

Meeting minutes

April 4th, 2023

Opening

The 22nd meeting of the Steering Group (SG) of the EUSBSR Policy Area Nutri (PA Nutri) was called to order online in Teams 4th of April, at 10:00 EET by the policy area coordinators (PACs).

Present:

1. Josefin Hjort, chair, NFP Sweden, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management
2. Hladii Viktoriia, Baltic Sea Strategy Point, Administrative Officer
3. Elsi Kauppinen, PAC Nutri Finland, ELY Centre
4. Liis Kikas, 2nd NFP Estonia, Ministry of the Environment
5. Johan Magnusson, observer, Strategic advisor, European Commission, DG REGIO
6. Pekka Paavilainen, 2nd PAC Nutri Finland, ELY Centre
7. Ann Riisenberg, NFP Estonia, Ministry of the Environment
8. Lotta Ruokanen, observer, HELCOM
9. Tom Schumacher, Baltic Sea Strategy Point, Development Officer
10. Baiba Zasa, NFP Latvia, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
11. Laura Saijonmaa, NFP Finland, Ministry of the Environment
12. Przemyslaw Gruszecki, 2nd PAC Nutri Poland National Water Management Authority (PGW Wody Polskie)
13. Andrzej Kaczorek, PAC Nutri Poland National Water Management Authority (PGW Wody Polskie)
14. Egidija Dūdaitė, NFP Lithuania, Ministry of Environment
15. Halyna Sukhonos, invited guest, The Basin Department of Water Resources of the Zakhidnyi Buh and Sian Rivers, Ukraine, present for 20 minutes for the part concerning cooperation with Ukraine

Apologies:

1. Heike Imhoff, 2 NFP of Germany, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety
2. Wera Leujak, NFP of Germany, Federal Environment Agency, Protection of the Seas and Polar Regions
3. Lasse Tor Nielsen, NFP Denmark, Ministry of the Environment

Introduction

Meeting was opened by the Chair Josefin Hjort. Elsi Kauppinen gave a short introduction to meeting agenda. A change in the order of items on the agenda was suggested and accepted. Cooperation with Ukraine (item 10 on agenda) was moved to the beginning of the meeting. Also updates from DG REGIO and BSP were discussed at the end.

Ukraine cooperation

Elsi shortly described how PA Nutri has cooperated with Ukraine after the last SG meeting. On the 8th of December 2022 the Swedish Presidency of EUSBSR organised a conference about cooperation between the Baltic Sea Region and Ukraine. PA Nutri together with PA Bioeconomy organised one of the side events, the topic was about wastewater and bioeconomy. After the workshop a group of Ukrainians from different organisations suggested a project idea, and asked for help about finding partners in the Baltic Sea Region and in drafting a proposal. PA Nutri assisted in those tasks and the project proposal was successfully submitted to the Swedish Institute Baltic Sea Neighbourhood - programme in March.

Halyna Sukhonos from The Basin Department of Water Resources of the Zakhidnyi Buh and Sian Rivers, Ukraine joined the meeting to present shortly the situation in the Ukrainian part of the Vistula River Basin, why the project is needed and what it included. Bug river is in risk of not achieving good ecological status. Wastewater treatment plant in Lviv is HELCOM Hot Spot due to nutrients, heavy metals and other harmful elements. Cooperation with Poland and Sweden to building capacity in Ukraina's 25 Hromadas through workshops and study visits will aim at planning and funding for modernisation of wastewater plants. The project proposal is a seed money project, which would aim at drafting project proposals to various EU funds.

Przemyslaw Gruszecki commented that PGW Wody Polskie has applied for a national fund for supporting Ukraine about issues related to the Water Framework Directive implementation (monitoring know-how, equipment, etc). Laura Saijonmaa commented that Finnish Ministry of Environment has started cooperation with Ukraine around environmental monitoring, circular economy and waste management. Finland has also donated an old wastewater treatment plant, that was decommissioned.

Halyna Sukhonos left the meeting after the comments.

Situation with Polish SG member

Ministry has not yet decided who should be a SG member, but there have been discussions that the member should be from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Changes to Rules of Procedure

Options for the rule regarding the presidency rotation were discussed through emails before the meeting. Three options were presented and further discussed at the meeting. BSP said, that the decision should be in consensus, not majority decision. Option 1 (below) was chosen in consensus.

“The SG presidency should rotate among the SG Members, normally on an annual basis and following the Presidency of the National Coordinators Group. The SG chair will be decided by the SG in a way that the same Member State does not, as a rule, hold the presidency for several years consecutively. In exceptional cases a chair can continue for two consecutive years. The objective is that the presidency will be held by all PA Nutri SG members in turn.”

PA Nutri’s Rules of Procedure are approved and modified with the above change.

Discussion about next President for PA Nutri

Latvia has overlapping duties, and they are not able to take over the presidency for PA Nutri on their turn. It was discussed what kind of other solutions there could be. It is recommended to start following the presidency rotation of the National Coordinators Group as soon as possible. The preferable solution in that case would be the option where Poland and Sweden split the duty for 2023/2024 in half – Sweden prolongs the presidency until the end of year 2023 and Poland starts the presidency half a year earlier. SG members agreed with the option. Poland has already discussed this possibility and there is preliminary agreement. Latvia and Sweden will have to discuss it still internally. The final decision for the next presidency will be made after the national discussions through email correspondence. Elsi will send Latvian member a summary of discussions.

PA Nutri Annual Report 2022

Finnish PACs have funding from Interreg BSR and deadline for the annual report is 14th of April. An annual report for EUSBSR will be made after that and it will be circulated among the SG members for endorsement.

How Nutri has cooperated with new project proposals

Nutri has offered a support letter for two projects and joined one as an associated partner. Will try to meet with new projects once they start their work but focus on the projects which got a support letter or where Nutri is an associated partner.

It was discussed if it would be useful for SG members to hear about projects, and in what kind of format. It is important for SG members to share project results through their stakeholder groups. PACs will make a short update before every meeting to share info.

PA Nutri Talks topic selection

PA Nutri Talks will cover each of the Actions in the Action Plan within a roughly two-year period. First session in May will cover the Action 2. The suggested preliminary topic was “Seminar for local

authorities on wastewater treatment standards and legal frames in the EU". The target audiences are the Ukrainian and Baltic Sea Region local authorities. The suggestion for the first session's topic was agreed by the SG members.

First ideas for the autumn sessions were also discussed. It was suggested that the seminar could cover all of the suggested topics about Action 1 (agriculture and diffuse sources), as they are related. PACs will discuss the topic more closely with HELCOM. It was suggested that HELCOM policy briefs regarding the issue could also be covered in the seminar.

PACs will collect experiences from the sessions and write a short paper, that can be discussed at a SG meeting at the end of the year.

EU MRS Week and Stakeholder session

PA Nutri participated to organisation of a Stakeholder Session together with EUSDR and EUSALP.

EU Missions – Restore our Ocean and Waters – Mission Charter

EU Mission Charter was discussed. Only legal entities can join, so PA Nutri or EUSBSR cannot join on their own. There is a possibility for PA Nutri to join as part of ELY-Centre. NCG will discuss the issue in their meeting in mid-April. It was decided to wait with joining, follow advice from the NCG. There is no hurry, as there is no deadline.

CiNURGi Flagship application -situation / Flagship concept

If CiNURGi receives funding, it will probably apply for a Flagship status in PA Nutri. Might cause confusion as the Flagship has changed from what it has been earlier. We can wait for a while for maybe common opinion and agreement on the issue. BSP will organise discussions among PACs about the Flagship-concept and will try to come to an agreement.

Updates from DG REGIO and BSP

DG Regio Johan Magnusson: at the Macroregional week there were 12 candidates for stakeholder sessions, and 9 available places (3 lost). SG members are invited to join in person or online. Report on regional strategies was published in December. PA Nutri Talks a good idea. Good to invite Ukrainians to the session, the more practical the better. Annual forum will be held in Latvia in autumn.

BSP Viktoriia Hladii: New concept Talks with PACs. Website is being worked over to make easier to find material. For communications there will be a guiding document. For monitoring and evaluation, the aim is to make reporting efficient and help the burden of the PA's

AOB and Other issues

PA Nutri will organise a workshop for Policy Areas (Bioeconomy, Hazards, Ship) that have nutrients on their agenda in some form. The workshop will discuss cooperation.



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Upcoming events where PACs are participating: MRS Week, HELCOM Source to Sea-group, the final event of Sweden's EUSBSR Presidency.

It was discussed that the SG prefers to have three meetings during year 2023. Elsi will send a questionnaire about timing of next one. The goal would be to have it during September or October.

No other issues arose for discussion, so the meeting was closed at 12.05 o'clock.