CPRM Baltic Sea Commission Executive Committee

TUESDAY 8 MARCH 2022 | 13:30 – 16:00 CET | online

The Executive Committee approved at its meeting on 8 March 2022:

- The Agenda of the Executive Committee;
- The Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting on 9 November 2021;
- A Statement on Ukraine;
- The invitation from Region Helsinki-Uusimaa to host the 27th BSC General Assembly in Helsinki on 26-27 September 2022;
- The timeline for the Call for Candidates for the positions of BSC President and Vice-Presidents;
- The list of Working Papers to submit to the 2022 BSC General Assembly;
- A BSC Policy Position on TEN-T proposed by the BSC Transport Working Group;
- A BSC Policy Position on the Arctic proposed by the BSC Arctic Task Force;
- A proposal from the BSC Executive Committee will be presented to the BSC General Assembly 2022 to propose Region Västerbotten as Host Region of the BSC Secretariat for the mandate period 2023-2024;
- A proposal from the BSC Executive Committee will be presented to the BSC General Assembly 2022 to propose the extension of the contract of Lucille Ehrhart as BSC Executive Secretary for the mandate period 2023-2024;
- The next BSC Executive Committee meeting will be held on 15 June 2022 in Helsingborg, at the invitation of Region Skåne, back-to-back with CPMR Political Bureau on 16 June;
- New budget lines in the BSC budget should be added to reflect PwC and the Host Region administrative costs for the BSC Secretariat.

The possibility for the BSC Secretariat to hire an intern to support the BSC Executive Secretary shall be explored.

1. Opening of the Executive Committee

1.1. Mr Jari Nahkanen (Oulu Region), President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission welcomed the participants and opened the meeting. He noted how fast both Europe and the world had evolved since the last meeting in Stockholm and condemned the illegal military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. He acknowledged the solidarity with Ukraine from across Europe and welcomed the sanctions imposed by the EU and its Member States. He stressed the impact of the geopolitical situation on Baltic Sea cooperation and the need to remain united in a world with rising tensions.

In light of this exceptional circumstances, the BSC Presidium suggested that tour de table be dedicated to the Ukraine situation, the impact of Baltic Sea cooperation and to discuss the proposed BSC Statement.

1.2. Approval of the Agenda
The Agenda was unanimously approved.

1.3. Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, 9 November 2021
The Minutes were unanimously approved.
2. Tour de Table

Each Member of the Executive Committee was given the floor to give their views on the current situation in Ukraine and on the proposed BSC Statement.

**Mr Jari Nahkanen** highlighted that the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of Baltic Sea States and other intergovernmental organisations have decided to suspend all cooperation with Russia and Belorussia.

**Mr Tomas Mörtsell, (Region Västerbotten)** addressed the Swedish point of view on the war in Ukraine. He expressed his shock at the brutality of the invasion and the terrifying attack on civil society. He reiterated the solidarity for the people of Ukraine, which is getting stronger each day. He confirmed his strong support for the BSC Statement.

**Mr Pontus Lindberg (Region Skåne)** agreed with Mr Mörtsell’s comments and also supported the BSC Statement. This situation should be a signal to further strengthen cooperation across the Baltic Sea.

**Mr Gustav Hemming (Region Stockholm)** welcomed the well-formulated BSC Statement. He informed participants that Stockholm region have sent healthcare materials to Kyiv and has granted free healthcare and transport to refugees with Ukrainian passports. All cooperation with St Petersburg has been cancelled. Cooperation with Ukraine has been opened up for the first time. It is expected that refugees will arrive to live with their families who are already settled in Stockholm region. He expressed his belief that Regions can do a lot in the Baltic Sea Region to help with economic reconstruction (innovation, incubators, science parks, research cooperation, cluster cooperation etc) although investment money should come from the European Union. He suggested adding a point in the BSC Statement related to the role of the European Union and of the Regions in supporting the reconstruction of Ukraine.

**Mr Wolf Born (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)** agreed with previous comments. In the past Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has had good cooperation with Leningrad Oblast, but this has now been suspended in reaction to the Russian aggression. Germany has agreed that Ukrainian refugees with be granted asylum seeker status according to a simplified procedure. He explained amendments to the wording of the BSC Statement submitted by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and that it is too early to state that the BSC supports Ukraine’s application to obtain EU Candidate State status, and so suggested the removal of this point. He agreed with Mr Pontus Lindberg on the need to increase cooperation and the different aspects of this (scientists, environmental issues etc) need to be considered.

**Mr Markku Markkula (Region Helsinki-Uusimaa)** gave brief feedback on the summit held the previous week in Marseille, where great commitment was demonstrated for activities in support of Ukraine. All collaboration with Russian counterparts has been frozen. He confirmed that Helsinki-Uusimaa Region agreed with the suggested amendments to the Statement.

**Mr Gustav Hemming** agreed to draft an extra bullet point as discussed.

Members were unanimous in condemning the brutal attacks and invasion of Ukraine, commending the sense of solidarity around the Baltic Sea, and **strongly supported the BSC Statement** (including amendments submitted by Mecklenburg Vorpommern and Region Stockholm).

**Mr Jari Nahkanen** informed the Executive Committee that the approved BSC Statement on Ukraine will be shared with CPMR President, Mr Cees Loggen, and CPMR Secretary General, Ms Eleni Marianou ahead of the CPMR Political Bureau in Barcelona end of March 2022.
3. Update from the BSC Secretariat

Ms Lucille Ehrhart, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission provided an update on recent activities of the BSC Secretariat, including:

- **Policy work** – the BSC was invited by the Committee of the Regions Informal Baltic Sea Group to present the BSC and share BSC views on interregional innovation investment in January 2022. This opportunity should be used to further dialogue with the Committee of the Regions. She informed participants that several Interreg programmes have recently been approved (Interreg BSR, Interreg Aurora...). She encouraged members to use the BSC to develop projects together and to find partners.

- **CPMR Inter-Commissions cooperation** – the BSC organised a joint event on TEN-T with the North Sea Commission Transport Working Group on 1st February 2022.

- **EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)** – She informed that a new EUSBSR Strategy Point (to improve communication and administrative support regarding the implementation of the EUSBSR) will be established in 2022 and financed by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme. The BSC Secretariat has been in contact with the two consortia that will be applying. She explained that the BSC has been invited to be part of the Steering Committee of PA innovation which will be a good opportunity to strengthen cooperation relating to smart specialisation. Mr Wolf Born asked who will represent the BSC. Ms Lucille Ehrhart replied that this will be decided by the BSC Executive Committee once the formal letter from PA Innovation has been received by the BSC Secretariat. She informed the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2022 will take place on 28-29 September in Lappeenranta (South Karelia). She informed that Oulu Region and Pomorskie are the new Policy Area coordinators for Tourism of the EUSBSR.

- **BSC cooperation with other pan-Baltic organisations** – the BSC Executive Secretary participated in a CBSS Expert Group for sustainable development in November 2021 to talk about the role of regions in the green transition. The BSC Secretariat was also invited to BSSSC Board meetings to provide an update on BSC key activities and reinforce cooperation with BSSSC. She informed participants that the BSSSC Chairmanship is now changing from Pomorskie to West Pomorskie. The Executive Secretary of HELCOM participated in a BSC Maritime Working Group meeting in December 2022.

- **Communication** – it is important to communicate to raise the profile of all BSC Member Regions via the BSC newsletter, Facebook, Twitter and the BSC website, which is continuously being updated. A video interview with CPMR Director for Regional Policy was also published to provide to BSC Member Regions an update on key issues at stake regarding cohesion policy.

- **CPMR work** - the CPMR Political Bureau will be held in Barcelona on 25 March which will be a good opportunity for the BSC members present to meet together and convey key messages to EU representatives (Guest speakers include EU Commissioner Ferreira, MEP Dalunde, Ms Vitcheva). CPMR Secretariat will help in March a two-day Staff meeting. The CPMR North Sea Commission has a new Executive Secretary and new hosting Region, the Dutch Province of Groningen.

- **Preparations for the 2022 General Assembly of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission** - Region Helsinki-Uusimaa kindly invited the BSC for its General Assembly on 26-27 September 2022. Mr Jari Nahkanen warmly thanked Helsinki-Uusimaa for the invitation and the invitation was accepted by the Executive Committee. The BSC Executive Secretary recalled that at the 2022 General Assembly, the BSC President and Vice-Presidents will be elected, and the Executive Committee will be nominated during the General Assembly. The timeline for Call for Candidates and the list of Working Papers were presented and adopted.

More information can be found in the Working Papers of the Executive Committee meeting.
4. Report on the BSC policy areas
The Chairs of the respective Working Groups provided an update on recent and upcoming activities of the Working Groups and BSC Task Force:

4.1 Ms Tiina Perho (Region SouthWest Finland) gave a report on the last BSC Maritime Working Group held in December 2021 on the topic of Small-Scale Fishing and the HELCOM new Action Plan. The Group has met once (event webpage) since the last Executive Committee meeting and Mr Gustav Hemming provided feedback from the meeting. A next meeting is scheduled in April on the topic of coastal tourism.

4.2 Mr Markku Markkula (Region Helsinki-Uusimaa) gave an update on the Energy and Climate Working Group’s recent activities. He stressed that the target of the Working Group is going through enormous change due to the Ukraine situation. He reminded participants that 4 out of the 5 EU Missions are related to climate change and pollution issues and gave information on the Open Call for Voluntary Pioneers of Cities to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Group met in December 2021 (event webpage) on the topic of offshore wind and is planning 2 webinars, on circular economy and energy (LULUCF, RED III) in Spring.

4.3 Mr Bosse Andersson (Region Stockholm) reported on the Transport Working Group. He explained that the Transport Working Group took an active part in the revision of the TEN-T regulation and submitted a response to the European Commission’s open Public Consultation on TEN-T in 2021. He provided feedback on a joint seminar organised with the North Sea Commission on TEN-T (event webpage) and reminded participants that the next meeting of the Working Group will focus on sustainable urban mobility and its links to TEN-T and urban node and will take place on 23 March (event webpage). He reminded participants of the questionnaire on alternative fuels and invited those regions that have not yet completed the questionnaire to do so as soon as possible. He welcomed Mr Pekka Komu as Vice-Chair of the BSC Transport Working Group. He presented the BSC Policy Position on TEN-T that was approved by the Working Group. Mr Gustav Hemming submitted an amendment concerning the Ports of Stockholm. The amendment was unanimously accepted. The BSC Policy Position on TEN-T was unanimously approved.

4.4 Mr Tomas Mörtssell welcomed the new EU Arctic Policy and noted that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has major consequences for Arctic cooperation. He provided feedback on past and future activities of the Arctic Task Force including the meeting held in January (event webpage) to develop a policy position on Arctic, and the discussion between the BSC Arctic Task Force and the Committee of the Regions’ Rapporteur for the Opinion on the Arctic, Ms Mirja Vehkaperä, Chair of Oulu City Board. He presented the BSC Policy Position on the Arctic. Mr Wolf Born suggested that a bullet point be added to the Paper following the invasion of Ukraine. It was agreed that the point from the BSC Statement would be included in the Policy Position. A SEArica Intergroup meeting will be organised by the BSC Arctic Task Force together with MEP Erik Bergkvist at the European Parliament in Brussels. More information to follow. The BSC Policy Position on the Arctic was unanimously approved with the addition of a point on Ukraine.

5. Future of the BSC Secretariat, Host Region and Executive Secretary
Mr Jari Nahkanen explained that the Executive Secretary’s contract expires in December 2022 as well as the mandate for the host Region Västerbotten, and so the BSC Executive Committee shall make a proposal to the next General Assembly regarding both the host Region and Executive Secretary.

Mr Jari Nahkanen thanked very much Västerbotten for the work carried on so far to host the BSC Secretary and asked Mr Tomas Mörtssell is Region Västerbotten would be ready to continue to the host the BSC Secretariat from January 2023 to December 2024. Mr Tomas Mörtssell confirmed that Region Västerbotten is willing to continue hosting the BSC Secretariat for the mandate period 2023-2024. He agreed with Mr Jari Nahkanen about the good work carried out by the current Executive Secretary.
Mr Markku Markkula stressed the support of Helsinki-Uusimaa to Västerbotten to continue being the host region for the BSC Secretariat for 2023-2024. He stressed the high ambitions and level of activities within the Working Groups, that however required adequate human resources. On the longer term, the BSC Executive Committee shall reflect on how much resources are needed to carry on the work. He stressed that it requires a lot from the Regions that are chairing or vice-chairing to animate the Working Groups. Ms Lucille Ehrhart agreed that the support of at least an intern would be welcomed and required to ensure an effective work of the BSC Secretariat. Mr Jari Nahkanen concluded that the Executive Committee supports continuing the contract of the Executive Secretary and the mandate of the host Region. Mr Pontus Lindberg expressed his gratitude to Region Västerbotten and the BSC Executive Secretary for the work carried out so far and confirmed his support for them to continue for 2023-2024. Mr Wolf Born also expressed the support for both the host Region and BSC Executive Secretary to continue for a new two-year mandate period.

6. Adapting BSC working to the digital era
Mr Jari Nahkanen suggested this session be moved to the end of the meeting and addressed if time allowed, or by written procedure.

7. Financial documents
Mr Tomas Mörtsell, BSC Vice-President and representative of the host region of BSC Secretariat Västerbotten provided an update on the Financial Papers. He reported on the final Financial Report for 2021. For 2021, the income is based on 19 Regions, meaning there was 133 000 EUR income (membership fees). The total expenditure for 2021 is of 128 516 EUR. Therefore, for 2021, there is therefore 4 484 EUR surplus. This is to be added with the surplus from 2020, meaning early 2022, there is a total surplus of 38 884 EUR. The surplus is BSC own capital reserve (to cope with budget variation) and is in CPMR account but earmarked for the Baltic Sea Commission.

Mr Wolf Born suggested that the surplus could be used to fund an intern. He questioned the considerable costs in the administration of the Executive Secretary and the external consultancy expenses and asked why the external consultant was needed. Mr Mörtsell explained that the consultant (PwC) was used by Region Västerbotten to handle Lucille Ehrhart’s Belgium contract. For 2021, PwC costs were EUR 6 6580, covered by the BSC budget. In line with the principle adopted by the BSC Executive Committee and confirmed by the BSC General Assembly in 2020, the BSC Secretariat costs would be covered only by membership fees. Therefore, Region Västerbotten has been invoicing the BSC to cover Region Västerbotten’s administrative costs to handle the BSC Secretariat. For 2021, Region Västerbotten’s administrative costs were EUR 9 864.

It was said that a budget line should be added in the BSC budget for PwC and Host Region administrative costs. Mr Tomas Mörtsell the presented an update on the 2022 Forecast Budget based on membership fees from 19 Member Regions (including the new Member Region Östergötland). There is no financial report yet for 2022, since the meeting was early in the year (Region Västerbotten had not yet invoiced the CPMR Secretariat for the costs of early 2022).

8. Membership
8.1 Ms Lucille Ehrhart, BSC Executive Secretary gave an update on the state of play regarding BSC membership, including consolidation of current membership which is on-going, and recruitment of new members to have a stronger Baltic Sea voice in EU policies. She reminded participants that they are all Ambassadors for the BSC and to continue the work with non-members and to invite them to BSC meetings.
She provided feedback from a positive technical-level meeting with Klaipeda Region. An invitation has been sent to a politician from Klaipeda Region politicians to meet with Mr Markkula and Ms Marianou. CPMR President, Mr Loggen has sent an invitation to the Marshall of Pomorskie for a political meeting. **Mr Tomas Mörtzell** gave an update on potential Swedish members, especially Västernorrland and Dalarna while **Mr Jari Nahkanen** provided an update about ongoing discussion with Lapland. There was a strong consensus among the BSC Executive Committee about the need and importance to increased cooperation with Polish Regions.

### 9. Closing session

#### 9.1 Any other business

- **Mr Gustav Hemming** shared the new text for the BSC Statement on Ukraine. **Mr Markku Markkula** suggested adding the word “education”. The BSC Statement was approved with the amendments.

The BSC Statement on Ukraine was unanimously approved.

#### 9.2 Next Executive Committee meeting

- **Mr Pontus Lindberg** invited the next BSC Executive Committee be held back-to-back with the CPMR Political Bureau on 15 June (more information to follow). Mr Jari Nahkanen thanked Mr Lindberg for the invitation and invited members to submit any issues to be addressed during the next BSC Executive Committee meeting in June;
- **Mr Wolf Born** informed participants that in the context of the German Presidency of CBSS there is an idea to hold a Baltic Sea Week in Berlin at the end of April or May 2023 and there is the possibility to hold the 2023 BSC General Assembly during this week. More information will follow.
- **Mr Tomas Mörtzell** shared the idea that the BSC could adopt a Position Paper at the next Executive Committee meeting in relation to the focus of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the spring of 2023. He also suggested inviting the Swedish Minister of European Affairs to CPMR Political Bureau in Skåne.

Following the invitation from Mr Pontus Lindberg, the next meeting will be held in Skåne in June, back-to-back with the CPMR Political Bureau.

#### 9.3 Calendar of the year

**Mr Jari Nahkanen** reminded participants that the timetable of events is available on the BSC website and is regularly updated.

#### 9.4 Mr Jari Nahkanen

Mr Jari Nahkanen thanked the Executive Committee Members and their supporting officers for a successful and productive meeting. He reiterated that in this tumultuous world and geopolitical tension, it is important that the BSC remains a strong platform of cooperation between the Regions, based on solidarity and trust. He reminded participants of the Cohesion Policy Brief organised with CPMR Secretariat to be held the next morning on 9 March 2022 and closed the meeting.

The BSC Executive Committee was followed by a CPMR [Policy Brief on Cohesion Policy](#) the next morning, which provided an update on:
- Assessment of partnership agreements;
- Main takeaways from the 8th Cohesion Report;
- First evidence on the programming of the Just Transition Fund;
- Cohesion Policy and the implementation of the recovery and resilience plans;
- A stronger territorial dimension of the European Semester review.
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Members of the Executive Committee
Jari Nahkanen, President of Baltic Sea Commission, Oulu Region
Tomas Mörtssell, Vice-President of the Baltic Sea Commission, Region Västerbotten
Pontus Lindberg, Chairman Human Resource Committee, Region Skåne
Gustav Hemming, Regional Chair for Growth, Regional Planning and the Archipelago, Region Stockholm
Wolf Born, Head of Unit "Baltic Sea Cooperation", Mecklenburg-Vorpommern / Ministry of Science, Culture, Federal and European Affairs

Working Group Chairs
Markku Markkula, President of the Board, Helsinki Region
Tiina Perho, Member of the Board, SouthWest Finland
Bosse Andersson, 1st Vice-President Regional Assembly, Region Stockholm

Supporting officers
Hanna Honkamäki, International Strategist, Region Oulu
Evert Kroes, International Strategist, Region Stockholm
Carin Peters, Senior Advisor, Region Skåne
Sonja Palhus, Manager of International Affairs, Regional Council of Southwest Finland
Janne Tamminen, Senior Adviser, Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council
John Kostet, Senior Adviser, North Sweden European Office (Jämtland Härjedalen, Västerbotten, Norrbotten)

Secretariat
Lucille Ehrhart, Executive Secretary, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission
Davide Strangis, Executive Director, CPMR
Clare Booth, Policy Assistant, CPMR