

## EUSBSR PA Tourism Steering Group Meeting

12/05/2022 1.00 PM CET - 2.30 PM CET

### MEETING MINUTES

#### PARTICIPANTS:

1. Denmark - Ms Eva Thybo, Visit Denmark
2. Estonia - Ms Ede Teinbas, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications
3. Finland - Ms Hanna-Mari Kuhmonen, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment
4. Latvia - Ms Inguna Zigure, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia
5. Lithuania - Ms Lidija Bajarūnienė, The Ministry of Economics and Innovation
6. Poland - Mr Karol Biedrzycki, Ministry of Sport and Tourism
7. Sweden - Ms Erika Rosander, Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth
8. European Commission, DG REGIO - Ms. Blagovestka Riiser
9. Let's Communicate - Mr Juhani Ailio
10. PAC Tourism / PTB - Ms. Marta Chetkowska
11. PAC Tourism / PTB - Ms. Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło
12. PAC Tourism / Oulu Region - Ms. Saija Tikkanen
13. PAC Tourism / Oulu Region - Ms Hanna Honkamäkilä



## Welcome

On behalf of the PAC Tourism coordinators team Ms Marta Chetkowska, President of the Pomorskie Tourism Board (PTB), welcomed the participants to the SG meeting. She thanked everyone for the intense email contact and cooperation and informed the participants that the meeting was recorded for technical reasons - preparation of the meeting minutes.

## Introduction of the new Policy Area Tourism Coordinators & update on the current PA Tourism activities

Ms Chetkowska briefly introduced the PTB activities and specifics and informed that PTB is happy to lead the PAC Tourism; she also confirmed the close support from the self-government of the Pomorskie Region. She added that PTB is pleased to work with the Oulu Region coordinating PA Tourism and asked Ms Hanna Honkamäkilä to take the floor.

Ms Honkamäkilä welcomed everyone, underlined that this is a historical day for Finland due to the current political situation, and confirmed that they are pleased to work in the PAC team. She emphasised that the BSR and EU cooperation is essential to the Oulu Region and that the cohesion policy is more than needed these days. She referred to the PA Work Plan draft and hoped the SG members would approve it.

*Ms Chetkowska asked the SG Members also introduce themselves and say a few words about themselves since not all the participants in the meeting could work together earlier and the PACs were new to the cooperation. Ms Erika Rosander from Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth introduced herself and presented her work, working on the tourist policy issues and international relations within tourism. She hoped to work closely with everyone in the SG, especially since Sweden will take over the EUSBSR presidency in June 2022.*

*Ms Eva Thybo also introduced herself and informed that she represents the Visit Denmark and the Ministry of Tourism and economics in DK. Both institutions have been present but less engaged in SG in recent years for many reasons, but now they are coming back to the active cooperation within the PA TOU SG and are willing to engage more. They are primarily working with the Nordic countries but are also willing to work with all the EUSBSR countries.*

*Mr Karol Biedrzycki from the Polish Ministry of Sport and Tourism confirmed he has been involved in the BSR cooperation for many years and is also very familiar with the works of PTB in the area of tourism in the BSR arena. He congratulated Pomorskie and Oulu on their new roles as PAC Tourism and expressed hope the cooperation would improve and develop again.*

*Ms Lidija Bajarūni from the Ministry of Economics and Innovation in Lithuania introduced herself. She confirmed she was happy to see everyone and expressed hope that everyone would soon see each other in person. She reminded that the political situation was difficult at the moment, so we should cooperate even more to become more resilient and prosperous and recover quickly.*

*Ms Ede Teinbas from Estonia informed she has worked as the Tourism Advisor in the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications since August 2021. There were no meetings when she joined the SG cooperation in 2021, so she is even more eager to start the intense collaboration on the EUSBSR level.*

*Ms Inguna Zigure from the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia agreed with others that it would be important to work closely together on tourism topics and finally see others in person at some future meetings. She informed she works primarily with Nordic cooperation and BSR cooperation too.*

*Mr Juhani Ailio introduced himself on behalf of the Let's Communicate project and informed that the project acts as governance support to the EUSBSR to NCGs and PACs. He reported he is working on cross-cutting themes and NCG support especially.*

*MS Chetkowska informed the participants that the German representative was not present at the meeting, but PACs are in contact with the German National Coordinator to EUSBSR, and hopefully, SG will have a person designated by Germany soon.*

*Finally, Ms Hanna-Mari Kuhmonen from the Finnish Economic Affairs and Employment introduced herself, saying she had participated in the SG since 2016. She confirmed she was happy to see two active new coordinators for PA Tourism. She also confirmed it was a historical day in Finland on that day. EC and Finland have signed the partnership agreement, which means that the new programming period has started officially, which is essential for our cooperation.*

## Presentation and adoption of the meeting's agenda

*Ms Chetkowska thanked everyone for their introduction and presented the agenda of the meeting to all SG Members asking if they accepted it or would like to make any changes to it. Ms Erika Rosander asked about Agenda Item no. 5 on Work Plan. She wondered if there would be a time foreseen to introduce the PAs Work Plan even though the SG Members received it in advance. Ms Chetkowska confirmed that Ms Magda Leszczyna-RZucidło is ready to present the document and give more details. She confirmed that new PACs have been working on this since 16th March 2022 and prepared the document with very little time, so now it would be important to have the discussion and better understanding of the activities foreseen for the PA in the upcoming months.*

*Mr Juhani Ailio asked about point no. 5 in the Agenda, whether they refer to the whole EUSBSR Action Plan or the PA Work Plan. Ms Leszczyna - RZucidło informed that they are referring to the PA Work Plan. There were no further comments or questions. **The SG Members adopted the meeting Agenda.***

## Discussion on the EUSBSR PA Tourism Rules of Procedure, adoption of the RoP

*Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło introduced herself to the SG Members and informed she would present the two documents sent to the SG Members in advance - the draft for the EUSBSR PA Tourism Rules of Procedure (RoP) and the PA Tourism Work Plan (WP).*

*She started with the RoP document, explaining that the document results from the amended RoP for the EUSBSR adopted by the NCG at the end of 2021. All the 14 PACs had to prepare the new RoP based on the NCG document and adapt it until June 2022, during the Lithuanian Presidency to the EUSBSR. Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło informed that she received the RoP template from the Let's Communicate team, and this was also sent to other PACs. To her understanding, other PACs did not propose too many detailed changes. Thus, the proposed RoP will be similar to other RoPs already adopted or soon-to-be adopted.*

*She presented the document point by point and highlighted the possibility of delegating their representatives to the SG by the EUSBSR Member State; she confirmed that Germany is looking for an SG member. PA Tourism will likely have all the EUSBSR countries' representatives on board. It is possible to work within the SG even if Germany does not attend the meetings, but hopefully, this will not be the case. Later she explained the procedures of appointing the observers to the SG and the updates on the SG members being sent to the NCG and Let's Communicate.*

*Mr Ailio asked about Art.2, referring to the text inviting non-EU countries from the Baltic Sea region as observers to the SG, which was in the original template and was missing in the draft document. He recommended adding this text to the RoP document, and all SG Members agreed to add this paragraph.*

*Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło continued to present the text and explain the details of the paragraphs concerning the SG Members' roles. She informed that the whole part was taken directly from the template suggested by the NCG. Ms Rosander mentioned the exact text in two places in Article 4, and one was removed.*

*Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło continued to explain the RoP and informed about Article 5, referring to the SG Presidency. Currently, there is no presidency in the PA Tourism SG. The RoP draft foresees joining the SG Presidency with the EUSBSR Presidency, which usually starts on 1st July and ends end of June the following year. This would mean that Sweden would be the 1st country to hold the Presidency within the SG for the PA Tourism. Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło mentioned this solution as the most reasonable, as it is easy to predict who will have the Presidency in the upcoming years. It is also easier to join the SG Presidency's events and/or activities with the NCG Presidency if necessary. She suggested that the SG Members adopt this rule as proposed and asked for questions and suggestions regarding this matter. She also asked the Swedish representative to confirm they agree to be the 1st country to have the Presidency of the SG with the support of both PACs. Ms Rosander confirmed that Swedish representatives are aware of that, and they agree to take that role.*

*Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło continued to discuss the RoP, namely the roles of PACs and the decision-making process within the SG. She underlined the possibility of the written procedure lasting ten working days in situations when the decision is needed within a shorter time. SG Members had no comments regarding these parts of the RoP document. Ms Hanna-Mari Kuhmonen commented on the format of the meetings and suggested that there should always be a possibility of online participation, so the SG meetings format should always be online or*

at least in a hybrid form. She also asked if we should add the information about the working language and maybe add if there would be a need for the interpretation; its cost should be covered by the party who needs it.

Based on the comments, Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło proposed the text change the RoP in the section on meeting formats and suggested adding that online meeting participation should always be an option. Regarding the 2nd suggestion, she asked Mr Ailio from the Let's Communicate project if another PA has similar text in their RoPs. Mr Ailio does not recall this info in the RoP template; maybe one or two PACs included this in their document. Others also included that the SG members have to cover all the costs of their participation in the meetings. He also said that it depends on what level of details PA Tourism would like their RoP to be - to his understanding this was clear that the working language is English, and all SG Members cover all their costs of participation on their own. Everyone agreed, and no further changes were suggested regarding these two matters.

Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło continued with the RoP details regarding the reporting and summarised the three significant changes done in the text during the discussion. Mr Ailio asked if the DG REGIO representatives were in contact with new PACs since DG REGIO acts as a strategic adviser to the SG. Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło informed me that Ms Blagovestka Riiser has just joined the meeting, and it was possible to ask her if she finds it necessary to add this text to the RoP. Ms Riiser confirmed that she will cooperate with the SG as DG REGIO representative since they wish to be more active now in the works of Policy Areas. The text suggested by the Let's Communicate representative was added to the RoP document.

Ms Eva Thybo confirmed she agrees with the proposed RoP and will be happy to cooperate with the PA Tourism SG in the future.

**SG Members jointly agreed to approve the text of the PA Tourism RoP based on the document presented and discussed during the meetings. The final version would be sent to the SG Members after the meeting.**

## Discussion on the EUSBSR PA Tourism Action Plan; adoption of the Action Plan

Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło presented the EUSBSR PA Tourism Work Plan draft. She informed that it was prepared by both PACs based on the Interreg BSR Application project proposal submitted to the JS on 29th March 2022. Since the project is foreseen for three years, the Work Plan was also proposed for three years with the possibility to update, change and develop it during the upcoming SG meetings. She briefly explained the proposed Work Packages and activities related to the PA Tourism Action Plan adopted in 2021.

She mentioned the upcoming meetings related to the EUSBSR where the PACs are planning to join, i.e. the Annual EUSBSR Forum in Finland in September 2022, the "Coffee with the Presidency" meetings, and the PACs meeting with the Swedish Presidency in autumn 2022 in Stockholm. Later she referred to the activities foreseen for the project development activities related to the PA Tourism and explained what type of actions are planned.

Mr Juhani Ailio confirmed that the EUSBSR Forum organisers would try to include the PACs into the Programme as much as possible. Most likely, it will be an option to contribute to some tourism-related workshops during the EUSBSR event in Lappeenranta, Finland, on 28-29th Sep 2022.

*Ms Erika Rosander asked about the timeline of the WorkPlan periods and suggested changing the Q1-Q6 to P1-P6, meaning Period 1-6, not to confuse the Q with a quarter. The SG Members agreed with the change, and the text was changed.*

*Ms Ede Teinbas asked for more clarification regarding the Work Plan timeline, whether it was only the Work Plan for 2022 that the SG shall approve now or the WP for three years, 2022-25. Ms Leszczyna - Rzucidło explained that the idea is to approve the WP 2022-25 as it is now, and the activities and events planned for the 2nd and 3rd years of the WP will be added later since this will be a rolling Work Plan. Ms Hanna-Mari Kuhmonen agreed it is a good situation that the Plan could be updated when needed, so he suggested just adding this information at the beginning of the document that it is a rolling Work Plan with the possibility of later changing updated by the SG members.*

*Mr Juhani Ailio informed that the new EUSBSR Action Plan requires all PACs to approve their Work Plans, and they should be at least annual since the NCG requires the Annual Reports. He said it is good to have the 3-year long plan, update it when needed, and report it annually to the NCG.*

*Mr Karol Biedrzycki congratulated PACs on the ambitious work Plan, and he underlined this is very in line with the EUSBSR goals and objectives. Also, he is content with a clear vision of what the PA will work on in the next three years.*

**SG Members jointly approved the text of the EUSBSR PA Tourism Work Plan.**

## Information on the PA Tourism Communication Plan and communication activities

*Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło presented the PPT slides regarding the planned communication activities of PA Tourism. She informed that the communication would be based on social media, live-format events where PACs will approach the stakeholders directly and online events. She mentioned the PA Tourism website run by the former PACs from Germany to which new PACs do not have access, so the Plan is to use the EUSBSR PA Tourism website and send information there.*

*Mr Juhani Ailio confirmed it is possible to use the EUSBSR website, and two options are possible - PACs can send just some basic information, i.e. SG meeting minutes, or they could create their own PA website integrated to the EUSBSR website and update it with news on their own, as some other PACs are doing.*

*Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło thanked the Let's Communicate representative for this offer. She confirmed this option would be preferable for PA Tourism, and she thinks this is better than creating another website. PACs will contact the Let's Communicate later to create this website.*



*The communication activities will also be done via new social media accounts established by the new PACs - Twitter and LinkedIn. Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło invited the SG Members to follow the PA's new social media and inform other stakeholders about them. She reported that the news on BSR tourism activities and info regarding the EUSBSR were posted daily. Finally, she confirmed that PACs are already in contact with PA Culture, PA Education and PA Spatial Planning, and some pan-baltic organisations like VASAB, CPMR and CBSS to discuss the possible joint activities related to the EUSBSR PA Tourism.*

*Ms Lidija Bajarūnienė asked if PA Tourism is considering any promotional activities regarding the current situation in Europe and the BSR, meaning the conflict in Ukraine. Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło said it should be discussed among the SG members, and if they decide we should have any statement or activities, then PACs would follow. Ms Lidija Bajarūnienė informed about the activities done by the European Tourism Commission and declared that she might send some ideas to SG Members in a few days regarding this matter for a joint discussion.*

*Ms Marta Chetkowska agreed this is a good proposal, as all EUSBSR countries are concerned about the war. Still, she also reminded that as Policy Area, we might not have any means to act and possibly we should follow the European Commission's statements and recommendations on this matter.*

*Mr Juhani Ailio added that the support goes mainly by the Member States and European Commission, and it's hard to think what type of activities the could Policy Areas do to support. He confirmed it is positive to think about this but suggested following the ECS activities.*

*Mr Karol Biedrzycki reported that two weeks ago, WTO rejected Russia from the organisation; thus, this is an example of how to act in this matter.*

*Ms Blagovestka Riiser confirmed that all the cooperation with Russia is suspended regarding the Interreg Programmes 2014-2020 and not possible for the future Programme now. All the EU Member States must follow this recommendation, so indeed, there is no current cooperation with Russia in the EUSBSR. She also recommended that it would be good to address how to help Ukraine in future projects and activities, so this discussion should start now.*

*Ms Lidija Bajarūnienė also commented that this is a threat to the tourism industry, as the tourists do not consider our region safe anymore, and the industry feels the negative consequences of the conflict. She suggested thinking about how to approach this and assure the tourists that BSR is safe and open to the tourists. Ms chetkowsdka agreed that marketing activities would be needed, and we should continue this discussion, but these activities should be balanced.*

## Any other business

*There were no comments at this point.*

## End of the meeting

**PA Tourism Coordinators closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their participation.**