INTRODUCTION

Dear Members, Partners,

In this Christmas atmosphere, we are pleased to share the third “CPMR BSC Newsflash” which provides an update about CPMR Baltic Sea Commission activities for November and December.

The Newsflash includes:

➔ Articles about latest CPMR BSC events
➔ An Interview with Member of the European Parliament, Mr Erik Bergkvist
➔ Information about the BSC Working Groups
➔ An update about Presidium meetings
➔ An interview with Mr Jesper Skalberg Karlsson about Gotland and also a video explaining how Gotland is restarting its tourism sector deeply affected by the pandemic
➔ A calendar of future BSC events for 2021

On behalf of the Secretariat of the Baltic Sea Commission, we also thank you for the good cooperation over the last months. We also wish you a nice and relaxing Christmas break. We look forward to meeting you in 2021 in good health!

Lucille Ehrhart, Executive Secretary of CPMR BSC
Clare Booth, Policy Assistant

Frohe Weihnachten
God Jul
Hyvää Joulua
Häid Jörði
On 5 November 2020, Ms Tiina Perho, Chair of the CPMR BSC Maritime Working Group was invited to share regional perspectives about how to find solutions to mitigate the threats to Baltic marine biodiversity posed by climate change, during an online seminar hosted by Mr Nils Torvalds, Member of the European Parliament and organised by the Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas (SEArica) Intergroup of the European Parliament.

Ms Tiina Perho first outlined the alarming state of the Baltic Sea environment and its main ecological threats, with a focus on the Archipelago Sea. She named the growing number of endangered species and the high pollution levels due to climate change, maritime transport and increasing nutrient loads as the main challenges facing the Baltic Sea environment. She then detailed some concrete examples of local action undertaken in Finland to safeguard the ecosystems in the areas of agriculture, aquaculture and shipbuilding. She welcomed the Green Deal Agenda as a unique opportunity for protecting the Baltic Sea and outlined the social aspects of preserving a sound and healthy environment in this region for future generations. More information HERE.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission submitted a contribution to the Public Consultation on the Future of the EU Arctic Policy organised by the European Commission. The consultation should enable a broad reflection on the EU’s Arctic Policy in the face of new challenges and opportunities, including the EU’s ambitions under the European Green Deal.

The key messages from the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission include:

1. The Arctic development concerns us all and obliges us to act;
2. The European Union must step up its engagement for the sustainable development of the Arctic and beyond;
3. Multi-level governance and a strong role of regions are needed to promote development in the Arctic Region;
4. Opportunities for research, technology, innovation and promoting accessibility for sustainable growth in the Arctic and beyond.

The full paper is available here.
INTERVIEW WITH ERIK BERGKVIST

Member of the European Parliament,
Former Member and President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

In light of the latest developments regarding negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council about the long-term EU budget, Mr Erik Bergkvist, Member of the European Parliament and former Member and President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, kindly accepted to provide the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission with an update about the on-going discussions. Discover the policy update in the form of an outdoor interview carried out on 24 November 2020, in Umeå, where Erik is carrying out his parliamentary activities from a distance, due to the current health situation.

In the interview, Erik also looked back at his experience as a member of the CPMR and Baltic Sea Commission. Last but not least, he also gave his personal recommendations on what to discover if you wish to come to visit Västerbotten or the north of Sweden. The video was made with the precious support of Mr Mårten Edberg, Region Västerbotten.

***** WATCH THE VIDEO HERE *****

Member States agree an historic EUR 1.8 trillion budget deal

Since the interview, an agreement was found between Member States, on 10 December, about the EU long-term budget for 2021-2027 and Next Generation EU, under the German Presidency. The budget package, totalling EUR 1.8 trillion should help a strong economic response to the crisis while preserving the rule of law. The European Parliament will soon approve the multi-annual financial framework and the rule of law mechanism.

Furthermore, during the last few weeks, the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission reached compromises regarding Cohesion Policy regulations (REACT-EU, Common Provisions Regulations, Interreg, ERDF, Cohesion Fund) and the Just Transition Fund.
In view of the growing importance of Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) on the EU agenda, for the EU recovery process and for regional development, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission organised an online meeting on 1 December, to explore the interests of Member Regions to set up a new Working Group dedicated to promoting further interregional cooperation on S3.

Ms Marta Bahta from Region Västerbotten presented an overview of the state of play of S3 at European level. It was followed by a presentation from Mr Esa Kokkonen, EUSBSR Policy Area Coordinator for Innovation, who stressed the growing potential regarding S3 in the new Action Plan of the Strategy. Mr Francesco Molica, CPMR Director for Regional Policy, provided an update on the latest developments of the inter-institutional negotiations on the new instrument “Interregional Investment Initiative”, established under the ERDF regulation with EUR 500 Mil.

Several Member Regions explained the state of play regarding the revision process of their S3 and the priorities of their regional S3. In view of the interests from the participants to cooperate more on S3, the meeting concluded by making a proposal to the BSC Executive Committee to create a new Working Group dedicated to this topic. The proposal will be discussed on 27 January 2021.

On 1 December, the CPMR BSC Maritime Working Group held an online meeting, chaired by Ms Tiina Perho (SouthWest Finland), where the Member Regions presented their views to the representative of the European Commission, Ms Isabelle Viallon (DG MARE), regarding a sustainable Blue Economy, which is currently under revision. Mr Harry Bouveng, Vice-Chair of the BSC Maritime Working Group stressed that the future of the blue economy strategy should provide adequate support to enable sustainable, safe maritime and coastal tourism to rebuild the tourism value chain differently and accelerate the transition towards sustainable tourism in the post-COVID-19 context. CPMR Director for Transport, Mr Lucas Bosser talked about the maritime transport in the Blue Economy.

At the invitation of the Maritime Working Group, several stakeholders were invited to discuss the new European Commission’s approach: Policy Area Clean Ship of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, an Energy Cluster in Vaasa (VEBIC) but also the Baltic Sea Centre. More information on the meeting, including the presentations, can be found here.

Read the BSC Maritime Working Group contribution to the European Commission’s road map on sustainable Blue Economy.
### Call for Nominations for Chair and Vice-Chairs – Deadline 11 January 2021

The mandate for the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the thematic Working Groups of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission will be renewed for a 2-year mandate and decided by the Executive Committee meeting on 27 January 2021. **Each interested Member Region is invited to submit a nomination to the Executive Secretary via email** (lucille.ehrhart@crpm.org) **by 11 January 2021 at the latest.** For more information, please contact the BSC Secretariat.

### Missions of the BSC Working Groups (Transport/Energy and Climate/Maritime)

- **Follow the political agenda** and monitor relevant policy developments at EU and national levels
- **Formulate Policy Positions**, reports, statements and contributions to public Consultations on relevant EU policies and instruments to influence the policy agenda
- **Promote the interests of the BSC Member Regions** on specific policy areas and participate in relevant events
- **Exchange best practices** and experiences, and share targeted information
- **Serve as a shared platform** for project development, targeted investments

### Save the Dates

#### 21 January 2021 – 10:00 – 11:30 CET

**BSC Energy & Climate Working Group EU Forest Strategy Post-2020**

The Working Group will discuss, together with a representative of the European Commission about the new approach of the European Commission on the revision of the EU Forest Strategy, taking into account the Green Deal Agenda. Member Regions will have the opportunity to directly share their views and feed into the reflection’s process of the European Commission.

More information will follow soon.

#### 23 February 2021 BSC Policy Brief

**New Approaches to Foster Regional Development Post-2020**

The event will discuss the implication for the BSC Member Regions of a **new Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** (to be adopted in February 2021), **a new Interreg Baltic Sea Programme**, new operational programmes on their way but also a **new approach from the European Commission to give a macro-regional dimension to Smart Specialisation Strategies**. These EU tools and programmes will all promote cooperation and contribute to achieve a smart, resilient, and sustainable Baltic Sea Region.

**Guest speakers include:**

- **Ms Scherrer**, Director JS Interreg Baltic Sea Programme; **Mr Simon Stermann**, representative of the German Presidency of the EUSBSR; **Mr Peter Bergkowitz**, European Commission.

More information will follow soon.
On 24 November, the President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, Mr Jari Nahkanen (Oulu Region), and the Vice-President, Mr Tomas Mörtsell (Region Västerbotten), together with Lucille Ehrhart, Executive Secretary, met online, to discuss the organisation and activities of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. At the centre of the discussion was how to best serve the Member Regions and add value to the membership, especially in this time of the pandemic when meetings can only be organised remotely.

On 11 December, the CPMR Presidium met online with Ms Eleni Marianou Secretary General of the CPMR and Mr Richard Sjölund, CPMR-Vice President of the CPMR in charge of Climate and Energy, to discuss organisational matters and how to ensure a strong link between the BSC, the CPMR Secretariat and the Member Regions.

On 27 January 2021, the new CPMR BSC Executive Committee will meet for the first time since the nomination during the 2020 General Assembly. The meeting will be an opportunity to discuss about the organisation and the priorities of the CPMR BSC for the two coming years. At the invitation of BSC President Mr Jari Nahkanen, Mr Cees Loggen, newly-elected President of the CPMR (Regional Minister of Noord-Holland) will attend the Executive Committee and present his vision for the organisation. At the meeting, Mr Nicolas Brookes, CPMR Executive Director, will also provide the BSC Executive Committee with an update on the EU long-term budget for 2021-2027 and Next Generation EU. A decision will be made during the meeting about the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the CPMR BSC Working Groups.

**Composition of the BSC Executive Committee of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (2020-2022)**

**President:** Jari NAHKANEN, Oulu Region  
**Vice-President:** Tomas MÖRTSELL, Västerbotten  
**Full Members:**  
Estonia: Romek KOSENKRANIUS, Pärnu  
Germany: Wolf BORN, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern  
Finland: Sami VIRTANEN, Kymenlaakso Region  
Sweden: Pontus LINDBERG, Region Skåne  
**Alternate members:**  
Estonia: Andrei NOVIKOV, Tallinn  
Germany: Merten BARNERT, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern  
Finland: Otto MERI, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region  
Sweden: TBC
INTERVIEW WITH JESPER SKALBERG KARLSSON

➔ Member of the CPMR Political Bureau
➔ Vice-Chairman of the CPMR Island Commission
➔ Vice-Chairman of the Regional Council, Region Gotland
➔ Chairman of the Moderate Party on Gotland

What makes Gotland stand out from the crowd?

Jesper: The island of Gotland is nothing short of magnificent. Geographically, it is located in the middle of the Baltic Sea – which has made the island a natural trading partner historically, especially in the Hanseatic League. Gotland is, to this day, the county in Sweden that has the most medieval churches, much thanks to the profits made in trade. But then again, some are in ruins since the Middle Ages were not all that peaceful. Looking back at history and our relations with the Danes and the Germans can probably explain why the local dialect is so unique.

Today Gotland is most known for being a great place to visit as a tourist. The nature of Gotland is widely known for its characteristic landscape. The journey from north to south takes you through wild and windswept stretches of coastline, past rauk fields1 and lambing pastures, into winding roads along flowering meadows and open landscapes. This is complemented by world-class beaches, where fine-grained sandy beaches co-exist with small hidden coves and pebble beaches.

Add to that a rich variety of restaurants that are mentioned in the White Guide2, the many medieval churches, the sprawling night life, the outdoor sports experiences... There is something for everyone!

So... what are the challenges?

Jesper: In the very short term, all focus must be directed towards handling the pandemic. Being both a region and a municipality, located on an island cut off from the mainland, means we must muster all available resources towards handling the situation locally at our regional hospital.

In the near future, more attention must be directed towards restarting the local economy and making sure businesses can leave the “pandemic slumber” and go from just keeping their nose above water to actually growing, developing and employing again.

In the longer term, let’s say the year 2030 or 2040, there are a number of challenges that have to be met with well thought out local policy. These include climate change, the demographic trends, inclusive growth, insularity and connectivity. All of these opportunities can also be regarded as opportunities – for new businesses, for new ideas and leaps forward – if they are handled correctly. Our history of adapting to change might be a strength in this regard!

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1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rauk

2 https://whiteguide.com
What is the focus of Region Gotland moving forward?

Jesper: Growing at a pace that is manageable is of course one thing. In the recent years we have seen an influx of new residents on Gotland, while at the same time precipitation has been limited and decreasing. That means we have to take action to make sure water and waste networks are up to date and efficient enough to meet the higher demand. Add to that the fact that more inhabitants mean more people have a need for housing, grocery stores, preschools...

Not everyone has made the leap towards moving to Gotland though. Part time residents and visitors play a huge role for the development on Gotland. In summertime, our population is more than doubled. Many also choose to stay during the fall and winter, which means that our local goal of reaching 65,000 inhabitants is probably already reached – even if not everyone has reported to the population register that they live here.

And climate change?

Jesper: The Government has instructed the Swedish Energy Agency to work to ensure that Gotland takes the lead in the transition to a sustainable energy system. In this way, Gotland will show the way for how the entire Swedish energy system can change.

This is a great challenge. To ensure Gotland has power to transition the industry, the transport and the green agricultural industries – we need electric power. That’s why we are lobbying the Government to finance a new high-capacity electric cable to the mainland – replacing the two current DC cables (no pun intended). That is necessary both for our increasing population, the transition of many industries, general life for regular families and emergency preparedness.

Which are Gotland’s strengths and what constitutes your smart specialisation strategy?

Jesper: We have a number of assets, both in terms of business, academia and peoples’ commitment and participation.

One of our strengths is our diverse business sector, which is probably a characteristic recognised by other islands in Europe.

The concentration of economic activities on Gotland relative to the mainland shows that we are specialised in mineral industry (cement and limestone), hospitality and tourism activities, agriculture and forestry, construction, and food production. But another characteristic is the high rate of entrepreneurs and newly started companies, and a small but rapidly growing start up scene thanks to our Science Park on Campus Gotland.

Gotland is a university island, with a strong partnership with Uppsala University, and the presence of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

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3https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2018/05/gotland-blir-pilotomrade-for-sveriges-framtida-energisystem/
We also have a strongly engaged local community, with local development companies⁴. Thanks to them and their engagement, Gotland has one of the best coverages of broadband (high-speed internet) in Sweden.

When it comes to smart specialisation, we have two areas in which we are especially committed: sustainable tourism/hospitality and food/food production.

Having a focus on sustainable tourism means we are trying to prolong the season in which people come to visit Gotland. We don’t want to be just a summer island; we want to be a destination all year round. That is why we have many projects with a focus to bring new guests to Gotland, for example Gotland OUT⁵ with funding from ERUF.

Another focus is of course on food and food production. Being an island has historically been synonymous with having to provide food security for oneself; that is why so many islands still to this day are dependent on tourism and local food industry.

The goal when it comes to food and food industry is on added value in the whole chain, from food to fork. The food industry contributes a lot to Gotland’s attractiveness, degree of self-sufficiency, innovation potential and rural development.

**How do you benefit from your membership in the CPMR?**

**Jesper:** Being a member of the CPMR provides us with the intelligence and information that we need, to monitor opportunities in terms of policy, programmes and funding. Gotland is part of both the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission and the Islands Commission, which enables it to be active in cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region and also with other islands spread across Europe. This double membership is a good opportunity to promote our interests related to EU policies in multiple ways. It gives access to other islands and coastal regions experiences, know-how and best practice – which is key when we ourselves want to grow and make progress. “In short: we don’t have all the answers, and that is why cooperation must be the cornerstone of any regional work towards progress and growth!”

**Discover in a video how Gotland is restarting its tourism sector in light of the pandemic**

All regions have been hit hard by COVID-19, in particular islands and maritime regions. Gotland is no exception.

However, the pandemic may also bring along some opportunities for a green and digital restart of the tourism and hospitality sector. Mr Mats Jansson, Senior Regional Project Manager for Sustainable Tourism on Gotland, explains how.

*** VIDEO HERE ***

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⁴ [https://www.gotland.se/landsbygdsutveckling](https://www.gotland.se/landsbygdsutveckling)  
⁵ [https://experiencegotland.se](https://experiencegotland.se)
The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) represents more than 150 regional authorities from 24 countries across Europe and beyond. Organised in Geographical Commissions, the CPMR works to ensure that a balanced territorial development is at the heart of the European Union and its policies. One of these Commissions is the Baltic Sea Commission, made up of 20 Regions from Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Germany.

For more information on the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, please contact Lucille Ehrhart, Executive Secretary (Lucille.ehrhart@crpm.org)