

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region National Coordinators Group

1st Meeting under the Polish Presidency, 2024-2025

Date: 10/09/2024

Time: 09:00–10:30 CET

Location: Hotel Warszawa Mercure Grand, ul. Krucza 28, room Olimp 1, 10th floor

MINUTES

1. Opening of the meeting and approval of the agenda

The Presidency opened the meeting at 09:05.
The meeting agenda was approved without amendments.

2. Action Plan Update

The BSP presented the current status of the Action Update process, in particular, the work on the PA template. The NCG took note of the information and thanked the BSP for the work done on the preparation of the template. One Member State suggested to include the stakeholder involvement more prominently to the template. Another Member State suggested that the BSP, which closely monitors and participates in the Policy Area meetings, update the NCG in case of any challenges or issues within the Policy Areas.

As the next step, the BSP is to do the final adjustments based on the NCG feedback and distribute the template to the PACs as soon as possible. The deadline for the PACs to submit the first round of the PA templates is December 31st, 2024.

Furthermore, the NCG discussed potential ways to include Ukraine and the work on supporting Ukraine better into the Strategy, especially in the light of the ongoing Action Plan update. There are two levels of including Ukraine into the Strategy: political and operational. Different levels of involvement would require different set of measures, such as updating the text of the Action Plan itself, updating the European Commission Communication on the EUSBSR, or even a Council Conclusion in case of including the state as a member. This could also have consequences for the Interreg BSR Programme, which is closely linked to the EUSBSR.

One Member State highlighted that the issue of Ukraine's participation in the Strategy has come up in the previous years, therefore, the NCG requested the BSP to prepare an input paper regarding the ways of involving Ukraine and the steps required for it, as the way to make the informed decision and proceed with the process.

3. BSP extension process

Interreg BSR Secretariat representative presented the current state of play of the programme support to the EUSBSR governance. The Strategy Point was awarded financial support by Interreg BSR on the competitive basis for three years, i.e. until October 2025. Interreg BSR Monitoring Committee relies on the NCG feedback for the next steps of the Strategy Point co-financing. Interreg BSR representative presented two options: 1) to extend the current project for 3 more years (October 2025 - December 2028) or 2) run a new call for a new project.

The feedback from the NCG to the Secretariat needs to be provided at least 3 weeks prior to the Interreg BSR Monitoring Committee meeting, taking place in Copenhagen on November 13-14th, for a decision.

The current BSP partner organisations - Centrum Balticum Foundation and the Senate Chancellery of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg - have expressed the interest and readiness to continue as the Baltic Sea Strategy Point implementing consortium.

The NCG agreed to make the decision on the BSP during the next NCG meeting online.

4. Proposal for a joint high-level communication

Sweden presented the initiative and clarified the intention was to produce a meeting declaration in connection with the Annual Forum in Visby. The aim of the declaration is to highlight the visibility and the achievements of the Strategy. From the Swedish side, the declaration is to be signed on the ministerial level, and Sweden extends invitation to the Member States of the EUSBSR to be a part of the meeting declaration. The draft text of the declaration has been circulated to the NCG prior to the meeting.

The NCG discussed the topic and concluded that the initiative can be helpful for the Strategy visibility and for increasing the political importance, however, the text as well as the purpose of the document needs to be clarified and acceptable for the Member States.

The Presidency invited Sweden to send more information via email to the NCG on the next steps regarding the process.

5. AOB and date for next meeting

AOB:

- The BSP has informed about the upcoming silence procedures regarding the PAC list update, new observers to the PA Ship and PA Safe.
- The BSP informed about the round table organised by BSSSC on stakeholder involvement in the update of the EUSBSR Action Plan on October 29th back-to-back with the Annual Forum in Visby. The Presidency was invited to open, the BSP to moderate and the NCs to join the event.
- The Presidency informed that the next Annual Forum will take place in autumn of 2025 in Poland. The preparations of the Letter of Support are ongoing and the silence procedure to approve the letter is to take place within the next weeks.

- DG REGIO representative informed that the bi-annual report on the implementation of the macro-regional strategies is likely to be delayed in connection with the new European Commission Cabinet taking over from December 2024. The considerations for the next year's MRS days in Brussels are ongoing and shall be coordinated together with the Presidency.

The next NCG meeting is proposed to take place online on October 10th, starting at 10:00 CET for 2-3 hours.

The Presidency concluded the meeting at 10:31.

PARTICIPANTS

Denmark	Peter Wilhelm Linde (NC) Elizabeth Moesgaard Bentsen	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Estonia	Tõnis Nirk (NC) Andreas Sepp (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Finland	Helena Tuuri (NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Germany	Sven Freitag (NC)	Federal Foreign Office
Latvia	Andra Kuzmina (NC) Santa Karina Norvele (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Lithuania	Robertas Bružilas (NC) Modesta Vanesa Viskontė (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Poland	Katarzyna Barcikowska (NC, Chair) Monika Langiewicz (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sweden	Anna Hagström (NC)	Prime Minister's Office
	Juhani Ailio Viktorii Hladii Anja Karppinen Tom Schumacher Pierre-Amaury Duclau Kirsi Ahlman Stefanie Wodrig	Baltic Sea Strategy Point Baltic Sea Strategy Point
	Petri Koistinen Blagovestka Riiser	European Commission, DG Regio European Commission, DG Regio
	Elena Kolosova Eeva Rantama	Interreg Baltic Sea Region Secretariat Interreg Baltic Sea Region Secretariat