

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region National Coordinators Group

4th Meeting under the Polish Presidency, 2024-2025

Date: 12/3/2025
Time: 10:00-14:00 CET
Location: online

MINUTES

1. Opening of the meeting and approval of the agenda

The meeting was opened at 10:05 by the Presidency. The agenda was approved without amendments.

2. Activities of the Council of the Baltic Sea States on supporting and engaging Youth in regional cooperation

The CBSS representative presented the CBSS activities towards youth, namely the activities of the Baltic Sea Region Youth Forum (BSRYF). The mandate of the structure comes from the CBSS Member States, laid out in the CBSS Ministerial Declaration “Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2030”, and its activities built also on the wider EU Youth Strategy. The predecessor of the BSRYF was an Erasmus+ project platform Baltic Sea Youth Forum Platform (2020-2022), led by the CBSS and BSSSC. The BSRYF target audience are young people in the age of 16-29. The BSRYF is coordinated by the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat. The Forum has 6 recurring events, including the BSRYF election meeting, CBSS Youth Ministerial in connection to the CBSS Ministerial Conference, Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue, Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum, EUSBSR Baltic Sea youth camp (in the margins of the EUSBSR Annual Forum until 2022).

The BSRYF ensures meaningful participation of youth via developed mechanism which includes elected Council of Youth Council, three Working Groups (connected to the CBSS units), Steering Group, BSRYF Committee of Youth Representatives, BSRYF Stakeholder meetings. The aim of the structure is to foster synergies and utilise resources available in the region as efficiently as possible. The challenges that BSRYF currently deals with are connected to the budgetary issues (attending the live meetings, licenses, activities and events organisation), recognition (BSRYF, as many youth representatives, are volunteers), knowledge transfer (complex Baltic Sea Region governance landscape, understanding meaningful youth participation), common positions (youth is a heterogenous group making it challenging to advocate for). Finally, the CBSS representative briefed the NCG with the upcoming events and plans of the BSRYF until the end of the year 2025.

The NCG took note of the presentation and thanked the CBSS representative for useful information delivered and the meaningful work done for youth in the region. The NCG reiterated, in continuation of the discussion of youth participation in the Strategy since the previous NCG meeting, that no new structures should be created within the EUSBSR governance structure, and the existing youth involvement formats need to be utilised better in the work of the Strategy.

The Presidency concluded the agenda point and highlighted that the discussion is important and feeds into the ongoing update process of the Action Plan.

3. Action Plan update - Review of Chapter 1 “The scope of the EUSBSR Action Plan”

The Presidency and the BSP presented the first draft proposal of the Action Plan Chapter 1 review compiled by the Presidency, DG REGIO representatives and the BSP based on the discussions held in the previous NCG meetings, and according to the Action Plan update timeline. The proposals in the draft address new geopolitical circumstances, challenges, security landscape in the region, cooperation with non-EU countries and Ukraine, obsolete and outdated formulations and strategic framework. Some revisions in the text are only examples and to be finalised upon the finalisation of the Chapter 3 “The Actions”. The suggested changes in the Chapter 2 are in relation to strengthening the role of the Annual Forum. The Presidency requested from the NCG to provide guidelines and feedback to the BSP on whether the suggestions presented are in the right direction, as well asked for concrete suggestions and proposals to the text, if available.

The NCG took note of the suggestions. Some Member States proposed to postpone the review of the Chapter 1 until after the PA composition has been decided. To ensure the most informed decision regarding the PA composition, more in-depth overview of the Policy Areas’ past achievements and activities is needed.

The Presidency concluded that review of the Chapter 1 is to be postponed until further notice.

4. Action Plan update - PA composition

The NCG discussed criteria for analysis and decision on the next PA composition. Besides the content laid out in the PA template and the substance of the future PA Actions, it is important to look also at the past achievements of the PAs. The NCG discussed the possibility of holding dedicated NC-PA consultations, online or onsite in Turku, in order to proceed with the decision on the next PA composition. Such calls or meetings would support in evaluating better the past achievements of the PAs and help to move forward with decision and possibly help the PAs to design well-functioning indicators, as highlighted by a Member State. It was also highlighted that it is important to cooperate and communicate as much as possible with the PACs in order to make informed decisions. In case of merging of the PAs, such merging should be done in consultation with the PACs concerned.

The Presidency concluded that the consultations with the PAs are to be arranged and instructed the BSP to look into the possibility of arranging them during the live meeting in Turku, or otherwise online.

5. Timeline revision

The Presidency informed the NCG about the need to adjust the Action Plan update timeline due to postponing of the deadline for submission of the first version of the PA templates by the PACs

by a month (by the NCG decision from 5/12/2024) and due to the additional time needed by the NCG to finalise the PA composition. The BSP presented several options for adjusting the timeline.

It was agreed by the NCG that the timeline will be adjusted according to the progress of the planned individual calls between the NCG and the PAs, preliminarily until the end of April or possibly later, taking into consideration also time needed for the PAs to work on the final PA templates, the time needed for the final approval of the updated Action Plan by the NCG, and the possible timeline of the European Commission's interservice consultation.

The Presidency will additionally consult with the upcoming NCG Presidency regarding the schedule and together with the BSP will draw a proposal for approval via silence procedure.

6. Final version of the PA template

The BSP asked for guidance from the NCG on how the final PA Actions section should look like in the updated Action Plan in the pre preparation stage of the PA Actions template. It was highlighted that the Action Plan shall be concise and concentrating on the Actions. Furthermore, it is a general document calling on the external stakeholders to get in touch with the PACs for further details and cooperation.

The NCG requested from the BSP to prepare the draft template by the live NC-PAC meeting in Turku.

7. Annual Forum 2026

Estonia informed the NCG that the Annual Forum 2026 is planned to take place on 9-10 June 2026, possibly also including 8th of June. The Forum organisers will be Tallinn City administration and CBSS Secretariat, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Climate. Preliminary focus of the Forum will be on resilience, sustainability and climate adaptability. The objective is to inform the wider public what the EUSBSR does in these areas.

The text of the Support Letter, presented in the Annex 6 has been approved by the NCG. The Presidency will therefore forward the letter to the Interreg BSR Secretariat.

8. EUSBSR governance financing

The Presidency informed that the Interreg MC has approved the extension of the BSP financing until the end of 2028. The BSP informed the NCG that for the purpose of securing the Strategy governance financing for the future, closer cooperation between the NCG and the Interreg BSR Monitoring Committee (MC) could be explored. This is to improve communication between the two, for the MC - to get a better understanding of how the Strategy operates, and for the NCG - to be better connected to the programme and programme's MC. Interreg BSR representative informed the NCG how the cooperation between NC and the MC has been in the preparation of the 2021-2027 financing period. Furthermore, the representative informed about the Interreg BSR platforms as the instrument for capitalisation of the project results from various funding programmes in the Baltic Sea Region. DG REGIO representative informed that closer cooperation with all programmes, and not only Interreg BSR, should be sought, especially the MA Networks in order to unlock more funding which is limited otherwise via the Interreg programmes.

It was discussed that it would be of benefit to continue such NCG-MC dialogue. Interreg BSR representative informed that they will bring this information next to the MC Chair.

9. Updates

The BSP informed the NCG on the status updates of the PA implementation activities within the last four months, including the updates on the BSP work and activities. The NCG took note of the information provided.

10. AOB and date for next meeting

AOB:

- Germany informed about the stakeholder meeting for German EUSBSR stakeholders, including SG members, PACs and line ministries which took place a few weeks ago. It was a very successful event and will be turned into a recurring stakeholder event. Germany also highlighted the importance of presence of the BSP at the event.
- DG REGIO representative informed that the bi-annual MRS implementation report is to be published before the Easter break.
- The BSP informed about the intention of using supportive AI tools for the future online meetings in order to optimise the work on the meeting minutes. The BSP will approach the NCG by email regarding the suggestion.
- The next BSP evaluation period will take place during April 2025; the BSP will provide the report to the NCG in the beginning of April and request the support letter from the NCG.

The date for the next meeting will be announced after the live NC-PAC meeting in Turku.

The meeting was concluded at 13:20.



PARTICIPANTS

Denmark	Peter Wilhelm Linde (NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Estonia	Tõnis Nirk (NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
	Andreas Sepp (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Finland	Helena Tuuri (NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Germany	Sven Freitag (NC)	Federal Foreign Office
	Winfried Meier (Deputy NC)	Federal Foreign Office
Latvia	Andra Kuzmina (NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Lithuania	Robertas Bružilas (NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
	Modesta Vanesa Viskontė (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Poland	Katarzyna Barcikowska (NC, Chair)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
	Monika Langiewicz (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sweden	Anna Hagström (NC)	Prime Minister's Office
	Anna Tofftén (Deputy NC)	Ministry of Rural Affairs and Infrastructure
	Juhani Ailio	Baltic Sea Strategy Point
	Viktorii Hladii	Baltic Sea Strategy Point
	Tom Schumacher (<i>agenda points 1,2,3,4,5,6</i>)	Baltic Sea Strategy Point
	Kirsi Ahlman	Baltic Sea Strategy Point
	Petri Koistinen	European Commission, DG Regio
	Blagovestka Riiser	European Commission, DG Regio
	Elena Kolosova	Interreg Baltic Sea Region Secretariat
	Aline Mayr (<i>agenda points 1,2</i>)	Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat