7. Mandate for the EUSBSR Annual Forum
2017 Task Force

(To be decided upon during the Baltic Sea Commission Executive Committee, 5-7 October 2016)

Background

The Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is an annual event which aims at shaping debates among decision-makers from businesses, politics, international organisations and civil society from across the Baltic Sea Region. It is an important platform that ensures visibility of the Strategy and strengthens cooperation in the Region. Strategy Forums of the EUSBSR have been organised every year since 2010 with an increasing number of participants, reaching up to 600-900 people during the last few years.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, together with its Member Regions, has a strong commitment to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region as a tool for solving common challenges and for the Region to reach its full potential.

During the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Executive Committee meeting in March 2016, it was decided that the organisations wanted to co-organise the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Berlin in 2017.

The argumentation from the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission’s Executive Committee to seek partnership to organise the Forum was as follows:

- Positioning ourselves even more in the work of the EUSBSR;
  The visibility of being a partner in the most important annual event of the EUSBSR;
- The opportunity to influence the content of the EUSBSR;
  Making it relevant for stakeholders from regional and local level to attend the forum and contribute to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

In March 2016, the National Coordinators group for the EUSBSR supported The Federal Foreign Office in Germany to be the lead partner and CPMR Baltic Sea Commission to be co-organisers.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission is not a legal entity and is hence not allowed to apply for funding. After dialogue with Norrbotten County Council and Region Västerbotten, Norrbotten County Council takes the responsibility to be the legal project-partner of the Annual Forum. However, it is the Secretariat of the Baltic Sea Commission, being the Project Leader and the organisation, with its 20 Member Regions in the BSR, that will be the visual project partner.

The main partner and the collaborating partner have been approved funding from the Interreg Baltic Sea Programme. The total of that funding amounts to 255,000 Euros and as collaborating partner we have applied for about 50,000 Euros. This amount requires own finances (in monetary contribution of 15%).
The theme of the EUSBSR Forum 2017 is already has already been decided by the partners to be Connectivity (see Appendix 1).
The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission’s main focus will be to ensure a meaningful participation of local and regional stakeholders in the Forum.

The Baltic Sea Commission General Assembly will take place on 12 June 2017 in the representation of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Berlin. This event is outside of the scope of the Forum but will secure a strong participation of Regional Authorities also in the Forum.

CPMR Baltic Sea Commission will be involved in ensuring a good content of high-level sessions and workshops. A special responsibility is to ensure a good level of Regional and Local Stakeholders as organisers and speakers.

In order to best do this, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission will set up a special Task Force during 2016/2017. This Task Force will function as a bouncing board for the development of the overall programme.

- Giving input on relevant issues;
- Giving input on speakers to the different sessions;
- Linking this with different communication projects to be supported by a current Call in EUSBSR on communication in support of the EUSBSR (we are associated partner in Let’s Communicate);
- How to make parallels and synergies with our General Assembly, hosted by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern?
- Steering and being involved in the development of a Report that the CPMR BSC will produce during spring linking the regional and local benefit with macro-regional structures;
- Creating specific workshops relating to “How to put the results of the projects into every day practice in home organisations”; Coordinate with HA Capacity
- The use of the trans-national component in the ERDF – funding (special session); This needs to be coordinated with the Managing Authorities Network within the EUSBSR;
- Ensure that local and regional actors and partners have the possibility to take part in the networking village.

The Annual Forum will be organised again in 2018. The Baltic Sea Commission will, during the preparations for the 2017 Forum, build up a closer relationship with the group of National Coordinators and the future hosts of the Forum. This link will enable the organisation to continue working for a good inclusion of local and regional actors both in the Forum as such but most importantly in the Strategy and its action plans.
Task Force – Organisation of The Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region 2017

Suggestions on decisions:

- The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission is to set up a Task Force for the planning, preparation and organisation of the EUSBSR Strategy Forum;

Who can participate and how will it be paid?

- The Secretariat has already sent out a request for voluntary contributions of 1,500 Euros to all Member Regions. There will be a reminder sent out in November;
- All Member Regions of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission are welcome to participate in the Task Force with staff working in relation to regional development and the Baltic Sea;
- Non-Member Regions and other networks sharing our vision are welcome to participate in the Task Force. They need to pay 1,500 Euros in order to be part of the work and support the own finances of the project.

Organisation of the task force

- The work will be coordinated by the Executive Secretary;
- The Executive Committee will work as the Steering Group for the whole process. They have two meetings scheduled during spring. One in January (Schwerin) and one in April (Brussels); The Task Force will meet as a whole group twice during the period:
  - The first meeting is scheduled back-to-back with the Strategy Forum in Stockholm on 9 November (17.00-21.00). During the first meeting we will discuss the content of the report to be produced during spring;
  - The second meeting is planned in Berlin during March. The focus will be on ensuring regional and local participation in the workshops, back-to-back events and seminars, as well as the launch of the report and possible ways to take the work forward;
- Most of the work will be carried out within the Region’s own setting. It could for example be organising stakeholder discussions, mapping on-going initiatives and writing input to the reports. The participating Regions choose their involvement from the relevance it has for the specific Region.

Appendix 1:
Extracts from the (approved) Project Application EUSBSR Strategy Forum 2017.

Contribution to the EUSBSR – policy and strategic aims

“The Annual Forum of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is a cornerstone in communicating the strategy to a wider public. It is also a platform to discuss the work for the common goals set and to develop new ideas. Thus, the organisation of the Annual Forum contributes directly to the implementation of the strategy.”
The EUSBSR underwent considerable changes in the past years. The revised Action Plan of 2015 redefined goals and priorities and the communication strategy, developed under the Polish presidency, strengthened the role of public relations. The Interreg BSR-programme has held several calls to support the coordinators of Policy Areas and Horizontal Actions in strengthening the communication thereby contributing to the implementation of the EUSBSR.

As the 8th Annual Forum in Berlin intends to provide improved coherence and continuity, there will be strong efforts to connect with both the Annual Fora in Sweden 2016 and Estonia 2018. The Annual Forum in Sweden in November will focus on the tools of the strategy and work for a vision of the Baltic Sea Region in 2030 to set landmarks and enable the strategy to head for a common goal. We intend on-going work in a troika formation with Sweden and Estonia. The findings of the Vision 2030 and the Swedish Annual Forum will be considered in the final topical planning of Germany.

The projected stakeholder forum 2017 shall bridge the longer-term perspective and the down-to-earth processes which make the implementation of the strategy visible and tangible. With the theme being connectivity, it is intended to shift the attention of the stakeholders at regional level to give increased attention to the stakeholders and decision-makers at regional and local level. It is on site where the implementation of the strategy has to meet the demands, the capacities and ideas of the decisionmakers and drivers of regional development. This is far from being self-understood as macro-regional action does not automatically translate into regional progress.

The 2017 Forum will be an important step to make a connection between local and regional development and the objectives of the EUSBSR visible and to promote best practice examples from different policy areas and horizontal actions. Stakeholders should be motivated to develop a regional and local perspective on the implementation process of the EUSBSR. Success stories on site will not only make the added value of the strategy visible to the citizens, it will also strengthen the commitment and ownership of regional and local decision-makers towards the strategy.

Communication and implementation on the ground go hand-in-hand. Transnational activities should be better translated into public headlines at regional level. Results of transnational cooperation need to be better rolled out and integrated into regional development.

In close cooperation with Policy Areas (PAs), Horizontal Actions (HAs) and the current on-going communication projects which should aim at supporting the communication of the implementation of the EUSBSR, the organisers seek a workshop programme which supports the development of creative ideas and innovative up-scaling of successful action as well as communication both informing the larger public regarding the achievements and involves new stakeholders into the implementation process.

In the process leading up to the forum, the organising partners plan to connect the Network of Managing Authorities, initiated in May 2016, and stakeholders at regional and local level. It is the intention to showcase initiatives and projects on how to more efficiently align funding and provide support to actors to be part of the implementation of the EUSBSR. This will give additional input to increase on-going and future processes and programmes. This should spur, as intended, macroregional cooperation and connectivity of involved stakeholders. This also provides examples to push the on-going processes for ways of more efficient financial support to the EUSBSR implementation by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programmes. It should increase coordination across relevant macro-regional stakeholders. These forms of cooperation are to be demand-driven.

The two-day Forum is planned to include Plenary Sessions, workshops, networking activities and back-to-back events, such as stakeholder meetings, which will be organised independently.
The Annual Forum 2017 is targeting all active partners of the implementation of the EUSBSR. The Forum will emphasise participation and involvement of stakeholders from regional and local level in order to further stimulate discussions on how to best support demand-driven transnational cooperation. In addition, the Forum seeks to link regional with transnational development, as well as to better align funding possibilities in accordance with ESI Funds programmes.

Content development will be provided by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany in cooperation with the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. The Baltic Sea Commission is an international, independent organisation of Regional Authorities at sub-national level in the Baltic Sea Region. The federal states in Germany - Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Brandenburg - are to be actively engaged in the implementation of the Annual Forum, as well as the line ministries.

**Description of partner-involvement:**

“Content development and organisational implementation will be provided by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany as the Lead Partner in cooperation with the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (BSC). The Federal Foreign Office (FFO) as the main organiser of the Forum in Berlin seeks to implement the Annual Forum project in close cooperation with a variety of (unofficial) partners at regional, federal and EU level. Therefore, the FFO will reach out to the respective Federal Ministries for further content guidance as well as for logistical and organisational support (e.g., through providing space for events). The Federal States in Germany, Brandenburg, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and SchleswigHolstein, which are all actively engaged in the implementation of the EUSBSR, have been approached to support the implementation of the Annual Forum 2017 project. The aim of this WP is to work out in detail the individual activities which are to take place in the respective ministries and State Representations of the German Länder (all based in Berlin within the vicinity of the FFO). The direct involvement of the federal and state institutions in the Annual Forum project also aims at strengthening the communication, implementation and networking objectives of the EUSBSR. The FFO also intends to reach out to the Embassies of the EU Member States of the EUSBSR in order to actively engage these as well. This will also intensify the joint ownership of the EUSBSR and provide a solid basis for a successful implementation of the Annual Forum project. In addition, the partners will involve the Representation of the EU Commission in Berlin to seek further advice and support for possible activities.

The specific role of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission as the second official Partner of the Forum is to contribute to the thematic content of the Forum and to the planning of sessions in close cooperation with the FFO. In order to ensure increased connectivity between regional development and transnational cooperation and with the "Vision 2030", the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, with the support of a subcontractor and contribution from its Member Regions and other interested regions, will provide analytical background material for the Forum.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission will outline a process of workshop selection for the Partner and Lead Partner to agree upon.

The process and content development, including networking activities and back-to-back events, will adapt experience from previous fora.”

**Special commitment of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:**

“The Forum will pay special attention to meeting the needs of the regions, and facilitate their involvement in the EUSBSR discussions. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) is foreseen to arrange a session and report on the topics of the Annual Forum. To support the development of the Forum concept, the CPMR BSC will carry out background analysis summarising regional needs and ideas.
This background report will provide input upon request on the thematic orientation of the forum and ensure a strong link between regional and transnational level. Furthermore, the background analysis will feed into the thematic workshop organised by the CPMR BSC.

The theme of the background work should connect with the foresight report on a vision for the Baltic Sea Region that is being prepared prior the Stockholm Forum in November 2016. The methodology of the background analysis will be outlined after the thematic selection. The Project Partner and the Lead Partner will cooperate closely in the prioritisation of the topics dealt with. The methodology will be outlined afterwards; possible ways include interviews, desk research or compilation of already existing data, depending on the analysis needed for the specific chosen topic. The methodology is foreseen to be set during fall 2016 and the study to be conducted during the winter/early spring 2017.

As part of the proposed methodology, four workshops will be organised to collect input from regional and local decision-makers around the Baltic Sea area. The workshops will be held in different Member States to ensure wider outreach to the target group.

A sub-contractor supporting the Secretariat of CPMR Baltic Sea Commission and the Regional Authorities involved in this work will be contracted.

The background materials and workshops organised by the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, will support the organisers in engaging local and regional actors in the high-level seminars and in organising workshops or back-to-back events during the Annual Forum. The document will connect the foresight report of the Vision 2030, being developed prior to the 7th Annual Forum, with concrete action on local and regional level. It will provide input for topical planning of the Forum by summarising regional concerns and policy issues. Background material/report(s) can also provide ground for new initiatives and mechanisms to support a demand-driven local and regional involvement in the implementation of the EUSBSR. 4 thematic workshops, prior to the annual forum, will address regional and local decisionmakers. The partners will strive for participation of at least 25 people in the workshops.”