The objective of the meeting was to finalise the preparation of the BSC General Assembly 2022.

During its meeting on 15 September 2022, the Executive Committee approved/agreed:

- The Agenda of the Executive Committee meeting;
- The Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 15 June 2022;
- The Working Papers for the BSC General Assembly 2022
- To put for vote to the next BSC General Assembly meeting in September 2022 that Oulu Region would become the host Region of the Secretariat of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission for 2023-2024

Opening session

Mr Jari Nahkanen, President of the Baltic Sea Commission, Region Oulu, welcomed participants and commented on the recent address of the Finnish Prime Minister and the President of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen to the European Parliament in Strasbourg in September 2022, who underlined the need for strong EU unity to overcome the energy crisis. He reminded participants the aim of the meeting was to finalise preparations for the BSC General Assembly, which will be the first in person General Assembly after the pandemic and therefore will provide excellent networking opportunities for the regions. He pointed out that the CPMR will renew its Political Bureau during the CPMR General Assembly in Crete in October 2022. He informed the Executive Committee, on behalf of the region of Southwest Finland and all Finnish regions, that Ms Talvikki Jori has submitted a candidature to become a CPMR Vice-President in light of her experience and knowledge of EU institutions. He informed participants that the Finnish delegation had met earlier in the week regarding the BSC Presidency and host region of BSC Secretariat. He expressed gratitude to Västerbotten for hosting the Secretariat successfully over the years and noted that the Finnish regions are proposing that Regional Council of Oulu to become the host region for the BSC Secretariat for 2023-2024.

The agenda of the Executive Committee meeting was unanimously approved.

The draft Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting, held on 15 June 2022 (available here) were unanimously approved.

Nominations received for the positions of BSC President and Vice-Presidents for 2023-2024

Mr Jari Nahkanen provided background details regarding the Call for Candidates, that was sent, in line with a previous Executive Committee decision, to all Member Regions in June 2022. The deadline to submit applications was end of August and the candidatures received will be send to all the Members one month ahead of the General Assembly. Mr Jari Nahkanen introduced the candidatures received:
Applications received for President
**Mr Tomas MÖRTSELL**, Region Västerbotten (Sweden) (here)

Applications received for Vice-President:
**Mr Richard SJÖLUND**, Region Ostrobothnia (Finland) (here)
**Mr Tomas MÖRTSELL**, Region Västerbotten (Sweden) (here)

**Mr Jari Nahkanen** noted that he had spoken to Mr Romek Kosenkranius, Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities (Estonia), and he was willing to continue as 2nd Vice-President.

There were no comments on the candidatures received.

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**Review of the Working Papers for the BSC General Assembly 2022**

**Ms Lucille Ehrhart**, Executive Secretary of the Baltic Sea Commission, gave an update on the following documents:

- Draft Agenda for the CPMR BSC General Assembly 2022 (here);
- Minutes of the CPMR BSC General Assembly 2021 (here);
- Draft BSC Activity Report 2021-2022 (here);
- BSC draft Resolution (here);
- Timetable of upcoming BSC events (here);
- Financial Report for 2021 and 2022;
- Forecast Budget for 2023;
- Proposal on Hosting Region(s) of the BSC Secretariat for January 2023 to December 2024;
- Proposal on the Executive Secretary for the CPMR BSC for 2023/2024.

All documents can be found on the BSC website here. The proposed amendments to the Resolution were presented.

**Discussion**

**Ms Jenni Suominen**, Southwest Finland, noted that in the draft Resolution the phrase “new programmes” was confusing, and asked for clarification on what was meant. **Ms Lucille Ehrhart** explained it refers to Interreg programmes that are newly adopted for this programming period, and she would change the wording accordingly to make it clear. Participants were reminded that the deadline to submit amendments to the Resolution was the next day.

**Mr Tomas Mörtsell**, as representative of the Host Region Västerbotten of the BSC Secretariat presented the intermediary financial report 2022 up to July 2022 that will be put for vote during the BSC General Assembly 2022. Regarding the intermediary financial report up to July 2022, out of an expected expenditure of 140 000 EUR, until end of July, 82 007 EUR have been used. You can see the details of expenses for the diverse budget lines. Until the end of the year, there is therefore a remaining budget of 57 993 EUR. In the budget line for the Executive Secretary, you can see it includes the costs of PwC and Region Västerbotten administration costs. There were no comments on the intermediary financial report 2022 up to July 2022. Mr Tomas Mörtsell didn’t present the proposal of forecast budget for 2023, since it was presented at the March Executive Committee. The two documents will be presented and put for vote to the BSC General Assembly 2022.

**Mr Jari Nahkanen** informed participants that the Regional Council of Oulu was interested in hosting the BSC Secretariat for the 2 year mandate from January 2023 to December 2024.
Mr Evert Kroes, Region Stockholm, recalled that the 2018 General Assembly decided that the Executive Secretary would be based in Brussels. He thanked Mr Mörtsell and Region Västerbotten for managing the financing and welcomed that the Executive Secretary is now financed only through membership fees. He stated that Region Stockholm considers hosting the Secretariat as an administrative burden not as a political decision as the host region no longer finances a certain percentage of the expenses. Region Stockholm do not envisage any problem with the host region being from the same country as the President, but it may be a little complicated if the same region were to hold the Presidency and host the Secretariat. He put forward the suggestion that the Executive Committee should look into the pros and cons of using the CPMR General Secretariat as the workplace for the BSC Executive Secretary, which would solve the problem of finding a host region and increase job security for the Executive Secretary. He stressed this was not a proposal but an idea for the next step in the development of the Baltic Sea Commission. He concluded by confirming that Region Stockholm is not opposed to Oulu as host region of the BSC Executive Secretary but requests that there is a discussion during the next mandate period to see if there is a better solution for the BSC Secretariat.

Mr Jari Nahkanen thanked Mr Kroes for the idea and opened the floor for comments.

Ms Hanna Honkamäkilä welcomed the support of Region Stockholm and noted on behalf of the Finnish delegation that the responsibilities should be shared not only for administration but also for job security. The Finnish delegation also felt it would be good for the dynamics of the Baltic Sea Commission if there were many regions engaged in this. She pointed out that the Finnish delegation did not discuss whether the Executive Secretary should be part of the CPMR General Secretariat.

Mr Evert Kroes reiterated that Region Stockholm is proposing that the BSC Executive Committee should explore a better solution for the employment of the Executive Secretary so that the Executive Secretary does not have to change employer every 2 years. He called for the BSC Executive Committee to look at the pros and cons of having the same system as the other CPMR Geographical Commissions that have an Executive Secretary employed by the CPMR General Secretariat. Ms Lucille Ehrhart confirmed this matter would be included as an agenda item for the next Executive Committee meeting.

➔ The Executive Committee agreed to propose Oulu as the hosting region of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Executive Secretary for the next mandate period.

Closing session

Any other business

Ms Lucille Ehrhart provided an update on BSC activities, including the participation of BSC President and Executive Secretary in the Baltic Sea Forum conference in Kiel at the invitation of Schleswig-Holstein. She informed that Minister Bettina Martin from Mecklenburg Vorpommern will be in the opening session of the EUSBSR Annual Forum held in Lappeenranta end of September 2022. She reminded participants that the CPMR has launched a questionnaire to review the services of CPMR General Secretariat and its Geographical commissions. She invited regions interested in hosting the 2023 BSC General Assembly to get in touch and opened the discussion on the dates and host regions for the 2023 Executive Committee meetings. She informed participants that non-member regions Darlarna and Lapland had been invited to participate in the BSC General Assembly 2022. She presented upcoming meetings of the BSC working groups.

Mr Tomas Mörtsell commented that regarding potential new members, the elections have just been held in Sweden, therefore discussions within Swedish regions will probably have to wait until the new year.
Mr Evert Kroes informed participants this would be his last Executive Committee meeting and thanked members for the good work achieved and looked forward to seeing everyone in Helsinki for his last General Assembly.

Closing

Mr Jari Nahkanen gave his final closing speech for an Executive Committee meeting as President of the Baltic Sea Commission and thanked the Executive Committee for their constant support. He reflected on the vast changes that have taken place since he was elected President for the first time in 2018 and noted that the members have stuck together and the BSC has continued to be a relevant actor in Brussels. He thanked all his Vice-Presidents for their close collaboration, as well as the committed politicians that are members of the Executive Committee, and their civil servants. He noted that he will remain active in the work of both the CPMR and the BSC in another role and looked forward to seeing everyone in Helsinki for the General Assembly.

Mr Tomas Mörtsell, on behalf of all the Executive Committee members, thanked Mr Nahkanen sincerely, it had been a pleasure to work with him and to achieve excellent productive collaboration together.

List of participants

President
Jari Nahkanen, Regional Council of Oulu

Vice-President
Tomas Mörtsell, Region Västerbotten

Substitute Members
Otto Meri, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region

BSC Working Group Chairs
Perho Tiina, Region Southwest Finland

Officers
Hanna Honkamäkilä, Regional Council of Oulu
Evert Kroes, Region Stockholm
Carin Peters, Region Skåne
Isak Sidestam, Region Västerbotten
Jenni Suominen, Region Southwest Finland
Janne Tamminen, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region
Liisa Perjo, Helsinki-Uusimaa Region

BSC Secretariat
Lucille Ehrhart, Executive Secretary
Clare Booth, Policy Assistant