Opening Speech, MEP BSR 28.03.12

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Delegates, teachers, directors, organizers, ladies and gentlemen

My name is Kirstine and I am very honoured to be here as a representative of the Danish delegation, the host country at this years MEP Baltic Sea Region as well as the land that holds the EU Presidency from January this year. On the behalf of the entire Danish delegation I would like to thank you all for being here and thank the directors for letting the ten of us participate.

(Pause)

The famous Danish writer and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard once said: ”To dare, is to loose ones footings momentarily. Not to dare, is to loose oneself.” Bearing that in mind, and thinking of the even more famous British playwright, who once wrote the well-known words: “To be or not to be”, one could be tempted to change that into: “To dare or not to dare. That is the question.” And that really is the question we should ask ourselves and each other, when we in the following days are to discuss some of Europe’s biggest problems. Are we willing to dare in order to find solutions?

When Denmark proudly accepted the EU Presidency this year on January 18th , our Danish Prime Minister, Helle Thorning Smith, presented four key priorities:

- a responsible European economy

- a more dynamic Europe, to stimulate long-term growth for the benefit of the young generation

- a green Europe

- and a safe Europe

and when you look at the committees that we are to work in this year the main topics are very similar:

- Employment and social affairs

- Industry, Research and energy

- Environment, public health and food safety

- Culture and education

- Poverty and Exclusion

This permits us to walk in the almost exact footsteps of the EU’s great politicians and to work, discuss and negotiate like the real thing.

But despite all the opportunities we have got, one might think: what difference can we make on the solutions our real and experienced politicians are making every day in the EU? What is it that we bring to the table this week? Our strength? My answer to that is: We are independent! We do not subscribe to any political party when we gather to discuss these dilemmas. We are free to think big and transgressively as well as go beyond national borders. THAT is our strength and I dare you to stay positive and open minded – because that enables everybody to raise their own standards of freedom and fairness in the debates of economies and societies without diminishing the diversity of cultures and communities.

But in order to gain the courage and produce the energy to dare loosing one’s footing like Kierkegaard said, we Danes have a great characteristic – we combine business with pleasure in the very best of ways.

And that is, among other things, why I am so excited that the Danish delegation has the opportunity not only to be political ambassadors at MEP for Denmark but also the cultural ambassadors, when we both yesterday and on Friday get to show you Denmark to discover it with your own eyes. Discover the country which we, with risk of sounding inordinately nationalistic, are so proud to be apart of.

I think I speak for everyone from the Danish delegation, when I say that we cannot wait to discuss, learn, laugh, become wiser and share this year of MEP Baltic Sea Region, with you.

Thank you.