



European  
Commission

# #baltic eye

a virtual exhibition by young  
Europeans [www.balticeye.net](http://www.balticeye.net)



Regional and  
Urban Policy



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## #balticeye Exhibition

Remembering -

for a European Future: depict local, regional  
and family history of young Europeans  
of the broader Baltic Sea Region



Source of photos: #balticeye www.balticeye.net

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#balticeye



#balticeye

## and the first Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue

In September 2014 the Council of the Baltic Sea States in cooperation with the Körber Foundation organised the first Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue. From their respective networks, they invited 22 young Europeans, aged 16-19, from 12 different countries to a weeklong program of workshops, lectures, debates and practical experiences in Tallinn and Narva (Estonia), as well as Ivangorod (Russian Federation). Coming from a generation that grew up in a Europe of free movement, the participants here developed their own perspective of history and different dimensions of their personal, cultural and regional identity.

Visual impressions of their quest are on display in the virtual exhibition #balticeye, where until 31 October 2014 all visitors were invited to vote for their favorite photographs. The three pictures with the most “likes” are part of this exhibition and in addition will be on display at Narva College.

The Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue is important for building a discussion on Baltic Sea regional identity among this generation. Regional identity was also recently approved as a long term priority by the CBSS. The Körber Foundation’s history network for young Europeans EUSTORY has for years created such space for encounters and facilitated dialogue on shared history and future of Europe in regular international gatherings for young people.

## The Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue brings the EU Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region to life

**The Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue was inaugurated by a one week training which took place in Narva (Estonia), and Ivangorod (Russian Federation) as a part of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in September 2014.**

### **EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)**

The EUSBSR strives for more intensive and more closely coordinated cooperation between countries of the Baltic Sea Region under three objectives: "to save the sea", "to connect the region" and "to increase prosperity". On a broader scale, the Strategy contributes to major EU policies and reinforces the integration within the area.

The EUSBSR was initiated by the European Parliament in 2006 as the first EU macro-regional strategy. The European Commission officially launched the EUSBSR and its Action Plan on 10 June 2009. Five months later, on the 26 October 2009, the Strategy was adopted by the European Council. The European Commission facilitates the coordination of the EUSBSR. The EUSBSR Action Plan serves as a practical guidebook for the steering and implementation of the Strategy. The revision of the Plan was concluded in February 2013. This process resulted in the launch of Horizontal Action "Neighbours" as one of the newly added Baltic Sea macro-regional strands.

### **Horizontal Action "Neighbours"**

The Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue is part of the EUSBSR Horizontal Action "Neighbours". The main purpose of Horizontal Action "Neighbours" is bringing together stakeholders in the EU member states and neighbouring countries, especially Norway and the North-western Russia. There are eight actions under Horizontal Action "Neighbours"; one of them is promoting youth and student exchanges.

## Pilot Project Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue

The Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Körber Foundation with its European history network EUSTORY organized the first Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue as a pilot project for EUSBSR Horizontal Action “Neighbours” activities.

The Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue brought the EUSBSR to life by witnessing one river, two countries, two fortresses, one region separated by the external border of the EU and one overarching dialogue for young people from the Baltic region.

## #balticeye - virtual exhibition demonstrating regional identity

As part of the Youth Dialogue, the participants documented their experiences in Narva/ and Vangorod by contributing to an Instagram exhibition, creating virtual photography rooms of five different themes: #sharedpast, #borderline, #identities, #ourgeneration, #wherewecomefrom. You will be able to explore these themes on the following pages.

The exhibition of photographs, along with participants’ thoughts on the theme Baltic identity are visualising the first Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue.

Visit the virtual exhibition here:

<http://www.balticeye.net/>



## Themes explored by the participants

### #sharedpast

The contributors for #sharedpast wanted to show how the Baltic Sea states are so much more than just the area directly around the sea. The states share history, identity and culture. Through the different pictures we are portraying the lasting effect of the past in Narva and Ivangorod.

### #borderlife

The border between Estonia and Russia is a natural border – a river. The fact that there is a bridge between the two countries made the contributors for #borderlife think of bridges between people that can and do exist. Therefore the photographs are meant to be a motivation for speaking to each other, crossing the border and trying to build bridges in order to live peacefully together. Everybody should build and restore these bridges.

### #identities

The contributors for #identities wanted to question the existence of common identities in the Baltic region, relating to the situation in Narva and Ivangorod. They tried to find and follow their different tracks and traces on both sides of the border, to highlight the similarities they share and how they have been and will be influenced by their proximity.

### #ourgeneration

During their photographic journey, the contributors for #ourgeneration realized, that there is more to their generation that meets the eye. The first idea of five themes around the topic of the internet changed, as they discovered, that their lives are more than just smart-phones, being “slaves” to the internet and the technology. They depict themselves as people, each with their own identity, their own problems and fears, and their own hopes and dreams – and as the future of not only the Baltic States, but also the world, and the history yet to come.

### #wherewecomefrom

For the theme, every participant of the First Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue had to visualize in one photograph, where he or she comes from.



## Behind the wall

Ivangorod:

Sometimes walls are built where they are at least expected.  
The things we shared in the past are now out of our reach.

Be it places, families or friends.

To re-establish the old connections, we all need to work  
together, so the wall can be broken.

Ester, 19. Tschechien

#sharedpast



### Common path

Ivangorod:

Like the old man and his wife the Baltic Sea states are sharing the same history. The countries grew up together, learned from each other and shared the good and bad sides of life. So that they can now walk together into a common future.

Johanna, 18, Sweden

#sharedpast



### Tree of love

Narva:

This silver tree is a symbol of love, you can find it near Narva castle. If a couple marries they put a leaf with an inscription of their names and marriage date on it. When the wind is blowing the leaves are making a smooth sound. This sound seems to echo the voices of the past, speaking to the people in the present.

Johanna, 18, Sweden

#sharedpast



### Unity

Ivangorod:

Even if we all have borders around us, throughout the years, we are still united! We can take each other's hands and cross the borders together. The history shows us that it is possible to overcome obstacles, e.g. borders, and share our lives, as the people in Narva are exemplifying us..

Johanna, 18, Sweden

#sharedpast



вода - Water - Vesi

Narva:

Water is a necessity for human lives.  
As the water is the same on all around the earth,  
people are as well even though they  
don't speak the same language.

Lucian, 18, Slovakia

#borderlife



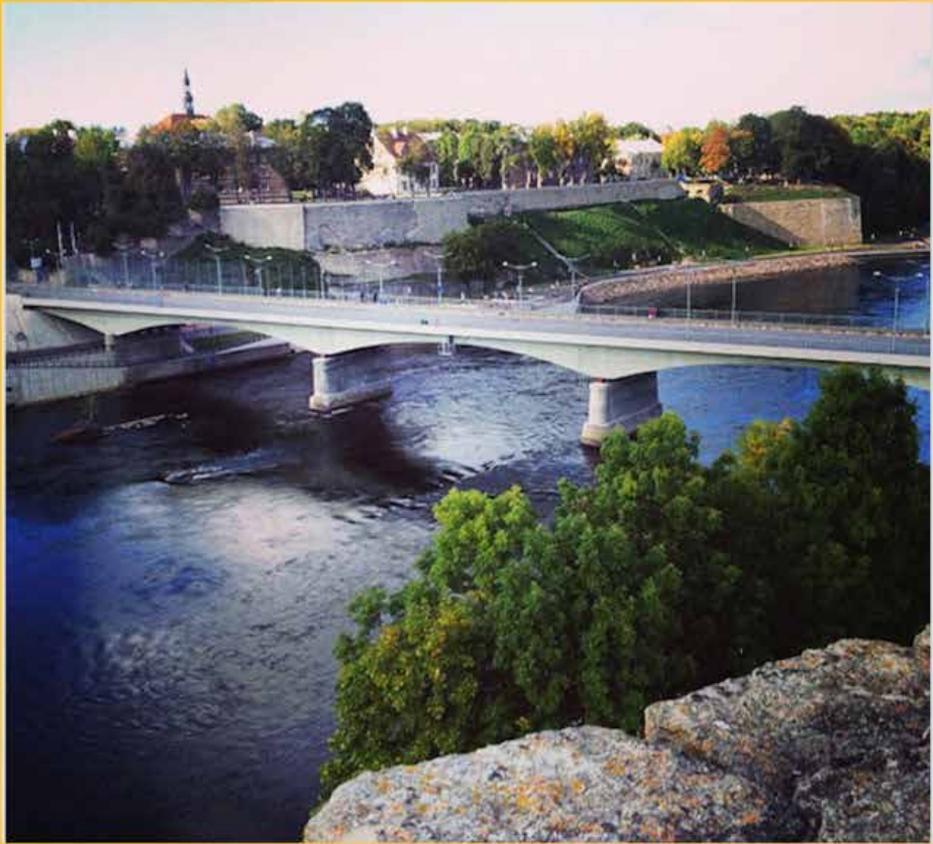
## The red chairs

Narva:

Half of your family might be Russian, the other Estonian.  
You are not necessarily one of them or both.  
It's all about communication and relationships.

Liska, 17, Germany

#borderlife



### Bridging the divide

*Ivangorod:*  
The bridge between Ivangorod and Narva is not only  
a bridge between two cities.  
It's also a border between the Russian Federation  
and the European Union.

*Anne, 19, Denmark*

#borderlife



## Connection

Ivangorod:

There are many borders between us,  
but that does not mean that people cannot meet.  
Together there is always a way.

Liska, 17, Germany

#borderlife



## Center of communication

*Narva:*  
The town hall of Narva is empty.  
It used to be the centre of the communication  
between the two border towns.

*Anne, 19, Denmark*

#borderlife



Clouds don't know borders

Narva:  
Borders can be everywhere,  
even in unusual places  
like between clouds.

Aise, 16, Latvia

#borderlife



No one is forgotten

Ivangorod:

WWII shaped the Russian identity greatly since each and every family lost a relative in the fight for peaceful living.

Maria, 85, Kaliningrad

#identities



## Staying united

Ivangorod:

Friends are a family that we can choose. Socializing leads to having experience, which is at the end of the day the core of identity. These are the people who accompany us throughout the whole adventure.

Maria, 18, Kaliningrad

#identities



## Factory of visions

Narva:

Schools are places that really shape people. Young kids coming there will gain knowledge, experiences and an understanding of the world. They leave it as adults, ready to shape the society in turn. For that reason, school is not only an important place in the life of its students, but also a tool to influence the common sense for identity. This secondary school in Narva is an Estonian speaking one, right next to a Russian speaking one. This situation shows, how difficult the current definition of identity in this region is. But it also gives a preview of a possible future, since there are plans to unite both schools.

Ephraim, 19, Germany

# #identities



## High hopes

Narva:

The picture was taken in Alexander's church, which is a protestant church. In the past it was used as a shop for some time, it was restored and now it is used as a church again.

Lukas, 17, Litauen

#identities



Belief through the time

*Ivangorod:*  
This church was built inside of castle walls  
to protect the identity of religion.  
*Lukas, 17, Litauen*

#identities



## The road of time

Ivangorod:

This picture represents the path of history. The door in the end is the time when this castle was built and the path represents how the city has survived throughout the history until today.

Kristoffer, 16, Norway

#identities



### Footprints of the past

Ivangorod:

We cannot change the past and therefore cannot change who we are. Each of us has his history, a part of us that will always remain the same. But the future is still ours to decide.

Benedicte, Norway

#ourgeneration



## The power of knowledge

Ivangorod:

In the phase of life our generation shares right now, the main task is to get educated well in order to succeed in the future. With this picture we want to raise awareness for this big and crucial part of our daily routine.

Bartłomiej, Poland

#ourgeneration



## Fighting for change

Narva:

One of the most vulnerable gifts we received from our ancestors is the chance to participate in political elections, and therefore make a difference.

Barthomej, Poland

# #ourgeneration



Daily activities

Narva:  
Only a healthy spirit lives  
in a healthy body.  
Dovile, 18, Litauen

#ourgeneration



### Influencing others

*Invangorod:*  
In this picture you can see a girl holding a mobile phone.  
This shows what influence our generation already has  
on the generation yet to come.

*Anna, 18, Lettland*

# #ourgeneration



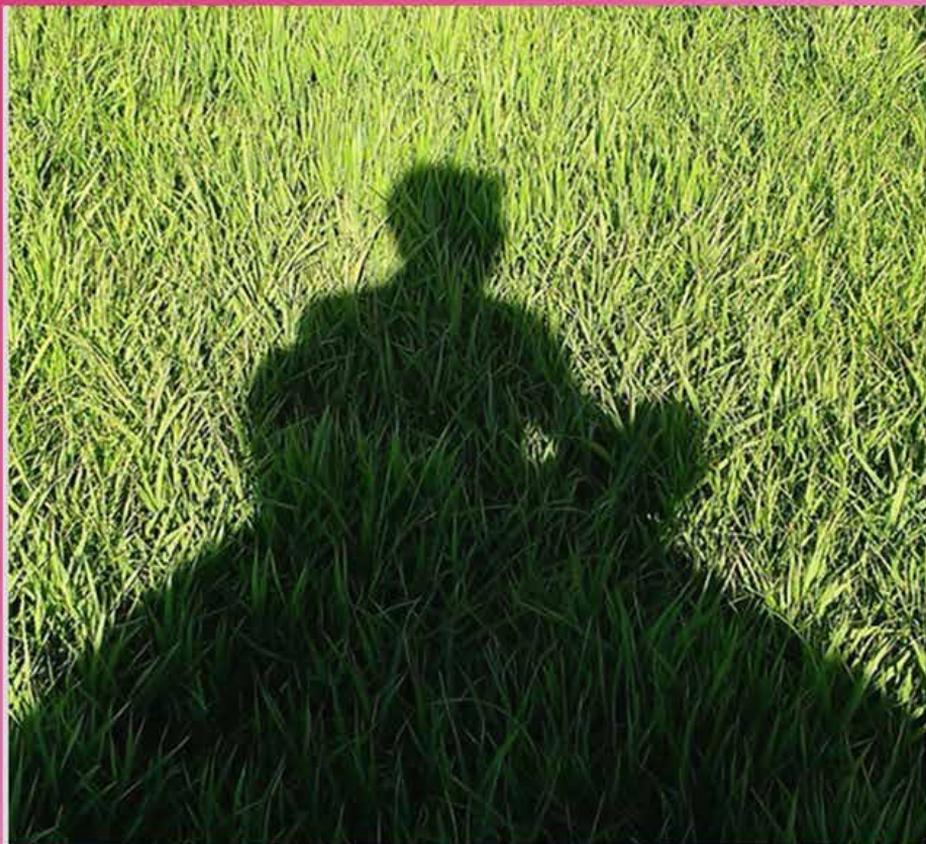
## Happiness inside

Ivangorod:

When we were talking to students in Russia they explained to us that even if Ivangorod may seem like a depressing place to live in, people still manage to focus on the bright side of life.

Richard, 19, Germany

#ourgeneration



Right behind the house I grew up in, the flood lands of the Elbe River open up. As a child I have spent endless afternoons exploring the green meadows, mysterious groves and cool ponds. When I came back from exchange two years ago, I started running and rediscovered the beauty that lay just a stone's throw away. For this picture I have returned to this place in order to express my love for nature and adventure, which to my mind is forever tied to this particular area I call home. It might sound mundane but to this day I am inspired with awe by the sight of the landscape. And to this day I remember how foolish and dire it was to ever overlook that.

Richard, 19, Germany

#wherewecomefrom



For the first photo, which describes my identity, I've chosen a photo that captures me with my friends from our folk-dancing group. I started dancing only in January, but it immediately became an inseparable part of my life. Folk dancing is in my opinion one of the many beautiful traditions that we have in Slovakia, but unfortunately, not many young people are interested. Although a lot of people can still appreciate its beauty.

Ema, 17, Slovakia

#wherewecomefrom



For the first photo, which describes my identity, I've chosen a photo that Today's 'on my own' essentials: It had never really occurred to me how true it was before I actually ran into these words of an utterly great mind. Here's my free style narration. Life generally tends to make us similar: The same stages we all have to go through to get into that successful kind of world defined by the society. The same various, but still limited passions, actions and fashion make us alike. Yet one thing keeps standing guard over who we really are: The time we spend on our own. It is who define how we take the minutes when nobody is around. This is what mostly made me me and made you you.

Maria, 16, Kaliningrad

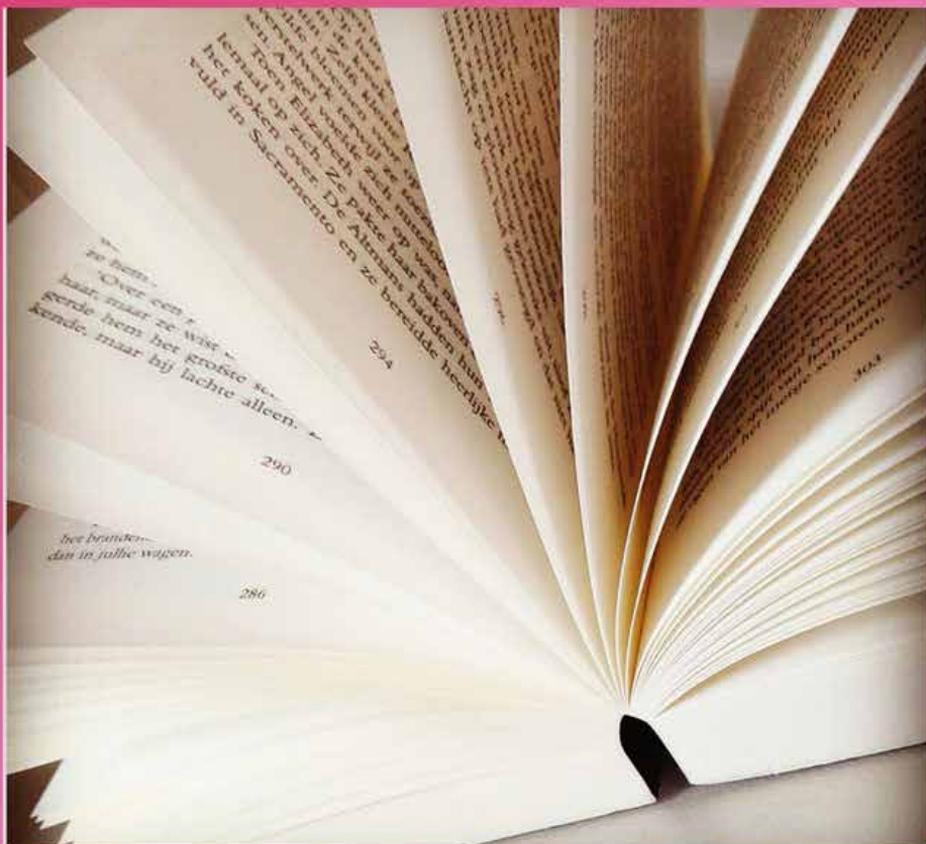
#wherewecomefrom



I chose Boršč, because it contains many types of vegetables from countries in the Baltic Sea region. This soup also has many colors e. g. red. It could symbolize the red blood of fallen soldiers. Some of them fought for peace of the world.

*George, Russian Federation*

#wherewecomefrom



In this photo exercise I chose to use a book as something that makes me Me and that shows what is important for me. Both reading and writing have become a part of my daily life and I love it. The fact that I can escape from reality and all its problems, gives me such joy. Wandering into unknown worlds, discovering new places, meeting and talking with creatures, are all things that only a book can give you, and that is why I love them so. If it were not for books, my life would be so much less fun.

Benedicte, Norway

#wherewecomefrom



Archaeology is my favorite hobby.  
I have taken part in excavations since I was 3 years old.  
And I have a tradition to take part in them every summer.  
When I was a child, I dreamed of becoming an archaeologist.  
But I have decided that archaeology would be my favorite hobby.

Daniil, 16, Russian Federation

#wherewecomefrom

## Contributors and their lessons learned

The alumni of the EUSTORY history competitions and participants in the first Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue had a full week of debates and discussions. They met the Estonian Minister of Education Jevgeni Ossinovski and the Mayor of Ivangorod Tatjana Sharova, as well as the German Ambassador to Estonia. There were excursions in Tallinn and Narva in Estonia and Ivangorod in the Russian Federation. The week was thought provoking and reflection centered – on borders and identities of past and present, about personal limitations and aspects of self-identification and recognition. This all resulted in #balticeye, the virtual exhibition of young Europeans.

After returning back from the 1st Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue, the participants reflected about what they learned and what thoughts and emotions they brought home. Here are some voices and impressions:



**Benedicte, Norway**

“What surprised me the most was that over 22% of the people living in Narva did not have citizenship. One of the main reasons for this I understood was that many felt just as much Russian as Estonian, and did not want to choose between them.”



**Ephraim, Germany**

“I had never thought about the question of Baltic identity that intensively. I have never previously crossed a border as consciously as we did when we went to Invangorod, Russia. The aspect I liked the most was when we had time to walk around and take pictures for the exhibition. While being active it is much easier for me to reflect on stuff instead of when I am sitting and listening. That’s why I also liked the task that was set to find out something about a sight in Tallinn and to interview a stranger.”



**Bartłomiej, Poland**

"I was surprised by the huge difference of the socioeconomic situation on the Russian side of the river in comparison with Estonia. Another really astonishing thing was the sight of so many monuments and other footprints of the Soviet past, even on the Estonian side."



**Ester, Czech Republic**

"The so-called alien passports surprised me the most, I think. I've never heard about them and I didn't know it's even possible to not have any citizenship."



**Richard, Germany**

"Talking about the Baltic Identity issue I was surprised that we were indeed able to identify similarities in the way people view life all around the Baltic Sea such as religion, sports and the economic and political system, but when we compared our results in the end no one took a stand declaring his or her Baltic identity. For my share I feel like I am able to answer the question about my personal "identity" now more easily than before the seminar and additionally was introduced to a number of new designs of identity, which may help to put oneself in somebody's shoes in the future."

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