



EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Area Hazards

Steering Group meeting

Date: 17/11/2025
Time: 13:00-15:00 CET
Location: online

MINUTES

1. Opening of the meeting

Annika Mikomägi, Chair of Steering Group, Ministry for Climate, Estonia

- a) Approval of the agenda
- b) Introductory words on Estonian presidency

Annika Mikomägi introduced the Estonian presidency and invited us to join a meeting in Estonia, as well as the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Tallinn in 2026.

2. Presentation by the European Commission

Johan Magnusson, Directorate for Urban and Regional policy

Johan Magnusson underlined that security and resilience is still very much on the agenda, which was clear in the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Sopot, Poland in October 2025. Moreover, the 5th implementation report on all macroregional strategies that was recently published, underlined security and resilience as key. It was furthermore emphasized in Council conclusions during the Danish presidency regarding key issues for the macro-regional strategies to focus on.

Furthermore, Johan informed on the Macro-regional and Sea-basin strategies Days taking place in September 2025. PAC added that PA Hazards was co-organiser of a workshop “Joining Forces for Water Resilience, Macro-regional Contributions to the EU Resilience Agenda” together with PA Nutri as well as coordinators from the Danube Strategy. It was a great opportunity to create links to the Danube strategy, and a suggestion to invite the corresponding coordinators to a future Steering Group meeting.

Lastly, we were informed that the European Commission has released its proposals for Cohesion policy and the Multi-financial framework post 2027. The proposals will now go to the Council and the European Parliament. Key changes are that there will be National and regional plans, including several funds under so-called chapters. There will be one separate Interreg Plan, where each



chapter will correspond to the current Interreg programmes. Moreover, focus will be on performance rather than checking spending, and focus on reforming the economy with the European Semester.

The Steering Group took note of the information provided by the European Commission.

Follow-up: Invite the Danube Strategy coordinators to future Steering Group meeting

3. PFAS

*Presentation by Lotta Lehti, project coordinator, Union of the Baltic Cities
The EMPEREST project has worked since 2023 to test advanced treatment technology to remove PFAS and other micropollutants. The project duration is coming to an end, and we will listen to some project results, focusing also on current challenges related to PFAS and with a view to the future.*

Presentation is attached to this report. The Steering group discussed how the tools developed by the EMPEREST project could be used by smaller municipalities. Lotta Lehti informed that EMPEREST now is part of the new HAZGONE project platform, where the tools developed will be disseminated further. Moreover, the project Baltic PFAS Resolve (co-financed by Interreg South Baltic) aims at further developing the EMPEREST assessment tool, where smaller municipalities are part.

PAC reminded that many of the SG members are associated to the HAZGONE project platform and members are encouraged to engage there to discuss how to disseminate and support relevant dissemination in your respective country.

Presentation by Mayumi Narongin-Fujikawa, IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute (Baltic Sea PFAS Network)

In our SG meeting on 28 March this year, Mayumi presented planned activities to the Steering Group as well as discussed the proposal to hold a seminar on firefighting foam, to discuss the consequences of the EU Regulation on Persistent Organic Pollutants, as well as foreseen changes in the REACH regulation affecting the use of firefighting foam. The Baltic Sea PFAS network organised a seminar on 11 November, and will present the outcome to the Steering Group.

There were 84 people registered, approximately 60-70 people joined. The idea was to get examples from different countries in the Baltic Sea Region, but there were mainly Swedish speakers and discussion amongst Swedish participants. A report will line out the main conclusions, and will make up the “Swedish example”.

The Baltic Sea PFAS Network would like to follow-up by this to involve more countries. One suggestion is to reach out to participants that joined the seminar *per country* and try to have a small national dialogue with them. If needed, we can reach out with the help of the Steering Group.



It was underlined that the Baltic Sea PFAS Network is not a project, and its activities are guided by PA Hazards priorities.

The Steering Group indicated that the idea to have national dialogues would be a good idea, and it would be added to the draft Work plan for 2026 prepared by PAC (agenda point 5).

More-over, Mayumi underlined that issues related to nutrient recovery for example are related to PFAS, which hinders the nutrient recycling, and suggested cross-PA cooperation on this topic as well as on resilience.

PAC informed that cooperation on this topic is included in the revised draft EUSBSR Action plan.

Steering Group took note of the information provided by the projects.

4. Update from Policy area Coordinator

Louise Floman, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water management

a. Workshop on sea-based hot spots

PA Hazards and PA Nutri have worked together with the HELCOM secretariat and working groups to support the process with updating the HELCOM criteria for designation and deletion of hot spots. There is a new group of *sea-based* hot spot criteria, including wrecks, munitions and contaminated sediments. The Contracting Parties (CP) have been testing the criteria during 2025. At the WG Source to Sea meeting in May 2025, it was suggested that PA Nutri and PA Hazards organise an external workshop to enable informal exchange on the topic. It was well received.

The workshop was held on 17 October 2025 online. It was overall appreciated, and the CP's found it useful to hear experiences from other countries. However, many CP's had not advanced far enough to share experiences in several categories. There is still a need to discuss the details of some criteria, and there is a potential for more workshops on e.g. wrecks and munitions. But the CP's have to progress more in testing the criteria to make such a workshop useful.

b. Update of the EUSBSR action plan

The draft PA Hazards actions, approved by the Steering Group on 14 November 2025 was formally submitted. PAC reminded about the process with the Steering group and informed on workshops and a stakeholder questionnaire to receive input in the update.

Next, the National Coordinators Group will decide on approving or revising the actions. Finally, the European Commission will adopt the Action plan by April 2026.

c. EUSBSR Annual Forum in Sopot 29-30 October 2025

PAC informed on the Annual forum. PA Hazards co-organised a workshop "New Circular Economy solutions" together with PA Nutri, PA Safe, and PA Bioeconomy. The project Achieving Zero PFAS represented PA Hazards in the workshop.



d. EUSBSR Annual Forum in Tallinn ~~9-10 June~~ (12-13 May) 2026

PAC informed about the timing and location for the next Annual Forum, however, since the meeting was held, the dates have changed. The new dates for the forum are on 12-13 May 2026.

Steering Group discussed...

e.

5. PA Hazards Work Plan

Some changes were made to the draft Work Plan following the discussion with the Baltic Sea PFAS Network under agenda point 3.

The revised Work plan for 2026 was approved by the Steering group.

6. AOB and date for next meeting

The next Steering Group meetings are suggested to be held:

2026:1 Online, late January/early February

2026:2 Tallinn, Estonia. Possibly in connection to the EUSBSR Annual Forum 11-13 May 2026.

The chair proposed to have a joint meeting together with PA Nutri Steering Group. The proposal was well received by the Steering Group.

A doodle will be sent out to the Steering Group to decide the exact date of the next meeting.



PARTICIPANTS

Denmark	*Organisation*	Name
Estonia		
Finland		
Germany		
Latvia (Chair)		
Lithuania		
Poland		
Sweden		
PAC		
Observer		
DG REGIO		
BSP		
Guest		