TASK FORCE REVISION OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION (TF EUSBSR)

The EUSBSR represents one focus area in the work of the BSC. In order to support the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan planned during 2019/2020, the Executive Committee during its meeting in Bialystok on 25 September 2018 decided to set up a corresponding Task Force under the Chairmanship of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. All the BSC activities related to the revision process shall be coordinated by the Task Force.

1. Composition of the TF EUSBSR

Based on an enquiry of the BSC Member Regions, seven regions have declared their readiness to work together in the TF EUSBSR:

1. Helsinki-Uusimaa
2. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Chair)
3. Norrbotten
4. Ostrobothnia
5. Päijät-Häme
6. Southwest Finland
7. Stockholm (tbc)
8. Västerbotten

A first meeting to set up the TF is scheduled to take place in Brussels on 20-21 February 2019 (tbc).

In addition to the members of the TF, further Member Regions have declared their willingness to provide input to and support the work of the TF in the following forms:

- **Skåne**: Interventions at political level, organisation of events and contribution to position papers;
- **Podlaskie**: Organisation of events.
2. BSC Member Regions involvement in the implementation process of the EUSBSR

The involvement of the Member Regions in the implementation process of the EUSBSR is the basis upon which activities of the BSC have to be built. The following information has been gathered on the basis of an enquiry among the Member Regions. Answers were received from:

- **FINLAND**: Helsinki-Uusimaa, Ostrobothnia, Southwest Finland
- **GERMANY**: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
- **POLAND**: Podlaski
- **SWEDEN**: Gävleborg, Skåne, Stockholm, Västerbotten, Norrbotten

The National Coordinators (NC) of the EUSBSR in the EU Member States in the Baltic Sea Region will play a key role in the revision process. Usually, they are located in the national Ministry of Foreign Affairs, except for in Sweden, where the Prime Minister’s Office is competent for this. Therefore, direct contact may be very useful to gather relevant information, to target speakers for events and to promote the regional perspective during the process. In this context, it may be useful to mention that Counsellor for Foreign Affairs Helena Tuuri has been appointed Finland’s new Baltic Sea Ambassador from 1 September 2018. Counsellor Tuuri is based in the Unit for Northern Europe of the Department for Europe at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

So far, all the members of the TF have had direct contact with their respective National Coordinators.

The EUSBSR Action Plan is structured along the lines of three objectives and their underlying sub-objectives.

The Policy Areas (PA/13) and fields of Horizontal Actions (HA/4) together with their underlying Flagship Projects (FP) are the cornerstones in the implementation process of the EUSBSR. Only in exceptional cases, regional actors have assumed a coordinating role in a PA or HA. This is the case for PA Culture (Schleswig-Holstein), PA Education (Hamburg) and Tourism (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern). In the cases of PA Culture and HA Neighbours, Member Regions are represented in the respective Steering Group, namely Ostrobothnia and Southwest Finland.

On the level of FPs, there is a broad range of activities of Member Regions. According to the number of projects and regions involved, the most important areas of involvement have been Innovation, Transport and Spatial Planning, followed by Nutri (reduction of nutrients input) and Hazards (reduction of hazardous substances). Of course, it is not always the regional level that is a project partner but actors from the region. A list showing the details regarding FP activities is attached to this paper.
3. Revision Process of the EUSBSR

During a meeting of the National Coordinators in Warsaw on 11-12 December 2018, the timeline for the revision process was agreed on:

02.01.2019 The consultancy firm COWI starts to prepare reports to facilitate the revision process. Commissioned by the European Commission, COWI also carried out the study on macro-regional strategies and their links with Cohesion Policy which was published in November 2017. Person in charge: Ms Bettina Rafaelsen.

31.03.2019 Submission of the 1. Input Paper of COWI on thematic focus of the EUSBSR. The key question here seems to be if the Objectives and Sub-Objectives are still relevant, or if they should be more focussed, or are there new thematic priorities? Part of the process is to ask key stakeholders for their contribution. An enquiry among NC, PAC and HAC shall be carried out by COWI. It seems likely that also stakeholders from the local and regional levels shall be involved, too.

16.04.2019 Decision of NC on the scope of the revision based on the 1. Input Paper. Call of the PAC/HAC to revise and update their specific Policy Area respectively Horizontal Action. A special focus shall be on the targets and indicators.

02.05.2019 Submission of the 2. Input Paper on governance issues. Key questions here refer to the role of the Steering Groups in the PA/HA and the Focal Points as a potential interface between the national political level and the PA/HA.

16.09.2019 Deadline for PAC/HAC to submit their input to the revision process


The NC underlined that the revision needs to be in line with other processes like the objectives of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC/INTERREG 2021–2027) and activities of key stakeholders like the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

Please be aware that the EU Report on the Evaluation of macro-regional strategies shall be published in January 2019. It may include some issues to be considered in the Revision Process, too.

Please also note the process character of the revision. Additional aspects may come up in the course of the process and timelines may change.

4. Preparing for the next programming period 2021-2027

The Draft Regulation for the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), which was submitted by the European Commission on 29 May 2018, contains in its Chapter II rules on how the future INTERREG programmes shall contribute to the implementation of macro-regional strategies.
Most importantly, in cases where a macro-regional strategy overlaps with an INTERREG programme under component 2, 70% to 100% of the budget should be allocated to the objectives of the relevant macro-regional strategy (see Article 15 of the Draft Regulation):

- Transnational cooperation programme (2A): 100%;
- Maritime cooperation programme (2B): at least 70%.

A further aspect which seems to be relevant for local and regional EUSBSR stakeholders can be found in Art. 14 4.b) according to which Interreg programmes under component 1, 2 and 3 (cross-border, transnational/maritime, and outermost regions' cooperation) shall “enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies”.

Please note that there are two Interreg-specific objectives, namely of “a better Interreg governance” and the external Interreg-specific objective of “a safer and more secure Europe”. Interreg programmes under component 1, 2 and 3 shall allocate 15% of their ERDF budget to these objectives.

In the Report of the European Parliament/REGI Committee on the ETC Draft Regulation, which was written by MEP Pascal Arimont and adopted in December 2018, amendments were proposed in Article 15. According to the new wording proposed, the INTERREG programmes shall "contribute" to the objectives of the strategy, instead of shall be "programmed on the objectives". The negotiations on the ETC Draft Regulation in the Council Working Group are scheduled to take place during January 2019.

The initial reaction of the CPMR General Secretariat\(^1\) welcomes the European Commission proposals to strengthen the support of INTERREG to macro-regional strategies for the post-2020 period. In addition, it advocates:

- A sufficient degree of flexibility to cope with unforeseen changes and be able to respond to territorial needs;
- A strong involvement of regional and local authorities in the design and implementation of macro-regional and sea basin strategies in the format of a multi-level governance of these strategies.

Referred to the situation of the Baltic Sea Region and under the assumption that the maritime cross-border programmes remain outside of the transnational component, the TF EUSBSR has to focus on four INTERREG programmes:

- Baltic Sea Region Programme;
- Botnia Atlantica Programme;
- Central Baltic Programme;
- South Baltic Programme.

As for the Baltic Sea Region Programme, the preparation of the upcoming programme period is about to start. A specific Task Force has been set up which is supposed to have its kick-off meeting on the 31 January 2019 in Berlin.

\(^{1}\) Technical Paper The future of INTERREG: 10 messages from the CPMR, June 2018
Annex - Member Regions Involvement in EUSBSR Flagship Projects

SAVE THE SEA
● PA NUTRI
  - Baltic Blue Growth – Initiation of full-scale mussel farming in the Baltic Sea (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)
  - IWAMA – Interactive Water Management
● PA HAZARDS
  - NonHazCity – Innovative Management Solutions for minimising emissions of hazardous substances from urban areas in the BSR (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)
  - Morpheus – Model Areas for Removal of Pharmaceutical Substances in the South Baltic (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Region Skåne Health Organisation and Kristianstad University College)
● PA SHIP
  - Ecoprodigi - Bringing eco efficiency and digitalisation to maritime industry (Southwest Finland)
● PA SECURE
  - HAZARD - Mitigating the effects of emergencies in Baltic Sea Region ports (Southwest Finland)
● PA SAFE
  - R-Mode Baltic (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)

INCREASE PROSPERITY
● PA TOURISM
  - BSTC – Baltic Sea Tourism Center (Mecklenburg – Vorpommern)
● PA CULTURE
  - Culturability (Skåne)
● PA INNOVATION
  - LARS (Ostrobothnia, Region Västerbotten)
  - Smart Blue Regions (Region Skåne, Southwest Finland)
  - BSR Stars S3 (Region Västerbotten, Region Värmland, Region Skåne)
  - Alliance – Baltic Blue Biotechnology Alliance (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)
  - BFCC-Baltic Fracture Competence Center (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)
  - Provahealth – Product Validation in Health (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Region Skåne)
  - BIC – Biomarker Commercialization (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)
  - IRIS – Improved results in Innovation Supporter – transnational exchange and joint development between innovation infrastructure (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)

CONNECT THE REGION
● PA TRANSPORT
  - NSB Core (Helsinki-Uusimaa, Region Skåne)
  - Scandria2act (Region Skåne, Region Örebro, Mecklenburg Vorpommern)
  - Baltic Tram (Region Skåne, Mecklenburg Vorpommern)
  - TENTacle (Region Blekinge, Region Skåne, Mecklenburg Vorpommern, Region Örebro)
● PA ENERGY
- Baltic Integrid – integrated Baltic offshore wind electricity grid development (Mecklenburg Vorpommern, Region Skåne)

HORIZONTAL ACTIONS

● SPATIAL PLANNING
  - BEA-APP Baltic Energy Areas, a planning perspective (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)
  - Baltic Lines – Coherent linear infrastructures in the Baltic Maritime Spatial Plans (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)

● NEIGHBOURS
  - Creating jobs through regional cooperation: development of trans-border (PL-ROS-LT) natural area Vistynets Lake/Rominten Forest
  - CBSS Summer youth camp
  - Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue

● CAPACITY (Helsinki-Uusimaa, Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Southwest Finland)
  - Let´s Communicate
The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) brings together some 160 Regions from 25 States from the European Union and beyond.

Representing about 200 million people, the CPMR campaigns in favour of a more balanced development of the European territory.

It operates both as a think tank and as a lobby group for Regions. It focuses mainly on social, economic and territorial cohesion, maritime policies and accessibility.

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