

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Area Culture

Steering Group meeting minutes

Date: 18/11/2024

Time: 12:00 - 17:00 CET

Location: Maritime Culture Centre in Gdańsk, ul. Tokarska 21/25

Participants

1. **Zuzanna Przyrkowska**, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland
2. **Jesper F. Schou-Knudsen**, Agency for Culture and Palaces, Denmark
3. **Kadri Jauram**, Ministry of Culture of Estonia
4. **Tarja Hautamäki**, Regional Council of Ostrobothnia, Finland
5. **Dāvids Garšva**, Ministry of Culture of Latvia
6. **Birutė Kazlauskienė**, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania
7. **Robert Nilsson**, Ministry of Culture Sweden
8. **Marcus Hagemann**, Ars Baltica
9. **Maili Roio**, Baltic Region Heritage Committee (BRHC)
10. **Kazimierz Musiał**, Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat
11. **Franziska Seufert**, Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat
12. **Krista Petäjäjärvi**, Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDCP)
13. **Tiina Kasvi**, Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC)
14. **Horlikuova, Anastasiia**, Youth representative; Danish Institute of Culture
15. **Tikkanen, Janne**, Youth representative; YouthHansa
16. **Blagovestka Riiser**, European Commission, DG Regio
17. **Elena Kolosova**, Interreg BSR Secretariat
18. **Laura Ligazzolo**, Interreg BSR Secretariat
19. **Magdalena Kleszczewska**, Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Poland (PA coordination)
20. **Franziska Kapteina**, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Areas, European Affairs and Consumer Protection of Land Schleswig-Holstein (PA coordination)
21. **Kaarina Williams**, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Areas, European Affairs and Consumer Protection of Land Schleswig-Holstein (PA coordination)

Moderation and chair: Zuzanna Przyrkowska

Agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting and approval of the agenda
2. (3*) PA Culture coordination briefing
3. (2*) SG members and observers briefing
4. Policy Input on the Action Plan update
5. Interreg consultation post-2027
6. AoB and date for next meeting

*The order of the agenda was changed during the meeting

1. Opening of the meeting and approval of the agenda

- **Zuzanna Przyrkowska** opened the meeting, followed by a brief round of introductions.
 - Three new Steering Group members were introduced: **Dāvids Garšva** (Latvia), **Franziska Seufert** (CBSS), and **Tiina Kasvi** (Union of the Baltic Cities - UBC).
 - **Birutė Kazlauskienė** represented Lithuania, substituting for **Daiva Parulskiene**.
 - Two youth representatives, **Anastasiia Horlikuova** and **Janne Tikkanen**, were also present.
- **Zuzanna Przyrkowska** introduced the agenda, which was approved following a proposed change.

2. SG members and observers briefing

Latvia

- **Dāvids Garšva** provided an overview of Latvian cultural policy:
 - Total budget for culture: **€262 million**, with a strong focus on cultural education and support for visual arts. Budget cuts are expected in the coming year.
 - Planned initiatives for 2025 include:
 - A focus on **internal and external cultural security**.
 - Infrastructure projects such as the **House of Literature** and the Riga philharmonic aligned with New European Bauhaus principles.
 - The establishment of a **Contemporary Art Museum**
 - Establishment of the **National Visual Art Award** in 2025.
 - Adoption of the **Popular Music Strategy 2027** (May 2024).
 - A start-guaranteed insurance for artists
 - Implementation of two protocols on heritage protection based on the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and streaming platform support for internal film production.

Lithuania

- **Birutė Kazlauskienė** highlighted key points of Lithuanian cultural policy:
 - She first introduced the Cultural Policy Framework of Lithuania (The Law on the Cultural Policy Framework of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted on 18 June 2024, and which shall enter into force on 1 January 2025), which recognizes culture as a unifying factor on a high political level. It includes eight principles of the cultural policy, and the principle of horizontality is of utmost importance, which bind all parts of the state system. This makes it a cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary framework that impacts other policies.

- There also is a focus on **upskilling creative employees** and developing systematic, targeted and long-lasting general and professional competences. The goal are qualitative changes in cultural services.
- A stronger emphasize on society's inclusion into cultural activities through cultural education and services e.g. The **Cultural Passport Initiative**, which promotes cultural accessibility for schoolchildren, integration of Ukrainian refugees or free museum visits for economically vulnerable groups.
- Record museum attendance in 2023: over **5.7 million visitors** visited Lithuanian museums, 16 per cent more than in 2022.
- Based on a CCI agreement, **Art Hubs** with an emphasis on accessibility in cultural institutions are going to be established. They cater to the development of integration.

Baltic Sea initiatives included:

- Cooperation with the **Baltic Museology School** (since 2004), promoting professional skills of museum experts in theory and practice.
- Collaboration between Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian museums.
- The **Baltic Cultural Fund**, which promotes joint cultural events and distributes grants annually.

Estonia

- **Kadri Jauram** shared updates on Estonia's cultural policy:
 - The **Cultural Backpack Initiative** remains active.
 - Budget cuts are planned for the next three years (4% for public institutions, up to 30% for others).
 - A notable success was Tartus title as a **Capital of Culture 2024**. The final event was held on 30 November.
 - A legislative developments was the introduction of the Creative Association Act, which will regulate artists' status, ensuring social security and better working conditions .
 - The renovation of the **National Library** will be finished 26, the costs have exceeded predictions.
 - There are geopolitical concerns regarding the need for preservation of cultural heritage, both in physical (evacuation etc.) and digital form. **Kadri Jauram** proposed **EU-level joint actions** to combat threats to cultural heritage via measueres of digital preservation. Potential for example would lie in organizing backups for existing databases via the European Commission. **She** invited SG members to join the initiative and offered a prepared one-pager on the topic.

Youth Representatives

- **Anastasiia Horlikuova and Janne Tikkanen** reported on the **Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue 2024** (11-16 November Gdańsk):
 - Topic: **"Cultural Heritage in the Baltic Sea Region: Expert and Peer Dialogue on Shared Heritage, Connections, and Outreach in the BSR"**.
 - Activities: Development of pamphlets and action plans tested in two high schools.
 - The youth representatives stated that there still is a need for more outreach of their work.
 - Janne Tikkanen emphasized youth engagement in cultural initiatives. He encouraged the improvement of youth engagement by directly involving schools.

Interreg Baltic Sea Region Secretariat

- **Laura Ligazzolo and Elena Kolosova** shared insights on:
 - The **Interreg post-2027 consultation**, which they plan to extend to the PA Culture Steering Group.
 - The **Project Platforms Call**, closing on **9 December 2024**, with results expected in **March 2025**.

Baltic Region Heritage Committee (BRHC)

- **Maili Roio** discussed the six active working groups within BRHC.
 - She highlighted the upcoming workshop on **"Unwanted Heritage,"** to be hosted in Estonia in the spring of 2025.

Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

- **Kazimierz Musiał** reminded participants of the CBSS's long-term priority of **Regional Identity**, which encompasses culture, higher education, and youth initiatives.

Poland

- **Zuzanna Przyrkowska** shared news from Poland:
 - First, she informed the other SG members about Poland's upcoming presidency in CBSS as well as the Council of the European Union.
 - Ongoing efforts to regulate the status of professional artists, prioritizing challenges faced by young artists entering the market during Poland's upcoming EU Presidency.

- New cultural infrastructure, such as the recently opened **Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw**.
- The next EUSBSR Annual Forum is going to be in October 2025 in the Polish voivodeship Pomorskie.
- **Lublin** will be the **European Capital of Culture 2029**, with interim plans to designate each candidate city as a "small capital" to build on their application efforts.

Ars Baltica

- **Marcus Hagemann** emphasized the fruition of initiatives that began with Ars Baltica's founding in 2013:
 - Collaboration with **PA Culture**, where Ars Baltica leads communication efforts.
 - Active partnerships offering numerous networking opportunities such as the BSR Cultural Pearls consortium.
 - Co-organization of the **InnoCulture Conference** (19-20 November), which will feature a dedicated networking panel led by Ars Baltica.

Finland

- **Tarja Hautamäki** (Regional Council of Ostrobothnia) outlined:
 - Financial cuts affecting the cultural sector.
 - Collective efforts by Finnish regions to counteract these cuts by petitioning the government.
 - The national agency for statistics plans on putting down their statistics on culture, which will come with great disadvantages such as a lack of clear indicators to base decisions of cultural policies on.
 - **Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) Cultural Cities Commission**
- **Tiina Kasvi** provided updates on the UBC Cultural Cities Commission:
 - **Espoo** continues as Chair, with **Kaunas** as Vice Chair for 2024-2025.
 - Discussions on the minimum cultural services each city should offer, emphasizing the importance of funding for children's and youth culture.

Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC)

- **Krista Petäjäjärvi** emphasized the connection between art, culture, CCIs and sustainable development:

- NDPC is involved in **nine international projects**, including four funded by Interreg BSR, four under Creative Europe, and one Erasmus+ project.
- Significant milestone: **Ukraine** joined NDPC as an observer country, endorsed by ministers from nine countries (except Lithuania).
- There also was a political declaration concerning the support of NDPC
- New initiatives are also concentrating on the connection of Art and Health

Denmark

- **Jesper F. Schou-Knudsen** provided updates:
 - Denmark is preparing for its EU Presidency and the adjoined cultural programme. The focus is on youth, collaborations within the EU as well as CCIs
 - Developments in cultural strategy:
 - There is a paradigm shift in the international cultural exchange to invite culture to address other topics
 - Focus on green transition and questions of sustainability
 - Launch of a **Cultural Passport** in November 2024.
 - Reform of Danish Museum law with increased funding.
 - Royal couple State visit to Germany included a cultural program in Schleswig-Holstein, also focusing on local cooperation and cross-boarder funding.

European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

- **Blagovestka Riiser** from DG Regio noted:
 - A slight revision of EUSBSR is underway.
 - **Commissioner Glenn Micaleff** plans - presented during his recent hearing - to continue the **Creative Europe** and **Erasmus+ programs**, alongside:
 - Launching **Youth Dialogues** within his first 100 days.
 - Developing an **AI strategy** for cultural and creative industries (CCI).
 - Introducing a **Culture Compass** as a strategic framework for the EU.
 - Focusing on topics such as cultural heritage, diversity, European identity and mental health as well as children's rights

Sweden

- **Robert Nilsson** discussed Sweden's focus on young people amid challenging cultural conditions:
 - The cultural budget is under pressure in Sweden as well

- Ongoing discussion on renovation or rebuilding of various old buildings e.g. the **Royal Opera House**.
- Launch of a new 10-years **CCI strategy** in May 2024, anchored in government and parliament to ensure continuity.
- Exploring private investment opportunities in culture to alleviate budget pressures.
- Survey on cultural policy
- Discussion on AI and the art sector, covering possibilities and tools but also problems such as claims on things that contribute to AI.

Germany

- **Kaarina Williams** represented Germany in the absence of **Dörte Törper**:
 - Cultural policy is primarily regional (Länder-level).
 - The new German Steering Group representative from the **Ministry of Culture of Schleswig-Holstein** will assume their role in December 2024.
 - The Cultural Pearls project will open its new call in February 2025.

3. PA Culture coordination briefing

Magdalena Kleszczewska began by informing the Steering Group (SG) members about the extension of Interreg financial support for PA Culture. She then outlined the activities undertaken by the PA Culture coordination team since the last SG meeting in April 2024. Key initiatives included:

- **“Culture Makes Cities Stronger” Event**: Held on April 24th in Warsaw and online.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**: Conducted outreach meetings and initiated the creation of a stakeholder database.
- **Kick-Off of the Polish Presidency**: Officially launched on September 10th in Warsaw.
- **EUSBSR Annual Forum in Visby**: PA Culture played an active role in October by participating in the following:
 - **Engagement Day** activities.
 - **Networking Village** stand.
 - Co-organized a workshop, **“Culture X Integration”**, in collaboration with Policy Area Education.

Magdalena also highlighted the upcoming **Innoculture Conference**, scheduled for November 19th-20th in Gdańsk. She expressed gratitude to the many SG members who planned to attend.

Next, she presented the projects submitted for the **Interreg Baltic Sea Region (BSR)** call for project platforms:

1. **CERBUS** - Creative Ecosystem Resilience and Business Support.
2. **CreativeMove2030** - Cultural and Creative Industries as Innovation and Sustainable Transition Brokers in Industry 5.0.
3. **Future Cities Platform**.
4. **BSR Heritage**.

Three of these project partnerships have invited PA Culture coordinators to serve as **Associated Partners**. It was agreed that the final decision on this matter would be made through a **silence procedure**.

4. Policy Input on the Action Plan update

Franziska Kapteina led an interactive panel on the ongoing Action Plan update. She began by presenting the current PA Culture actions included in the Action Plan, suggesting that these could be built upon with slight updates reflecting current activities. She proposed that the process start by identifying problems, obstacles, and existing policies, which would naturally define the required actions. Franziska introduced the Action Plan update template, emphasizing the central role of the **impact pathway**.

Key guiding questions:

- **What will lead to the desired outcomes?**
- **What changes are needed in policy to achieve these outcomes?**

Guiding principles included ensuring actions are **plausible** and **relevant to the macro-regional framework**.

Discussion Points

- **Krista Petäjäjärvi (KP):** Advocated for setting a clear goal to enable more strategic planning, with a focus on defining stakeholders. She suggested narrowing the scope of the Action Plan, noting that the three current actions are too broad.
- **Zuzanna Przytkowska (ZP):** Questioned whether the broad scope of the Strategy should be retained or narrowed, acknowledging that this might necessitate leaving out certain elements.
- **Marcus Hagemann (MH):** Suggested that a narrower focus within the existing three actions could work. Precision in defining scope could address concerns without excluding key areas.
- **Jesper F. Schou-Knudsen (JS-K):** Highlighted the potential of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** as an opportunity.
- **Kaarina Williams (KW):** Observed that translating national challenges into an international context can be complex.

- **KP:** Highlighted the fragility of the cultural sector amidst funding cuts and asked how the Action Plan could address this.
- **MH:** Proposed focusing on specific topics and identifying their challenges, with an emphasis on a strong entry point. He also stressed the power of cross-sectoral approaches and suggested eliminating less impactful elements that may obstruct progress.
- **Blagovestka Riiser (BR):** Advised against excessive precision in the Action Plan and emphasized the need to complement other cultural formats in the region.
- **ZP:** Noted the project-based nature of NDPC's work, distinguishing it from PA Culture's broader approach.
- **BR:** Suggested showcasing inspiring inputs from Baltic Sea Region (BSR) countries, potentially via the PA Culture website.
- **Kadri Jauram (KJ):** Highlighted digitalization as a key area, mentioning an upcoming ministerial meeting in May 2025 in Stockholm. She suggested piloting solutions at the BSR level and discussed topics such as professional artists' status, culture and mental health, and regional resonance of these issues.
- **KP:** Proposed using PA Culture as a platform for piloting and exchanging best practices.
- **Kazimierz Musiał (KM):** Recommended a shift in mindset, focusing on opportunities rather than challenges, and leveraging individual expert experiences to share solutions.
- **MH:** Stressed the need for PA Culture to be a voice for culture, showcasing good examples. He questioned PA Culture's role, suggesting it should be more of a **rapporteur of change** rather than a driver.
- **Tiina Kasvi (TK):** Mentioned the importance of creative thinking skills and referenced the Baltic canon.
- **Youth Representatives (Anastasia and Jan):** Expressed concerns about funding cuts and their impact on youth. They suggested that Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD) outputs could contribute to PA Culture's plan.
- **KW:** Questioned the added value of EUSBSR, noting that funding challenges persist.
- **JS-K:** Pointed out that PA Culture coordinators were tasked with drafting the form and emphasized focusing on regionally relevant issues.
- **BR:** Highlighted the need for better communication about EUSBSR and suggested PA coordinators map funding committees and participate in meetings.
- **Robert Nilsson (RN):** Urged PA Culture to seize opportunities and set an example for other Policy Areas.
- **Maili Roio (MR):** Proposed underwater and coastal heritage as potential topics.
- **MH:** Emphasized the inherent cooperation within macro-regional strategies and noted EUSBSR's unique inclusion of culture, suggesting it could serve as a showcase.

- **KJ:** Mentioned an upcoming ministerial meeting in Brussels on financing culture, initiated by Latvia and Estonia, with support from 10 countries.
- **Birutė Kazlauskienė (BK):** Highlighted Baltic Cultural Cooperation as a strong example of regional collaboration.

5. Interreg consultation post-2027

Elena Kolosova and **Laura Ligazzolo** led the round of consultations, posing the following questions to the Steering Group members:

- In which topic do you see the biggest need and potential for transnational cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region?
- Is there a need for some infrastructure projects to be implemented in transnational cooperation?
- What are the major obstacles to good transnational cooperation in the Baltic Sea region? How could these be removed?
- What could facilitate your work with your counterparts in another country?
- What would be the transnational cooperation project of your dreams in the Baltic Sea region?

6. AOB

- The date of the next Steering Group meeting will be decided at the beginning of 2025.