Meeting of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Arctic Task Force

28 JANUARY 2022 | 10:00 – 11:30 CET
MINUTES

Tour de table with introduction of each participant.

**Lucille Ehrhart**, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission explained the current context, recalled the objectives of the BSC Arctic Task Force and gave a brief review of the activities undertaken in 2020-2021 (see presentation [here](#)).

**John Kostet**, Senior Advisor at North Sweden EU Office gave an overview of the EEAS/EC Joint Communication for “A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic”. He gave a recap of the situation and recalled that EU engagement for the Arctic has been on-going and evolving for a while, from having a foreign affairs focus to being more interlinked with the domestic development of the European Union. The introduction of the third pillar in 2016 makes it more relevant to the regions and reflects the belief that the people who live in the Arctic should be involved. He informed participants that the policy is detailed, includes a lot of improvements and covers a broad set of policy areas.

**Micaela Löwenhöök**, Senior Advisor at Region Västerbotten presented the draft BSC Policy Position on the Arctic (see presentation [here](#)). She addressed the focuses of the Position and especially the importance of:
- an Arctic Policy based on territorial strengths;
- making policy-makers understand what there is and what can be achieved in the Arctic;
- recognising the potential of the Green transition and green growth in the Arctic;
- maintaining a human aspect in Arctic policies, whilst taking into account demographic challenges and sustainable social development;
- mainstreaming the Arctic within the EU agenda and relevant EU policies;
- increasing cooperation;
- ensuring Regions are at the centre of the implementation of the EU Arctic Policy.

A media campaign will be used to increase awareness of the messages in the policy position.

**Feedback from Member Regions on the draft BSC Policy Position on the Arctic**
Member Regions were invited to comment and provide input to the draft Position

Key aspects and issues raised during the debate included:
- The paper should include a new reference to the importance of research, technology and applied sciences;
• Important to increasingly sell the possibilities of the know-how in Arctic regions;
• The green transition and the need for a smart and sustainable green transition in Europe is the main issue for everyone;
• Pointing out that Arctic regions have some of the answers for the Green transition and they want to contribute, will help ensure the right decision-makers and stakeholders listen and are interested;
• The message of regional cooperation and multi-level governance is highlighted and supported;
• The Arctic is important for all regions, given its geopolitical importance and the effects of climate change in the Arctic can have repercussions on the whole planet;
• Due to the territorial socio-economic and environmental values, Arctic affairs should also be EU affairs;
• Region Murcia will be organising events to raise climate protection awareness and one of these events could focus on the Arctic perspective;
• Indigenous people and their original livelihoods must be kept in mind, life is local and local solutions must be found;
• Research could be more profoundly mentioned in the paper, emphasising the importance of broadening the spectrum of what Arctic research encompasses;
• A point could be added for example: Increase the innovation capacity in the Arctic by interlinking Arctic research within the Arctic regions to the sustainable development activities in the Arctic region;
• Support from the EU is needed to leverage the potential for new solutions;
• The paper should emphasise that the 2 pillars of climate change and low tension must be built on the basis of sustainable development and collaboration within the Arctic, and the Arctic with the rest of the world;
• A point could be added to highlight that the BSC welcomes the EU policy, especially the EU focus on indigenous people, women, and young people, and also follow up with a comment that it is important to not forget the Arctic also has a large green bioeconomy to deliver to the European Union and future climate actions;
• Participants were invited to submit proposals and ideas by email to the BSC Secretariat.

A consolidated Policy Position, including new input from the Member Regions will be circulated, and then put for approval to the BSC Executive Committee on 8 March.

Next steps of the CPMR BSC Arctic Task Force for 2022
Possible activities for the BSC Arctic Task Force during 2022 were discussed. The Arctic will be a new policy area addressed by the EP’s SEArica Intergroup and chaired by Erik Bergkvist. The 1st meeting will on 1 June 2022 in Brussels. The BSC Arctic Task Force will meet in the morning of the SEArica meeting. The seminar proposed by Region Murcia could also be another possibility for the future. It is hoped that a physical meeting of the BSC Arctic Task Force can be held in the Arctic once the health pandemic situation has improved.
Anne Rännäli-Kontturi, International Affairs Manager at City of Oulu, introduced herself and presented the Committee of the Regions’ future Arctic report (see presentation here). The CoR is going to publish an Opinion in spring on “a stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic”. She explained that there will be a stakeholder consultation and welcomed the BSC draft position which is in line with basic questions that have been drafted by the CoR as part of reporting work. She provided details on the timetable up to the expected adoption in plenary at the end of June 2022. She pointed out the key questions to be addressed and noted that these will be supplemented with a set of complementary questions.

Anne Rännäli-Kontturi offered the Arctic Task Force a meeting to discuss the Opinion and the Position directly with Mirja Vehkaperä. It was decided to hold a meeting together in February.

Concluding remarks
Lucille Ehrhart invited the participants to send in any further amendments to the paper, as well as any more ideas for activities for the Task Force, to the BSC Secretariat.

Micaela Löwenhöök thanked the participants and speakers for a productive meeting and closed the session.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Hanna Honkamäkilä, Manager of international affairs, Council of Oulu Region
Mikael Janson, Managing Director, North Sweden European Office
John Kostet, Senior Adviser, North Sweden European Office (Jämtland Härjedalen, Västerbotten, Norrbotten)
Reigo Lehtla, Environmental Adviser, ELVL
Micaela Löwenhöök, Communication Officer, Region Västerbotten
Sonja Palhus, Manager of International Affairs, Regional Council of Southwest Finland
Anne Rännäli-Kontturi, International Affairs Manager at City of Oulu
Carl Rova, Adviser in International Affairs, Region Norrbotten
Janne Tamminen, Senior Adviser, Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council
Adrian Zitelli Ferrari, Director General of EU Affairs, Region of Murcia
Clare Booth, Policy Assistant, CPMR
Lucille Ehrhart, Executive Secretary, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission