Executive Committee of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission
Minutes

Wednesday, 27 January 2021 | 09:00 – 11:30 CET

Opening of the meeting
Mr Jari Nahkanen, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission gave an opening speech. He welcomed participants and expressed his hope that 2021, the year in which the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission will celebrate its 25th anniversary, will bring plenty of new opportunities for Baltic Sea cooperation and lobbying actions, with a new Executive Committee, new chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Working Groups, a new CPMR President, and EU policy developments. He also warmly welcomed Mr Cees Loggen, CPMR President to the Executive Committee meeting.

Approval of the Agenda
The Executive Committee unanimously approved the agenda.

Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, 6 October 2020
The minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held last October were unanimously approved.

Position of 2nd Vice-President of the Baltic Sea Commission
Moderated by Mr Jari Nahkanen, BSC President

Mr Nahkanen introduced the candidature of Mr Romek Kosenkranius.

Mr Romek Kosenkranius, Mayor of Parnü, Member of the Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities, provided participants with information on his motivation for this position, and on his political background, experiences and his current positions, including being a member of the BSC Executive Committee for the last 2 and a half years. He presented his specific policy areas of interests, namely the importance of digitalisation, the development of infrastructure and the innovation of transportation, and environmental and climate change issues across the Baltic Sea Region. Cooperation between regions and to find and support new development within the Baltic Sea Region are also important issues to be addressed over the next few years.

Decision
The Executive Committee unanimously approved the candidature of Romek Kosenkranius (Mayor of Parnü, Member of the Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities) as second Vice-President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission for the mandate period starting now until the 2022 General Assembly.
Strategic outlook on the work of the CPMR and its link to the Baltic Sea Commission
Moderated by Mr Jari Nahkanen, BSC President

Mr Jari Nahkanen welcomed CPMR President Mr Loggen and stated that the BSC wants to have a good, fruitful and strong cooperation together with him. He emphasised the opportunity of this meeting to discuss together the future of the CPMR, its priorities and how the Baltic Sea Commission can best contribute to that work. He listed the key policy priorities for the Baltic Sea Commission such as climate, transport, maritime affairs, smart specialisation and Arctic issues.

Mr Cees Loggen, President of the CPMR, thanked the Baltic Sea Commission for the invitation. He explained his priorities as CPMR President, including strengthening cooperation between CPMR and the Geographical Commissions, who can see how policies work in the regions. He noted that coastal regions are the first to be hit and are hit hardest in times of crisis, and it is essential for the CPMR to have a strong connection with the Geographical Commissions. He congratulated Romek Kosenkraniu on his election as Vice-President of BSC.

Mr Loggen briefly highlighted the topics to be addressed during his mandate as CPMR President. The top priority is climate change and the CPMR as a whole can play a more prominent role in tackling climate change as the knowledge and expertise is in its regions. The Green Deal agenda is a major priority and there is a lot of work to be carried out in the field of climate adaptation and climate mitigation to tackle climate change. Regions have an important role to play in this and have interests in European policy initiatives and funding programmes. He stressed that if climate change is not stopped in time some Europeans will probably become climate refugees, and some parts of Africa will become uninhabitable. Climate refugees may arrive on the shores of many regions in numbers never seen before and this influx of migrants will make great demands on European solidarity and our regions will once more be at the very centre of these developments. The CPMR can be a driving force for a constructive approach to a major and recurring situation at European borders.

He expressed his hope that the CPMR remains a resilient and future-oriented association, with attractive membership that offers a high level of service. The CPMR will launch a broad reflection, combining policy analyses with brainstorming meetings with CPMR Members. Issues discussed during this exercise will include the role of Cohesion Policy in economic governance, a new EU strategic framework for the reform of the European Semester, and the revision of the partnership principle. This will shape the CPMR's lobbying efforts. He stressed that the CPMR is so big that one size fits all will never work, it needs the Geographical Commissions and their specific knowledge of their sea basin to function properly. The Geographical Commissions need the CPMR to represent their interests in Brussels, which is why a strong link between the CPMR and its Geographical Commissions is essential.

He stressed that important regions within the national arena, like Helsinki-Uusimaa and Stockholm are crucial for a strong representation of CPMR at Member State level. He noted his plan to attend the General Assemblies of all Geographical Commissions to get in touch with and listen to the members, to learn what they expect from CPMR and how they think CPMR meetings can be more lively and interactive. He concluded by reiterating the Palermo manifesto and noted that the pandemic crisis that followed the financial crisis has taught one important lesson: No one is big enough to succeed on their own. Cooperation and shared values are the pillars of a common future. The CPMR must play its role in the future of the European Project, a renewed Europe that will gain a renewed trust from its citizens. A driving force of regions, ensuring a prosperous future for the new generation of Europeans.
Discussion with Executive Committee

Mr Jari Nahkanen thanked Mr Cees Loggen and opened the discussion with the Executive Committee by asking him how he believed the CPMR can strengthen the Arctic perspectives towards the EU, which are issues for the whole of Europe not just northern Europe.

Mr Cees Loggen acknowledged it is a geographically important issue for all regions and the BSC has an ally in the CPMR to address this issue in Brussels, in the same way that it addresses issues that are specific to other regions. The lobby strength of the CPMR is at the BSC’s disposal.

Mr Jari Nahkanen agreed with Mr Loggen that more lobbying is needed.

Mr Tomas Mörtsell, Vice-President of the CPMR, Region Västerbotten, thanked Mr Loggen for his interesting speech and noted that he appreciated his focus on the challenge to handle climate change and global warming, this is one of the key challenges for both the CPMR and the European Union for the coming years when it comes to handling climate change issue. He noted the importance for both the Baltic Sea Commission and the CPMR to address Arctic issues. There are several reasons for that, one is the climate change issue and global warming which leads to major consequences for lots of coastal regions if we cannot deal with global warming in a way that doesn’t make the ice melt more than it already has. He also highlighted that there are some geopolitical reasons for addressing Arctic issues, and it would be positive for BSC regions to have a stronger cooperation and stronger participation in Arctic issues.

Mr Cees Loggen noted that it is good that the Baltic Sea Regions are behind Arctic issues and that more research is needed into what affects the melting of the ice caps and the disappearance of the permafrost and how that will affect climate change. It is good that the BSC make it a priority so that the CPMR family can bring it to the attention of Brussels.

Mr Otto Meri, Region Helsinki-Uusimaa, agreed that climate change and actions in that respect are of vital importance for the future and he gave details of the concrete roadmap to be a carbon neutral region by 2035 that Region Helsinki-Uusimaa has made with municipalities. He stressed the need for concrete examples and actions, municipalities and citizens can plan together how we can make this happen, how this challenge needs to be addressed and how we can be successful in reaching our goal.

Mr Cees Loggen welcomed the roadmap to be carbon neutral by 2035 and shared experiences happening in Holland. He mentioned one of the issues is to not only become climate neutral in the future for climate change, but also to have a healthier environment for all.

Mr Pontus Lindberg, Region Skåne wondered if the CPMR and BSC, as an organisation, has learned something from the experience of these online meetings, is there something in the way of working with breakout sessions that will make it possible to involve Member Regions more in the future, and to get more people involved in the discussions. He asked if this should be considered, as although everyone is longing to get back to normal but at the same time, we should think about what we have learnt and what can strengthen the organisation. He wondered if the CPMR and BSC should work more to find groups of regions that could work together on specific issues to find common and EU funding for specific measures in the climate area.

Mr Romek Kosenkranius noted he was looking forward to good cooperation.
Mr Richard Sjölund, Region Ostrobothnia, thanked Mr Cees Loggen for his speech and welcomed strengthening the link between the CPMR and the Geographical Commissions. The regions have the expertise, and we have to profit from that expertise. He fully agreed that this is the way to work together, we share history, and we share the future, and mitigating climate change and implementing the Green Deal is a shared responsibility. He cited an example of how regions in the BSC have worked to mitigate climate change, with the City of Lahti in Region Päijät-Häme which has become Green Capital of 2021, which is an achievement.

Mr Wolf Born, Region Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, thanked Mr Cees Loggen for his availability and strongly supported the comment from Mr Pontus Lindberg, he called for the strengthening of the CPMR member regions’ ability to learn from one another, and for the solutions that are found in the North Sea or the Atlantic Arc Commissions to be made available to other Geographical Commissions. He noted that if we are strengthening our capacity to learn from each other, then we should also think about tools and instruments that are more flexible than CPMR inter-Commission Working Groups. He felt the organisation of the Working Groups needs to be more flexible and more able to react in the short term as we have seen through pandemic situation.

Mr Sami Virtanen, Kymenlaakso Region, thanked Mr Cees Loggen for taking part in the meeting and the good speech. The areas of interest of Finland and Kymenlaakso are very much in line with those of the CPMR. Cohesion Policy enabling social and economic development in the regions with financial support from the EU funds and programmes. Flexibility enabling fluid transport flows for goods and people, it is important to stress the completion of TEN-t core network corridors by 2030. As a coastal region, maritime issues, the state of the Baltic Sea and blue economy opportunities are important, whilst not forgetting maritime transport which is crucial for countries like Finland and regions like Kymenlaakso. He agreed with Mr Cees Loggen that climate change should be top priority and Kymenlaakso region welcomes the Green Deal and aims to become carbon neutral by 2040. The region has also updated its S3 strategy, which includes priorities such as bio and circular economy, digitalisation and logistics. He believes the cooperation between Mr Cees Loggen, the CPMR General Secretariat and the Baltic Sea Commission will be fruitful.

Mr Loggen thanked everyone for their kind words and support given, and noted it strengthened his beliefs that the CPMR is on the right track with climate change as the main priority.

Regarding the question on what can be learnt from this period and how can it be exploited more for our benefit, Mr Cees Loggen pointed out that this can offer support in quick meetings, there is no need to travel, however personal meetings are needed to strengthen and build friendships. Calls for help can now be answered more quickly, and online meetings are a perfect instrument to handle issues now not in 2 months. Another benefit is the trips that are not being made, which contribute to less carbon emissions.

On the other hand, another question is how can we benefit from each other’s experience and how can we share experiences. Social media is a relatively easy way to do this. A bulletin board where parties can address their challenges or issues and other regions can respond if they have a solution or experience, which is an easy way to help each other. This needs to be addressed in a more administrative way in Brussels. We can learn from instruments that are already there and will explore this further with the CPMR General Secretariat to see if this low level approach can be a solution.

Mr Jari Nahkanen thanked Mr Cees Loggen and invited him to the Baltic Sea Commission General Assembly, which will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Commission.

Mr Cees Loggen replied that he would be very honoured to attend the 25th anniversary.
Update about European policies’ key developments and issue for 2021 and their implications for Baltic Sea Regions

Moderated by Mr Tomas Mörtsell, Vice-President of CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Mr Tomas Mörtsell thanked Mr Jari Nahkanen and welcomed Mr Nicolas Brookes, CPMR Executive Director. He noted that looking at the EU agenda, a new phase of policy development is starting. Over the last few years, regions have been following and lobbying the long-term EU budget and Cohesion Policy regulations and he recognised that the CPMR General Secretariat has been a tremendous support and key player. Focus is now on the finalisation and start of the new programmes (mainstream but also Interreg programmes), the implementation of the Green Deal, and how it will affect transport and maritime policies. Regions from the Baltic Sea Commission will also look at the EU agenda related to Smart Specialisation Strategies.

Mr Nicolas Brookes, CPMR Executive Director, thanked the Baltic Sea Commission for the invitation to speak and provided information on the CPMR’s strategy for 2021, which will mostly focus on implementation and the support it provides to its Members. Until recently, CPMR work focused on lobbying, engagement events, amendments etc, but is now moving to another phase of work which is the implementation of EU policies and programmes. He reminded participants that a reflection process should be launched on an extension of the adopted manifesto, territories matter, and how the regions see themselves when it comes to the future of the EU and in particular investment policies.

Regarding implementation and EU policies, starting with regional policy, there are 3-4 items of interest for the CPMR this year. There will be a lot of work on analysing the issues the members are facing with the preparation of the programmes, for example the number of funds that exist and how they deal with ReactEU, Next Generation EU, ERDF etc plus the level playing field with the recovery plan. The CPMR will relay the information to the European Commission. Territorial cooperation is still very much a priority, the CPMR will continue the work initiated and compare the differences between the current programmes and future programmes. The CPMR will also work on regional state aid guidelines, which should be issued in the spring.

The CPMR is also monitoring how macro-regional strategies and initiatives are being implemented and it hopes to adopt a new position in the autumn on this policy area. Transport is also big priority for the Baltic Sea Commission. The implementation phase has already begun to a large extent, analysing the implementation of the previous programming period to make sure the Connecting Europe Facility better answers the needs of members in the future. There is still no compromise on Connecting Europe Facility for the next period, but an agreement should be reached soon. Mr Brookes mentioned that regarding TEN-T, the Commission will publish a proposal for review in autumn. There will be a Consultation before that which the CPMR will reply to.

The CPMR will also work on longer term issues, defining what territorial accessibility means as a criteria, and also working on innovative maps that are being prepared in-house on territorial accessibility. This should be presented in a Paper in the next couple of months. The CPMR is also monitoring other transport issues such as aviation, maritime transport, smart and sustainable mobility strategy and the mobility package.

It is clear that climate and energy is the priority for the CPMR. The political objective is to show that the regions are implementing the Green Deal, that they are key in realising the EU objectives on the ground. He agreed with Mr Sjölund that the regions have the experience on the ground, this is very important and one of the key messages the CPMR hopes to deliver as part of its Regions Act! Initiative which will be presented in the next few weeks.
A lot of work will revolve around the implementation of the Green Deal at territorial level and monitoring legislation that will be coming up this year. The CPMR will also be looking at broader issues such as financing climate action at local level and the link between the recovery efforts and climate change. He confirmed the CPMR will take part in COP26 in Glasgow.

On maritime issues, the bulk of CPMR activities on all maritime policy areas will go through the SEArica intergroup in the European Parliament. The CPMR will also look at the implementation of the EMFF and is preparing the ground for the review of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2023. On migration, much of the CPMR’s work will revolve around the flagship project REGIN. There is also interest in looking at this from a different perspective, the link between the climate crisis and migration issues in a large sense.

The CPMR will remain a big lobbying organisation and it has been particularly active with regard to the Brexit adjustment reserve. The CPMR adopted a Declaration on this in December 2020. The CPMR will be doing a lot to influence the work of Parliament and will have a meeting with Commissioner Ferreira in February to influence the proposals.

The CPMR will largely focus on implementation this year, however it does not only want to follow the EU agenda, it also wants to shape it. The CPMR is renowned for being a think tank for Europe and it hopes to revive this image by launching an initiative which will be an extension of the manifesto adopted in Palermo. The idea is to weigh in on discussions on the future of Europe and the role that regions have when it comes to delivering EU objectives on the ground from the angle of EU investment. The aim of the initiative is to go beyond what the CPMR already does on Cohesion Policy, climate change etc, and how we see regions in the governance of these EU investment policies in the future. A Technical Paper will be prepared on this issue for the CPMR Political Bureau in March 2021.

Discussion

Ms Hanna Honkamäkiä, Oulu Region, asked about the future ETC-programmes. She asked if it is possible to investigate the possibility of using "block exemption" instead of "de minimis" in all programmes. Now, different Member States have different interpretations of de minimis and it is not equal. In most of the cases the amount of State Aid is insignificant for the projects. Block exemption would make it a level playing field for all. This has been discussed at least in the preparation of Nordic Interreg programmes.

Mr Tomas Mörtsell asked if the CPMR will follow and study the effects on the decrease in the number of Interreg areas.

Mr Nicolas Brookes replied to Mrs Honkamäkiä that in 2016 the CPMR called for the removal of State Aid requirements when it came to ETC programmes, but it was not successful. This is something the CPMR has been addressing for quite some time. Regarding particular concerns he will pass them on to Mr Molica at the CPMR, dealing with this topic. He informed Mr Mörtsell that when it comes to ETC programmes the CPMR will update its analysis to see where we are in terms of comparison with previous period and the new programming period. The CPMR has been fighting for a very strong Interreg with some success in the maritime cooperation strand.

Ms Hanna Honkamäkiä noted that as Interreg regulations were agreed upon in the EU in December 2020, it is now good time to take this up.

Mr Tomas Mörtsell thanked Mr Nicolas Brookes for the very useful policy update.
Update from the BSC Secretariat

Moderated by Mr Tomas Mörtsell, BSC Vice-President

Mr Tomas Mörtsell introduced the session and explained that the Executive Secretary would present the main developments regarding the Baltic Sea Commission’s activities. A table providing an overview of these activities was sent in advance to the participants.

Ms Lucille Ehrhart, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission reiterated the key elements included in the overview of activities undertaken by the BSC. These activities included supporting the Working Groups and replying to public consultations on a sustainable blue economy and the future of Arctic policy. She acknowledged the importance of linking the Baltic Sea Commission priorities with those of the CPMR General Secretariat. Ms Ehrhart noted the time spent in regions Västerbotten and Ostrobothnia had been extremely useful and that she intends to spend time in more regions once the health situation permits. There is also emphasis on improving internal and external communication to ensure during the pandemic the Baltic Sea Commission send targeted information. She also provided details of upcoming events, such as an event on linked to the EUSBSR and Interreg Baltic Sea Programme organised on 23 February.

Mr Wolf Born, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, asked for the title of the meeting on 23 February 2020.

Ms Lucille Ehrhart replied it is to be confirmed but will probably be “A macro-regional approach to smart specialisation – zoom on the Baltic Sea Region”. She noted she is in contact with the European Commission as they will organise a macro-regional strategy week and there is a possibility that the Baltic Sea Commission meeting could be organised as a side event. This would give more visibility to the Baltic Sea Commission event.

Preparation of the 2021 BSC General Assembly and 25th anniversary of the BSC

Mr Tomas Mörtsell explained that this year marks the 25th anniversary of the CPMR BSC. This is an opportunity to look at the achievements of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission and reflect on the future of Baltic Sea cooperation in view of new challenges. He noted the General Assembly is a great occasion to celebrate at the same time this anniversary, and organise an high-level political event to increase visibility for the organisation. He informed the participants that Helsinki-Uusimaa Region wish to host the General Assembly and passed the floor to Mr Meri.

Mr Otto Meri, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, confirmed that Helsinki-Uusimaa Region is willing to host the BSC GA in the autumn, however taking into account that the COVID situation can change for the better or worse, it will be necessary to see what the situation is later this Spring.

Mr Tomas Mörtsell thanked Mr Meri and opened the floor for comments.

Ms Lucille Ehrhart thanked Helsinki-Uusimaa for the invitation to host the General Assembly. She noted that due to the health situation, a physical event in May or June, as is usually the case, might be very difficult. Another option would be to postpone it to September, where there could be more chance to have a physical meeting. Considering the format of the meeting, the host region will decide if it will be a meeting in Helsinki, or if it could be on ferry. This will be discussed with the host Region and with the Executive Committee during its next meeting, when the health situation might be clearer.

Mr Tomas Mörtsell agreed it was a good idea to hold it in September.
Mr Otto Meri agreed that a ferry to Stockholm or Tallinn will be investigated. The COVID situation will be carefully monitored and hopefully in March the actual facilities can start to be organised and made as safe as possible. There should always be a Plan B.

Mr Wolf Born noted that the 30th Baltic Parliamentary Conference will be held in Stockholm at the end of August so a back-to-back meeting could be explored as an option.

Mr Pontus Lindberg thanked Helsinki-Uusimaa for the invitation and supported the idea for a physical meeting but agreed the situation should be monitored and he felt that September might still be a problem.

Mr Tomas Mörtsell concluded that the BSC will aim for physical meeting in September hosted by Helsinki-Uusimaa Region.

Policy areas of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission
Moderated by Mr Jari Nahkanen, BSC President

Mr Jari Nahkanen thanked the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Working Groups for their tremendous work and commitment during their mandate. He thanked Richard Sjölund for his work as Chair of Energy and Climate Working Group and wished him luck in his new role as CPMR Vice-President in charge of Climate Affairs. He invited each Chair to provide a brief update on their activities since the last meeting.

Mr Richard Sjölund, Chair of the Energy and Climate Working Group recalled the long journey of his chairmanship and noted much of the work was centred on the LARS project which has now ended. He said that learning was one of the core centres in the activities within the BSC and CPMR. The Working Group focused on climate issues over the last 2 years. He thanked Kaarin Taipale and Pontus Lindberg for their work as Vice-Chairs and provided a brief update on the recent activities of the Working Group which last met on 21 January 2021 to discuss the EU Forest Strategy with 3 key speakers and 12 member regions participating. He stressed the importance of following-up this issue.

Mr Nahkanen thanked Ms Perho and her supporting officers for their hard work over the last few years and for leading this Working Group with great enthusiasm and commitment. He thanked Ms Perho for her nomination to continue as Chair of the Working Group.

Ms Tiina Perho, Chair of the Maritime Working Group noted that the COVID crisis had not stopped the work of the Working Group, which has had productive meetings and 2 main thematic areas of maritime industry and sustainable tourism were addressed. In September a policy statement was made and in December there was a meeting on a sustainable blue economy. She provided an update on the work carried out, also within SEARICA intergroup.

Mr Nahkanen thanked Mr Bosse Andersson for his excellent work as Chair of the Transport Working Group and noted that the role of Stockholm Region is very important.

Mr Bosse Andersson, Chair of the Transport Working Group provided an update on the activities and events of the Working Group. The last year has been turbulent, however the Working Group has still maintained interesting discussions. He gave feedback on the meeting held in October 2020 which covered the report of shared experiences and included an interesting presentation on transport mobility integration in spatial planning. There have also been discussions on the future Action Plan for the Working Group, and it is clear that the members want to maintain a focus on TEN-T revision and questions relating to the EU strategy or smart and sustainable mobility.
Mr Jari Nahkanen thanked all the Chairs for their updates.

**Decision on the nomination of the Working Group Chairs and Vice-Chairs for the period 2021-2023**

The nominees for the positions of Chairs and Vice-Chairs left the meeting. 5 nominations were received from interested Member Regions. The Executive Committee made the decision to ask Mr Bosse Andersson and Mr Harry Bouveng from Stockholm Region to continue in their respective roles of Chair of the Transport Working Group and Vice-Chair of the Maritime Working Group, for this new mandate period. During the meeting, Mr Bosse Andersson accepted the proposal from the Executive Committee, to continue his position in the Working Group. Following a short discussion, the following nominations were made:

- **Energy and Climate Working Group**
  Chair: Mr Markku Markkula, Region Helsinki-Uusimaa
  Vice-Chair: Mr Pontus Lindberg, Region Skåne

- **Maritime Working Group**
  Chair: Ms Tiina Perho, Region SouthWest Finland
  Vice-Chair: Mr Harry Bouveng, Region Stockholm (TBC)

- **Transport Working Group**
  Chair: Mr Bosse Andersson, Region Stockholm
  Vice-Chair: Mr Magnus Lagergren, Region Örebro
  Vice-Chair: Päijät-Häme (name TBC)

**Decision on the process to develop the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Work Plan for the 2021-2023 period**

The Secretariat made a proposal regarding the process to develop a new Work Plan for 2021-2023. Ms Ehrhart provided detailed information and stressed this was a collaborative process which will involve the Member Regions. Each Working Group will also provide a contribution and the Work Plan. The draft Work Plan will be submitted to the next Executive Committee meeting and will be put to the vote during the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission General Assembly.

The Executive Committee unanimously approved the proposal.

**Decision on the creation of a new Working Group on Smart Specialisation Strategies**

Ms Lucille Ehrhart presented the Secretariat’s proposal to establish a new Working Group on Smart Specialisation Strategies.

Mr Wolf Born noted the need for Working Group to work self sustainably with the Civil Servants working in the Working Groups as the Secretariat is reaching its limit for workload.

The Executive Committee unanimously approved the proposal.

**Discussion on Arctic issues**

The possibility for the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission to work more on Arctic issues was discussed. The Baltic Sea Commission contributed to an open public consultation last November dedicated to the Future of the Arctic Policy. EU Arctic Policy is of interest of several Regions and potential new Members.
Mr Tomas Mörtsell introduced the idea to create a Task Force on Arctic issues. For the next few years Arctic issues will be important for the EU. It will also be a way of seeking and inviting new partners for cooperation. If the BSC were to set up a Task Force to work on Arctic issues it could be an idea to involve other regions and countries like Iceland, Greenland, etc. The importance of Arctic issues is growing, and it could be a good idea for the BSC to address these issues in the work that the CPMR is carrying out.

During a brief discussion, it was agreed that an Arctic Task Force would be geographical, and it may be useful to have Arctic issues addressed in the existing Working Groups. It was acknowledged that organisations such as Barents Regional Council already work on Arctic issues.

Ms Hanna Honkamäkilä clarified that Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation is not based on political presentation at regional level. In Sweden, Regions are in fact not Members of Barents Regional Council, it is the State’s regional representatives, läns. In Finland, Regions are Members, but it is more on a civil servant level.

The Executive Committee agreed the Baltic Sea Commission should work on Arctic issues, but the question remains of how this is to be achieved, through existing Working Groups, or through a dedicated Task Force. It was agreed that the work should be organised by the Regions most interested rather than the BSC Secretariat.

Mr Tomas Mörtsell confirmed that Region Västerbotten would be interested in contributing human resources if a Task Force were to be set up.

Mr Jari Nahkanen suggested that a horizontal Task Force is the best idea, and Mr Wolf Born agreed that a cross-cutting Task Force which is open to other partners could be a good way to reactivate contacts with other regions. He pointed out that a way forward could also be to involve the Working Groups in the work of the Task Force, and for the Task Force to have a temporary mandate for a set time.

Ms Lucille Ehrhart concluded that a Task Force would be established, with Region Västerbotten providing human resources to lead the work, which would be facilitated by both the BSC Secretariat and the CPMR General Secretariats. There will be an open call to all CPMR Member Regions.

Membership and Communication
Moderated by Mr Jari Nahkanen, BSC President

As the meeting was running late, and the paperwork for these sessions had already been sent in advance to participants, it was decided to skip these two sessions. Participants were reminded that Blekinge and Satakunta have left the organisation and focus will now be on consolidating membership and recruiting new members. Participants were invited to send their comments and questions to the BSC Secretariat, and these issues will be addressed in the next Executive Committee in March.

Financial documents
The financial reports for 2020 and 2021 were presented by Mr Tomas Mörtsell, BSC Vice-President. He reminded participants that Region Västerbotten is the hosting region since July 2020 and explained the financial reports for both 2020 and 2021. He highlighted that there is a surplus in the budget, which is the reserve and capital of the Baltic Sea Commission, that can be used in a strategic way to help to compensate annual variations in income or for special projects or initiatives.
The financial report for 2020 and 2021 were approved.

Mr Jari Nahkanen provided an update on the forecast budget for 2022. He suggested that a Task Force be created to establish a forecast budget for 2022, which should explore different options and present a Forecast Budget to the next Executive Committee meeting. The Task Force will be led by the Civil Servants of the Presidium with the participation of the Civil Servants of the Executive Committee members who so wish. The Executive Secretary should provide support in the process.

Decision to set up a Task Force to come up with a draft BSC Forecast Budget for 2022.

Closing session

Next Executive Committee meeting
Due to the uncertainties of the health situation, the BSC Secretariat suggested that the next Executive Committee meeting in spring 2021 be held online. The decision was made to hold the next meeting during the week of 22 March 2021. The BSC Secretariat will come up with suggestions of dates.

Calendar of the year
There were no comments on the timetable of events.

Mr Jari Nahkanen closed the meeting by thanking all participants for such an active and productive meeting. He congratulated the new Vice-President, Chairs and Vice-Chairs and noted that there is a lot of discussions and work ahead.
Executive Committee of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

List of Participants

Bosse Andersson, 2nd Vice-Chair of the Regional Council, Region Stockholm
Clare Booth, Policy Assistant, CPMR BSC
Wolf Born, Head of Unit, Ministry of the Interior and for Europe Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Nicolas Brookes, Executive Director, CPMR
Lucille Ehrhart, Executive Secretary, CPMR BSC
Hanna Honkamäkilä, Oulu
Britt Karlsson Green, Strategist Sustainable Fuels, Region Skåne
Daniela Kober, Clerk, Unit Baltic Sea Cooperation, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Romek Kosenkranius, Mayor (Local Government), Estonia
Evert Kroes, EU Coordinator Officer, Region Stockholm
Jonas Larsson, Senior Adviser, External Relations, Region Västerbotten
Pontus Lindberg, Chairman Human Resources, Region Skåne
Maria Lindbom, Advisor Regional dev, International Affairs, Region Skåne
Cees Loggen, President, CPMR / Province of Noord-Holland
Martijn Lucas, Coordinator Team European Affairs, Province of Noord-Holland
Otto Meri, Member of the Board, Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council
Tomas Mörtsell, Storumans kommun, Vice-President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission
Jari Nahkanen, President of Baltic Sea Commission, Oulu
Andrei Novikov, Tallinn City Government
Sonja Palhus, SouthWest Finland
Tiina Perho, Member of the Board, SouthWest Finland
Toivo Riimaa, Deputy Director, Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities
Isak Sidestam, Adviser External Relations, Region Västerbotten
Davide Strangis, Executive Director, CPMR
Janne Tamminen, Senior Advisor, Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council
Toni Vanhala, Head of International Affairs, Regional Council of Kymenlaakso
Sami Virtanen, Executive Committee Member, BSC, Kymenlaakso
Appendix 2

Executive Committee of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission
Proposals from the BSC Secretariat

Proposal on the BSC Work Plan:

During the next General Assembly taking place in 2021, the Executive Committee will present and put forward for approval a CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Work Plan for the 2021-2023 period. The Executive Committee asks the BSC Secretariat and the thematic Working Groups to present a draft Work Plan for 2021-2023 at its next meeting which will be discussed by the Members. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Work Plan should include the main activities for the 2021-2023 period, taking into account the new BSC political orientations, the EU agenda, and the CPMR general objectives and actions, as well as harnessing previous BSC political declarations and activities. The Work Plan should also include horizontal actions such as the cooperation approach with other organisations and thematic areas such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The Work Plan, as a result of a participatory exercise, should constitute a framework for action for BSC Members, built on discussions between the President, Vice-Presidents, the Executive Committee and all the Members to be transformed into concrete actions to enhance the BSC’s political visibility at EU level. The document will include contributions from the thematic Working Groups of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, setting out their strategic priorities and actions.

Proposal on the establishment of a new Working Group on S3:

The BSC Secretariat proposes that the Executive Committee decides on the establishment of a new thematic Working Group dedicated to foster regional cooperation on a macro-regional level regarding Smart Specialisation Strategies. The objectives of the new Working Group should be:

- to foster cross-border S3 collaboration and build capacity for regions in the design and implementation of their S3 between the Member Regions. Build capacity for regions and increase the understanding of the status of S3 in the BSR, share experiences, lessons learnt from project involvement, and evaluate the gaps and opportunities;
- to strengthen the regional perspective in the wider smart specialisation agenda post-2020 and to develop policy messages;
- 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.

The new Working Group should be called “Smart territorial/regional development”.

The Executive Committee asks the BSC Secretariat to launch a Call for Interest for Chair and Vice-Chair(s) for this new Working Group.

The Executive Committee should decide on the Chair and Vice-Chair of the new Working Group at its next meeting.

The new Working Group should develop a Work Plan for 2021-2023 which will be included in the 2021-2023 BSC Work Plan. A first draft should be presented at the next Executive Committee meeting.