



Present:

Mr David Hunt (DK / B7), Ms Ann Irene Saeternes (NO), Mr Pawel Maciejewski (PL), Ms Magdalena Anisko (PL), Ms Malgorzata Ludwiczek (PL), Mr Sebastian Gojdz (PL / Brussels), Mr Toivo Riimaa (EE), Ms Marlene Rothe (DE), Mr Janne Tamminen (FI / CPMR BSC), Ms Hannele Luukkainen (FI), Ms Krystyna Wroblewska (PL), Mr Jon Halvard Eide (NO), Mr Thore Westermoen (NO), Mr Esko Lotvonen (FI), Mr Tommy Eliasson (SE / B7), Mr Knud Andersen (DK), Ms Ingrid Klemp (NO), Mr Sten Svane (DK), Mr Roger Ryberg (NO), Ms Elisabeth Traelstad (NO).

Guests:

Ms Ewa Hedkvist Petersen (SE), Ms Monica Carlsson (SE), Ms Yulia Victorova (RU)

1. Opening of the Board Meeting

On behalf of the host region Mr Esko Lotvonen welcomed the BSSSC Board to Rovaniemi and briefly presented the Board with the most characteristic features of the Lapland Region. Due to the absence of Mr Olgierd Geblewicz, the BSSSC Chairman, Ms Małgorzata Ludwiczek, Managing Director of the BSSSC Secretariat, welcomed the BSSSC Board to Rovaniemi and chaired the meeting. At first she expressed a special gratitude to Mr Lotvonen for inviting the Board to Rovaniemi and for organizing a seminar the day before. She welcomed to the meeting a new BSSSC Board member, Mr Roger Ryberg from Buskerud County Council, Norway.

The Board adopted the meeting agenda and the minutes of the BSSSC Board meeting in Brussels on November 30, 2011.

2. Annual Conferences

2.2 Annual Conference 2012: Report from the Norwegian host

Mr Roger Ryberg, on behalf of the conference host, the Eastern Norway County Network, gave an introduction to the updated information on the BSSSC Annual Conference 2012. He informed the Board that since the last BSSSC Board meeting, the invitation letter and the draft programme of the Annual Conference and the GREEN conference have been developed. He informed the Board that the youth conference will be held at the same venue as the BSSSC Annual Conference.

Ms Ann Irene Saeternes added the information that the draft invitation letter was prepared with the aim of clearly explaining the goal of the conference. She informed that due to the input of youth representatives, there has been a change of the location of the youth conference, which will enable the youth to participate in the BSSSC Board meeting. Moreover, she informed the Board that the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs has accepted the invitation to the conference. Ms Saeternes gave a report about the received input from Germany (Hamburg), who proposed a change in the 2nd session. Another issue was the invitation for the representative of the Danish Presidency in the Council of the European Union, who will present the results of one the presidency priority "A green Europe". She confirmed that Baltic 21, the Buskerud Region, the Lahti Science Park and Hamburg will be in charge of parallel sessions. She stressed the change of the conference title.

She informed the Board that the conference host is in contact with the European Commission – DG Regio, the aim is to involve the European Commission in the panel discussion. She told the Board about the plan to invite a representative from the European Commission or from the Committee of the Regions to the morning session on 19th September.

Ms Saeternes forwarded the information from the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development who had asked for help with the invitation of the members of the European Parliament. The ministry is planning to invite the Finnish representative Ms Riika Manner, who is responsible for the new regulation concerning the territorial cooperation and Mr Knut Fleckenstein from Germany.

Ms Ingrid Klemp informed the Board about the youth working meeting, which resulted in the preparation of the draft programme of the youth conference. The youth agreed on the subject of the conference, but the names of the speakers and politicians who will be invited to the conference are still to be decided. The youth members expect that the outcome of the event will be transferred to their local communities and through various activities they will be continued after the conference.

Mr Knud Andersen supported the new conference title, but he also pointed out that the proposed issues which will be discussed during the whole conference are too similar to each other. He suggested to concentrate more on good examples, which will show how the problems can be changed.

Mr Thore Westermoen mentioned that the energy issue is very crucial for the future. He proposed to add to the conference discussion the subject of hydropower energy.

Ms Ludwiczek asked about the 2nd session and advised to place the new ideas raised during the meeting into the draft conference programme.

Ms Saeternes informed that in the programme of the 2nd session, there has been indicated a place for the German representative who will have a chance to talk on the issue of closing down the nuclear energy plants. What is more, there has also been placed the alternative proposal raised by Hamburg concerning green concepts in water and energy, but ultimately only one topic can be chosen.

Ms Marlene Rothe pointed out that it is difficult to find a person who will cover the whole concept of energy. For session 2 she proposed Mr Klaus Rave, who could make an intervention on wind energy. She also proposed to present the INTERREG project RENREN (Renewable Energy Regions Network), which aims to optimize regional policy frameworks in order to foster and strengthen production and use of renewable energies in the regions.

Mr Andersen stressed that it is absolutely crucial to talk about green energy, because Europe, for too many years, has been depended on a limited number of energy resources (coal and gas).

Ms Ludwiczek noted that the preparation of the conference still requires a lot of discussion and arrangements. She proposed to come back to the practice of the meetings of the task force group for the annual conference, which could help the conference host in the preparation process. Ms Ludwiczek suggested organizing such a meeting before the next board meeting in Berlin.

Ms Saeternes replied that it is better to keep in contact via e-mail and that the conference host is waiting for concrete feedback and comments from the regions concerning speakers etc. Ms Saeternes informed the Board that after the meeting she will send to the board an e-mail with the updated programme.

Mr Esko Lotvonen promised to contact Ms Riika Manner. As for the conference, he proposed to broaden the energy issue and not to concentrate only on wind power. Mr Lotvonen suggested to present, for example, how the increase in wind power supply in Germany will affect other areas.

Mr Andersen proposed to present, during the conference, the EcoGrid EU project, which aims to contribute to the European 2020 goals by showing that it is possible to operate a distribution power system (on the Danish island of Bornholm) with more than 50 % renewable energy sources (RES). This is done by making active use of new communication technology and innovative market solutions. It is an EU funded project running for the next four years, in which Siemens and IBM participate for example.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska posed a question on the main focus of the conference. She asked to what extent the conference topics will focus on economic aspects and suggested that the energy and green issues could be presented as a way of escaping from the economic crisis and in turn it will lead to economic development. She inquired if it is planned, in the conference presentations and discussions, to combine the economic issues with green aspects in such a way to show that going in the green direction will help us to recover from the economic crisis and not to come back to worse times.

What is more, due to the problems in finding a speaker for session 2, she asked if Poland, instead of session no 2, can propose a panelist for another session.

Ms Saeternes replied that during the parallel sessions there will be the possibility for showing good practice examples and it could be a place for a Polish speaker. In regards to the conference focus she answered

that the main concentration is on sustainability and on innovation aspect, which is indicated in the conference subtitle: Baltic Sea regions promoting green innovation in energy and water.

Ms Rothe added a proposal to focus also on hindrances to better usage of renewable energy, as for example infrastructural problems etc.

Ms Ludwiczek asked Ms Saeternes to update the programme with the proposals from the board meeting and to send it to the board for their comments and contribution. Ms Ludwiczek indicated that this year the BSSSC will celebrate its 20th anniversary and proposed that at the beginning of the conference the BSSSC Chairman will present a review on the past 20 years of the BSSSC's work.

Ms Saeternes pointed out that this year, it will be the 20th BSSSC Annual Conference and that next year the BSSSC will celebrate its 20th anniversary of establishment.

The board agreed on the proposed conference title, the structure of the programme and the joint session with Baltic Sea Region Programme on 19th September.

Mr David Hunt stressed that it is worth remembering that in 1993 when the BSSSC was established the political aim was to reunite the Baltic Sea region. Nowadays, it is the time for the BSSSC to reconsider its political interests.

3. Political Aims and Goals of the BSSSC

Due to the absence of Mr Olgierd Geblewicz, the Chairman of the BSSSC, Ms Małgorzata Ludwiczek presented the chairmanship statement on the political aims and goals of the BSSSC. The statement was an introduction to further debate on the political reform of the BSSSC and was focused on three main issues: the scope of topics and activities in the BSSSC; the cooperation with partner organisations in the context of the role of the BSSSC in the decision making process on the European level; the organization of the work of the BSSSC (for a complete text see attachment).

Mr Knud Andersen thanked for the introduction to the discussion. He underlined that the BSSSC should adopt to the changing reality, which is not the same as 20 years ago when the organization was founded. He stressed that the biggest successes of the BSSSC are based on networking. He proposed to strengthen the cooperation with other Baltic organizations on the common strategic issues. Mr Andersen stressed the importance of improving the contact between the BSSSC member regions and their national platforms. He gave an example from the work on the BSSSC statement on cohesion policy where only 5 five member regions participated in the creation process.

Mr David Hunt indicated the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region as one of the policy areas where the BSSSC should continue its contribution. The BSSSC was very active and effective up and till the formulation of the strategy, but at the present stage of implementation the BSSSC has no influence

on the strategy. The BSSSC should work out how to effectively deal with the strategy and how to set up communication links to find out what is happening and which areas can be influenced.

Ms Saeternes as a rapporteur on the BSR Programme, underlined that the BSSSC can also have an influence on the new shape of the Baltic Sea Region Programme, because within the programming committee there are representatives of the BSSSC member regions. She informed that there is a plan to invite a Pan-Baltic organization into the programming work. The new BSR Programme will be more related to the EUSBSR and multi-level governance subject.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska pointed out that the EUSBSR has become an administrative tool and a platform for sharing information on running the Baltic Sea projects. Ms Wróblewska stressed the need for influencing the regions by using their national authorities, which will help to increase the visibility of the regions in the EUSBSR. Concerning networking, she proposed a closer cooperation with other Pan-Baltic organizations for instance during the BSSSC Annual Conference or the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2012 in Copenhagen. She suggested trying, together with other organizations, to influence the programme of the Annual Forum, by organizing a joint seminar etc. Ms Wróblewska also focused on the BSSSC agreement with the Committee of the Regions. She proposed a joint event with the CoR in Brussels that would be related to the most important issues for the regional authorities.

Mr Thore Westermoen proposed to establish a working group on the BSSSC reform process. He agreed that the BSSSC should have a closer cooperation with others organizations. Mr Westermoen also stressed that the BSSSC, in principle, is working as a network. He noticed a need to concentrate on the way the BSSSC is working, to reconsider the BSSSC's most important goals and to try to find out how the BSSSC can involve the national governments in its work.

Mr Andersen, in regards to the EUSBSR, stressed the need to influence the state level in each country, which is at the moment responsible for the strategy implementation. He proposed to strengthen the contact with the European Commission, which is interested in working closer with the regional authorities.

Mr Esko Lotvonen pointed out that the debate on the BSSSC political goals has very good timing, especially for the preparation of the Helisinki-Ussimaa Chairmanship. Concerning the topics of the BSSSC's interests, he mentioned: the energy, research and innovation policy. He agreed that the BSSSC should join forces with other Baltic organizations. Mr Lotvonen proposed to continue the BSSSC's cooperation with the CBSS and the Northern Dimension Partnerships, which are representatives of the national structures.

Mr David Hunt asked a question about how the BSSSC will be represented during upcoming Baltic events such as: Baltic Sea Days, European Maritime Day, the EUSBSR Annual Forum. He proposed to give a mandate to smaller groups to actively participate and to present the topics of interest for the BSSSC. He noted that the BSSSC takes part in such events mostly as a passive observer and does not intervene in

the ongoing debates. He suggested to reconsider the involvement of the BSSSC in projects related to the EUSBSR.

Ms Marlene Rothe agreed that the BSSSC mostly influenced the EUSBSR at the formulation stage. She noted that a positive effect of the EUSBSR is a willingness to cooperate between organizations and different actors from the Baltic area. She proposed to target the projects which should be supported by the BSSSC. She suggested that the BSSSC should be involved in more projects as an associated partner. Ms Rothe mentioned the cooperation of the BSSSC WGMP with working groups from other organizations, which organized together a joint event during the European Maritime Day in Gdańsk, and are planning next joint events for the future. The aim of this cooperation is to establish a dialogue between Baltic organizations and actors of the EUSBSR. She suggested that this example of the partner work of the BSSSC WGMP with other Baltic organization, could be transferred to other fields of the BSSSC's actions.

Ms Saeternes informed the Board that for the next programming period, the regulation of the partnership issue will be very important. She stated that working as a network is mostly advantageous for the BSSSC, as it makes its work more flexible. She proposed to think about the areas in which the BSSSC was successful and those needing improvement, while formulating the future goals of the organization.

Ms Ludwiczek concluded the discussion, which concentrated mostly on the following aspects: focus on networking; strengthening the dialogue with the national platforms; joint activities with other Baltic organizations and using the events organized in the BSR to promote the regional approach; stronger involvement of the member regions' representatives in the BSR Programme; establishment of the temporary, virtual working group on the future priorities of the BSSSC; engagement in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region; creation of the separate point on the BSSSC meetings agenda related to the BSSSC reform. Ms Ludwiczek informed that the Secretariat will come back to the board with proposals concerning further work on the BSSSC reform process.

Mr Toivo Riimaa pointed out that there is still a need to also focus on the problem that countries such as Russia, Lithuania and Latvia are not participating in the BSSSC Board meetings.

Ms Ludwiczek informed that the Secretariat contacts those countries regularly, but unfortunately due to their internal problems they are not able to participate in the BSSSC Board meetings.

Mr Lotvonen proposed that the working group should be organized on the troika system.

Mr Hunt suggested that the part concerning the BSSSC's strengths and weaknesses should be included in the conclusion from the debate and could serve as a starting point for the further discussion.

Mr Jon Halvard Eide asked if the BSSSC has an observatory role in the CBSS ?

Mr Hunt clarified that CBSS is a strategic partner for the BSSSC. At the joint meeting in Berlin, it will be a good opportunity to discuss with the CBSS what this partnership should look like.

Ms Wróblewska added that in the past, the cooperation between the BSSSC and the CBSS was working well and that the BSSSC representatives were regularly invited to the CBSS meetings

[BREAK]

After the break Ms Ludwiczek welcomed and presented the special guests who had been invited to the meeting – representatives of the Best Agers project: Ms Ewa Hedkvist Petersen and Ms Monica Carlsson from Norbotten County Council in Sweden and Ms Yulia Victorova – representative of the St. Petersburg State University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics – one of the project's partners.

4.1 Cohesion Policy

Ms Ludwiczek informed the Board that the report had been sent out before the meeting. Mr Knud Andersen added to this point that the Danish government, a few days before the meeting, had had a meeting which resulted in the successful simplification of the projects' administration procedures.

Ms Ann-Irene Saeternes mentioned the regulations which Norway has been lobbying for. It concerns the status of the lead partner. The territorial cooperation objective includes third countries but it does not allow them to act as a lead partner – these have to come from the EU. She hoped that this could be considered by the Board. She asked if this paragraph should be developed or omitted. Ms Saeternes also pointed out that the connections between the INTERREG programmes and the macro-regional structures are weak. She proposed to strengthen this paragraph.

Mr Jon Eide asked about the letter that the BSSSC Secretariat had received from Commissioner Hanhn.

Ms Ludwiczek informed that this was just an answer with thanks for the document that had been sent before.

Mr David Hunt said that B7 is affected by the presence of two programmes: South Baltic and Central Baltic because it's difficult for the member-islands to develop a cross-border project. Firstly, when the Commission designed the programmes, this option was available but as soon as it went out to the member states it got particularly difficult.

Mr Eide underlined the fact that BSR programme mainly will focus on the implementation of the EU Strategy for the BSR and as Norway is a non-EU member, he wondered if it would have influence on Norway's participation in the programme.

Mr Andersen said that the problem also appears when the state level is responsible for the implementation of the Strategy. In this scenario money will be moved from the cohesion policy to the Strategy, and that will result with withdrawal of the funds from the regions to the national level. The same pattern will be repeated in the case of Norway. The more the INTERREG and structural funds will be aligned with the Strategy, the less opportunities will there be for the regions and Norway afterwards.

Ms Saeternes added that if the programme was an important tool, it would give more possibilities for Norway to be more active in the Baltic Strategy. So if we make the programme more regional, this will lead to making the Strategy more regional. She also said that we have to advocate for this because this solution gives bigger access to the Strategy.

4.2 EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Ms Małgorzata Ludwiczek informed the Board that the draft of the joint paper is a result of the joint meeting in Gdansk. The BSSSC was represented there by Mr Knud Andersen. The B7, UBC, CPMR BSC, BDF and Euroregion Baltic were present. She informed the Board that some parts of the BSSSC position paper were included in the document. She asked the Board for a decision concerning the adoption.

Mr Andersen said that the main idea was to underline the need when preparing the paper, to take some of the responsibilities from the state level. He had some concerns regarding the length of the document, in his opinion it is too long. He proposed to reduce it to 10%. The most important aspect is to make contact with the European Commission and to contact the national governments and inform them about the problem.

4.3 Maritime policy

Ms Ludwiczek informed the Board that the report prepared by Schleswig-Holstein has been attached to the documentation.

Ms Marlene Rothe informed the Board that due to the absence of Mr Stefan Musiolik – the Chairman of the BSSSC Working Group on Maritime Policy she will report on this issue. She asked the Board for a mandate to represent the activities of the working group during the European Maritime Day in May.

Ms Ludwiczek asked about the programme of the European Maritime Day. Ms Rothe responded that this is just a meeting of the working group and as soon as she has the presentation, she will send it out.

Mr David Hunt asked if the Board gives the mandate? The Board approved this request.

4.4 Science and Education

Ms Ludwiczek informed the Board that none of the representatives from Hamburg – the coordinating region was present.

4.5 Youth policy

Ms Ludwiczek informed the Board that a brief report is attached to the documentation. The paper, apart from the information about the webpage and current activities, includes information about the next meeting of the Working Group on Youth Policy which will be held in May in Tallinn and the preparations to the upcoming BSSSC Annual Conference.

Ms Saeternes, referring to what Mr Vladimir Svet had said in Brussels about the engagement of the youth in the works of the BSSSC Board, proposed to prepare the proposals for the upcoming meeting.

Ms Ludwiczek added that a similar discussion is being carried on within the national platforms.

4.6 Cooperation with Russia

Ms Ludwiczek asked for any additional comments on this point as the coordinating region – Hamburg was absent.

Ms Rothe referred to the CBSS initiative called SEBA and asked if the BSSSC wishes to combine its activities with it. She added that Schleswig-Holstein is willing to use its contacts in this respect.

Ms Ludwiczek said that this might be a point of discussion for the upcoming meeting with the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials.

Ms Hannele Luukkainen said that it would be very interesting to raise the issue of the pollution of the Baltic Sea, as Russia is the main factor of that. Ms Lukkainen noted that she would like to include this topic in the agenda of the BSSSC Board – CBSS CSO meeting in Berlin.

5. Baltic Sea Region Programme

Ms Saeternes informed the Board that the paper on this particular issue has also been prepared in advance and attached to the documentation. She asked if the Board is still willing to support the INVOLVE project which was presented during the meeting in Oslo last year, because the project is applying for funding in the last, 5th call. She added that the exhibition of the projects form 4 clusters and will be displayed during the Baltic Sea Days in Berlin. The update on the next programming period will be presented on the upcoming meeting – Ms Saeternes added.

Ms Ludwiczek asked about the deadline for the last call. Ms Saeternes informed that it is 29th March and added that if the BSSSC wishes to support the INVOLVE project, it should be decided now. The project is devoted to the issue of multi-level governance, with focus on water and innovations – has a limited number of areas.

Mr Esko Lotvonen referred to the concept of the meta regions, which was raised during the BSSSC Board meeting in Szczecin last year. Mr Lotvonen asked if there were any updates in this particular matter?

Ms Saeternes said that issue concerns Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg area and there were no meetings related to it lately.

6. Report from Brussels

Mr Sebastian Gojdz informed the Board that the comments on the Declaration of Common Interest between CoR and BSSSC were collected and inserted into the final version of the proposal. He added that as soon as the Board adopts it, he will contact Mr Stahl's cabinet in order to decide about the signing procedure.

Mr Knud Andersen asked about the possibilities of joint events between CoR and BSSSC.

Mr Gojdz confirmed that the point on this particular issue is included in the document, as Ms Krystyna Wroblewska called for the improvement of the cooperation instead of cancelling it.

Mr Anderesen advised that when speaking with the Secretary General, Mr Gojdz could mention this article. Mr Gojdz agreed with it.

Ms Ludwiczek asked the Board for comments.

Ms Saeterens asked if the document will be signed by the Committee of the Regions and the BSSSC and if the other organizations will be sub-partners (on behalf of) or will they be a co-signers? Mr Gojdz replied that the Board should decide about it.

Ms Krystyna Wroblewska asked if the BSSSC has an official title to sign the document on behalf of other organizations. She informed that as far as she knows, UBC wants to sign it separately, they would like to be present at the signing. On the other hand the Euroregion Baltic has nothing against being represented by the BSSSC too.

Ms Ludwiczek said that as far as she knows, the other organizations would prefer to sign it together. This could be an excellent occasion for a joint meeting of the organizations' Chairs – she added.

Ms Saeterenes asked if it means that they will have to separate the agreements with CoR ? How does it work in practice? Should they act together? Ms Ludwiczek said that the previous document was signed by the organizations separately.

Mr Hunt said that he is in favour of the concept of writing a short description of the other organizations at the end of the document.

Ms Ludwiczek asked if the Board could all agree that there should be a possibility to organize a joint meeting on the occasion of the signing with the other organizations? Ms Ludwiczek asked if the document could be approved? The Board agreed.

Mr Sebastian Gojdz mentioned also an issue, which is high on the agenda currently in EU, the SECA regulations (Sulphur Emission Control Areas). He said that he will update the Board on this issue.

7. Presentation of the project

Ms Ewa Hedkvist Petersen and Ms Monica Carlsson from the Norbotten County Council in Sweden presented the project Best Agers.

Ms Ludwiczek thanked them for their presentation.

Ms Wroblewska underlined that it is important to share experiences on this topic. In March the meeting of the regional Parliaments of the South Baltic will be devoted to this issue. She suggested that this could be an idea, regarding the topic of active ageing, to organize a joint meeting between the Baltic organizations and the Committee of the Regions in this year. She referred to the proposal of the Best Agers project to organize an event in early autumn. And since 2012 is the year of active ageing in the EU, this could be an opportunity to join the forces, perhaps on the plenary session of the CoR in November – she added.

Ms Ludwiczek raised the question of how to use the BSSSC website to promote the Best Agers activities. It was agreed that the BSSSC website will serve to promote the actions of the project.

8. BSSSC Board meetings in 2012

Ms Ludwiczek informed the Board that there has been contact between the BSSSC and the CBSS secretariats concerning the upcoming joint meeting of the BSSSC Board and the CBSS Committee of the Senior Officials in April in Berlin. She said that the venue is still unknown, but it has been confirmed that only 1 hour and 10 minutes will be allocated for this. The CBSS suggested discussing the topic of SEBA. She turned to the Board with a question about which topic to take up.

Mr Hunt suggested dealing with the topic of cooperation with the CBSS, as it is the core organization, the one recognized by the European Commission which represents the entire Baltic Sea Region.

Ms Ludwiczek thanked Mr Hunt for the proposal.

Ms Wroblewska said that it is crucial to have a representative to the Commission from a different level – the regional one as it is as equally important as the national.

Ms Ludwiczek suggested picking one topic and on this basis, discuss the cooperation between the organizations.

Ms Wroblewska proposed the topic devoted to the cooperation with Russia, as soon the Russians will take over the chairmanship of the CBSS.

Mr Gojdz proposed the topic of the Northern Dimension as it covers the areas of transport etc. How to transfer the knowledge to the regional level.

Ms Saeternes informed that the ND Steering Committee meeting will be held on the occasion of the Baltic Sea Days in April in Berlin as well. She suggested that BSSSC Chairman can join this meeting. She also underlined the fact that the ND and the CBSS is not one body. She added that Mr Uno Aldegren, who is responsible for the transport issues, should speak up. She also asked about the exact time of the meeting, as it is crucial to make the transportation arrangements.

Ms Marlene Rothe confirmed that the meeting will start at 14:00, at the Federal Ministry.

Ms Ludwiczek said that she will forward the draft proposals and informed the Board that the Secretariat proposes to set the last meeting in this year for 6/7 December, in Brussels.

Mr Hunt said that at this time there will be the B7 Annual Conference. On the 6th, Finland will celebrate its independence day – added Mr Esko Lotvonen. As previously agreed, the joint meeting on active ageing could be held on 28-30 November. The Secretariat will come with the proposal at the next meeting.

9. Reports from meetings and events

Mr David Hunt gave a short presentation on the Multi-Level Governance Project – INVOLVE. Mr Hunt attended the workshop on 10-11 January. He reminded the Board that the BSSSC had supported the project in the previous call, but it was rejected. The B7 is interested in this project, it is seen as a good tool to contact the European Commission and give recommendations concerning the implementation of the Strategy. Mr Hunt presented the 3 work packages, WP 1 is a general administration involving politicians, WP 2 is a dissemination, as the work with the Strategy requires an exchange of information – he added. WP 4 focuses on several areas such as water etc. On 28-29 March there will be the next meeting. Mr Hunt underlined the fact that if the BSSSC is willing to give support to this project, it should be more specific. It should include concrete information on why the project is important and how it could provide benefit for the BSSSC. Next week Mr Hunt said he will send the draft of the letter. He underlined that the main problem with this kind of projects is that many regions are involved, but it does not make it multi-governance. It requires national level partners.

Ms Ludwiczek asked for a decision. The BSSSC Board agreed on this.

Ms Ludwiczek briefly presented the Baltic Sea Media Forum which was held on 5-7 February.

9. Coming events

The events were listed in the agenda.

10. Any other business

Ms Ludwiczek presented the activities undertaken recently by the BSSSC Secretariat. These were:

1. Contest for the best thesis on the issue related to the Baltic Sea Region, organized under the patronage of the Marshal of the Westpomeranian Region and announced among all Polish universities.
2. Proposal of changing the BSSSC internet domain from .com to .org. The Board approved it.
3. Proposal of a new BSSSC logo contest. The Board disapproved of the idea.

Ms Marlene Rothe presented the issue of culture and Baltic identity. She informed the Board that after the last BSSSC Board meeting in Brussels there was a meeting with Mr Colin Wolfe. The common initiative of the Ars Baltica and the Government of Schleswig-Holstein is to strengthen the cultural and regional identity in the BSR Strategy. The European Commission responded positively – she added. During the meeting in Berlin more details will be delivered.

In closing Ms Ludwiczek informed the Board that TransBaltic had turned to the Secretariat with a request. It concerned the support letter of the BSSSC in the follow-up project that TransBaltic entitled 'BSR TransGovernance'. Ms Ludwiczek briefly presented the concept.

Mr Hunt said that since that is the last call and there is not much money left, only a few projects will be selected. He added that the TransGovernance project is a joint initiative of 3 different transport projects under the umbrella of the multi-level governance. As the last call from the BSR Programme is designed for a horizontal project, this is the only way how the funds can be reached – he added. Mr Hunt also advised considering supporting one project not two.

Ms Saeternes shared the same opinion.

Mr Eide said that the application is very logical and transparent. Mr Eide said that he is in favour of this project as the written documentation was presented. Mr Eide added that the Board should consider choosing one project as they are competing.

Mr Lotvonen said that he sees no restrictions in supporting both projects as there are dealing, in fact, with different issues.

Ms Krystyna Wroblewska said that supporting two competing projects is not a good idea. She proposed to prepare 2 letters of support which clearly shows why exactly the project is backed by the organization.

Ms Saeternes added that the Board should consider how the BSSSC can benefit from these projects. She added that the INVOLVE project clearly corresponds to what the BSSSC is actually doing. The transport project asks for the support in order to increase its chances – she added. So the question is, if the BSSSC just wants give support or get involved.

Mr Eide asked if the INVOLVE project had submitted the final application to the BSSSC Board? Ms Ludwiczek replied to this by saying that the project manager presented the project personally last year. She also informed that Mr David Hunt is the organization's representative in the steering committee.

Mr Hunt said that others were also representing the BSSSC during the meeting. Mr Hunt said that until recently TransBaltic was a part of the INVOLVE project and the reason why it doesn't want to be a part of it anymore, is because the TransBaltic is closing and obviously the project leaders wish to continue.

Mr Knud said that if the BSSSC is already involved in the INVOLVE project, it should stick to it because it would look strange if the BSSSC supported 2 projects in one call.

The final decision was to give support to the INVOLVE project.

Ms Ludwiczek thanked everybody for their contribution and discussion.

BSSSC Secretariat

Attachment to the point 3 : Political aims and goals of the BSSSC

In the absence of the Chairman Mr Geblewicz I'd like to present the chairmanship statement an introduction of a discussion today.

Dear Board members,

At this point of the agenda we 'd like to discuss the future of the BSSSC in response to the wish of the Board expressed some months ago. We decided not to present a new, improved or corrected Terms of Reference paper as we think that Terms of Reference of the BSSSC adopted by the Board in 2007 is still a good basis for the work of the BSSSC and we do not intend to make any revolutionary changes – unless the Board makes such a decision.

However we hope you agree that nowadays the political, economic and social situation is going through big changes. The BSSSC should respond to these changes and challenges. Other Baltic organisations such as the CBSS and recently the UBC have been undertaking the internal reform and this is a good time to talk about possible directions and developments of our work.

We would propose to focus this discussion on three issues.

- 1) the scope of topics and activities in the BSSSC
- 2) the cooperation with partner organisations in the context of the role of the BSSSC in the decision making process on the European level
- 3) the organisation of the work of the BSSSC

Firstly let me refer to the scope of activities in the BSSSC

We believe that the main aim of an organization such as ours is to identify common goals and interests and to promote and lobby for them together on a European or regional level, in order (generally speaking) to realize some improvements and developments in the BSR.

This can be done in each field – economic affairs, maritime policy, social affairs and this is what the BSSSC has been doing for years in such areas as – the northern dimension, maritime policy, transport, education, climate change and youth policy. Now we can discuss which goals and in which areas should be defined and realized for the future work . It seems that there should be a limited number of areas and concrete measurable goals.

It is important to ensure that these areas and topics are important for all regions – we have to remember that the BSSSC is very diverse and the regions have got different needs and key objectives. Therefore, there is a need for a discussion in the Board and a decision to be made concerning the overall goals and areas of interest for the BSSSC. This process is crucial in the time of economic, political and social change in Europe and the Baltic Sea Region.

Another important challenge that stems from the variety of our regions, is that some member regions have special interests which are not so important for the others. So there should be the possibility to discuss and support such a topic, too.

Bearing all this in mind we would propose that the priority areas and concrete political goals in each area should be carefully defined and that the activities of the working groups should be focused on achieving the political goals of the BSSSC. Such working groups should consist of representatives from preferably all regions to ensure that all points of view are raised. A good practice example of such work was the recent BSSSC paper on cohesion policy to which all regions contributed.

The possible areas in which BSSSC shall focus on in the future are to be decided by the board. There is a broad number to choose from

- Maritime Policy

- Green growth

- Demography change and migration

- Adaptation to climate changes

- Health and sustainable lifestyle issues

- Baltic Metropolis – impact to regional policy

- Cultural Heritage and Baltic Identity

- Sparsely inhabited areas

- Education and science

- Youth and youth exchange

- Business cooperation

- Northern Dimension – cooperation with Russia and Nordic Organisations

Energy issues – energy safety, renewable energy
Branding of the Baltic Sea Region

Surely the BSSSC cannot deal with all those issues in a way that the work would bring significant political change. Therefore BSSSC should concentrate on one or two areas for a period longer than longer than 2 years.

Secondly let me underline the role of the BSSSC in the decision making process. And its cooperation with Baltic Organisations.

Another important aim of the BSSSC is to react at an early stage to developments that are carried out on a European level (such as the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region or the Cohesion policy) and influencing these processes for the benefit of our regions – the members of the BSSSC.

We have been very successful in doing this – we were very active in all aspects of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and also the policy paper on the future cohesion policy will influence this policy in some way.

To make our efforts even more successful – we believe that close cooperation with other Baltic organisations can bring good results, but at this point our action plan should also be clear and concrete. Perhaps then we should devote some of our following Board meetings to discuss along with the UBC, the CPMR and B7 an action plan of cooperation and joint lobbying in certain areas. We may find common topics and develop cooperation with similar working groups. And may also furthermore formulate common goals and activities.

The first opportunity comes already in April at the joint CBSS CSO and BSSSC Board meeting in Berlin. And again the good practice example is the work of the Maritime WG and its cooperation on a regular basis with relevant working groups of BSPC and CPMR. Mr. Musolik is not here with us but he can confirm that it's a difficult task but nevertheless worthwhile.

The third issue which may need to be discussed is linked to the of the organizational issues .

The BSSSC is a non-fee organisation and it is based on the involvement of the regions, the commitment of the Board members and the professional skills of the staff. The system of troika with previous, current and subsequent Chair region working together ensures continuity and smooth transition between the chairmanships.

However a two year period seems rather short to reach the goals of the Chairmanship. Moreover building up the Secretariat from scratch every two years affects the results of work.

Therefore we would like to ask the board whether there are other/further possible solutions to ensure efficiency, professionalism and constantly high standards of the BSSSC management.