The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (BSC), together with its Member Regions, support a strong EU Macro-Regional Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) that helps to address joint challenges in the Baltic Sea Region. The BSC promotes a strong role for the regions in the design, governance and implementation of the EUSBSR and the delivery of the three goals of the Strategy: Saving the Sea, Connecting the Region, and Increasing Prosperity. The BSC has been cooperating with the Policy Area Coordinators, the National Coordinators, the Baltic Sea Strategy Point and the European Commission.

The EUSBSR was the first of the four EU Macro-Regional Strategies, approved in 2009 by the European Council. It followed a Communication from the European Commission and consultations with the European Parliament, Baltic Sea Region and stakeholders. The Strategy works as a framework for cooperation and aims at enhancing the regional integration of the eight EU Member States in the Baltic Sea Region.

The EUSBSR Action Plan sets out objectives, targets and policies, and has been successively revised over the years (2009, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2021) to take into account emerging challenges. The EUSBSR Action Plan 2021 is under revision for 2024-2025, with an adoption of the final Action Plan by the European Commission in early 2026.

This new 2024/2025 revision is a key opportunity to reinforce the role of regions in the Strategy. In order to support the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan planned during 2024/2025, the BSC Executive Committee decided in January 2024 to set up a Task Force under the chairmanship of Lapland. The Task Force shall develop a regional perspective for the revision of the objectives and scope of the EUSBSR Action Plan and its governance structures, with the aim of promoting a stronger involvement of regional stakeholders in the EUSBSR implementation process.

The BSC stands ready to partner with the European institutions, National Coordinators, the Coordinators of Policy Areas and the Baltic Sea Strategy Point to discuss the role of the regions in the future implementation of the Strategy and to develop new approaches for cooperation where needed.
1. EUSBSR Action Plan 2021

a) Information about the BSC contribution to the revision process in 2019-2021
The EUSBSR Action Plan was revised in 2019-2021. The BSC established a Task Force, led by Mecklenburg Vorpommern, to provide regional input to the Strategy. The following outputs were developed:
- Task Force Revision of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (January 2019)
- BSC Input Paper to the EUSBSR Revision Process (May 2019)
- BSC Policy Position on the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan (June 2019)
- BSC Final Report of the BSC Task Force for Revision of the EUSBSR (September 2020)

b) The Action Plan 2021 (Read it here)
- It maintains the three objectives “Saving the Sea, Connecting the Region, and Increasing Prosperity”;
- It introduces the Baltic Sea Strategy Point (coordinated by Hamburg and Turku), that acts as a Secretariat of the Strategy;
- The Action Plan defines 14 policy areas covering 44 actions.

c) How is the BSC involved in the EUSBSR Action Plan 2021?
There is no specific role for the BSC, as a pan-Baltic organisation, in the Strategy. The BSC though takes an informal role.

1- Policy Area Coordinators (PACs)

- BSC cooperation with PAC Transport
  - PAC transport participates in BSC Transport WG meetings, BSC General Assembly

- BSC Cooperation with PAC Innovation
  - BSC is member of the Steering Committee of PAC Innovation
  - Regular participation of PAC Innovation in BSC Events (Working Groups, GA)

- BSC Cooperation with PAC Tourism
  - Regular participation of PAC Tourism in BSC Events (Working Groups, GA, BSC participation in the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum)
  - PAC Tourism is coordinated by Oulu Region and Pomorskie

- The BSC has also had ad-hoc cooperation with PAC clean ship

2- Other actors

- BSC regular dialogue with National Coordinators from Sweden, Germany and Finland;
- BSC regular dialogue with the Baltic Sea Strategy point (e.g. Participation in the BSC Ex Com meeting or BSC General Assembly 2024);
- BSC regular dialogue with the European Commission (DG REGIO, unit dealing with MRS).
2. EUSBSR Action Plan revision process 2024-2025 (to be discussed and completed with BSC Members input)

a) The timeline of the revision process
Preparations started in early 2024. The bulk of the work will take place from mid-2024 onwards, with the aim of having the updated Action Plan adopted and published by early 2026.

b) What kind of revision?
For this revision, there will not be a revision of the governance but mostly on the content of the PACs goals and actions: Re-think and re-define the Actions; Develop indicators; Prepare for the post-27 round of cohesion policy programming.

The BSC should provide input to the targeted PACs and give input to their Actions.

The BSC should provide input to the PACs by end of November 2024 at the latest.

c) What objectives and goals of the BSC Task Force for the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan (to be discussed and defined by Member Regions)

Objective
- Contribute with a regional perspective to the revision process of the EUSBSR Action Plan.

Goals:
- Reinforce the role of BSC regions in the governance of the Strategy. Regional Authorities should be given a larger mandate, both in relation to setting goals and carrying out implementation;
- Effective working structures with a concrete and strategic involvement of the regional level are necessary in the next EUSBSR Action Plan;
- Reinforce the Arctic dimension in the Action Plan;
- Better alignment of fundings between the Strategy and other EU fundings.

d) Actors to work with during the revision process
- National Coordinators;
- Policy Area Coordinators;
- DG REGIO;
- Baltic Sea Strategy Point.
e) What activities of the BSC Task Force for the EUSBSR revision? (to be discussed with Members)
- Online meetings with PACs, NCs, DG REGIO, to convey them our points;
- Elaboration of a BSC technical note as a BSC input to the revision process, to deliver to the PACs, NCs and DG REGIO (By October 2024?) / based on a questionnaire to the BSC Members);
- SEARica event at the European Parliament (Spring 2025);
- Participation in the EUSBSR Annual Forum Gotland 2024 (various seminars, BSC Stand).

f) What BSC activities during the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2024 in Gotland?
The overall themes of this year’s Forum are Sustainability, Resilience and Security in the Baltic Sea Region. Read more information and register: Annual Forum 2024 - EUSBSR
- Seminars where the BSC is a co-organiser:
  o Take-Off for Sustainable Aviation in the Baltic Sea Region;
  o The European Arctic – a Driver for a more Sustainable and Resilient Baltic Sea Region;
  o What does the Future of Regional Innovation Collaboration in the Baltic Sea Region look like in the next Programming Period Post-27?
- BSC contribution to the plenary session on transport “Sustainable Transport Systems in the Baltic Sea Region” (30 October, 13.30-14.30);
- BSC stand in the networking village.