



PA Culture invites Simon Anholt for a special keynote speech „On the international reputation of the Baltic Sea Region: prospects, challenges and good practices”. An inspiration for stimulating EUSBSR synergies and cooperation.

On the occasion of PA Culture’s brainstorming workshop on 19th January 22 which kicked-off preparations of the new application for 2022-2024, the coordinators – The [Adam Mickiewicz Institute](#) (PL) and the [Ministry of Justice, European Affairs and Consumer Protection](#) (DE) - invited [Simon Anholt](#)ⁱ to share his thoughts about the international reputation of the Baltic Sea Region. In his short keynote speech he reflected on prospects, challenges and good practices that we believe could serve as an inspiration not only within the field of culture and creative sectors, but for all other Policy Areas working for the implementation of the EUSBSR. Drawing from his best-known research project – [the Good Country Index](#)ⁱⁱ – Simon also shared some general remarks on what is and what is not effective when it comes to fostering countries or regions international reputation. Special attention has been given to Latvia’s SEA 2030 initiative.

Being critical about effectiveness of the branding practices and marketing campaigns, Simon focused on how to use cultural relations and cultural assets in general to work for the region’s favour. What’s needed is an organic action, networking, and raising interest in the region among countries outside of it by providing ideas and solutions that could benefit not only their citizens, but also foreign visitors and audiences. It is the countries and regions contribution to the global good by i.e. fixing the world’s most urgent problems that is nowadays the most commonly recognized reason of their favorable international reputation.

The main recommendation that could be drawn from the meeting is that if BSR wants to strengthen its international reputation, the countries from the region should focus on one already widely recognized image, narration or stereotype around BSR and try to genuinely fix it. And one of such most widely acknowledged facts about the Baltic Sea is that it is [one of the most polluted sea in the world](#). Yet “fixing it” should not mean reversing the message with sole marketing campaigns, communication strategies, etc., but acting as coherently on the common aim as possible. Generating projects and stimulating partnerships within the region to imaginatively contribute to cleaning up the Baltic Sea together could be used as a banner and call for action also for CCI. But moreover, we should think about what sort of benefits can result from the clean Baltic Sea to the rest of the world – how this fact could contribute to the global good? How the cultural and artistic endeavours can inspire global audiences and raise the interest in collaborating with BSR and countries from the region?

The key takeaways from Simon Anholt speech:

- There is no correlation between the money spent by a country, city or region to change its image & the effective change of such image over time
- People keep in their mind about 3 countries on average – it is a very difficult task to make them think specifically about a given country, yet alone a region

- Change of image is not done by investing in marketing, but by proposing and implementing meaningful actions that would eventually result in changing people's behaviours
- People do not appreciate countries that are rich, beautiful, happy or successful, but countries that are "useful" and contribute to the development and well-being of humanity
- There is about 80% correlation between Good Country Index and Nation Brands Index, meaning that countries that do contribute the most of their resources (relative to their economic size and wealth) to fighting the global issues are most often the ones that are being perceived in the most favorable manner.
- Latvia launching its [SEA 2030 initiative](#) - cleaning the Baltic Sea is a task that could serve as a focal point of the overall BSR initiatives, as it may make humanity grateful to Latvia and other countries that would be involved in this endeavour that they exist
- Countries are judged by the company they keep and by working together with specific other countries
- Mixing competition and collaboration gives magical effects
- Cultural engagement works better than cultural promotion

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ⁱ Note that very recently the newest, 5th edition of the Index has been published.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.diplomaticourier.com/posts/how-the-good-country-index-works>