Members of the Executive Committee

CPMR BSC President
Jari Sainio, Vice-Chairman of the Board, Regional Council of Helsinki-Uusimaa

CPMR BSC 1st Vice-President
Annika Sandström, President of Stockholm County Council

Working Group Chairs
Tiina Perho, Regional Council of Southwest Finland, Chair, BSC Maritime Working Group
Richard Sjölund, Member of the Board, Regional Council of Ostrobothnia, Chair, BSC Energy Working Group
Kai Holmberg, Regional Council of Southwest Finland, Chair, BSC Transport Working Group

Full Members
Wolf Born, Head of Section - Baltic Sea Cooperation, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Alternate Members
Jori Talvikki, Member of the Board, Regional Council of Southwest Finland

Supporting Officers
John Kostet, Adviser International Affairs, Region Västerbotten
Evert Kroes, Adviser International Affairs, Stockholm County Council
Krista Taipale, Head of International Affairs, Regional Council of Helsinki-Uusimaa
Sonja Palhus, Adviser International Affairs, Regional Council of Southwest Finland

CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Secretariat
Åsa Bjering, Executive Secretary, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission
Lucille Ehrhart, Policy Analyst, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Guests
Clara Wahren, Head of International Affairs, Stockholm County Council
Maria Leissner, former General Secretary of Community of Democracies, current Ambassador at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden
1. Opening Session

1.1. Opening speech, Jari Sainio, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission
Jari Sainio, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, welcomed all members of the Executive Committee and the participants. He warmly thanked Annika Sandström, President of Stockholm County Council, for hosting the Executive Committee meeting at Stockholm County Council.

Ms Annika Sandström welcomed the members of the Executive Committee to Stockholm County Council. Clara Wahren, Head of International Affairs and Evert Kroes, Secretary of the Regional Growth and Planning Board, gave a presentation on Stockholm County Council.

→ Presentation of the Stockholm County Council by Clara Wahren, Head of International Affairs. The PowerPoint presentation is available on the BSC website (click here):
  • She presented the tasks, the objectives in 2017, the governance and the financial results of Stockholm County Council;
  • She went through the four core assignments of Stockholm County Council:

→ Presentation of the Regional Development Plan for Stockholm Region (RUFS) by Evert Kroes, Secretary of the Regional Growth and Planning Board. The PowerPoint presentation is available on the BSC website (click here):
  • He explained the planning process of the RUFS 2050 and its governance.

Discussion between members:
A key message emerging from the discussion was that innovation has been a key driver of the regional development of Stockholm County Council. Stockholm has a strong tradition of cooperation between stakeholders, the business community and universities which has helped set up innovation clusters.

1.2 Adoption of the Agenda
The agenda was adopted without changes.

1.3 Adoption of the minutes of the BSC Executive Committee meeting held in Brussels on 25-26 April 2017
With the addition of Annika Sandström’s name on the participant list, the minutes were adopted. The minutes are available on the BSC website (click here).

1.4 For information: Minutes from the BSC General Assembly 2017
The Executive Committee approved the minutes of the last CPMR General Assembly of the Baltic Sea Commission on 12 June 2017 in Berlin. They are available on the website of the Baltic Sea Commission (click here) and will be adopted by the General Assembly in 2018.
1.5 CPMR BSC Secretariat Report, Åsa Bjering (please note that there is no written report)

Åsa Bjering gave a brief presentation of the latest activities of the Secretariat since the General Assembly in June in Berlin.

- **Update on the CPMR Political Bureau in Stavanger, June 2017**
  - Åsa Bjering underlined that the highlight of the Political Bureau was the adoption of the [CPMR Policy Position on the future of Cohesion Policy](#) which includes concrete proposals for post-2020 Cohesion Policy;
  - Krista Taipale mentioned that Director General of DG REGIO, Marc Lemaître, who attended the Cohesion Session, gave positive and constructive feedback on the CPMR Policy Position. She also stressed that the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission contributed to the document through the inclusion of strong references to the key role of Smart Specialisation Strategies. For more information about Marc Lemaître’s main messages during the CPMR Political Bureau, please [click here](#);
  - The Transport Session of the Political Bureau discussed the CPMR Technical Paper on the [TEN-T core network corridors: amendments proposed under the review of the CEF2](#), and Jari Nahkanen, Member of the Political Bureau representing the Regional Council of Oulu, underlined the two amendments that the BSC Transport Working Group contributed to the Technical Paper.

- **Update on other meetings attended by the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission**
  - 3-5 September: President Jari Sainio represented the CPMR BSC at the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Hamburg;
  - 5 September: Jessica Olausson, Region Västra Götaland and Janne Tamminen, Regional Council of Helsinki-Uusimaa, attended the CBSS Expert Group on Maritime Policy in Donsö;
  - 6 September: Åsa Bjering attended the CPMR Migration Task Force together with representatives from Päijät-Häme and Skåne;
  - 7-8 September: Åsa Bjering represented the CPMR BSC and gave a speech on the West Swedish EU Forum in Trollhättan;
  - 11 September: DG MOVE Conference Connecting Europe in Tallinn. Kai Holmberg, Chair of the BSC Transport Working Group represented the Baltic Sea Commission and several BSC Member Regions participated as well;
  - 18–19 September: Kick-off meeting of the Sustainable Tourism Project in which the BSC Maritime Working Group is an Associated Partner. Åsa Bjering attended the meeting on behalf of the BSC Maritime Working Group;
  - 20 September: Kick-off meeting of the Alignment of Funding Partnership, Potsdam;
  - 20-21 September: The BSSSC Conference on Cohesion Policy was attended by many BSC Member Regions and Åsa Bjering;
  - 28 September: Lucas Bosser from the CPMR Secretariat gave a presentation on the work that the Maritime Working Group has carried out on the mapping of Sustainable Blue Growth value chains during the 2nd Submariner Conference Better off Blue, in Berlin.
1.6 Information on the hiring of Policy Analyst Ms Lucille Ehrhart on a VIE Contract
Åsa Bjering informed participants about the hiring of a new Policy Analyst for the Baltic Sea Commission. Lucille Ehrhart will be working from September 2017 to June 2018 on a part-time basis (50%) for the Baltic Sea Secretariat and the CPRM Secretariat team on Cohesion Policy. More details about the funding of the new VIE and the assigned tasks can be found in the document that was sent out prior to the meeting.

Lucille Ehrhart introduced herself to the Executive Committee members and underlined that she was glad to work for the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Members for the next 10 months.

2. Work Plan 2017 - 2019

2.1 Update and discussion on activities and plans for Priority Area 1: Supporting the process of creating a Smart Specialisation Financial Platform

Background information on Priority Area 1:
- CPMR’s Baltic Sea Commission Members have had a growing interest in reinforcing transnational cooperation on Smart Specialisation in the Baltic Sea Area;
- It was decided by the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Members at the last General Assembly in Berlin to set a Priority Area for supporting the creation of a Smart Specialisation Financial Platform. This Priority Area 1 has been included in the Baltic Sea Commission Work Plan for 2017-2019;
- In accordance with Policy Area 1, since the last General Assembly in Berlin, the Baltic Sea Commission has been involved in a series of initiatives to create better conditions to strengthen business areas through pan-Baltic cooperation on Smart Specialisation strategies.

Åsa Bjering provided the Executive Committee with an update on the latest activities of the Secretariat with regards to the Priority Area 1. She based her presentation on the working document that was sent out in preparation of the Executive Committee.

In addition to the background provided in the document, Åsa Bjering informed participants about the kick-off meeting that was held in Potsdam on 20 September. At the kick-off meeting of the AFM-BSR meeting, project partners agreed to act as a Task Force for Priority Area 1 of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission if the Executive Committee decide that is suitable. AFM-BSR project partners will then provide the Baltic Sea Commission Executive Committee with regular updates on the development of the discussion, which will feed into Priority Area 1 of the Baltic Sea Commission. The minutes of the meeting in Potsdam are available on request from the BSC Secretariat.

Åsa Bjering informed participants that the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission is supporting Policy Area Innovation for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR PA-Innovation) in exploring the possibility of developing a training programme for Smart Specialisation Strategies/Experts. She underlined that a first pilot of the training programme for Smart Specialisation experts could possibly be financed by the Swedish Institute (and include all countries in the Baltic Sea Region). If this goes through, it is expected to be launched in Autumn 2018.
The Baltic Sea Commission Secretariat has been asked by EUSBSR-PA innovation to co-organise a first meeting to explore the possibilities of creating such a training programme and what the Regions’ needs would be, on 29 November 2017 in Stockholm.

**The Executive Committee decided:**

**Regarding the Task Force:**
- Region Västerbotten shall be responsible for coordinating the creation of a Smart Specialisation Platform;
- The Steering Group is composed of civil servants working on Smart Specialisation from interested Regions, also outside of CPMR BSC membership;
- The initial group of Regions involved are those in the Alignment of Funding – seed money project;
- Next meeting: 13 December 2017 in Copenhagen.

**Regarding the possibility of an Interreg Application for a Smart Specialisation Platform:**
- The Task Force should look into this possibility and at the next meeting in January, the Executive Committee will make a decision on the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission’s involvement in possible future projects.

Regarding the possibility of a training programme, the Executive Committee expressed its thanks for the information and stressed the importance of working closely with PA-innovation in this process.

Overall, the discussion in the Executive Committee concluded that the information is too vague at the moment. For next meeting, they ask the Task Force to come up with a short but informative text on the work being carried out, also taking into account:

- How the BSC Members will be involved in the AFM-BSR project/the future S3 Platform?
- What would be the added value and benefits for the BSC members in practical terms from the involvement of the organisation in the project?
- How will the members of the Baltic Sea Commission be reported on this?

The discussion ended with Åsa Bjering stressing that this is an open process and that any Regions interested in participating actively are more than welcome to do so.

A meeting with PA Innovation on the need to provide training for an S3 specialist is planned for 27 November 2017 in Stockholm.

A meeting with the Task Force is planned for 13 December 2017 in Copenhagen.

2.2 **Update and discussion on activities and plans for Priority Area 2: Regional and Pan-Baltic take on the UN Sustainable Development Goals**

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has identified the priority to enhance capacity and opportunities for Member Regions to increase their knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the period of 2017-2019. SDGs will be related to their regional
development strategies, as well as creating partnerships for the implementation of the goals at regional level and throughout the Baltic Sea Region.

Åsa Bjering provided the Executive Committee with an update on the background with regards to the Priority Area 2. She based her presentation on the working document that was sent out in preparation of the Executive Committee. No activities have been planned as yet.

**The Executive Committee decided:**

- That Region Norrbotten is the Region responsible for coordinating the Priority Area on the Regional and Pan-Baltic take on the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- That the Task Force is open to all Member Regions that wish to participate and the partnership that EuroRegion Baltic brings to the joint project;
- Invitation to be part of the Task Force should be sent out to all Members of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission.

The next Executive Committee meeting plans to:
- Receive information on the on-going processes;
- Decide on the CPMR BSC involvement in possible future projects or activities.

### 2.3 Transport Working Group, Report by Kai Holmberg, Chair of the Transport Working Group

Kai Holmberg updated participants on the high-level conference “Connecting Europe” that he attended on 21 and 22 September in Tallinn. The conference focused on investments in the EU’s Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) with the aim of identifying policy actions, priorities and financing solutions for such in the post-2020 EU financial framework. He briefly presented the considerations and proposals for future reflection and potential development of the TEN-T and CEF included in the Joint Declaration of the European Coordinators on the future of the TEN-T & CEF which was presented during the event. It stressed that stakeholders clearly asked for more financial resources for transport for the next programming period. Kai Holmberg mentioned that the question of the impact of Brexit on transport was also raised during the meeting. It was also said that DG MOVE is expected to publish ideas in early 2018 on the CEF post-2020 and formal proposals will be included in the Commission’s post-2020 package in May 2018.

Åsa Bjering underlined that Member States are not in agreement with regard to the future of the CEF, in particular on the respective share of grants and loans. She also added that the theme of Motorways of the Sea was not mentioned at the Tallinn event.

### 2.4 Maritime Working Group, Report by Tiina Perho, Chair of the Maritime Working Group

Tiina Perho presented the upcoming activities she will be involved in over the coming weeks.

Firstly, she will be take part in a panel discussion in the framework of a stakeholder conference on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), entitled “Beyond 2020: Supporting Europe’s Coastal Communities” on 12-13 October in Tallinn organised by the Estonian Presidency and DG MARE. Stakeholders from all over Europe will convene to discuss how the EMFF is helping to support the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and
Maritime Policy in the current programming period (2014-2020). The event will also represent the opportunity to discuss the current and future challenges of coastal communities, as well as potential policy responses.

Secondly, she will be a speaker in the maritime session of the CPMR General Assembly on 21-22 October 2017 in Helsinki. In this context, she will give some regional perspectives to the maritime discussion. She will focus on presenting the priorities of the Regional Council of Southwest Finland with regard to Blue Growth. She will also present the results of the mapping exercise of Blue Growth Value Chains carried out by the Baltic Sea Commission Maritime Working Group.

2.5 Energy Working Group, Report by Richard Sjölund, Chair of the Energy Working Group

Richard Sjölund informed participants about the role of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Energy Working Group in the project “Learning Among Regions on Smart Specialisation” (LARS).

The LARS project attempts to help the public sector in leading smart specialisation processes in their Regions and to connect innovation networks across Regions. It helps to find solutions tackling the fragmentation of regional innovation systems looking for entrepreneurial discoveries within such topics as blue growth, bio- and circular economy, advanced production methods and technologies for energy efficiency. The project leader is the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia. Several CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Member Regions are also involved in the LARS project, such as the Regional Council of Päijät-Häme and Region Västerbotten.

Richard Sjölund explained that the Energy Working Group will have a supportive role in the LARS project in discussing the results and agreeing on the political communication of the project results. He also underlined that, as an Associated Partner of the LARS project, the CPMR will be committed to disseminating the results of the projects through its extensive network among the Regions and the EU institutions.

Richard Sjölund mentioned that he will be representing the Baltic Sea Commission Energy Working Group at the kick-off meeting on 6 October 2017 in Vaasa.

The PowerPoint presentation made can be found on the BSC website (click here).

Invited key-note speaker: Poland of today, Maria Leissner, former General Secretary of Community of Democracies, current Ambassador at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Maria Leissner started by introducing herself. She explained that she was former Party Leader of the Swedish Liberal People’s Party and Sweden’s Ambassador in several countries. She was also former Secretary General of the Community of Democracies in Poland which is a global intergovernmental organisation that connects countries in a common belief in democratic principles.

As such, she briefly presented the milestones of Poland’s history, including the Second World War and the Cold War. She also shared with the Executive Committee Members her
impression about the current political state of play. She stressed that Poland was relatively spared by the financial and economic crisis of 2008/2009. However, she pointed out that Poland is marked by important social and economic inequalities. She mentioned that there is great potential in the emerging young, well-qualified generation. She underlined that the rise of nationalism, anti-globalisation and anti-multiculturalism reactions have fuelled populism and brought authoritarian leaders. These leaders have a different concept of what democracy is. If their legitimacy is based on legal elections, they do not accept the traditional principles of dialogue, agreements, consensus which characterise democracies. She shared her concerns about a series of reforms carried out by the Polish leaders which do not comply with democracy. She stressed the key role of the European Union and the Council of Europe in ensuring that democracy is safeguarded. She emphasised that Polish citizens underestimate the great potential they have. In conclusion, she emphasised her hope in the young Polish generation and their enormous strength in making possible political future changes.

3. CPMR Baltic Sea Commission wrapping up priority area 2017

The background for this agenda item was sent out to the Members in advance.

The Executive Committee concluded that it has been valuable for the organisation to co-organise the EUSBSR Annual Forum. It has contributed to making the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission more visible to the EU institutions and stakeholders.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has developed a strong partnership with PA-innovation and is having a good relationship with the HA Climate of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). With regards to the EUSBSR, it was underlined that there is still a lack of political push to move forward and there is uncertainty on the role of the EUSBSR for the next programming period. Åsa Bjering emphasised the need to continue a permanent dialogue with national contact points. She informed participants that the next EUSBSR Annual Forum in Tallinn on 4-5 June 2018 will focus on the future of Cohesion Policy.

Krista Taipale mentioned that Finland will develop a Policy Position on Cohesion post-2020 which will make a strong reference of the key role of the EUSBSR. She also informed participants about a Conference on the future of EU finances which was held in September 2017 in Brussels in the presence of the Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Cretu, and the Commissioner for the EU Budget, Günther Oettinger. A strong message arising from the discussion was that if the Cohesion Policy budget is likely to be cut because of new emerging priorities and a financial gap in the EU budget because of UK withdrawal, there is a strong will to increase funding for transnational cooperation. During the event, it was highlighted that Interreg programmes have a strong added-value and that is why European Territorial Cooperation may be strengthened in the next programming period.

During the Executive Committee meeting, it was also said that the Swedish government has been completely silent about its position on the future of Cohesion Policy so far. It remains unclear if there will be a position on that and what the Swedish position will be regarding the future of the policy. It was also mentioned that the Swedish regions have been working with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions in developing a Policy Position on the future of Cohesion Policy.
Åsa Bjering mentioned that the European Commission (DG REGIO) is expected to publish a report on the relevance of Macro-Regional Strategies in Cohesion Policy by October/November 2017.

The Executive Committee decided:

- The voluntary contributions of the Member Regions should be used within the scope of the Interreg Project: EUSBSR Annual Forum 2017;
- The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Secretariat should, at the next Executive Committee Meeting, present a suggestion on how cooperation with HA Capacity could look over the coming year;
- The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Secretariat should present a Background Paper on how continuous work will look for the CPMR BSC within the framework of the EUSBSR. Comments and remarks from the CPMR BSC Working Groups should be included;
- The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Secretariat should include regional participants from the Executive Committee and discuss whether or not the Executive Committee should make a message/position on the report that DG REGIO is publishing on the topic of Macro-Regional Strategies in Cohesion Policy.

4. Organisational matters CPMR BSC

4.1. Financial report

4.2 Membership
Åsa Bjering provided participants with an update on BSC membership.

4.2.1 Nordland
Åsa Bjering informed Members of the Executive Committee that Nordland County Municipality has decided to terminate its membership in CPMR, including the Baltic Sea Commission and the Transport Working Group. The reason for the withdrawal is that they will prioritise other international tasks and arenas.

4.2.2 Estonia
Åsa Bjering informed participants that the Estonian municipal elections will be held on 15 October 2017. The municipality reform will be effective from 1 January 2018. This will mean that the County Councils will no longer exist. It is still unclear where the current tasks of the County Councils will be organised.

Estonia’s membership in the CPMR and Baltic Sea Commission changed last year. The membership fee is financed by the Ministry of Finance and the representation should, according to the statutes of the CPMR and BSC, be elected politicians from sub-national level. Who should select the representatives needs to be discussed with representatives from the Estonian actors during spring 2018.
4.3 Decision mandate and representatives: Task Force to prepare the discussion on the future of the CPMR BSC Secretariat from 2019 onward

It was decided that this point will be discussed on 18 October 2017 at the CPMR BSC meeting in the framework of the upcoming CPMR General Assembly in Helsinki. This will be an opportunity for open discussion with all Members. The outcome of the meeting should be to give mandate to the Executive Committee to create a Task Force to prepare the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Secretariat (2019 onward). It was agreed that the Task Force should come up with a draft proposal for the future of the Secretariat before Christmas. It was decided that Åsa Bjering will invite BSC Members to join this discussion on this in the framework of the CPMR General Assembly in Helsinki. The Secretariat will also support the President with sending out a formal invitation to an Executive Committee meeting that will (if necessary) make decisions on what will be discussed in the opening meeting for the Members.

5. CPMR GENERAL ASSEMBLY 18–20 October 2017

5.1. Agenda for the 45th CPMR General Assembly, Helsinki 18–20 October 2017
Âsa Bjering went through the draft agenda for the 45th CPMR General Assembly in Helsinki. She gave details on the content of each session of the CPMR General Assembly. Lucille Ehrhart presented briefly the content of the sessions dedicated to the future of the EU budget and to the future of Cohesion Policy. Åsa Bjering provided details about the CPMR documents which will be presented during the event, including the draft Final Declaration, draft Policy Positions on Climate, and on the Future of Europe, and the 2016-2017 CPMR Activity Report. All CPMR documents presented at the General Assembly can be found here. She also informed participants about the Cardiff Conference on Brexit which will be held on 16 November 2017. More information on the Cardiff Conference can be found here.

5.2 Draft Agenda for the preparatory Baltic Sea Commission meeting
Âsa Bjering went through the draft agenda for the preparatory Baltic Sea Commission meeting which will be held on 19 October 2017 during the CPMR General Assembly in Helsinki.

5.3 Draft Final Declaration
Âsa Bjering also explained the amendments process for the CPMR Final Declaration. She advised Members of the Executive Committee to focus on the points of the CPMR Final Declaration that they absolutely want to keep or those they absolutely want to remove.

6. Any Other Business

6.1. Next meetings (including an overview of the whole year)
The next CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Executive Committee meeting will be held on 17 January 2018 in Helsinki-Uusimaa’s office in Brussels. There will be a dinner organised the evening of 16 January and the meeting is expected to close at 17.00 on 17 January.

Jari Sainio thanked the Executive Committee Members and the Chairs of the Working Groups for productive and active discussions and closed the meeting.