Baltic Sea Commission Executive Committee Meeting
MINUTES

Tuesday 6 October 2020 | 09:00 – 11:00 CET
Online

1. Opening Session

The meeting was opened by Jari Nahkanen, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. He welcomed participants and acknowledged that the meeting should have been held in Schwerin but due to the current health crisis it is not possible. He expressed his hope to have an Executive Committee meeting in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern another time. He noted that the BSC has been active recently despite the challenging times. He stressed that bridging distances and fostering exchanges between the Member Regions is perhaps needed more than ever. The Baltic Sea Commission has therefore been active over the last few weeks. The effects of the pandemic on regions have been hard, and cooperation is crucial to join efforts to overcome this challenging time. He declared the meeting open.

Jari Nahkanen asked for the Arctic Consultation to be added to the agenda, as agenda item 9. The agenda for the Executive Committee meeting was unanimously approved including this addition.

No changes were made to the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held online in May and June 2020 and they were unanimously adopted.

Jari Nahkanen stressed that according to the CPMR BSC Work Plan 2019-2021, during the General Assembly 2020 the Executive Committee should present a Region or Regions to host the BSC Secretariat for the 2021/2022 mandate period. He thanked Västerbotten for hosting the BSC Secretariat for 2021-2022. He also warmly thanked Norrbotten for having hosted the BSC Secretariat for several years.

He reminded the Executive Committee of the decision made in June 2020, to appoint Lucille Ehrhart as new BSC Executive Secretary for 2020-2022. He said that a recruitment report regarding the open recruitment process was also sent to all Members. The BSC had also issued a press release on the Executive Secretary recruitment. Before giving the floor to Lucille, he warmly thanked again Åsa Bjering for the tremendous job she carried out the past few years.

Lucille Ehrhart thanked Jari Nahkanen and the Executive Committee and stressed her will to build from the very beginning good and close work relation with the Member Regions. She informed the Executive Committee that she got in touch with most of the Member Regions, has visited 3 regions and contacted
key external partners from the Baltic Sea Commission. She mentioned she intends to visit all member regions as soon as the health situation allows.

2. Preparation of the BSC General Assembly 2020

Lucille Ehrhart introduced the Working Papers for the 2020 General Assembly, which is the priority of this meeting. It has been decided to split the General Assembly into 2 parts, with a Policy Session first and then the actual General Assembly meeting for members. She invited members to send her contact details of interested stakeholders so she can invite them to the policy session.

The draft Agenda for the BSC General Assembly and policy session was discussed.

Wolf Born mentioned that he would like to see the buzz word “resilient” as well as robust and adaptable.

The Minutes of the 2019 BSC General Assembly were approved with no comments.

Lucille Ehrhart passed the floor to Jenny Mozgovoy, who introduced the Financial Report 2019/2020 that was sent to all Members prior to the meeting. She noted that in all the documents the exchange rate is 1 Euro = 10 Swedish Crowns. These figures were also shown in January and for the online meeting in June. The budget was kept in balance. It was cheaper for the hosting regions, mostly due to the one new member, Jämtland Härjedalen. She mentioned that the for 2020, Region Norrbotten has handed over the legal responsibility of being a hosting region to Region Västerbotten. Based in this, the books were closed for the first six months of the year. Norrbotten and Västerbotten agreed to pay hosting region costs for 2020 during the first six months. This has enabled working within the principles set in January – that hosting the secretariat shouldn’t matter. For 2020, there is a lower cost of the Executive Secretary since Åsa Bjering didn’t work full time during the spring. Regarding the budget for the remaining six months, (July-December), there is an updated estimation.

Wolf Born asked if all regions had paid their membership fees for this year and Lucille confirmed that yes, all fees have been paid.

Jari Nahkanen reminded participants that the decision was made during the Executive Committee meeting in January in Oulu to propose an increase in the membership fees to €7,000 so that all secretariat expenses are covered by the membership fees. This proposed increase will be put to the General Assembly. There were no comments and the forecast budget 2021, including Membership fees.

Lucille Ehrhart introduced the draft BSC Activity Report for 2019-2020. Annika Sandström noted that there was no mention of an evaluation of the BSC goals and if they were being achieved. Lucille Ehrhart said that a paragraph will be added to provide an update on the goals. Annika Sandström asked for all Working Papers to be sent to members of the Executive Committee.

There were no additional comments and the document was approved.

Richard Sjölund, Chair of the Energy and Climate Working Group introduced the draft Policy Position from the Energy and Climate Working Group. Jenny Mozgovoy informed the Executive Committee that Norrbotten is working on amendments and asked when the deadline is for submitting amendments. Lucille Ehrhart replied that the deadline is 13 October. Annika Sandström commented on the format and noted that every paper should start with a summary not an introduction. She said that all BSC policy position should always have the same format, starting with a summary, including the key messages of the content of the policy paper. Richard Sjölund explained that although it was called an introduction, it actually provides a summary of the paper. Tomas Mörtzell noted that the paper is very well written, and he supported the paper. Annika Sandström replied that the content was not in question but she felt the
introduction was too long. To have an impact it is important that every paper presented is very sharp and easy to grasp the content of all the paper. It was decided to revise the document among the Energy and Climate Working Group, with the submitted amendments and reworking the first page, which will then be send to the Presidium. Jari Nahkanen, thanked the Energy and Climate Working for having developed the policy position and seizing the opportunities of the Green Deal.

Lucille Ehrhart introduced the draft BSC Resolution 2020, she explained how it was developed, with the input of the Working Groups, the BSC Task Force and the Presidium, and how it will be adopted. Wolf Born asked to remove the reference to Germany, as Germany did not sign the Ministerial Declaration. Annika Sandström understands the problems but as the BSC is an organisation of regions and so it should be OK if his region stands behind the declaration. Wolf Born replied that he will ask his colleagues as he is not in a position to make a decision during the meeting and said that he will speak to colleagues from the Ministry and the amendment will be submitted if agreed. It was decided that if Mecklenburg-Vorpommern doesn’t support the proposal of amendment, it will be taken out of the Resolution. If Mecklenburg Vorpommern supports the proposal of amendment, it will then be submitted for integration. Toni Vanhala mentioned TEN-T and noted that for Kymenlaakso it is more important to stress the importance of existing TEN-T corridors rather than pointing out the importance of new extensions.

Jari Nahkanen thanked members for helping to develop the draft Resolution. There were no further comments, and the list of Working Papers was approved.

3. BSC Elections

Lucille Ehrhart introduced the session. She noted that 2 applications were received for the position of President and 1 for the position of Vice-President. Applications received for the position of President were sent to all members one month prior to the General Assembly, in accordance with Article 5 of the internal rules.

Lucille Ehrhart explained how the online electronic voting system will work and stressed that a test vote will be organised on 16 October. Every Member Region will see the results of the vote at the same time. Jenny Mozgovoy stressed the importance of sending clear information to Member Regions on who is allowed to vote. She asked what would happen if the nominated politician was no longer able to participate in the meeting and so unable to vote. Lucille Ehrhart explained that only politicians can take part in the vote. However, civil servants are allowed to take part in the test vote. Wolf Born confirmed that in the internal rules it is politicians that have the right to vote. He mentioned that there may not be a politician from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern able to vote, as it has been the case in the past, and he asked if it would be possible for him to vote with a proxy. Annika Sandström agreed that Germany is the exception to the rule, and this was already agreed in the past, and backed the proposal. Jari Nahkanen confirmed that there would be 20 voters and that Mecklenburg-Vorpommern would be an exceptional case.

Regarding the rules on the candidatures, Annika Sandström stressed that internal rules state the instructions only for the applications of President. According to internal rules, the applications for President need to be sent out to all Members, one month in advance of the elections. Internal rules don’t say anything regarding when the applications of Vice-President’s positions should be submitted. She said that more applications for Vice-President might be submitted. Only the application for President should be sent beforehand, stressed Annika Sandström.

Jari Nahkanen commented that it is very polite if someone that want to apply for a Vice-President position, to send the application in advance. He reminded participants that the BSC General Assembly needs to elect two Vice-Presidents. He also stressed that, according to Article 5 of the internal rules, the
President and the Vice-Presidents must all be from different countries, and also the two Vice-Presidents must be from different countries.

4. Update BSC Task Force on the EUSBSR

Jari Nahkanen introduced the session and warmly thanked the lead Region of the Task Force, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, as well as the members of the Task Force for the great work carried out in the revision process of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Wolf Born, Chair of the BSC Task Force on EUSBSR presented the conclusions of the BSC Task Force on the EUSBSR Revision process, included in the Final Report produced by the Task Force. He stressed the importance to explore new areas of work related to the EUSBSR and the importance of exploring how Member Regions can act under the umbrella of the Baltic Sea Commission towards the EUSBSR and not only act individually. He suggested some themes that the Baltic Sea Commission could further work on, such as themes related to innovation or bioeconomy.

Wolf Born introduced the draft proposal on the EUSBSR. Jenny Mozgovoy supported the proposal. She stressed that in Norrbotten one aspect being considered as added-value for the region to be part of the Baltic Sea Commission is the work done and the link with the EUSBSR.

The draft proposal on the EUSBSR submitted by the Chair of the BSC Task Force, was discussed and approved by the Executive Committee*.

Wolf Born mentioned a workshop organised in the framework of the EUSBSR Annual Forum, organised by CBSS, about developing common action plan for sustainability in the entire Baltic Sea Region.

5. Update on the BSC Working Groups

Richard Sjölund, Chair of the Energy and Maritime Working Group gave an update on the activities and members of the Energy and Climate Working Group. He noted that the capacity of the Working Group had developed over the last year with new Vice-Chairs from Helsinki-Uusimaa and Skåne. He also mentioned the BSC involvement in the CPMR Climate Task Force.

Tiina Perho, Chair of the Maritime Working Group provided an update on the activities of the Maritime Working Group throughout the year, including information on its work with the European Parliament’s SEArica Intergroup. She also gave feedback from the CPMR meeting with Ms Vitcheva, Director General of DG MARE. The latest meeting of the BSC Maritime Working was in September, where the group discussed the messages on sustainable tourism to include into the BSC draft resolution.

Bosse Andersson, Chair of the Transport Working Group was having technical difficulties and could not provide an update. Instead, Lucille Ehrhart informed the Executive Committee about a report produced by the BSC Transport Working Group during 2020, shared with all BSC Member Regions, and the next meeting of the Working Group on 27 October.

Jari Nahkanen introduced the issue of new policy areas to explore, stressing the importance of discussing and exploring new areas of work for the Baltic Sea Commission in order to be a dynamic organisation that strives for new activities and work. Bioeconomy and smart specialisation for example, are two policy areas that could be addressed. Tomas Mörtsell backed the proposal to work on new policy areas including smart specialisation, since Västerbotten has been working on that issue for couple of years. Jerker Johnson added his support for smart specialisation as well as regional innovations. He expressed the importance of transnational learning from each other and sharing experiences. Annika Sandström agreed information exchange is always good and stressed the role of the Baltic Sea Commission is to bring ideas into the political process. She stressed the importance of further developing policy areas in depth.
and see where the public sector can make a difference. She stressed the importance of being clear in where we want to put the scarce resources and how there are allocated. **Lucille Ehrhart** suggested that during the General Assembly, the President could announce a Call for Interest to all members on innovation and smart specialisation. Interested regions can attend a first brainstorm meeting to discuss if there is the need, potential and wish to join forces on those themes and take common actions under the umbrella of the Baltic Sea Commission.

**Jari Nahkanen** explained that the Call for Chairs and Vice-Chair of the BSC Working Groups will be sent out after the General Assembly and they will be appointed during the Executive Committee meeting after the General Assembly. **Annika Sandström** asked for confirmation that the Call will be sent out after the General Assembly. **Lucille Ehrhart** confirmed that as mentioned by Jari, the Call would indeed be sent out after the General Assembly meeting.

### 6. Update on CPMR General Assembly

**Lucille Ehrhart** introduced the CPMR General Assembly agenda and explained that it will be held online. She reiterated that amendments to the CPMR Declaration can be submitted until 16 October.

### 7. Communication

**Lucille Ehrhart** suggested developing a BSC Communication Strategy, to increase the visibility of the work of the organisation and Member Regions towards the EU institutions, CPMR and external partners. She asked members for input and comments on what they would like to see included in relation to both the communication and membership strategies.

**Jari Nahkanen** noted that some members have asked for clarification on the BSC Communication Strategy and plan. He proposed that the BSC Secretariat presents a Communication Strategy at the next Executive Committee meeting in January. It was approved that the BSC Secretariat will present a Communication Strategy for the Baltic Sea Commission at the next Executive Committee in January 2021.

### 8. Membership Perspectives

**Lucille Ehrhart** explained that a strategy would be developed by the BSC Secretariat on Membership to consolidate current membership and to recruit new BSC Members.

**Jari Nahkanen** agreed it is important to have a plan how to recruit new members, and that all members can help with this by speaking to other regions in their country. He again proposed that a Strategy be submitted to the next Executive Committee meeting in January. This proposal was approved.

### 9. Any other business

**Jari Nahkanen** introduced the draft BSC input to the Arctic Public Consultation. It was decided by the Executive Committee that a short-term Task Force will meet up once, online, to consolidate the BSC draft contribution developed by the Secretariat. The document will be sent for final approval to the Presidium. All regions will be invited to participate in this and there will be a meeting scheduled at the end of October.

**Jenny Mozgovoy** asked if Wolf Born could provide more information on the German interest in this issue.

**Jari Nahkanen** asked Lucille Ehrhart to send an invitation to all members to attend the meeting.
10. Concluding Session

Jari Nahkanen introduced the timetable of BSC events 2020. Wolf Born noted that as it was not possible to host this meeting, he would like to invite the BSC Executive Committee back to Schwerin during 2022. The first meeting of the new BSC Executive Committee will be held on 27 January in Satakunta if the health situation has improved. If not, it will be held online.

Jari Nahkanen, thanked participants for a productive meeting and closed the meeting.

End of proceedings

*Proposal adopted by the Executive Committee

- The Executive Committee welcomes the Final Report of the Task Force for the Revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan and considers the work of the Task Force to be finished. It expresses its thanks to the Member Regions for their commitment in this matter.
- Regarding the future development of BSC activities relating to the EUSBSR, the Executive Committee asks the Executive Secretary to develop a proposal on how to better seize the cooperation potential among Member Regions under the umbrella of the BSC and to submit it to the Executive Committee during its next meeting.