Dear Sirs,

The BSSSC welcomes the European Commission’s proposal to organise a “systemic dialogue” with associations representing regional and local government in the European Union. This will definitely help implement the principles of openness, participation, effectiveness and coherence as expressed in the White Paper on “European Governance”. For the national and European associations the partner in this dialogue should be the EU Commission and not the Committee of the Regions.

The BSSSC would like to underline the point that the proposed “systemic dialogue” implies a two way interaction and cannot be limited to a “presentation” of “major initiatives and highlights” by the EU Commission. Instead, it should allow for the active participation of both sides in the dialogue. Moreover, to ensure an in-depth and full dialogue, an adequate preparation time is needed before the “dialogue meetings” to enable the associations to react effectively to the Commission’s policies and highlights. It is also essential that this new form of dialogue should not forbid or inhibit direct consultations on specific questions with different General Directorates of the EU Commission and other organs of the European Union.

The BSSSC, representing the regional level authorities of all the countries in the Baltic Sea Region, should be a partner in this dialogue. This is especially important now that EU enlargement is taking place and as the EU develops enhanced relationships with its new neighbour, including Russia (Kaliningrad Oblast) and Belarus.
The BSSSC, concentrating its work on issues like enlargement, implementation of the Northern Dimension initiative, regional policy and sustainable development, Baltic 21, good governance (including youth and equality problems), European vs BSR vs national vs regional identity, can bring a valuable input to the dialogue and function as an effective channel between the EU bodies and individual regional entities.

Brunon Synak

Chairman