The Council of Oulu Region is submitting a proposal for candidacy to the Chair of the Maritime Working Group of the Baltic Sea Commission for 2023–2024. Our candidate is Ms. Sari Nurro, member of the Board of the Council of Oulu Region.

Sari Nurro is a member of the Maritime Working Group coming from a maritime city of Raahen herself. She has a long international career, and she is internationally very well connected. She has worked during her career in the UN in New York, in Sweden and in Western Africa.

The primary supporting civil servant for Sari Nurro is Chief of Civil Engineering Lauri Romppainen and secondary supporting civil servant is Manager of International Affairs Hanna Honkamäkilä.

The Council of Oulu Region is EUSBSR Policy Area coordinator for PA tourism. We can offer resources for maritime tourism, which is one of the key themes for the Maritime WG. Policy Area provides a strong platform to reinforce sustainable tourism development. Cruise tourism in the Baltic Sea is in the new international situation because St. Petersburg is not a destination anymore. Swedish presidency of the EUSBSR has suggest the promotion of the Baltic Sea Region for cruise ships. Recreational use of the sea, boating in the archipelagos, connecting remote regions, and islands in a sustainable way are also good themes to promote maritime tourism.

Baltic Sea Region’s industry, ports and shipping companies are fully committed to sustainable development to achieve a fossil free society. European ports and marine industry are going through massive decarbonization process. However, EU Fit for 55 Package should take better into account wintertime arctic conditions in northern Europe. Arctic maritime operations require extra strong vessels and engine power resulting in extra fuel consumption throughout the year. Finland is fully dependent on maritime export and import to reach European market and in the current security political situation maritime connectivity is highly essential.

Ports and sea routes of the EU’s TEN-T network are strategically very important. Good transportation conditions and accessibility are essential for maritime tourism too. Improving accessibility and increasing visibility is a way to mitigate seasonal fluctuations in tourism. FueleU Maritime will over time cut carbon intensity of marine fuels used in Europe, but now emissions trade in shipping increase energy cost. New innovations will not improve the situation fast, so we need to promote green transition economically viable ways.
The offshore wind power should also be one of the topics for Maritime WG. Oulu Region is at the moment the biggest wind power producing region in Finland, and it is expected to have 30% of all the future new wind power in Finland. Increasing energy self-sufficiency relates to maritime activities. The port of Raahe is the third largest port in Finland, thanks to the transportation of wind power installations and turbines.

The role of ports in security of supply issues in the Baltic Sea has increased. We hope that the role of the Maritime working group will be greater in the future, and it will take into account the operation and development of ports in both normal and exceptional circumstances to an increasing extent. Reducing the carbon footprint of maritime transport in the current situation must be done in an economically, technologically, and politically meaningful way. The importance of operational reliability is emphasized in times of crisis.

Sustainable shipping industry and clean shipping technologies address climate change. Supporting green innovations and a highly skilled workforce for the development of the maritime industry are necessary in time when we compete of the workforce.

Pauli Harju
Region Mayor
Oulu Regional Council