EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Helsinki EU Office, 15-17 Rue Belliard, 1040 Brussels

List of participants

President
Jari SAINIO, Region of Helsinki-Uusimaa

1st Vice-President
Annika SANDSTRÖM, County Council of Stockholm

Full Members
Erik BERGKVIST, Region Västerbotten
Anders ÖBERG, Norrbotten County Council
Wolf BORN, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Richard SJÖLUND, Regional Council of Ostrobothnia

Working Groups
Kai HOLMBERG, Regional Council of Kymenlaakso, Chair of the BSC Transport Working Group

Supporting Officers
Jerk JOHNSON, International Coordinator, Regional Council of Ostrobothnia
John KOSTET, Senior Advisor, Region Västerbotten
Evert KROES, Regional Planner, Stockholm County Council
Jonas LUNDSTRÖM, Head of Enterprise, Innovation and Social Development, Region Västerbotten, BSC Coordinator of Priority Area 1
Saara NUOTIO-COULON, Head of Office, Turku-Southwest Finland European Office
Krista TAIPALE, Head of Office, Helsinki European Office

Guests
Kari AALTO, Director, Oulu Region / East and North Finland EU Office
Peter SCHENK, DG Regio, European Commission

CPMR and BSC Secretariat
Åsa BJERING, Executive Secretary
Nick BROOKES, Director Regional Policy
Gregg JONES, Director for Finance and EU Programmes
Lucille EHRHART, Policy Analyst
1. Opening of the Board meeting

1.1. Opening of the meeting - Mr Jari Sainio, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Jari Sainio, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, welcomed members of the Executive Committee and the participants to the Helsinki EU Office in Brussels.

1.2. Adoption of the Agenda

Åsa Bjering informed participants about a proposed change to the agenda that had been sent out with the preparatory documents one week prior to the meeting. The speech by Gregg Jones was postponed to early afternoon. The agenda was adopted with this change as below.

1.3 Adoption of the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, Stockholm, 4 October 2017

With the modification of Kai Holmberg’s regional belonging, the minutes were adopted. They can be read [here](#).
1.4 CPMR BSC Secretariat Report, Ms Åsa Bjering (no written report)

Åsa Bjering updated participants about the several communication activities carried out by the BSC Secretariat since the last meeting in October 2017:

- Update of the BSC website;
- Draft of news articles for the BSC website about events attended by the BSC Secretariat or members of the BSC. All news can be read here;
- The BSC Secretariat has developed a template for news submissions. All BSC Members are invited to use the template (available from the Secretariat) and submit news materials to further develop the BSC website and increase the overall visibility of the BSC.

The Executive Secretary informed the Executive Committee that the Secretariat is developing a proposal on a Communication Strategy for the Baltic Sea Commission. This will be presented and discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting.

Keynote speech by Mr Nick Brookes on post-2020 EU budget & the agenda for spring 2018

The PowerPoint presentation can be read here.

Context: The European Commission is preparing the legislative proposal for the future of the EU budget that is expected to be published at the end of May 2018. The publication of the legislative package for EU policies, including Cohesion Policy, should be published in June.

Mr Nick Brookes, CPMR Director for Cohesion Policy, presented the current work of the CPMR. This work is being developed by the CPMR Core Group on Cohesion Policy and more information is available upon request from the Secretariat.

Nick Brookes informed participants that the CPMR Secretariat is currently developing a Policy Position on the future of the MFF which will presented at the next Political Bureau on 8 March in Patras.

The intervention of Nick Brookes was followed by a discussion with participants.

2. CPMR Budget and Balance with Projects

2.1 Presentation by Mr Gregg Jones, CPMR Director of Finance and EU programmes

Throughout the last year, the CPMR has had an increase in projects. A report was presented at the CPMR Political Bureau in October 2018. The Executive Committee Members requested a discussion with the CPMR on the topic.

Mr Gregg Jones, Financial Director of the CPMR gave a presentation. Giving the background, and the rationale for being involved in projects, he stressed that project involvement should have no detrimental impact on core policy/lobbying activities and that projects provide a positive feedback loop to policy/lobbying activities in certain fields such as Maritime Affairs.
The CPMR Secretariat emphasised that EU funding remains a relatively small share of overall CPMR income (less than 15% for 2017) although there is an increase for 2018, and steps have been taken to manage the risks associated with increased activity – including the strategic framework and risk assessment exercise presented to the Political Bureau in October.

These issues were then discussed with participants.

The Baltic Sea Commission Members highlighted:
• A concern that 12 Regions have still not paid CPMR Membership fees for previous years;
• Transparency on which projects CPMR decides to join and the rationale;
• Importance that project involvement shouldn’t take means and resources for lobby work;
• Balance between the Geographical Commissions in project involvement through central CPMR.

The discussion was concluded by Gregg Jones, who stressed that he appreciate the dialogue and is more than happy to continue the dialogue. There is also a Finance Committee, of which Mr Kaj Suomela, Regional Mayor of Ostrobothnia is a Member. They usually meet once a year, and their next meeting is scheduled for 2 May 2018 (in Brussels).

3. Future of the CPMR BSC Secretariat

Ms Krista Taipale, Technical Secretary of the Task Force, presented the outcome of the first Task Force meeting in Stockholm, in November 2017. The minutes of the meeting were sent to the Executive Committee in advance and are available upon request from the secretariat.

The Executive Committee discussed the proposal and the future process. The discussion was concluded with the following decision on the mandate of the Task Force.

The Executive Committee asks the Task Force on the future of the BSC Secretariat to make a proposal on the future work and location of the BSC Secretariat and submit it to the next Executive Committee meeting.

It was asked to explore the following aspects in particular:

• Make the work of the Executive Committee more focused on strategic and political questions;
• Better involve Member Regions with regard to EU policy monitoring and the related work of the CPMR Secretariat;
• Communication system with the BSC on strategies and activities on a political and project level,
• Resources needed to implement this.
4. CPMR BSC Organisational Matters

4.1 Financial Report

Mr Anders Öberg presented the Financial Report (this document is available on request from the BSC Secretariat).

4.2 Budget 2019 (initial discussion)

The Executive Committee is, according to the Internal Rules, obliged to submit a proposal on the Budget for 2019 to the General Assembly. The Secretariat is to develop a draft proposal for the next Executive Committee meeting.

It was noted in the discussion that even if the membership fees have been raised, there is a need for one or more Regions to take on an extra financial obligation in terms of hosting the Secretariat. This should be discussed in the Task Force and among the Regions prior to the next Executive Committee meeting.

4.3 Membership

Åsa Bjering informed the Executive Committee about the latest updates on Membership discussions. All membership fees for the CPMR BSC Members have been paid for 2017. Nordland left the organisation in 2017. The Executive Committee had been informed about this during the last meeting.

Discussions are on-going with Satakunta (FI), Lapland (FI), Värmland (SE), and Pomorskie (PL).

Estonia – as of January 2018 the County Councils are no longer in existence.
- Association of Estonian Cities (AEC);
- Municipality Association of Municipalities of Estonia.

The Executive Committee decided that the Executive Secretary should draft an email to be signed by the Presidents of the CPMR, the CPMR Island Commission and the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission to the Presidents of the two associations mentioned above.

Invited Guest: Peter Schenk, DG REGIO

Mr Peter Schenk, responsible for the EUSBSR within DG REGIO, provided an update on the EUSBSR to the participants.

In October, DG REGIO published a Report on how to better link the Macro-Regional Strategies to Cohesion Policy. The study on macro-regional strategies and their links with Cohesion Policy published in November in 2017 by the European Commission aims at:
- assessing the performance of the MRS and to carry out an in-depth analysis of each MRS;
- exploring the current links between the MRS and the ESIF during 2014-2020 but also explore future opportunities.

This is now being discussed at the meetings of the National Contact Points.
Mr Schenk also thanked the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission for the cooperation regarding the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Berlin and informed participants of the Annual Forum in Tallinn, on 4-5 June 2018. Peter Schenk’s speech was followed by discussions with participants.

5. Work Plan 2017 - 2019

5.1 BSC Transport Working Group, Mr Kai Holmberg, Chair of the Transport Working Group

Kai Holmberg presented the past and future activities of the BSC Transport Working Group to the participants.

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<th>PAST ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>PLANNED ACTIVITIES SPRING 2018</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Mr Holmberg participated at the High-Level Conference Connecting Europe in Tallinn in September;</td>
<td>• Transport Working Group, Helsinki, 15-16 February 2018;</td>
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<td>• The BSC attended a seminar organised by the TEN-Tacle.project partnership in October in Berlin;</td>
<td>• Deadline platform application, 28 February 2018;</td>
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<td>• Meeting with Chair and Vice-Chair of NSC;</td>
<td>• Joint meeting with the North Sea Commission (TBC/April);</td>
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<td>• CPMR Transport Working Group;</td>
<td>• Members participating in the TEN-T days, Ljubljana, 25-26 April 2018;</td>
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<td>• ARC-meeting in the European Parliament.</td>
<td>• Chair and Vice-Chairs to participate in an event in Berlin on 2-3 May 2018, on the links between the ERDF and CEF.</td>
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5.2 Maritime Working Group, Ms Tiina Perho, Chair of the Maritime Working Group

Saara Nuotio-Coulon replaced Tiina Perho to present the work of the Maritime Working Group.

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<tr>
<td>• The Maritime Working Group attended the Kick-off meeting of the “From the SDGs towards a Sustainable Tourism in the BSR” project in September;</td>
<td>• Maritime Working Group meeting, 7 March 2018 in Stockholm;</td>
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<td>• Tiina Perho was invited to speak at the Conference “Beyond 2020: Supporting Europe’s Coastal Communities”, organised in October in Tallinn. Read more here;</td>
<td>• HELCOM activities (Helsinki-Uusimaa represents the Maritime Working Group);</td>
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<td>• Tiina Perho presented the work of the Maritime Working Group at the CPMR General Assembly in October in Helsinki;</td>
<td>• CBSS Expert Group Meeting on Maritime Policy (Executive Secretary to participate).</td>
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<td>• The Maritime Working Group met in Turku late October. Read more here;</td>
<td>• HELCOM Meetings in Helsinki.</td>
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5.3 Energy Working Group, Mr Richard Sjölund, Chair of the Energy WG

The Energy Working Group is functioning as the Advisory Committee of the Interreg BSR project “Learning Among Regions on Smart Specialisation” (LARS website). The CPMR BSC is an Associated Partner in the project.

About the project LARS. The Lead Partner is the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia. The project attempts to help the public sector in leading smart specialisation processes in their Regions and to connect innovation networks across Regions. It helps find solutions to tackle the fragmentation of regional systems of innovation looking for entrepreneurial discoveries within such topics as blue growth, bio and circular economy, advanced production methods and technologies for energy efficiency.

About the role of the CPMR BSC in LARS. The BSC is in charge of communicating and disseminating LARS results and political messages of the project to the EU institutions and among CPMR Member Regions.

Jerker Johnson presented (read presentation here) the recent progress of the LARS project. A kick-off meeting was held in October 2017. In the framework of the project, several seminars will be organised. The next seminar will take place in April 2018 in Vilnius (LT). An invitation will be sent to other Regions.

Richard Sjölund, Chair of the Working Group, stressed the importance of making a new call for Vice-Chairs of the Working Group, the position is still vacant in the Energy Working Group.

5.4 Update and discussion on activities and plans for Priority Area 1: Supporting the Creation of a Smart Specialisation Platform, Mr Jonas Lundström, Coordinator of PrioArea 1

Jonas Lundström presented the actions taken since the last Executive Meeting on:
- The Baltic Leadership Programme for S3 experts;
- A Smart Specialisation Platform in the Baltic Sea Region.

He said that the Task Force of the BSC Priority Area on supporting a Smart Specialisation Platform suggests that the Executive Committee:
- Writes a Memorandum of Understanding with PA Innovation and the Swedish Institute, committing to support in the preparation and recruitment phase of the Baltic Leadership Programme for S3 experts;
- Becomes an Associated Partner and writes a letter of support on the on-going project platform application to Interreg BSR that Region Västerbotten is planning to submit in February 2018.

The Executive Committee agreed with the two suggested points.
5.5 Update and discussion on activities and plans for Priority Area 2: Regional and Pan-Baltic take on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Mr Anders Öberg, Coordinator of PrioArea 2

Anders Öberg presented past and planned actions regarding the BSC Priority Area 2.

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| • Invitation to all CPMR BSC Members to join the Task Force;  
  • Norrbotten, Skåne, Stockholm and Southwest Finland have indicated an interest. | • Online meeting with the Regions of CPMR BSC & ERB;  
  • Application to organise a seminar at the EUSBSR AF (deadline 31 January);  
  • Seminar: Transforming our future, 7 April;  
  • Discussions with CBSS to start a new leadership programme with focus on local and regional level. |

6. CPMR BSC General Assembly, 16 May, Oulu

6.1 Practical information

Kari Aalto brought two points in particular to the attention of the Executive Committee:

• **The date of the Baltic Sea Commission has been changed to Wednesday 16 May;**
• The hotels should be booked on time by participants. After 24 May, room availability cannot be guaranteed.

The timeframe for the preparation of the General Assembly and the information/documents that will be sent out to the members is available on request from the Secretariat.

6.2 Draft Programme

Åsa Bjering and Kari Aalto presented the draft programme that had been sent to the Executive Committee Members prior to the meeting.

Kari Aalto added that Regional Council of Oulu would want a session on the budget/MFF issue. They are aiming to invite Mr Juha Sipilä, Finnish PM.

Mr Wolf Born added that he wanted a point on the EUSBSR, especially in light of a possible message to be disseminated during the EUSBSR Annual Forum which will take place only a couple of weeks after the General Assembly.

The Executive Committee concluded that the programme was good overall and that they liked the idea of a session on the budget and a link to the on-going work of the EUSBSR.

There was a discussion on a proposed final declaration.

The Secretariat, together with the Regional Council of Oulu, is working to finalise the programme for the General Assembly. Input from Members is welcome.
6.3 List of documents

Åsa Bjering asked the Executive Committee if they want to have a BSC Final Declaration for the General Assembly.

Wolf Born said that the documents foreseen for the General Assembly are technical documents. He suggested having a political paper which would enable the BSC to raise its visibility and also a paper that could be used by participants of the 9th EUSBSR Annual Forum which will take place early June. He reminded participants that at the last General Assembly, a Policy Position was adopted on the link between the Baltic and the Arctic.

The Executive Committee agreed with the proposal to have a political Final Declaration for the next General Assembly. It was agreed that politicians from the BSC will reflect first on what political messages should be included in the Final Declaration. Based on these reflections, a drafting group will develop the Final Declaration. The CPMR General Secretariat will be involved in this work.

6.4 Election

Åsa Bjering explained to participants the process and the timeline for the election of the next President of the Baltic Sea Commission.

- 16 March at the latest, the BSC Secretariat will send the Call for Nominations;
- 16 April 12 noon: All applications must be sent to the Executive Secretary, together with a Curriculum Vitae and a maximum one-page declaration on the Baltic Sea Commission strategy and should reflect political ambition. Candidatures received will be sent to all Member Regions one month before the election (16 April afternoon).

6.5 A.O.B.

Mr Wolf Born asked if the BSC will submit an application for the organisation of seminars in the framework of the 9th EUSBSR Annual Forum. The deadline for application is 31 January. He added that one seminar could be on communication, since the BSC has been working on the added value of communicating transnational cooperation.

The Executive Secretary answered that the organisation is preparing proposals on the two priority issues decided at the last General Assembly in Berlin (SDG and the role of Regions and the creation of a Smart Specialisation Platform). The Secretariat is not preparing any other proposals but will be active in order to support other organisers to involve regional representatives in their sessions.

7. EUSBSR

7.1 Presentation by Åsa Bjering

Due to the time constraints of the meeting, Åsa Bjering gave a brief overview of the work carried out in relation to the different reports, communication and discussions on EUSBSR
and macro-regional strategies at the moment. This is all linked to the Working Group activities and the two priority areas of the organisation.

Åsa Bjering said the Secretariat has developed a Paper on the recent study from DG REGIO on the ESI funds and the links with macro-regional strategies. This could potentially feed into the development of the General Assembly Final Declaration.

Lucille Ehrhart has written a summary of the study. This is available on request from the Secretariat.

8. Closing session

8.1. A.O.B

8.2 Next meeting

It was decided that the next meeting will be held lunch-lunch on 19-20 March 2018 in Umeå.

8.3 Timetable of events

This is updated constantly and is available on the BSC website (click here).