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FOREWORD

JARI NAHKANEN
CPMR BSC President,
Member of the Board, Council of Oulu Region

“These past few months, we have been subjected to restrictions that highly modified our daily lives. Within this peculiar context, however, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) has continued to work hard to serve its members’ interests, put forward their specific needs, and contribute to a swift and green recovery for the Baltic Sea Region and the EU as whole. While the European Commission prepares policies of key interest for Member Regions, the three BSC Working Groups have been active in feeding into the Commission’s reflection about the new EU Forest Strategy, the EU Arctic Policy, the TEN-T Regulation, but also the sustainable Blue Economy. I am proud that the CPMR BSC has enabled Member Regions to continue sharing experiences and increasing their mutual understanding. Our impactful cooperation continues, even as borders are partially closed. This year was also marked by the adoption of a new Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, following an intense revision process where the CPMR BSC played an essential role. We will continue to facilitate regional involvement in the implementation of the Strategy. I would like to warmly thank all the BSC Members, regional politicians, civil servants, the Executive Committee and the BSC Secretariat for their hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm to build a shared future for the Baltic Sea Region. After 25 years of trust and successful cooperation, our commitment to make the Baltic Sea Region more prosperous, sustainable and competitive, is still the driving force for our daily work. I look forward to another fruitful year ahead, and to 25 more years of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region.”

LUCILLE EHRHART
CPMR BSC Executive Secretary

“This first year as Executive Secretary of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has been exciting in many aspects, despite the tumultuous time due to the health crisis. I have highly appreciated working with committed, inspirational politicians and civil servants from the Member Regions, that have such a strong attachment to their territories. Building more cooperation day-to-day for the Baltic Sea Region to thrive, and promoting the regions’ needs and interests towards the EU institutions, have been at the core of the BSC Secretariat’s activities over the year. Together with Clare Booth and CPMR colleagues, we have adapted to this remote working situation, in order to deliver the best standards and add the most value for the Member Regions, ensuring the CPMR and its Baltic Sea Commission continue to be a forward-thinking organisation with strong leadership in Brussels. This Activity Report outlines the main activities of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission from the General Assembly held in October 2020 up to the General Assembly held in September 2021. Happy reading et à bientôt!”
MEMBER REGIONS

CPMR Membership

136 Member Regions
24 countries

CPMR BSC Member Regions

18 Member Regions
4 countries
In January 2021, the Executive Committee welcomed the new CPMR President, Mr. Cees Loggen, Regional Minister of North Holland Province, who was elected by CPMR General Assembly in October 2020. At this occasion, he presented to BSC Members key priorities for his mandate, namely, to ensure CPMR is a resilient, relevant, and future-oriented association. He expressed his commitment to reinforce the link between the CPMR and its Geographical Commissions. Mitigation of climate change and ensuring the role of regions in the green transition is a major priority for the CPMR President.

In June 2021, the Executive Committee welcomed Mr. Pyry Niemi, President of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and Member of the Swedish Parliament and Bodo Bahr Secretary General. Mr. Pyry Niemi stressed the importance of close dialogue between BSPC and CPMR BSC to build a sustainable and prosperous Baltic Sea Region and welcomed further cooperation in the field of fight against climate change.
TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP

Bosse Andersson  
*Chair of BSC Transport Working Group, Stockholm Region*

“I am very pleased that we have been able to continue our work and also develop new working methodologies, despite the pandemic. During the year, we have started two new focus groups to intensify our work towards the EU level. I am also satisfied with the process that we have had in the TEN-T revision, which is a continuous learning process which also gives us a stronger voice for the joint interests of the Baltic Sea Region. It is with pride that I notice an increased activity in the group with several new Member Regions onboard.”

Kristiina Hämäläinen  
*Vice-Chair of BSC Transport Working Group, Region Päijät-Häme*

Magnus Lagergren  
*Vice-Chair of BSC Transport Working Group, Region Örebro*

**Action Plan 2021-2023**

Over the year, the BSC Transport Working Group developed a new two-way Action Plan for 2021-2023, reflecting policy priorities and interests of Member Regions related to transport and accessibility. The Action Plan serves as roadmap and is anchored in the framework of the EU, national, macro-regional and regional transport policy frameworks. The Transport Working Group Members have agreed to focus on two areas for 2021-2023:

- Promote functional TEN-T network for strengthening the connectivity and accessibility in the Baltic Sea Region
- Promote smart, sustainable and climate neutral transport modes

Promoting accessibility and connectivity in the Arctic is a key objective, included in both policy priorities defined by the Working Group.

[Read the detailed Action Plan HERE](#)
The Working Group followed closely and took an active role in the revision process of the TEN-T regulation. Member Regions participated in the EU public consultation on TEN-T and submitted policy messages reflecting the views of Members. They also asked for some adjustments on the TEN-T maps. [Read the document HERE.](#)

The Working Group enabled Member Regions to increase mutual understanding and sharing of knowledge regarding sustainable mobility. Good regional examples on sustainable mobility on Sea, in Land and in the Air were presented, as well as experience from Lahti as European Green Capital.

The Working Group kept a close dialogue with representatives of the EU institutions. In May, BSC Regions welcomed Ms Henna Virkkunen, Member of the European Parliament, and exchanged about the support of the EU to promote sustainable mobility in the BSC Regions. A letter was sent to Ms Catherine Trautmann, Coordinator for the North Sea-Baltic TEN-T Corridor.

**New working methodology**

On the suggestion of the Chair and Vice-Chairs, the BSC Transport Working Group established two subgroups to ensure greater effectiveness in the work, made up of interested civil servants from BSC Member Regions. The two established technical sub-groups focus on the TEN-T revision, and the other on the Smart, sustainable and Clean Transport modes. They are in charge of following relevant EU policies, preparing reports, mapping exercise, organising seminars, following calls.

**Meetings**

**Transport WG Meetings**

- EUSBSR Transport Action Plan
  27 October 2020
- Revision of the TEN-T regulation
  17 March 2021
- Sustainable Mobility
  25 May 2021

[BSC Transport WG meeting; March 2021](#)
Over the year, the BSC Maritime Working Group developed a new two-year Action Plan for 2021-2023, reflecting policy priorities and interests of Member Regions related to maritime affairs and sustainable coastal tourism. It serves as a roadmap and is anchored in the framework of the EU, national, macro-regional and regional Transport Policy frameworks. The Maritime Working Group Members have agreed to focus on two policy areas for 2021-2023:

- Promote sustainable maritime industries in the Baltic Sea Region (Maritime skills, shipbuilding industry, sustainable blue economy, small-scale fishing, Maritime Spatial Planning)
- Promote sustainable coastal tourism in the Baltic Sea Region (Support investments and development of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region. Help regions to support the recovery of the tourism sector and encourage a transition to new forms of sustainable tourism).

Read the detailed Action Plan HERE.
Monitor and Influence EU Maritime Policies

The Working Group was active in the development of a new EU Sustainable Blue Economy, and contributed to the EU public consultation, including policy messages reflecting the view of the Members, but also developed messages regarding sustainable maritime tourism in light of the recovery of the sector in the Baltic Sea Region.

Cooperation with partners

Over the year, the Working Group has exchanged on a macro-regional level with Policy Area Clean Ship and Policy Area Bioeconomy regarding the Sustainable Blue Economy, but also Policy Area Tourism regarding the recovery of the tourism sector in the Baltic Sea Region. The Working Group had also contact with key BSR stakeholders related to maritime affairs.

Exchange with the EU institutions

The Working Group had close dialogue with representatives of the European Commission (DG MARE) about the role of BSC regions and their contribution regarding Sustainable Blue Economy, but also about sustainable coastal tourism (DG GROW). The Maritime Working Group also co-organised an event in the framework of the SEArca intergroup.

Meetings

Maritime WG Meetings

- Sustainable Blue Economy
  1 December 2020
- Coastal maritime tourism in recovery context
  10 March 2021
- Sustainable Blue Economy
  31 May 2021
- SEArca event “preserving marine biodiversity in a changing climate in BSR”

BSC Maritime WG meeting; March 2021

Click here to read the BSC position on Sustainable Blue Economy!
Over the year, the Energy and Climate Working Group developed a two-year Action Plan reflecting policy priorities and the interests of Member Regions, and serving as a roadmap. The Working Group’s activities are anchored in the European Green Deal Agenda, as the new EU Growth Strategy post-2020. Through their activities within the Working Group, Member Regions are committed to contributing to achieve the goals of climate neutrality as set out in the Green Deal. In a recovery context, the Working Group promotes the green transition as an opportunity to redirect our societies towards a more sustainable, hence more competitive and resilient model, and to support job creation.

The Working Group Members have agreed to focus on four policy areas for 2021-2023:
- Promoting Clean Energies
- Promote forestry and its multi-functional roles
- Facilitate the transition towards an innovative circular economy
- Support the development of Sustainable Smart Specialisation Strategies

Read the detailed Action Plan HERE.
The Working Group took an active role in the revision process of the EU Forest Strategy, looking at the implications for Baltic Sea Regions. In January 2021, the Working Group shared key messages with representative from the European Commission (DG CLIMA) on forests, and later contributed to the EU public consultation, to shape the new EU forest Strategy.

Member Regions of the CPMR BSC took an active role in the CPMR Climate Task Force, chaired by Richard Sjölund (Ostrobothnia), who was Chair of the BSC Energy and Climate Working Group until January 2021. Regions provided input to the CPMR initiative Regions’Act! and also in the exchange regarding the role of regions in climate adaptation and mitigation.

The Working Group served as a platform to exchange experiences between regions on the sustainable dimension of their Smart Specialisation Strategies, to increase mutual understanding and explore possible joint actions. They also exchanged experiences regarding forests regional policies, and the use of forest-products in the construction sector.

The Working Group conveyed key messages with representatives from the European Commission (DG CLIMA) on the EU Forest Strategy, and representatives from the Joint Research Centre about the sustainable dimension of Smart Specialisation Strategies. Member Regions also exchanged with representatives from DG ENER about the New European Bauhaus.

Meetings

Energy & Climate WG Meetings

- EU Forest Strategy
  7 January 2021
- EU Forest Strategy
  2 March 2021
- RIS3 as a Driver to the Green Recovery
  3 June 2021
ARCTIC TASK FORCE

Tomas Mörtsell
Chair of BSC Arctic Task Force, Region Västerbotten

“...We need more EU in the Arctic and more Arctic in the EU. What happens in the Arctic has effects on us all. The Arctic task Force gather regional forces to promote a stronger territorial dimension in the new EU Arctic Policy.”

Monitor and Influence EU Arctic Policy

In November 2020, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission submitted a contribution to the Public Consultation on the Future of the EU Arctic Policy to feed into the European Commission’s reflection. Among key messages, the BSC underlined that the European Union must step up its engagement for the sustainable development of the Arctic and beyond, and to increase multi-level governance. Read the document HERE.

CPMR Political Bureau discuss EU Arctic Policy

In the spring CPMR Political Bureau, gathering about 100 representatives, regional cooperation at Europe’s border was discussed, including regional cooperation in the future EU Arctic Policy. The CPMR Political Bureau discussed with Michael Mann, EU Special Envoy for Arctic Matters, on the need to increase the territorial dimension of the future EU Arctic Policy, and what happens in the Arctic concern all Regions in Europe.

Discussion with regions and EU Special Envoy on Arctic Matters

In March 2021, the BSC Arctic Task-Force, chaired by Tomas Mörtsell, discussed from a regional perspective, the future EU Arctic Policy together with Michael Mann, EU Special Envoy for Arctic matters at the European External Action Service, and regional representatives from Nordland, the Faroe Islands, Scotland, Iceland, and Member of the European Parliament Pierre Karleskind. More information HERE.

Discussion of the role of Arctic to realise the Green Deal

On 28 June, the CPMR BSC Arctic Task Force, together with, MEP Urmas Paet, Chair of the Arctic Friendship Group of the European Parliament organised its 2nd online meeting to discuss the innovation potential in the Arctic, to lead the green transition. EU Commissioner Sinkevičius in a video message addressed to the audience the role of smart specialisation strategy process in the European Arctic can support sustainable development. More information can be read HERE.
CPMR Baltic Sea Commission commitment to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Wolf Born
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

“After taking an active part in the revision process of the Action Plan of the EUSBSR, the CPMR BSC together with its Member Regions is committed to work hand in hand with the key implementers of the Strategy in order to promote the sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region.”

New EUSBSR Action Plan adopted!

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission welcomed the adoption of the new Action Plan of the EUSBSR by the European Commission in February 2021. The organisation was active in the revision process, through a dedicated Task Force lead by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to ensure a strong territorial dimension and involvement of regions. In the new Action Plan, the 3 objectives “Save the Sea”, “Connect the Region”, “Increase prosperity” are still valid, while the number of the Policy Areas decreased to 14 actions. A new Baltic Sea Strategy Point will be established.

New perspectives to territorial development and innovation in the Baltic Sea Region

On 11 March, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission organised an event to discuss from a regional perspective the recently approved Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the new Interreg Baltic Sea Programme in its final stage of preparation, and also the growing role of Smart Specialisation Strategies on the EU Agenda, including the new Interregional Innovation Instrument, and how they will contribute to the resilience of the Baltic Sea Region. Around 70 participants from the Baltic Sea Region attended the event. Guest speakers included Francesco Molica, CPMR Director for Cohesion Policy, Simon Stermann, Chair of the EUSBSR National Coordinators Group, Eeva Rantama, from Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, Policy Area Innovation Esa Kokkonen and Peter Berkowitz, Head of Unit at DG REGIO. More information HERE.

Click here to read the new EUSBSR Action Plan

Cooperation with EUSBSR Policy Areas Coordinators

Over the year, the Working Groups of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission have had close cooperation with Policy Areas Coordinators for INNOVATION, TRANSPORT, SHIP, BIOECONOMY and TOURISM on their respective policy areas of work.

Simon Stermann
German Foreign Office, Chair of the EUSBSR National Coordinators Group

“Local actors and federations like the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission are the engine room of our cooperation. The new Action Plan opens opportunities to strengthen ties while attracting newcomers.”
What are the main activities performed by the CPMR in the area of cohesion?

“Over the past 12 months the legislative work related to cohesion has been very intense with several files being negotiated all at once: Common Provision Regulations for the period 2021-2027, Just Transition Fund, REACT-EU, Brexit Adjustment Reserve. The CPMR has carried out a close monitoring of the process providing in-depth updates and tailored information to its members. Our analyses and advocacy activities are credited to have swayed the outcome of negotiations so as to better reflect the interests of regional authorities in the relevant regulations. One concrete example of this is the agreed governance for the new Interregional Innovation Investments initiative, which will see a strong role for regional authorities thanks to lobbying efforts of the CPMR, among others. The CPMR has also focused extensively on the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) with a view to ensuring a close involvement of regions and a strong territorial dimension. Additionally, specific attention has been given to the RRF implications for Cohesion Policy: on this very issue the work of the CPMR has been widely praised resulting in an invitation to speak at a meeting of the European Ministers of Cohesion Policy. Lastly, the CPMR has launched a reflection to update its position about regional aid guidelines.”

How have Baltic Sea Commission and its members have contributed to the work in the area of cohesion?

“The Baltic Sea Commission has historically provided a key contribution to CPMR activities on Cohesion Policy. Member Regions have been active in the CPMR Cohesion Working Group (Core Group) in sharing their experiences regarding the use and implementation of Structural Funds. Over the years the views and expertise of the Baltic Sea members have largely contributed to shaping the positions of the CPMR on relevant areas ranging from territorial cooperation to smart specialisation strategies. Recently, several BSC Member Regions answered a CPMR questionnaire about the experience of regions regarding the national Recovery and Resilience Facility, which will help to develop an analysis, to be then presented to the EU institutions. The CPMR’s recognised work on macro-regions owes a great deal to the Baltic Sea Commission for instance on topics such as “embedding”. Baltic Sea regions are playing and will continue to play a prominent role in showing the positive impact of Cohesion Policy in delivering future-oriented priorities, such as the transition towards a carbon neutral society. This is of utmost importance to fight future attempts to cut the budget of Cohesion Policy on the grounds that it shall make space for instruments addressing “less traditional” areas.”

Francesco Molica
CPMR Director for Cohesion

BSC Action about the Recovery and Resilience Facility

As national governments were finalising their draft Recovery and Resilience Plans which list the reforms and investments in each Member State ahead of the 30 April deadline, the Executive Committee of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission adopted a policy position with 5 key messages addressed to Member States asking them to act together with with Regional Authorities to prepare and deliver successful RRP, act beyond national borders to enable a balanced territorial development, act on the basis of already existing mature projects, act in coordination to avoid the risks of competition between funds and to act to unlock the potential for growth and sustainable development based on territorial strengths. Read the paper HERE.
Interview with the CPMR Director for Transport

What has been the main focus of CPMR work related to transport over the past months?

“The CPMR Transport Working Group has mainly focused its work on monitoring and influencing the Revision Process of the Guidelines for the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) lately. Our efforts consisted of contributing to the roadmap for the Public Consultation in December 2020 and then to the Public Consultation itself in May 2021. We also worked to influence (successfully) MEP Gens Gieseke’s Initiative Report on TEN-T. A Policy Position on TEN-T was adopted by the CPMR Political Bureau in spring (read here). In parallel, we contributed to the preparation of the Strategy for Smart and Sustainable Mobility, the mobility dimension of the Green Deal (read here). We also focused on the Alternative Fuels Directive and the new FuelEU Maritime Initiative. In December 2021, the Transport Working Group met Pr. Kurt Bodewig, the Coordinator for Motorways of the Sea. It was a great opportunity to discuss the maritime dimension of the revised TEN-T. The CPMR Secretariat also initiated a study on territorial accessibility, with our colleague Guillaume Moreno. The aim of this work is to establish a criterion for CEF 2.0 projects to take benefit from our efforts to include territorial accessibility in the list of award criteria for the 2021-2027 Programming Period.”

How have Baltic Sea Commission and its Member Regions have contributed to CPMR work relating to transport?

“The Baltic Sea Commission brings an important contribution to the work of the CPMR on Transport and Accessibility thanks to its Transport Working Group. Indeed, over the last year, the BSC contributed to our work on TEN-T both by providing valuable ideas based on the experience of its Member Regions to strengthen the position of the CPMR and by identifying key BSC amendments to bring to the TEN-T maps in the perspective of the Revision of the Regulation. Additionally, the members of the BSC are always keen to participate in the Inter-Commissions Transport Working Group of the CPMR. For instance, the presentation of the BSC report on its Call for Experience Sharing of Transport Projects to the other member Regions of the CPMR was inspiring and brought a great example of initiatives that could be duplicated elsewhere.”
COMMUNICATION

Due to distance work, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has made efforts in reinventing ways of communication to ensure smooth and impactful correspondance internally with Member Regions with the regular publication of a Newsflash, including interviews with Members, and the creation of a Facebook page. Over the past year, the focus has also been to raise the profile of the organisation towards EU institutions and stakeholders, through targeted and active external communication, including an active twitter account with more than 1000 followers, and the regular publication of articles on the BSC Website.

CPMR BSC joins Facebook community!

Watch outdoor interview in Umeå with MEP Erik Bergkvist about the EU long-term negotiation: November 2020

Discover BSC Newsflash
October Newsflash: Spotlight on Örebro: interview with Magnus Lagergren
December Newsflash: Spotlight on Gotland: interview with Jersper Skalberg Karlsson
January Newsflash: Spotlight on Ostrobothnia: video interview with Richard Sjölund
March Newsflash: Spotlight on Värmland: interview with Ola Persson
June Newsflash: Spotlight on Jämtland-Harjedalen: Interview newflash with Elise Ryder Wikén

Creation of a new logo for 25th anniversary

more than 1 000 Twitter followers