

EUSBSR PA Tourism Steering Group Meeting

Tuesday 02/06/2026 10.00 AM CET - 12.00 PM CET online

MEETING MINUTES

PARTICIPANTS:

1. *Estonia - Ms Ede Teinbas, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications*
2. *Denmark - Ms Eva Thybo, Visit Denmark*
3. *Latvia - Ms Inguna Žigure, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia*
4. *Latvia - Mr Sergejs Gomzjakovs, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia*
5. *Poland - Mr Karol Biedrzycki, Ministry of Sport and Tourism*
6. *PAC Tourism / PTB - Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło*
7. *PAC Tourism / Council of Oulu Region - Ms Anna-Maija Toivonen*

Welcome

On behalf of the Estonian Presidency to EUSBSR PA Tourism Steering Group and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications Estonia, Ms Ede Teibas welcomed all the participants to the meeting.

Presentation and adoption of the meeting's agenda

Chair of the meeting, Ms Ede Teibas, presented the meetings' agenda to all the participants and asked if there were any issues regarding the agenda and asked if they accept it. The SG Members adopted the meeting Agenda.

Summary of PA Tourism activities October 2025 - May 2026

The Policy Area Coordinators provided an overview of the Policy Area Tourism activities since October, highlighting key events such as the BSTF 25 in Gdansk, the EUSBSR Annual Forum, food tourism webinar, project launches, and stakeholder engagement.

BSTF25 Event Highlights: The BSTF25 event in Gdansk was a major success, featuring around 200 participants and speakers discussing regenerative and data-based tourism. The event facilitated networking and received positive feedback from attendees, marking it as the annual highlight for Policy Area Tourism.

EUSBSR Annual Forum Participation: Policy Area Tourism was active at the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Sopot, organising two sessions: one with CPMR Baltic Sea Commission on extending the coastal tourism season and improving resilience, and another with Policy Area Culture colleagues on cultural roots and sustainable tourism, both of which were fully booked and popular.

Food Tourism Initiatives: A food tourism webinar was organised with the Bascil project, launching the Baltic Sea region's food tourism developers network on LinkedIn, which now has over 100 members. This initiative supports sharing news and updates about culinary tourism in the region.

Project Workshops and Conferences: Policy Area Tourism organised workshops with ClineDest and RegenT projects at the UBC Annual Conference, focusing on practical climate actions in cities. The Bothnian Coastal Route project, aimed at developing tourism in the northern Baltic Sea, awaits further funding, with support from Policy Area Tourism.

Cycling Tourism Promotion: A cycling tourist trip from Copenhagen to Gdansk was organised by Pomorskie Tourist Board, involving tour operators and cycling bloggers from several countries. The trip promoted the Eurovelo 10 Baltic Sea cycling route and sustainable mobility, aligning with the upcoming EU sustainable tourism strategy.

PAC Tourism Project update 2027-2028

Project Extension Process: The Policy Area Tourism assistance projects are set to be extended until the end of 2028, with the submission of a steering group support letter and updated documents to Interreg BSR. The decision is expected in November 2026, following technical review and monitoring committee approval.

Steering Group Support and Voting: A formal letter of support was prepared and a silent procedure of voting was conducted via email, in accordance with EUSBSR Policy Area Tourism rules. The process received strong backing from steering group members, ensuring continued coordination by the current organisations.

EU Structural Funds Timeline: Ms Ede Teinbas noted that the structural funds period typically extends two years beyond the official end, suggesting the possibility of further project prolongation to 2029 if new calls are not ready. This aligns with the experience of previous EU funding cycles.

Policy Area Continuity: Both coordinating organisations confirmed their intention to continue, and with the new Action Plan approved, Policy Area Tourism remains one of the EUSBSR Policy Areas. Norway will join as a full member, further strengthening the network and collaboration.

Norway joined the EUSBSR

Norway's Inclusion in Baltic Sea Region Strategy: Policy Area Coordinators announced Norway's official inclusion as a full member of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, outlining efforts to integrate Norwegian stakeholders, potential Steering Group members, and plans to invite Norwegian representatives to upcoming meetings.

Norwegian Membership Confirmation: Norway became a full member of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in May, following formal discussions and requirements with the Norwegian government. This expands the network from eight to nine countries, offering new opportunities for collaboration.

Stakeholder Integration: Efforts are underway to bring Norwegian expertise into Policy Area Tourism, including inviting Norwegian partners to the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum.

Steering Group Representation: Two potential Norwegian steering group members were suggested: Marte Ludvigsen from the Norwegian Ministry responsible for tourism and Karsten Aust from Agder County / CPMR North Sea Commission representative for tourism. The Coordinators plan to invite them as guests to the autumn meeting if official appointments are not finalised.

Upcoming events & activities

Upcoming Events and Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2026 Planning: The Coordinators introduced the preparations for the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2026 in Elsinore, Denmark, including event structure, main themes, partner involvement, and associated meetings.

Forum Structure and Themes: The BSTF 2026 will be held in Elsinore, Denmark, on 2nd and 3rd November, focusing on changes in tourism behaviour, regenerative tourism, climate neutral destinations, cross-border rail tourism, cruise tourism, and future trends. Keynote speakers and case examples from the region will be featured.

Partner Collaboration: Partners include Wonderful Copenhagen, Cruise Baltic, Port of Helsingör, train tourism network, and Visit Denmark. The event will also launch the BSR Climate Neutral Destinations Network, expanding from current partners to the wider Baltic Sea region.

Associated Meetings and Logistics: A pre-forum regenerative tourism meeting is planned for 2nd November, with additional project meetings encouraged on 4th November. Venue arrangements at the Culture Yard include meeting rooms for stakeholders, and a special Copenhagen visit card will be offered to participants staying two nights or longer.

Cycling Tourism Event: A conference dedicated to cycling tourism will be organised, involving partners from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland, and Lithuania, with discussions on Eurovelo coordination and participation from the European Cyclists Federation and potentially DG Move.

Regenerative Tourism Webinar: A webinar on regenerative tourism is scheduled for 2 June, featuring speakers from Sweden, the Mediterranean, and the Interreg Aurora region, with over 230 registrations. The event aims to set the scene for regenerative tourism and showcase diverse projects and tools.

Regen T Project Collaboration: Policy Area Tourism supports the Regen T project, which is recognised as strategically important by Interact and the Commission. The project is developing a knowledge hub, AI tools, and training for national tourism organisations and ministries.

Steering Group Engagement: Plans are in place to invite Regen T representatives to the autumn steering group meeting, coinciding with the BSTF, to present project outcomes and facilitate knowledge exchange among regional stakeholders.

Training and Knowledge Hub Development: Pomorskie Tourist Board and ASPAC are leading the development of tailored training for regenerative tourism, involving partners from Sweden, Finland, Estonia, and Latvia, with the aim to launch the training by the end of next year or early 2027.

News & updates from each country

Estonia Tourism Strategy and Reforms: Estonia is implementing a new action plan with a focus on data measurement, resident satisfaction, and structural reforms. The tourism department has been integrated into broader economic agencies, with ongoing work on short-term rental regulation and sustainability certification support measures.

Denmark Presidency and Structural Changes: Denmark is preparing to take over the EUSBSR presidency, with recent government changes affecting tourism's placement within ministries. The country maintains 23 DMOs and several national agencies, focusing on data projects, sustainability partnerships, and gradual adoption of regenerative tourism practices.

Latvia Project Collaboration: Latvia is involved in Interreg Central Baltic funded New Nordic project and initial discussions are underway to host the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum in 2028, with ongoing collaboration between the project and Policy Area Tourism.

Poland Tourism Development and Projects: Poland reported increased non-resident arrivals and foreign tourists, completed sub-strategies for various tourism types, and launched registration for



short-term rentals. The ministry supports EU strategy implementation, participates in consultative groups, and aligns national priorities with Baltic Sea region programmes.

Upcoming EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy - open discussion

EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy Updates: The participants discussed the anticipated EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy, sharing limited information from recent events, concerns about regional representation, and expected delays in publication, with ongoing efforts to contribute Baltic Sea region perspectives.

Strategy Content and Focus Areas: The upcoming EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy is expected to address unbalanced tourism flows, connectivity, train and cycling tourism, multimodal transport, digitalisation, and SME support. Policy Area Tourism is well-positioned to align its activities with these themes.

Regional Representation Concerns: PA Tourism contributed to CPMR Baltic Sea Commission's message to DG Move and sent their updated action plan to DG Move representatives, aiming to emphasise the Baltic Sea region's importance in the strategy.

Publication Timeline and Stakeholder Engagement: Eva Thybo reported that the strategy's launch is delayed until at least October due to geopolitical and fuel-related issues, contrary to earlier expectations of a June release. Stakeholder meetings continue, and the team remains eager for updates.

Next Meeting & Any other business

The next meeting is scheduled for 4 November in-person, back to back with the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2026 in Elsinore, Denmark.