INTRODUCTION

Dear Members,

In this Autumn spirit, we are pleased to share the second “CPMR BSC Newsflash” which aims to provide an update on recent CPMR Baltic Sea Commission activities and also upcoming events of relevance for Member Regions. Wishing you a good reading!

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

The Newsflash includes:

➔ Articles about latest CPMR BSC events
➔ Zoom on Region Örebro. Discover an interview with Mr Magnus Lagergren and a description of an EU project “Baltic Loop” focusing on transport in which Blekinge is involved.
➔ A calendar of future BSC and CPMR events

THE WORK CONTINUES ...ONLINE
On 21 October, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission organised an online policy webinar on how macro-regional cooperation can foster resilience of the Baltic Sea Region. Moderated by Vice-President, Ms Annnika Sandström, (Region Stockholm), the online meeting was an opportunity for Member Regions to exchange with guest speakers. It was said if the Baltic Sea Region is a solid Region, it still put under pressures by several challenges, and therefore stronger cooperation was needed. Among the key challenges, there are the effects of climate change, economic competitiveness and the mistrust of citizens towards the EU decision-making bodies. Ms Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, Member of the European Parliament, presented how the European Union is promoting a green recovery and the role of digitalisation in strengthening the resilience of Europe and the BSR. Mr Grzegorz Poznański, Director General of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, presented the activities of the CBSS to promote cooperation between countries but also with stakeholders and regions. Ms Eleni Marianou, Secretary General of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), provided participants with an insight into the negotiations about the long-term EU budget and the EU recovery instruments, currently on a final stage. Read more HERE.

On 6 October 2020, the Executive Committee of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission met online, to prepare for the 2020 General Assembly. More information can be found HERE.

On 21 October, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission held its General Assembly, for the first time online, replacing a face-to-face event initially scheduled in Turku in SouthWest Finland. The event brought together representatives from 20 Member Regions to review activities carried out during the last year, presented in the 2019-2020 BSC Activity Report, and to discuss EU policies.

The General Assembly unanimously adopted a Resolution including key messages to EU institutions to promote a more resilient Baltic Sea Region. Discussion also focused on the role of regions in the green transition in relation to the EU Green Deal Agenda. A Policy Position on that topic was also approved (available here).

Each Chair of the Maritime, Transport and Energy & Climate Working Groups presented activities relating to their thematic area of work. The conclusions of the BSC Task Force on the revision process of the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region were presented. It can be found in the Final Report from the Task Force on EUSBSR.

Read more about it in the article here.
Main messages from the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Resolution 2020

Approved by the BSC General Assembly on 21 October 2020

In light of the long-term challenges for a sustainable development in Europe, conditions worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, Member Regions of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission sends the following messages to EU decision-makers, national governments, regional authorities and stakeholders in order to build a prosperous Baltic Sea Region within Europe.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

a) Demands that regions will play a major role in implementing the EU recovery plan and policy areas covered by the long-term EU budget

b) Strongly supports the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to contribute to regional resilience

c) Emphasises the importance of a green recovery as an opportunity for sustainable growth in the Baltic Sea Region and thereby boost Europe’s competitiveness in the global economy

d) Points out the importance of increasing accessibility for the Baltic Sea Region and sustainable transport in the Baltic Sea Region to strengthen Europe's internal market

e) Demands intensifying efforts to achieve more sustainable tourism in maritime regions in the Baltic Sea Region and develop Europe’s tourism sector

The full Resolution can be found HERE.
On 21 October 2020, Mr Jari Nahkanen, Member of the Board of Oulu Region, was re-elected by the General Assembly of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission for a second mandate as President of the organisation.

“I am honoured to pursue this great adventure to lead the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. In this challenging context, I will continue to foster cooperation among regions in a spirit of trust and to promote our interests towards the EU, to ensure the resilience and prosperity of the Baltic Sea Region. The challenges we face are big but our will to cooperate is bigger”, stressed Jari Nahkanen.

During the online meeting, Member Regions also elected the BSC Vice-President, Mr Tomas Mörtsell, second Vice-President of the Regional Development Board at Region Västerbotten.

“It is humbling to have been given the honour of joining the Executive Committee of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. Together with President Jari Nahkanen and all Member Regions I will continue the work of upholding our common positions on EU policies, safeguarding our Member Regions’ interests, and strengthening the bonds and cooperation between all our Regions” stressed Tomas Mörtsell.

The CPMR General Assembly met online on 29 October 2020, followed by the Political Bureau, gathering regional representatives from the Member Regions and all the Geographical Commissions. During this occasion, Mr Cees Loggen, Regional Minister of the Province of Noord-Holland in the Netherlands was elected President of the CPMR for a renewable two-year term. Mr Loggen replaces Mr Vasco Cordeiro, President of the Government of the Azores, who has been at the reins of the CPMR for the past six years.

The Political Bureau also elected Mr Richard Sjölund, Chair of the Energy and Climate Working Group of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission as new Vice-President in charge of Climate and Energy. “I am glad to take up this position and be in charge of this portfolio of crucial importance for the regions. Regions have a key role in the green transition and in the implementation of the EU Green Deal Agenda. Together with CPMR Member Regions, we will work for a green recovery and a more sustainable and resilient Europe”.

During the event, discussions focused on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on regional authorities and the EU recovery plan. Mr Jari Nahkanen, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission stressed the major damage of the outbreak on the economy of the Baltic Sea Region, especially on shipping industries, tourism sectors and SMEs. Member Regions discussed this with Elisa Ferreira, European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Mr Younous Omarjee, and Mr Jan Olbycht, Members of the European Parliament.

More information can be found here.
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

... and more!

CPMR BSC TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP MEETING 27.10.2020

Chaired by Mr Bosse Andersson (Region Stockholm), the CPMR BSC Transport Working Group met online on 27 October, in presence of Member Regions, Mr Lucas Bosser (CPMR Director for Transport) and Mr Thomas Erlandson (Policy Area Coordinator for Transport of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region). At the centre of the discussions were the report about sharing of experiences of transport projects, developed by the Working Group, and also initial discussions on the future BSC Action Plan on Transport for 2021-2023. Region Helsinki-Uusimaa also gave a presentation on the Integrated Planning Model (IPM): Multicriteria analysis as a background for sustainable mobility linked solutions at regional planning level. Lucas Bosser and Thomas Erlandson provided participants with an update about the Transport EU agenda and CPMR lobbying activities and the revised Action Plan on the EUSBSR.
SAVE THE DATE: 7 DECEMBER 14.00 – 15.30 CET

PREPARATORY MEETING TO SET UP A COOPERATION FORMAT ON SMART SPECIALISATION STRATEGIES WITHIN THE CPMR BALTIC SEA COMMISSION

Invitation

• All CPMR BSC Member Regions are invited to a first meeting on S3 cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, which aims at exploring the interests, the needs of the Member Regions and the actions to undertake under the umbrella of the CPMR BSC on the topic of S3.

• Based on the exchange, if there is interest from sufficient Member Regions, there will be the possibility to set up a more institutionalised cooperation format within the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission on this matter.

Context

In light of the growing role of Smart Specialisation Strategies on the EU agenda, as well as their role in promoting regional development, there is potential to foster macro-regional cooperation in the field of S3. For the new programming period, there will be a new tool, the Interregional Innovation Investment, which regions will work with. The new action plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region also integrate a dimension on Smart Specialisation strategy, with the Policy Area Innovation.

In that context, regions from the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission can benefit greatly from learning from other regions regarding various S3 elements (governance, monitoring etc.) but also understanding better the innovation conditions and S3 approach in relation to other regions, and joint forces for investments in these areas.

Under the umbrella of CPMR BSC, there are the opportunities:

→ to foster cross-border S3 collaboration and build capacity for regions for the design and implementation of their S3 between the Member Regions. Share experiences in different fields of S3 (bioeconomy, e-health, digitalisation...).

→ to strengthen the regional perspective in the wider smart specialisation agenda post-2020.

→ to offer an interface for cooperation with other macro-regional actors, such as Policy Area Coordinator Innovation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

PRACTICALITIES

DATE: 7 December 2020
TIME: 14h00 – 15h30 CET time
REGISTRATION: HERE
AGENDA: HERE
GUEST SPEAKER: PA Innovation EUSBSR
INTERVIEW WITH MAGNUS LAGERGREN

→ Member of the CPMR BSC Transport Working Group
→ Member of the CPMR NSC Transport Working Group
→ Vice-Chair of the regional public transport authority and regional infrastructure board, Region Örebro County
→ Board member of Oslo-Sthlm 2.55 AB
→ Board member of the Bothnian Corridor cooperation

Please tell us why the Örebro region plays such an important part in the Nordic transport system?

MAGNUS: The Örebro region is one of Sweden's most important transport regions for both passenger and freight transports. Both Sweden's geographical and demographic center is located in the region. Almost all goods from northern Sweden's basic industry by rail pass the Örebro region and the city of Hallsberg on their way to Europe or the world via the port of Gothenburg. Railway and terminal operations in Hallsberg have been designated as a node in TEN-T and constitute an important facilitator in the transfer of goods from road to railway. In Hallsberg you can find the Nordic countries largest railway marshalling yard where more than 500,000 train units are arranged every year and at the Hallsberg terminal more than 35,000 lifts are made between trucks and trains every year.

In addition to an important railway node, the Örebro region offers a well-developed transport infrastructure that includes Sweden's most important motorways for heavy traffic and Örebro Airport, which is Sweden's largest regional freight airport. At the airport, the large companies such as FedEx, DHL and TNT are established, as well as routes to Europe’s most important airport hubs.

In the Örebro region, there is a strong logistics cluster that is held together by Business Region Örebro and brings together business, academia and the public sector in order to strengthen and develop the Örebro region's multimodal concept called - Supermodality!

The largest railway marshalling yard in the Nordics. Hallsberg, Region Örebro.

What is the focus of Region Örebro in terms of EU transport policy to improve the connectivity of the Region?

MAGNUS: For us, it is important to continue to develop and strengthen as a designated node in TEN-T. As the Örebro region is a transit region for both passengers and freight transports, it is very important that the infrastructure to, from and through the region is built to maintain a high standard. For us, it is important that the railway network throughout Sweden is built to meet a standard of 250 kph. This will create better
connections within whole Sweden and also connect us better to our neighbor countries. Furthermore, it is important that the railway is electrified and that longer freight trains of at least 750 meters can be run between Sweden and Europe. We also need to increase the proportion of goods by rail and shipping, work to phase out fossil fuels and improve infrastructure planning across national borders.

An important part of achieving these goals is continued European cooperation for an expanded, common and well-functioning transport TEN-T system. So far, European transport policy has focused on connecting us on the periphery with Central Europe. It is now important to highlight the great potentials that also exists in the major population centers in the North and Baltic Sea and work towards better connecting these regions - from Oslo in the west via Stockholm and Helsinki to the Russian border in the east.

**How can we accomplish better connections in the Baltic Sea Region?**

**Dino:** To achieve this, we see that the ScanMed corridor needs be extended north from us, along the Bothnian Corridor and merged at the Finnish border with the North Sea Baltic corridor. It is equally important that the ScanMed corridor is extended between Stockholm and Oslo in the west. A faster railway connection between the Oslo and Stockholm would mean many benefits in terms of sustainability, regional and inter-regional commuting, as well as strengthened labor and study markets for the municipalities along the route. In addition, the connection would bring increased benefits for municipalities located close to the route.

**How can the work within the BSC Transport Group and CPMR contribute to achieving these goals?**

**MAGNUS:** The work within BSC and CPMR is extremely important for influencing policy and infrastructure development. When many regions can come together and raise common issues that often can be unique to our geography, we can more easily reach out with our messages and demonstrate the added value that certain investments and policies in our regions can bring. CPMR and the BSC also creates opportunities to get to know each other better and find collaborations and projects across national borders, something that in the extension allows our states to get closer to each other. If the regions do not cooperate, the states will certainly do the same. We must work together and support each other to create cohesion and sustainable development - BSC is an arena that makes this possible!
**PROJECT CORNER**

**BALTIC LOOP**

Baltic Loop is a project under the European Union’s (EU) Interreg Central Baltic Programme running from April 2019 until June 2021. It involves seven partners from four countries: Sweden, Finland, Estonia, and Latvia.

Baltic Loop focuses on solutions to improve and smooth transport flows of both people and goods in three selected corridors running in the West-East direction (Northern, Middle and Southern) within the Central Baltic Region, namely Örebro – Turku/Tallinn/Riga – St. Petersburg. The projects seek to minimise the impact and/or number of different traffic hindrances or bottlenecks. The overall aim is to minimise travel and cargo time in the corridors and to reduce CO2 emissions.

The idea of the project is to draw attention to the enormous potential that exists in the Baltic Sea area today and that could be increased even more with an improved infrastructure. An expanded infrastructure with reduced travel times is important to speed up the economy after the current pandemic and thereby create better conditions for trade and employment in an east-west direction than we have today.

In the project, we have already been able to identify certain bottlenecks such as high traffic volume in relation to existing infrastructure capacity in the Oslo-Stockholm route, long queues at the borders between Estonia-Latvia and Latvia-Russia. There are also bottlenecks at the ports in the Baltic Sea area, where they are increasingly forced to adapt their operations and geographical scope in relation to growing large cities, where the consequence is that port areas have less land available. Other important investments in the Baltic Sea area that will minimize the bottlenecks and reduce the travel time are a faster railway connection between Turku-Helsinki and the establishment of the port of Norvik, says project manager Ahmed Alaeddine at Region Örebro County.

The planning and implementation of well-functioning traffic/transport systems is a complex and multilayered process covering many measures and elimination of transport hindrances and bottlenecks. It affects many actors and sectors (users, planners, authorities and administrations) of the society on all levels. Thus, the process needs to involve and encourage all stakeholders, to a greater extent, to develop more open and transparent communication, better cooperation and a stronger commitment to establish a coordinated, long-term vision and holistic approach to transport system planning, says project manager Irina Wahlström at Åbo Akademi.

Learn more at: https://www.balticloop.eu/
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 (Lucille.ehrhart@crpm.org)