



## **BSSSC Board meeting Brussels, Belgium –minutes (per 13.01.20)**

Date: 3 December 2019

Venue: Oslo Region European Office, Rue du Luxembourg 3, 5<sup>th</sup> floor

09:00 – 13:00

### **Present:**

**Board Members:** Roger Ryberg (BSSSC Chairman - Mayor Buskerud County, Norway), Mieczysław Struk (Incoming Chairman BSSSC, Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland), Christian Schärf (Head of Foreign Relations Unit, Brandenburg, Germany (substitute for absent Reiner Kneifel-Haverkamp)), Arne Tilk (Mayor of Põlva vald Estonia, Association of Estonians Cities and Municipalities), Ricards Gailums (Deputy Mayor of Valmiera City, Latvia), Venla Hatakka (BSSSC Youth Board Member, Häme, Finland), Ossi Savolainen (Regional Mayor of Uusimaa Regional Council, Finland), Wojciech Dorżynkiewicz (Councillor of the West Pomeranian Parliament, Poland).

**Board Civil:** Jon Halvard Eide (International Advisor Agder County, Norway), Marlene Rothe (Senior advisor, Unit of Baltic & North Sea Affairs - Schleswig-Holstein, Germany), Christopher Lucht (BSSSC Youth Coordinator - Brandenburg, Germany), Krista Taipale (Head of Helsinki - Uusimaa European Office), Krystyna Wróblewska (Head of the Baltic Sea Cooperation Bureau, Pomorskie Region, Poland), Laila Gercane (Head of Development and Project Department, Vidzeme Region, Latvia), Marta Czarnecka-Gallas (Baltic Sea Cooperation Bureau, Pomorskie Region, Poland), Monika Pochroń Frankowska (Head of the International Cooperation Bureau, Pomorskie Marshal's Office, Poland), Matti Lipsanen (Director Regional Development Regional Council of Häme, Finland), Janne Tamminen (International Advisor Uusimaa Regional Council, Finland), Toivo Riimaa (Deputy Director Estonian Association of Cities and Municipalities, Estonia),

**Others:** Gunnar Selvik (Director Oslo Region European Office), Sylwia Skwara (Senior Policy Officer for Research and Innovation, Pomorskie Regional EU Office), Dominika Lange (EU Policy Officer, Pomorskie Regional EU Office), Anna Drązek (Director, Pomorskie Regional EU Office), Aaretti Siitonen (Political Officer at the European External Action Service) and Åsa Bjerjing (Executive Secretary CPMR Baltic Sea Commission).

**Secretariat:** Ann Irene Sæternes (BSSSC Secretary General), Lars Lund Godbolt (BSSSC Executive Secretary)



## 1. Opening of the Board meeting

### 1.1. Opening of the meeting – Mr. Roger Ryberg, BSSC Chair

**Mr. Ryberg** opened the Board meeting and started a round of introductions. Mr. Ryberg thanked Helsinki EU office for hosting the meeting the day before and to Oslo Region European Office for hosting the Board Meeting.

### 1.2. Welcome by the new director of the Oslo Region European Office, Mr. Gunnar Selvik

**Mr. Selvik** introduced the work done by the Oslo Region European Office and welcomed everyone to their premises. He also pointed to the fact that the City of Oslo in 2019 is the European Green Capital, which shows that Norway is a close partner to the EU.

### 1.3. Adoption of the agenda

**The Agenda was adopted.**

### 1.4. Adoption of the minutes from the Board Meeting in Klaipeda, 18 September 2019.

**The Minutes were adopted.**

## 2. Northern Dimension – update by Aaretti Siitonen, Political Officer at the European External Action Service (EEAS)

Mr. Siitonen gave an update on the Northern Dimension policy. He could inform that the EU-Russia relation dramatically changed in 2014 due to Russian annexation of Crimea. He said that relations are not likely to be restored to pre-2014 situation, but he emphasised, however, the need to have a good relationship with Russia. He underlined that the principle of "selected engagement" and people to people (P2P) contact is important in this regard. The less dialogue at the high political level, the more important the dialogue on the regional and P2P level becomes. He said that regional organisations like BSSC contribute to several of the principles, in particular the P2P. It is important to maintain contacts at this level.

Mr. Siitonen pointed to the fact that there are a broad pallet of organisations, networks and strategies in the Northern Dimension area and that this net of cooperation has a great value in itself. Furthermore, he said they have a selected engagement on cooperation on urgent issues like the fight against terrorism and climate issues in the Arctic. He said that a key issue is to promote and defend the European model of free expression and argument.



The Board Members shared some experiences with how they cooperate with Russian regions and agreed with Mr. Siitonen that the level of cooperation has decreased. There was consensus that keeping contacts and trying to create more collaboration is important.

### 3. BSSSC Strategy towards 2030

The Board has had a good dialog and process on revision of the BSSSC Strategy during 2019. The first draft was presented in Klaipeda in September. No changes were proposed and the final version of the Strategy is therefore put up for adoption.

#### 3.1. Adoption

**Ms. Krystyna Wroblewska** congratulated the Secretariat on the strategy. Emphasising it is short and concise.

**Ms. Marlene Rothe** said that we should change the SDG 8 and 11 in parentheses behind culture.

**Mr. Matti Lipsanen** said, on behalf of absent Board Member **Ms. Rautio** that she liked that the SDGs are emphasized.

**Ms. Krista Taipale** congratulated.

**Mr. Ryberg** informed that the Strategy will be updated with the proposed changes by Ms. Rothe and with graphics and posted on BSSSC.com as soon as possible. He thanked for all the input to the Strategy and thanked the Secretariat for keeping track of the process and finalising the strategy document.

**The BSSSC Strategy 2030 was adopted.**

### 4. EUSBSR revision of the Action Plan

#### 4.1. Status and update

**Ms. Ann Irene Sæternes** gave an update on the revision. Quoted the paper that called on the rapporteurs to confirm whether they have the capacity to engage with the respective policy areas (PA) of the EUSBSR.

#### 4.2. Discussion around role and position of BSSSC based on input from the ad hoc WG on EUSBSR

**Mr. Jon Halvard Eide** confirmed his interest and capacity to engage in the PA for transport.



**Mr. Janne Tamminen** confirmed his interest and capacity to engage in maritime-related PAs.

**Ms. Rothe** said that Schleswig-Holstein is already involved as PA for culture. She also underlined that the SDGs will be integrated in the new Action Plan of the EUSBSR. The content of the new revised Action Plan is expected to be streamlined, but with the same objectives.

**Ms. Taipale** announced that the next Annual Forum for EUSBSR will take place in Turku 16 – 17 June.

**Ms. Wroblewska** said that it would be good if BSSSC could come up with concrete proposals on how it would like to be involved. Involvement in HA Neighbours could be a good link to Russian partners – also with regards to the 2020 BSSSC Annual Conference that will be hosted in Kaliningrad. The conference should also be seen in light of the Northern Dimension cooperation, she added.

**Ms. Sæternes** proposed that BSSSC could send an official letter from the Chairmanship to explore the option of becoming an observer in the National Coordination group (NCG). She said it is expected to be easier for the BSSSC to become involved in the thematic Policy areas and Horizontal areas.

#### 4.3 Recommendation for the further work of the ad hoc WG

**The BSSSC rapporteurs are positive to a stronger role in the PAs of the EUSBSR. The Secretariat writes a letter to NCG asking for an observer status.**

## 5. BSSSC Annual Conferences

### 5.1. AC 2019 in Klaipeda, Lithuania - summing up, reflections and feedback

The Chair recalled the AC in Klaipeda in September and mentioned that the main theme of blue growth will be an important theme in the next programming period. Mentioned that the set-up was new, with double set of parallel sessions.

Mr. Christopher Lucht said that there was a good panel discussion with the youths and experts at the end, but that seminar organisers should know in advance if they want to involve youth or not – adapting the seminar to youth listeners as well, making them understand and feel included.

The Board was in general very satisfied with the Annual Conference.

### 5.2. BSSSC AC 2020 in Kaliningrad - Information from the hosts – dates and framework

#### 5.2.1. Ideas for focus and content as well as possible speakers

The dates for the conference is proposed to be 29 September to 1 October 2020. There was no objection to this proposal.



**Ms. Wroblewska** said that some of the parts of the programme, such as the cross border programmes between two countries aren't interesting for everyone. We should make the topics more interesting for participants from all Baltic Sea. She proposed to discuss the relationship and linkage between the EUSBSR and North West Russian Strategy – recalling the workshop carried out in Saint Petersburg on 30 October.

**Ms. Laila Gercane** said that it would be valuable to look on more strategic cooperation formats. She wanted to focus on democracy touching issues and Youth involvement too.

**Ms. Wroblewska** replied that it could a good idea to include a democracy dimension, but potentially controversial. It should not be perceived as "preaching" 'our' model of democracy. She said that a possible angle is to discuss the role of culture to promote P2P cooperation.

**Mr. Lucht** said it is a good idea to use culture, maybe not use the word democracy, he said he thinks culture is a good topic for youth too.

**Ms. Rothe** liked the idea too. She also suggested that the AC could also be an opportunity to take stock of where we are ("state of the region") in terms of environmental and climate status – in terms of the upcoming programming period and the revised EUSBSR AP.

**Mr. Lucht** asked about youth event, and **Ms. Wroblewska** said that her impression was that they will host a BSSC youth event in the days leading up to the AC.

## 6. Youth involvement and empowerment

### 6.1. Report from youth Board members and coordinator

**Mr. Lucht** said that the Youth Spring meeting will be hosted by Pomorskie voivodeship in the end of April, after Easter. The idea is to arrange it together with European Solidarity centre (in Gdansk).

**Ms. Wroblewska** added that the idea is to capitalise on two things.

1. Intergenerational dialogue on climate crisis. 2. Climate solidarity (hosted by European solidarity centre).

**Ms. Venla Hattaka** gave feedback from the youth event in Klaipeda, back to back with the BSSC Annual Conference 2019. She said that the youth loved the three first days we had together in the separate youth event, highlighting the high level of the workshops they had. Unfortunately, she said, at the AC many of the youth felt that they couldn't get their voices heard. This was partly because several presentations were too complicated. She also added that the youth had hoped that there would be more discussions between adults, youth and politicians, saying that they only had ten minutes to present their work. She hopes that in the future there will be more dialogue.



**Mr. Lucht** added that next time the organisers of the youth event should coordinate with the moderators and facilitators of the workshops which ones the youths should attend.

**Ms. Taipale** asked if it would help if some of the topics would be introduced in the youth event before. **Ms. Hattaka** agreed to this.

## 6.2. Status regarding One youth platform in the BSR

**Mr. Lars Lund Godbolt** could inform that CBSS have applied for an ERASMUS+ project to create a pilot project for a common youth platform in the BSR. BSSSC are in the project through Mr. Lucht and his home region, Brandenburg. The suggested project will go over two years, funding several youth events – both for youths and for youth coordinators and stakeholders – bringing all together. It is intended that after the first two years the CBSS will find funding to have a permanent position for a common youth coordinator at the CBSS Secretariat in Stockholm for the Baltic Sea Region. The project partners are having a meeting at the same time as the BSSSC Board Meeting. BSSSC are represented by Malgorzata Klawiter from the upcoming BSSSC Secretariat of Pomorskie Region, Poland.

## 6.3. Youth Camp 2020 in Turku

**Mr. Godbolt** could inform that the CBSS are very interested in continuing the Youth Camp. All partners from this year (BSSSC, Euroregion Baltic, Union of Baltic Cities and Baltic Sea Cultural Centre) are interested in creating another camp, but lack funding. CBSS say that they can provide funding (about 50 000 euros in total) if they get the ERASMUS+ project funds. If not, they said that there might be opportunities from the Interreg project that will fund the EUSBSR Annual Forum. The CBSS Secretariat is in dialogue with Baltic Youth Camp Partners and informed to keep up the dialogue with the new upcoming Chairmanship of BSSSC.

## 7. BSSSC Work plan 2020 – 2021

### 7.1. Presentation of draft for discussion by incoming chairmanship – Ms. Krystyna Wroblewska

**Ms. Wroblewska** said that they will take the Work Plan of the Norwegian chairmanship as a point of departure. She invites the Board to provide input and comment by end of January 2020, and that the new work plan should be adopted at the Board meeting in Gdansk in February. She said that they commit to maintain BSSSC visibility, involvement in EUSBSR and to develop cooperation with Committee of the Regions. They will take youth work further and integrate the SDGs in our work. Furthermore, she added that they would like to concentrate more on democracy. They will use Northern Dimension as a framework – also in the context of the AC in Kaliningrad and in the cooperation with other Russian regions.



Finally, she said that they will exploit the Submariner network in support on work with blue growth.

**The Board took note of the information and will provide their input to the new BSSC Work Plan by the end of January 2020**

## 8. Report from Brussels antenna

**Mr. Gunnar Selvik** briefed the Board on recent European affairs.

Mr. Selvik informed about the new European Parliament (EP). Changes in EU institutions with new EP – where the big groups have lost majority - and the new European Commission (EC) that took office on 1 December the landscape is changed. 2020 will be an interesting year.

Time has come for the new EU Commission President, Ursula Von der Leyen, to deliver on promises, including the Green and landing the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). **Mr. Selvik** could inform that the Finnish proposal on MFF is small, but not as small as Germany would like. Agricultural is going down. Horizon Europe programme maintained. Cohesion not too bad in relation to the original proposal. Security reduced in Finnish proposal. **Mr. Selvik** said this is a surprise, as Finland has as one of their four priorities as EU Presidency to protect citizens.

On 11 December there will be a presentation of the new Green Deal at the EP. This will be followed by a Council meeting 19 December. Ms. Leyen also attended the climate summit in Madrid last weekend. This shows how high on the agenda climate is for her.

**Mr. Selvik** gave an update on Brexit, stating that it is also important for Norway, and the regional cooperation with the UK. There is now a reluctance to cooperate with UK. An orderly exit is expected if Johnson is winning his election. There is an ambition on the UK side to finalise trade agreement with EU before end of transition period, but Michel Barnier (EU main responsible coordinator) doesn't believe that's realistic.

**Mr. Selvik** could inform that the EEA agreement is now 25 years. It has proved remarkable flexibility to adapt to new legislation and new members. The EEA has become even more popular in the context of the Brexit discussions over the past years. The agreement is working very well.

## 9. Reports from other BSR organizations, programmes and networks

### 9.1. Interreg BSR programme – Mr. Matti Lipsanen

**Mr. Matti Lipsanen** gave an update on Interreg BSR programme. He said that there are two calls of financing open just now. The first one is seed money, which supports implementation of the EUSBSR. A budget max 50 000 euro for project preparation, not



necessarily to the Interreg BSR programme, but for all the other possible sources of financing.

Next call is on extension stage projects – capitalizing on 2<sup>nd</sup> call approved projects. Application deadline is end February next year and budget max one mill euro per project.

Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2021 – 2027

There are challenges to agree on the MFF and the regulations, and this will influence on the timeline for future programmes. Mr. Lipsanen presented a timeline – based on experience from current period: First call is only likely to be scheduled in 2022, projects starting in 2023.

The launch of the programming work will be in the beginning of February 2020. MC members will automatically be members of Joint Programming Committee (JPC) – incl Matti Lipsanen, Ann Irene Sæternes and Toivo Riima. The group have already discussed the project types: current mainstream projects (upgraded), small scale projects up to 200 000, platforms & cooperation between projects. Extensions not so much supported. A workshop on the next programme will take place in Hamburg on 4 December. Review of policy documents – incl the BSSSC AC resolutions. The programme bodies will try to define a strategic focus on the basis on that. It is expected to be support for PO 1, 2 and 3 (Policy Objective Smart Europe, Green Europe and a more Connected Europe).

An Orientation paper from EC published: To provide options on future thematic orientation. Guiding principles: support for Macro Regional Strategies, priority for PO1 and PO2. Not PO3, as not so much need for further transport planning. The paper is not saying that the maritime CB programmes should be merged with Baltic Sea Region programme, but this idea is still alive.

## 9.2. Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) – Ms. Åsa Bjering

**Ms. Åsa Bjering** could inform that BSC have given input to the revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan. She mentioned the PAs where the regional interests are the strongest. The BSC have discussed with national coordinators and said that the regions should be involved in the governance of the different PAs (not necessarily the pan-Baltic org). She believes that BSC and BSSSC have a place at the table on HA Climate and HA Neighbours and HA Capacity. The BSC have met with new MEPs to support the CPMR Secretariat to set up SEARICA intergroup (120 signatories – including 22 from the BSR). It now has the momentum to build an informal BSR intergroup.

BSC organised an event on Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) in Brussels. CPMR has interest in defending the new Interregional Innovation Investment instrument. It seems to be losing in the Finnish negotiation box. BSC see the need for interregional tools in support of innovation. But also, other instruments like IE and mainstream ERDF programmes. She suggested agreeing on a common paper among BSR organisations in support of using ERDF main stream money inter-regionally in support of S3.





Ms. Bjerling referred to the CPMR General Assembly in October where they adopted new Manifesto: Cohesion and transport as main policy areas. Stronger focus on climate, with increased action from the CPMR.

The BSC Annual meeting will be in Turku in June 2020 – back to back with the EUSBSR Annual Forum.

## 10. Report from the Norwegian Chairmanship 2017 – 2019

### 10.1. Brief presentation of the draft report by Secretary General

**Ms. Sæternes** referred to the report and thanked the rapporteurs for their contributions. She said that the Secretariat will do further lay out and include pictures in the final version. She encouraged the Board and Board Civil to send an email if more should be added or amendments made to the report. Deadline: End of the year.

### 10.2. Comments and input from Board members

The Board had no comments to the first draft. The Secretariat will proceed to finalise the Report and upload it to [www.bsssc.com](http://www.bsssc.com) in January 2020.

### 10.3. Short round of additional updates and news from Rapporteurs

#### 10.3.1 Cohesion Policy

The Brandenburg rapporteur informed the Board about the new negotiation box on the MFF 2021 – 2027 from the Finnish Presidency published today (2/12-19). For the first time, there are figures on the table. The proposal will be discussed at the EU Summit on 19 December. The Presidency proposal indicates a budget with 1,07% of the EU GNI – which is lower than the EU Commissions original proposal of 1,114%. The European Parliament has called for 1,3% of EU GNI for the MFF 2021 – 2027.

It will take time for the EU Member States to agree on the MFF and one does not expect any agreement before autumn 2020 under the German EU Presidency. In the meantime, the EU Commission urges the countries and regions to start the programming work – in order not to be too delayed with the start of the next programs.

Many issues are still at stake and there is a need for BSSSC to keep up its lobbying activities. A 4<sup>th</sup> policy paper on Cohesion Policy and MFF could be put forward and adopted at the next Board meeting in Gdansk in February 2020 – to recall BSSSC positions on the level for Cohesion Policy in the budget, budget share for INTERREG (ETC) and on the interregional innovation investment component.

#### 10.3.2 Transport

Mr. Jon Halvard Eide gave an update where he among others underlined the focus on climate in the Green Deal including social cohesion in transport. He also mentioned TEN-T



days in the North Sea and Baltic Sea regions. More sea based approaches for Motorways of the Seas (MOS) was called for. Road safety an important topic where EU launched a 0 vision for traffic deaths. Digitalisation is in focus in transport. Less money proposed for CEF – need for the Member States to bring more national money into the big infrastructure projects in the future. Mr. Eide regretted that the orientation paper from the EU Commission on the new Interreg BSR programme did not mention transport as an important policy area for the future.

### 10.3.3 Culture

Ms. Marlene Rothe mentioned that the application for seed money to the Baltic Sea Cultural Cities project was approved. The work now continues.

## 11. Board meeting plan 2020

The incoming BSSSC Chairmanship proposed the following meeting plan:

- 18 – 19 February in Gdansk, Poland
- 29 – 30 April in Blekinge, Sweden (*place tbc*)
- 29 September in Kaliningrad, Russia – alongside the BSSSC AC 2020 (29.09 – 01.10)
- 7 - 8 December in Brussels.

## 12. Thank you from the ENCN Chairmanship - handing over the tasks to the Pomeranian Region

**Mr. Ryberg** thanked for the opportunity to chair the BSSSC and stated that the past three years have been interesting and challenging. He underlined that BSSSC is an excellent platform for cooperation and a good arena for lobbying the important issues for cities and regions and their citizens towards national authorities and EU institutions. At the end of the Norwegian Chairmanship, Mr. Ryberg concluded that BSSSC is recognized as an important voice in the Baltic Sea region and has become a strong political lobby organisation. He ended by concluding that BSSSC has a promising future with the incoming Pomorskie chairmanship.

The Chair then handed over the BSSSC meeting mallet (wooden hammer) to the incoming chair **Mr. Mieczysław Struk**.

**Mr. Struk** said thanked and congratulated the outgoing Norwegian chairmanship, with the whole team, for a professional and joyful effort. He said that Pomorskie is committed to build upon the good momentum created during the Norwegian chairmanship, with good support from the Board.

**END OF MEETING**