

EUSBSR PA Tourism Steering Group Meeting (Online)

14/05/2025 12.00 AM CET - 15.00 PM CET

MEETING MINUTES

PARTICIPANTS:

1. Estonia - Ms Ede Teinbas, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications
2. Finland - Ms Susanna Markkola, Visit Finland
3. Lithuania - Ms Jurgita Kačėnaitė, The Ministry of Economics and Innovation
4. Poland - Mr Karol Biedrzycki, Ministry of Sport and Tourism
5. Denmark - Ms Eva Thybo, Visit Denmark
6. Sweden - Ms Anna Haag, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation
7. European Commission, DG REGIO - Ms Blagovestka Riiser
8. PAC Tourism / PTB - Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło
9. PAC Tourism / Council of Oulu Region - Ms Anna-Maija Toivonen

Welcome

On behalf of the Polish Presidency to EUSBSR PA Tourism Steering Group and the Ministry of Sport and Tourism for Poland, Mr Karol Biedrzycki welcomed all the participants to the meeting.

Presentation and adoption of the meeting's agenda

Chair of the meeting, Mr Karol Biedrzycki, presented the meetings' agenda to all the Steering Group members and asked if there were any issues regarding the agenda and asked if they accept it. The SG Members adopted the meeting Agenda without any changes.

Quick recap

The Steering Group meeting for EUSBSR Policy Area Tourism covered updates on recent activities, tourism statistics from various countries, and plans for upcoming events. Participants discussed the



Action Plan draft, ongoing projects, and the importance of stakeholder involvement in identifying key topics for each country. The conversation ended with discussions about the upcoming Baltic Sea Tourism Forum in Gdansk and arrangements for the next steering group meeting.

Next steps

- All Steering Group Members: Register for the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum in Gdansk, Poland in October 2025.
- Estonia: Prepare for taking over presidency from Poland in July
- All Member Countries: Participate in DG MOVE's consultation on New EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism
- All Member Countries: Consider supporting Poland's candidacy for Vice Chair of the World Tourism Organization's Regional Commission for Europe
- All Steering Group Members: Review and respond to the proposed change in silence procedure timeline from 10 to 5 working days
- All Steering Group Members: Consider and respond to options for next steering group meeting timing and format
- Steering Group Members: Nominate 4-5 people per country to participate in the regenerative tourism masterclass
- Estonia: Share draft version of short-term rental study results with other member countries when available
- Sweden: Share additional information about Swedish tourism statistics and regulatory reforms with the Steering Group
- Denmark: Share carbon footprint measurement data and methodology with other member countries
- PA Tourism coordinators: Send detailed information about Baltic Sea Tourism Forum registration and agenda to all members
- PA Tourism coordinators: Send separate email regarding the regenerative tourism masterclass scope and participant suggestions
- PA Tourism coordinators: Issue official invitation to Polish Minister to open the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum
- PA Tourism coordinators: Wait for EUSBSR Annual Forum workshop approval confirmation before finalizing next steering group meeting arrangements
- Steering Group Members: Review and suggest potential speakers for the remaining slots in the database tourism session at the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum

Summary





Tourism Policy Area Progress Update

The meeting focused on the work of the policy area tourism since the last meeting in November. The team discussed their newsletter from December, which included news about projects that received funding and upcoming calls. They also mentioned their stakeholder meetings and the preparation of support letters for applicants in the Interreg South Baltic program. The team discussed the finalization of the Action Plan draft, which was appreciated by all members. They also mentioned their participation in the Interreg Aurora programs workshop and the launch of the food tourism network in the Baltic Sea region together with the BASCIL project. The team also discussed their work in preparing for the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum and the Interreg BSR conference in Tampere. They also mentioned their work on the CliNeDest project, the ReTour project, and the RegenT, regenerative tourism project platform. The team also discussed the update of the Action Plan and the timeline for its approval. They emphasized the importance of the steering group members' contribution to the update process and their role in identifying the most important topics for their countries.

News from each BSR country and DG Regio

All the SG Members from participating countries and the DG Regio representative shared their information on currently run tourism-related initiatives, presented the tourism statistics in their home country and informed them on planned events and activities that may be important for the EUSBSR tourism cooperation.

Baltic Sea Tourism Forum Discussion

Anna-Maija and Magda discussed the upcoming Baltic Sea Tourism Forum, which will be held in Gdansk, Poland. The event will focus on regenerative tourism and data-driven decision making, with keynote speakers including Anna Pollock and Andreas Koch. The forum will also include a masterclass on regenerative tourism for Steering Group members and other experts. Magda encouraged attendees to register and share the event with their networks. Karol suggested inviting a minister to open the forum and offered to find a panelist for the event.

Steering Group Meeting Scheduling Discussion

The group discussed the next Steering Group meeting, which should take place towards the end of 2025. They consider holding it in November or December, either online or in-person, and potentially back-to-back with other events such as the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum or the EUSBSR Annual Forum. Members shared various scheduling conflicts and preferences. The coordinators will send an email with options for the meeting date and format, taking into account the suggestions and constraints discussed.



Key takeaways

- Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2025 will be held in Gdansk, Poland on October 1-2
- Registration for BSTF has opened with focus on regenerative tourism and data-based tourism
- Several countries reported tourism recovery but face budget cuts due to defense spending
- New Action Plan for policy area tourism is drafted
- Estonia will take over the EUSBSR Presidency from Poland in July 2025

Discussed topics

Country Updates and Tourism Statistics

- Estonia:
 - New head of tourism: Kristina Jerjomina
 - 3.6M overnight visitors in 2024 (5% increase from 2023)
 - Preparing tourism strategy 2026-2029 as an action plan of the The Long-Term Outlook for Estonian Tourism 2025-2035
 - Conducting study on short-term rental strategy
- Finland:
 - Still behind 2019 tourism numbers
 - Budget cut by 50%, staff reduced by 40%
 - New Eastern Finland sustainable tourism growth program (3M euros for 3 years)
- Sweden:
 - 69M guest nights in 2024 (0.7% increase)
 - Total tourism consumption back to pre-pandemic levels
 - Top markets: Germany, Norway, Denmark, US, Netherlands
- Denmark:
 - Exceeded 2019 tourism levels since 2022
 - Increased funding despite ministry changes
 - Focus on spreading tourism throughout the year
 - Leading in climate footprint measurement for tourism

Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2024

- Details:
 - Dates: October 1-2, 2024
 - Location: European Solidarity Center, Gdansk
 - Main topics: Regenerative tourism and data-based tourism
 - Confirmed keynote speakers: Anna Pollock, Andras Koch



- Special masterclass planned for day 2 (limited to 25-30 participants)

Action Plan Update

- Draft submitted to National Coordinators
- Dialogue sessions conducted with coordinators
- Final approval expected by end of 2025
- Implementation planned for April 2026

Challenges

- Budget cuts affecting tourism organizations in multiple countries
- Defense spending priorities impacting tourism development
- Balancing tourism growth with sustainability goals
- Limited time for extensive meetings and workshops

Action items

All members:

- Register for Baltic Sea Tourism Forum
- Share BSTF registration information with networks
- Provide feedback on proposed meeting dates for next steering group meeting

PA Tourism coordinators:

- Send detailed information about BSTF masterclass
- Distribute updated Rules of Procedure for silence procedure
- Coordinate with speakers for BSTF
- Send follow-up email regarding next steering group meeting options
- Country Representatives:
- Nominate experts for BSTF masterclass participation
- Review and respond to silence procedure changes (5 working days timeline)