

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Area Secure

21st Steering Group Meeting

13 – 14 May, 2024, Helsinki

Venue: 13.05. Aleksanteri, MoI, Kruununhaka
14.05. Event Area Bank, Unioninkatu 20, Kaartinkaupunki

MINUTES

Day 1, Monday, 13 May

13:00 – 13:05 Welcome address by the Finnish Presidency, welcome words by Policy Area Coordinators (PACs)

13:05– 13:10 Adoption of the agenda and the minutes from the last Steering Group meeting
The Steering Group adopted agenda of the meeting and the minutes from the previous meeting.

13:10 – 14:00 Latest updates from the Presidency and PACs: current and planned projects, activities, preparations for DG meeting 11-12 June

PACs briefed about the coordination activities, reporting, cross-PA and cross-MRS initiatives. PACs called for participation in the upcoming food security webinar and Ukrainian volunteer conference, EU Civil Protection Forum and EUSBSR Annual Forum (*PPT attached*)

FI chair presented the results of the Finnish Presidency, briefed about the upcoming CBSS CPN DG meeting in Helsinki, event's programme, logistics and collected feedback from the members.

14:30 – 15:30 Elena Kolosova (Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme), transnational cooperation funding, update and discussion post-2027

After a brief presentation about the Interreg BSR work, Ms. Kolosova collected SG opinions on the biggest needs for transnational cooperation within the PA Secure field of work, good practices and gaps in today's cooperation and the ways Interreg BSR could address them in the future.

SG members agreed that harmonizing countries' approaches to emergencies are important within the following areas: severe weather conditions, military crises, crisis and risk communication.

Comprehensive security as a concept of cooperation also needs a boost. Interreg BSR might help addressing these areas by initiating project calls on: societal security and, in particular, on connecting academia to practitioners, crisis and risk communication, infrastructure projects, capacity building for local administrations, civil society engagement in civil protection. Micro-projects for short-term initiatives and increasing BSR organisations capacity to handle project work were also named among ideas for improvement.

15:30 - 16:00 – Morgan Olofsson, MSB, establishing Crisis Communication Network in the Baltic Sea Region, discussion

Mr. Olofsson, director of communications at MSB presented the status of the CBSS PSF funded project on establishment of a BSR-wide network of crisis communication experts and started a discussion on possible institutionalisation of the network under the auspices of CBSS CPN/ EUSBSR PA Secure. SG members agreed that the project is timely and promising, and that this topic should

be discussed more in the upcoming SG meetings after the project is finalized. Different continuation ideas were voiced: from presenting the results to the DG meeting and seeking their endorsement to sharing the network's knowledge with the EUCPM Knowledge Network.

Day 2, Tuesday, 14 May, Event Area Bank, Unioninkatu 20, Kaartinkaupunki

09:00 – 09:20 Civil Defence Shelters. FI shared videos and survey results on the topic.

09:20 – 10:20 Roundtable: short information updates from MS based on the prefilled Overview of implementation, discussion.

PACs asked the SG members to react to the new version of the Overview document, which was prefilled and shared before the meeting (*Overview is attached*).

DK: Good document, distinction between past and present is needed for clarity

EE: The new format helps saving time, however, we need to agree on the level of details. It can be difficult to decide under which priority updates belong

SE: Good first step but it could be confusing, should we leave it empty for the next time or keep the details from last meeting and update them?

SPEK: Good document, details level should be agreed upon

PL: Good idea, provides a bird-eye view of the region's situation in civil protection

LT: We see it as replacement of tour-de-table, a good idea, in general. But it can be confusing to choose which JP priority to use for reporting.

UBC: This form is easy and convenient, it saves time for discussion on other topics

FI: Much needed idea, we should not be too detailed, just most important points relevant for international cooperation, information, available in English, important links

DE: Great document, it is good to have the national updates to be written down. But challenging to find the correct priority of the Joint Position.

Discussion concluded with the following decision: PACs will modify the document:

- Add "future" column.
- Move JP priorities to the top of the document and leave the table empty for national updates so the members would not need to choose a corresponding priority.

PACs will investigate uploading the document on a shared online resource for ease of use (Google drive, MS SharePoint), taking into account security concerns.

PACs initiated discussion about the ideas and suggestions, expressed by the SG members in the Overview ideas/suggestions section:

DE proposal: Introduction of BBK (Step 1) -Step 2 Implementation of BBK as a permanent member of PA Secure (Goal: Decision in the next meeting in autumn)

DE: BBK is needed since crisis communications, shelters and other topics are placed at the federal level in Germany, and neither HFRS nor BFRS can cover those topics in cooperation.

BBK: it will be beneficial for the organisation to join BSR cooperation not only for the international aspect but also for closer links within Germany. BBK management is positive to joining based on the report about the first meeting, in which BBK participated. At the moment, expecting response through the decision-making channels – from the Ministry of Interior. The process will be initiated by Hamburg in cooperation with BFRS and BBK and the PA Secure SG will be informed about the results.

Discussion and decision: all countries agreed to welcome BBK as a potential member after the decision is made at the appropriate levels in DE.

SE: question to DE – you have been active with study visits in the past. Will you continue?

DE: depends on requests – and departments to which the requests come, sometimes it is very easy, sometimes departments lack capacity or language skills. HFRS will continue its best efforts to welcome as many study visits as possible.

SE remark: The changed security situation in the region and consequences of climate change have increased the importance of cooperation around the Baltic Sea with a focus on safe and resilient societies. This places even greater demands on the authority's ability to use the opportunities for cooperation that a common EU strategy offers.

During discussion PL, DK, EE, FI, LT suggested exploring informational exchange with NATO civil protection branch.

Decision: PA Secure will consult MS authorities regarding the invitation of NATO for an informational point on the agenda of one of the future meetings.

DK idea: 2-3 webinars per year for exchange of information on volunteerism. Similar to DG Grow Fire Information Exchange Platform (FIEP) webinars (suggestion from letter to SG group from 20.03.24 about NOVA network TOR)

PACs: it can bring substance in the newly established NOVA network of volunteers

SPEK: we received 9 applications to NOVA network. First meeting could be in an online format, as suggested by DK. Some of the subsequent meetings might also be in an online format.

SE: this suggestion could bring content to the NOVA network

Conclusion: this proposal will be considered in the planning of the NOVA network of volunteers.

FI idea: Creation of a critical supply subgroup, aerial surveillance subgroup for ground fire and RDI subgroup

EE: not in the position to decide – supply is different agency, aerial – positive, but need to discuss with experts, RDI- is the academy responsibility, will ask them again

SE: strong proposals from FI, but there are already international formats for critical supply – let's see what is working, the same with aerial, EU is actively engaged with this issue. Let's try to avoid duplications. Request to FI to develop concept document so it will be easier to discuss with relevant colleagues.

PL: as for critical supply - in PL it's another agency, not KGSP. Regarding RDI - will send info to colleagues from Academy.

DE: important topics but not in the HFRS domain – need more structured information to share.

FI: much is done on EU level, but would be nice to have it at the Baltic Sea Region/Northern Europe level since we have similar climate and could benefit from similar solutions – this way we can also contribute to EU knowledge base.

Conclusion: FI will develop concept papers for each potential subgroup and come back to SG members for reaction.

UBC remark: through UBC Safe Cities Commission came information that the city of Kaunas (LT) after taking part in the Baltic Excellence Programme in Helsinki finalised its plans for bomb shelter conversion and invested **100 000 EUR in the project, based on the lessons learned from Finland.** This can be seen as a direct concrete impact of BSR cooperation within the PA Secure/ CBSS CPN networks.

10:45 - 11:00 Estonian initiative: establishing a working group for fire safety experts.

EE expert on Fire Safety shared arguments for creation of the fire safety working group (*PPT attached*)

DK: Proposal is clear, we will get back to you. Great idea with regional coordination.

DE: HFRS can contribute to the working groups with experienced fire experts and projects results. Meetings schedule looks good. HFRS will do their best to bring experts there.

PL: Fire safety colleagues asked: will the group focus on legislation or solutions? PL wants to have precise focus. PL interested in 50% of subjects of the matter presented. Will be useful to have agenda before the initial meeting.

EE: topics might change from time to time: from scooter bikes and batteries to timber building – depending on the current demand.

LV: Great idea – we will participate, need a list of people in fire safety

LT: very positive (good example is the statistical Baltic countries group). Working online is practical.

SE: positive, would like to see agenda before the first meeting. MSB will facilitate that the right organisation participates (not necessarily MSB, could be other organisations)

FI: very positive towards the initiative, need agenda of the first meeting, many topics are not in the MoI jurisdiction, it will take time to find right people from other agencies. Good suggestion to have it as EE presidency topic.

CBSS: Secretariat will actively support this initiative.

Conclusion: all MS agreed to support EE initiative to establish a working group on fire safety. EE will elaborate a draft agenda of the first meeting and share with the members.

11:00 – 11:30 Estonian presidency priorities and preliminary calendar

EE shared Presidency priorities and a preliminary Presidency calendar (*PPT attached*)

11:30 – 11:45 Marion Geisler (BBK) presentation

Ms Geisler presented BBK structure and potential fields for cooperation with the Baltic Sea formats. (*PPT attached*)

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