

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Area Secure

20th Steering Group Meeting

3 October 2023, Riga

Venue: Riga City Council (Ratslaukums 1)

Minutes

11:00 – 11:10 Welcome address by the Finnish presidency (chair of the meeting), welcome words by CBSS DG/ newly appointed DDG and by PACs

11:10 – 11:15 Adoption of the agenda and the notes from the last Steering Group meeting
Steering Group adopted agenda of the meeting and the substantial report to the National Coordinators Group, sent to the participants prior to the meeting for silent procedure.

11:15 – 11:35 Latest updates from the Presidency and Policy Area Coordinators (PACs): current and planned projects, activities

PACs briefed about the progress of projects: VOALA/Byfores, NEEDS. PACs called for action within Secure Kids project (for gathering national experts) and Civil Protection Faculty project (organising kick-off during Ukraine Forum planned by Finnish CBSS presidency)

11:45 – 11:55 Updates from the Baltic Sea Strategy Point, Anja Karppinen

Baltic Strategy Point representative assured the Steering Group, that BSP is ready for promoting the work of PA Secure with all available tools: EUSBSR website, social media, etc. plus developing tools to help Pas in communication. Importance of human stories as an important vehicle of communication was emphasised.

11:55 – 12:30 Discussion on the new proposed format of cooperation, PACs suggestions:

FI introduced the need for the new way of working: Steering Group adopted the model of rotation presidency and needs to adapt the coordination format to it. Main questions: How do we help network members to do our jobs better – for our MSs and for the whole region? How do we introduce initiatives so not only PACs and presidency initiate activities? What is the role of TRIO? What does coordination mean?

PACs: reiterated the idea of “Trio” coordinating all priorities in the Joint Position instead of individual countries and the new roundtable format: filling the “Overview” document pre-meeting with national news and events and more focus on discussion during the physical meetings.

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14:00– 14:30 Discussion on the new proposed format of cooperation

SE: it would be beneficial to simplify the way of work to avoid becoming a “stale” and bureaucratic institution

LV: Positive towards the idea. It can help us map each other’s needs (something similar is done in the regular meetings between Baltic States – “Baltic Coffee”)

PL: we can create and fill a form which will outline our priorities and experts names and contacts so MS know who to contact at each time. It would be good to organise a database of ongoing and planned Projects for Ukraine in, containing the topics, scope and project partners in one place.

SE: Baltic Coffee weekly is a good example. We also have not exhausted potential of interactive sessions established within PA Secure. Ideas should be gathered centrally by CBSS Secretariat and circulated to everyone.

FI: interactive sessions should be on important topics, relevant at the moment to one or more MSs.

LV: if we talk about common initiatives – UCPM Track II (multi-country projects) is an option, (LV uses usually Track I), recent ideas from LV, LT,EE discussion points at mass evacuation as a potential common theme for joint activities.

EE: positive towards PACs suggestion, needs time for decision with the management. Trio idea is also great – but EE can only participate as much as their personal and resources allow.

SE: The presidency country is not expected to do everything alone - it should rely on support from other two countries. Plus, PA Secure can first pilot the new way of working – to evaluate the effectiveness and adjust if necessary.

UBC: positive towards new way of working, but we always need to remember to include local actors in the PA Secure modus operandi

FI and SE: we can organise an interactive session on the PL proposed “database” of contacts

NO: we need to define better the contact profiles and how they will be used

Chair (FI): judging by the MS responses, let us consider the proposal from the PACs accepted, interactive discussion will be organised around PL proposal. TRIO format will be pilot-tested. Secretariat will create a new format of the Overview document and it will also be discussed in the same interactive session as the PL initiative – the new Overview will be tested on the next SG meeting and evaluated later.

14:30 - 15:30 Roundtable: updates from the MS (implementation of the JP and other relevant news). Discussion (follow-up on cooperation with EUSDR and PA SAFE).

SE: MSB published a new report: [Building resilience for the future – Lessons from Ukraine](#) with key take-aways from the Ukraine Forum in spring 2023.

SE annual budget dedicates more investment in total defence. In particular, some items include: increased public-private cooperation, for protection of population and rescue services, allowing critical infrastructure work even in crisis , local level preparedness, cyber threats, applying research results to practical needs, preparedness of the general population

DK: Government concentrates on reaching 2% military funding, following defence agreement. Country is enhancing civil protection and critical infrastructure. Civil protection authorities and business will participate in the implementation of the Critical Entities Resilience Directive (CER) which came into force in 2023.

Assistance to UA is a big priority for DK, DEMA participated in fact funding mission in summer

EE: In Sept EE [conducted large scale evacuation exercise CREVEX](#): tested early warning systems, including SMS, TV, radio. Evacuated 1000 people, tested cross-agency cooperation. Results will be published soon. [11-12 Oct 2023 an international civil protection conference](#) will be organised, it can be attended online, 9 Oct is the deadline for registration.

EE keeps supporting UA with equipment, trainings. EE got EU funding to put together EOD (Explosive Ordnance disposal) module – first one in EU available for the EU Civil Protection Pool. **SPEK**: organised a seminar within VOALA project. SPEK pilot volunteers were part of wildfire surveillance seminar in January 2023. SPEK also was working on calculating return of investment for volunteering. There are clear results – investment in volunteering is clearly effective. Summary of findings will be available after translating.

FI: SG members are aware of most of the presidency calendar activities by now. One of the interesting updates: safety driving instructions were published for people driving in Finland.

LV: Last month was organised a cross-agency exercise with military. Feasibility study continues on comprehensive training - how to transmit crisis info to different groups. Study on stockpiling is underway. Third study on management of wild fires – how to improve system of working together with volunteers. Improving capacity to deal with migrants influx: fire and rescue service achieved agreement with Ministry of Interior, received funding from Immigration fund, acquiring beds, sheets, since municipalities do not have capacity to deal with that.

Assistance to UA: cabinet of ministers supported: state police cars sent to UA, firefighting car and drones are donated.

PL: Fire and Rescue Headquarters Preparing for the CPN/PA Secure presidency – topic “communication”. Other focus areas: control organised on the Slovakian border, concern at BY border. New elections in PL are coming and possible new management of agencies. Innovative comms tools for UCPM are being developed. PL is active in championships in fire fighting

UBC: Project NEEDs for SEEDS summer university developed study courses. UBC is also taking part in VOALA volunteering project. UBC had a meeting in Gdansk mid Sept. Canadian experience in noise pollution in cities was discussed. UA participants were very active, we can also learn from them. Kaspars Vārpiņš was re-elected as the chairman of UBC Safe Cities Commission for another 2 years. UBC general conference comes soon – register till 6 Oct.

NO: Govt appointed two new commissions: Total preparedness commission and Norwegian defence commission. Commissions will give recommendations to govt, DSBs role might be increased. More focus on total defence and civil-military cooperation in the future, white paper will come with results. DSB took part in the opening in new USAR training facility in RO - Norway grants result. Developed theoretical and practical curriculum for first responders – not only for Norwegians but also to other countries. Medevac is extended to Feb 2024 in UA – in total 1264 patients evacuated.

15:30 – 16:00 Guest lectures

Žaneta Ozoliņa is a Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science, University of Latvia. Her research interests focus on European integration, Transatlantic security, strategic communication, regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Professor Ozoliņa briefed about the results of the project #borderresilience focused on information reception in the Latvian regions bordering Russia.

Mika Lehestö from the Ministry of Interior of Finland made a presentation: Shortcut to Finnish Comprehensive security, Civil Defence and terminology

End of day

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