

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region National Coordinators Group

3rd Meeting under the Latvian Presidency, 2023-2024

Date: 13/03/2024
Time: 11:00-12:40 EET
Location: Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

1. Opening of the meeting and approval of the agenda

The meeting was opened by the Presidency at 11:01.
The agenda was approved without amendments.

2. View from DG Regio. EU Council Conclusions and other current affairs

DG REGIO representative presented the process and timeline of the preparation of the upcoming report on implementation of the four macro-regional strategies in the EU, including the EUSBSR. The questionnaires designed to provide input to the report are to be sent out to the Policy Area Coordinators, the National Coordinators and the BSP on 13th or 14th of March. Following the publishing of the report, the Council Conclusions shall be adopted. DG REGIO representative also informed the NCG on the upcoming Macro-regional and Sea-basin strategies' days taking place in Brussels in June. It was noted that the Presidency of the NCG was invited to participate in one of the plenary sessions of the event. Finally, DG REGIO representative underlined the possibility as well as the importance of the macro-regional strategies' stakeholders to actively participate in the post-2027 cohesion policy consultation process.

3. Action Plan Update

The BSP presented the timeline and activities related to the Action Plan update for January to December 2024. The NCG reiterated that the current Action Plan update process will be focused first and foremost on the Strategy's Policy Areas, Actions and indicators. The governance part of the Strategy will be reviewed in terms of outdated references and terms.

The NCG tasked the BSP to start the preparation of the first draft of the PA template for the discussion and consideration of the NCG in May.

The NCG noted that the Interreg BSR Secretariat is to launch the extension process of the Policy Areas financial support for the years 2025 and 2026 and did not have any additional feedback or objections to this timeline. The NCG, therefore, agreed on all 14 PAC projects to be extended for the years 2025 and 2026, noting that if the Policy Area is to be discontinued during that period, the financial support is to be terminated as well.

4. PAC needs assessment

The BSP presented the PAC needs assessment, comprising PACs' expectations towards the BSP, which were compiled from discussions at the EUSBSR Monthly meetings and the PAC-NC meeting in Hamburg in February 2024. Among the issues raised by the PACs were the engagement of the Steering Group members, the exchange between the PACs, communication support, the Action Plan update process. Furthermore, the assessment showed that PACs' demand regarding funding opportunities and support has decreased. NCG noted the information and recognised the usefulness of the report in terms of obtaining the overview of the situation and needs of the Policy Area Coordinators. The NCG agreed that the BSP continues providing support to PACs according to the needs assessed and by taking into consideration the available resources.

5. Updates from the BSP

The BSP updated the NCG on the progress of its activities. Updates included the ongoing work on the BSP semi-annual reports to the NCG and Interreg, cooperation regarding the funding calls and opportunities with EuroAccess, as well as the BSP participation in the meeting of the pan-Baltic organisations on March 6th and the BSSSC board meeting on March 7th. The NCG took note of the updates and the progress.

6. Updates from the Policy Areas

The BSP presented the latest news and updates regarding the EUSBSR. The topics included news from the Policy Areas, PAC list update, PA Annual Reporting, as well as the timeline for decision-making in the Policy Areas.

The NCG noted the information on the difficulties in some Policy Areas in relation to the decision-making timeline (currently 10 business days, without flexibility allowed). The NCG decided that the minimum requirements for timeline for decision-making set in the Common Structure for the SG Rules of Procedure are to be adjusted to allow faster and more flexible decision-making.

Once the new Common Structure is approved by the NCG, the PA SGs may update their SG Rules of Procedure accordingly and send them to the NCG for endorsement as soon as possible. However, the NCG decided, the SGs may implement the abovementioned changes as written in the Common Structure already prior to the NCG endorsement of the updated SG Rules of Procedure.

7. Youth engagement

The BSP presented the youth representation topic in the context of the upcoming MRS and Sea-Basin Strategies' Days in Brussels in June. The CBSS Youth Forum Coordinator has approached informally the BSP with a proposal to organise youth representation at the meeting in Brussels.

The NCG took note of the information and highlighted that the question of the youth coordination and / or representation is the issue to be discussed and agreed upon by the relevant decision-making level, i.e. CSO in case of the CBSS and the NCG in case of the EUSBSR. In order not to duplicate any effort or format already existing in the region, the NCG in principle does not object cooperation in this matter, as long as it is addressed on the proper level. The NCG agreed that Finland, as the current Chair of the CBSS CSO, will address this question and return with more information at the next NCG meeting. One Member State expressed caution towards the cooperation with the CBSS in the matters of youth representation due to its negative experience with CBSS Youth Coordinator earlier.

8. AOB and date for next meeting

AOB:

- The Presidency informed on attending the Interreg Knowledge Fair, organised by Interact in Riga, and representing the Strategy.
- The Presidency informed that the Latvian Presidency closing event will take place live in Riga on 30 May 2024.
- Lithuania informed about hiking expedition around the Baltic Sea, which took place on 11 of March in Lithuania. It includes 8 countries and 6000km around the region and will involve different layers of stakeholders. More information is available from <https://savebaltic.eu/>, <https://www.facebook.com/SaveTheBalticSea>.

The next NCG meeting will take place on 11 April 2024 where the BSP will present the semi-annual activity report and, subsequently, on 16 April 2024 in the NCs only format to prepare the Feedback Form on the BSP's performance.

PARTICIPANTS

Denmark	Anders Henriksson (NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Estonia	Tõnis Nirk (NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Finland	Helena Tuuri (NC) Kaisa Arkkila (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Germany	Winfried Maier (Deputy NC)	Federal Foreign Office
Latvia	Andra Kuzmina (NC, Chair)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Lithuania	Robertas Bružilas (NC) Modesta Vanesa Viskontė (Deputy NC) Feliksas Remeika (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Poland	Andrzej Cieszkowski (NC) Monika Langiewicz (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sweden	Anna Hagström (NC) Linnea Lindström	Prime Minister's Office Prime Minister's Office
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