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**CPMR BALTIC SEA COMMISSION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING  
25 August 2011**

Venue: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern State Chancellery, Schloßstraße 2-4, 19048 Schwerin

## MINUTES

### WEDNESDAY 24 AUGUST 2011

Dinner hosted by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

### THURSDAY 25 AUGUST 2011

#### **Opening Session**

Mr Rainer KOSMIDER from the State Chancellery of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern welcomed the Executive Committee members.

Mr Erik BERGKVIST, President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission and President of Västerbotten, opened the meeting.

Mr Erik BERGKVIST indicated that if the EC proposals concerning the EU budget were adopted, the budget for Cohesion Policy would globally be maintained. That is interesting for sparsely populated areas. There is still work to be done for our regions, as there are still uncertainties concerning how the budget will be divided. In this context, an essential issue is how to keep the EU together, how to continue to form a membership, a group of nations that share a future and work increasingly together. This debate is naturally stimulating when some countries have great economic problems. The conclusion is not that we should cooperate less, but we should cooperate more. As always, we are at a crossroads and we must say if we want more or less cooperation. Asia, China, India have very strong growth and will continue to rise. The EU needs to cooperate more, including with them, and at the same time to compete with them. The USA are also having economic problems, but do also have possibilities to bounce back. If the EU does not pull together, it will not bounce back. Key meetings around the Baltic Sea will take place in the near future. The next one will be in Gdansk and the BSC will be there through a seminar on multi-level governance. The BSC should do more and make the most of this opportunity in the greatest sense.

#### **Adoption of the Agenda and list of Executive Committee members**

- The Agenda and list of Executive Committee members were adopted.

#### **Adoption of the minutes of the Vaasa Executive Committee meeting and the minutes of the BSC General Assembly**

- The minutes of the Vaasa Executive Committee meeting were adopted.
- The minutes of the General Assembly were adopted.

#### **Financial issues: Update on membership dues, financial report and forecast budget for 2011**

Mr Janne TAMMINEN, Executive Secretary of the BSC, indicated that the situation is rather good, as only one Member Region has not paid yet. A question was raised concerning planned events and the cost associated with this. Mr Janne TAMMINEN answered that an event could be organized if the Executive Committee so wishes, in addition to the General Assembly and Executive Committee meetings.

## **BSC Work Programme for 2011**

Mr Janne TAMMINEN would like to gather information and input from ExCOM Members in order to structure the BSC action plan for the coming months.

Mrs Marjatta VEKAOJA stressed that the BSC should indeed keep on structuring its work in the perspective of the year to come, and that regular and direct input from ExCOM Members is crucial in that sense. Mr Erik BERGKVIST stressed the need to strengthen the use of resources of the BSC Member Regions in order to provide support to initiatives. A map of resources that are available to help would be useful, and the BSC Secretariat should be used as a "spider in a web".

Concerning the issue of multi-level governance and the EUSBSR, Mr Wolf BORN commented that specific initiatives would need to be taken in order to link up the event on multi-level governance and the BSC, as this event is not formally organised by the BSC.

Mrs Anne BERG suggested that in addition to policy statements, specific information concerning initiatives of projects carried out by BSC Regions would be displayed in Gdansk.

Mr Erik BERGKVIST agreed on this point.

Mr Berndt VEDIN put forward the idea that the CPMR could propose to be the host or co-host of the next Annual Summit of the EUSBSR. This year, the annual summit is very centralised and it mostly involves State level.

Mr Wolf BORN thought at the Summit the BSC needed to have some written material as well as the study and CPMR material. More support from the Executive Committee to the Secretariat is needed and in addition in order to keep on structuring the work and anticipating forthcoming key dates and initiatives. For example, the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern tourism conference in the context of the priority on tourism.

Mrs Marjatta VEKAOJA considered it a good idea to list projects or initiatives which could be promoted, in addition to policy statements.

Mr Janne TAMMINEN suggested that the BSC should send some questions to Member Regions in the form of a short questionnaire.

Mr Erik BERGKVIST wanted to carry out a questionnaire, via email or at the occasion of the General Assembly. He reminded participants that he had also discussed with the CPMR General Secretary concerning the deficit of representation from the Baltic Area on the programme of the CPMR General Assembly.

## **EU Budget and Cohesion Policy**

Mr Janne TAMMINEN mentioned the Political Bureau in June and the discussion on solidarity. There was a debate on the financial crisis and its impact on solidarity and on Cohesion Policy. President LE DRIAN stressed that the CPMR historical values encompass solidarity. Now, economic governance is progressing and the question of solidarity will be more and more on the stage. Solidarity is more than an essential value and has a practical dimension. Solidarity has been under pressure. Social Europe can solve more problems and opens the gate to solidarity. Consideration of new instruments is needed. Expectations are very high, for instance in the EU 2020 strategy. The impact of the crisis in peripheral countries like Portugal, Greece etc and therefore on Regions which are important for the CPMR should also be addressed.

Mrs Marjatta VEKAOJA stressed her interest in this debate, and thought it is a difficult moment to address solidarity. The demand for solidarity is not always well accepted in all countries and needs to be explained and put in perspective with a clear strategy. The difficulty also lies in the contrast between the need to find quick solutions to accurate problems and the need for policies and programmes that must last for longer periods. It is crucial to involve populations in these debates, as some parts of the population can sometimes consider that voting does not make sense as decisions are already taken.

Mr Wolf BORN commented on the different notions of solidarity and asked if the intention of the CPMR was to suggest specific programmes or propositions on the basis of the thinking launched.

Mr Erik BERGKVIST was glad that the issue of solidarity was raised, in order to balance the political debate, in which economic issues took a very strong place. In the current political context, it is fundamental to talk to each other about the directions that should be taken, and to link these debates to where we want to go, and then link this with the discussion on solidarity. He asked are we members just because we want economic development? The debate in Sweden is all about money. The discussion is that we pay membership fees that

are too high. Mr Erik BERGKVIST spoke about the Seminar with Richard Florida: he did not discuss economics, but rather about what to tell to the people. What is missing in the EU is discussions on a common future.

Mr Damien PÉRISSÉ indicated that the CPMR launched a reflection on solidarity at the request of President LE DRIAN. The objective is to put this key political dimension at the centre of European debates, which sometimes tend to be very technical. The CPMR is trying to add a more political dimension to its action concerning Cohesion, the EU Budget and the EU Strategy in general. Mrs Marjatta VEHKAOJA stressed the need to stimulate the discussion on values.

Mr Erik BERGKVIST indicated that people share the same needs, even through their values sometimes differ. Mr Damien PÉRISSÉ (see PowerPoint presentation) gave a PowerPoint presentation concerning the main messages that will be included in the discussion at the next CPMR General Assembly concerning Cohesion.

He mentioned the BSC as an interesting innovation: support to taxation measures? Mr Erik BERGKVIST stressed the need for the BSC to deepen the debate on Cohesion Policy. Such a debate on Cohesion is no longer a debate between the poor and the wealthy. It also involves some thinking concerning EU resources, and for instance.

Mrs Marjatta VEHKAOJA stressed the need for discussions on solidarity, and also on the link between cohesion and solidarity.

### **Multi-level Governance and the EUSBSR**

Mr Berndt VEDIN provided information on the issue of multi-level governance. He considered that the only way to secure implementation of the EUSBSR and to maintain its political momentum is to involve more levels. A closer work with the CPMR and with different networks involving BSC Regions, such as the Baltic Sea Group in Brussels, is needed. The European Commission agrees that multi-level governance should be addressed outside the priority itself. The European Commission also shares the idea that Regions are not involved enough. At the same time, the local level is not always the best seller of the strategy. Still, there should be greater involvement.

Mr Wolf BORN stressed the difficulty to concretely implement messages concerning multi-level governance. He recalled results of the inquiry of the role of the regions in the EUSBSR. The BSS is an open process and there is a problem of communication within some Member States. It not always possible to complain that Regions are not heard enough.

Mrs Marjatta VEHKAOJA also stressed the need to link up messages with concrete projects.

Mr Damien PÉRISSÉ indicated that CPMR was about to launch a new step in its work concerning Macro-Regions. Each CPMR Geographical Commission will be soon contacted and asked to take part in this work. A link with the dimension of maritime basins will also be done.

### **Neighbourhood and the link with Russia**

Mr Damien PÉRISSÉ (see PowerPoint presentation) presented the main messages from the draft CPMR policy position on Neighbourhood Policy. He also asked whether the BSC ExCOM would like the CPMR General Secretariat to make some more propositions concerning initiatives that could be taken in that field. Mr Erik BERGKVIST answered positively.

Mrs Anne BERG stressed the existing links, including at political level, between Nordland and Russia. Recently, several politicians mentioned that Norway has its 20 years anniversary of cooperation with Leningrad Oblast. 4-5 politicians went to Russia for this event.

Mrs Marjatta VEHKAOJA reminded participants that Russians are the second largest minority in Finland.

Mr Toni VANHALA stressed that Kymenlaakso Region is an immediate neighbour of Russia and they have good links with Leningrad Oblast, and cooperation exists between them within the ENPI Programme. The ENPI instrument should work much better. The South Finland alliance expressed an opinion a few months ago that it should be managed by DG Regio instead of DG Relex.

Mr Erik BERGKVIST stressed that Leningrad Oblast and St Petersburg are among the most populated areas with the Baltic Sea Area and that there is a need to involve them. Should the BSC have a group looking into this issue? Look at the status of Russia within the CPMR.

Mr Janne TAMMINEN informed participants that the Conference of the EU, Norway and Russia will come to Kaliningrad on 22 September.

### **Maritime Issues**

Mr Janne TAMMINEN (see PowerPoint presentation) presented the current developments of the EU Maritime agenda and activities of the BSC working group on maritime issues. As for now, specific focus has been put on MSP and ICZM. Another issue coming on the agenda is maritime safety, as a CPMR Seminar on maritime safety will be organised in December (in the European Parliament), in partnership with Baltic Master II, and Regions Skåne and Blekinge and the European Parliament's Intergroup on Seas and Coastal Affairs.

Links between the BSC and HELCOM will be increasing, for example in the next working group meeting.

### **Transport Policy**

Mr Karl SCHMUDE, Region Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, presented information on the current issues of the BSC Transport Working Group and the situation of the transport network in the Baltic Sea Area.

### **Other issues**

The next meetings of the Executive Committee will be in Aarhus on 28 September and in Brussels (or Umeå) on 2 November 2011. The invitation for the BSC General Assembly in 2012 is needed and the host will be decided during the next Executive Committee meeting.