part of the Baltic Sea Days (see proposed measure 5).

25 Establishment of a sports exchange to promote sporting encounters of all people in the Baltic Sea Region, among other things, with a focus on diversity and to promote cross-border friendly matches of sports teams. If necessary, this could also be integrated into the International Engagement Finder (see proposed measure 8).



“ For a sporting Baltic Sea Region! Because international sports encounters help build intercultural and social competence, self-confidence and a sense of responsibility.
Reno Tiede



“ Learning from each other in the Baltic Sea Region gives us a tailwind for the structures in the field of education and child and youth work in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. **Katja Zühlsdorff**

Expand youth exchanges

Many young people are internationally oriented and interested in future topics such as climate change, sustainable energy or the shift to sustainable mobility. In order to inspire young people for international exchanges, their interests and needs should be addressed. Youth encounters and participation formats in the Baltic Sea Region have considerable potential here. Voluntary services, such as the German Federal Volunteer Service, can be a component of this.

However, there are often very practical problems that hinder such encounters. These can be remedied through targeted measures.

In addition to youth encounters, youth participation in Baltic Sea affairs also plays a greater role. For example, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and the Southern Baltic Sea Parliamentary Forum as well as the Council of the Baltic Sea States offer corresponding formats and participation. The Baltic Sea Youth Forum (BSYF), which organises the youth participation formats of parliamentary co-operation and the Council of the Baltic Sea States on behalf of the Baltic Sea states, has become an important hub for the development of cross-border activities.

The youth council of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is an interface to the work of the BSYF, which also develops activities in the direction of Poland with its member associations.

Proposals for youth exchanges:

- 26 Strengthening regional professional youth work** as a lever for voluntary work in this area and a basis for international youth work. At the same time, the topics of youth encounters and participation in the Baltic Sea Region should also be presented to the state parliament's Commission of enquiry "Being Young in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern".
- 27 Improving the possibilities for organising and further developing youth meetings and participation formats in the Baltic Sea Region with participation from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.** The problem here is also access to low-threshold and adequate co-financing, especially in the area of non-formal education, which takes into account the reality of life, especially in rural areas. Young people should also be given time to participate. In addition, the offer of affordable rooms and accommodation for international youth meetings in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern should be increased or better supported financially, for example in the state's youth plan. In particular, the decline of youth rooms and clubs should be counteracted by providing better financial support to municipalities and associations for the creation, equipping, maintenance and repair of these facilities.
- 28 Use of already existing youth participation formats in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for Baltic Sea-related topics.** The organisation of the North German youth conference "Take 5 for Europe" in 2024 by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern offers the opportunity to introduce a Baltic Sea reference, for example on the topics of digitalisation, security and democracy in Europe, health, environmental and climate protection, diversity, equal opportunities and education. In this context, the possibilities of vocational training should also be explicitly taken up and the relevant target groups addressed.

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Strengthening the sustainability, value creation and innovation of science and business in the Baltic Sea Region

In an international comparison, the Scandinavian states are among the most innovation-friendly and sustainable economies in the world. There are remarkable development processes in the Baltic states in the areas of innovation, start-ups and digitalisation. The Baltic Sea Region thus offers excellent conditions for the successful transition to a climate friendly,, demographically resilient, digital and knowledge based innovative economy and the development of good infrastructure.

Close cross-border interlinking of science and relevant transfer institutions offers the opportunity to benefit from developments in neighbouring countries, for example in digital health-care, where Estonia is a pioneer.

New products and services that help the economy of the Baltic Sea Region to further develop and grow can be developed through close co-operation between research institutions and companies. Especially in niche areas, it is only through co-operation that innovation becomes possible because there is often a lack of critical mass to be able to carry out such developments on their own. One result of this can also be the securing of skilled labour.



“ Economic growth requires short planning and approval times. Here we can learn a lot from the other Baltic Sea states! Siegbert Eisenach

Accelerating cross-border infrastructure development

Co-operation in infrastructure projects and the acceleration of planning and approval procedures are important success factors for sustainable economic development, especially in the expansion of new electricity grids and renewable energies on land and at sea.

Infrastructure development measures:

- 29 Large-scale logistics, transport, energy and environmental protection infrastructure projects** and flagship projects in the Baltic Sea Region **should be recorded and their benefit and co-operation potential for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern examined.** Investments and



“ The Baltic Sea Region as a future real-life laboratory for the energy transition - let us strengthen this pillar for Europe together! Europe together! Dr. Ralf Tschullik

co-operation in infrastructure projects can be attractive for business start-ups and settlements, for example in connection with the development of system-serving hydrogen production and infrastructure. In addition, it should be examined whether it could make sense for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to become more actively involved here or in new projects in view of the impact of large EU (research) infrastructure projects, such as in Lund (MAX IV / European Spallation Source).

- 30 Possibilities for accelerating procedures for projects in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern compared to the Baltic Sea countries** should be recorded and examined for their acceptability, e.g. in the areas of port expansion, energy, transport and digitalisation. Sufficient appropriately qualified staff should be kept available in the licensing authorities for planning and approval procedures. Accordingly, co-ordinated joint education and training in Baltic Sea rim countries could be created.

Expanding co-operation in renewable energies

The conversion of the energy supply to renewable energy sources is a common political focus in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and the Baltic Sea rim countries. In the Marienborg Declaration of 30th August 2022, the eight EU countries bordering the Baltic Sea, including Germany, declared their intention to expand offshore wind energy in the Baltic Sea and to intensify co-operation in energy policy.

Germany and Denmark have also agreed to jointly implement the Bornholm Energy Island project. This project is regarded as an important reference project and a possible starting point for the future cross-border interconnection of the offshore transmission grids between Baltic Sea rim countries. The Baltic Wind Connector (BWC), which is to connect countries such as Estonia with Germany via a hybrid interconnector and which is thus the foundation stone for further networking with the Baltic region as a whole, is representative of this. As a prototype for the complete supply of renewable energies, Bornholm is also developing as a test field for the corresponding transformation of the regional economy.

An important component here is also hydrogen research and development, which should be approached with commitment. With the cross-border development of a hydrogen economy, the Baltic Sea Region can make an important contribution to an

EU-wide hydrogen infrastructure, whether in terms of a filling station network, a hydrogen pipeline network or the conversion of natural gas pipelines to renewable hydrogen. This goes hand in hand with an improved public perception of hydrogen ecosystems and the model character of the Baltic Sea Region.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is seen as a natural starting and landing point in Germany for energy partnerships in the Baltic Sea Region. Closer networking with partner countries, for example in offshore development and maritime spatial planning, and the intensification of sector coupling should therefore be sought.

Energy policy co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region should be actively pursued by the state government. In this context, cross-border projects should be promoted politically, the construction of suitable infrastructure in the state should be offered and a regular close exchange of experience between Baltic Sea rim countries should be ensured.



“ A Hanseatic League for energy in the Baltic Sea Region with networking of the potentials from renewable energies can become a growth engine in the decade ahead. Andree Iffländer

Proposed measures for more co-operation in renewable energies:

- 31 Development of an industrial policy concept for value creation models from renewable energies; the expansion of renewable energies** also offers considerable opportunities for the economy in the Baltic Sea Region, for example for shipyards and shipbuilding. Areas used jointly for production, logistics and other services are needed in ports and shipyards to promote the securing of reliable supply chains and to increase the expansion of production capacities for renewable energies. The estab-



“ The Baltic Sea Region can become a beacon for cross-border, intra-European energy co-operation. Stefan Kapferer

lishment and co-operation of companies from the Baltic Sea Region should be particularly promoted.

- 32 Involvement of the energy sector in existing Baltic Sea co-operation bodies and strategies;** better use should be made of the opportunities offered by energy policy co-operation, for example the professional development of skilled workers. This includes the implementation processes of the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP), which has established a working group of the EU Baltic Sea countries for offshore wind energy. It is suggested that the state government get involved here, if necessary also together with other regions in the Baltic Sea Region.

- 33 Closer regional co-operation,** e.g. with the Bornholm Energy Island project with the aim of learning from the approaches there. In future, cross-border co-operation with Poland should also address the linking of offshore transmission grids in a west-east direction. The activities on the German-Polish Energy Platform for the development of a cross-border energy region could serve as a starting point.

- 34 Establishment of a real-world hydrogen economy laboratory in the Baltic Sea Region** with the aim of developing the hydrogen economy and markets internationally which function optimally both technically and economically and show environmental perspectives across the entire Baltic Sea Region. The use of hydrogen in sustainable and environmentally sound production, storage and distribution for different industrial, mobility and energy uses should be developed and demonstrated within the real-world laboratory, following the example of the successful BalticSeaH2 Horizon Europe approach.

35 Committed progress by Baltic Sea rim countries in the hydrogen sector in order to drive research and technology and make the Baltic Sea Region more climate-neutral and energy-independent. This includes the plan to establish an international hydrogen conference for the Baltic Sea Region in Stralsund from 2024 onwards, building on existing formats, which should be carried out with the constant involvement of the University of Rostock, the Leibniz Institute for Catalysis (LIKAT) Rostock, the Fraunhofer IGP Rostock, the Leibniz INP Greifswald, the IWEN Institute Rostock and all relevant business enterprises in the hydrogen sector. The Institute for Regenerative Energy Systems (IRES) at the University of Applied Sciences of Stralsund could provide a good link in this network via the established, annual and expandable REGWA Energy Symposium event format to establish Mecklenburg-Vorpommern as a central marketplace for applied hydrogen research and business in the Baltic Sea Region.

Using co-operation in the health economy

The health economy in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is a significant driver of growth and employment in both health care and research and also along the value chain. Accordingly, digitalisation, medical technology, biotechnology, health tourism and medical care for the future are important topics that are being promoted by BioCon Valley® GmbH as a network of the industry. In co-operation with other Baltic Sea rim countries, many developments can be accelerated and resources – especially EU funds – and potentials can be better utilised. This also includes community medicine, which deals with the development of concepts to combat widespread diseases.

The digitalisation of healthcare also offers great potential for co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region. At the same time, the protection of personal data is becoming increasingly important in times when the commercialisation of data has become a lucrative business model. A secure European Data Space offers the opportunity to make new business models and value chains human, connected and digital. At the same time, the Baltic Sea Region has the potential to create a unique research data infrastructure as a basis for improved scientific data use.



“ Digital transformation and the radical change in (digital) communication are tasks for the coming century that are revolutionising the way we live and work. The opportunity for us lies in taking new paths with vision, rethinking business processes and value chains together with our partners and shaping the future digitally, humanely and networked...” **Manon Austenat-Wied**

In this context, an even more intensive and accelerated transfer between business and science is a central goal (collaborative research) in order to generate an even greater force of attraction for the start-up ecosystem in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Measures for stronger co-operation in the healthcare industry:

36 Development of joint solutions for services of general interest: Expanding digital health, against the backdrop of demographic change, especially for the provision of services in rural areas. This includes intelligent data use, combined with a sensible level of data protection and data security. Patient needs can for example be addressed precisely on the basis of meaningful real data analyses. Faster data availability and better data quality enable patient-centred care planning and management. One of the most important elements of the digital healthcare landscape is the electronic patient record. It is part of cross-border prevention and care. The Baltic Sea Region thus offers the opportunity to provide patients with data-based options for optimal care.

37 Technology transfer in medical technology and biotechnology benefits from co-operation, especially in rapidly developing AI-based technologies. Established event formats such as the annual National Health Industry Conference with the Baltic Sea Health Region Meeting and the international Baltic Sea Region Health Innovation Award for start-ups and companies can play an important role here. In the area of digitalisation, the Digital Health Hub MV is exemplary as a platform for co-operation, as an initiator and developer of project approaches and also as a docking point for internationally oriented start-ups and companies. Specialist trade fairs also lend themselves as a building block for increased internationalisation in the Baltic Sea Region.

38 Strengthening MV as a health and medical tourism destination by establishing the DAS Gesundheitsland health tourism brand. (Vision from the MV Health Economy Masterplan for 2030), e.g. in the form of healthcare and digital health hubs. Customer orientation, know-how and existing networks such as the international ScanBalt Baltic Sea network increase the attractiveness of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern as a location and contribute to more value creation in the state.

Increasing attractiveness as a business, employment and science location

Working, investment and living conditions must also be suitable for attracting and founding companies or recruiting foreign researchers and skilled workers. In addition to fair pay commensurate with performance, these include factors such as family-friendliness, good housing conditions and schools, cultural offerings, internationality and a welcoming culture.



“ Universities, municipalities and companies jointly develop local identities with an international charisma.” **Professor Claudia Danker**

Proposed measures for an attractive MV location:

39 Expansion of international informal economic co-operation by developing the Baltic Sea Business Day as a key event for the networking of businesses from the Baltic Sea Region. In addition, low-threshold offers for companies should be developed in order to be able to manage the entry into European co-operation, for example flanked by the technology centres and sector networks.

40 Active presentation of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern as a business and science location in the Baltic Sea Region through (digital) industry meetings in Baltic Sea format organised via technology centres and industry networks. In addition, the Elisabeth Mann Borgese research vessel could be used as an ambassador of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for new event formats in Baltic Sea ports. Furthermore, joint international delegation trips should be promoted (see proposed measures 3 and 4).



“ Science builds bridges: From ignorance to understanding, society and nations in the Baltic Sea Region.” **Professor Ulrich Bathmann**

41 Closer collaboration between science and research with the industry in Baltic Sea co-operation, as is already practised, for example, in the areas of underwater technologies and old ammunition via the Ocean Technology Campus. In order to broaden the basis for co-operation, entire areas should also be interdisciplinary, in particular the health economy (including medical technology, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, digital health), bioeconomy, IT and technology. Companies should be involved in scientific collaborations and established networks.

A holistic approach to securing skilled labour

Securing skilled labour is a challenge for all Baltic Sea countries and requires a holistic view of working and living conditions. A close exchange of good practice solutions for promoting and securing skilled workers in the Baltic Sea Region is therefore recommended. Innovative and creative ideas are needed to establish an attractive place to work and live, especially for young people.

The existing Welcome Centres in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern should also be upgraded in this context.

Closer co-operation between universities and industry in the entire Baltic Sea Region can help to secure skilled labour and recruit personnel. Up to now, foreign students in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern have generally not come from the Baltic Region.



“ The international potential of the Baltic Sea Region: cosmopolitanism and a welcoming culture to sustainably attract students and professionals. Professor Margit Bussmann

In addition, many foreign students leave the state again after completing their studies. Here, the number of students from the Baltic Sea Region should be increased and the prospects of staying improved through targeted offers, for example in the form of mobility scholarships, industrial placement opportunities or the promotion of spin-offs.

Proposed measures to secure skilled labour:

- 42** Increase attractiveness for highly qualified employees, researchers and entrepreneurs, for example by using best practice examples from the Baltic Sea Region and setting up corresponding projects and programmes.
- 43** Targeted investments in personnel recruitment measures for the development of offshore wind energy, photovoltaics and other renewable energies from the sea in close co-ordination with partners in the Baltic Sea Region. Possibilities for co-operation with other Baltic Sea countries in the area of training and qualification should also be explored.
- 44** Combine work and tourism into a "workation" in order to further develop tourism value creation and create attractive points of contact for skilled workers from home and abroad who can and want to work in attractive locations that are close to nature.
- 45** **Increasing the attractiveness of the state for international students through the expansion of English-language degree programmes**, courses together with Baltic Sea rim countries and international and double-degree programmes, e.g. at Stralsund University of Applied Sciences. In some cases, this also includes compulsory semesters abroad at a partner university. The domestic economy should also be involved in these co-operation and mobility formats. The BA study programmes can also be expanded in the four-year Bachelor International variant with a compulsory year abroad at the University of Greifswald. Study opportunities in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern should be advertised more strongly internationally. By expanding the contact office of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's universities in Riga, for example, more information could be provided about study opportunities here and students from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern could be supported in studying abroad. Alumni networks should also be more involved.



“ Off to new and familiar shores: The Baltic Sea on our doorstep and digitalisation make it possible: the economy co-operates with Baltic Sea rim countries and science. This has a long tradition - after all, the Hanseatic and university city of Rostock is home to the oldest university in the Baltic region. As northerners, we are united by the Baltic Sea and Nordic efficiency: a clear course ahead into the future. Klaus-Jürgen Strupp

- 46** **Opening up retention prospects after graduation** through interfaces from studies into the regional economy via compulsory placements or the closer integration of companies into study processes and courses at universities in the form of dual study programmes. This could lead to a stronger regional bond and create prospects of staying after graduation.
- 47** **Expanding the range of international summer and winter schools** at universities, colleges and non-university institutions in the state as a pull factor such as the "Sustain MV" summer school in English. Corresponding formats could also be developed in cross-border co-operation, such as in the case of the "International Baltic Earth Winter School" for young Scientists by the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research in Warnemünde. Companies, cultural institutions and municipalities should be involved.
- 48** **Increase learning and study exchanges for pupils, trainees and students in the Baltic Sea Region** through better promotion and use of the Erasmus (+) funding programme.



“ I advocate close co-operation between Baltic Sea rim states in clearing the Baltic Sea of old ammunition using the most modern methods. Professor Uwe Freiherr von Lukas

Promoting innovation, digitalisation and start-ups

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern should establish itself more strongly internationally as a location for innovative economic and work models. Current trends in the world of work should be taken more into account. These are increasingly characterised by flexibility, self-determination, mobility and sovereignty of working hours ("smart work").

More and more companies are also gearing their actions towards finding solutions for pressing social challenges, e.g. demographic change, sustainability, healthcare and climate neutrality. By targeting start-up funding to address these challenges and opening up government procurement to innovative solutions including from start-ups (venture clienting), regional value creation and societal progress can be contributed to at the same time ("public-driven entrepreneurship").

With the development of robotics and artificial intelligence, routine tasks are increasingly being digitalised and automated. These developments harbour many new approaches and opportunities. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern should therefore create possibilities for such new ways of working, forms of employment and fields of activity in co-operation with actors from the Baltic Sea Region. Corresponding communication measures should be developed in order to activate the know-how and further resources in the Baltic Sea Region.



“ The 4-Ds (digitalisation, decarbonisation, demography, de-globalisation) are changing our world. We are all driven by the opportunities they offer and the responsibility to find suitable answers together in the Baltic Sea Region. Through the targeted promotion of innovation and new technologies, MV should take on a pioneering role as a kind of real-world laboratory.

Sebastian Megow

evaluated and continuously developed through applied research, concrete steps for clearance should be proposed, the training of the urgently required specialists should be advanced, standards defined, best practices processed and transferred and relevant stakeholders from politics, administration, business, society and associations should be consulted. Technology and service providers from this market segment would thus find a hitherto unique contact point that could also attract new settlements. The state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern could thus make an important contribution to the “Restore our Oceans and Waters” EU Mission and help build a Baltic Sea-wide network that could also be used for other activities in the context of the Blue Economy.

50 Development of a bio-based and regionally supported circular economy to promote sustainable value creation in the Baltic Sea Region, e.g. by supporting corresponding regional and international alliances and networking formats such as the Anklam Conference on the Bioeconomy (held for the sixth time in 2023) or the bioeconomy group in ScanBalt. Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region should be included in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's bioeconomy strategy, which is still to be developed.

51 Include the start-up ecosystem in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in activities in the Baltic Sea Region across all sectors and use it as a vehicle for co-operation; if necessary, fast and flexible support from the state administration in setting up test fields and real laboratories which should also be open to international co-operation partners. The digital innovation and start-up centres set up by the state, which could take on an active role in this area, are exemplary. Several of the centres are traditionally already in contact with comparable institutions in the Baltic Sea Region and have relevant contacts and experience that can be built on.

52 Create an incentive system for publicly-driven entrepreneurship and develop a targeted exchange with other regions in the Baltic Sea Region on corresponding best practice approaches and thematic clusters, such as the Odense Robotics Cluster.

53 Establish an application hub for artificial intelligence and data science with actors from the Baltic Sea Region for closer co-operation between research and companies (“AppHub AI”), for example in the health industry (see proposed measure 41) and in close co-operation with the “Digital Health Hub” and BioCon Valley® GmbH, among others. Here, interdisciplinary key competences could be developed for both the humanities and the health and natural sciences, for example in the area of visual comparability of data sets.

54 Support and expansion of existing and development of new, internationally oriented formats for start-up and innovation promotion, such as the “Healthcare Hackathon MV” or the “Digital Baltic Start-up Day”. New formats such as “hackathons” - collaborative software and hardware development events - have proven themselves across sectors to promote the co-operation of start-ups with business and science. International orientation can make Mecklenburg-Vorpommern visible as a location and create docking points for start-ups and companies.

The digital space also offers new approaches to co-operation and training in rural regions, even if they are far apart and have so far been separated in the Baltic Sea Region due to language and spatial barriers. The possibilities of including the Digital Innovation Centres initiated by the state in cross-border co-operation should be promoted.

In the long term, efforts should be made to make data security and infrastructure in the Baltic Sea Region internationally compatible and to standardise interfaces in the fields of science, business and the environment. In this context, companies should be involved in the topic of digital security (“cyber security”) from the very beginning, in order to minimise the danger of digital espionage.

Proposed measures to promote innovation and start-ups:

49 Establishment of a competence and transfer centre for old ammunition in the sea to support the transition from basic research to ammunition detection, recovery and destruction on an industrial scale. Rostock could take on a co-ordinating role here docked on to the Ocean Technology Campus. Via a competence and transfer centre, available technologies (e.g. robotics) should be

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

With the report of the Co-operation Council for the Democratic Baltic Sea Region, we – the 29 members of the Co-operation Council – hereby hand over to the state government our recommendations for a Baltic Sea strategy for the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in accordance with the cabinet decision of 31st May 2022. In these recommendations, we have developed proposals on how the state can and should realign its co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region.

Democracy thrives on the active and free participation of all people, regardless of their origin, gender or age. We have therefore identified goals and recommendations that enable this participation in culture, science, the economy as well as in the health sector. For us, this respect for freedom, human rights, the rule of law and the preservation of peace as well as the promotion of sustainable development were and are the immutable and general foundations of co-operation in the democratic Baltic Sea Region.

The recommendations are the result of an intensive and fruitful exchange in which we, as independent experts from politics, science, business, education, culture and associations, have met regularly on a voluntary basis since the middle of last year.

Thanks to the broad, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary composition of the Co-operation Council and the different perspectives on co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region, we can look back on extremely exciting, multi-layered and stimulating discussions. It was important for all of us to always look at the topic from a practical perspective.

This was a good basis not only for a political assessment of the importance of Baltic Sea co-operation for our region. The result – based on common objectives – was the identification of strategic fields of action as well as proposals for measures which we are convinced are very concrete and can be implemented.

With the presentation of the recommendations, we have given impulses for the “MV Baltic Sea Strategy” to be developed. The work of the Co-operation Council is now entering its second phase. In the further process, we will accompany the state government in an advisory capacity in the realignment of its co-operation with the Baltic Sea Region and the implementation of the strategy. In doing so, the Co-operation Council will particularly advocate the inclusion of numerous actors in business, science, culture and civil society in the corresponding activities.

Members of the MV Co-operation Council for the democratic Baltic Sea Region

Chair

Bettina Martin | Member of the State Parliament Mecklenburg-Vorpommern’s, Minister for Science, Culture, Federal and European Affairs

Co-Chair

Dr. Anja Mihr | Head of the Centre on Governance through Human Rights, Berlin Governance Platform and DAAD Professor for Democracy and Human Rights at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek

Other members

Manon Austenat-Wied | Head of the TK regional office in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Vice-President of the Board of Trustees for the Health Economy and Digitalisation Ambassador of the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Professor Ulrich Bathmann | Chair of the German Marine Research Consortium and member of the Board of the German Alliance for Marine Research, Senior Professor for Earth System Research and member of the interdisciplinary Faculty of Maritime Systems at the University of Rostock, member of the advisory boards of the UN Decade of Ocean Research for Sustainable Development and the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration

Lars Bauer | Managing Director of BioCon Valley® GmbH, member of the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Business and Science Strategy Council, Secretary of the Board of Trustees for the Health Economy of the state, member of the Health Economy Committee of the Schwerin Chamber of Industry and Commerce

Dr. Wolfgang Blank | President of the Neubrandenburg Chamber of Industry and Commerce for Eastern Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Managing Director of WITENO GmbH, Digitalisation Ambassador of the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Professor Margit Bussmann | University of Greifswald, Chair of International Relations and Regional Studies, Interdisciplinary Centre for Baltic Sea Region Research (IFZO)

Professor Claudia Danker | Stralsund University of Applied Sciences, Dean, Chair of the Gender Institute, teaching area: commercial law, in particular public commercial law

Siegbert Eisenach | Chief Executive Officer of the Schwerin Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Member of the Fehmarn-belt Business Council

Dr. Marek Fialek | Chair of the Vorpommern German-Polish Society, artistic director of the polenmARkT festival, research assistant and lecturer for Polish at the University of Greifswald

Professor Uwe Freiherr von Lukas | Site Manager of the Fraunhofer Institute for Computer Graphics Research IGD in Rostock, University of Rostock, Chair of Maritime Graphics

Steffi Groth | Managing director of ATI Westmecklenburg GmbH – Agentur für Technologietransfer und Innovationsförderung GmbH and ATI ert gGmbH – education, research and furtherance of innovation, honorary commercial judge

Professor Kilian Heck | University of Greifswald, Chair of Art History, Director of the Research Centre for Manors in the Baltic Sea Region

Professor Cordelia Heß | University of Greifswald, Chair of Nordic History, Baltic Sea Region Interdisciplinary Research Centre (IFZO)

Katharina Husemann | Chairwoman of the schloss bröllin e.V. association

Andree Iffländer | Chair of WindEnergy Network e.V., Branch Manager and Project Director Gennaker of Skyborn Renewables offshore solutions GmbH

Franziska Jende | Headmistress of the German-Polish Grammar School in Löcknitz

Stefan Kapferer | Chair of the Management Board of 50Hertz Transmission GmbH

Mandy Kröppelien | Head of Rostock European Integration
Centre | EIZ Rostock

Dr. Adriana Lettrari | Managing Director and Member of the Board of the Ehrenamtsstiftung MV

Sebastian Megow | Digitalisation Ambassador of the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Co-Founder of HEROFOUNDERS - Regional Company Building Network, Partner H2F Kommunikationsagentur, Board Member of Baltic Incubate - Business Angels Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Dr. Heike Müller | Chairperson of Land-Frauenverband
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern e.V.

Dr. Jörg-Uwe Neumann | Director of the Kunsthalle Rostock

Beate Schlupp, MdL | 1st Vice-President of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Member of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

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Dr. Ruth Slenczka | Director of the Pomeranian State Museum

Klaus-Jürgen Strupp | President of the Rostock Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Managing Partner of Hansa Automobile Rostock GmbH-Audi Zentrum Rostock

Reno Tiede | Goalball player and bearer of the Order of Merit
of the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Dr. Ralf Tschullik | Head of IWEN Energy Institute gGmbH,
Managing Director of rostock EnergyPort co-operation GmbH,
co-ordinator of the Rostock Energy Port Strategy for deve-
loping Rostock port into a European hub for green energy
sources

Katja Zühlsdorff | Youth Education Officer djo - Deutsche Jugend in Europa Landesverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern e.V.



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Schlossstrasse 6-8
DE - 19053 Schwerin
Telephone: +49 385 - 588 18223
Email: kooperationsrat.ostseeraum@wkm.mv-regierung.de
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Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Best of Northern Germany

