INTRODUCTION

Dear Members, partners and friends,

First of all, we wish you a Happy New Year, with health and joy. May 2021 bring plenty of new opportunities for Baltic Sea cooperation. This is a special year for the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, as its marks its 25th anniversary. For this festive occasion, a new logo has been created and we joined the Facebook community.

Looking at the history of the Baltic Sea Commission

In 1996, on a Silja Symphony ferry from Helsinki to Stockholm, in the middle of the Baltic Sea, the Baltic Sea Commission was founded, as part of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe. Its very first aim was to enhance the sub-national levels and stakeholders around the Baltic Sea as vital participants in the political arena and shape the future of the Baltic Sea Region.

At the time, the Baltic Sea Region faced tough challenges following the lifting of the Iron Curtain. For more than 50 years, exchanges of culture and trade across the Baltic Sea had been hindered. At the same time, there was a strong belief in opportunities in the future, and a deep wish to join forces. The level of enthusiasm for taking advantage of the new opportunities for cooperation and exchange was high.

After 25 years, trustful cooperation, enthusiasm and a strong willingness to make the Baltic sea Region more prosperous are still the driving forces of Member Regions of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission.

In this January Newsflash

- News about Executive Committee meeting and the election of a new 2nd Vice-President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission
- Information about the new Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the BSC thematic Working Groups
- Update about new BSC Activities: launch of a Task Force on Arctic issues and a Working Group dedicated to Smart Specialisation interregional cooperation
- Spotlight on Ostrobothnia, Interview with Richard Sjölund, CPMR Vice-President
- CPMR’s most recent analyses

Wishing you good reading!

Lucille Ehrhart, Executive Secretary, CPMR BSC
Clare Booth, Policy Assistant
On 21 January 2021, the Energy and Climate Working Group of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission met online, to discuss the European Commission’s new approach regarding the EU Forest Strategy and its implications on Baltic Sea regions. The EU is revising its Forest Strategy to take into account the new EU Green Deal Agenda.

Chaired by Richard Sjölund (Ostrobothnia), the meeting was an opportunity for Members to share their regional experiences regarding Forest Policy, with representatives from the European Commission, the Finnish Ministry and a Professor from Umeå University, and feed into the reflection process of the European Commission.

Members from Helsinki-Uusimaa, Norrbotten, Gävleborg, Kymenlaakso and Skåne shared messages on what the future European Strategy should integrate, among others the need to promote a regional place-based approach, a governance integrating regions, the promotion of the multi-functional role of forests, sustainable forest management, the role of forests in mitigating climate change and protecting biodiversity. More Info HERE.

On 27 January 2021, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Executive Committee met online, for the first time since the General Assembly held in October 2020. The meeting was an opportunity to organise the work and plan future activities of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, in relation to regions’ needs and European policy developments for the year 2021, and beyond.

On this occasion, BSC Members also exchanged together with the President of the CPMR, Cees Loggen, who presented his view on CPMR priorities and the contribution of the BSC. Mr Cees Loggen, new CPMR President, presented the key priorities for his mandate, namely, to ensure CPMR is a resilient and future-oriented association. He expressed his commitment to reinforce the link between 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.

"Maritime regions have been dealing with the effects of climate change for years. This gives us the knowledge and expertise that all of Europe – our own member regions included - can benefit from. One of the goals for this year is that CPMR presents its knowledge, expertise and added value at the COP26 in Glasgow”.

Cees Loggen
CPMR President
Regional Minister of Noord-Holland
RENEWAL OF BSC WORKING GROUPS

In accordance with BSC internal rules, the mandates for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission’s thematic Working Groups were renewed by the Executive Committee on 27 January 2021, as it was the first meeting following a General Assembly that held an election.

It was decided by the Executive Committee to appoint the following politicians to lead the Working Groups, for this new mandate period:

**Transport Working Group:**
Chair Bosse Andersson (Region Stockholm)
Vice-Chairs Magnus Lagergren (Region Örebro) and Region Päijät-Häme (name tbc)

**Maritime Working Group:**
Chair Tiina Perho (SouthWest Finland)
Vice-Chair Harry Bouveng (Region Stockholm)

**Energy and Climate Working Group:**
Chair Markku Markkula (Helsinki-Uusimaa)
Vice-Chair Pontus Lindberg (Region Skåne)

On the appointment of the new leaders of the Working Groups, President Jari Nahkanen said: “the strong competences, experiences and enthusiasm of the elected Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Transport, Maritime and Energy and Climate Working Groups, will be strong assets to promote further cooperation and the interests of Baltic Sea Commission Members on the EU agenda”.

He also warmly thanked Mr Richard Sjölund (Region Ostrobothnia) and Ms Kaarin Taipale (Region Helsinki-Uusimaa), former Chair and Vice-Chair of the Energy and Climate Working Group for their major contributions and involvement in running the Working Group for the last few years.

**NEXT STEPS**

Looking ahead, each Working Group will hold its first meeting early March. The meeting will be an opportunity to define the policy priorities of the Working Groups, based on the regions’ needs, in relation to the EU agenda and policy developments.
NEW ARCTIC TASK FORCE

In view of the revision of the EU Arctic Policy, and the interest of several BSC Member Regions to work more on Arctic issues, the Executive Committee decided to set up a new Task Force on Arctic issues.

Led by Vice-President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, Mr Tomas Mörtsell, (Region Västerbotten), the Task Force will be open to all interested BSC Members, but also from other CPMR Geographical Commissions.

The objective is to follow and provide regional evidence to the EU institutions during the current revision process of the EU Arctic Policy, and form alliances to further promote multi-level governance in the Arctic and beyond. It should also showcase the extensive potential of smart solutions and contributions that regions have to realise the overall EU targets of reaching complete climate neutrality by 2050.

The CPMR BSC already participated in the Public Consultation in November 2020. Looking ahead, the European Commission will publish a Joint Communication on the Arctic at the end of 2021.

Stay tuned for upcoming activities of the Arctic Task Force!

NEW WORKING GROUP ON SMART SPECIALISATION AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

In view of the growing importance of S3 on the EU agenda, it was decided to create a new Working Group dedicated to fostering interregional smart specialisation strategies collaboration and building capacity for regions of the Baltic Sea Commission.

The new Working Group should also aim to follow the political agenda and ensure a regional perspective in the wider smart specialisation agenda post-2020.

The content of the Working Group should be based on and decided according to region’s needs. However, the general objectives of the Working Group include:

• Foster interregional S3 collaboration and build capacity for regions for the design and implementation of their S3 between the Member Regions;
• Follow the political agenda and monitor relevant policy developments at EU level, related to S3 (example: follow the development of the new I3 tool under preparation);
• Formulate Policy Positions, reports, statements and contribution to Public Consultations on relevant EU policies and instruments;
• Serve as a shared platform for project development, and finding partners for projects;
• Strengthen the regional perspective in the wider smart specialisation agenda post-2020;
• Liaise and cooperate with other partners / initiatives / frameworks in the field of S3.

CALL FOR CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR TO LEAD THE WORKING GROUP ON SMART SPECIALISATION.

ALL INTERESTED MEMBERS REGIONS ARE KINDLY INVITED TO CONTACT THE BSC SECRETARIAT.
NEW 2nd CPMR BSC VICE-PRESIDENT

Mr Romek Kosenkranius, Member of the Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities and Mayor of Pärnu, was elected 2nd Vice-President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, during the Executive Committee meeting on 27 January 2021.

CPMR BSC President Jari Nahkanen, praised the profound understanding of Mr Romek Kosenkranius regarding local policies and Baltic Sea cooperation. He said, “the strong expertise and commitment of Romek Kosenkranius will be a major asset for the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission and cooperation among regions”. Mr Romek Kosenkranius presented the key interests and policy priorities for Estonia during his mandate, such as digitalisation, development of innovation, infrastructure, and mitigation of climate change.

CPMR UPDATE

Read the latest CPMR analysis, produced by the CPMR General Secretariat:

- **CPMR Technical Paper on the EMFF and Financial Instruments for 2021-2027**
- **CPMR Technical Paper – Assessing CPMR impact on the Cohesion Policy Package 2021-2027**
- **CPMR Analysis on the Brexit Adjustment Reserve**
- **CPMR Climate Task Force– Look at the interactive map showing BSC regions actions for the green transition**

The CPMR launched the Regions Act! – CPMR Regions acting for climate neutrality initiative in order to show, via an interactive map, the contribution of its Member Regions to reach the European Green Deal objectives and to foster the exchange of best practices.

*Picture of the Executive Committee, 27/01/2021*
JANUARY IN PICTURES

BSC Presidium Meeting, 11/01/2021

Meeting of the BSC Energy and Climate Working Group, 21/01/2021

Richard Sjölund, CPMR Vice-President, Chairing the CPMR Climate Task Force, 26/01/01

NEWS

LAHTI
EUROPEAN GREEN CAPITAL
2021

Congratulations to Lahti, as European Green Capital 2021, located in Region Päijät-Häme!

Learn about Päijät-Häme’s commitment regarding the Green Deal, in an interview with Mr Kristiina Hämäläinen.

CPMR BSC MEMBER REGION PÄIJÄT-HÄME

INTERVIEW WITH KRISTIINA HÄMALÄINEN

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE REGIONAL BOARD OF PÄIJÄT-HÄME AND LAHTI

How is your region involved in the sustainable transition in relation to the Green Deal Agenda?

"As a region, we are proud to have the European Green Capital of Lahti in 2021. It is an international recognition of the pioneer.

The vision of Päijät-Häme is to be "the successful resource efficient region" in 2030. The road map process to define vision and goals involves stakeholders like regional and municipal authorities, higher education institutions, a regional development corporation, and private and public companies. The road map is updated annually in cooperation with regional stakeholders. The road map is recognised as a good practice at EU level."
SPOTLIGHT ON REGION OSTROBOTHNIA

Watch the video interview with Richard Sjölund, CPMR Vice-President in charge of Climate and Energy, and Jerker Johnson, International Affairs Coordinator for Region Ostrobothnia, on the Green Deal and Smart Specialisation Strategies.

*** VIDEO INTERVIEW HERE ***

Video realised by the BSC Secretariat in Vaasa in December 2020

OSTROBOTHNIA AND THE GREEN TRANSITION CHALLENGE:
FROM LARS TO GRETA PROJECTS

Contribution from Jerker Johnson
International Affairs Coordinator Regional Council of Ostrobothnia

The COVID-19 crisis has led to an EU-wide recession and huge sums are currently being allocated to stimulate economies. The key question is, will the regions be able to absorb these funds in future oriented investments or will they impede a regional transformation? The funds need, on one hand, be absorbed quickly to stimulate the economies and, on the other hand, provide an added value in the policy towards the green transition. As always when funds are becoming available there is no shortage of suggestions on how they could be used, but the issue remains, how to use them quickly and in the most efficient way.

This requires a proactive role of regional governments, administrating the funds but also tools for identifying the most urgent needs for green innovations. The LARS-project (Learning Among Regions on Smart Specialisation) builds on the Ostrobothnian Model of Smart Specialisation, known as a connectivity-model, which has been developed for measuring the quadruple helix innovation network connectivity as a logic for policy intervention. This has been combined with a mapping of value-chains and stakeholder identification as a base for information gathering, dialogue and concluding on the evidence.
The GRETA-project (Green Transformation! A Policy tool for Regional Smart Specialisation in the Baltic Sea Area) is an extension stage project of the LARS-project. The aim is to build on and transform experiences with methods to support growth (LARS) with environmental targets in selected areas in line with the European Green Deal. The project will assess policy interventions according to their consequence on the UN identified SDG.

Funds are currently being made available, and efficient fund use requires that regions have challenges that can be broken into different coherent steps forming a base for a logic for policy intervention. It is well-known to economic science that market actors may have different incentives for their actions and that these may coincide with their absorptive capacity or rather interest to engage in new roles. Analysing this needs a format that has been elaborated by the project.

The European policies are being conducted in a multi-level setting and an efficient communication between the different levels of governance is pivotal. The analysis provides a base for the dialogue between different levels of governance. The detailed identification of the regional challenges presented against a coherent framework also opens up for policy coordination between different government levels.

Finally, the green transition challenge is a question of policy learning and discoveries. It is an unprecedented challenge, that requires a development-oriented mindset. It is hoped that the analysis made and that in the making, will inspire like-minded efforts in other regions. This to jointly tackle and overcome the challenge of the green transition.

More information: www.lars-project.eu

LARS and positioning in the CPMR – from the designing of the LARS project to Greta

The LARS EU project has had a link with the CPMR from the very beginning. Learn more about it, in the 6th LARS newsletter LARS-newsletter-6-January-2021.pdf (lars-project.eu)
### BSC AND CPMR UPCOMING EVENTS

**FEBRUARY AND MARCH**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 FEBRUARY 2021</td>
<td>CPMR Cohesion Policy Working Group</td>
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<td>Online (information <a href="#">here</a>)</td>
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<td>2 MARCH 2021</td>
<td>BSC Energy &amp; Climate Working Group</td>
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<td>Online (more information will follow)</td>
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<td>MARCH 2021 – dates to be confirmed</td>
<td>BSC Transport Working Group meeting</td>
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<td>Arctic Task Force meeting</td>
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<td>New perspectives to territorial development and innovation in the BSR</td>
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<td>24 MARCH 2021</td>
<td>BSC Executive Committee</td>
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<td>26 MARCH 2021</td>
<td>CPMR Political Bureau</td>
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### CPMR BSC SOCIAL MEDIA

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- [CPMR_BSC](#) (twitter account)
- [CPMR Baltic Sea Commission](#) (Facebook page)
- [https://cpmr-baltic.org](https://cpmr-baltic.org) (website)

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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 18 Regions from Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Germany.

For more information on the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, please contact Lucille Ehrhart, BSC Executive Secretary ([lucille.ehrhart@cpmr.org](mailto:lucille.ehrhart@cpmr.org)).