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## Memo

# EUSBSR Horizontal Action Neighbours 5<sup>th</sup> Coordination Group meeting

5<sup>th</sup> of June 2018 16:15 - 18:30  
Estonian Architecture room,  
Estonian Center of Architecture  
Tallinn, Põhja pst 27a

**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:** Juhani Ailio, EUSBSR / HA Neighbours  
Daria Akhutina, EUSBSR / HA Neighbours  
Åsa Bjering, CRPM Baltic Sea Commission  
Yury Bulavko, Embassy of Belarus  
Ilze Gailite-Holmberg, Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture  
Lars Godbolt, Eastern Norway County Network  
Michal Grodzki, MFA Poland  
Olga Gurikova, Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics  
Kari Hyppönen, Baltic Sea Region University Network  
Kristiina Isokallio, EUSBSR / PA Nutri  
Tomasz Jalukowicz, EUSBSR / PA Inno  
Elena Belova, Leontief Centre  
Ramona Krasovska, MFA Latvia  
Igor Kuprienko, ITMO University  
Talis Linkaits, VASAB  
Mikko Lohikoski, EUSBSR / HA Neighbours  
Denis Moskalenko, MFA Russia  
Kristina Pingoud, MFA Finland  
Gabor Schneider, Swedish Institute  
Yustyna Zielkowska, EUSBSR / PA Culture



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## 1. Welcoming words

The meeting was opened at 16:00 with welcoming words from the Chair of the Coordination Group, Mikko Lohikoski from the City of Turku.

A presentation round was held to introduce all the participants and their organizations. It was noted that Iceland was not represented. Daria Akhutina welcomed participants on behalf of CBSS and made a briefing on the HA Neighbours' activities during 2017-2018, highlighting the successful event which was held in Turku in the framework of BS Science Day, working session on academic mobility for young researchers of BSR.

## 2. Activity report

The meeting continued by going through the previous years activities and actions planned (see attachment 1).

After the briefing the participants gave their inputs:

- **Ilze Gailite-Holmberg**, Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture:
  - Recapped the efforts from NDs part. There has been multiple events in which the cooperation has been discussed and multiple project application have been submitted though some have not gone through. She expressed a worry over funding.
- **Mikko Lohikoski**, HA Neighbours
  - Expressed that HA Neighbours should cooperate more with Northern Dimension.
- **Kristiina Isokallio**, PA Nutri
  - PA Nutri has project with Russian partners. She mentioned that the ENI CBC funding agreement has not been ratified yet in Russia.
- **Denis Moskalenko**, MFA Russia
  - ENI CBC expected to be ratified in end of July.
- **Talis Linkaits**, VASAB
  - VASAB organized a workshop in Baltic Sea Day and it offered the possibilities for Russian and EU participants to exchange knowledge. VASAB is looking forward for more cooperation with Russia.
- **Igor Kuprienko**, ITMO University
  - ITMO is active in the St. Petersburg area and trying to be active in whole of Russia. The university is and wants to be international. They also offer possibilities for double degree diploma with Finland, some Baltic countries, Poland, Germany. Student and faculty exchange through Erasmus are popular in Russia.
  - The university has lots of R&D projects and is co-financing international research laboratories. The university is also making efforts to develop startups and spinoffs in cooperation with a German university.
  - ITMO is also active in Horizon and in Interreg BSR. There are also plans for cooperation in the KOLARCTIC Programme when the financing begins.
- **Mikko Lohikoski**, HA Neighbours
  - Expressed that St. Petersburg is a UBC founding member but Russian participation has been rather passive or too formal.



- **Igor Kuprienko, ITMO University**
  - Concurred that it has been difficult to find European partners.
- **Åsa Bjerling, CRPM Baltic Sea Commission**
  - Member regions have voiced out interest for more cooperation with St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad etc.
  - From regional perspective transport has good international cooperation going on. And Mecklenburg and St. Petersburg have good cooperation as well.
  - CRPM Baltic Sea Commission is eager to develop relation between the Arctic and Baltic seas
  - There is a new president in CPMR and the Eastern partnership might rise as a more important topic than before.
- **Kari Hyppönen, Baltic Sea Region University Network**
  - BSRUN has two secretariats to serve the members better. The problems BSRUN faces with Russian and Belarussian cooperation relate to funding; Russia and Belarus cannot be sole beneficiaries of any projects.
  - The BSRUN consortium with universities from BSR universities are looking to integrate Belarussian universities with the higher-level education organizations in other countries.
- **Åsa Bjerling, CRPM Baltic Sea Commission**
  - Expressed interest to HA Neighbours Arctic-Baltic cooperation. CPMR interested if it is organized later
- **Mikko Lohikoski, HA Neighbours**
  - Explained that the event was postponed because of lack of resources from partner organizations.
- **Daria Akhutina, HA Neighbours**
  - Reminded about the topics, which currently defined as of interest for HA Neighbours activity: a) Joint research with focus on academic exchanges and mobility, b) education and c) maritime issues with focus on Baltic-Arctic perspective, d) future of work, e) labour mobility and comprehensive forecasting of the labour market in BSR.

### 3. Current issues of the HA Neighbours “Country Tracks” (past activities and future plans)

#### 3.1 NW Russia

- **Mikko Lohikoski, HA Neighbours**
  - Presented the Turku-Process because the issues have been raised again in discussions with the original partners. There is will to build an informal policy dialogue and contact forum, which could have both lower and higher level participation.
- **Elena Belova, Leontief Centre**
  - Promoted the plan.
- **Kristiina Isokallio, PA Nutri**
  - Asked what would be discussed?
- **Daria Akhutina, HA Neighbours**
  - Expressed that perhaps the basis should be the “Five Fishes” and then it should move forward.



- **Mikko Lohikoski, HA Neighbours**
  - Mentioned that there is explicit need for informal discussion formats especially when some formal routes have been closed.
- **Igor Kuprienko, ITMO University**
  - Reminded that the region South-West Finland has a Russia Strategy, St. Petersburg has Finstrategy, after that there has been a joint strategy. And that the St. Petersburg corridor has been thought as the heart of ND. They all have similar priorities. Some have moved forward while others have not.
- **Ilze Gailite-Holmberg, Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture**
  - Promoted the idea because ND has experienced problems while working with line ministries. This might offer new routes. ND should rely more on regions instead of state organizations. ND needs more local support and the ministries need more bottom up input. ND encourages HA Neighbours to contact them for more cooperation.
- **Igor Kuprienko, ITMO University**
  - Promoted the idea as well. A university would be a useful partner because that might encourage ministries to get interested.
- **Elena Belova, Leontief Centre**
  - Mentioned that HA Neighbours offered useful support in Interreg BSR funding applications. Leontief is eager to try to use the platform instrument of Interreg.
  - Expressed interest to get more involved with the work done by Let's Communicate.

### 3.2 Belarus

- **Mikko Lohikoski, HA Neighbours**
  - Told that he had met with the Belarussian Ambassador to Finland and made arrangements for HA Neighbours to begin forming more lasting relations with Belarus and the EUSBSR. The starting point would be environmental and educational cooperation.
- **Daria Akhutina, HA Neighbours**
  - Mentioned that the HA Neighbours seminar was successful and digitalization is topical in Belarus, distance learning is a priority area of the State University which could be another topic for cooperation.
- **Yury Bulavko, MFA Belarus**
  - Provided the participants with a message from the MFA of Belarus (see attachment 2).
- **Daria Akhutina, HA Neighbours**
  - Asked what would be the most important cooperation points?
- **Yury Bulavko, MFA Belarus**
  - Mentioned transport, environment but that more discussion should be had with the MFA of Belarus directly.
- **Kari Hyppönen, Baltic Sea Region University Network**
  - Pointed out that BSRUN projects will be moving forward.
- **Kristina Pingoud, MFA Finland**
  - Belarus has been discussed about membership. And the CBSS would like to see more project cooperation in the following topics: education, environment and nuclear safety.



- **Daria Akhutina**, HA Neighbours
  - Mentioned that Belarus wants to be part of CBSS bank cooperation and in other CBSS cooperation formats as well.
- **Michal Grodzki**, MFA Poland
  - Mentioned that municipal self administration is interesting topic for future. Maybe the focus could be on preparing and assisting in planning more projects.
- **Gabor Schneider**, Swedish Institute
  - Briefed the meeting on Swedish Institutes BSR strategy which 4 thematic areas. They also have a funding instrument of their own which has had Russian and Belarussian beneficiaries.
- **Daria Akhutina**, HA Neighbours
  - Pointed out that there is lack of middle sized project funding.
- **Kristina Pingoud**, MFA Finland
  - Reminded the Coordination Group of the CBSS foreign ministers meeting in Stockholm.

### 3.3 Norway

- **Lars Godbolt**, Eastern Norway County Network
  - Briefed the Coordination Group on Norwegian activities (see attachment 3)
- **Mikko Lohikoski**, HA Neighbours
  - Noted the large amount of different efforts and that HA neighbours will be in contact about more cooperation.

### 3.4 Iceland

- **Daria Akhutina**, HA Neighbours
  - Icelandic presidency was a good link for cooperation. The CBSS organized the Meeting of the Expert Group on Maritime Policy in Reykjavik in 2017, the Maritime issues and especially the Baltic-Arctic perspective is highly topical as well as areas of tourism, labour and education. Icelandic members are often willing to come to Stockholm and Oslo.
- **Mikko Lohikoski**, HA Neighbours
  - Mentioned that the President of Iceland was visiting in Turku, and HA Neighbours has discussed cooperation with the ambassador of Iceland to Finland.
- **Kristina Pingoud**, MFA Finland
  - Reminded that Iceland will have the Arctic Council presidency after Finland which could be another useful link.

## 4. Any other issues

- **Michal Grodzki**, MFA Poland
  - The Polish MFA has 3 projects waiting for support from the Commission with Belarus and Russia from commission. These include tourism, cycling routes, new roads and bridges.
- **Åsa Bjering**, CRPM Baltic Sea Commission
  - Mentioned that it would be a good idea to link the PAs in the seminars, for example Arctic-cooperation should be discussed with PA transport.



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## 5. Conclusions

- HA Neighbours coordinators were extremely pleased with the participation and amount of possibilities that arose from the discussion. HA Neighbours will be in contact with many of the participants about further actions and would like to encourage the stakeholders to contact HA Neighbours directly with any cooperation ideas they might have in the future and with problems they might face.
- HA Neighbours coordinators mentioned that they will look in to the possibility of organizing another meeting during the winter back-to-back with some other major BSR conference.

## 6. Meeting concluded at 18:00



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Attachment 1. HA Neighbours report

## Annual Summary and Future Plans

### EUSBSR Horizontal Action Neighbours 5<sup>th</sup> Coordination Group meeting

5<sup>th</sup> of June 2018 16:15 - 18:30  
Estonian Architecture room,  
Estonian Center of Architecture  
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### Summary 7/2017 - 6/2018

The second period of the funding period has been about making more numerous and stable contacts in our focus countries, promoting the EUSBSR and in building the foundations for the actions in the new project call from 2018 to 2020.

The planner in charge of the Turku Process Secretariat and the administration of HA Neighbours in Centrum Balticum Ms Jaana Kerttula moved on to other tasks and Mr Juhani Ailio replaced her in the post. Jaana Kerttula, and HA coordinators Mikko Lohikoski and Daria Akhutina gave Juhani Ailio a good introduction to the tasks.

HA Neighbours has been visible and actively promoting the strategy in many events (see table 1 *Selected events and meetings in 7/2017 - 6/2018*). This has led to the making of new contacts and the strengthening of old ones as well as improved the knowledge base of the potential and old partners about the Strategy and how to become part of it.

These talks, seminar and events have (in addition to creating the foundations for more cooperation) now that for example the Russian funding agreement has been signed also lead HA Neighbours to begin planning and studies and surveys about the operating environment. It has become clear that though there is much information available about the state of the non-EU country cooperation within the EUSBSR this information cannot be easily found and used. For this the HA Neighbours team has been planning small scale studies and surveys the results of which could be easily analysed, reported and most importantly used in the planning of future HA Neighbours actions and of the other PAs and HAs as well.

Also HA Neighbours has been planning to increase the effectiveness of the communication about the EUSBSR in the non-EU countries. The situation in Norway and Russia is developing well but it would be extremely helpful if there was similar developments in Belarus and Iceland. The good development of Norway is partly due to the work of Let's Communicate and in Russia the main proponent has been the Leontief Centre.



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*Table 1. Selected events and meetings in 7/2017 - 6/2018*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>EUSBSR Support Module I</b><br>Riga<br>19-20/09/2017           | EUSBSR Support Module I concerned the alignment of funding from different sources to achieve the goals of the Strategy. HA Neighbours will take these lessons in to action when planning and assisting in the planning of new projects.   |
| <b>EUSDR Annual Forum</b><br>Budapest<br>16-19/10/2017            | HA Neighbours participated in the EUSDR Annual forum in order to create better connections to our sister strategy. As a result there has been discussion between HA Neighbours and EUSDR PA10 to learn from each other. HA Neighbours also took part in discussions about non-EU country cooperation and promoted the Strategies communication methods. |
| <b>Forum Strategov</b><br>St. Petersburg<br>23-24/10/2017         | HA Neighbours was invited to speak in a seminar concerning cooperation with the EUSBSR and met with Russian partners.   |
| <b>EUSBSR Support Module II Tallinn</b><br>12-13/12/2017          | The second module of the programme was about the measuring of the PA/HA 's work and updating the indicators set in the Action Plan. HA Neighbours will take these lessons in to account when the time comes to update the Action Plan. HA Neighbours also consulted experts to assist in the planning of the updates.                                   |
| <b>Baltic Leadership Programme I</b><br>Tallinn<br>13-14/12/2017  | HA Neighbours participated the Swedish Institutes seminar about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which most likely will permeate even the Strategy at some point. The UN SDG 's can be used as tools to promote more cooperation.   |
| <b>Interreg Financial Seminar Hamburg</b><br>30-31/1/2018         | HA Neighbours participated in the financial seminar in order to develop the project financial management further. The result will be more accurate reporting and more efficient use of the project budget in the coming periods.  |
| <b>Baltic Sea Science Day</b><br>Turku<br>25/01/2018              | HA Neighbours provided the participation of the young PhDs and doctoral students from Belarus and Russia, they made contributions to the Workshop on "International cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region - a major factor for success - research, innovation and mobility".   |
| <b>Baltic Sea Day</b><br>St. Petersburg<br>21-23/3/2018           | The Baltic Sea Day offered HA Neighbours a good place to contact more Russian partners and meet with potential project partners.  |
| <b>EUSBSR Support Module III</b><br>Brussels<br>10-11/4/2018      | The third module of the programme handled the question of more efficient work methods for PACs and HACs. HA Neighbours will as a result focus more on building its stakeholder network and project base.  |
| <b>Baltic Leadership Programme II</b><br>Brussels<br>11-12/4/2018 | The second part of the programme focused on understanding each other's challenges; uncovering common opportunities, and; learning how the macro-regional strategy can support and bring added value for national implementation of SDGs, and vice versa.  |
| <b>CBSS CSO Meeting</b><br>Stockholm<br>23-24/4/2018              | HA Neighbours Coordinators presented the work of HA Neighbours to the Senior officials of the CBSS and discussed possible future developments.  |
| <b>Digitalizing the Neighbourhood</b><br>Tallinn<br>5/6/2018      | A seminar organized in the 2018 EUSBSR Annual Forum with Atene KOM to discuss the prerequisites of digitalization and how to create cooperation from it.  |





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In addition to these events, representatives of HA Neighbours have regularly participated in a number of BSR-related events, CBSS, annual meetings Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, BSSSC, UBC etc., often as panelists. Likewise, coordinators of HA Neighbours have regularly met with relevant EUSBSR stakeholders and representatives of Neighbouring countries to promote dialogue and implementation of its mandate in the Action Plan.

## Plans 6/2018 - 7/2019

After the Annual Forum HA Neighbours will begin to implement the planned studies and surveys, own expanded communication efforts and support for other stakeholders, plan how to best utilize the other funding instruments besides Interreg BSR and of course promote the EUSBSR in the non-EU countries.

The statistical study and information gathering will be continuous and the surveys will be conducted at least ones a year. The form of the survey will be finalized before autumn. The results of the studies and surveys will be reported and communicated through the new website and all the EUSBSR communication channels available to us. The new website will be expanded as required to encompass a wider range of information useful to potential new partners from the non-EU countries and as well for the EUSBSR stakeholders. The primary point is to make information more accessible to and to bring it out through social media.

HA Neighbours will be active in finding more possibilities to promote the EUSBSR in the non-EU countries. This means in addition to participating events, to be active in finding seminars and discussion which participate as panelists and to organize such ourselves more. HA Neighbours will also look into utilizing the workshops and programmes offered by HA Capacity and the Swedish Institute.

Now that we have two countries with funding agreements and two countries showing interest towards more cooperation we can utilize more the

experiences of the countries further along in the cooperation to stimulate more cooperation from the other two that are not so far along. There is the much need for building and soliciting “bilateral” relations between the non-EU countries and the EUSBSR but there is much more space and need for a more multilateral approach. This will result in events targeted more to cooperation between all the partners instead of singling out one. This way we can better utilize the work done elsewhere as well.

With each country HA Neighbours will be focusing on following actions.

**Russia:** Promoting the birth of new projects and supporting the communication about the EUSBSR the focus being in stimulating new projects in the PAs with Russian participation. Joint interest we have already mapped out are: a) joint Research (with focus on academic exchanges and mobility) b) education (in general) c) maritime issues with focus on Baltic-Arctic interaction and d) labor mobility and comprehensive forecasting.

**Norway:** Promoting the birth of new projects and supporting the communication about the EUSBSR the focus being in new projects in the PAs with Norwegian participation. HA Neighbours plans to continue joint initiatives with Norwegian stakeholders, in the spirit of earlier events organized in Oslo (among others two HA neighbours events as well as two events by “Lets communicate -project”. Details to be agreed with Norwegian representatives.



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**Belarus:** Building more solid foundation for cooperation by strengthening the contact network and inviting participants to EUSBSR events and meetings. The target being finding out joint interests and possibilities for more cooperation. In continuation of the results of the seminar “Cooperation with Belarus” in June 2017 in Berlin, a follow-up meeting is under consideration. It could be organized in Belarus, with the aim of a) informing about the EUSBSR and possibilities it offers for cooperation, and/or b) to review experiences and

plans of existing joint initiatives as well as possibilities for new initiatives and/or c) to discuss future activities on the HA Neighbours “Belarus country track” up to June, 2020.

**Iceland:** Building more solid foundation for cooperation by strengthening the contact network and inviting participants to EUSBSR events and meetings. The target being finding out joint interests and possibilities for more cooperation. The dialogue must be continued.



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## Attachment 2. Message from the MFA, Belarus as presented by Yury Bulavko

### Council of the Baltic Sea States

Belarus is one of the most active observers in the Council of the Baltic Sea States. We are interested in upgrading our status in the Council of the Baltic Sea States to full membership.

We also contribute to activities within other cooperation frameworks in the Baltics:

- Northern Dimension (observer status since 2015) and its Partnership on Transport and Logistics as well as Environmental Partnership where Belarus contributes financially;
- VASAB (Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea). On 13 September 2017 a VASAB seminar on green urban planning and public participation in the Baltic Sea Region» took place in Minsk;
- EU-funded Latvia - Lithuania - Belarus Cross-Border Cooperation Programme (since 2007);
- BRELL Baltic Energy Ring (Belarus- Russia- Estonia-Latvia-Lithuania).
- Belarus cooperates with the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB, framework agreement signed in 2010) and Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO, framework agreement signed in 2010). They support a number of environmental and energyefficiency projects in Belarus.

Our country enjoys access to the sea via ports of the Baltic States in which it invests heavily ( e.g. Belarus partially owns one of Klaipeda terminals ). The transit of Belarussian goods is an important for these countries.

All this confirms the ability of Belarus to share responsibility for the future of the Baltic Sea region.

As far as we know, the Council of the Baltic Sea States Senior Officials meeting on 15 March failed to formulate a common position on possible Belarus mem-bership. I would appreciate therefore if you could share with us further details and give some guidance on the way to proceed.



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### Attachment 3. Message from the MFA, Belarus as presented by Yury Bulavko

#### Møte i styringsgruppa for HA Neighbours i Tallinn 2018

Info-punkt fra Norge under agendapunkt «Current issues of the HA Neighbours - country tracks». Past and future activities

#### Let's Communicate project:

We, the Eastern Norway County Network (ENCN) are partner in the Interreg BSR project Let's Communicate - with the responsibility to communicate the EUSBSR.

Our part is to inform and raise awareness of the EUSBR and the Baltic Sea Region cooperation in Norway.

We have among others opened a page under the [www.interreg.no](http://www.interreg.no) portal about the EUSBSR - where we inform in Norwegian about the strategy and news from EUSBSR.

In beginning of February, we held a seminar called "Baltic Sea Region - a model region for clean shipping and a leading region in maritime safety and security". The seminar was conducted in cooperation with PA Ship and PA Safe and the Norwegian ship owners association, Oslo.

25 April we arranged a second seminar on Smart Specialisation and the Baltic Sea Region - in cooperation with PA Innovation. Invited several counties in Norway to present their work and other relevant actors.

More info about these events is available in English on [www.bsssc.com](http://www.bsssc.com).

ENCN also hosted a project meeting of the Let's communicate project on 26 April in Oslo - where the project started the work with revision of the communication plan for the EUSBSR.

Might arrange a seminar in November on bio-economy, but we have to see what we have of remaining funds.

#### BSSSC Chairmanship:

Eastern Norway County Network holds the chairmanship of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation for 2017-2018 - and possibly also for 2019 (under debate - answer on Friday 8.6)

Last Board meeting was held in Kaliningrad region 23 May - alongside the International Forum for Kaliningrad's partner regions. (Denis Moskalenko)

BSSSC has Northern Dimension and cooperation with Russia as a horizontal priority. Among other BSSSC takes part - as an observer - in the Steering Group meetings of the Northern Dimension. Last meeting was in Saint Petersburg 6 April. BSSSC strives to include a sub-regional dimension within the Northern Dimension and uses its platform to inform the Steering Group members about the work on sub-regional level.





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Next Annual Conference of BSSSC will take place in Gdansk, Poland 10 - 12 September with the title "Solidarity, participation and smart action for a better future"

High focus on SDGs and the Baltic Action Plan + Youth cooperation:

Seminar held on 4 June - as part of the AF here in Tallinn. Nothing about us without us.

#### EUSBSR Annual Forum 2019:

BSSSC will be the partner of Pomorskie Voivodship in arranging the next Annual Forum of the EUSBSR in Gdansk in June 12-13 2019.

As Chairmanship ENCN will use this opportunity to include partner countries (Neighbours) in the programme. Norwegian ministry of foreign affairs and Norwegian Ministry of Local Authorities and Modernisation will be involved in the preparations. Also, SDGs and youth participation will be focus areas of BSSSC.

A Youth Camp will be organised pre to the forum. With support from the CBSS Small Project Facility. Cooperation with UBC, ERB and Baltic Sea Region Cultural Centre in Gdansk.

#### Interreg Baltic Sea region Programme:

Norway is part of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme and through this also in several Flagship projects of the EUSBR.

Some of the projects have both Norwegian and Russian partners on-board. As part of the 3rd call for application Norway and Russia assisted the project applications in involving Norwegian and Russian partners in the project consortia.

The final decision for projects to be funded will be in the second half of September 2018.

#### Oslo European Green Capital: Possibilities?



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