



## **EUSBSR Policy Area Innovation**

### **Steering Group meeting minutes**

31 October 2023 r., online (Teams)

13.00 to 15.00 CET (14.00 to 16.00 EET)

Participants (16):

#### **EUSBSR PA Innovation Coordinators (PACs):**

1. **Esa Kokkonen**, The Baltic Institute of Finland, **Finland**;
2. **Liina Luup**, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, **Estonia** (substitute for Kristi Aruküla, PAC Estonia);
3. **Zuzanna Kozłowska**, Ministry of Education and Science, **Poland**.

#### **EUSBSR PA Innovation Steering Group (SG) Members:**

4. **Alberto Terenzi**, Senior Consultant, **Submariner Network**;
5. **Angelīna Bekasova**, Ministry of Economics, **Latvia**;
6. **Anja Karppinen**, Communication Officer, **Baltic Sea Strategy Point (BSP)**, **EUSBSR**;
7. **Eivind Lorentzen**, Royal Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries, **Norway**;
8. **Jessica Mattisson**, The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, **Sweden**;
9. **Kaarel Lehtsalu**, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications of Estonia, **Estonia**;
10. **Karl Viiol**, Business Consultant, **Tartu Business Advisory Services**;
11. **Lucille Ehrhart**, **CPMR Baltic Sea Commission** (regional representative);
12. **Marcin Łata**, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, **Poland**;
13. **Patrik Laxell**, Associate Partner, **Synocus Ltd**;
14. **Petri Koistinen**, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG Regio), **European Commission** (PA INNO strategic advisor);
15. **Samanta Budrecka**, Ministry of Economics, **Latvia** (SG member substitute);
16. **Viktorija Misekaite**, Ministry of the Economy and Innovation, **Lithuania** (SG member substitute);

#### **SG meeting proceedings:**

- **Welcome** by Esa Kokkonen (PAC Finland);
- **Opening** by Kaarel Lehtsalu (Estonia), who led the meeting in compliance with SG presidency procedures;
- Short **introductions** and updates by all participants;
- **Item 1:** The Steering Group approved the **meeting agenda**.
- **Item 2:** Esa Kokkonen (PAC Finland) initiated the topic of **EUSBSR and PA INNO contribution to the EU Missions**, recalling that a closer linkage of PA INNO activities to EU innovation agenda and priorities in PA INNO communication was lately suggested by the SG. The coordinator introduced the invited **guest speaker Alberto Terenzi**, Senior Consultant at the **Submariner Network**, which constitutes a great example of now well-established blue economy project that successfully 'graduated' from the Interreg programme, and has managed to secure further funding for its ongoing development through Horizon Europe, I3, and EU Ocean Mission implementation. **Alberto Terenzi** then **gave a focused presentation** entitled '**BlueMissionBANOS Baltic & North Sea Lighthouse: Supporting the EU Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters' in the Baltic and North Sea**'. The speaker reminded that the 'Restore our Ocean and Waters' goal constitutes one of **5 EU high policy level targets referred to as 'EU Missions'** (the remaining 4 are: the Adaptation to Climate Change Mission,



the Cancer Mission, the Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, and the Soil Mission), and **presented the concept and 6 Work Packages of Lighthouse project**. The **SG discussed the project** and the learning opportunities it presents for other EUSBSR PA INNO initiatives supporting the EU missions.

- o Notes from the discussion: Eivind Lorentzen (Norway) thanked the speaker for his informative speech. He noted that there are a lot of interesting developments happening presently within the mission, including its ongoing **review**, and a **new mission implementation platform** launch that should increase its accessibility and visibility. He underlined that although it is obvious that some of the initial mission targets will not be met by 2023, we should not give up. According to the Norwegian representative the main challenge is to **efficiently engage local and regional actors**. He pointed out that there is a considerable mobilising potential, but **the interface between top-down and bottom-up initiatives should be smoother and easier**.

Subsequently, **Patrik Laxell**, Associate Partner at **Synocus Ltd**, gave a **second focused presentation related to the EU Missions**, dedicated to the **PA INNO initiative 'Collaborative BSR Decarbonization'**. The initiative contributes to two of the EU Missions: 'Climate Neutral and Smart Cities', and 'Adaptation to Climate Change', and it **brings together BSR cities in the implementation of their common climate-related goals**. PA INNO has already initiated **discussions on the topic with other EUSBSR Policy Areas**, and has introduced the concept during the recent Annual EUSBSR Forum in Riga (4-5 October 2023). The SG discussed the project and expressed its approval of the initiative. **Patrik Laxell** stressed that the **SG's input on the topic is very welcome**, as the initiative is still in its preparatory stage, and he underlined that, in general, **we should stay open and mindful in our approach to the EU Missions**, as they would certainly benefit from new views and contributions, as well as from **further integration with regional policies and needs**. It is clear that while in some particular cases, EU Missions prove less ambitious than the local municipal climate agendas, in others climate neutrality and adaptation issues remain to be fully addressed by the local authorities. What the common BSR and EU level approach offers in that respect is an opportunity to work in parallel towards our shared goals and to co-implement them together by combining different actors and objectives. To that end, a **close involvement of companies**, as the scalers of ideas, seems crucial, together with an **enhanced cross-sectoriality**. Also, we can't dismiss neither the human, nor the financial aspect of the transition. Esa Kokkonen (PAC Finland) added that there are a lot of natural connections between the BSR cities, as they face similar climate-related challenges. The coordinator explained that the **'Collaborative BSR Decarbonization'** initiative, that was recently granted funding and that will formally launch in November 2023 as an Interreg BSR programme project, now becomes one of the focal areas of the PA INNO.

- **Item 3:** Esa Kokkonen (PAC Finland) presented **an update on the latest PA INNO activities (Spring-Autumn 2023)**. The **Steering Group discussed the reported actions and expressed its feedback regarding PA INNO activities**, that included the ongoing **support for the Interreg Baltic Sea Region applicants and project developers**, organisation of multiple **events promoting the Strategy and connecting its stakeholders**, contribution to a number of **Europe-wide events linked to innovation**, as well as **development of cross-macroregional cooperation in the field of innovation**. Additionally, PA INNO team worked on its own Interreg Baltic Sea Region projects that include the **Real Time Economy** initiative led by the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications.
- **Item 4:** Esa Kokkonen (PAC Finland) presented the **upcoming PA INNO activities (Autumn 2023 – Spring 2024)**, that include **further support of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region applicants and project developers**, especially given the **upcoming kick-off of the 2<sup>nd</sup> call projects implementation**, and the **forthcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> call** in the beginning of 2024. Besides the



Interreg programme, **PA INNO is also strongly interested in Horizon Europe** as the largest R&D funding instrument in the world with a strong BSR focus. PA INNO will follow closely the upcoming Horizon calls in innovation-related fields, especially in **climate adaptation**. The coordinator specified that **the mission initiative will be the key PA INNO activity for the upcoming months**. He also stated that the **support for Ukraine** is of utmost importance for PA INNO, and that we should all do our best to **connect Ukrainian partners to European innovation networks**. The coordinator concluded by emphasising that, in the near future, **PA INNO team would like to focus its efforts more on digitalisation**, and that it expects more digitalisation-focused projects in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Interreg BSR programme call. **The Steering Group and the invited guests took the information about upcoming activities to its attention and provided their feedback**. Specifically, Karl Viiol (Tartu Business Advisory Services) stressed the significance of **data connectedness and interoperability** in the digitalisation-related tasks and processes.

- **Item 5:** The EUSBSR **Baltic Sea Strategy Point (BSP)** representative **Anja Karppinen presented the scope of BSP's activities, and summarised the latest developments and upcoming processes within the Strategy**, including an update regarding National Coordinators' Group' work on the **revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan**, as well as **EUSBSR 2023 Annual Forum key takeaways** and plans for **the next Annual Forum, to be held in Visby (Sweden) in late October or early November of 2024**. BSP provides administrative and technical support for the Strategy's management, development and communication, and its current tasks include preparation of **EUSBSR Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines** to be used by PACs, drafting the **EUSBSR Communication Strategy**, covering both internal and external communication (to be adopted by the end of the year), targeted **capacity building** exercises such as an onboarding programme for incoming SG presidencies, technical support to National Coordinators' group and to PACs, as well as strategic and practical assistance to the **Annual Fora organisation**. **The 2023 EUSBSR Annual Forum, organised in Riga under the theme "Safe and Sustainable BSR for the Future Generations", attracted nearly 600 participants**, including EUSBSR key stakeholders, funding programmes representatives, EU Commission colleagues, and field experts. The event featured 9 workshops (2 of which were organised by PA INNO), 6 SG meetings, and project visits hosted by local Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme project developers.
- **Item 6:** Zuzanna Kozłowska (PAC Poland) informed the group that **the next SG meeting will be held physically in Warsaw (Poland) in spring 2024 (around April)**, with the possibility to join online. As the current EUSBSR PA INNO Steering Group Latvian Presidency ends in the summer of 2024, **the Polish party proposed to take over the SG Presidency a few months earlier, in order to align the inauguration of the Polish SG Presidency with the SG meeting in Warsaw**. The Steering Group approved the proposal, and it was agreed that the last key formal action of the Latvian SG Presidency will consist of, based on SG comments to the report, signing the required feedback form on the next PA INNO 2023 report to the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme.