

Meeting of the Steering Group of the Policy Area TRANSPORT

(2nd in 2023)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

14.12. 2023

Following members were represented in the meeting: Sweden (Mr Lennart Andersson), Finland (Mr Mikael Nyberg), Estonia (Mr Silver Tammik), Latvia (Mr Valdis Bars), Poland (Mr Konrad Uscilowski), Germany (Ms Gudrun John-Ruff), the European Commission, DG Regio (Mr Johan Magnusson), Lithuania (Ms Ina Irens). In addition to that Ms Lucille Ehrhart (The Baltic Sea Commission) participated in the meeting as a special guest invited by PACs.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

1.1. - doc 1.1/32/23

No comments nor additional proposals.

2. Administrative Arrangements

2.1. PA Transport as Interreg project - (*state of play*) -

PAC provided an overview of activities concerning administering the Policy Area Transport. Transportation activities including activities of the Lead- PAC were transferred 1 July 2024 from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication, Estonia to the newly formatted Ministry of Climate, Estonia. According to the Interreg Secretariat's point of view it was defined as a major change. Therefore some additional administrative steps had to be made- the Ministry of Climate had to sign a new Partner Declaration and get approval by the Committee of National Coordinators. These activities were completed by the time of the meeting of the SG. The Lead- PAC also asked for the approval of the SG to act as a Lead- Policy Area coordinator.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information and approved the Ministry of Climate to act as a Policy Area Lead Coordinator.

2.2. Communication plan - doc 2.2/2/23

PACs have prepared the final version of the Communication plan. According to the working plan of the PA Transport, the document must be completed during 2023. The draft of the Communication plan was completed already in 2022. As the Baltic Strategy Point prepared the overall Communication Strategy for all policy areas of the EUSBSR, PACs decided not to rush with

the approval process and wait until the overall Strategy is approved to have synergies between both documents. The Communication Strategy prepared by the Baltic Sea Strategy Point was approved in November. Comparison shows that the Communication Plan of the PA Transport was in line with the general strategy and only minor adjustments were needed. The final version of communication plan of the PA Transport was prepared and introduced to the SG.

Members of the Steering Group took note of the information and approved the PA Transport Communication plan.

3. Update on PA Transport activities

3.1. Forthcoming events- doc 3.1/2/23

One of the main tasks of PACs is to promote values of EUBSSR and introduce activities described in the Action plan. PACs have been quite active in that field, and they have received number of invitations to participate different events in the year of 2024. Policy Area Coordinator (Lithuania) asked members of the SG to participate the Transport Innovation Forum which will take place on the **9-10th October 2024**. It was also proposed by PACS that the next meeting of the SG could take place at the same time in Vilnius. Germany proposed to consider organizing the next meeting of the SG in parallel with the Annual Forum, for instance. However, according to PACS, topics of the Transport Innovation Forum would be very interesting for transport people. From the connectivity point of view flying to Vilnius is easier and less time consuming than flying to Visby.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information and approved the idea to organise the next meeting of the SG in Vilnius, Lithuania.

3.2. Communication and publicity, website development (*state of play*) - doc 3.2/2/23

PAC gave an overview of communication activities. During the period of this and the previous meeting of the Steering Group (May 2023- January 2023) 6 different news releases which covered PA Transport were published. The first version of the new PA Transport website was made accessible on the 13.09.2022, after that date the website was updated several times.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information and approved the work PACS have done.

3.3. -Key take-aways from Transport Innovation Forum- doc 3.3/2/23.

PAC (Lithuania) informed about the event took place on 23-24 November 2023 in Vilnius. The PA Transport is one of the organisers of the Forum. The session dedicated to sustainability in optimising transport logistics chain was moderated by the PAC (Lithuania).

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information.

3.4. Regional cooperation (*state of play*) - doc 3.4/2/23

Coordinators have invited Policy Area Coordinators invited Ms Lucille Ehrhart (Executive Secretary of the Baltic Sea Commission) to join the SG meeting with the aim to discuss possibilities of cooperation.

Ms Ehrhart presented the role of the Baltic Sea Commission and introduced how the PA Transport and Baltic Sea Commission work together, sharing expertise and exchanging experts.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information and approved PACs initiatives.

3.5. Relevant topics in the transport field in member states

Sweden informed that they have started the initiative of meeting of Transport Administrations of Nordic Countries (SE, DK, FI, NO, Iceland).

Poland informed that Poland's part of the via Baltica route will be totally completed in 2025. As part of Via Baltica, more than 95% of the route's length is currently commissioned in Poland, i.e. the entire S8 expressway from Warsaw to Ostrów Mazowiecka, nearly 44 kilometers of the S61 expressway from Ostrów Mazowiecka to Łomża, and the Łomża-Lithuania border section of more than 158 kilometers. A 12.9-kilometer-long Łomża bypass remains under construction and is scheduled for completion in 2025 (single carriageway completion in 2024).

Lithuania informed that the mandate of the NDPTL (Northern Dimension partnership on Transport and Logistics) will not be prolonged after the April 2025. This can be an opportunity for PA Transport to take over additional tasks and finances dedicated to the organisations.

4. Various topics on EU, MRS and EUSBSR level

4.1 Update of the various activities of the European Union.

DG Regio of the European Commission informed that at the end of the year a new report (State of play of macro regional activities) will be prepared. This will be a good opportunity for PACs to emphasise the importance of their work. The second issue highlighted was the information about macro-regional week, which will take place on 12-13. June in Brussels.

Germany raised the issue of the EU Strategy of Atlantic region and asked whether we are aware of that. PA Transport has been in contact with them and participated in the meeting introducing values of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy.

5. Transport related projects

5.1. Overview of approved projects financed by Interreg (*state of play*) - doc 5.1/2/23

PAC informed Steering Group about projects financed by different Interreg programs. Three new projects started their activities after the last meeting of the SG.

Projects are following:

- Project New North- Transport, Logistics and Security of Supply

The project focuses on the development of transport and logistics systems in the northern region of Scandinavia. The aim of the project is to create green transport corridors, develop sustainable electric aviation suitable serving the region and secure smooth supply of cargo between different northern regions. The project is financed by the Interreg Aurora Programme.

- Project **Baltic Sea region Active mobility Solutions** - in darkness and all-weather conditions (BATS)

The project BATS supports local and regional authorities to design and implement policies, infrastructures and campaigns that effectively promote walking and cycling in adverse light and weather conditions. Solutions will be co-developed and tested in 7 BSR countries and transferred to neighbouring cities and regions. The project is financed by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.

- Project Revitalisation of Inner-Urban Freight Rail Hubs (UrbFRail)

With the aim to shift goods from road to rail and to make last mile transport more sustainable, inner-urban freight rail infrastructure is coming into focus again. Its development is a complex issue, as a number of requirements have to be met. By developing a set of tool, UrbFRail aims to enable spatial and transport planners to select suitable areas for freight rail hubs and to foster their revitalization. The project is financed by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme

More detailed information about these projects is available on the website of the PA Transport.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information.

5.2. Overview of project financing mechanisms (*state of play*)- doc 5.2/2/23

The Baltic Sea Strategy Point has prepared the overview of main EU and some regional financing programs. They asked to distribute it among stakeholders and all interested parties who can benefit for that.

EuroAccess is the online search tool for EU financing was introduced to all policy coordinators and it seems to be a convenient tool to find funding opportunities for projects.

The link to the website is following: [EN - EuroAccess - Fördermittelsuche der EuroVienna EU-consulting & -management GmbH \(euro-access.eu\)](https://www.euro-access.eu)

PACS asked members of SG to distribute this information among their partners in their countries.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information.

5.3. 1st meeting of project leaders of transport related projects - doc 5.3/2/23

PAC informed that on 6th September, the PA Transport organised a first joint meeting with leaders of transport projects. The event was chaired by the PA Transport. The aim of the gathering was to

strengthen partnership among project leaders, policy coordinators, financing institutions and offering them a platform to share and discuss mutual expectations. Discussions were centred around three primary topics:

- Enhancing visibility of projects
- Efficient dissemination of project conclusions
- Sharing knowhow and experience between project leaders and PACs.

Up to the moment of the meeting of the SG there have been totally three information exchange rounds between the Lead PAC and project leaders.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information.

5.4. Current calls of different funding opportunities, the 3rd BSR Interreg call-promotion the call- doc 5.4/2/23

PACS gave overview of different calls:

- Swedish Institute's call to promote sustainable development in eastern Partnership countries. There will be at least one transport related project proposal presented. The call is opened until 15 February.
- Council of the Baltic Sea States' Project Support Facility fund's call will be opened in spring 2024. The call invites innovative projects that promote energy transitions in the maritime transport sector.
- Interreg Baltic Sea Region Program 3rd call for core projects. The call will be opened on 17 January 2024 until 21. June 2024. Priority areas are innovative societies and climate neutral societies.

PACS asked members of the SG to distribute this information among their partners in their countries.

The members of the Steering Group took note of the information.