EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

25-26 September 2018, Białystok, Podlaskie (PL)
Hotel Royal, 11 Rynek Kościuszki St., 15-001 Białystok

List of participants

President of the Baltic Sea Commission
Jari NAHKANEN, Member of the Board of Oulu Council

Vice-Presidents of the Baltic Sea Commission
Annika SANDSTRÖM, President of Stockholm County Council
Cezary CIESLUKOSWKI, Member of the Board, Podlaskie Council

Members of the Executive Committee
Erik BERGKVIST, President Regional Executive Committee Region Västerbotten
Romek KOSENKRANUS, Mayor of Pärnu
Talvikki JORI, Member of the Regional Council Southwest Finland
Richard SJÖLUND, Member of the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia
Kai HOLMBERG, First Vice-Chairman, Kymenlaasko

Supporting officers
Hanna HONKAMÄKILÄ, Manager of International Affairs, Oulu
John KOSTET, International strategist, Region Västerbotten
Evert KROES, Regional Planner, Stockholm County Council
Anna OTAPOWICZ, External Relations Unit, Podlaskie
Sonja PALHUUS, Senior Planning Officer, South-West Finland

CPMR / BSC Staff
Åsa BJERING, Executive Secretary of the Baltic Sea Commission
Lucas BOSKER, Senior Policy Officer for Transport, CPMR Secretariat
Lucille EHRHART, Policy Analyst, BSC and CPMR Secretariat
Keynote speech: Marshal Jerzy Leszczyński

Marshal Jerzy Leszczyński welcomed the BSC Executive Committee members to Bialystok and a video presenting Podlaskie Region was shown.

In his keynote speech, Marshal Jerzy Leszczyński highlighted the importance for Podlaskie Region to be Member of the CPMR and its Baltic Sea Commission, as an EU-wide association representing peripheral regions, such as Podlaskie. He stressed the crucial role of EU Cohesion Policy funds in helping the development of Region Podlaskie, which is one of the poorest regions in Poland. He said that a strong European Union requires a strong social, economic and territorial cohesion. He emphasised that a strong Cohesion Policy post-2020 is in the interest of both the poorest and the richest regions.

Furthermore, Marshal Leszczyński highlighted the importance of the development of Via Carpathia to improve connectivity and accessibility, and to further connect the Southern and Northern parts of Europe. He also mentioned that Via Carpathia would significantly help to increase the attractiveness of Podlaskie Region.

1. Opening of the Board meeting

1.1. Opening of the meeting, Mr Jari Nahkanan, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Mr Jari Nahkanan, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, welcomed participants to the BSC Executive Committee meeting. He warmly thanked Region Podlaskie, Marshal Jerzy Leszczyński and Vice-President of the BSC Mr Cezary Cieslukowski for hosting the meeting in Bialystok. As newly-elected President of the BSC and for his first Executive Committee meeting, President Jari Nahkanen stressed the importance of continuing to further develop, during the mandate period, cooperation between the Baltic Sea Regions and to prepare decisions for the BSC General Assembly. He also gave details about the future way of working under his Presidency.

1.2. Approval of the agenda

The Executive Committee adopted the agenda of the meeting.

1.3 Approval of the minutes from the Executive Committee meeting, Umeå, 19-20 March 2018

The Executive Committee approved the minutes of the last Executive Committee meeting which took place on 19-20 March 2018 in Umeå.

2. Written Reports

Ms Åsa Bjering gave a brief update on the recent activities of the BSC carried out since the last Executive Committee in March 2018. The written reports that were sent to the Executive Committee prior to the meeting address the following themes: EUSBSR Annual Forum in Tallinn; CBSS – Latvian Presidency Priorities 2018-2019; HELCOM – Revision of Baltic Sea Action Plan and Finnish Presidency Priorities; Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference; BSSSC Annual Forum; Almedalen Report; Dissemination of the Oulu Declaration.
3. Reports from the Working Groups/Priority Areas

3.1 Maritime Working Group
As Ms Tiina Perho, Chair of the Maritime Working Group, could not attend the Executive Committee meeting, Ms Åsa Bjering briefly presented the recent work carried out by the BSC Maritime Working Group.

- The Maritime Working Group co-organised the event ‘Save the Baltic Sea for real’ which took place on 5 September 2018 at the European Parliament in Brussels. This event was hosted by SEArica, together with the Baltic Sea Commission, the Informal Baltic Sea Group of the European Parliament, the informal Baltic Sea Group in Brussels (which is the EU offices of the BSR regions) and Policy Area ‘HAZARDS’ of the EUSBSR. The meeting offered the opportunity to debate the current state of the Baltic Sea and the progress that still needs to be achieved. HELCOM was the key speaker and other contributions came from stakeholder involved in flagships of the EUSBSR PA Hazard.

- Following the SEArica event, the Maritime Working Group held a meeting in the presence of a representative from DG MARE to discuss maritime investments and sustainable growth. Chaired by Ms Tiina Perho, the meeting was the opportunity to also discuss the upcoming revision of the EUSBSR and reflect upon what was said in the Parliament earlier the same morning.

- Ms Sonja Palhus also informed participants that Ms Tiina Perho is also chairing the CPMR inter-Commission Maritime Industries Working Group, coordinated by Damien Périssé. A meeting was held early September where a Memorandum of the Regions for the updating of a Leadership process was discussed.

3.2 Transport Working Group
Mr Kai Holmberg, Chair of the Transport Working Group, gave an update on the recent activities of the Transport Working Group.

- He provided details about the CPMR inter-Commission Transport Working Group meeting held early September on the CEF II. The meeting was an opportunity for Member Regions to discuss the current state of play of the negotiations and the missing elements of the Commission’s proposals on CEF II. The CPMR objectives and lobbying actions were also discussed. Member Regions also shared their views on aviation and other transport modes.

- He also informed participants about the annual forum of the CIVITAS project held in Umea in September, which was the opportunity to discuss sustainable mobility in tourist destinations.

Mr Cezary Cieslukoski asked if Via Carpathia was discussed by the CPMR Transport Working Group during its meeting in September. Mr Lucas Bosser replied that Via Carpathia was not formally discussed as the discussions on the CEF Annexes focused on what was missing in the proposal. Indeed, Via Carpathia is integrated in the Annex Part III point 2, “Pre-identified sections on the comprehensive networks” of the CEF II proposals.
Mr Richard Sjölund stressed that the national route number 8 was of concern for Ostrobothnia. This is linked to the planned extension of the TEN-T corridor.

Ms Åsa Bjering informed the Executive Committee that the project platform application made up of the three existing Interreg flagships projects on transport in the Baltic Sea Region, which was supported by the BSC, was approved in June. The project will start in Autumn 2018.

Ms Åsa Bjering stressed that the three flagships projects, NSB Core, Scandria 2 Act and TENTacle, will organise their Final Conference on 8 March 2019 in Brussels. They have approached the BSC Transport Working Group to co-organise an event at the European Parliament on 7 March. More information on this will follow soon.

The next Transport Working Group meeting will be held on 21-22 November 2018 in Region Gävleborg. The event will be organised back to back with the stakeholder seminar of the TENTacle project (20-21 November).

3.3 Energy Working Group
Mr Richard Sjölund, Chair of the Energy Working Group mentioned that the Group’s last meeting was held prior to the BSC General Assembly in Oulu in May 2018. He then gave an update on the LARS project that the Energy Working Group is supporting and following closely. The Energy Working Group is in charge of spreading the results and the messages of the LARS project among CPMR Member Regions and towards the EU institutions. The first LARS newsletter has been published. The next meeting of LARS will be in Lahti in October.

The next meeting of the Energy Working Group has not been decided yet.

3.4 Update on priority area Sustainable Development Goals and Regions
Ms Åsa Bjering gave an update on the BSC Task Force on SDG. The Work of the BSC is carried out in close cooperation with Euroregion Baltic, Baltic Sea Future and the CBSS. The activities are carried out with the financial support of a project funded by the Swedish Institute. The project concludes in December and apart from a one-day workshop mentioned below, one more workshop is being planned.

The Baltic Sea Commission also works in close cooperation with the Union of Baltic Cities sustainability committee in supporting the CBSS to build a Leadership Programme focused on Local and Regional Stakeholders and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Baltic Sea Region.
27 September 2018: One day workshop on energy transition in the Baltic Sea Region

The BSC, together with Euroregion Baltic, Baltic Sea Future and the Swedish Institute, organised a workshop in Bornholm on the theme of energy transition to a low carbon economy in the Baltic Sea. Specifically designed for decision-makers that are working on regional development and are interested in understanding how to achieve sustainable energy transition in the Baltic Sea Region, by serving and using the SDGs in every day planning and concrete action, the workshop is to help pave the way for increased cooperation and engagement between local and regional authorities as well as other relevant stakeholders, in their work towards the transition to a low-carbon economy in the Baltic Sea Region.

3.5 Update on priority area creating a Smart Specialisation Financial Platform

Ms Åsa Bjering gave a short recap of the information that had previously been sent out to the CPMR Executive Committee. The following activities have been carried out within this priority area since the Oulu General Assembly:

- EUSBSR Annual Forum – a seminar inviting more regions and actors to join the work;
- ERDF MA Network – Digitalisation was approved as one of the Pilot Areas;
- The Application to the S3 Platform to Interreg BSR was not approved. A new call will open in October;
- Meeting with Peter Berkowitz, DG REGIO;
- Baltic Institute of Finland has been chosen as PA Innovation of the EUSBSR;
- Stakeholder workshop on Digital Transformation was organised in Berlin 24-25 September.

Region Västerbotten, as lead Region of the Task Force for the creation of an S3 Financial Platform, will invite regional development Directors to attend a meeting on 15 November in Stockholm to create a Regional Directors Network, an important building block of a future Smart Specialisation Ecosystem in the Baltic Sea that we are exploring together with PA Innovation and some of the flagships of S3 in the Baltic Sea Region/EUSBSR.

4. Updates

4.1 Tour de Table - Members of the Executive Committee

Ms Annika Sandström and Mr Erik Bergkvist updated the Executive Committee about the results of the Swedish election which took place on 9 September 2018. The election result does not provide majority to any of the parties/coalition and therefore there will be a coalition government, but it remains unclear what parties will be in this coalition.

Mr Cezary Cieslukoswki provided information about the upcoming elections in Poland which will be held on 21 October. There will be elections at different levels (municipalities, districts, regional councils) and more than 40,000 people will be elected. He gave information about the polish voting system.
Ms Talvikki Jori informed participants about the current social and healthcare reform in Finland. She stressed that this reform will have a key impact on regional authorities as there will be a transfer of competences from local and national level to the regional level.

Mr Romek Kosenkranius, Mayor of Pärnu, stressed that he was glad to attend a BSC Executive Committee meeting for the first time.

Ms Åsa Bjering informed the Executive Committee that an important regional reform recently took place in Denmark having a key impact on the regional level. The regional development mandate was transferred from the regional level to the national level. Regional authorities are now responsible for public transport and healthcare issues.

4.2 Update on CPMR Secretariat activities

● Update on negotiations on post-2020 EU Cohesion Policy and EU budget
Ms Lucille Ehrhart gave an update on the recent development regarding the negotiations on post-2020 Cohesion Policy and the EU budget and the CPMR lobbying activities. The PowerPoint presentation can be found on the BSC website (click here).

● Update on transport issues
Mr Lucas Bosser gave a presentation on state of play of the CEF II negotiations and CPMR lobbying activities. The PowerPoint presentation can be found on the BSC website (click here).

● Update on the CPMR Strategic Plan
Mr Erik Bergkvist informed participants about the process initiated by the CPMR to develop a Strategic Plan. A Discussion Paper on the Strategic Plan, developed by the CPMR Secretariat together with some Member Regions, will be presented and discussed at the upcoming CPMR General Assembly in Madeira. The Discussion Paper has been structured to address issues around the following questions: “Who is the CPMR?”, “What does the CPMR cover?”, “How does the CPMR deliver?”. The Strategic Plan will be adopted in 2019.

4.3 Update on CPMR General Assembly, 17-19 October 2018, Funchal Madeira
Ms Åsa Bjering presented the main topics that will be discussed at the upcoming CPMR General Assembly. She also informed the Executive Committee that a preparatory meeting for all Member Regions of the Baltic Sea Commission will be held on Thursday 18 October 2018 to discuss the CPMR Final Declaration and internal issues. CPMR members will receive all the working papers for the General Assembly early in October.

5. CPMR BSC Organisational matters

5.1 Financial Report as of 31 Aug 2018
Ms Åsa Bjering presented the Financial Report as of 31 August 2018. She informed the meeting that the budget had been calculated on a higher membership fee than what in reality. Even so, she trusts that the budget will have a close to zero result this year.

5.2 Project update for CPMR BSC
Ms Åsa Bjering provided clarification about the remaining funding for the projects the BSC is currently involved in:
● Project on SDGs: hosted by Region Norrbotten;
● Project ERDF MA network: hosted by Region Västerbotten.

Both projects will end December 2018.

5.3 Information on exchanges with the CPMR Auditor
Ms Åsa Bjering informed participants that the Auditor of the CPMR has raised some questions regarding the operational and financial management of the Baltic Sea Commission. Mr Vasco Cordeiro, President of the CPMR, has therefore invited Mr Jari Nahkanen, President of the Baltic Sea Commission and regional representatives of the two hosting regions, Mr Erik Berkvist and Mr Anders Oberg to clarify the operational and financial management of the Baltic Sea Commission during a meeting at the upcoming CPMR General Assembly.

5.4. Membership
Ms Åsa Bjering informed the Executive Committee that Region Värmland (SE) and Satakunta (FI) have recently announced that they will join the Baltic Sea Commission. Region Värmland in June 2018 and Satakunta as of January 2019.

5.5 Hosting Region for the CPMR BSC General Assembly 2019, 2020
Ms Åsa Bjering informed participants that there are on-going discussions with Regions that have expressed an interest to host the 2019 Baltic Sea Commission General Assembly meeting. This is still to be confirmed.

5.6 Current staff situation CPMR BSC
At the CPMR BSC General Assembly in May 2018, Region Norrbotten and Region Västerbotten confirmed that they were willing to continue jointly hosting the Secretariat of the organisation for 2019/2020. Mr Jari Nahkanen on behalf of the BSC Member Regions expressed gratitude to Region Norrbotten and Region Västerbotten for their readiness and continued commitment to hosting the Secretariat for the mandate period 2019/2020.

The Executive Committee decided to prolong the contract of Ms Åsa Bjering, as Executive Secretary of the Baltic Sea Commission until December 2020. On behalf of the Executive Committee, President Jari Nahkanen thanked and congratulated Ms Åsa Bjering for the good work carried out as Executive Secretary of the Baltic Sea Commission.

It was said, during the meeting, that Ms Lucille Ehrhart, Policy Analyst, has informed the BSC Secretariat that she will end her contract with the CPMR and the BSC as from the end of September. Ms Clare Booth, Policy Assistant, is currently working part time for the Baltic Sea Commission and her salary is funded by the CPMR.

5.7 Election of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the BSC Working Groups
Mr Jari Nahkanen stressed the importance of respecting geographical and national balance while nominated the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the BSC Working Groups. Mr Jari Nahkanen informed the Executive Committee that Region Skåne has officially withdrawn its candidature for the position as Chair of the Transport Working Group.
The Executive Committee decided to nominate the following candidates:

- **Transport Working Group**
  Chair: **Bosse Andersson**, Stockholm County Council
  1st vice chair: Kaarin Taipale, Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council
  2nd vice chair: Johan Söderling, Region Västerbotten

- **Maritime Working Group**
  Chair: **Tina Perho**, SouthWest Finland
  Vice-Chair: Harry Bouveng, Stockholm County Council

- **Energy Working Group**
  Chair: **Richard Sjölund**, Ostrobothnia
  Vice-Chair: Vacant

Mr Richard Sjolund stressed the importance of having a Vice-Chair of the Energy Working Group in the future.

**Mr Jari Nahkanen** warmly thanked **Mr Kai Holmberg** for his involvement and key contribution to the BSC Transport Working Group, which he has been chairing for 4 years.

### 6. Strategic issues

#### 6.1 Initial discussions and information on action taken regarding BSC Secretariat forming a closer working relationship with MEPs from Baltic Sea Region

**Ms Åsa Bjering** informed the Executive Committee that the BSC Secretariat has made sure that the CPMR amendments on Transport were sent to the relevant MEPs from the Baltic Sea Regions. She stressed that the CPMR amendments on Cohesion Policy will also be sent to the relevant MEPs from the Baltic Sea Region.

**Ms Bjering** said that the CPMR is active in the European Parliament via the SEArica Integroup. However, there is, for this mandate period, only a few MEPs from the Baltic Sea Region involved in SEArica as there is an informal Baltic Group in the Parliament, chaired by **MEP Miapetra Kumpula-Natri**. **President Jari Nahkanen** and **MEP Miapetra Kumpula-Natri** have decided to organise a joint Christmas Lunch in December 2018 to discuss future areas of cooperation between the Informal Baltic Group in the Parliament and the Baltic Sea Commission.

#### 6.2 CPMR BSC involvement in the revision of the EUSBSR

A background paper on the contribution of the Baltic Sea Commission to the upcoming revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan was sent out to the Executive Committee prior to the meeting. It included suggestions of forthcoming actions for the BSC regarding the revision.

The Executive Committee decided to create a BSC Task Force responsible for animating BSC activities regarding the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan in line with the document that had been presented. **Ms Åsa Bjering** informed the Executive Committee that **Mr Wolf Born** has expressed an interest in coordinating the work of the Task Force, together with the BSC.
Secretariat. It would be composed by volunteering Regions. Until the next Executive Committee, the Task Force will find more information on the process to revise the Action Plan and map out how BSC Member Regions have been involved in the EUSBSR so far.

6.3 BSC Goal Document
President Jari Nahkanen explained that, in Stockholm in August, the Presidium decided to develop a Goal Document for the Baltic Sea Commission. The goal should set out what the BSC wants to achieve for the coming years. The objective is to prepare a very short document. This document should also help the BSC Secretariat in its daily work.

Vice-President Cezary Cieslukoski stressed the importance of measuring the success of the Executive Committee and the Presidium, using the SMART performance tool, at the end of the mandate period. After the two years, the Executive Committee should report back to the General Assembly.

Vice-President Annika Sandström underlined the importance of developing clear, precise, and focused goals that can be qualitatively and quantitively measured. This should help to have an influence and an impact on EU policies.

Members of the Executive Committee exchanged views on the goals and the process to develop the document.

The Executive Committee decided that BSC Secretariat, together with the support of the civil servants from the Presidium, should develop the Goal Document with the help of the Preparatory Group - working as a sounding board - and after consultation of the BSC Working Groups.

It was also decided that Goal Document should be presented at the next Executive Committee meeting in January. A first draft will be sent out to the Executive Committee mid-December 2018.

6.4 Implementation areas of improvement
Ms Åsa Bjering gave a short background to this process. This comes from a discussion that the Executive Committee initiated during last year and that was discussed by the Member Regions at the CPMR BSC General Assembly in Oulu. Several areas of improvement have been identified since then that are included in a document sent to the Executive Committee prior to the meeting in Bialystok. The actions taken to deliver in these areas of improvement will be presented at the next Executive Committee meeting.

7. Calendar of the Baltic Sea Commission 2018/2019
The Calendar of the CPMR BSC Executive Committee (including first drafts of Agendas for the different meetings) was presented.

8. Any Other Business
No item was raised by participants.
9. Closing session

9.1 Next meeting
At the invitation of Region Päijät-Häme, the next Executive Committee meeting will be held on 30 January 2019 in Lahti. The event will take place back-to-back with an event on the Future of Europe co-organised by the CPMR Finnish Regions and the Baltic Sea Commission. The event on 31 January will be an opportunity to discuss the role of Regions in the future of Europe, in the revision of the EUSBSR and in the negotiations on the EU budget. More information on the event will follow soon.

9.2 Calendar of the year
The Presidium of the Baltic Sea Commission will meet on 29 November 2018 in Stockholm. The timetable of events is on the BSC website (click here).and is frequently updated.

The Executive Committee meeting was followed by a high-level discussion on Via-Carpathia organised by Region Podlaskie. The event was an opportunity to discuss the issues at stake, the potential to develop Via-Carpathia further and its importance for the development of Podlaskie and in connecting the North and the South of Europe.