



3rd Coordination Group meeting of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region HA Neighbours

7 November 2016, 14.00-16.00

Tillväxtverket's office, Västgötagatan 5, Stockholm. Meeting room "Aktören".

Invited: Nominated HA Neighbours Coordinating Group members, NCs and Focal Points (as listed in the Strategy web pages). The GC is in principle open to stakeholders which are interested and relevant in the field of HA Neighbours.

Present: **Kristiina Isokallio**, Ministry of the Environment Finland, PA Nutri
Mantas Jakimavicius, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania
Guido Kemmerling, Federal Foreign Office, Berlin
Reiner, Kneifel-Haverkamp, Brandenburg Ministry of Justice, for European Affairs and Consumer Protection (*arrived later*)
Jacek Sladewski, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Eastern Department
Janne Tamminen, BSSSC (*arrived later*)
Elina Tanne, Latvian Embassy in Sweden
Erja Tikka, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
Daria Akhutina, CBSS Secretariat, HA Neighbours
Mikko Lohikoski, City of Turku, HA Neighbours, *Chair of the CG*
Jaana Kerttula, Centrum Balticum Foundation, City of Turku, HA Neighbours, *Secretary of the CG meeting*

Opening of the meeting:

- The meeting started with the thanks by the Chair Mikko Lohikoski to Tillväxtverket for hosting the meeting. After that, there was a presentation round of participants and Ms. Daria Akhutina from CBSS Secretariat who has worked as the CBSS HA Neighbours coordinator from the beginning of September. Akhutina has formerly worked for the Norden association in St. Petersburg and acted as the national Baltic Sea NGO Network coordinator and a HA Neighbours contact point in that area.
- Mikko Lohikoski made an overview of the political situation regarding cross-border cooperation with the neighbouring countries. There are some political difficulties concerning cooperation with NW Russia in the political level but practical level discussions and cooperation has been going on despite of the difficulties.

Country tracks:

Russia:

- HA Neighbours has organized seminars and workshops in St. Petersburg during the Baltic Sea Days and All-Russian Strategy Forums. These include an info seminar about Interreg BSR funding,

cooperation workshop and a joint seminar on environmental education with the Baltic Sea Challenge.

- A cooperation seminar was organized in Kaliningrad in September 2016 where the issue of a Neighbours Task Force was raised. This proposal has been seen as a good platform for a more coordinated cooperation between EUSBSR stakeholders and Russia. The setting up of the Task Force will also be discussed more thoroughly in the CBSS CSO meeting in late November.
- Ambassador Tikka told about the recent developments of the NW Russian 2020 Strategy and that the updating process is under way. Year 2017 will be the year of Environment in Russia, which offers a good basis for future cooperation.
- Akhutina told more about the updating process and that the NW Russian 2020 Strategy is based on the so-called "5 fiches" or the cooperation themes adopted by EU and Russia a few years back. It was agreed during the meeting that HA Neighbours coordinators will provide this document on the five fiches for the CG participants.
- Akhutina briefed the CG also about the CBSS project facility funding which is open to all countries of the region and it funds so-called "soft projects".
- Kristiina Isokallio from PA Nutri told that projects that started before the sanctions work as usual in their field. Isokallio also told that the interest to start projects with Russian partners is there but it is difficult to formalize new projects now.
- Guido Kemmerling presented the themes of the 2017 EUSBSR Annual Forum, which will be held in Berlin 13-14 June. One of the Annual Forum's themes will be the "neighbourhood and connecting the region" as well as cooperation building between EUSBSR and neighbouring countries. This will be also one of the main topics of the opening plenary.
- BSSSC's Tamminen told that the BSSSC is currently looking for new contacts in Russia since the participation in BSSSC board meetings is low from that side.
- Polish MFA's Sladewski raised the issue from the Polish side that cooperation with Russia at the border has been suspended for now (small border traffic) but from people-to-people cooperation point of view it is hoped to be restored soon. Also he saw that Russian NGO's have difficulties in participating EUSBSR cooperation because of the possible foreign agent status.
- Mantas Jakimavicius from the Lithuanian MFA reported that they are working with Russian CBC programmes. Local level and practical cooperation is unfortunately affected by the current political situation.

Belarus:

- The CG discussed about the participation of Belarussian stakeholders in regional cooperation and found out that apparently on higher-level it seems to be difficult to find contacts and interest in cooperation (i.e. Interreg funding possibilities) but on the practical and project level the interest is in fact very high (PA Nutri Isokallio).
- Baltic Sea Region University Network (BSRUN) reported to the CG via email that BSRUN has 6 members from Belarus and BSR cooperation is very much in the agenda.
- CG participants from CBSS, Poland and PA Nutri told that there is dialogue between them and Belarussian partners and that in November there are cooperation meetings taking place. PA Nutri's Isokallio said she will report about their Assembly meeting to the HA Neighbours.
- It was agreed that all CG participants will get back to HA Neighbours about their Belarussian contacts.
- It was agreed that in Spring 2017 it would be a good idea for the HA Neighbours to organize a dialogue meeting in Belarus. Taking into account the 2017 EUSBSR Annual Forum and its theme, it would be beneficial also in this respect.

Norway:

- HA Neighbours have good relations to Norway and experiences in successful seminars held in Norway that have resulted in tighter cooperation and inclusion of Norwegian partners (for example in Oslo in October 2015 together with PA Education). Similar meetings are being discussed with Norwegian contacts.
- Norway will have the BSSSC Chairmanship next year.
- Erja Tikka told that Norway is also a partner in the new "Let's Communicate" EUSBSR communication project which is an example of the good partnership between EUSBSR and Norway.

Iceland:

- Iceland holds currently the CBSS Presidency. Thematic presidency priorities include mainly human dimension aspects: democracy, equality and children etc. HA Neighbours had a meeting with Icelandic partners a year ago and a second meeting is in the pipeline with relevant PA with themes covering transport and maritime security. The Arctic is also of interest to Iceland.
- The CG discussed possible future events that might be good from HA Neighbours side to consider when planning the cooperation meeting with Icelandic partners:
 - o Baltic Sea Science Day in St. Petersburg (part of the Icelandic CBSS Presidency programme), 8th February 2017.
 - o Meeting of the Labour ministers, back-to-back with the EUSBSR 2017 Annual Forum in Berlin, June 2017.
 - o Baltic Sea NGO Network conference in Iceland, April/May 2017.
 - o CBSS Expert Group on migration organizes a seminar with the "Balance" project in Helsinki (Part of the Icelandic CBSS Presidency programme), April/May 2017.

Projects and Seed Money Facility:

- PA Nutri's Isokallio told that PA Nutri had received four Seed Money applications of which one also is relevant for HA Neighbours.
- Jaana Kerttula presented the "BSR-DocTrainHealth" Seed Money application that was sent to HA Neighbours for preliminary evaluation. This is the first time that EUSBSR PAC and HACs are involved in the Interreg BSR Seed Money project application process as the first evaluation step. It is their task to give the proposal of three best Seed Money applications to the Interreg BSR secretariat. HA Neighbours received only one application.
- The "BSR-DocTrainHealth" application was seen by the CG as well prepared, ambitious and holding macro-regional potential and relevance for HA Neighbours. The project's LP is the University of Turku and it has partners from all around the Baltic Sea Region, neighbours included. The partners represent high-end universities and research institutions of the region, which gives the project leverage and extremely good possibilities of being successful.
- The CG members were invited to present in near future possible further views via email about the Seed money project application should they arise. Otherwise the HA Neighbours and the CG did not see any objections to supporting the "BSR-DocTrainHealth" project for the Seed Money Facility funding.

Discussion:

- BSSSC's Tamminen told about the Baltic Sea youth affairs round table that was organized with BSSSC and CBSS Secretariat. The event was successful and the cooperation will continue in the future.
- Reiner Kneifel-Haverkamp raised the issue of the importance of mutual understanding in cooperation with the neighbouring countries and also in EU cooperation. The issue is that Interreg funding comes from a different background and they tend to look for *growth* projects and actions in particular. For the Annual Forum 2017 there might be a need to study the funding instruments

from different perspective and think about including the political aspect to the funding instruments as well.

- The meeting ended at 15:45. Next CG meeting is planned to be held back-to-back with the AF 2017 in Berlin.

Mikko LOHIKOSKI
Coordinator, HA Neighbours
Chair, CG

Jaana KERTTULA
HA Neighbours
Secretary of GC meeting