

Meeting of the Steering Group of the Policy Area TRANSPORT

(2nd in 2024)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

10.10. 2024

Following members were represented in the meeting: Sweden (SE) (Mr Lennart Andersson), Finland (FI) (Mr Mikael Nyberg), Latvia (LV) (Mr Ronalds Romanovskis), Germany (DE) (Ms Gudrun John-Ruff), the European Commission, DG Regio (EC) (Mr Johan Magnusson), Lithuania (LT) (Ms Ina Irens). The Polish (PL) representatives were missing due to their other obligations.

Estonia (Mr Tarmo Ots) and Lithuania (Ms Inga Ablingienė and her successor Dalius Kontrimavičius) were participating as Policy Area Coordinators (PAC).

Guests of the meeting: Ms Elena Kolosova and Mr Hunter Reinhardt from the Managing Authority of Interreg Baltic Sea Region, Ms Modesta Vanesa Viskontė and Mr Feliksas Remeika from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania.

1. Adoption of the Agenda- doc 1.1/2/24

No comments nor additional proposals.

2. Administrative Arrangements

2.1. Information on the forthcoming prolongation of PA Transport- doc 2.1/1/24

PAC provided an overview of activities concerning the prolongation of the mandate of the PA Transport for the period of 2025-2026. The process started in June and will end up in mid-November. EUSBSR Secretariat invited Estonian Ministry of Climate and Transport Innovation Association (Lithuania) to extend current projects for 2025-2026. Lithuania has already signed the Partner Declaration. Estonian Partner Declaration was on approval in the Ministry. On the 13-14 November MC decides on the approval of the project's extension.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information.

2.3 Changes in Policy Coordinators team - doc 2.3/2/24

PACs informed that the end of the year 2024 would bring some personal changes to the PACs team. Due to personnel changes in Transport Innovation Association, Dalius Kontrimavičius, Project

Manager at Transport Innovation Association will take over the role of PAC for Transport starting with the 23rd October 2024.

The Lead Policy Area Coordinator Tarmo Ots was nominated to the new official position in the Ministry of Climate and he resides since the beginning of September in Brussels, Belgium. The Ministry has decided to nominate a new person to the position. The decision is not done yet. Therefore, Tarmo Ots completes the role (but not in a full capacity anymore) until the nomination of the new person or until the end of 2024.

The members of the Steering Group approved the candidate of the Policy Area coordinator and asked PACs to inform Baltic Sea Strategy Point (BSP) about the change. They proposed Lithuania to send the new candidate for approval to the NCG.

2.4 New member of the Steering Group- doc 2.4/2/ 24

PACs informed members of the Steering Group that Mr **Ronalds Romanovskis**, LATVIA, Ministry of Transport, was nominated to the position of member of the Steering Group. The Policy Area Coordinator informed the Baltic Strategy Point about new nomination. The members of the Steering Group welcomed the new member.

3. Update on PA Transport activities

3.1. Forthcoming events- doc 3.1/2/24

One of the main tasks of PACs is to promote values of EUBSSR and introduce activities described in the Action plan. PACs will continue work in that field. The next event will be EUSBSR Annual Forum.

This year, the forum will be held over three days, starting on Tuesday 29 October and closing on Thursday 31 October in Visby, Sweden. During the Forum a Panel session on Transport has been proposed jointly by CRPM and PA Transport and accepted by organisers. The topic of the panel discussion will be Sustainable Transport Systems in the Baltic Sea Region.

Another event, Engagement Day will take place on the 29th October during the Annual Forum. Interests to engage with PA Transport in the event has been inquired. Lennart Andersson, Steering Group member from Sweden, will cover the transport issues on behalf of PA Transport in that meeting. Mr Magnusson told that he would moderate the event and can support Mr Andersson if there would be a need.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information.

3.2. Letter from the Baltic Sea Commission, CPMR - doc 3.2/2/24

The organisation Baltic Sea Commission has sent their proposals and recommendations concerning the most critical topics in the field of transportation in the Baltic Sea Region. The Baltic Sea Commission asked the PA Transport to take them into account during the planning process of the next Action Plan. PA Transport considered the information received from the Baltic Sea

Commission relevant and will analyse how these ideas might be incorporated into Action Plan having in mind limited mandate and resources available for PA regarding implementation.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information.

3.3. Action Plan: progress report on activities in in 2024- doc 3.3/2/24

PACs have prepared the overview of activities carried on the first part of 2024. Steering Group members took note of the information, no discussion in that field.

3.4. – PA New PA Transport Action Plan- doc 3.4/2/24.

PACs informed Steering Group that they would propose to modify Actions of the priority are.

Action 1 would be renamed to “Implement activities to build a resilient and sustainable transport corridors on the North-South transport axis”.

The political shift from the former title of Action 1 “Improve connectivity of the regions and cooperation with third countries” which also used to include Russia and the Silk route to the new title above and the new geographical shift was confirmed by SG members. Everyone agreed upon this necessary political alignment, although everybody had other understandings of what could be meant with the North-South axis. SG proposed to add “East-West corridor in the Northern Scandinavia connecting FI, SE, NO” to make it more precise. DE asked to clarify definitions *axis vers corridor*.

The title of the Action 2 “Development of measures towards climate-neutral and zero pollution transport” will be the same, however activities under it will be reworded. DE asked to exchange “alternative fuels” into “renewable fuels”, which was agreed upon.

The title of the Action 3 “Facilitate innovative technologies & solutions in the Baltic Sea region” will be the same, however activities under it will be slightly changed. DE gave into consideration, that emissions are not counted, but calculated. SG changed wording of activity into: “Increase awareness and usage of digital tools, which measure/calculate CO2 emissions from transport, that contribute to decrease of CO2 emissions in the region.”

PACs promised to take a look at the document submitted by the Baltic Sea Commission and take their proposals into consideration and to include them to list of activities under every Actions.

The biggest challenge is to define indicators (inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts). The Baltic Sea Strategy Point has worked out the template of indicators which must be defined to measure the work of coordinators.

The members of the Steering Group asked PACs to find out how other Policy areas have solved the issue with inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts.

Concerning wording of Actions PAC promised that proposals made by members of the SG will be taken into consideration and actions will be modified on the basis of that.

4. Various topics on EU, MRS and EUSBSR level

4.1 Interreg post 2027

The agenda point was covered by Hunter Reinhardt and discussion moderated by Elena Kolosova from the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat of Interreg Baltic Sea Region-

Mr Reinhart presented the current situation of projects financed by the Interreg BSR. The discussion round table was led by Ms Kolosova and the main topic was to hear what would be the priority topics in the field of transport and transnational cooperation after 2027. On the basis of information collected from different Policy Areas Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat will prepare report till the end of 2024.

In this context DE raised the topic of the new plans of the commission to change the structure of the new multiannual financial framework and how it may affect the work of Interreg. COM representative gave his opinion on the plans and stated that upcoming discussions with the Member States have to be awaited.

5. Transport related projects

5.1. Project Best ACE completed its activities - doc 5.1/2/24

The project has completed its planned activities and the final seminar took place on 20th September in virtual format. The final report will be completed during October and after that it will be available for all interested parties and public.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information.

6. AOB

Under the agenda point additional questions raised from Poland were discussed. Poland proposed to consider possibilities to exchange the current framework of functioning of PAC work and to set up a time frame for the coordinators term, for example 2 years. This kind of practice is widely and successfully used in UNECE led projects. This way each country will be able to engage actively in the works of our group and we will all benefit from diversity and pool of different experiences.

Steering Group discussed the topic and found unnecessary to change the current system. However, Poland's comment to improve the engagement of all member countries was very welcomed. In fact, this was the reason why the Presidency system was established in the EUSBSR - to give every Member State the possibility to bring out its priorities and guide coordinators to work with these.

Steering Group discussed the importance of meeting in person (instead of meeting only virtually as the last years) and of meeting in the future maybe a full day to discuss the items of future action plan more intensively and meet as a side event to the Annual Forum of the EUSBSR.