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Policy Area Culture Steering Group Meeting, March 10, 2022, 9:30-11:00 (CET)

Participants:

Patryk Fornalak, Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Poland
Idun Bredahl Genborg, The Agency for Culture and Palace, Denmark
Szymon Jałkowski, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland
Heili Jõe, Ministry of Culture of Estonia
Sverre Miøyen, Ministry of Culture and Equality of Norway
Robert Nilsson, Ministry of Culture of Sweden
Laura Okdaldere, Ministry of Culture of Latvia
Daiva Parulskienė, Ministry of Culture of Lithuania
Zuzanna Przytkowska, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland
Tarja Hautamäki, Regional Council of Ostrabothnia, Finland
Milda Vakarinaite, Ministry of Culture of Lithuania
Kaarina Williams, Ministry of Justice, European Affairs and Consumer Protection of Land Schleswig-Holstein

Moderator: Milda Vakarinaite

Agenda:

- 1. Updates on the application process**
- 2. Overview of PA Culture application for Interreg**
- 3. Feedback to the application by PA Culture steering group members**
- 4. Letter of Support**
- 5. AOB**

Milda Vakarinaite opened the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the application of the PA Culture to the Interreg. The application encompasses the work plan of the PA Culture for 2022-2024. It was prepared after the PA Culture workshop that took place on January 19 and considers main ideas that were expressed in this workshop.

A short round of introductions followed.

Milda Vakarinaite reported about the reactions to the war in Ukraine. It was noted that for the EU restrictive measures to be fully implemented, the European Commission has suspended the cooperation with Russia and its ally Belarus in the European Neighbourhood Instrument cross-border cooperation programmes and Interreg Baltic Sea region programme. It was also announced that the National Coordinators Group of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region issued a statement concerning the suspension of cooperation with Russia and Belarus. Baltic Leadership Programme Neighbours for which PA Culture had previously submitted its application was cancelled.

The coordinators of PA Culture assured that the flagship projects involving Russian partners are finished and no further payments will be made.

Lars Schieber noted that Interreg secretariat informed all project developers about the suspension of cooperation with Russia and there is no need for PA Culture to take additional actions.

SG members discussed the scope and impact of the sanctions on Russia.

Milda Vakarinaite continued by introducing the agenda of the meeting.

1. Updates on the application process

Patryk Fornalak informed that the basis for the application were the ideas expressed in the PA Culture workshop in January. The aim of the PA Culture Coordinators was to make the framework of the application as flexible as possible and leave space for future ideas implementation. The next steps in the application process were introduced – signed letter of support by PA Culture, partnership declaration and partnership agreement signed between the members of the consortium. The application must be submitted by the 30th of March. Currently the last version of the application is under technical review by the Interreg secretariat.

2. Overview of PA Culture application for Interreg

Lars Schieber presented the application procedure for Interreg and introduced the content of the draft application. 4 groups of activities of the application were briefly discussed – coordination and strategic facilitation of the policy area; implementing the EUSBSR Action Plan and engaging with the network; support of project idea generation and project development; communication. Overview of the deliverables and result indicator was provided.

3. Feedback to the application by PA Culture steering group members

Daiva Parulskienė thanked PA Culture coordinators for the draft application and presented her remarks. It was noted that the concept *stakeholders* is used in the application so it should be clearly defined what is meant by that (what organisations). The *target groups* should also be clearly defined. One of the suggestions for the future is the mapping exercise aiming to identify the main strategic actors, stakeholders and networks in our region – their functions and goals. It is also important to identify overlapping themes. Another remark concerns the horizontal priorities in the application, namely youth involvement. It is important to discuss what could be the goals of the PA Culture in this area. The final remark concerns the involvement of the non-EU countries. The suggestion is to focus only on the EEA countries.

Laura Okdaldere thanked for the preparation of the draft document and welcomed the idea to focus and include only EEA countries in the work of PA Culture. She noted that cultural heritage and contribution to sustainability are very important aspects of the work of PA Culture.

Patryk Fornalak thanked for the remarks and informed that there had been considerations on the need to discuss the target groups in more depth. The mapping exercise could prove useful. However, for now, the application refers to the more general document – the action plan that defines the target groups more broadly.

Kaarina Williams added that Interreg terminated the seed money that had been offered initially, however, there is now some extra money for studies, mapping or similar initiatives by the coordinators.

Daiva Parulskienė welcomed the idea to conduct studies and asked the coordinators to share the idea behind the youth involvement as it is a very specific topic.

Kaarina Williams noted that the plans in this regard are not yet very concrete, however, there has been youth involvement in the past. There is a Baltic Sea Youth Platform that has been established at the Council of the Baltic Sea States and encompasses a wide variety of youth organisations. It is important to include young people to get new impulses and foster regional identity. During the youth camp in Poland, a declaration to the Strategy had been prepared. The young generation will be involved in the discussions whenever this is suitable. This is also a part of the current Action Plan of the Strategy which needs to be implemented.

Milda Vakarinaite inquired about the future work format with pan Baltic organisations since they are no longer the members of the SG.

Patryk Fornalak informed that the aim is to include all previous partnerships in the work of the PA Culture in different formats. They could also be included in the roundtable meetings that will focus on particular topics. Their knowledge could be very useful. It is important to discuss what specific issues could be taken into consideration in the first place. The next step for PA Culture is to organise a meeting that will include stakeholders and partners of the previous flagship projects and form a work group that will be meeting regularly to discuss particular topics. The organisation of the kick-off meeting is foreseen in the application. It could take place in May. It would be useful for developing more concrete ideas.

Kaarina Williams noted that even if the Interreg results will be announced later this year, the work of PA Culture should continue. The expenses can be reimbursed.

It was agreed there is no need for another meeting of the SG before the submission of the application.

Lars Schieber informed that the deadlines for the final comments on the application should be March 23-24.

4. Letter of Support

Milda Vakarinaite informed about the need to sign a standardised Letter of Support for the PA Culture application which among other things states that the SG will support PA Culture

coordinators in implementing the activities foreseen in the application. The letter will be signed by the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture.

The SG members had no objections.

5. AOB

Milda Vakarinaite informed the SG that the PA Culture received an application from a game industry organisation for a flagship project status and asked the SG members if PA Culture should continue working with some kind of a flagship label in the future.

Kaarina Williams informed that in the previous Action Plan and previous Interreg Programme flagship status provided an extra bonus to project applications. Currently there is no real incentive to become a flagship project. However, from the PA Coordinators perspective it would be good to have some kind of label for projects that are a part of this policy as they help to implement Strategy's goals. It may also prove useful in the process of reporting the PA Culture progress. Not many organisations are aware of this change, so more projects will be applying for the flagship status.

SG members agreed on having the flagship label.

Zuzanna Przykowska suggested to decide on the procedure for granting the flagship label.

Daiva Parulskienė suggested that the SG should make a decision on which projects should get this label. Flagship label would add to the clearer structure of activities and visibility of the PA Culture.

Robert Nilsson inquired if this would be just a label and nothing else.

Kaarina Williams explained that it would show a political commitment and they would follow the results of such projects. However, it would not provide any advantage concerning their financing.

Lars Schieber noted that the label could also provide more visibility to the Strategy itself.

Kaarina Williams proposed that the SG could review the applications and that the written procedure could be used to make a decision.

SG members accepted this proposal.

At the end of the meeting Kaarina Williams informed that Anja Uhlenbrok is leaving the Ministry of Justice, European Affairs and Consumer Protection of Land Schleswig-Holstein this month and will no longer continue her work as one of the Coordinators of the PA Culture. New staff member will be appointed to continue this work.



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