

4th Steering Committee meeting of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Priority Area Nutri “To reduce nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels”

Meeting Minutes

Nov 13, 2013

Opening:

The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) of the EUSBSR Priority Area Nutri (PA Nutri) was called to order at 9:00 on 13th November, 2013, at the premises of the Hotel Le Meridien Vilnius (Lithuania) by the Priority Area Nutri Coordinators (PACs). The meeting was organized as a Back-to-Back meeting to the 4th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR.

Present:

Kristiina Isokallio, PAC, Ministry of the Environment, Finland
Anna Sosnowska, PAC, Chief Inspectorate of Environmental Protection, Poland
Sanni Turunen, PAC, Ministry of the Environment, Finland
Laura Saijonmaa, PAC, Ministry of the Environment, Finland
Joanna Charytonowicz, PAC, Chief Inspectorate of Environmental Protection, Poland
Miina Mäki, Project BEST, City of Helsinki Environment Centre and John Nurminen Foundation
Marjukka Porvari, Project BEST, John Nurminen Foundation
Anja Nysten, Belarus Project, Nefco
Mikhail Durkin, HELCOM Secretariat
Ilze Ciganska, Project Officer of EUSBSR Seed Money Facility
Joanna Kirylo, DG REGIO
Susanna Minnhagen, Project BBG, Kalmar municipality
Carl Hamilton, Project BBG, East Sweden Region
Hans Bjurbäck, Project BBG, East Sweden Region
Dennis Hamro-Drotz, Alleco/SITO
Seppo Silvennoinen, SITO
Erkki Ikäheimo, SITO
Aliaksandr Pakhomau, Belarus water institute
Magdalena Gajewska, Project SUWMAB, Gdansk University of Technology
Arkadiusz Ostojki, Project SUWMAB, Gdansk University of Technology
Andrzej Tonderski, Project BaRuWa, POMInnO

Apologies:

Heike Imhoff, NFP Germany, Ministry of the Environment
Thomas Johansson, NFP Sweden, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management
Aiste Kubiliute, NFP Lithuania, Environment Protection Agency
Enn Liive, NFP Estonia, Ministry of the Environment
Charlotte Betina Mogensen, NFP Denmark, Ministry of the Environment
Katarzyna Pirowska, PAC, Chief Inspectorate of Environmental Protection, Poland
Andrzej Podscianski, PAC, Chief Inspectorate of Environmental Protection, Poland
Axel Rod, DG Regio
Josefin Walldén, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, representative of the NFP Sweden
Baiba Zasa, NFP Latvia, Ministry of the Environment, Latvia
Erik Olofsson, Project BBG, Aquaculture Centre North

A. Introduction

Kristiina Isokallio and Anna Sosnowska presented the main aim of the meeting – presentation and assessment of potential Flagship Project proposals, which received support letters from PA Nutri to the Seed Money Facility (SMF) managed by the Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein (IB.SH.). Representatives of four project proposals (Project BEST, BBG, SUWMAB and BaRuWa) were present at the meeting. Also almost finished Belarus project from Nefco and the preliminary results of SITO's work about finding new Flagship Projects for PA Nutri were presented. Present in the meeting were representatives from HELCOM, SMF, DG Regio and Belarus water institute.

B. Seed Money Facility

Ilze Ciganska presented a quick overview about the situation of SMF (<http://seed.eusbsr.eu/>). During the second decision round the Seed Money Secretariat received 68 pre-selected, eligible, applications. The applications contribute to the majority of the Priority Areas and Horizontal Actions of the Action Plan of the EUSBSR. During November-December 2013 the Seed Money Committee will decide which projects are to receive funding. Due to the big amount of applications, there will be a 3rd round in the spring. Ilze informed that it will be possible to comment all recommended projects for 3 weeks on the SMF online-platform.

PA Nutri received 13 project proposals and gave support letters to four projects, which all have now, according to the Seed Money Secretariat, improved their technical quality. The Secretariat proposes that they'll give funding for two PA Nutri projects now and the others on April 2014. The projects that receive the funding on 2nd round can start in February 2014. The 3rd round will not be open as the previous rounds, but PACs will be given chance to recommend new projects.

C. Ongoing Flagship Project

Anja Nysten presented the results from Flagship Project (14th Nov 2012 – 31th Dec 2013) “Assessment of nutrient pollution and identification of priority projects to reduce nutrient pollution from Belarus to the sea” funded by The Baltic Sea Action Fund (BSAP Fund). The project stated the need of priority investments and HELCOM recommendations for municipal waste water treatment plants and animal farms in Belarus. Factsheet of the project and the BSAP Fund will be added to the PA Nutri webpage. Continuation of the project was discussed. After the identification, it is important to use the project results in concrete actions.

D. Potential Flagship Projects

Four project proposals that received support letter from PA Nutri to the SMF were asked to present their project ideas and how they fulfil the Flagship Project criteria and actions of PA Nutri in the EUSBSR Action Plan.

1. BEST. Marjukka Porvari and Miina Mäki presented the project BEST – Better Efficiency for Sewage Treatment. Project aims to implement cost-effective measures on waste water treatments, especially in Belarus and Poland, and invest on removal of phosphorus and hazardous substances. It was noted that phosphorus is the triggering factor for eutrophication and it is cheaper to remove than nitrogen. A question was raised how to focus on most important hazardous substances. The project will do analyses and case studies. It was noted that strong ownership of the project is important. The SC noted that it is good to tackle both nutrients and hazardous substances form for e.g. sludge. A question of pharmaceuticals was also raised and noted important. The project could contribute with HA neighbours. Speakers confirmed that the effect of the project will be concrete nutrient reduction.

2. SUWMAB. Magdalena Gajewska and Arkadiusz Ostojki presented the project SUWMAB – Strategies for sustainable communal waste-water management in the Baltic Sea Region. Because disperse development and scattered pollution is the biggest problem in Poland, the project idea is to focus on treatment wetlands. The plan is to build one pilot wetland, offer training for communities and raise awareness. Among others, they showed examples of small scale garden wetlands and it was asked whether such wetlands exist and could work in other northern countries as well. Leaders informed that the project will be supported by Gdansk Marshal Office and Pomeranian Voivodeship Office. HELCOM noted that the figures in the presentation were out of date and questionable. The SC noted that they should combine and implement their work with the work already done in Belarus and Russia (e.g. HELCOM BASE project). The partners of the project are all research organisations and it was noted that participation of local authorities and communities should be involved.

3. BaRuWa. Andrzej Tonderski presented the project BaRuWa – Evaluation and promotion of rural wastewater treatment for reduction of nutrient loads to the Baltic Sea. Because population connected to central sewage systems varies 64-95% in the Baltic Sea Region the project will evaluate and compare waste water treatment operations and create independent guidance, especially in Poland. It was noted that since both SUWMAB and BaRuWa are planning to work in the same areas and in quite similar fields the two projects could cooperate.

4. BBG. Susanna Minnhagen, Carl Hamilton and Hans Bjurbäck presented the project BBG – Baltic Blue Growth. The project is about initiating feed-mussel farming in larger scale. Mussels filter nutrients from the sea, offer buffer zones around coastal fish farms and can be used as a mussel meal. Also the project creates new, ecological jobs around the region. It was noted that not all previous mussel farm projects have succeeded in farming and reducing any significant amounts of nutrients from the sea. Because of low salinity the mussels grow small in the Baltic Sea and the reduction of nutrients may be small as well. The project noted that this is not the final and only solution to reducing nutrients, but it can serve as a one solution in certain areas. Amount of toxins in the mussels was raised as a question and it was noted that it depends on the area. A question about the size and location was raised. The plan is to make 3-5 ha in Swedish coastal line in Kalmar area, about 10 ha total. The mussels are easier to grow in the archipelago than in the open sea. In Sweden there are no laws for aquaculture so the project is easy to implement there.

E. Preliminary results of SITO

Erkki Ikäheimo presented the preliminary results of SITO from the case identification survey “Identification and development of new flagship projects for Priority Area Nutri of the EUSBSR”. The presentation concentrated on the measures taken and on-going projects, problems and bottle necks for action and priority needs for action. A discussion about monitoring was raised. Interim report with the results will be given on 9.12.2013.

F. Other issues

1. Flagship status and potential Flagship proposals. Kristiina Isokallio raised a discussion about when to propose projects as Flagship projects to DG Regio and which projects we should prioritize in SMF’s second round. Since the SM is used for planning and finalizing the project idea, we can wait until the projects are ready to apply additional funding for implementation. The Flagship status would however benefit the projects to find funding.

Discussion about similarities of SUWMAB and BaRuWa was raised. It was agreed that some kind of cooperation between projects would be needed. It was mentioned as well that POMInnO – the leader of BaRuWa is a partner in CIRCUNUTS – project proposal supported by PA Agri. It was

noticed that there are some similarities between BaRuWa and BASE project in Russia, but it was noted that Poland is a different environment and therefore these kinds of projects would have additional value.

It was agreed that SC will support the project BEST and BBG on this stage of SMF and continue the discussion between SUWMAB and BaRuWa until the third round of SMF and wait also SITO's results. It was noted that even if the two projects stay separate, they should either cooperate or differ in their actions. SM secretariat can inform the projects and communicate with them.

2. Criteria of PA Nutri. PACs of PA Nutri have been writing new criteria for Flagship Projects. It was noted that we need concrete outcomes, not networks or new databases. The draft of the criteria will be send to SC members for comments and it will be released on the webpage of PA Nutri. DG Regio noted that the projects should contribute to bottlenecks, publish annual implementation reports and communicate to public. It was noted that SMF should give concrete instructions for applicants. DG Regio suggested that the projects should act as a tool to impact on policy making.

3. EU-Russia. An EU-Russia working group has been set up to identify joint priorities for EU-Russia regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. DG Regio asked PACs and HALs to prepare half a page of relevant information concerning their area of expertise by 18.11.2013. The paper should explain what the concrete objectives and expected results of the cooperation are. The documents prepared independently by the EU and Russia will be compared. It was decided that PA Nutri will write the paper together with PA Agri and concentrate on the Environment topic. The paper will be send to SC for comments.

4. Annual Forum 2014. The 5th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR will be held in Turku 3-4.6.2014 as a part of the Turku Baltic Sea Days. The back-to-back meetings are planned to be on 5.6.2014. A discussion of weather PA Nutri should contribute was raised. It was agreed to contact HA Neighbours for details. Organization of next SC PA NUTRI meeting back-to-back with AF is to be further discussed.

5. DG Regio – PAC meeting. DG Regio has invited all PACs and HALs to Brussels to discuss about the implementation of the Action Plan and improving the coordination. The questionnaire received from DG Regio will be sent to the SC for comments. It was discussed who should join the meeting and how DG Regio could help our work. It was noted that PA Nutri has a ToR for the SC. PACs of PA Nutri will visit DG Regio on 29.1.2014.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 13:15 by the PACs.

Minutes submitted by Sanni Turunen