Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions

BALTIC SEA COMMISSION

2019

ACTIVITY REPORT

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# ACTIVITY REPORT 2018-2019

(Approved by the Baltic Sea Commission General Assembly, Gdansk, Poland, 11 June 2019)

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1. Foreword

By Jari Nahkanen, President, Baltic Sea Commission

The last year I believe we experienced a revitalisation of the public debate on Europe. Political and economic freedoms are the foundation of Europe. Over the last four decades, EU enlargement has contributed to economic growth and strengthened democratic forces in Europe. Minority rights and freedom of the press in the EU are as important as a free market economy and consumer protection. Despite this, British people said "no thank you" for the prosperity, growth and freedom that the EU has sought to promote. That is why Brexit has been a great shock to us.

Climate issues are one of the most important themes for the future. It seems that children have taken on the responsibility for action to combat climate change due to adults’ incapability to act. The movement started by the frustration of a Swedish 16-year-old girl has developed into a European phenomenon. We politicians and decision-makers have to act to ensure sustainable solutions for our planet, for our children’s future, and for our own credibility. This work has to be carried out together at transregional level. This is where the Baltic Sea Commission can be shown as a force for cooperation.

The Baltic Sea Commission provides us, as regional politicians, with a platform to discuss what Europe we want in the future. In January 2019, a Future of Europe Conference was held in Lahti, Finland. It provided a platform to deliver political messages that enforce actions supporting solidarity, partnership and strengthened territorial cohesion across the continent. This discussion must continue. Europe is something unique that has historically developed through our endeavours and is too precious for us to lose.

We do not want openly extreme, anti-European narratives to become any more prevalent in the public domain. What is solidarity in Europe if we need to test it for real? What would we do for others? Answers to these questions are in response to the rise of nationalism where European values of unity and multilateralism are under threat from within Member States and beyond.

2019 is a crucial year for the Future of Europe and Baltic Sea cooperation, as it will be marked by the European elections, the on-going Brexit discussions, the revision of the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the post-2020 EU Budget negotiations and policies. Finland will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from 1 July 2019, as well as the coordination of the Member States for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

Through our everyday decisions and actions, Regions of the Baltic Sea are an active part of implementing and delivering EU policies and decisions. Through the CPMR, the Baltic Sea Commission and our different working groups, we ensure that our interests are heard and taken into account.

This is the Activity Report for 2018/2019, building up for a stronger cooperation post-2020. This is the first Activity Report I sign as President of the Baltic Sea Commission. The work of our organisation brings value to the Regions and the European Project as a whole.

With pleasure,
Jari Nahkanen
2. Executive Summary of the CPMR BSC Activity Report

- The Baltic Sea Commission and its three Working Groups have had nine ordinary meetings, the meeting venues were in six different Member Regions and Brussels;
- Representatives of the Member Regions met to discuss the prioritised policy areas of Sustainable Development Goals and Smart Specialisation and the Task Force for the Revision of the EUSBSR;
- Four special events were organised by the BSC on the topics of: Save the Baltic Sea for Real, Via Carpathia and the Future of Europe;
- Participation in 3 CPMR Political Bureau meetings was assured;
- The number of Member Regions increased with two new Regions, Region Värmland (SE) and Regional Council of Satakunta (FI) making a total of 20 Members;
- The political engagement in the Commission’s work has increased. During the year the mandate of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Working Groups has been renewed;
- Members have contributed to the CPMR Task Force on Cohesion Policy and current standing in the negotiations is that the European Parliament position on important issues for CPMR Members is aligned with the CPMR main messages. Also, maintaining the Maritime Cross-Border Programmes has been high on our agenda and seems to be possible to count as an achievement based on various lobby activities;
- The Commission was represented in the CPMR delegation with MEP Pascal Arimont, Rapporteur on European Territorial Cooperation;
- The Commission has contributed favourably to the development of the CPMR Policy Position on Aviation and the TEN-T consultation;
- The Commission has been an Associated Member of 3 flagship projects related to TEN-T Corridors and will continue this engagement through the BSR Project Platform BSR Access;
- The Transport Working Group has contributed to the CPMR activities and lobbying activities on TEN-T corridors and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and major achievements were reached in the proposal of DG MOVE;
- The Chair of the Maritime Working Group took part as a speaker in a high-level meeting with policy-makers on the Future of the European Maritime Technology Sector, held in the European Parliament;
- Member Regions contributed to the CPMR Task Force’s response to the EU Commission’s Consultation on the long-term strategy for climate;
- A Task Force to support the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan has been set up to coordinate all BSC activities related to the revision process;
- The Commission ensured that the role of the Regions was reflected in the proposal for the Baltic 2030 Action Plan, which was adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the Member States in the Council of the Baltic States (CBSS);
- The Commission has supported the initiative to create a Smart Specialisation Ecosystem in the Baltic Sea Region and has continuously committed to be an Associated Partner of the BSR Project Platform;
- The Commission has started to improve its work on the 5 areas of improvement as agreed in the General Assembly 2018 and has undertaken actions to implement the agreed reforms;
3. Meetings 2018-2019

During 2018/2019, the organisation has organised the following meetings for its Member Regions:

Executive Committee
- Podlaskie (25-26 September 2018);
- Päijät-Häme (30 January 2019);
- Southwest Finland (9-10 May 2019).

List of BSC Executive Committee Members

PRESIDENT
Jari Nahkanen, Member of the Board, Council of Oulu Region

VICE-PRESIDENTS
First Vice-President: Annika Sandström, Member of the Regional Council, Region Stockholm

Second Vice-President: Cezary Cieslukowski, Vice-Chairman of Podlaskie Regional Assembly, Podlaskie Voivodeship

FULL MEMBERS
GERMANY: Wolf Born, Head of Unit, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
ESTONIA: Romek Kosenkranius, Mayor, Pärnu
FINLAND: Talvikki Jori, Member of the Regional Board, Regional Council of Southwest Finland
SWEDEN: Erik Bergkvist, President of the Regional Executive Committee, Region Västerbotten

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS
GERMANY: Merten Barnert, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
FINLAND: Sami Virtanen, Member of the Board, Regional Council of Kymenlaakso
SWEDEN: Anders Öberg, County Council Commissioner, Region Norrbotten

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
Åsa Bjering
Working Group meetings

ENERGY WORKING GROUP
- Oulu, 15 May 2018
- Lahti, 31 January 2019

MARITIME WORKING GROUP
- Brussels, 5 September 2018
- Riga, 5 April 2019

TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP
- Gävleborg, 21-22 November 2018
- Brussels, 9 April 2019
Prioritised Areas/Task Forces

- Sustainable Development Goals: Bornholm (27 September 2018), ensured regional participation in CBSS leadership programme on SDGs (Spring 2019);

- Smart Specialisation: Tallinn (5 June 2018), Lahti (31 January 2019), ensured regional participation in the Swedish Institute/PA Inno Baltic Leadership Programme for Smart Specialisation in the Baltic Sea Region (Autumn 2018);

- Revision of the EUSBSR: Brussels (20 February 2019).

Special events co-organised by BSC

- Future of Europe - Political seminar in Almendalen, (3 July 2018)

- Save the Baltic Sea for Real, Brussels (5 September 2018)

- Via Carpathia, Podlaskie (26 September 2018)

- Future of Europe Conference, Lahti (31 January 2019)

Participation in CPMR meetings

We have also ensured participation in the decision-making bodies of the CPMR, participating in 3 Political Bureau meetings (Pärnu, Funchal, Brest) and during the General Assembly a specific meeting for the members of the Baltic Sea Commission was organised. Members of the CPMR BSC have actively contributed to the drafting of Policy Positions by the CPMR, by answering questionnaires, providing written input, and contributing during working group meetings.
4. Member Regions

Region Värmland (SE) joined the CPMR and its Baltic Sea Commission in June 2018. Regional Council of Satakunta (FI) joined the CPMR and its Baltic Sea Commission in January 2019.

The organisation now has 20 Members from five countries around the Baltic Sea Region.
5. EU Budget and Cohesion Policy

Cohesion Policy is the main EU investment policy which aims at reinforcing economic, social and territorial cohesion in all regions. 2018 marked the 30-year anniversary of Cohesion Policy. The CPMR was actively involved in the creation of the Policy and has been one of its strong supporters ever since. The work of the CPMR includes Policy Positions and public reports, including comprehensive analysis of the key issues at stake for its Member Regions.

The CPMR focused on the European Commission prior to the publication of the legislative proposals in May 2018, before focusing on the European Parliament and the Council. The Baltic Sea Commission does not have a specific Working Group on Cohesion Policy, instead, the Members work in direct contact with the CPMR General Secretariat and the dedicated technical working group.

FURTHER INFORMATION

All CPMR Policy Positions, messages and Public Reports are available here

In 2017/18 the CPMR focused its lobbying activities on calling for a strong and modern Cohesion Policy after 2020. The challenging context of the on-going EU budget negotiations and the emergence of new priorities likely to be supported by the EU budget were calling into question the very existence of Cohesion Policy. In relation to the Budget, the CPMR has strongly argued that Cohesion Policy needs a robust post-2020 financial envelope so that it keeps delivering long-term European public goods while simultaneously pursuing the objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion. More specifically, we have strongly defended that the INTERREG budget line should be brought back, at least, to its 2014-2020 level.
CPMR actions undertaken throughout the year

Interview with Nicolas Brookes, CPMR Executive Director

What have been the main activities of the CPMR in relation to Cohesion Policy over the last year?

We were the first organisation to analyse the European Commission proposal from a regional and local perspective, to start off with. We have worked hard to influence the European Parliament reports to the four Cohesion Policy Regulations to convey the mess ages of CPMR regions. We are also in close dialogue with the Cohesion Attachés of the Permanent Representations. This is a year of negotiations and we work very closely together with our Members to ensure our proposals are taken into consideration.

What have been the main achievements so far, knowing that the negotiations are not yet complete?

The rule of thumb in the Council is “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”, and that is a very accurate description of the situation right now! Despite that, the reinstatement of maritime cross-border programmes for post-2020 is surely a prime example of where we have made a difference.

I also want to highlight the 67 proposals for amendments that we drafted with our Members to influence the European Parliament reports. A total of 96 MEPs tabled 284 amendments that are literally, or in essence, what our Member Regions had agreed upon. That is a great achievement in itself!

The European Parliament position on important issues for CPMR Members is aligned with our main messages. Amongst others, the Parliament has reinforced the partnership and multi-level governance principle, deleted the macro-economic conditionality clause, defended thematic concentration at regional level and the territorial dimension of ESF+.

What is the main concern of the CPMR at this stage of the negotiations?

We are currently closely monitoring the ongoing negotiations at the European Parliament and Council of the EU level, while defending our messages when needed. We are really concerned about the watering down of partnership and multi-level governance arrangements by Member States. Cohesion Policy core principles, such as shared management, partnership and multi-level governance, must be maintained.

Other elements of the package such as ETC Component 5 on Interregional Innovation Investments, provisions towards specific types of territories, or the link between the European Semester and Cohesion Policy are also attracting our attention.

When can we expect the negotiations to be over and done with?

We expect the European Parliament and the Council to start negotiating on the EU budget and the Cohesion Policy package starting in the autumn later this year. It is difficult to predict how quickly the two institutions will reach a deal at this stage: there are many divisions between Member States regarding the size of
the EU budget and the volume of funds to be attributed to key EU policies.

The Council and the European Parliament will first need to reach a deal on the EU budget and the general framework of EU policies and programmes, before the negotiations on the more technical aspects of Cohesion Policy can be completed. In the best-case scenario, this may be achieved at the very end of the Finnish Presidency of the Council (end of 2019), but many are anticipating an agreement some time in 2020.

What will the CPMR do after that?

The CPMR General Secretariat will shift its focus to supporting its Members with the preparation of the 2021-2027 period, by facilitating exchanges of experiences across its Members for instance.

The CPMR will also look to engage with the new European Parliament and Commission to ensure that the voice of Regions in key EU policies like Cohesion Policy is heard loudly and clearly.

Maritime cross-border programmes in the Baltic Sea Region

As soon as the worrying news from the European Commission was received, the Finnish Regions had a meeting with the BSC and CPMR. The CPMR reacted immediately and started lobbying for cross-border programmes with maritime borders. The Regional Council, as a Managing Authority of the Central Baltic programme, as well as the Joint Technical Secretariat are very happy and thankful for all the support received.

In addition, the BSC, through its working groups, naturally carried out lobbying activities, communication and contacting through its Members with MEPs, Member States, Committee of the Regions and other interest groups.

In September, together with other Interreg programmes, the Central Baltic programme organised a seminar for MEPs and Nicolas Brookes from the CPMR gave an excellent presentation on the issue.

Active cooperation seems to have paid off and the joint lobbying has possibly saved the maritime border programmes for the post-2020 period. The good networks of the BSC and CPMR made a huge difference.
6. CEF and the up-coming revision of the TEN-T Corridors

Transport Policy is a prioritised area of work for both the CPMR and the Baltic Sea Commission. The areas covered in the Baltic Sea Commission Work Plan are the revision of the CEF as well as the TEN-T Corridors, support for State Aid for regional airports and the enhancement of connections with third countries.

CEF 2 and the preparations of the TEN-T Corridors have been areas where the Baltic Sea Commission has contributed to the CPMR activities and lobbying activities throughout the year. CEF 2 is highlighted below in an interview with Lucas Bosser, CPMR Director of Transport and Accessibility. The CPMR Policy Positions in relation to aviation have been closely developed in cooperation with Region Stockholm and Region Västerbotten, who have reported back to both the CPMR Political Bureau and the Transport Working Group. Preparations and activities related to the upcoming TEN-T revision are being planned.

The Baltic Sea Commission Transport Working Group works in close symbiosis with the PA Transport of the EUSBSR and the Flagships in which many of the Member Regions of the organisation are active. This section also includes an interview with Thomas Erlandson, who highlights the important contribution of the Flagships that relate to the implementation of the TEN-T network and the EUSBSR.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has been an Associate Member of TENTacle, NSB Core and Scandria2Med, all three flagship projects that will be finalised during this year. The Transport Working Group is continuously connected and dedicated to the Interreg BSR Platform BSR Access.
CPMR Achievements in the CEF negotiations

Interview with Lucas Bosser, CPMR Director

What have been the main activities of the CPMR, in relation to the CEF over the last year?

The first step of our work back in June 2018 consisted of analysing the proposal DG MOVE published for CEF 2021-2027. We had made a great effort since 2017 in influencing this proposal. We had mixed feelings about DG MOVE’s proposal, we had the feeling that the whole Regulation could be better for our Member Regions. As the European Parliament’s timing was tight, we worked a lot to finalise a list of amendments with all our Members to be able to submit it to the EP right after the summer break. We met a lot of MEPs during the autumn to influence the EP report.

What have been the main achievements so far, knowing that the negotiations are not yet complete?

There were 3 main steps since June 2018:

- There were major achievements already in the proposal DG MOVE published last year: several new sections we advocated for were added to the Annex, the share dedicated to the Comprehensive Network was increased and there was a stronger focus on sustainable transport and climate change. There were also some remaining concerns and questions on military mobility for instance;

- We successfully influenced the European Parliament and every point we pushed for was included in the Report voted in Plenary in December 2018, including better support for maritime transport, a greater role for Regions in the governance scheme of the Programme and it acknowledged territorial accessibility as an objective of the Programme;

- The Trialogue reached a Partial Agreement on 7 March. This agreement doesn’t cover budget-related articles as these will be discussed later. The agreement brings important improvements to the Programme. A major improvement is that territorial accessibility is now an objective of the CEF and is included in the list of award criteria. In addition, the European Parliament managed to reach a decent deal on governance as Member States will be able to decide that its approval is not needed to apply for specific calls.

Spring 2019, what is the main concern of the CPMR?

Considering the Partial Agreement on CEF, an important concern would be how the EU considers maritime transport as it seems left aside. It is not really in CEF 2, and Motorways of the Sea are not shown on TEN-T maps, which is not only symbolic when you know how important maps are. We will need to continue our effort in that respect, especially with the up-coming review of the TEN-T Regulation.
Added value of being active in the BSC Transport Working Group

Contribution by Bosse Andersson, Chair of the CPMR BSC Transport Working Group

If I get the question of what the added value is of me being involved in the Transport Working Group, the answer is simple – it is the people. All politicians are accompanied in the meetings by their Region’s expert in transport and logistics. We organise meetings back-to-back or in cooperation with the flagship projects of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, enabling discussions with academia and business. In our meeting in Gävleborg in November, we had a full day of discussions with stakeholders in the TENtacle project. The purpose of this seminar was to review the findings and the achievements of the project over the last three years and to put this in a policy context with suggestions on specific actions. The CPMR provides the opportunity to gather stakeholders for this type of project where the projects are to be seen as an important tool for achieving our common goals for the Baltic Sea region. We get an idea of the current situation, but also what needs to be done further.

The policy discussions of the Transport Working Group transcend the individual interest of a single region. The Baltic Sea Region as a whole is peripheral in a European context and often we can achieve more influence by working together than alone. This was heavily discussed in April when we met in Brussels to discuss joint activities for the upcoming revision of the TEN-T Network. The Transport Working Group opens up the possibility for us politicians to build long-term trust, for our civil servants to ensure we initiate joint projects and for our staff in Brussels to better connect and coordinate.

The people also challenge and inspire you. You give, get and share knowledge between each other. Throughout the year, the Transport Working Group has visited the E-highway in Gävleborg. We have also discussed the importance of aviation and small airports, both in relation to the EU Regulation regarding State Aid and to EU instruments supporting sustainable fuel for the airplanes and sustainable transport at large.
Policy Area Transport of the EUSBSR

Interview with Thomas Erlandson, Policy Area Coordinator for Transport, EUSBSR

How do you work together with Regions to implement the PA Transport Action Plan?

The first of the three actions in the PA Transport Action Plan focuses on striving to optimise the effects of the implementation of the BSR relevant TEN-T Core Network Corridors in cooperation with the European Coordinators. The National Policy levels with support from the EU have responsibility for the implementation of the infrastructure. However, in order to fully explore the potential benefits for all BSR citizens and businesses, regional and local policy levels must also be involved, as well as other stakeholders who can contribute to the development of an effective and sustainable transport system in the Baltic Sea macro-region. Having no own appropriate organisation or funding, PA Transport welcomes regions, cities and municipalities, business communities, academia, NGOs and other stakeholders who have an interest in cooperating on these issues.

Highlight of the year: the Flagship Conference in Brussels

Three PA Transport Flagship projects, Scandria2Act, NSBCoRe and TENTacle, have recently been completed and held their joint Final Conference on 6 March 2019 in Brussels. The major part of the Conference was moderated by the European Coordinators Mr Pat Cox, Ms Catharine Trautmann and Ms Anne Jensen. Mr Kurt Bodewig, who could not attend, presented his supporting message by video. This engagement from the European Coordinators demonstrated that a solid cooperation platform has been established for a continued and mutually beneficial multi-level cooperation.
An event highlighting Via Carpathia

Contribution by Cezary Cieslukowski, Vice-President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Via Carpathia is a motorway of strategic importance to Central and Eastern Europe, which is currently under construction at various stages in different regions. This project is the opportunity to exploit the potential of the regions by which it passes giving a major stimulus to the transport and economic development.

It runs along the eastern border of the European Union from Klaipeda via Kaunas (LT), Białystok, Lublin, Rzeszów (PL), Košice (SK), Debrecen (HU) and then to Romania. In Romania it splits towards the Constanța seaport and towards Svilengrad. Next, via Bulgaria to Sofia and the Greek ports on the Aegean Sea in Thessaloniki.

The Final Declaration of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, adopted in Oulu 2018, recognises the importance of the Via Carpathia route in terms of both the social and economic development not only of Eastern Poland itself, but also of Europe as a whole in the North-South relations.

During the Executive Committee meeting in September 2018, Podlaskie invited the Baltic Sea Commission to co-organise a high-level event highlighting the importance of Via Carpathia, just a month before the Regional elections in Poland.

Press conference, Podlaskie

The meeting was a perfect occasion to discuss the state of play and adopt a common position in order to increase the chances of financing the investment with EU funds. The participants included numerous foreign guests from the BSC Member Regions, as well as representatives of the Polish Ministry for Infrastructure, General Direction of the National Roads and Highways (PL), Regional Roads Authority from Podkarpackie Region and Podlaskie Region (PL).
7. Sustainable Blue Growth in the Baltic Sea

The Work Plan states that the BSC Maritime Affairs Working Group should align its main focus on the promotion of Sustainable Blue Growth, monitoring the Baltic Blue Growth Agenda and supporting regional stakeholders’ inclusion in the implementation phase.

Tiina Perho, Southwest Finland, has not only been chairing the Baltic Sea Commission Maritime Working Group throughout the year but also the CPMR Working Group on Maritime Industries, having focused on the updating of the LeaderSHIP 2020 strategy.

This has ensured a Baltic perspective to the work of the CPMR and has initiated a discussion on what needs to be done in EU instruments relating to the Baltic Sea Region in order to ensure funding for regional stakeholders, especially small and medium-sized enterprises in the Baltic Sea Region. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has engaged in discussions regarding the on-going programming of the BONUS Programme and has discussed the necessity to engage in closer dialogue with colleagues and national representatives in the up-coming Interreg Programming.

Tiina Perho also took part as a speaker in a Social Partners’ high-level meeting with policy-makers on the Future of the European Maritime Technology Sector, held in October 2018 in the European Parliament.

The Baltic Sea Commission has sought cooperation with PA Hazard and HELCOM. Information on an event the Baltic Sea Commission organised in the European Parliament in September 2018 follows.

The BSC has observer status with HELCOM. Helsinki-Uusimaa has been selected to follow this work in more detail and reports back to the Maritime Working Group.
Save the Baltic Sea for Real, European Parliament, 5 September 2018

Contribution by Tiina Perho, Chair of the CPMR BSC Maritime Working Group

In Brussels, the EU offices of the Regions from the Baltic Sea Region cooperate in a network, called the Informal Baltic Sea Group. In 2018, the Maritime Working Group asked this network if they were interested in coordinating a large event in the European Parliament. Together with Policy Area Hazards, a programme was put together in which the HELCOM General Secretary presented the State of the Baltic Sea Report and speakers were included from different Regions and EUSBSR Flagships.

The speakers gave an overview of on-going action but also delivered suggestions on policy needed from European decision-makers. Representatives from DG REGIO, DG MARE and DG ENVIRONMENT had the possibility to relate this input to on-going policy development regarding marine plastics as well as hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea. The Seminar also included discussions about the up-coming revisions of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP, HELCOM) and the EUSBSR Action Plan.

The event was hosted by the SEArica Intergroup, which the CPMR supports and involved several Members of the European Parliament. Over 150 people participated in the event.

Working like this in a Brussels setting strengthens both the common understanding of the Baltic Sea Region and the messages of us Regions in Brussels.

Small and medium-sized ports in the Baltic Sea Region

The Baltic Sea Commission is an observer organisation in the CBSS Expert Group on Maritime Economy. During the year, the mandate of the Expert Group has been revised. It was decided that the CBSS Expert Group will highlight one important field of work every year. The 2019 event highlighted small and medium-sized ports and related well to the Maritime Working Group, seeking a closer dialogue with the ports of the Baltic Sea. The Secretariat of the Baltic Sea Commission was involved in suggesting speakers for the event. The Maritime Working Group decided to organise a working group meeting back-to-back with the event.

The Baltic Sea Region is rich in maritime and fishing traditions, and small and medium-sized ports form a significant part of the Baltic Sea Region ports infrastructure. In order to stabilise and improve the operation of these ports, creative solutions are needed to ensure crucial port infrastructure and secure
financial sustainability. It is necessary to find areas that can be developed, as well as to ensure an attractive environment for new businesses and jobs.

The Conference offered an opportunity for Ministry representatives, EU officials, Regional Authorities, businesses and port organisations to discuss these issues.

The event was arranged by the Latvian Presidency of the CBSS Expert Group for Sustainable Maritime Economy and the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) of the European Commission.

Åsa Bjering, BSC Executive Secretary, participated in a panel discussion regarding the up-coming revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan and the EU Blue Growth Strategy.

The Chair of the Working Group, Ms Tiina Perho, gave a speech in the first workshop of USWE project on the 8 May 2019 in the city of Turku, describing the Region’s cooperation with the CPMR in requesting a new strategy for Europe for stronger maritime industries in Europe.

USWE is an EU-funded project born in the frame of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue for Shipbuilding with the aim of supporting industry and workers in the adaptation to the industry 4.0 technologies.

Under the umbrella of the European sectoral social partners -SEA Europe and IndustriAll Europe- industry experts, trade unions, education providers, policy-makers and other stakeholders will jointly analyse the impact of technological change in existing occupations and future skills needs.

Ms Perho especially described the Region’s manifestos points relating to education and maintaining an industrial capacity in Europe, attracting workers to the maritime fields, as well as avoiding social dumping.

Tiina Perho, USWE Workshop, Turku
8. Climate and Renewable Energy

Circular Economy and the LARS Project

The Baltic Sea Commission Working Group on Energy and Climate has been organised as an Advisory Group to the Interreg Baltic Sea Region project “Learning Among Regions on Smart Specialisation”. The project is enhancing transnational learning in the field of renewable energy and circular economy. The purpose of the group is to bring the findings on to the agenda of the CPMR and other relevant stakeholders. The work of the Working Group is wider than the project communication but during the past year the project dominated the work.

This year, the Energy Working Group has shared experiences on how to enhance business-driven circular economy and elaborated on EU funding experiences and business opportunities in the Circular Economy.

The Working Group met in Lahti, on 31 January 2019 and participated in the International Seminar on the Circular Economy, on 1 February. The Working Group has successfully submitted a proposal to organise a session during the EUSBSR General Assembly in Gdansk on 12-13 June.

Climate

The BSC Energy Working Group has the ambition to play an active role in the CPMR Task Force on Climate in order to ensure a Baltic regional perspective in the overall positions of the CPMR. Seven Member Regions from the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission contributed to the CPMR Task Force response to the Commission’s Consultation on the long-term strategy.

Richard Sjölund, Chair of the BSC Energy Working Group, was invited to participate in the 9th BSR Climate Change Dialogue Platform meeting, held in November 2018 in Riga. The BSR Climate Change Dialogue Platform is organised by the CBSS, Baltic 2030, in its role as HA Climate of the EUSBSR.

To pursue these objectives, the platform facilitates knowledge-sharing, the exchange of information and best practice, information about policy development in BSR countries, the fostering of synergies amongst existing initiatives, as well as the identification and
exploration of further cooperation opportunities for relevant projects and actors in the BSR. Richard Sjölund shared information about LARS and the CPMR Energy Working Group.

The next Climate Dialogue Platform Round Table meeting is scheduled to take place in Denmark in autumn 2019, and will promote:

- Integrative cross-sectorial policy discussions and alignment of policies in the Baltic Sea region;

- Low-emission and climate resilient development;

- Secure energy supply and efficient use of the potential of renewable energy sources, as well as promoting energy efficiency;

- Sustainable production and consumption;

- Increased coordination and synergy among initiatives and projects dealing with climate adaptation and mitigation.
9. On-going Revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has, ever since the establishment of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), worked to strengthen the role of regions in the implementation and governance of the Strategy. This was also the main reason why the Baltic Sea Commission decided to co-organise the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Berlin in 2017.

During the last four years, the organisation has developed the following Policy Positions relating to the EUSBSR.

During its meeting in Bialystok on 25 September 2018, the Executive Committee decided to set up a Task Force under the Chairmanship of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in order to support the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan planned during 2019/2020. All BSC activities related to the revision process have been coordinated by the Task Force.

The overall objectives of the BSC contribution to the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan:
● **Regarding the future themes of the Action Plan**: make sure future themes identified in the Action Plan are based on the needs of Baltic Sea Regions;
● **Regarding governance**: make sure to strengthen the role of Regional Authorities in the governance of the EUSBSR, ensure a formal involvement of the BSC in the EUSBSR governance.

For this purpose, the Task Force provided analytical insight and relevant arguments to the drivers of the revision process in the form of an Input Paper. It will continue to liaise with the stakeholders in this process and will continue to be an advocate of regional interests in this matter.

Wolf Born and Bettina Rafaelssen
10. Future of Europe

Contribution by Dr. Laura Leppänen, Regional Mayor of the Regional Council of Päijät-Häme

Future of Europe conference in Lahti

The Regional Council of Päijät-Häme took the initiative to organise a Future of Europe Conference in Lahti in January 2019. The Regional Council of Oulu, the European Commission in Finland and the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission co-organised the event.

The Conference set out to create a dialogue and enhance the exchange of views and discussions between the EU institutions and stakeholders on what the future will bring for Europe and how we perceive the Regions’ role in European governance in the years to come.

2019 is a year of change and challenge. Brexit, the new EU budget and the legislative packages, the European Parliamentary elections, as well as the revision of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the upcoming Finnish Presidency are all occurring at once.

Regarding the current changes and challenges in Europe, it is vital to create a dialogue between Regions to prepare ourselves for adapting to the on-going developments in Europe. The CPMR and its Baltic Sea Commission provides an important platform for cooperation among Regions that share the same objectives in areas that are of great importance for their development. This cooperation enables a European perspective to be added to our work and the Future of Europe Conference is a good example of what Regions can accomplish by working together.

The Conference gathered more than 150 people. The morning included high-level speakers from the Finnish Government, European Commission, as well as Alexander Stubb and voices of the youth. The afternoon session was devoted to workshops and dialogue. The following day was dedicated to an international Seminar on Circular Economy.

I am proud we took this initiative and I am happy for the close cooperation with the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission in organising, as well as making this discussion possible in a Finnish setting, with the contribution and participants from across the Baltic Sea Region, as well as the European Institutions.

Future of Europe Political Seminar in Almendalen

In July 2018, the Swedish Member Regions of the Baltic Sea Commission took the initiative to organise a seminar regarding the Future of the European Union, the budget proposal and the role of Regions during the Political Week in Almedalen, Gotland. The seminar was organised in cooperation with the Baltic Sea Commission and the EU Commission representation in Sweden.
11. Report on the prioritised area of regions and sustainable development goals

Contribution by Region Norrbotten

During 2017-2019, the Baltic Sea Commission worked to enhance capacity and opportunities for Member Regions to increase their knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and relate them to their regional development strategies. In close cooperation with Baltic Sea Future, Euroregion Baltic, CBSS Expert Group on Baltic 2030, the following activities have been carried out during 2017/2019:

- March 2017: Event in Stockholm;
- Spring 2018: Baltic 2030 Capacity Programme for Local and Regional Authorities;
- September 2018: Event in Bornholm;
- Spring 2019: Baltic 2030 Capacity Programme for Local and Regional Authorities. UBC and CPMR BSC supported the CBSS Secretariat in recruitment.

The BSC helped to ensure the role of the Regions was reflected in the proposal for the Baltic 2030 Action Plan, which was adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the Member States in the CBSS on 20 June 2017 in Reykjavik.

In January 2019, the European Commission published the Reflection Paper “Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030” (press release and factsheet), which provides a state of play of the implementation of the 17 UN SDGs across the EU (including at regional level) and draws some options for the EU to further contribute towards achieving these goals by 2030.

In the absence of an EU strategic document for the post-2020 period, to replace the Europe 2020 Strategy, we have good reason to believe that these 17 SDGs could play a key role, even more significant than in the current political debate, and will shape the future EU long-term strategic framework. They will therefore inspire the future orientations of the new Multi-annual Financial Framework, EU Cohesion Policy, the Urban Agenda for the EU and the renewal of the Territorial Agenda, amongst others.

Inclusive growth, attractive living environments and sustainable regional development are core priorities for the Member Regions of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. Complex challenges require broad collaboration between participants at multiple levels with several different perspectives.

12. Report on the prioritised area of supporting a Smart Specialisation Platform

Contribution by Region Västerbotten
The idea to establish a Smart Specialisation Platform emerged from a Stakeholder Conference on S3, co-organised by the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission and Policy Area Innovation in 2016 and was further developed throughout 2017. At the 2017 General Assembly, the Baltic Sea Commission Members decided that supporting the creation of a Smart Specialisation platform, with the purpose of aligning existing funding sources that will support the development of cross-regional Smart Specialisation areas in the BSR, was a priority for 2017-19.

In May 2019, the Monitoring Committee of Interreg BSR approved a Project Platform - BSR S3 Ecosystem. BSR S3 Ecosystem provides a much-needed platform for creating a better understanding on the best practices and opportunities for smart specialisation in the BSR. The Interreg funded platform will be for a two-year period and aims to build capacity for the involved Regions prior to the next programming period. The activities will be open for all Regions in the Baltic Sea Region countries to become involved. The Baltic Sea Commission is an Associated Partner in the platform.

The platform consists of three pillars:

- Analysis, alignment and incubation of the key S3 projects across the BSR which demonstrate potential for interregional scale-up and/or advancing the value chain orientation of the BSR where each country/region should be able to identify relevant links and flows of goods, services and knowledge revealing possible patterns of integration with other regions. The Platform will add value by investing in selected S3 projects and identifying successful S3 approaches and practices for wide dissemination and impact.

- Interregional learning regarding S3 implementation and capacity building function. The support required by the projects identified above will be channelled through this Pillar in order to facilitate joint understanding and capacities of the BSR Regions and to generate a clear “action plan” to prepare for post-2020. This includes training, communication and outreach on efficient S3 implementation both at regional as well as interregional levels.

- Stakeholder involvement pillar. The 2014-2020 S3 policy agenda has placed increasing importance on the “Entrepreneurial Discovery Process” (EDP) and how the innovation ecosystem and its internal dynamic are critical enablers of improved innovation performance. The BSR has a significant opportunity to deliver this through greater investment of key innovation actors including those from science, research and academic communities, the BSR’s SME base and targeted actors from the social sector. The S3 Platform will organise events that utilise e.g. the identified best practice challenge-based methods to involve stakeholders from the whole BSR in focused interregional cooperation.
13. Report on concrete actions taken following the discussion on added value

Background information

The Task Force on the Future Secretariat started its work with an enquiry, which was sent out to the Member Regions prior to the Task Force’s first meeting in November 2017. As a result of this, a Discussion Paper Added Value and Areas of Improvement was published in May 2018. The purpose of this Discussion Paper was to give structured input to this discussion among the Member Regions on added value and areas of improvement. Based on the results of a discussion in the BSC General Assembly, the Executive Committee was asked to write a Report on the reforms implemented, on the added value offered to the Member Regions and on how the Executive Committee has initiated its work to get new Members of the CPMR BSC. This report is to be submitted to the General Assembly in June 2019.

Added value of the Baltic Sea Commission

The Discussion Paper noted that the Baltic Sea Commission should provide the following added value for its Member Regions:

- **A platform to monitor, communicate and lobby** matters of importance for the Baltic Sea Region and the Member Regions within the CPMR and towards other relevant Baltic Sea organisations, EU institutions and relevant European stakeholders;
- **Strengthen territorial cohesion** among all Regions around the Baltic Sea and boost the accessibility of the Baltic Sea Region and the Member Regions as an integrated part of the EU;
- **Connect the Member Regions** by sharing best practices and knowledge, increasing strategic knowledge for the regional political level within an EU context;
- **Multi-level governance support and navigation** within the BSC agreed prioritised areas and support in building EU projects.

Improvement needed to achieve better added value

During the 2017 Baltic Sea Commission General Assembly in Berlin, a Mission Statement was adopted in the Work Plan: *A platform for policy-orientated cooperation*. It was agreed to become a platform for policy-oriented cooperation. During the 2018 Baltic Sea Commission General Assembly in Oulu, a workshop was organised to discuss areas of improvement needed to achieve better added value for the Commission.

Below is a report on the actions undertaken and the state of play in the agreed areas of improvement:

- **Improve the basis for Executive Committee meetings** with more focus on strategic key issues concerning the development of the Baltic Sea Region and monitoring the Commission’s work regarding the agreed priority areas:
State of play: An Executive Committee Preparatory Group has been established (see below for further information). In addition, the Presidium has met regularly to prepare the work of the Executive Committee. A goal-oriented working process has been initiated and was used as the basis for drafting the BSC Work Plan for 2019-2021, in cooperation with the Working Groups.

- **Identify and strengthen the Commission’s contribution to the EU Baltic Sea Strategy** and create synergies with similar platforms that have the Baltic Sea Region as a working area:
  
  **State of play:** A Task Force on the Revision of the EUSBSR has been set up. Meetings with the European Commission, National Coordinators and the external consultant writing the input report has taken place. The Task Force sent out a questionnaire out to Member Regions and a Background Paper was produced. A final Input Paper is in the process of being finalised. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has organised activities with for example PA Innovation, PA Transport, PA Hazards and HA Capacity throughout the year. The Work Plan describes which Policy Areas and flagships the Working Groups wish to build closer relations with over the coming years.

- **Develop and improve tools for cross-border cooperation and support for macro-regional EU projects**, which ensure that projects are based on the needs and conditions of Member Regions:
  
  **State of play:** The CPMP now has a member of staff dedicated to EU projects, who coordinates projects and staff working on them, to help ensure that projects are based on needs and conditions of Member Regions. In addition, the BSC has started to create a table of all the EU projects that the BSC and its Member Regions are involved in. This work is still on-going and is constantly being developed. The Executive Committee has tasked the Executive Secretary to present a proposal on how the Baltic Sea Commission can handle requests for projects. And to further investigate the legal possibilities for the organisation to become full partners (not only associated partners).

- **Develop efficient working methods and a (digital) system** for reporting of on-going processes within the BSC and CPMR continuously to Member Regions:
  
  **State of play:** The BSC Secretariat has initiated an on-going process to monitor the representation, participation and specific interest areas of the Member Regions. This relates to the work carried out by the CPMR General Secretariat. Each Member Region has provided a key contact to the BSC Secretariat. These people are kept regularly updated by the BSC Secretariat and receive all digital communication from both the CPMR and the BSC. The mailing lists for the various Working Groups are constantly updated.

- **Develop tools for the evaluation of BSC activities** and of the Organisation’s Working Groups’ activities, collaborations, platforms etc:
  
  **State of play:** There has been an increase in the number of online, digital meetings over the past year. The responsibility for the coordination of the Working Groups has been given to the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Working Groups. The BSC Secretariat supports the Chairs where necessary in terms of policy briefings in the respective policy areas. The Chairs and Vice-Chairs then feed into the documents drafted by the Secretariat, providing details for the Activity Report and Work Plan for example.
Further to discussions on these areas of improvement for the BSC, 5 reforms were discussed during the 2018 Baltic Sea Commission General Assembly in Oulu. These reforms were to be implemented by the BSC Executive Committee in order to create conditions for a more effective and efficient organisation.

Below is a report on the actions undertaken and the state of play in the agreed reforms:

- **Creation of a Preparatory Group** with officials that support the politicians in the Executive Committee and the Chairs of the Working Groups. This group should support the Executive Secretary in preparing the Executive Committee meetings:
  
  **State of play:** A Preparatory Group has been established which includes civil servants from each Member Region of the Executive Committee. The Preparatory Group has met several times over the year.

- **Strengthen the link between the BSC and CPMR General Secretariat,** by initiating a dialogue with the CPMR Secretary General on how intelligence and insight could be made more accessible to the BSC Member Regions:
  
  **State of play:** A regular team meeting between the CPMR General Secretariat and the Secretariats of the various CPMR Geographical Commissions has been set up. The first meeting was held in April 2019.

- **Establishment of a Contact Group** with one representative per Member Region, to create conditions to better involve the Member Regions in the work of the BSC and the CPMR as the umbrella structure:
  
  **State of play:** A mailing list including one key contact from each Member Region has been created. These contacts will be invited to a special meeting in the autumn of 2019, and the future of this group as a proposed “Contact Group” will be explored in more detail. A potential “Contact Group” could act as a Member Region interface with the BSC Secretariat, be a sounding board for new initiatives and activities beyond the scope of the BSC Working Groups, provide input on the political and policy priorities of the Member Regions and inform and discuss activities in the Member Regions.

- **Focus the work of the BSC Executive Secretary** on key activities:
  
  **State of play:** Several steps have been taken to help focus the work of the BSC Executive Secretary, for example, the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Working Groups taking on more responsibility for the running of their respective Working Groups, the creation of a Preparatory Group for the organisation of the Executive Committee meetings etc. The Executive Secretary can now focus on activities such as cooperating with the CPMR Secretariat, liaising with key stakeholders in the EU institutions, maintaining close contact with the Member Regions and representing the BSC in various meetings and events.

- **Use a standardised communication format** on envisaged and on-going activities:
  
  **State of play:** The CPMR is currently finalising the development of an intranet for Members, where they will be able to access various documents that are available for Members only, hence increasing the added value of their membership. Each Region will be given a username and password that will give them access to the intranet of the CPMR and BSC.
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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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