Executive Summary

The present Work Plan for the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission includes the main goals, policy priorities and activities for the period 2021-2023, taking into account the BSC political guidelines, EU policy development, the revised Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the CPMR general objectives and actions, harnessing as well the previous BSC positions and activities.

It should serve as a framework for action for BSC members, built on the discussions between the Presidency, the Vice-Presidents, the Executive Committee and all the Baltic Sea Commission Member Regions to be implemented as concrete actions. It includes the main elements of each BSC Working Group’s Action Plan for 2021-2023. The Work Plan allows sufficient flexibility to carry out short-term activities to react to EU policy developments, affecting CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Members.

The Baltic Sea Commission is an international, independent organisation of Regional Authorities at sub-national level in the Baltic Sea Region. The Baltic Sea Commission has a strong emphasis on territorial work, and each Member Region is represented by leading elected politicians. The Baltic Sea Commission is one of six Geographical Commissions that make up the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR). Members of the Baltic Sea Commission are also Members of the CPMR.

1.1 Vision: A united voice of the Baltic Sea Regions

Cooperation within the Baltic Sea Commission is based on Members’ mutual understanding of cultural differences, sensitivity for each other’s interests, trust, and solidarity. Regional Authorities are at the crossroads of cooperation, able to bridge efforts at local, national, pan-Baltic, EU, and international levels. The Member Regions serve as a reference point for a broad spectrum of sectoral activities. Citizens need Regional Authorities to voice their interests and perspectives to Member States and EU institutions. United in the Baltic Sea Commission, the Member Regions voice the interests of the Baltic Sea Region.

1.2 Mission: A platform for policy-orientated cooperation

Since its foundation in 1996, the Baltic Sea Commission is a platform for policy-oriented cooperation for its Member Regions. Politicians, officials, and experts from the Member Regions work for common goals. The main focuses are strengthening territorial cohesion, enhancing the European maritime dimension, and boosting the accessibility of Europe’s territories. The Baltic Sea Commission regularly partners with European institutions, Member States, and other key actors of importance for the development of the Baltic Sea Region as a whole.

1.3 Goals

To realise its vision and mission the Baltic Sea Commission will work to achieve the following goals:

1. Increase the number of Members Regions;
2. Strengthen Member Regions’ input into policy discussions at European level;
3. Strengthen the Baltic Sea Regions’ perspective in the CPMR work.

2. Actions and horizontal priorities of the Action Plan

2.1 BSC political priorities

In a context where Baltic Sea Regions are facing the challenge of recovering from the COVID-19 crisis, and implementing the green transition, the Presidium and the Executive Committee proposes the following political orientations to seize and harness the opportunities offered at EU level for 2021-2023.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission will focus its work during 2021-2023 to promote:

➢ A stronger territorial dimension to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region: To take an active part in the implementation of the new EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and its three main goals (“Save the Sea”, “Connect the Region”, “Increase prosperity”), but also to
promote a stronger role of regions in the governance of the Strategy, as an intermediary between the project and (strategic) multi-level policy development.

➢ A climate neutral and sustainable Baltic Sea Region: To contribute to achieving the goals of the Green Deal and promoting sustainable growth in the Baltic Sea Region. To support regions in seizing opportunities of the Green Deal Agenda while profiling the Baltic Sea Region as a frontrunner in the green transition. The activities of all BSC Working Groups should contribute to achieving the goals of the Green Deal Agenda.

➢ A connected Baltic Sea Region: To promote sustainable connectivity and accessibility in the Baltic Sea Region while fostering the shift towards smart and sustainable mobility.

➢ A sustainable blue economy for the Baltic Sea Region: To promote a sustainable blue economy in the Baltic Sea Region with focus on maritime industries, sustainable tourism, and sustainable fishing.

➢ A resilient Baltic Sea Region: to seize opportunities of the new programming period (new programmes in place) to foster territorial development, while supporting the recovery of local and regional economies through the EU Recovery Plan and new Multi-Annual Financial Framework.

➢ An innovative and competitive Baltic Sea Region: To contribute to the creation of an innovative ecosystem in the Baltic Sea Region by fully embracing the new interregional dimension to Smart Specialisation Strategies in Cohesion Policy post-2020. To foster the connection and development of local and regional economies by taking a macro-regional approach to smart specialisation strategies, contributing overall to position the Baltic Sea Region as a competitive and innovative region.

2.2 Key actions

In this context, the BSC will put in place different types of action: policy messages, high-level political events and seminar sessions in the framework of its General Assemblies, participation in fora at EU and Baltic Sea Region levels, as well as in specific EU cooperation projects, including flagship projects, responding to the political guidelines and through the activities of its Working Groups.

Policy Positions
- At least two BSC Political Declarations should be prepared in the framework of the BSC General Assemblies in 2021 and 2022. Possible ad-hoc policy messages could be developed according to the needs of the BSC, Working Groups, or Member Regions, in agreement with the Executive Committee.

High-level political events and lobbying activities
- The BSC will continue and further develop its dialogue with the European Commission. This implies inviting representatives of the European Commission to BSC meetings, such as Working Group meetings, seminars and General Assemblies;
- The CPMR BSC will also continue to have dialogue and build new contacts with Members of the European Parliament from the Baltic Sea Region and from relevant Committees. The Working Groups should enhance their dialogue with relevant MEPs. The BSC will make the most of the SEArica Intergroup of the European Parliament and will develop closer cooperation with Baltic Sea MEPs who are members of the SEArica Intergroup;
- The BSC will also try to build synergies with the Swedish Presidency of the Council, which will be January-July 2023;
- The BSC Secretariat will help its Member Regions to harness new funding opportunities under this framework of the new Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 (e.g., Interreg programmes...) but also other programmes (Horizon 2020...).
Consolidate and develop CPMR Baltic Sea Commission membership
- The CPMR BSC Executive Committee and Secretariat should ensure that the services provided and activities developed by the CPMR BSC rely on the needs of the Regions and create the most value for Members;
- Specific attention will be given to approaching non-CPMR Member Regions in all countries of the Baltic Sea Region (Denmark, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Germany, Sweden, Finland), via the support of CPMR-BSC Regions to help meet the goal of increasing the number of Member Regions via the support of BSC Regions. CPMR BSC Regions could work as Ambassadors of the CPMR in the regions and act as a bridge between non-CPMR members’ priorities and the CPMR BSC objectives and services. The BSC will capitalise on the work initiated with the Arctic Task Force to approach potential Member Regions from Norway.

Ensure Baltic Sea Regions’ perspective in CPMR work
- The CPMR BSC Secretariat and Member Regions will keep contributing to the definition of relevant messages from the angle of BSC Members’ needs and expertise when developing CPMR Policy Positions;
- The CPMR BSC Secretariat and Member Regions will participate in relevant CPMR meetings and organise joint events with other CPMR Geographical Commissions;
- Exchanging views with other CPMR Geographical Commissions on best practice should be fostered, especially with the CPMR North Sea Commission;
- The CPMR BSC Secretariat will participate in CPMR Geographic Commission coordination meetings to increase synergies between the Geographical Commissions.

Foster the territorial dimension in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
- Following-up from the approval of the new Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), by the European Commission in February 2021, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission stands ready to take an active role in the implementation of the Strategy. This implies promoting further a strong role for the regions in the Strategy and multi-level governance in achieving the three objectives of the EUSBSR of Saving the Sea, Connecting the Region and Increasing Prosperity;
- The CPMR BSC will work on the EUSBSR through the thematic Working Groups, which have streamlined the goals of the Strategy in their respective Action Plans. The Working Groups will maintain close dialogue with the rotating Presidencies of the Strategy, the Policy Area Coordinators and National Coordinators, that will be invited regularly to Working Group meetings. The Working Groups should help to foster the development of macro-regional EU projects, which ensure that projects are based on the needs and conditions of Member Regions. The BSC Secretariat will support the involvement of Member Regions in the implementation of the Strategy via its participation in the EUSBSR Annual Forum and liaising with relevant actors involved in the Strategy.

Maintain close cooperation with external partners and organisations
- The CPMR BSC is liaising with key stakeholders in the EU institutions and in the Baltic Sea Region. The CPMR BSC should work in close cooperation with other pan-Baltic organisations, such as CBSS, BSPC, BSSC, UBC, Helcom, Vasab, String, Euroregio Baltic, and the Informal Baltic Sea Group. This implies political or technical representation at relevant meetings;
- The Working Groups have listed in their respective Action Plans relevant organisations, stakeholders and projects that they liaise with.

Communication activities
- Due to distance work, there is a need for the CPMR BSC to further reinvent ways of communication to ensure the most effective and strategic internal and external communication. (e.g., Newsflash, Facebook page, interviews with Members to keep close contact...). There will be a stronger
emphasis to raise the visibility of the Baltic Sea Commission towards the EU institutions and relevant stakeholders;
- More information regarding communication is available on request from the BSC Secretariat.

Projects:
- The CPMR BSC Secretariat and the Working Groups should shadow and capitalise on relevant EU projects, provide input to the definition of Calls, monitor Calls for funding and explore the option of developing relevant projects to EU programmes;
- The CPMR BSC should help to develop strategic flagship projects among the Member Regions, and disseminate their results, while promoting and liaising with umbrella flagships gathering activities of joint value for the macro region, such as platform projects.

3. Sectoral approach to the Work Plan

- The CPMR BSC has 3 Working Groups. The different Working Groups contribute to the general guidelines and objectives of the CPMR BSC and to the implementation of its Work Plan via lobbying activities, intelligence gathering and acting as a forum for regions to share best practices or develop joint cooperation projects;
- The Working Groups meet regularly (online, physical, study visits), and liaise with representatives of the EU institutions, external partners as well as other CPMR Member Regions;
- The Working Groups should also work together on areas of common interests, to foster coordination between the different sectoral work and enable synergies. The Chairs of the BSC Working Groups are invited to the BSC Executive Committee to report back and to politically enhance the activities of the group;
- Each Working Group of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has developed a two-year Action Plan, which includes the priorities, objectives and setting the perimeter of their actions. It serves as a roadmap while allowing sufficient flexibility to carry out the work. Each Working Group operates its activities in the framework of the EU’s main policy developments, CPMR work, the Action Plan of the EUSBSR and the key interests of the BSC Regions within the respective policy areas. Overall, the Action Plans should contribute to ensuring the most added value of the Working Groups to the Member Regions. The overall Action Plans are anchored in the new EU Growth Strategy for 2021-2027, which is the Green Deal. Promoting sustainability is a mainstreamed goal in each Action Plan of the Working Groups. The Working Groups are also developing activities to promote recovery, which is seen as an opportunity to redirect societies in the Baltic Sea Region towards a more sustainable, and hence more competitive and resilient model.

The table below represents key topics identified by the Working Groups’ Members to take action on. More details can be found in the Action Plan of each Working Group.

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<th>MARITIME WORKING GROUP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair: SouthWest Finland</td>
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<td>Vice-Chair: Region Stockholm</td>
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<td>❖ Promote sustainable maritime industries in the Baltic Sea Region</td>
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<td>❖ Promote sustainable coastal tourism in the Baltic Sea Region</td>
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<th>ENERGY AND CLIMATE WORKING GROUP</th>
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<td>Chair: Helsinki-Uusimaa Region</td>
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<td>Vice-Chair: Region Skåne</td>
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<tr>
<td>❖ Promote clean energies</td>
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<td>❖ Promote forests and their multi-functional roles</td>
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❖ Facilitate the transition towards an innovative circular economy
❖ Promote the development of Sustainable Smart Specialisation Strategies

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<th>TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP</th>
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<td>Chair: Region Stockholm</td>
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<td>Vice-Chairs: Region Örebro and Region Päijät-Häme</td>
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❖ Promote a functional TEN-T network to strengthen connectivity and accessibility in the Baltic Sea Region
❖ Promote smart, sustainable and climate neutral transport modes

The BSC set up a Task Force to take an active part in the revision process of a new EU Arctic Policy

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<th>Arctic Task Force</th>
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<td>Chair: Västerbotten</td>
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❖ Contribute to the revision process of the new EU Arctic Policy, and promote a stronger regional and territorial dimension, building on the common messages identified in the BSC Contribution to the Arctic Consultation (HERE) and the collected views of all Task Force members
❖ Form regional collaboration and united action to further promote multi-level governance in the Arctic and beyond. It should serve as a platform for regional cooperation and lobby actions. It should help to raise awareness of Arctic issues and increase collective action
❖ Showcase the extensive potential of smart solutions and contributions that regions make to realise the overall EU targets of reaching complete climate neutrality by 2050 and accelerate decarbonisation.

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.

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