Context

This Work Plan sets out the **vision and policy priorities of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission for the period 2023-2025**. It builds on BSC political guidelines, EU policy development, the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the CPMR Work Plan. It serves as a **framework for action for BSC members**. The Work Plan allows sufficient flexibility to carry out short-term activities to react to EU policy developments, affecting CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Members.
1. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission – The United Voice of the Baltic Sea Regions

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission is an international, independent organisation of regional authorities across the Baltic Sea Region. Established in 1996, it promotes the specific interests of Baltic Sea regions to EU institutions and fosters regional cooperation to address common challenges and build a prosperous Baltic Sea Region. The organisation supports the main goals of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Each Member Region is represented by elected politicians.

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-oriented cooperation and lobbying

Since its foundation in 1996, the Baltic Sea Commission is a platform for policy-oriented cooperation for its Member Regions. Member Regions share best practices, experience and information. Politicians, officials, and experts from the Member Regions work for common goals and address joint challenges. The BSC also monitors, communicates and lobbies matters of importance for its Member Regions within the CPMR and to other relevant Baltic Sea organisations, EU institutions and relevant European stakeholders. The BSC promotes multi-level governance.

The main focuses of the BSC cooperation and lobbying purpose are strengthening territorial cohesion, enhancing the European maritime dimension, fostering the energy transition, and boosting territorial accessibility in the Baltic Sea Region.

1.3 Goals

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

1. Strengthen Member Regions’ input in line with the identified priorities (see below) into policy discussions and projects-oriented cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region and at European level;
2. Strengthen the Baltic Sea Regions’ perspective in the EU agenda, national agenda and CPMR work;
3. Strengthen cooperation with other partner organisations in the multilevel setting in the Baltic Sea Region;
4. Increase the number of Member Regions.
2. Priorities and actions

2.1 BSC political priorities

The brutal and illegal aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine is human tragedy on site with wide spread repercussions, also on the Baltic Sea Region. The cooperation in the region that has been built step by step, especially after 1990, has been partially damaged, or even suspended. In addition, the question of energy security is as high on the agenda as never before.

Since the Russian attack, we also note that the cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region has started to adapt to the changed situation and to refocus cooperation among the democratic countries bordering the Baltic Sea. Next to the energy crisis, the issues of climate change, digitization and demography are also imminent. Altogether, the situation requires fast forward action in order to make cooperation contribute to the change urgently needed.

Against this background, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Member Regions want to cooperate to build a prosperous, resilient, well-connected and sustainable Baltic Sea Region. The BSC President, Vice-Presidents and the Executive Committee proposes the following political orientations for the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission for 2023-2025.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission will promote for 2023-2025:

A stronger territorial dimension to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

- The Baltic Sea Commission encourages the National Coordinators Group of the EUSBSR to consider a revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan. Since its adoption in 2021, the geopolitical landscape and conditions for cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region have changed fundamentally. Therefore, it seems adequate to have these developments also reflected in the Action Plan. The BSC stands ready to actively support the revision process.

- The BSC promotes macro-regional cooperation among its member regions to enable social, economic and territorial development in the Baltic Sea Region and help provide solutions to shared challenges. Therefore, the BSC will continue to take an active role in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to contribute to achieving the three main goals of the Strategy (“Save the Sea”, “Connect the Region”, “Increase prosperity”).

- The BSC will work to further reinforce the link of the Strategy with regional authorities. It will do so by having regular contact and working closely with the bodies of the EUSBSR, such as relevant Policy Area Coordinators, National Coordinators, the EUSBSR Strategy Point and the European Commission. The BSC will also promote a regional perspective in relevant EUSBSR events, such as the Annual Forum. BSC Working Groups have streamlined the goals of the Strategy in their respective Action Plan.

- The BSC will also promote a stronger role for regions in the governance of the Strategy, as an intermediary between project and (strategic) multi-level policy development.

- The BSC will continue to promote multi-level cooperation, and therefore stand as an active cooperation partner with other pan-Baltic organisations and stakeholders such as the CBSS, BSPC, BSSSC, UBC, HELCOM, VASAB, the Arctic Council, the Interreg Baltic Sea Region program, the Interreg cross-border programmes (land and maritime) in the Baltic Sea and arctic areas, the Committee of the regions informal Baltic Sea Group, the SEARICA Intergroup of the European Parliament etc.
A climate neutral and energy resilient Baltic Sea Region

- The BSC will support its Member Regions in seizing the opportunities of the Green Deal Agenda while helping to adapt and mitigate climate change effects. It will support its Members in the deployment of renewable energies in the Baltic Sea Region while ensuring a fair and just green energy transition.

- The BSC Energy and Climate Working Group will in particularly work to promote a climate neutral and energy resilient Baltic Sea Region.

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<tr>
<th>ENERGY AND CLIMATE WORKING GROUP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair: Mr Markku Markkula, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region (Finland)</td>
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<td>Vice-Chair: Mr Pontus Lindberg, Region Skåne (Sweden)</td>
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**Key topics for 2023-2024**

- Increased production of sustainable renewable energy in the Baltic Sea Region. Increased added value in the energy production chain - from energy production to high added value products;
- Increased sustainable and smart use of natural resources for climate transition in the Baltic Sea Region;
- Promote adaptation of Regions to the foreseeable effects of climate change.

More information in the Action Plan [here](#).

A connected, green and resilient Baltic Sea Region transport system

- The BSC will support its Members to promote a functional TEN-T network and increased better cross-border connectivity and territorial accessibility in the Baltic Sea Region while fostering the shift towards smart and sustainable mobility. In light of the new geopolitical environment in the Baltic Sea Region, the BSC Members will cooperate to build a more resilient transport system and secured strategic infrastructure.

- The BSC Transport Working Group will in particularly work to promote a connected, green and resilient transport system in the Baltic Sea Region.

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<tr>
<th>TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair: Mr Magnus Lagergren, Region Örebro (Sweden)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice-Chairs: Mr Pekka Komu, Region Päijät-Häme (Finland) and Mr Jan Owe Larsson, Region Östergötland (Sweden)</td>
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**Key topics for 2023-2024**

- Contribute to better cross-border infrastructure planning for passengers and goods and increased territorial accessibility in the BSR;
- Contribute to the phasing out of fossil fuels by accelerating clean fuel development and deployment in the transport sector;
- Promote innovative transport solutions – for people and goods.

More information in the Action Plan [here](#).
A sustainable blue economy for the Baltic Sea Region

- The BSC will work to promote a sustainable blue economy in the Baltic Sea Region with focus on maritime industries, sustainable coastal tourism, and sustainable small scale fishing.

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<th>MARITIME WORKING GROUP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair: Ms Sari Nurro, Oulu Region (Finland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice-Chair: Mr Harry Bouveng, Region Stockholm (Sweden)</td>
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**Key topics for 2023-2024**

- Promote competitive and sustainable maritime industries in the Baltic Sea Region;
- Promote sustainable coastal tourism in the Baltic Sea Region;
- Restore and protect the Baltic Sea.

More information in the Action Plan [here](#).

A cohesive, competitive and innovative Baltic Sea Region

- The BSC will support its Member Regions to position the Baltic Sea Region as a competitive and innovative region. It will support them in embracing the full opportunities from the various EU instruments, such as S3, I3 and the Partnerships for Regional Innovation.

- The BSC will take an active role in shaping the future of Cohesion Policy 2028 via the CPMR Secretariat.

A sustainable and fair territorial development in the European Arctic regions

- As the European Arctic (comprised of the northernmost regions in Finland, Sweden and Norway) is part of the Baltic Sea Region, their development is closely interlinked. What happens in the Arctic has furthermore a global impact. In line with the BSC Position On The EU Arctic Policy, the BSC is supporting a strong involvement of regional authorities in the implementation of the new EU Arctic Policy.

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<th>Arctic Task Force</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair: Mr Jari Nahkanen, Oulu Region (Finland)</td>
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**Key topics for 2023-2024**

- Promote a sustainable economic and territorial development of the European Arctic Regions;
- Promote the European Arctic Regions as low-tension areas through increased multi-level cooperation;
- Contribute to social development and building attractive communities in European Arctic Regions.

More information in the Action Plan [here](#).
2.2 BSC actions

The BSC will carry out a wide range of actions to deliver the policy priorities identified above. Below is a snapshot of actions ahead.

Development of impactful Policy Positions
- Policy Positions to convey messages to the European institutions will be prepared according to the needs of the BSC Working Groups, or Member Regions, in agreement with the Executive Committee.

Organisation and participation in relevant events
- 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 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 Secretariat will help its Member Regions to harness new funding opportunities under the framework of the new Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 (e.g., Interreg programmes…) but also other programmes (Horizon Europe…).

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.

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, such as the CBSS, BSPC, VASAB, HELCOM, UBC, BSSSC and more;
- 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 to the EU institutions and relevant stakeholders.
Projects

- The 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.

Mission of the Working Groups and Task Force

- The CPMR BSC has three Working Groups and one Task Force that contribute to the implementation of the priorities of the BSC. They serve as 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, in-person, 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 outlining 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 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 19 Member Regions across the Baltic Sea Region.

Rond-Point Schuman | 1040 Brussels, BELGIUM
info@crpm.org | +32 (0)2 612 17 00

6, Rue Saint-Martin | 35700 Rennes, FRANCE (siège)
info@crpm.org | +33 (0)2 99 35 40 50