



BSSSC BOARD MEETING
June 10th, 2020

MINUTES

Date: 10 June 2020
Online meeting
10:00 – 13:00

Present:

Board Members: Mr. Ossi Savolainen (Regional Mayor of Uusimaa Regional Council, Finland), Ms. Sari Rautio (Vice - Chairperson of the Managing Board Regional Council of Häme, Finland), Mr. Stefan Musiolik (Ministry of Justice, European Affairs, Consumer Protection and Equality of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany), Mr. Reiner Kneifel-Haverkamp (Brandenburg Ministry of Finance and for European Affairs, Germany), Ms. Agnes Lusti (BSSSC Youth Board Member, Østlandsamarbeidet, Norway), Mr. Mieczysław Struk (BSSSC Chairman – Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland), Ms. Alla Ivanova (Agency for International Affairs and Regional Cooperation of the Kaliningrad Region, Russia), Mr. Ilmar Reepalu (Region Skåne, Sweden).

Board Civil: Mr. Toivo Riimaa (Deputy Director Estonian Association of Cities and Municipalities, Estonia), Ms. Krista Taipale (Head of International Affairs, Helsinki EU Office, Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, Finland), Mr. Matti Lipsanen (Director of Regional Development Regional Council of Häme, Finland), Mr. Janne Tamminen (International Advisor Uusimaa Regional Council, Finland), Ms. Marlene Rothe (Senior advisor, Unit of Baltic & North Sea Affairs - Schleswig-Holstein, Germany), Mr. Christopher Lucht (BSSSC Youth Coordinator - Brandenburg, Germany),

Special guests: Mr. Bernd Hemingway (the Council of the Baltic Sea States).

Others: Ms. Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło (Head of the ERB International Permanent Secretariat), Ms. Monika Pochroń-Frankowska (Head of the International Cooperation Bureau, Pomorskie Marshal's Office, Poland), Ms. Julia Orluk (BSSSC Youth Board delegate from Pomorskie, Poland).

Secretariat: BSSSC Secretariat (Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska - BSSSC Secretary General, Head of the Baltic Sea Cooperation Bureau Pomorskie Region, Poland, Ms. Małgorzata Maria Klawiter-Piwowarska - BSSSC Executive Secretary, Ms. Marta Czarnecka – Gallas - BSSSC Communication Officer, Ms. Agata Birecka), Ms. Anna Drążek (BSSSC Brussels Antenna, Director of the Pomorskie Regional EU Office in Brussels, Poland).





Digital BSSSC Board meeting Minutes

1. Opening of the Board meeting

1.1. Opening of the meeting – Mr. Mieczysław Struk, BSSSC Chairman

Mr. Struk welcomed the BSSSC Board Members gathered via the online platform because of the pandemic of COVID - 19. In his opening speech, the BSSSC Chairman stressed he is content to see each other, even if at a distance, and introduced the plan for the meeting.

Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska presented short technical instructions for the meeting.

1.3. Adoption of the agenda

Mr. Struk asked the participants of the BSSSC Board to approve the online meeting agenda.

The Agenda was adopted.

1.4. Adoption of the minutes from the Board Meeting in Brussels, February 18th 2020

The Minutes were adopted.

2. Covid-19 pandemic – status in BSSSC regions

Mr. Struk proposed to start the meeting with sharing information on the COVID – 19 situation in the BSSSC countries. The Chairman underlined that we are far from having controlled COVID - 19 and there are still more questions than answers. He stated also that we should be able to draw conclusions from what had happened and prepare better for the future. Mr. Struk suggested then to make an informative round on COVID – 19 situation in the BSSSC member regions. The BSSSC Chairman passed the floor to Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska.

The Secretary General of the BSSSC informed that the total confirmed number of Polish citizens infected by the virus was 27 160. 12 988 persons had successfully recovered. 1 166 persons had died. The situation differed from region to region, but in the Pomorskie region, it was quite good. The most affected region was Silesia, because of work conditions in two coal mines. Ms. Wróblewska presented then a brief report on the lockdown exit strategy. She explained that Poland had loosened the restrictions, which had been quite strict. Restaurants and services had been reopened, children of working parents had been able to return to nurseries or kindergartens but their parents could still choose to stay home and receive 80 % of the salary. Classes in schools were to be held online until the end of June. Secondary school final graduation exams, only in written form, had just begun and would continue until the end of the month. Wearing masks or another kind of garment covering





the mouth and nose was still obligatory, but only in situations, where it was not possible to keep a distance of two meters e. g. shops or public transport. People were allowed to use sports facilities, but they could allow only up to 150 persons. Travel was restricted until June 12, but this might change depending on the pandemic situation in our country. In closing, Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska said that Marshal Struk had his personal experience with COVID-1. His condition had not been very serious and he had recovered quite fast.

Mr. Ilmar Reepalu shared the information on behalf of the Swedish BSSC Board Member. He said that the great majority of cases - ca. 75 % of 4 700 of COVID deaths - came only from the Stockholm community and its homes for elderly and special care homes. The authorities were trying to investigate what had happened there really and who was responsible for the situation. One option was that the people working there had not been properly informed about necessary restrictions. The government has decided to start easing the coronavirus lockdown. From June 13, 2020 people had been allowed to travel, however, everybody was expected to keep a social distance. The Swedish people did not think everything was over yet and continue to be very careful.

Mr. Stefan Musiolik thanked for giving him the floor and informed that Schleswig – Holstein was, fortunately, less affected. He explained that in Germany there had been 1 805 confirmed COVID cases and 300 newly infected persons per day. It meant 2, 9 infections per 100 000 inhabitants. He stated that the country's way to tackle the Corona crisis had been quite successful. The country had experienced severe lockdown, but there had been also broad support from the citizens. Mr. Musiolik said that Germans had experienced rather specific than general problems, as in Brasil or the United States or Spain and Italy. He said that in Schleswig - Holstein, there had been all in all 65 infected persons and only 8 new cases during the last week which was very little in a 2. 8 million land. Mr. Stefan pointed out that Germany was more or less ready to come back to normal life. Primary schools had been reopened only for the youngsters - from grades 1 to 4. He admitted that this was a positive development, but there was still a need to be careful because the situation could change immediately. Mr. Musiolik presented the situation in his office - most of the meetings had been held from home using online solutions. he and many other employees had had to learn the new systems like ZOOM or MS Teams and that he saw it as a positive development as we are all making better use of the available digital tools.

Ms. Sari Rautio mentioned several that many of us had gained a lot of experience meeting, also together at online discussions, conferences, etc. Concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, she informed that there had been about 7 000 people infected by the virus and 312 death cases. She admitted that Finland had coped with the danger of Corona - illness very well. She enumerated two main factors responsible for this: the fact that everybody had strictly followed the rules and that Finland is a sort of an island. In Ms. Rautio's opinion, very helpful was also that Finland is not a densely populated country and that in everyday life they do not meet so many people. She said that the government had introduced a serious lockout as of the 13th of March and civil life had almost stopped. She informed also that the economic





crisis because COVID-19 was enormous and the authorities were doing their best to find solutions.

Ms. Sari Rautio stressed also that at the same time Finland had been experiencing a big climate crisis and she concluded that there was a need for really close cooperation and learning from each other. In closing, she mentioned that Finland had loosened restrictions and reopened the schools two weeks before the summer leave. Finns had been learning to adjust to the “new normality” and trying to find out ways how to cope with the financial crisis. Ms. Rautio suggested that cooperation within the EU and the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) was more needed than ever before.

Ms. Ann Irene Sæternes apologized on behalf of Mr. Roger Ryberg who could not join the Board meeting due to the work-related duties in the region and sent greetings to all the participants. She said that in Norway there was a very low level of new COVID cases, something like 15 -20 infected persons every day. Most of them (about 70 %) came from the Oslo region and there were a lot of municipalities with no COVID cases from the very beginning. Norway had had 39 deaths and the average age of infected persons was 82. There had been some cases in elderly care homes, but the authorities had been doing their best to improve the situation. Schools had been reopened, but universities kept distance learning. People were still encouraged to work from home and not use public transport too much. She stated that even though COVID affected mostly the elderly, young people had been hit by it too. She explained that summer jobs had not been available for them anymore, so they could not earn money and study in autumn. There were many more applications for studies because the youth were afraid of not getting jobs. Most popular are faculties which could guarantee more secure jobs e. g. in the construction sector. Ms. Sæternes said that the economic situation in the tourism industry was also quite bad, so Norwegians are encouraged to travel within their country. She informed that borders would be rather closed, but there were discussions about opening connections with Scandinavia, especially with Denmark. She finally stated that there had been a lot of bankruptcy cases in the gastronomy and hospitality sectors. She said that Norway had funds available and would use it as support. She expressed her personal opinion that we should focus especially on young people and maybe this was an issue we should share as the BSSSC and work on it.

The BSSSC Chairman thanked and asked Ms. Ann Irene Sæternes to congratulate Mr. Roger Ryberg on his new function.

Ms. Krista Taipale shared some information on behalf of the Helsinki Uusimaa region. She said that Ms. Sari Rautio gave a very good overview of the Finnish situation. She stated that Finland had done rather well with the Corona crisis. The total number of infected had been about 7 000 (ca. 5 000 in Helsinki Uusimaa region) and only 324 deaths. The situation was comparable to that in Norway and Sweden. Borders had been closed for three weeks. The Helsinki Uusimaa region has suffered a lot economically from the Corona. The human consequences were extremely severe, in other Finnish regions too. Ms. Taipale explained that





she was staying in Belgium at the moment, so her colleague from Helsinki would better highlight all the restrictions concerning Coronavirus. She passed the floor to Mr. Janne Tamminen.

Mr. Janne Tamminen said that the region had suffered relatively badly, especially the tourism industry and gastronomy. Young people had lost their summer jobs. He informed that sectors like engineering had not been hit so much. The government had loosened the restrictions and restaurants had been reopened, but there had been a need for the authorities to support this most suffering from the Corona crisis. Mr. Janne Tamminen stressed also that all summer cultural events had been canceled and this was a big problem for the region, but he thinks that situation will get better and better.

Mr. Kneifel - Haverkamp informed about the situation in the state of Brandenburg stressing it was quite similar to Schleswig - Holstein, but major problems had been actually in the border areas with Poland. „Circulation of goods has been maintained, but unfortunately not so much circulation of human” - informed Mr. Kneifel - Haverkamp. People who entered Poland were subjected to quarantine. It was very difficult for commuters. He admitted also that east German and western Polish regions had already integrated and it was really a problem to close the borders and make traffic difficult again. Mr. Kneifel - Haverkamp responded to Ms. Krista Taipale’s comment on the social and economic consequences of COVID - 19. He explained the Germans had been very much in line with their government when the lockdown came, but now when societies and economies had been slowly opening up, there appeared a lot of different conspiratory theories and political groups that capitalized on that. He admitted that it would be very interesting to see what was going to happen in the nearest future. He agreed with Ms. Rautio’s statement that European and international cooperation would be very important for us all to recover and create an economic boost.

Mr. Bernd Hemingway thanked the Board for the invitations stated that he had learned a lot on digital cooperation during COVID-19 period. He said that the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) for the first time ever had its official meeting in the form of a video conference, which was quite challenging. In Mr. Hemingway’s opinion, it had one disadvantage - it was difficult to get some discussions among the ministers. He told then it was the first time for many years that all ministers had been present at the Council meeting, which was very positive. Despite some technical obstacles, he assumed it all in all as a good time. He said that from his side there had been a problem with the real reliability of Coronavirus data. All the regions and all the countries had different ways of sharing it, which makes it difficult to compare figures. He thought that this should be an issue to look into. The CBSS representative then said that a small survey had been made among their seniors' advises which concentrated on the impact of the Corona crisis on the long term priorities of the CBSS. He suggested sharing the assessment with the BSSSC. Ms. Wróblewska answered she would be very grateful to get the information.





Ms. Alla Ivanova said that Kaliningrad's situation is relatively similar to the rest of the BSSSC regions. There were still new COVID cases - about 40 - 46 new infections per day and one person had died so far. The authorities had been easing the Coronavirus lockdown. It was still obligatory to wear masks in public places. Summer resorts and hotels would be reopened in the nearest future. Citizens of Russian regions would be welcomed to the Kaliningrad region in two weeks. People in more than eighty countries were still waiting for the possibilities to come back to their homes. Country borders were opened only for people who were studying in Poland or had relatives in Lithuania. Ms. Alla Ivanova added that the economy suffered a lot and people were looking forward to supporting from the state.

Mr. Toivo Riimaa mentioned that the population in Estonia is 1.3 mln people and 92 000 COVID tests had been done. The number of confirmed infections had been 1 958, which was 2.1 % of the total number of tests. 105 persons were in hospitals and 11 positive cases had been confirmed during the last 24 hours. Totally, 69 deaths in the Corona period. Mr. Riimaa mentioned that mostly affected sectors were as in the other states: tourism, gastronomy, industry, and gambling. People were told to work from home whenever possible. Up to 5 persons can be seated at a table in the restaurants. Citizens were able to have gatherings, but no more than 50 persons in closed areas and 100 in open areas. Concerning the borders, there had been a free movement within the Baltic Sea Region.

Mr. Struk thanked for the presentations and expressed his hope that we would come out stronger from the experience. He informed us that we would later get feedback from Brussels Antenna on how the EU had acted addressing the problem.

3. BSSSC Annual Conference

3.1. Digital BSSSC Annual Conference 2020 - Information by the BSSSC Secretary General, Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska

The BSSSC Chairman addressed the plans to have the Annual Conference (AC) in the region of Kaliningrad on September 29th to October 1st. and admitted that it would be difficult or even impossible to predict what the situation with COVID and border crossing would be at the time. He added that the Working Group (WG) on the AC had already met online and discussed different possibilities. Mr. Struk asked then the Secretary General to report briefly on the results of this discussion and passed the floor to Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska.

The BSSSC Secretary General thanked everybody who had participated in the online conversation on what the BSSSC AC 2020. Ms. Wróblewska said the Working Group suggested having the conference in 2020 but in an online mode. She said that it would be also positive to keep the date as much as possible and then hoping that situation with COVID - 19 would improve have a real-life conference in 2021 in Kaliningrad and 2022 in Estonia. She marked also that if nothing had changed in the meantime both the hosts had already agreed to such a solution. Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska added it would be good to keep the general subject of the conference, because all the things planned to be discussed were still absolutely valid,





maybe with the edition of the pandemic influence on the reality. The Secretary General suggested that, as always, there would be a short Board meeting before the conference on the 29th of September and then several sessions during those days that had been planned. The sessions should be longer than 2 – 3 hours with some breaks included between. Ms. Wróblewska added that it would be good to keep to the idea to compare and bring together the two strategies - EUSBSR and the Russian Strategy for the North - West Russian Regions. Ms. Wróblewska reminded us that we had been already promised that a minister from Russia's federal level would be able to participate. She mentioned that we would try to invite people responsible for the Baltic Sea Strategy which was still under the revision process. She added that it would be important to invite the Chair of the National Coordinators' group (NC group) would be from Germany and representative of the HA Neighborhood. After this discussion, there would be another block in the form of break up sessions defined subjects. On the last day, there would be a closing session, which as Ms. Sæternes suggested, should be devoted to the European Territorial Agenda to be adopted in December 2020. Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska stated that it would be important to have some division of labor because there would be no host as such. The Pomorskie Chairmanship would be the host in the sense that it would provide the online platform and all the technicalities and help arrange the whole event, send out invitations, etc.

3.2. Discussion on the shape of the online conference

3.3. Division of tasks in preparation for the online BSSSC AC 2020

The BSSSC Chairman asked the BSSSC Board Members to comment on the proposal and share responsibilities. Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska asked for the formal agreement from the Board which was given and the discussion followed.

Ms. Sæternes said that it was important to have the conference. She added that some policies and documents had still to be discussed and developed so September would be a good moment to discuss them and provide input. e. g. the new EUSBSR Action Plan, entering into force by the beginning of the following year. She added that this time it might be a conference with some more lectures due to an online formula.

Mr. Musiolik commented that an online meeting would be a challenge, but also the best way to deal with the AC in Corona times. Concerning the introductory session, he raised a suggestion to have the Chairman of the NC group for the EUSBSR. From July 1, 2020, Germany would take over the Chairmanship of the NC group and Mr. Musiolik knows the person in charge in the Foreign Ministry to ask Mr. Simon Stermann and could help to invite him to the conference. Mr. Stefan Musiolik stated that it would be a very good thing to have such an important actor on board. He suggested that one of the breakout sessions could focus on the Baltic Sea Culture Cities project. He said it would be beneficial to invite Ms. Kaarina Williams to the AC because she is the lead partner for developing the Baltic Sea Cultures Cities project. Mr. Musiolik suggested the BSSSC should try to get a person from





the EU Commission, e.g. commissioner or the Director General from DG Regio. He said it would be easier to reach them in a digital way.

Ms. Sari Rautio stated she totally agreed with the opinion of Ms. Sæternes saying that though we all had different experiences, it is possible to have a good online meeting. In her opinion, the worst scenario would be for the BSSSC not to have the conference this year at all.

Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska asked whether there are some other comments from people who had not participated in the meeting of the Working Group itself.

Mr. Reiner Kneifel – Haverkamp, referring to the persons proposed to be invited, it was important to be clear which level we want to aim at. He explained that if we want to have the Director General from the DG Regio for e. g. the introductory session then the other speakers should be on a similar level. He said that we need to search on the higher level and if we do not get a response then go to the level below.

Ms. Wróblewska thanked and agreed with the opinion of Mr. Reiner Kneifel – Haverkamp. The BSSSC Secretary passed then the floor to **Ms. Ann Irene Sæternes**.

Ms. Sæternes noticed it would be Lithuanian Chairmanship of CBSS at the time of the conference, so it would be positive to get someone from the level of the foreign ministers' office in Vilnius. CBSS would then also have a new Director of the Secretariat in Stockholm – Mr. Grzegorz Poznański and it would be good to try to invite him to the opening session. She stated that the Chair of the NC Group will be more connected to the topic of the conference and maybe could interact also with someone from the Foreign Ministry in Moscow.

Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska thanked everybody for their input and asked to join forces on trying to have the best possible people. Ms. Wróblewska asked if the Board Members of the BSSSC agree to arrange the AC in the way it had been discussed.

The Board agreed to proceed with the plans as stated.

The Secretary General suggested that it would be good if the Working Group could meet again online next week, discuss the proposals for the program and send the material out to the Board Members until June the 15th- 16th to figure out the details e. g. whom to invite and how to share the responsibilities, especially when it comes to the breakout sessions.

Mr. Chairman thanked for all the opinions shared so far and proceeded to the next agenda point concerning youth involvement.





4. Youth involvement and empowerment

Mr. Chairman expressed his satisfaction that the youth are so experienced online. He underlined also that the BSSSC was now between two important virtual events – the BSSSC Spring Youth Event which was held June 2nd to 5th and the Baltic Sea Youth Camp (BSYC) which was going to happen June 12-13th. Mr. Chairman asked the BSSSC Secretary General to give information upon the BSSSC Spring Youth Event and then pass the floor to Mr. Christopher Lucht to report on the Baltic Sea Youth Camp and the Baltic Sea Youth Platform (BSYP).

4.1. Report from the BSSSC Spring Youth Event 2020 – Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska

Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska said that she was really satisfied with the BSSSC Youth Spring Event. She described four main topics discussed on each day session and stressed that all in all there had been 16 European experts involved. The BSSSC Secretary General thanked then Ms. Sari Rautio and Mr. Christopher Lucht for their involvement and helping to have excellent panelists. She informed that the number of attendees had been from 40 to 50 of different ages. Panels consisted of professional discussions between experts first and then talks involving the youth also in a form of chats and Q & A sessions. The BSSSC Secretary General mentioned the event had been followed and summed up very professionally in the form of graphics recording which would be sent out to the Board Members. She thanked warmly all the politicians from the BSSSC and the UBC for their participation in the BSSSC Spring Youth Event and encouraged participants of the online Board Meeting to share their opinions.

The Youth Coordinator of the BSSSC shared the presentation about the BSSSC Spring Youth Event showing its outcome and promised to prepare a written summary of it. Mr. Lucht said that the youth had been hit in a very special way by the Corona crisis and there had been nearly no measures that de facto would have tackled the special situation of youngsters. They had been often only seen as students or as pupils, but not in a holistic way as human beings. He presented then conclusions from the Ms. Agnes Lusti meetings with youngsters during which they summed up the event. The general conclusion was that it would be important to involve the youth more in the preparations of the event and give them more floor in the discussion. The topics' range might be not that broad and it would be good to help the youth to prepare better in smaller groups before the event. The youth did not felt invited to real discussions, although they were encouraged and empowered to join. In Mr. Lucht's opinion, the BSSSC needs to think about how to do it better in the future.

Ms. Agnes Lusti admitted it had been a different, but interesting event with very good panelists and experts. She said that it had been a little challenging for the participants. She also stated that it had forced the Secretariat to think in a new way. Ms. Lusti forwarded the opinion from the youth that they considered it a great event which happily had not been canceled.

Mr. Christopher Lucht thanked and said that the BSSSC Spring Youth Event had been absolutely a different experience, but it had been done in a very good way. It was surely





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a learning process for all the organizers. The BSSSC Youth Coordinator shared information on the Baltic Sea Youth Camp. He underlined then very good work of Ms. Aline Mayr and Ms. Kaarina Williams from the CBSS. Mr. Lucht gave also a résumé of the Baltic Sea Youth Platform (BSYP). He added that the AC Youth event in Kaliningrad was coming and mentioned some interesting events like „Dialogue on Youth & European Cooperation” on June 23rd, organized within the Interreg Programme and Interact.

Ms. Julia Orluk took the floor and informed on the working groups within the BSYP. She said they were not ready yet, recruitment was in progress, so there would be a chance for young people to apply.

Mr. Wróblewska asked the Board Members to promote the Baltic Sea Youth Platform among young people and encourage the youth to take part in it.

Mr. Chairman thanked for all the information and admitted that it was good to see that COVID – 19 had not stopped the BSSSC and the youth activities. Mr. Struk thanked also to Ms. Sari Rautio, Mr. Ossi Savolainen, Mr. Stefan Musiolik, and Ms. Alla Ivanova for their participation in the political debate. He apologized for his absence and once again thanked everybody involved in the organization of the event, including – IT experts as well as Mr. Christopher Lucht and the Secretariat for the organization and coordination of the event.

5. CoR Interregional Group ‘Baltic Sea Macroregion’

5.1. Establishment of CoR Interregional Group ‘Baltic Sea Macroregion 2020- 2025’ – Ms. Sari Rautio, Häme

The Chairman expressed his gratitude to Ms. Sari Rautio for her involvement and timing to successfully establish the Interregional Group „Baltic Sea Macroregion 2020 – 2025” within the Committee of the Regions.

Ms. Sari Rautio thanked for kind words and informed she had been working with Mr. Marrku Markkula and Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska as well. Due to the COVID crisis, no meeting of the intergroup had taken place yet, but it was planned in the near future as an online – event. She said the intergroup would concentrate on three main objectives of BSR: 1) the leading innovative and people-centric macro-region, 2) the most sustainable forerunner in Europe and then as well as 3) the first plastic-free sea in the world. She stressed it was essential to cooperate better and coordinate activities within the mentioned areas - on the policy, coordination, and operational level. This was something to discuss within the BSSSC, too. Ms. Rautio presented the preliminary schedule for the 2020 meetings and subjects to discuss: EUSBSR state of the art: theory and practice (14th of May), BSR creating regional innovations ecosystems: BSR Smart - up as a network for change (2nd of July), Implementing SDG’s & Plastic Free Baltic Sea (14th of October), New collaborative operations for BSR regions (10th of December). Ms. Sari Rautio underlined each of these themes would be more specified in collaboration with the invited speakers and hosts of the meetings.





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She introduced members of the official Secretariat of the Intergroup: Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities represented by Ms. Ulla Karvo from Brussels and Ms. Anu Wikman – Immonen from Helsinki. Mr. Janne Tamminen had also promised to join the team. In closing, Ms. Sari Rautio mentioned her three wishes for the BSSSC: 1) to strengthen cooperation, 2) to involve more members of CoR, and 3) to discuss common goals to be to achieve.

Mr. Janne Tamminen thanked Ms. Sari Rautio and underlined that it was important for the BSSSC to be involved in the work of the Intergroup, especially because the BSSSC does not have any permanent representation in Brussels. This is a very good way to be involved in the EU decision - making process. The next very strong connection is that some of the current Members of the Board and also previous chairs of the BSSSC and are among members of the Committee of the Regions too.

The Secretary General of the BSSSC thanked Ms. Rautio on behalf of the Chairmanship and requested the Board Members to contact those politicians in their regions who are delegates or deputies to the Committee of the Regions and try to encourage them to join the Interregional Group.

Mr. Chairman thanked all the Board Members and promised he would try to encourage more delegates to participate. He expressed his hope that the group would be active and strengthen the Baltic dimension of the Committee of the Regions.

Mr. Stefan Musiolik added that it was a very good development as concerns the Committee of the Regions. To have Members from the BSSSC there looked very promising. Mr. Musiolik offered to contact Mr. Bernd Voss (Schleswig – Holstein Member of the CoR) encourage him to participate in the Baltic Sea Interregional Group Committee of the Regions.

Mr. Reiner Kneifel-Haverkamp congratulated Ms. Sari Rautio on her work of establishment of the Intergroup. He admitted that had not seen the list of the current Members.

<Coffee break>

6. Interreg BSR 2021-2027 programming

6.1. Report from Mr. Matti Lipsanen, Häme

Mr. Chairman invited Mr. Matti Lipsanen to inform the Board on Interreg developments.

Mr. Matti Lipsanen started with the presentation of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2021 – 2027. He informed on the progress with preparation and programming work. He said it was possible that the Programme would be ready by December 2021. The Joint Programming Committee (JPC) had a first physical meeting in February, the next one was planned to take place in Turku but then transferred to the digital mode due to the pandemic. The following





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Interreg Values Statements 2021 - 2027 were presented: 1) supporting transition; 2) flexible content; 3) customer Orientation; 3) the transfer of knowledge and capacity building. The objective of the Programme was listed as „transnational cooperation facilitates the transition of the Baltic Sea Region to a cleaner, climate-neutral and a better place to live for all citizens”. There are two Policy Objectives (PO) on Board: smart Europe (PO no. 1) and greener Europe (PO no. 2) and then 3 priorities: 1) Innovative and resilient economies and societies and responsive public services; 2) Sustainable use of the Baltic Sea and regional water resources adapted to the impacts of climate change; 3) Climate change mitigation. The fourth priority is called „Interreg Specific Objective”, which is related to the implementation of the governing of the EUSBSR. Three horizontal topics were mentioned: digitalization, smart specialization, and then the impact of the Corona pandemic.

Mr. Lipsanen admitted that would be quite happy to recommend to go further with PO no. 1 and no. 2 and three priorities and then 7 topics. After the thematic framework of the future Programme has been agreed in the JPC, online consultations would be launched - start of consultations on July 13 and the end on August 21, 2020. The BSSSC is expected to participate in consultations.

Mr. Krista Taipale congratulated Mr. Lipsanen on his great work and stated she was happy with the priorities and topics of the draft.

Mr. Matti Lipsanen thanked for kind words, but underlined that this was also a success of Ms. Ann Irene Sæternes.

Mr. Chairman thanked for professional presentations and good work, which had been done so far.

Mr. Stefan Musiolik thanked Mr. Matti Lipsanen for his good work. He added that at this point he saw better chances to add culture activities in the upcoming Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. He mentioned the BSSSC Position paper on culture from 2018, with a clear wish of the BSSSC that cultural activities should have high priority and should be highlighted in all EU policies. He thanked then Mr. Lipsanen for mentioning the Program Priority no. 1. Culture is mentioned there to a certain degree as „(...) strengthening and coming identity of the Baltic Sea Region or (...) societies resilient through culture changes or e. g. mobilizing creativity”.

The Chairmanship was requested to write a letter to the Joint Programming Committee Chair (and as a copy to the NC Group for the EU Baltic Sea Strategy) supporting the line of the Priority no. 1 to further culture activities in the next Interreg funding period.

Ms. Krista Taipale responded to Mr. Stefan Musiolik, saying this was a very good point, indeed. She informed that culture and tourism had been mentioned by the EU Commission during the previous weeks as two main sectors most affected by the Corona crisis and the EU reaction instruments were exactly focused on these two branches.





Mr. Ilmar Reepalu noticed the Program Priority no. 2 about water and the Baltic Sea is very important. The BSSC should have the possibility now to talk about how to take care of the Baltic Sea. He mentioned there are no cruising ships this year and maybe there would be no next year either. He suggested focusing on how to use the sea and prevent it from throwing too much-polluted water into the Baltic Sea. He offered to share a survey showing how the Baltic Sea is used and how much wastewater is coming out of the sea.

7. MFF and Cohesion Policy

7.1. Update from Rapporteur - Mr. Reiner Kneifel-Haverkamp, Brandenburg

Mr. Chairman reminded that in May the EU Commission proposed the long term budget including the Recovery Plan. He added that the financial EU plans are quite strongly influenced by COVID, which is no surprise. Mr. Chairman asked then Mr. Reiner Kneifel - Haverkamp to report on where the EU is with those plans.

Mr. Reiner Kneifel-Haverkamp admitted that we still were at the current MFF from 2014 - 2020 and the proposals from the EU Commission included € 11 500 billion for the European structures funds mainly. That was for commitments basically only for this year in order sort of to sculpt the whole process. The second proposal from the EU Commission on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework was not so much different from the previous one. New was the combination with the Recovery Plan called „Next Generation EU” that should be used to support reforms in all Member States - especially those most affected by the crisis - and in those sectors where resilience needs appear greatest: employment, education, research, innovation, health, environment, and finance. These are the purposes of the new Recovery and Resilience Facility - the centerpiece of the Recovery Instrument. The Recovery and Resilience Facility had come with a proposed budget of € 560 billion, equipped with a grant facility worth up to € 310 billion and able to make up to € 250 billion in loans. In addition to the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Commission had proposed to finance the adoption of key crisis repair measures in support of small- and medium-sized enterprises through the REACT-EU initiative, equipped with additional funding of € 55 billion between 2020 and 2022.

Mr. Kneifel-Haverkamp referred to Ms. Krista Taipale, who mentioned the React - EU Programme that consists of largely € 55 billion to be given to the eligible Member States under the Cohesion policy, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, and probably the Cohesion Fund. This money goes into the current Operational Programmes which are supposed to terminate maybe until 2023.

Ms. Krista Taipale thanked for the presentation and agreed that it was important to make the decision as soon as possible on the EU level, but at the same time there were still quite big differences between the Member States.





Mr. Kneifel-Haverkamp added that he had been very positively surprised when the French-German governments came out with a € 500 billion package. It meant a huge departure from traditional European German thinking on the EU budget. Angela Merkel only agreed to that package after receiving a green light in the Bundestag. Mr. Kneifel – Haverkamp said that stakes were high, but there was a choice between failing now or fighting for success in the coming years.

8. EUSBSR

8.1. EUSBSR – Revision of the Action Plan – Ms. Ann Irene Sæternes, ENCN

8.2. EUSBSR Annual Forum – Ms. Ann Irene Sæternes, ENCN

Mr. Chairman recalled that the revision process of the EUSBSR still continued and would probably be finalized at the beginning of 2021. Mr. Struk asked Ms. Ann Irene Sæternes to share information concerning the current EUSBSR developments.

Ms. Ann Irene Sæternes said that the EUSBSR revision of the Action Plan lasted much longer than expected. She admitted that there had been an ambition to finalize it by the end of the Finnish Chairmanship of the NC Group, meaning the end of June, but it would enter into force in January 2021, as already mentioned. The NC Group had proposed to establish the Baltic Strategic Point. Ms. Sæternes stated it seemed to be an interesting new way of thinking about the EUSBSR governance. She said also that capacity building had been something that could be within the steering structure. The steering group should be in all PAs and more open for the observers. In Ms. Sæternes opinion, it would be a space for the BSSSC to be active.

Regarding the Turku event, it was still unclear what COVID related situation would be in Finland in October, so the AF would be either digital or in a mixed format. Ms. Sæternes expressed hope that the next AF to be held in Lithuania in 2021 would be a physical meeting with the New Action Plan in place.

9. Transport

9.1. Information from Rapporteur – Mr. Jon Halvard Eide, Agder – to be found in supporting documents

The BSSSC Secretary General shared the information that Mr. Jon Halvard was not able to participate at the Board meeting but he had sent his report, which had been included in the Board meeting document packet.

10. Culture

10.1. Update from Rapporteur – Mr. Stefan Musiolik, Schleswig-Holstein

Mr. Stefan Musiolik thanked the Pomorskie Chairmanship for their support to the proposals of having a better founding framework in the next Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.





He recalled the résumé given by Ms. Ann Irene Sæternes on the current actions aiming at the PA Culture within the EUSBSR. Three of the four areas have been identified as major action fields related to culture: action no. 1 as promoting the BSR's culture and creative industries and encouraging creative entrepreneurship; action no. 2 as promoting the BSR's culture. Cultural diversity and European values, promoting culture as a driver for sustainable development; action no. 3 as preserving the BSR's cultural heritage and strengthening regional identity. Mr. Musiolik stated he was happy to be still in PA Culture and hoped there would be 14 PAs in the future. He recommended then the official website on PA Culture - <https://www.eusbsr-culture.eu/>.

11. Report from Brussels Antenna Ms. Anna Drążek, Director of the Pomorskie Regional EU Office

The Chairman of the BSSSC asked Ms. Anna Drążek to give information on the most important developments within the EU since the last Board meeting.

11.1. The EU response to COVID crisis

Ms. Anna Drążek shared information there had been 9.6 000 of COVID deaths reported and the Belgian health system was close to its maximum capacity for hospitals. The major crisis had been there, thanks to severe measures that had been undertaken. The European Commission and the European Parliament had been very active and reacted early on all fronts – there had been financing, medical research, coordination with the Member States, ordering of necessary medical equipment, major readjustments with founding for the structure of funds as well. The focus here was especially on solidarity and flexibility as a proof the Pomorskie Regional Office sent out the proposal to change the Regional Operational Programme to adapt to the new situation and received a response from the EU Commission. Ms. Drążek reported only on some of the actions taken by the EU institutions and give a link to the website with a timeline of all the EU interventions. The main point here was the New Recovery Plan (MFF 2.0) proposed by the Commission on 27th of May and the „Next Generation EU”. Ms. Drążek added that the Commission had put in the table a proposal allowing more flexibility and more funding for the instruments that were necessary to react to the possible future crisis as well (European Solidarity Fund and European globalization adjustment fund). Ms. Drążek noticed it was only a proposal with a very heated debate still ahead of us. She stated also it would be a difficult task for the EU German presidency to find a middle ground between the poor countries, those most severely struck by the situation, and the countries who were in favour of the proposals including more loans and maybe smaller funding from the EU. The results would be probably at the end of the year. The European Commission had also adjusted its work program for 2020. Ms. Drążek showed the European Commission's website that has all the information about the EU response and timeline of these interventions.





11.2. The Green Deal

Ms. Anna Drążek gave an update about the EU Green Deal, which remains to be a priority, even in the current health crisis. She admitted, that there had been fears, especially during the first weeks of March, that the EU Green Deal would be forgotten and the no. 1 priority would only focus on health issues and economic recovery. It was not the case, because the economic recovery is very much linked to the investments in Green Strategy. There had been no shift in priorities due to the COVID – 19. Ms. Drążek presented then briefly the latest news regarding public consultations related to the Green Deal (on the European Climate Pact – open until 17th of June and on 2020 Climate Change Target Plan open until 23rd of June). She presented also the new proposals from the EU especially the Farm to Fork Strategy and EU Biodiversity Strategy. The first one is about providing citizens with healthier and more affordable food as well as to reducing the use of pesticides and turning the farmland into organic farming. The latter aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 with benefits for people, climate, and the planet. Ms. Drążek presented a list of most important documents and initiatives that were connected to the European Green Deal (Assessment of the final National Energy and Climate Plans, Strategy for Smart Sector Integration, Strategy for sustainable and smart mobility, Renovation wave initiative for the building sector, Strategy on offshore wind, as well as New EU Strategy on Adaptation for Climate Change). She clarified then the idea of the Innovation Fund having which supports innovative low – carbon technologies. It is to be a € 10 billion investment fund. Ms. Drążek promised to prepare a list with the details as fast as the call will be on.

11.3. The Conference on the Future of Europe

Ms. Anna Drążek said that the crisis brought up a question whether the EU had enough powers to tackle a crisis like the current pandemic. Maybe the response would have been faster and better if the EU had more competences in this domain. The treaty change might be an answer to that. A call for this change could be a possible outcome of the incoming Conference on the Future of Europe. The launch of the Conference had been planned for the 9th of May on Europe Day, but it had to be postponed for obvious reasons and now the institutions were planning the start for September, but it is still to be confirmed. The joint position of all the institutions is required to start the discussion about the future of Europe and the Commission, the Parliament is very eager, optimistic, and enthusiastic. Council however had not been very enthusiastic by that moment. The Conference had been planned as institutional dialogue and as bottom-up discussion with citizens to avoid misinformation about the EU and crisis such as. Brexit. The institutions had been working on the technology that would allow the participation of citizens and the safe exchange of use. The ambitious outreach activities that had been planned need to be transformed into digital reality.

11.4. EU Digital Agenda

The European Digital Strategy is a document published on top of the European Strategy for Data and also the White Paper on Artificial Intelligence. There will be three streams





of action: technology that works for people, a fair, competitive, and digital economy as well as an open, democratic, and sustainable society. The main tool for financing the Strategy is Digital Europe Programme. Basically, € 9.2 billion of funding for supercomputing (€ 2.7 billion), AI (€2.5 billion), cybersecurity (€ 2 billion), advanced digital skills (€ 700 million), ensuring a wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society (€ 1.3 billion) as well.

11.5. The Priorities of the German EU Council Presidency

Ms. Drązek presented the logo of the German Presidency in the EU Council. The Presidency had already been forced to reshuffle the priorities. The major goal is to tackle challenges brought about by the COVID pandemic. Other key topics include negotiations to be completed as quickly as possible to make funding available. The next points are mainly focused on climate changes and digital transformation as well as rule of law and relations with the UK. She recommended then the German Presidency website.

Ms. Anna Drązek shared a quick update on the European agenda. European institutions had gone digital. European Committee of Regions had been meeting online as well and this would be true for the major events planned in Brussels, such as. EU Sustainable Energy Week (22nd - 26th of June) with the First European Youth Energy Day, the EuroPCom conference (29th of June and 7th - 8th of December - depending on the situation it will be online, physical or hybrid), European Week of Regions and Cities (12th-15th of October - TBC).

12. BSSSC communication activities report

12.1. Report by Ms. Marta Czarnecka-Gallas, BSSSC Secretariat, Pomorskie

Mr. Chairman said that the BSSSC Secretariat sees the need for regular and modern external and internal communication, so all BSSSC social media channels, as well as the website, had been updated. Pomorskie had sent out one BSSSC newsletter and had been working on the next one at the moment. The Secretariat focused on online campaigns e. g. during the BSSSC Spring Youth Event. Mr. Struk then passed the floor to Ms. Czarnecka - Gallas.

Ms. Czarnecka – Gallas presented a brief report on the BSSSC communication activities, which had mainly focused on the BSSSC website updated, concerning issues most relevant for the Baltic Sea Region cooperation. Ms. Czarnecka – Gallas invited then the Board Members to follow FB, TT regularly. She mentioned that the recent newsletter differed a little to the previous ones. It had been enriched with some news related to the BSSSC website, articles about the current situation in the BSR and in Europe as well as with information on the COVID - 19 situation. The BSSSC Secretariat had been very active on social media e. g. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. She presented a digital campaign prepared for the BSSSC Spring Youth Event 2020, which included the SDG's promotion. The BSSSC Secretariat ensured the visual recording of the event, which would be used to promote the event on Facebook and LinkedIn.





Ms. Sari Rautio thanked Ms. Czarnecka - Gallas and congratulated Pomorskie on their job.

13. Reports from other BSR organizations

13.1. Euroregion Baltic- Ms. Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło, Head of ERB International Permanent Secretariat

Ms. Magda Leszczyna - Rzucidło thanked for the invitation to the BSSSC Board meeting and shared information on the recent work of Euroregion Baltic (ERB). She presented then the outcomes of the ERB Executive Board meeting of 19th May. The main concern had been the lobbying against the merger of for the South Baltic Programme (SBP) with the Central Baltic Programme, becoming second South Baltic. Ms. Leszczyna - Rzucidło confirmed that the net JPC meetings had been scheduled for June 22-23 and ERB would be present with the fourth ERB document of the future of the Interreg South Baltic Programme. She added that ERB had actively participated in capacity building initiatives and ways to involve more newcomers and smaller actors in peripheral areas.

Ms. Magda Leszczyna - Rzucidło reminded that ERB is the leader of the Umbrella project. She invited warmly the Board Members to register and participate in free webinars planned within the project for the summer.

13.2. Council of the Baltic Sea States - Mr. Bernd Hemingway, Deputy Director General of the CBSS Secretariat

Mr. Hemingway thanked for giving him the floor and presented a brief report on couple of prime points:

Firstly, was the Bornholm Declaration of the ministerial meeting, which is available online. Plus, there are some points might be worth remembering:

- Finalizing the reform of CBSS as follows: 1) CBSS should be more focused on the future and flexible in its work; 2) CBSS should improve cooperation with other international foras and formats active in the region, which gives a clear mandate to work really strongly, especially with the BSSSC; 3) CBSS should enable concrete results in areas, in which the organisation is uniquely suited to add value;
- CBSS's response to the pandemic of COVID - 19: 1) to focus on civil protection; 2) to highlight engagement of young people with the participation of the BSSSC or Baltic Sea Youth Platform; 3) to focus on environment and climate change, including team shipping and tourism as well as clearing of dumped mentions from the Baltic Sea; 4) to fight the cross border crime and organized crime.

Secondly, the Lithuanian Presidency that was set for July 1, 2020. The following priorities were mentioned: 1) sustainable development, especially in the field of developing the cities





of green industry, what is also in line with the Bornholm Declaration; 2) green and maritime tourism as an important sector in reviving the regional economy, increasing region's visibility, giving employment opportunities to young people; 3) civil protection in the region, strengthening resilience in the region against major emergencies and disasters; 4) fight against human trafficking for labor exploitation in the region and prevention of violence against children. The Presidency offers also to assess the achievements of the region, where the CBSS was involved, to evaluate the organization's role over the last decade since Vilnius Declaration „A Vision of the Baltic Sea Region until 2020”. The Declaration was adopted by the CBSS Prime Ministers' in Vilnius on June 3, 2010.

Thirdly, the Secretariat will move to a new office and more information about that will be provided soon.

Fourthly, the CBSS is a co-organizer of the EUSBSR Annual Forum, which this year will have only an online format. The AF will focus on the new strategy, which should be by then already in place.

Fifthly, the Committee of Senior Officials finalized the recommendations for the selection of a new Director General of the CBSS. Information on the results will be sent out as soon as the ministers confirm this proposal from the Committee of Senior Officials.

Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska thanked for the very informative and important information.

14. Next Board meeting

Ms. Krystyna Wróblewska said that the next Board Meeting will be held a day before the online AC of the BSSSC, which is September 29th.

15. Upcoming events

- 15.1. The Online edition of the Baltic Sea youth Camp – June 12-13, 2020
- 15.2. The BSSSC Annual Conference – September 29th – October 1st
- 15.3. The EUSBSR Annual Forum – October 19th – 20th
- 15.4. EU Green Week 2020 – October 20th – 22nd

16. Any other business

There were no special reports, so the BSSSC Secretary General thanked everybody present on behalf of Mr. Mieczysław Struk for the very good meeting and the valuable discussions and wished everybody to stay safe and healthy.

END OF MEETING ■

