



Prime Minister's Office
EU Coordination Secretariat

Chair Completion Report: Swedish Chairmanship of the EUSBSR National Coordinators 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017

Summary

Sweden chaired the group of National Coordinators of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017. During this period, Sweden chaired five meetings with the National Coordinators (NC-group), organised the 7th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR, co-hosted a number of workshops and joint meetings with key stakeholders and chaired four meetings with the ERDF network. During this period, Germany also successfully organised the 8th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR.

One of the major results of the work of the NC-group during this period was to agree on a set of rules of procedure for the NC-group of the EUSBSR, formally establishing a rotation order for chairing the NC-group, organising and hosting the Annual Forums of the EUSBSR until 2025. This provides clarity on roles and responsibilities and facilitates long term planning.

The Swedish chair continued the work done by predecessors to increase the involvement of key stakeholders, such as the main implementers; the Policy Area Coordinators and the Horizontal Action Coordinators of the EUSBSR (PAC:s and HAC:s). The Swedish chair also took further steps to improve cooperation with relevant funding programmes in order to facilitate transnational cooperation.

Activities of the group of National Coordinators, 1 July 2016 - 30 June 2017

Improving governance

A main ambition for the Swedish chair was to retain a strategic perspective on the future for the Baltic Sea Region of the EU and the three objectives of the EUSBSR, Save the Sea, Connect the Region and Increase Prosperity. With the topic ‘One Region, One Future – Vision 2030 for the Baltic Sea Region’ for the 7th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Stockholm 8-9 November 2016, the ambition was to view the strategy in a larger context and with a timeframe beyond the current multiannual financial framework 2014-2020. The NC-group took active part in forming the scope of a foresight report on development, trends and what they could imply for the region, through a preparatory workshop in Stockholm together with other experts from the Baltic Sea Region. The foresight report was presented at the 7th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Stockholm.

The Swedish chair also sought to increase transparency and sustainability in the governing-role of the National Coordinators. As a result, the NC-group agreed to formalise its meetings with the help of a set of rules of procedure, codifying the formats of its meetings, composition of the group, tasks, roles, voting rules and reporting. Consequently reports from NC-meetings are now published at the [EUSBSR website](#) with the support of the Let’s Communicate project. The rules of procedure also established a yearly rotation order of the NC-chairs, running until 30 June 2025, as well as a rotation order for the Annual Forums of the EUSBSR running until 2025.

Supporting implementation

A main task of the NC-group being to support and facilitate the implementation of the EUSBSR, the Swedish chair highlighted the role of the coordinators of the Policy Areas and the Horizontal Actions of the EUSBSR. The PAC:s and HAC:s were all invited at an early stage to benefit from the 7th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Stockholm by organizing seminars, and to use the networking space of the conference called Creative Lounge for structured meetings.

The Swedish chair also continued the tradition established by the Polish chair, to cooperate closely with PAC:s and HAC:s in joint meetings with the NC-group. In a first meeting in Stockholm on 21 September 2016, the coordinators discussed current issues such as flagship nominations and the needs of the PAC:s and HAC:s in view of the upcoming call for application for targeted support. In a second meeting in Stockholm 5-6 April 2016, the former traditional “Spring meeting” was relaunched, with the participation of PAC:s, HAC:s, NC:s, European Commission (DG Regio), Interact Turku Office and Let’s communicate project. The participants discussed implementation of the EUSBSR, the link between flagship project results and policy impact and alignment of funding. The Spring meeting was organized by HA Capacity, with the help of Interact.

The NC-group also discussed and agreed to a technical review of the Action Plan of the EUSBSR which the European Commission formally adopted 20 March 2017 (SWD (2017)118 final). The technical review included revisions of the content in Policy Area Transport, the inclusion of a new action on the integration of refugees in the Policy Area Education and a shift of Policy Area Coordinator for Energy from Denmark to Lithuania. Some minor changes were also made in the text of Policy Areas Ship and Safe.

Six new flagship projects were adopted during the NC-chair period, which were added to the Action Plan of the EUSBSR.

Communicating Baltic Sea Regional cooperation

The National Coordinators all play an important role in communications efforts domestically but also as a group. In October 2016, the management of the official EUSBSR website was transferred from the Interact Office in Turku to the Centrum Balticum Foundation as the Lead Partner of Let’s communicate project, based in the same city. The Swedish chair has regularly invited the lead partner, Centrum Balticum, of the Let’s Communicate project to the NC- meetings. The EUSBSR website is an active and integral communication tool for the benefit of all active stakeholders of the strategy. The website is continuously being improved e.g. recently with a blog platform.

During the period 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017 two successful Forums of the EUSBSR were organised (The 7th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Stockholm, 8-9 November 2016, and the 8th Annual Forum in Berlin, 13-14

June 2017), successfully illustrating the rich variety of activities performed by stakeholders of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the results of their efforts.

With the 7th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR that took place in Stockholm 8-9 November 2016, the format of the forum was re-arranged with a more decentralised bottom-up model characterised by an open call for organising seminars and a direct involvement of stakeholders such as PAC:s and HAC:s at an early stage. This approach generated a broader ownership and a good spread of topics. With financial support of the European Commission, including help with travel and accommodation arrangements, 14 journalists from 7 EU Member States in the Baltic Sea Region were invited to cover the Strategy Forum. National media were also invited but at own expense. In total, more than 30 journalists participated in Forum events in Stockholm. Extensive communication efforts were made by the organisers before and after the Forum, using the Forum website as well as social media #EUSBSR as the main communication tools.

The same decentralised format was also applied for the Annual Forum in Berlin the year after, which gave PAC:s and HAC:s a key role in organising and advertising their events through their networks. 13 journalists from all 8 EU member states in the Baltic Sea Region participated during the Annual Forum in Berlin, once again with the support of the European Commission.

In general, Annual Forums of the EUSBSR has proven to be an important event to communicate and give visibility to results and added value of Baltic Sea Regional cooperation, both to the wider public as well as to decision makers at EU-, national-, regional-, and local level.

Facilitating funding for EUSBSR activities

The NC-group was presented with the result from the 2nd call from the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme (ISBSR) for targeted support to the implementation of the EUSBSR. The group made an assessment on the EUSBSR-relevance of the applications and expressed a needs priority to the ISBSR Secretariat.

For the first time, the National Coordinators of the EUSBSR had a joint meeting with the Monitoring Committee of the ISBSR in Berlin, 15 June 2017. The meeting took place at the Federal Ministry of Transport and

Digital Infrastructure in Berlin and was arranged back to back with the 8th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR. A discussion paper had been prepared by the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation in advance of the meeting. The aim of this joint meeting was to exchange ideas on how to create added value for the EUSBSR and the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme by increasing synergies and utilising the resources of both the strategy and the Programme. As this was the first meeting of its kind, delegates were invited to continue to discuss and exchange views on closer cooperation between the Monitoring Committee and the EUSBSR governance actors. The NC-group will continue this discussion under the Estonian NC-chair.

The European Regional Development Fund Management Authority Network (ERDF network), initiated by the Polish chair was convened four times during this period. The focus has been on aligning funding from the national and regional ERDF programs within the selected thematic area of innovation. The ERDF network has launched pilot projects in the field of clean tech, based on regional smart specialisation strategies. The development of the pilot projects has been done in close co-operation with the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) Baltic Sea Commission.

Calendar 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017

Events organised by/with the NC chair

20.09.2016 Stockholm, Preparatory **workshop** on foresight report ‘Vision for the Baltic Sea Region 2030’

21.09.2016 Stockholm, **NC-meeting** and **joint meeting with PAC:s/HAC:s**

08-09.11.2016 Stockholm, **7th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR**

10.11.2016 Stockholm, **NC-meeting**

09.02.2017 Brussels, **NC-meeting**

05-06.04.2017 Stockholm, **NC-meeting and joint meeting with PAC:s/HAC:s** (“Spring meeting”)

15.06.2017 Berlin, **NC-meeting and joint meeting with NC-group and the Monitoring Committee of the Interreg BSR Programme**

Other main EUSBSR relevant activities during the year

07.10.2016 Stockholm, 2nd ERDF-network meeting

10.11.2016 Stockholm, 3rd ERDF-networking meeting

26.01.2017 Brussels, Friends of the Presidency group meeting on macro-regional strategies

09.02.2017 Brussels, Meeting of the High-Level Group of macro-regional strategies

20.02.2017 Brussels, Friends of the Presidency group meeting on macro-regional strategies

03.03.2017 Brussels, Friends of the Presidency group meeting on macro-regional strategies

27.03.2017¹Brussels, Friends of the Presidency group meeting on macro-regional strategies

20.04.2017 Stockholm, 4th ERDF-networking meeting

23.05.2017 Brussels, joint meeting NC:s of all EU macro-regional strategies

31.05.2017 Helsinki, 5th ERDF-networking meeting

13-14.06.2017 Berlin, 8th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR

¹ Council conclusions on the implementation of EU Macro-Regional Strategies was adopted by the General Affairs Council (Cohesion policy), 25 April 2017.