

7th Steering Committee meeting of the Policy Area Nutri “To reduce nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels” of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Meeting Minutes June 16, 2015

Opening:

The seventh meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) of the EUSBSR Policy Area Nutri (PA Nutri) was called to order at 14:00 on 16th June, 2015, on the margins of VI Annual Forum of EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in Jurmala (Latvia) by the Policy Area Nutri Coordinators (PACs).

Present:

1. Sanni Turunen, chair, PAC Nutri, Ministry of the Environment, Finland
2. Kristiina Isokallio, PAC Nutri, Ministry of the Environment, Finland
3. Adriana Dembowska, PAC Nutri, National Water Management Authority, Poland
4. Josefin Walldén, NFP Sweden, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

Invited project leaders, part-time:

5. Hannamaria Yliruusi, project leader, Turku University of Applied Sciences Ltd. (FI)
6. Tapio Salo, project leader, Natural Resources Institute Finland
7. Björn Grönholm, project leader, UBC Sustainable Cities Commission
8. Anna Sosnowska, project participant, WWF Poland

Apologies:

1. Edyta Jurkiewicz-Gruszecka, PAC Nutri, National Water Management Authority, Poland
2. Charlotte Betina Mogensen, NFP Denmark, Ministry of the Environment, Denmark
3. Enn Liive, NFP Estonia, Ministry of the Environment, Estonia
4. Heike Imhoff, NFP Germany, Ministry of the Environment, Germany
5. Wera Leujak, NFP Germany, Federal Environment Agency, Germany
6. Aiste Kubiliute, NFP Lithuania, Environment Protection Agency, Lithuania
7. Nijole Remeikaite-Nikiene, NFP Lithuania, Environment Protection Agency, Lithuania
8. Baiba Zasa, NFP Latvia, Ministry of the Environment, Latvia
9. Joanna Kirylo, DG REGIO, European Commission
10. Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky, HELCOM Secretariat

A. Introduction

Sanni Turunen welcomed the participants and presented the agenda of the meeting. The topics planned to be discussed were: revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan and its consequences for PA Nutri, discussion on potential and new potential Flagship Projects and the work plan for second half of 2015.

B. Revision of EUSBSR Action Plan

Sanni Turunen informed that a revised Action Plan (second revision) was published on 15th June, 2015. The revised Action Plan may be found at EUSBSR webpage [<http://www.balticsea-region.eu/communication/news/590704-updated-eusbsr-action-plan>].

EUSBSR activities will be organised in the structure of 13 Policy Areas (former Priority Areas) and four Horizontal Actions. There are no major changes with regard to PA Nutri policy area. Coordinated PA Nutri proposal for revision was largely taken into account. Synergies with HELCOM work have been emphasised in the context of the need for closer co-operation, internal load of phosphorus as a new potential field of interest as well as promotion of MSFD and WFD implementation.

From now on Flagships will not constitute an integral part of an Action Plan, but be added as annex to it, which may make possible changes easier. The final decision of new Flagships will be made by National Coordinators (NCs) instead of High-Level Group.

Sanni Turunen also informed SC that on the 2nd and 15th June National Coordinators have approved proposed projects as Flagships, including six PA Nutri projects: BBG, BEST, BaRuWa, SUWMAB, SmallWWTPs, NutriTrade. However, it was also mentioned that BaRuWa has been not approved for funding and there is no recent information what the further plans of project leaders are.

C. Presentation of new Flagship Projects

SmallWWTPs – Small wastewater treatment plants (project leader: Turku University of Applied Sciences, FI)

Presented by Hannamaria Yliruusi

The main objective of the project is to improve the treatment of municipal wastewater in small WWTPs (300-3000 persons) in the Baltic Sea region. Small WWTPs quite often do not meet standards and the main reasons for this include: lack of knowledge on technology development, lack of training of operators, out-dated or insufficient technology. Improvements with regard to these areas are the main objectives of the project.

The project involves 10 partners, among them 5 WWTPs.

There is intention for close co-operation with IWAMA and BEST projects, as all three are closely interrelated.

The presentation was given for information, as the project has been approved as PA Nutri Flagship.

Baltic Phoenix – Sustainable recovery and recycling of nutrients – safety and efficacy for clear Baltic waters (project leader: Natural Resources Institute, FI)

Presented by Tapio Salo

The main objective of the project is to reduce eutrophication of the Baltic Sea via enhancing sustainable nutrient usage in the region. It will provide knowledge on technologies, production, economic feasibility and effective usage of recycled bio-based fertilisers by turning under-exploited agro- and urban-derived waste into part of sustainable bioeconomy in terms of nutrient recycling. Now the potential of alternative sustainable fertilisers is not much recognised by farmers and market. Furthermore the project will provide a support tool and policy recommendation on more sustainable nutrient management.

The initiative builds upon already completed Baltic Compass, Baltic Deal and Baltic Manure projects.

The project involves 12 partners and 6 associated partners.

The presentation was given for information, as the project has been approved as PA Bioeconomy Flagship.

D. Presentation of new potential Flagship Projects

IWAMA – Interactive WAtER MAnagement (project leader: Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) Sustainable Cities Commission)

Presented by Björn Grönholm

The project addresses three main means of supporting municipal wastewater treatment plants in reaching lower nutrient loading in discharges: the need for structured lifelong learning among wastewater treatment plant operators and experts; the need to operate the wastewater treatment plants more resource-efficiently; the need to improve and develop municipal sludge management.

One of the concrete objectives of IWAMA project is to reduce nutrient loads from municipal wastewater treatment plants. This is achieved through combining high quality lifelong learning and knowledge transfer with investments in energy efficiency and sludge management. In addition it is expected that investments will reduce the carbon foot print of treatment.

Knowledge and education are key points to successful operation of wastewater treatment. Modern processes are based on sufficient technology investments and skilful operation.

The project will involve partners from Belarus (municipalities of Minsk and Slonim) and Russian Federation (EKAT Kaliningrad and St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences).

The project was discussed by PA Nutri SC and approved as a potential Flagship, in accordance with previous discussion, however it was also mentioned that project boundaries (among IWAMA, BEST and SmallWWTPs) should be more clearly indicated.

SIGWET – Increasing significance of midfield wetlands to combat Baltic Sea eutrophication (project leader: Institute of Technology and Life Sciences, PL)

Presented by Anna Sosnowska (WWF PL)

The main aim of the project is construction or revitalization of 100 midfield wetlands on different farms in six countries of the Baltic Sea Region, and thus decrease nutrient run-off from farms in order to combat the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. Other important outputs include: report on the role of midfield wetlands in reducing nitrogen and phosphorus run-off from farms as well as description of its costs and effectiveness in different countries published and disseminated (also on webpage); manual for farmers on construction and conservation; recommendations for the governments (water management authorities) regarding water protection measures in relation to agricultural pressure published (also on the webpage) presented on the final conference and disseminated among stakeholders.

The project description has been distributed to SC Members prior to the Meeting. Questions and comments received were submitted to the project leaders, and some of them (due to time pressure) were responded to during the SC Meeting. The written response will be distributed to the SC by e-mail.

The project was then further discussed by PA Nutri SC. Main concerns of SC Members are related to the scale of project (100 wetlands and no pilot phase foreseen), its cost and sustainability. The possibility of advancing the project results to a political and administrative level was also questioned.

PA Nutri SC was of the opinion that the project needs further development, especially in line with the comments already provided, if the SC support would still be sought, and agreed to reconsider the revised draft as soon as it is submitted.

Baltic Slurry Acidification – Reducing nitrogen loss from agriculture by promoting the use of slurry acidification techniques in the BSR

(project leader: Swedish Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Engineering, SE)

The main objective of the project is to promote the use of slurry acidification technologies throughout the BSR, which will result in decreased ammonia nitrogen loss from livestock production and increased manure fertiliser value for the farmers.

The project involves 9 partners from 8 countries in BSR being also EU Members, as well as 1 associated partner from Belarus.

The PA Nutri SC shortly discussed the project (there was no presentation) and agreed to give supportive recommendation to PA Bioeconomy where it could be considered as potential Flagship.

ELIPHOSFER – Baltic Sea environment Protection by chemical nutrient recovery combined with eco-fertiliser production (project leader: Gdynia Maritime University, PL)

The aim of the project is to propagate in the Baltics countries the methods of reduction and recovery of nutrients from wastewater. It involves the precipitation of magnesium ammonium phosphate (struvite) from leachates, generated during excessive sludge digestion. The effect of precipitation is reduction of the nutrients load in wastewater treatment plants, production of valuable ammonium phosphorus eco-fertilizer from wastewater and prevention of clogging of pipes by struvite.

The project description has been distributed to SC Members prior to the Meeting. In the discussion the issues of unclear link with the main priorities of EUSBSR as well as unclear need to test the technology already made operational in a number of WWTPs were raised. European Commission (*via* e-mail) expressed its concern that project may be seen as promotion of one particular commercial technology and in that case formal support from PA Nutri may be legally questionable.

PA Nutri SC did not make final decision with regards to the project. PACs will send comments and information about Baltic Sea Region Programme seed funding to the project leaders and get back to the issue with SC, if the project applies for seed funding with improved application.

E. Work Plan for 2015

8th Meeting of PA Nutri Steering Committee was decided to be held back-to-back with HELCOM HoD meeting planned for 10-11 December 2015 (at the premises of HELCOM Secretariat in Helsinki) with a hope to attract the attention of more Member States.

SC started a discussion on the next PA Nutri Stakeholder seminar. Sludge management (including the priority substances issues) and treatment of wastewater from scattered settlements were preliminary proposed as possible topics. Due to low SC Members attendance the issue was postponed for further consideration and e-mail consultations.

E. Other issues

The meeting considered the proposal from the Commission to extend its participation in the PA Nutri SC with the experts from DG ENV and was of the opinion that despite of a number of representatives a single opinion by the Commission would be expected in any issue to be discussed. Furthermore it was noted that low level of interest from the Member States, rather than the lack of EC experts (who may be internally consulted anyway), is a major issue of concern.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 16:30 by the PACs.

Minutes submitted by Adriana Dembowska