

Meeting minutes

December 5th, 2022

Opening

The 21st meeting of the Steering Group (SG) of the EUSBSR Policy Area Nutri (PA Nutri) was called to order online in Teams 5th of December, at 12:00 EET by the policy area coordinators (PACs).

Present:

1. Damian Bojanowski, representing PAC Nutri Poland, State Water Holding Polish Waters
2. Josefin Hjort, chair, NFP Sweden, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management
3. Anja Karppinen, Baltic Sea Strategy Point, Communication Officer
4. Elsi Kauppinen, PAC Nutri Finland, ELY Centre
5. Liis Kikas, 2nd NFP Estonia, Ministry of the Environment
6. Wera Leujak, NFP Germany, Federal Environment Agency, Protection of the Marine Environment
7. Johan Magnusson, Strategic advisor, European Commission, DG REGIO
8. Pekka Paavilainen, 2nd PAC Nutri Finland, ELY Centre
9. Ann Riisenberg, NFP Estonia, Ministry of the Environment
10. Lotta Ruokanen, observer, HELCOM
11. Tom Schumacher, Baltic Sea Strategy Point, Development Officer
12. Baiba Zasa, NFP Latvia, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development

Apologies:

1. Heike Imhoff, 2 NFP of Germany, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety
2. Lasse Tor Nielsen, NFP Denmark, Ministry of the Environment
3. Egidija Dudaite, NFP Lithuania, Ministry of the Environment
4. Laura Saijonmaa, NFP Finland, Ministry of the Environment,
5. Andrzej Kachorek, PAC Nutri Poland, State Water Holding Polish Waters

Introduction

Meeting was opened by the Chair Josefin Hjort. Elsi Kauppinen gave a short introduction to meeting agenda. An addition to agenda was suggested, a statement from Johan Magnusson from DG REGIO. It was also suggested to change the order of topics, because some members who could not stay until the end and were needed for discussion about the topic. Agenda was accepted with the addition and the change in order.

EUSBSR presentation

Baltic Strategy Point and EUSBSR were introduced by Anja Karppinen and Tom Schumacher (slides). What EUSBSR is doing: Save the sea, Connect the region, Increase prosperity. Strategy is increasing cooperation between organisations. Its governance is explained by the “Three No’s”-principle: No new funding, no new structures, and no new legislation. PA Nutri and its steering group is the implementing body for the related actions in the EUSBSR Action Plan. Funding for EUSBSR’s work is received by several Interreg instruments, cohesion funds and thematic funds.

A comment to EUSBSR’s and PA Nutri’s work was presented: How nutrients which come from the catchment area outside of BSR are tackled, and what is the role of PA Nutri in strategy and HELCOM. It was answered that one example of tackling the nutrients coming from upstream countries is the cooperation with Ukraine. Cooperation with HELCOM is being done in a way that hopefully does not create extra work for the steering group members, but rather helps them with fulfilling their country’s obligations. Cooperation with Ukraine and HELCOM were further discussed later in the meeting.

Updates from DG REGIO

Johan: Commission is publishing a biannual report on how the EUSBSR is implemented. At 9.12. it will be submitted to all the structures within the EU (<https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/newsroom/news/591413-report-from-the-eu-commission-on-the-implementation-of-eu-macro-regional-strategies>). Next year the report will be discussed, and decisions will be made. DG REGIO is organising EU macroregional week during the last week of April for all Policy areas, including steering group members and PACs.

Presidency rotation

It was discussed how we should act when a country can’t handle presidency according to the rotation schedule of National Coordinators presidency. Latvia can’t take presidency because of HELCOM chairmanship coinciding at the same time. Possibly could handle the workload in year 2024.

It was discussed that it would be important to have a common decision on how these situations should be solved. We should find a way how each country will take its turn as a chairman, so that we can avoid the situation where one country is stuck with the presidency for several years. No other country would be willing to take over in such a situation. There should be a clear advantage in taking over the responsibility as a chair, so that no country would be willing to skip the chance.

In some other policy areas, a temporary solution has been to extend previous presidency by six months and the next country in rotation starts six months early. It was pointed out, that one year rotation is quite short and could be extended, so that there is a chance to get more familiar with the work. The workload for the chair is not very big as PACs are doing most of the work. Elsi pointed out, that PACs especially would like to have the same country both as EUSBSR president and PA Nutri

president, because it allows for better exchange of information about the goals the EUSBSR president country has and what they are working on. However, other solutions would work too.

It was decided that PACs will look for examples from other policy areas and how these types of situations have been solved. The issue will be discussed through email-correspondence and possible decisions about the matter will be done in the next SG meeting.

Silent procedure about the double role of PACs

The rules of procedure for EUSBSR were clarified in a silent procedure. The clarification was, that PAC organisation cannot be also a SG member except for a brief transitional period when a new SG member is sought. In PA Nutri there is such situation, but it is now being looked at and hopefully solved in the near future.

What is PA Nutri?

There are several new and inactive SG members, for whom the way PA Nutri has been working is unclear. In the slides (attachment 1) it was clarified how things have been done in the past, so that we can start discussing what could be further improved.

Flagship-changes and PA Nutri talks

Situation of work in PA Nutri was shortly discussed. Elsi has been discussing with several SG members one-on-one.

Flagships in other policy areas are in some cases processes which support the implementation of Actions. It was suggested that Nutri could move towards the same direction, and during year 2023 we could experiment with different concepts. The first idea is to improve openness of work by adding informal discussions, where the topic and people who get invited can vary each time. The discussion group will be for now called PA Nutri talks, just for improving its visibility as a separate meeting from SG meetings and to improve reportability. For now, we would not call it a Flagship, but rather use it as a test bed about possibility to become a Flagship with a refined concept.

Chair asked SG members and observers for comments about the PA Nutri talks and if there were any objections about trying this concept. There were no objections or comments. It was decided to proceed with experimentation about the PA Nutri talks, with the aim of having the first one with the newly approved Interreg BSR core projects working on nutrient removal or recycling. PACs will prepare a more precise plan about the PA Nutri talks for next SG meeting, for example about possible issues to discuss at the meetings.

Work plan for year 2023

Draft of work plan was sent to SG members and observers through email and the main points were shown on slides at the meeting. It was suggested that we would increase the number of SG meetings per year from about two to three and additionally have informal meetings, if needed. It was suggested that PA Nutri talks would occur two or three times per year. It was commented that it would be better to concentrate to two talks per year for now.

The work plan does not have any suggested activities involving the youth. However, Latvia is organising the next EUSBSR Annual Forum, and the preliminary idea is to include the youth-issue in some way.

Chair asked the participants if there are any comments or objections. There was a question raised if it would be possible to comment the work plan later. It was clarified that the schedule in work plan is preliminary, and it is possible to modify it during the upcoming year, if needed. SG members and observers can be also active in asking for adjustments. There were no further comments. The chair asked if anyone objects the endorsement of the work plan, and there were no objections. Work plan for year 2023 was endorsed by the steering group, with possibilities to update it if needed.

Cooperation with Ukraine

Conference about cooperation between Ukraine and the Baltic Sea region organised 8.12. PA Nutri suggested for one of the workshop topics wastewater treatment in the city of Lviv. It was successful and workshop is organised together with PA Bioeconomy. Swedish Institute will tell about their new fund (<https://si.se/en/apply/funding-grants/si-baltic-sea-neighbourhood/>).

Reporting

Finland has received funding from Interreg BSR for work done by PACs. For its annual reporting, a document about how the PAC-work has been going will be circulated through email among SG members. The chair will have to accept it.

AOB and Other issues – CiNURGI-project

It was discussed if Nutri could arrange a workshop for a new project that is being planned through HELCOM. The workshop would include new projects funded through Interreg BSR about the same issues. The idea was accepted.

No other issues arose for discussion, so the meeting was closed at 14.10 o'clock.