

The background features a dense pattern of sharpened colored pencils, viewed from the side, creating a textured, hexagonal grid. The pencils are in various colors including red, blue, green, yellow, purple, and orange. Scattered throughout the scene are several solid-colored circles in shades of orange, purple, pink, and light blue.

Russian invasion of Ukraine & inclusive youth cooperation around the Baltic Sea

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Russia's social reality since 2010s

- Imperialist & belligerent narrative of Russia's history across centuries, affecting school curriculum
- 'Besieged fortress' syndrome
- Shrinking space for civic activities
- Subjugation of NGOs (replaced by GONGOs), e.g. through the 'foreign agents' law
- Limited access to independent media outlets
- Pacification of opposition
- De facto dismantling of local self-government
- Growing centralisation of decision-making process in regional cooperation

Isolation of Russia & Russians after February 24, 2022

- Political
- Economic
- Technological
- Academic
- Cultural
- People-to-people contacts

Consequences for the Baltic Sea Region

- Greater integration of Western democracies:
 - NATO enlargement by Finland and Sweden
 - Denmark possibly dropping its EU defence cooperation opt-out
 - Norway increasingly interested in advantages of EU membership
- 9+1 matrix: 9 tightly integrating Baltic Sea states vs. isolated Russia
- Chance of pushing integration forward in new areas vs. Russia's Baltic provinces left out and lagging behind → green transition
- Volatile international security environment → mini Cold War between regions, cities and people?
- Political confrontation likely to be followed by provocations in other areas:
 - environment protection
 - civilian aviation
 - maritime transportation

Education & youth cooperation

- Impaired already since 2014:
 - Putin's new conservative project
 - new official narrative on history
 - aggressive promotion of Russo- and Soviet-centrism
 - mounting pressure on civil society & growing control of educational institutions
 - decreasing participation in international initiatives
- State-sponsored hatred for Ukraine and Ukrainians in Russian schools and media
- The West openly declared an enemy conspiring against Russia (the 'besieged fortress' syndrome)
- Intimidation & persecution of pluralism & freedom of speech

What does it mean for initiatives such as MEP?

- Small-scale 9+1 matrix: Russian students excluded from interacting with their BSR peers
- Especially Kaliningrad Oblast youth intellectually & culturally isolated
- Devastating for promoting dialogue and shaping new civil activists, decision-makers & educators
- Severe damage or destruction of 30 years of intellectual capital & people-to-people ties between the youth
- Ex definitione incomplete discussions about the future of the Baltic Sea

What can we do?

- **Why not inviting representatives of Ukrainian youth to participate in MEP BSR?**
- Inclusion of Russia-related topics in the debates
- Not demonising the Russian youth → it's the Russian state, political culture and older generations that are to blame
- Creating & pursuing ideas on how to facilitate bottom-up change in Russia
- Showing positive examples through respect, inclusiveness & pluralism
- Activity in social media that would catch young Russians' attention



Thank you

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