



# EUSBSR Forum for Gender Equality and Growth 3.0



**Britt-Marie S. Torstensson, Chairperson, Winnet Sverige**

hear from Gertrud Åström, President of partner organization Women's Baltic Peacebuilding Initiative. We hope that you enjoy this first newsletter, and we wish you happy holidays!

**Britt-Marie S. Torstensson**

## **Q&A:** Gertrud Åström *Women's Baltic Peacebuilding Initiative*

**Q:** Could you describe the work of the Women's Baltic Peacebuilding Initiative?

**Gertrud:** It is about peacebuilding. It started in 2014 when I attended a meeting with Margot Wallström - she was then the Minister of Foreign Affairs - together with quite a lot of people from civil society organizations. She talked about women in peacebuilding, a feminist foreign policy, women's rights. A bunch of us



met afterwards and then we started this new women's organization focusing on peacebuilding in the Baltic Sea Region. Of course we live in global surroundings, but the focus of our work, of our activities, is here. There are peace organizations doing important work to prevent war, counting missiles and nuclear plants or following treaties etc but that is not the same as building peace in our interpretation. We are a women's organization. Our statutes, visions, and activities are based on CEDAW from 1979 (the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women), the Beijing Platform for Action from 1995, the Security Council Resolution 1325:2000, and goal 16 on peaceful societies in the UN Agenda 2030. Our starting point is that if you want to build peaceful societies, you have to work for women's rights and gender equality. Therefore a key document for us is also Feminist Agreements and Demands – New Action on Women's Rights from 2014.



Gertrud Åström, President Women's Baltic Peacebuilding Initiative

If a society is built on a systematic bias between women and men when it comes to power, rights, services, livelihood etc., then you have an in-built tension in society that has to be handled. Subordination of women can be open and often accompanied by penalties to scare people to obey, but even in democratic societies women are more or less discriminated against as a group, and we are able to measure the unequal outcome in gender equality statistics. Peaceful development, peaceful societies, can only be achieved if you work for equal rights for women and men.

We work on a broad scale on understanding welfare societies and democratic issues with a focus on women's rights and gender equality. Our joint program, EUSBSR for gender equality and growth within the Baltic Sea Region, fits very well into our program since it is about building gender equality from the point of view of women's economic empowerment and independence and being part of innovative areas and structures.

**Q:** You have worked with Winnet for quite some time; were you part of putting together the EUSBSR gender equality project, and how does it fit into your organization's vision? **[Read the full interview...](#)**

