

BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity (CCB)

Final Report

August 2023



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Climate Change and Biodiversity (CCB)**
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Final Report on Climate Change
and Biodiversity for the 32nd BSPC
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Texts: Working Group, Experts in the
WG meetings,
Governments of the Baltic Sea States,
Philipp da Cunha,
Bodo Bahr, Marc Hertel, Jördis Palme,
Evgenya Bakalova
Editing: Bodo Bahr, Jördis Palme
Layout: produktionsbüro TINUS
Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference
www.bspc.net
Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference
Bodo Bahr
Secretary General
+49 171 5512557
bodo.bahr@bspcmail.net
www.bspc.net
BSPC Secretariat
Schlossgartenallee 15
19061 Schwerin
Germany

The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) was established in 1991 as a forum for political dialogue between parliamentarians from the Baltic Sea Region. The BSPC aims to raise awareness and opinion on issues of current political interest and relevance for the Baltic Sea Region. It promotes and drives various initiatives and efforts to support the sustainable environmental, social and economic development of the Baltic Sea Region. It strives to enhance the visibility of the Baltic Sea Region and its issues in a broader European context. BSPC gathers parliamentarians from 10 national parliaments, 7 regional parliaments with legislative powers, one supranational parliament and 4 parliamentary organisations around the Baltic Sea. The BSPC thus constitutes a unique parliamentary bridge between the democratic EU- and non-EU countries of the Baltic Sea Region. BSPC external interfaces include parliamentary, governmental, subregional and other organisations in the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension area, among them CBSS, HELCOM, the Northern Dimension Partnership in Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS), the Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF) and the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC).

The BSPC shall initiate and guide political activities in the region; support and strengthen democratic institutions in the participating states; improve dialogue between governments, parliaments and civil society; strengthen the common identity of the Baltic Sea Region by means of close cooperation between national and regional parliaments based on equality; and initiate and guide political activities in the Baltic Sea Region, endowing them with additional democratic legitimacy and parliamentary authority.

The political recommendations of the annual Parliamentary Conferences are expressed in a Conference Resolution adopted by consensus by the Conference. The adopted Resolution shall be submitted to the governments of the Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS and the EU and disseminated to other relevant national, regional and local stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region and its neighbourhood.

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Introduction

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to present the Final Report of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity. From its establishment at the 29th BSPC in 2020 until its conclusion at the 32nd BSPC in 2023, the Working Group has aimed at preparing ambitious, effective, and realistic recommendations for the governments of the Baltic Sea region in the area of climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as biodiversity protection. Its interim proposals and calls for action have been integrated into the resolutions passed by the 30th and 31st BSPC. The core outcomes of the Working Group – a comprehensive list of 25 far-reaching recommendations – have been unanimously adopted at the final Working Group meeting in Gdańsk, Poland and are included in the draft of the resolution of the 32nd BSPC.

BSPC Working Groups traditionally focus on local best practices and knowledge sharing on the most current issues affecting our region, countries, and communities. The geopolitical, political, and environmental developments of the past three years have shown that the topic of our Working Group could hardly be more timely. In 2023, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Synthesis Report concluded that at the current rate, the +1.5°C temperature increase threshold would already be reached by the early 2030s – with profound consequences for ecosystems and human activities all around the globe. And the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) confirmed that global average temperature for July 2023 was the highest on record for any month. At the same time, the IPCC report underlined that international cooperation was a critical enabler of accelerated climate action. We already see such international efforts in the Baltic Sea region: the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), adopted by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in October 2021, provides a strategic program of action for achieving good ecological status of the Baltic Sea by 2030.

Indeed, climate change and biodiversity loss are global challenges, which cannot be mastered by a single country or even a single region alone. Therefore, a broad consensus and joint international efforts are urgently needed in order to address these common issues. However, in order to be effective, climate solutions must to be tied back to and “owned” at the local level, since this is where most of the ambitious international and national measures would have to be implemented.



Mr Philipp da Cunha

Local experiences, successes, but also challenges have stood at the centre of the BSPC Working Group's interests and concerns throughout its extended three-year mandate. Through regular and intensive contacts with officials, entrepreneurs, researchers, civil society and youth representatives from all across the Baltic Sea region, the Working Group's members could benefit from local stakeholders' views and ideas on a wide range of relevant topics. These included but were not limited to blue carbon potential, sustainable fisheries, peatland renaturation, sustainable energies, island habitability, and climate change in the Arctic – just to enumerate a few. The themes of the eight Working Group meetings were chosen in such a way as to reflect the specificities of our Baltic Sea region in general and the particularities of each host region.

During these meetings, many of our invited experts and guests have underlined the importance of open communication, transparency, and public engagement. Be it in the area of farmer compensations in rewetted peatlands, reed recycling, or offshore wind farm construction – working together with local communities was seen as essential for successful climate action.

The report at hand offers a unique and comprehensive overview of the knowledge, experiences, best practices, as well as existing projects and policies shared by local stakeholders and governments from across the Baltic Sea region. The Working Group's final recommendations combine and condense this wealth of knowledge into a set of focussed, far-reaching, but also pragmatic political recommendations.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby, former member of the Swedish Riksdag and former Chair of the Working Group, for her engaged and inspiring work. Ms Tenfjord-Toftby has led our group in the most challenging times – with the global pandemic and the disastrous war on the European continent disturbing the very foundations of international cooperation in the Baltic Sea region and beyond. I would also like to thank Ms Liz Mattsson and Mr Jesper Josefsson from the Åland Islands, Mr Kolbeinn Óttarsson Proppé from Iceland, and Mr Jarosław Wałęsa from Poland, who have at different times served as the Working Group's Vice Chairs. My deepest thanks also go to the Parliament of Sweden, the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein, the Parliament of Åland, the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the Parliament of Norway, and the Polish Sejm for organising and hosting the respective Working Group meetings all around the Baltic Sea region.

Furthermore, I would like to thank our experts, who have shared their unique perspectives on climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as biodiversity protection in the region. These insights have provided the most fertile ground for informed, intensive and consensus-oriented discussions and deliberations at our meetings. I would finally like to thank all Working Group members for their insightful and thought-provoking contributions, constructive and result-oriented suggestions, and the overall collaborative working atmosphere.

In the past three years, we have learned a lot – from our guests and from each other. But the most difficult and important task, i.e. ensuring the implementation of targeted measures, is still ahead of us. There is no time to waste; the health of the Baltic Sea environment is our common responsibility and its protection is our duty to future generations.

Philipp da Cunha

Member of the Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Chairman of the Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity

Executive Summary

The BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity (WG CCB) was launched at the 29th Digital Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference on 24 August 2020. The primary outcome of the group's work consists of political recommendations on climate change and biodiversity.

Climate change is a global phenomenon that needs to be tackled using international cooperation and mutual agreements. Still, it also requires finding sustainable solutions at regional level and local levels. Learning from leading experts and researchers of the Baltic Sea Region and from each other and by studying best practice examples of successful projects can contribute positively to this most challenging task of our time and the future decades to mitigate and counteracting climate change's effects and preserving biodiversity.

When the Working Group was established, it was decided to focus on the environmental aspect of climate change and biodiversity and innovation, technology and best practices. The WG members expected to meet each other in person and study interesting projects on location, but this was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic for a long time. The Working Group, therefore, held during the first period of its work digital meetings. But also there, the WG had been given valuable knowledge about the present situation concerning climate change, the status of the Baltic Sea, and concrete projects intended to improve the environment in the sea and on land.

For example, the WG learned about the Swedish projects “Living Coast – Regaining good ecological status in coastal areas” and “ElectriVillage”, a solar-powered hydrogen refuelling station in Mariestad. The working group has also learned about sustainable and environmentally friendly fishing in Iceland and a local project in the Åland Islands to strengthen biological diversity in the sea. HELCOM informed about the status of the work on the new Baltic Sea Action Plan and presented the Climate Change Fact Sheet produced by HELCOM and the Baltic Earth network.

The details of this first phase of the WG's work were comprehensively documented in an initial report to the 30th BSPC in the summer of 2021:

https://www.bspc.net/bspc_climate-change-and-biodiversity/

Regarding climate change and biodiversity, it was most important for the WG to include the perspective of young people. As part of this ambition, a Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum has been arranged two times back-to-back to the 30th and 31st BSPCs. The participants were encouraged to give recommendations to be presented at the Annual Conferences and to the Working Group. The WG had discussed these recommendations with the young representatives of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum and considered them in its further work. And - and this was and is the difference from many other youth conferences – the BSPC WG CCB included them in its different calls for action. In that way, the recommendations of the young generation got part of the BSPC's resolutions. They were included in the calls for action of the parliaments to the governments of the Baltic Sea Region.

In October 2021, the working group discussed with experts from Schleswig-Holstein and the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum the importance of collaboration in the Baltic Sea region on climate

change. The German federal state of Schleswig-Holstein informed that the state had acquired 40,000 hectares of peatland since 1978, providing refuge for endangered species. Rewetting efforts to sequester CO₂ made traditional agriculture impossible, but animal farming, biochar production for textiles, or green hydrogen could occur. Green infrastructure and environmental education were also emphasized, as was fair compensation for farmers. Seagrass, salt marsh, and mangroves have the potential for carbon sequestration. The price is offset by additional benefits such as cleaner water, coastal protection, increased biodiversity, and secure fisheries yields. Highlighted was also the Baltic Health Index on the socio-ecological status of the Baltic Sea.

Usually, the Working Groups within the BSPC have a two-year mandate. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the group members could not meet each other in person until the end of 2021. Therefore, the Working Group's mandate has been extended until the 32nd BSPC 2023. During the recent two years, the WG had several opportunities to study best practice examples on-site, met on the Åland Islands, in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern/ Germany, in the polar region in Norway and Gdańsk/Poland and could, in that way, increase the quality and outcome of its work by including insights from different regional situations and perspectives.

In May 2022, the working group visited the Åland Islands to learn about their efforts towards a fully sustainable society. They discussed the Smart Energy Åland project, which aims for a society run on 100% renewable energy. The project includes three sub-projects: an energy island community, a planned hydrogen-powered ferry, and an abandoned mine as a hydro energy storage facility. The government of Åland is also implementing the Sunnavind project, which aims to establish large-scale offshore wind farms with a 30-35-year lifetime. Habitability is a concept developed on the far-off island of Kökar, which considers factors such as place identity, ecosystems, fresh water, energy, local economy, public service, and population growth. The long-term project, Bärkraft, aims to become fully sustainable by 2051. The Working Group also visited a Wetland for increased biodiversity and climate-adapted stormwater management as part of Mariehamns environmental programme.

The meeting in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in August 2022 was split into two days: the first day in Schwerin and the second day in the Schaalsee biosphere reserve. The negotiations included expert presentations on forests, the sea, energy, and peatland. Youth representatives presented recommendations on carbon sequestration, renewable energy sources, resilient cities and oceans, and curbing nutrient influx. Presentations on forests discussed eco-certificates, the importance of peatlands, and the need for diversification in tree species. The presentations on energy covered hydrogen storage, offshore wind power, and sector coupling. The working group also visited a battery factory. The presentations on peatland highlighted the importance of peatland restoration and the benefits of functional peatlands as carbon sinks. The meeting also included discussions on alternative land uses for degraded peatland and the cultivation of medicinal plants through paludiculture.

In March 2023, the working group assembled in Tromsø, Norway, dealing with expert presentations and the newest research results about the dramatic effects of climate change in the Arctic and its impact on biodiversity, with consequences for the entire planet. The Norwegian Polar Institute presented the institute's research on climate change, biodiversity, glaciers, and oceanography. The Institute of Marine Research highlighted the shrinking Arctic species populations and the need for a holistic understanding of the ecosystem. The Arctic Council Secretariat explained the workings of the Arctic Council and its involvement in various themes related to the Arctic, presented the Arctic Monitoring

and Assessment Programme and informed about the council's efforts to involve young people in the region. A guided Polaria tour opened a deep insight into the Arctic environment. And a presentation at the Polar Museum was an impressive experience on the region's cultural heritage.

The working group met in May 2023 for the final time in Gdańsk, Poland, to complete its intensive three-year-long work. Once more, the group listened to and discussed three expert presentations, two on nuclear power as part of the Polish strategy of transitioning away from fossil fuels and towards low-carbon energy systems and one on the Slovinski National Park and Biosphere Reserve and the collaboration between biosphere reserves in the Baltic Sea region. The participants also intensively negotiated, as a long work's worthwhile outcome, the working group's final recommendations for the 2023 BSPC resolution. The calls found unanimous approval.

This Final Report is an overview of the WG's work results. The primary focus is on the results of its meetings, the scientific input and the political recommendations, which were elaborated during the sessions and were forwarded to the 30th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference on 30 August 2021, the 31st BSPC on 12-14 June 2022 in Stockholm and to the 32nd BSPC from 27-29 August 2023 in Berlin.

As the working group's recommendations for action were incorporated into the resolution in the BSPC, the governments in the Baltic Sea region were also called upon to comment on the implementation of the corresponding calls for action in the following year. This was done in detail in each case.

In addition, before Russia's brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine, the Working Group sent a comprehensive list of questions to the governments in the Baltic Sea region on the implementation of measures regarding climate and biodiversity. The governments responded in detail to each of these. After the start of the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine and the actions taken and adopted in this regard by all member countries of the BSPC about the war and its effects, the BSPC, on the recommendation of the working group, addressed the question to the governments on the extent to which the responses to the war have influenced and are influencing the policies and measures concerning climate and biodiversity. The governments commented on each of these as well. The Baltic Sea Region government statements on these questions provide a unique overview of climate and biodiversity actions in each of the countries in the Democratic Baltic Sea Region.

The BSPC working group has continued to focus on climate and biodiversity issues during the waves of crises, which were also triggered in the Baltic Sea region by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's illegal war of aggression on Ukraine and its consequences.

After fundamental discussions about the future work of the BSPC because of the unjustified invasion of Russia into Ukraine, the WG continued its intensive work with several in-person meetings.

The working group's main concern was to ensure that the implementation of further adequate and far-reaching measures relating to climate and biodiversity would be addressed due to the far-reaching defensive measures against the crises and their consequences, which stretched budgets to the limit.

In 2021 the WG's recommendations called on the governments in the Baltic Sea Region to take significant steps in line with the UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, and the Baltic 2030 Action Plan to reduce emissions and achieve climate resilience in vital economic sectors. The recommendations also emphasised the need to reduce nutrient influx into the Baltic Sea and support the development of technology and innovations to reduce eutrophication. They also urged further actions to reduce ship emissions, invest in green hydrogen technologies, and cooperate on risk assessment and coastal protection measures due to rising sea levels. The recommendations also addressed the impacts of increased shipping and cruise-ship tourism on climate change and biodiversity loss in the Baltic Sea. They emphasised the need for global action and cross-border cooperation to mitigate emissions, promote the transition of ships to sustainable renewable fuels, reduce black carbon ship emissions, support the development of technology and innovations, prevent harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens in ballast water, and aimed to improve and preserve the marine and land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea.

In 2022 further far-reaching measures were considered necessary: These include supporting the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and its action documents, implementing additional steps from the 'HELCOM 2021 Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Fact Sheet', intensifying efforts to limit temperature rise to less than 2° by the end of the century, promoting zero-emission energies, and boosting research and development of low carbon solutions. The region should also strengthen efforts to recover and neutralise explosive ordnance in the Baltic Sea, implement nature-friendly farming methods, support sustainable green energy, develop policies and regulations around fishing and other industries that harm biodiversity, promote the building of facilities from recycled materials, and promote communication about the impact of individual actions. These recommendations aim to achieve good ecological status for the Baltic Sea and its environment by the decade's end.

The core of the outcome of the working group's work is 25 far-reaching and ambitious recommendations for action on climate and biodiversity, which were unanimously agreed upon at the group's final meeting in Gdansk in May this year and have been incorporated into the 32nd BSPC draft resolution to be adopted at the annual conference on 29 August 2023 in Berlin.

The recommendations call on the governments in the Baltic Sea Region to increase efforts in implementing ambitious national climate targets, strengthen regional collaboration, encourage renewable energy development, and focus on transitioning from fossil fuels to low-carbon energy systems. They also underline the need to urge the world's three largest CO₂ emitters to step up their efforts to achieve ambitious climate targets, incentivise renewable energy development, and address the risks associated with increasing dependence on rare metal suppliers.

The WG also urges the implementation of coastal management plans to protect and restore coastal ecosystems, support research and innovation in climate change mitigation and adaptation technologies and promote cross-border cooperation on regional climate initiatives. Annual Baltic Sea Climate and Biodiversity Summits are convened to raise public awareness, track progress, share best practices, and refine regional climate action and adaptation strategies.

The WG additionally emphasises halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030 while ensuring inclusive, socially, and environmentally sustainable economic growth and development. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) must be fully implemented, and the region should contribute to the rapid entry into force of the international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity.

The Baltic Sea Action Plan and its associated action documents should be implemented quickly and strictly to achieve good ecological status by the decade's end. Regional strategies should be developed to deal with transboundary emergencies caused by climate change and pollution, including forest fires, eutrophication, and spreading pathogens.

Based on intensive consultations and discussions with relevant experts, the recommendations for action also address regional cooperation and information exchange between the democratic Baltic Sea states and the Arctic to intensify joint strategies and policies to deal with climate change. Also, expanding the existing network of marine protected areas (MPAs), conserving carbon-rich ecosystems such as forests, wetlands and natural rivers, and measures to reverse land degradation are vital in the calls for action.

The report furthermore provides examples of best practices in climate change and biodiversity from the Baltic States, Estonia, and Lithuania. The Baltic States emphasise regional cooperation and support for clean environments, biodiversity protection, and climate change mitigation. They have implemented projects such as integrating climate change policy in sectorial and regional policies, innovation in forestry biomass residue processing, and peat restoration. Estonia has focused on restoring habitats, swamps, and drained peatlands and promoting sustainable management of wooded meadows. Lithuania has implemented projects on climate change mitigation in nutrient-rich organic soils and cooperation on greenhouse gas inventory. These examples demonstrate efforts to address climate change and protect biodiversity in the respective countries.

The work of the working group was additionally flanked by the fact that the BSPC Standing Committee, in some of its meetings, deepened the main themes of its WG with experts. The respective results have also been incorporated into the further work of the working group.

The recommendations also address the most recent international developments and agreements in these areas, which have recently been adopted after many years of negotiations at the international level.

The urgency of further, consistent and comprehensive measures in these areas was again clearly emphasised by the experts during the recent discussions in the BSPC:

Crucial aspects to be considered overall are:

It is easy to destroy but extremely hard to recover. It takes not just a few years but many decades or centuries to restore the natural state necessary for a genuinely healthy ecosystem. It is a fundamental task for decision-makers to take with them that protection is crucial. There is no short-term use which could be excused when looking at a long-term ecosystem – because recovery was such a long and challenging process. It is essential to keep in mind that short-term events have long-term effects.

Remaining scientific unknowns cannot be a reason not to act. One could not wait until all the scientific results had come in before moving towards protecting the oceans and making sustainable use of them and the Earth in total. One should always strive to do better. There would be mistakes in predictions, in the actions taken, and hard work being done to understand things better. However, one should not shy away from doing the right thing at the right time – and that was now.

This fundamental conviction shapes the working group's recommendations for action.

This report should thus be considered a strategic summary of BSPC WG CCB's work.

Mainly because some members of the working group left their parliaments, changes in the composition of the chairmanship were necessary. The WG's chairmanship was conceded from Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby, Sweden, to Mr Philipp da Cunha, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, at the end of September 2022. Vice-chairs at the beginning were Ms Liz Mattsson from the Åland Islands and Mr Kolbeinn Óttarsson Proppé from Iceland. In the final phase of the WG work, Mr Jesper Josefsson from the Åland Islands and Mr Jarosław Wałęsa from Poland were Vice-Chairs of the WG.

Deeper insights about the working group's activities are presented in this final report, with further links to detailed information about the meetings of the WG and all expert presentations.

Final Report

BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity (BSPC WG CCB)

The overarching objective of the Working Group was to elaborate political positions and recommendations pertaining to climate change and biodiversity.

The Working Group and its members should furthermore – according to their mandate determined by the Standing Committee of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference - aimed at raising political attention on Climate Change and Biodiversity and contribute to the exchange of knowledge and best practices within its area of responsibility.

For this purpose, the Working Group established and maintained contacts with relevant institutions, organisations and other actors in the Baltic Sea Region, helped to drive cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region actively and followed and influenced political initiatives.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present a set of political recommendations from the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity (WG CCB) to the 32nd BSPC. This is pursuant to the mandate of the WG.

The report also gives a cursory account of challenges that the WG has discussed with many experts.

2. Mandate

The BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity (WG CCB) was established - based on a corresponding decision of the BSPC Standing Committee - by the Digital Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference on 24 August 2020 at its 29th annual conference.

The resolution points out that the group has the task to submit a first report at the 30th BSPC – with particular focus on the need for joint and cross-border cooperation –, concerning enhanced solutions to preserve the biodiversity inherent to the entire Baltic Sea region and to mitigate the effects of climate change with special emphasis on

- the state of policies and strategies concerning climate change and
- biodiversity in the Baltic Sea region;
- best practices in addressing the interlinked challenges of biodiversity and
- climate change with a specific focus on the Baltic Sea;
- innovations and measures to tackle climate change and preserve biodiversity;
- climate change adaptation and challenges for science, technology and the Economy;
- ensuring efficient and environment-friendly transport and energy supply solutions

According to the resolution, the working group shall concentrate its attention on the environmental side of climate change and biodiversity as well as on innovation, technology and further economic aspects.

3. Scope of Work – Programme and Work in Progress

In accordance with this decision, the WG CCB agreed on the following

Scope of Work - Topics, Themes and Priorities

Global climate change and related challenges are central policy areas in many countries. The Paris Agreement, national and multinational strategies and fundamentally changed public awareness set the framework for far-reaching measures that will profoundly impact the future development of many countries.

It is the task of this Working Group to support this process by means of optimised parliamentary co-operation to achieve the most far-reaching and rapid progress possible in meeting these challenges in the entire Baltic Sea region.

More intensive cooperation, also at the parliamentary level, can and should further strengthen current efforts in individual countries and international bodies and optimise the basis for necessary decisions in the Baltic Sea region.

The Nordic Council Session in Stockholm focused on climate change and the Nordic Council's Committee for a Sustainable Nordic Region is working intensively with this issue.

The Baltic Assembly has also announced that climate change is among its priorities for the next year. Furthermore, the issue is in line with the latest ambitious goals in the EU and beyond.

The European Commission recently presented its long-term strategic vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate-neutral economy by 2050. Following the invitations of the European

Parliament and the European Council, the Commission's vision for a climate-neutral future covers nearly all EU policies. It is in line with the *Paris Agreement* objective to keep the global temperature increase to well below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.

In light of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a focus on biodiversity (SDG15), climate (SDG13) and oceans (SDG14), the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the 2020 UN Biodiversity Conference in Kunming, China, on 17-30 May 2021, the issue of climate change and biodiversity are of utmost importance. The WG should consider the conclusions of the UN Biodiversity Conference and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in its work.

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) has been closely focussing on issues of both biodiversity and climate change as well as its impact on the marine environment of the Baltic Sea region specifically and has stressed the importance of recognising climate change as a cross-cutting topic within the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP). In addition, the HELCOM Expert Network on Climate Change (EN CLIME) is preparing the Climate Change Fact Sheet final report to be adopted in 2021. Moreover, both biodiversity and climate change are featured as a prominent issue area within the currently developed HELCOM Science Agenda. Given the intensive work and accumulated HELCOM expertise on these topics, the WG should also closely follow the climate change- and biodiversity-related work conducted within relevant HELCOM bodies and continue the long-standing tradition of cooperation and exchange between the BSPC and HELCOM.

The goal of the WG should be to create closer cooperation in this field and to facilitate far-reaching decisions through parliamentary support in the whole Baltic Sea region.

In doing so, the WG will focus its framework, topics, themes and priorities on Climate Change and Biodiversity mainly on regional aspects of the Baltic Sea region.

The scope of work of the Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity should cover, but not be limited to, the following main items:

A. Climate Change and Biodiversity in the Baltic Sea region – an analysis of the current situation

Climate change and biodiversity policies differ in the various countries of the Baltic Sea region. In order to find a common platform for deliberations on common activities, the working group needs to elaborate a common framework for discussion by collecting and discussing information about the current situation in the Baltic Sea region countries, and how climate change has affected biodiversity and climate change policies in the region.

B. Climate Change and Biodiversity in the Baltic Sea region - best practice examples

The WG should, through e.g. expert presentations, study visits and questionnaires, collect and compile examples of best practices and measures, as well as follow and influence political initiatives.

It is commonly assumed that climate change and biodiversity are interconnected. Climate change is

affecting species, ecosystems and biodiversity while biodiversity plays a role in reducing the negative effects of climate change. The WG should cover different perspectives of climate change and biodiversity, as well as the impact on land-based and marine ecosystems.

The aim is to get an overview of the state of current policies in the Baltic Sea region and to identify where common action is possible and further action is needed. This will form one part of the basis for the political recommendations of the WG. It should also be examined how the BSR countries could benefit from the experiences of other countries and measures.

C. Climate Change and Biodiversity in the Baltic Sea region – innovations and measures to deal with climate change, biodiversity and climate change adaptation

The WG should, by means of e.g. expert presentations, study visits and questionnaires, collect and compile examples of measures to promote common progress in reaching the set goals concerning climate change and biodiversity and how to deal with the challenges of climate change, biodiversity and climate change adaptation.

The aim is to identify measures that have been undertaken, to assess achievements and to study innovative solutions for dealing with the impact of climate change on science, technology and the economy. This will also serve to identify gaps and any need for further measures.

The results of this process will form another part of the basis for the political recommendations of the WG. The WG should further help to actively drive cooperation and develop recommendations to improve collaboration and exchange of information between Baltic Sea countries in matters related to climate change, biodiversity and climate change adaptation between various authorities, organisations and other operators.

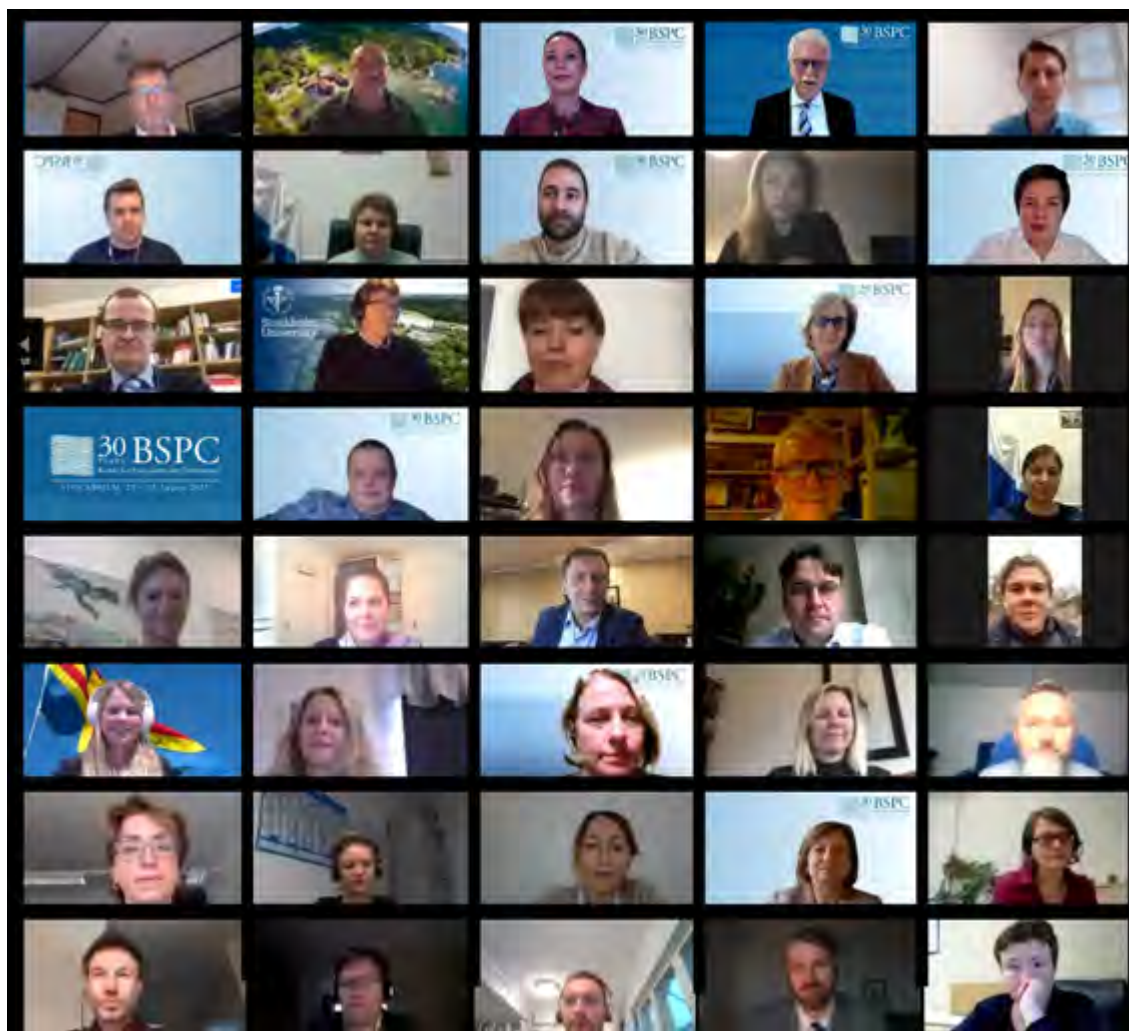
D. Climate Change and Biodiversity - political recommendations

The primary outcome of the activities of the WG is to elaborate joint political recommendations to speed up and specify measures concerning climate change and biodiversity. The political recommendations should be based on an assessment of the specific role and added value that the parliamentarians can contribute to the promotion of these policy fields in their countries. The political recommendations constitute a manifestation of the joint political push that parliamentarians of the BSPC can exert on the governments of the Baltic Sea region.

4. Working Group Meetings

4.1 16 November 2020, Digital

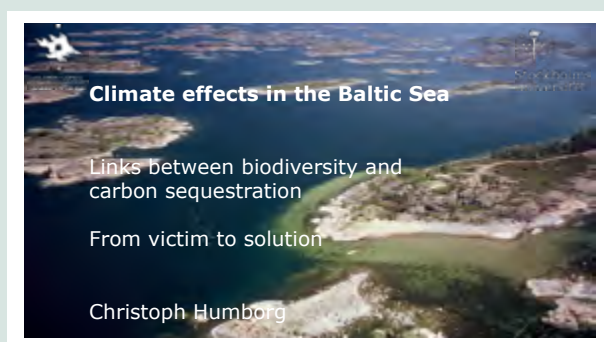
The BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity held its first meeting on 16 November 2020 in a digital venue, due to the coronavirus restrictions established at the time. Chaired by Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby, Chairwoman of the working group, expert presentations focused on then-recent conferences, the Baltic Sea ecosystem and its resilience to climate change as well as a Swedish best practice example for sustainable development.



Mr Jan Terstad, the Deputy Director General in the Swedish Ministry of the Environment, responsible for the Division for Natural Environment, related that the recent “Our Baltic” conference had discussed the challenges faced by the Baltic Sea, such as the pressure from fisheries and the input of pollutants, litter, and contaminants.



Aiming to boost intersectoral management and commitment to the existing goals, a Ministerial Declaration had been signed. The UN Biodiversity Summit had addressed biodiversity loss and opportunities to counteract said loss, also launching an online platform “Voices for Nature”. Mr Terstad saw this summit as a good sign. Prof Christoph Humborg, Scientific Director of the Stockholm University Baltic Sea Centre, explained that the Baltic Sea was unique, with an extremely long-term water exchange and low salinity. This made Baltic species sensitive and susceptible to nutrification and climate change. Moreover, eutrophication was causing algal blooms and dead organic material gathering at the bottom of the sea, emitting the powerful greenhouse gas methane. Amelioration efforts should protect coastal areas, decrease the nutrient influx into the ocean, and restore carbon-rich ecosystems, such as seaweeds. Prof Humborg highlighted the reduction of nitrogen and phosphorus contaminants in the Baltic Sea due to the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.



Ms Susanné Wallner, Development Strategist from the Mariestad Municipality, explained that ElectrVillage in the biosphere reserve in Mariestad, Sweden, was a unique approach to sustainable transport solutions and energy systems.



Their practice tests had been immersed in the real-life environment of the city and municipal operations, also tackling logistics, purchasing, and business development. She emphasised the necessity of commitment by all parts of society.

Professor Michael Tjernström, Dept. Meteorology, Bolin Centre for Climate Research at Stockholm University, noted the uneven distribution of climate change, with faster temperature rises the further south or north one went.



The Arctic was the fastest-heating region, but differences between north and south were also present in the Baltic Sea. Especially the loss of sea ice would strongly affect rising sea levels and contribute to extreme weather conditions. Greenhouse gases were the only suitable explanation. Prof Tjernström cautioned that the temperature rise had to be kept between 3 and 6 °C; otherwise, the Arctic ice would disappear by 2050, the sea level could rise by one metre, snowfall during the winter would be reduced, thus causing water supply problems.

More details and expert presentations are published *here*.

4.2 15 March 2021, Digital

Under the chairmanship of Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby, the second meeting on 15 March 2021 concerned HELCOM's efforts to restore a good ecological status to the Baltic Sea as well as best practice examples in coastal regions, small islands, and fishing around Iceland.



Mr Rüdiger Strempele, HELCOM Executive Secretary, explained the organisation's fundamental tasks of monitoring the environment along with thematic and holistic assessments.



The Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) was a central tool that was being overhauled at that time to reflect that its goals had not been met and new challenges, such as marine litter or underwater noise joining the established hurdles of eutrophication in particular. Related processes accompanied the BSAP to achieve the overall goal of a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea. Ms Jannica Haldin, HELCOM Professional Secretary, presented the Climate Change Fact Sheet produced by HELCOM together with the Baltic Earth network.

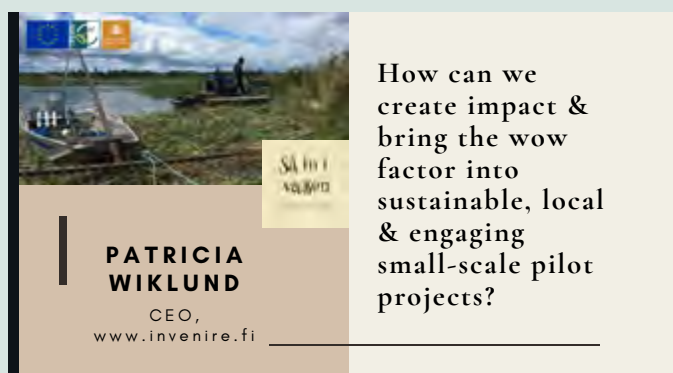


The Fact Sheet served as an easily accessible report on 34 parameters in a science-driven consensus view, such as air temperature, sea level, and precipitation. These in turn altered secondary parameters, among them oxygen levels as well as various marine fauna. She highlighted the interconnectedness of diverse drivers and the key messages on climate change. As for the present state of the Baltic Sea, food webs had already been affected, nutrient circulation was changing, algal blooms were increasing. Especially eutrophication had to be reduced by lowering nutrient loads from agricultural practices. Ms Linda Kumblad, Associate Professor in Systems Ecology at Stockholm University, was the Project Leader of Living Coast, a full-scale remediation project on areas severely affected by eutrophication and with limited water exchange.



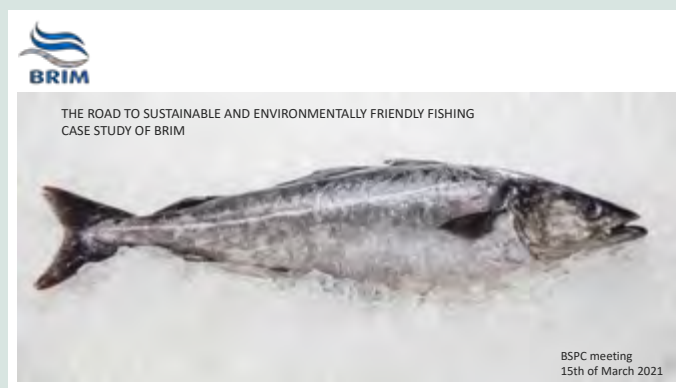
The Björnöfjärden bay in the Stockholm archipelago served as a miniature version of the Baltic Sea; here, Living Coast had implemented measures to reduce inputs from agriculture and horse keeping but also to improve local sewage systems as well as increasing phosphorus sequestration in the sediment. Over 10 years, phosphorus loads had been reduced by ca. 70 %. Improvement of the environmental status of coastal areas was possible, given time, patience, resources and involving the local community.

Ms Patricia Wiklund, Project Manager, CEO of Invenire, presented a very small-scale, community-led project in the tiny island group Brändö, Sweden. Common reed had overgrown both land and sea areas, affecting both sets of fauna.



By repeatedly harvesting the reeds and recycling them as ground cover in greenhouses and fertiliser in the spring, water pathways and canals had been restored, improving fish habitats, while overgrown meadows had been returned to cow pasture as well as game feed. In her view, the local community had to be at the heart of the efforts, appreciating what was to be achieved.

Ms Gréta María Grétarsdóttir, Managing Director of Innovation, Social Responsibility and Investor Relations at the Seafood Company Brim in Iceland, stressed the importance of the environment for her company.



The primary impact of the fishing industry on water was oil use in boat engines. Since ships on average lasted 30 years, long-term investments took 10 – 15 years to bear fruit. Brim had cut its oil use by half since 2005, also because better management had reduced fishing trips. Smaller boats would be switched to hybrid engines soon; she saw hydrogen fuel cells as the engine technology of the fisheries' future. A holistic assessment of the carbon footprint was achieved through Brim's real-time data collection system on environmental effects of the vessels and land-based operations, continually refining and innovating measures.

More details and the expert presentations are published *here*.

4.3 04 October 2021, Digital

Meeting for the last time in digital form, Chairwoman Tenfjord-Toftby welcomed the working group to hear presentations on biological carbon sequestration and innovative shipping technologies. The German federal state of Schleswig-Holstein had organised the expert participants. Representatives from the recent Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum explained their recommendations.



Mr Jan Philipp Albrecht, State Minister for Energy, Agriculture, the Environment, Nature and Digitalization of Schleswig-Holstein, spoke about collaboration in the Baltic Sea region on climate change, praising the BSPC as essential in bringing people together and getting the necessary tasks done. Dr Walter Hemmerling, Managing Director, Foundation for Nature Conservation Schleswig Holstein (SNSH), noted that 40,000 hectares had been acquired by the foundation since 1978, providing refuge for endangered species. Peatland – 9 % of the state's whole area – was a particular focus as most of it had been drained, turning it into a carbon emitter.



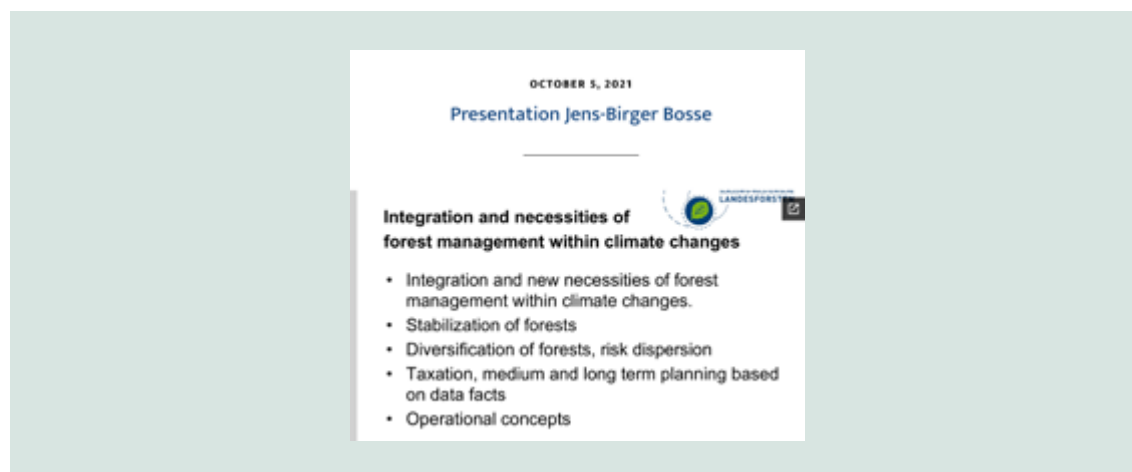
Rewetting efforts to sequester CO₂ made traditional agriculture impossible, though animal farming and biochar production for textiles or green hydrogen could take their place. Green infrastructure and environmental education were further focused upon, as was the necessity of fair compensation for farmers.

Dr Wilfried Rickels, Director Global Commons and Climate Policy, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, spoke about the potential of seagrass, saltmarsh and mangroves for carbon sequestration.



Expensive as resettling seagrass meadows was, the price was offset by additional benefits, such as cleaner water, coastal protection, increased biodiversity, and secure fisheries yields. He stressed that such efforts had to be embedded into marine and maritime strategy to mitigate other stressors as well, such as eutrophication. He highlighted the Baltic Health Index on the socio-ecological status of the Baltic Sea.

Mr Jens-Birger Bosse, Head of the Department of Organic Production, Schleswig-Holstein State Forests, explained that his organisation was balancing economic forest management with protective and recreational functions.



A major difficulty in responding to climate change – e.g., beech trees succumbing to present temperature changes – was the slow growth of trees, such that effects had to be measured in 100 or 200 years. Threats to forests came from fungal diseases, parasitic species but also fires and storms. Diversification of forests ameliorated risks, reinforced resilience by e.g., combining native with non-native species as well as planted with seeded trees.

Dr Alexander Dyck, Institute for Maritime Energy Systems in Geesthacht, spoke about carbon emissions from shipping.



Responsible for ca. 3 % of global emissions, alternative energy supplies were crucial in achieving entirely green shipping. This entailed a holistic approach combining ships and harbours. New ship designs and infrastructure systems would be necessary to incorporate alternative fuels, such as hydrogen, metal hydrides or batteries. Especially long-term travel was problematic. The implementation of standards and regulations was inevitable and had to happen soon since new vessels would have to run on alternative fuels from 2030 at the latest.

Two representatives from the most recent Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum, Ms Kamila Ciok from Poland and Mr Liviu Pintilie from Estonia, presented the forum's recommendations. These included the phase-out of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers, close collaboration between science and politics, a stronger use of recycled materials in construction, and the reduction of waste. They highlighted that people at the lower levels, such as fishermen, had to be involved, not least to inform politics about the practical aspects.

More details and the expert presentations are published *here*.

4.4 09 – 10 May 2022, Mariehamn

Meeting for the first time in person, the working group under the chairmanship of Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby learned on the first day about the Åland islands' efforts towards a fully sustainable society, such as offshore wind parks, solar power plants, and a new concept for island sustainability. This visit also coincided with the host region celebrating 100 years of autonomy.



Mr Berndt Schalin, CEO of Flexens Ltd, explained that his company – a public-private partnership – was implementing the project Smart Energy Åland which targeted a society run on 100 % renewable energy. He listed three sub-projects, one about an energy island community, a planned hydrogen-powered ferry, and an abandoned mine as a hydro energy storage facility. Usage determined technology, he underlined: If e.g., the end use was heat – such as predominated in Åland –, heat storage was best.



Although hydrogen looked feasible for long-duration use, such as ferries, he noted the poor energy conversion. Still, the Baltic Sea was a very good place for hydrogen production through e.g., offshore wind.

Mr Ralf Häggblom, Department of Infrastructure in the government of Åland, introduced the project Sunnavind (Sea-based Wind Power), administrating the establishment of large-scale offshore wind farms.



While the potential energy production was huge, the primary concern was how to get the power to suitable markets in cost-efficient ways. The permission process was shared between Åland and Finland. The wind farms were planned to be built around 2030, with a 30-35-year lifetime. Mr Christian Pleijel introduced the habitability concept developed on the far-off island of Kõkar, with EU funding.



Since ordinary sustainability tools did not apply to tiny locations, especially island peculiarities, habitability was more suitable. This concept looked at what made people want to live on an island. Its indicators encompassed place identity, ecosystems, fresh water, energy, local economy, public service, and prosperous people. The final – and most important – consideration was whether the population was growing. Ms Petra Granholm and Mr Niklas Lampi spoke about the long-term project on fulfilling the sustainability targets on the islands, called Bärkraft.



Aiming to become fully sustainable no later than 2051, the Åland project pursued seven goals: The first two concerned social sustainability, three and four the environment, the fifth attractiveness of the islands, the sixth climate change and energy efficiency, and the seventh sustainable and mindful patterns of consumption and production. The grassroots approach had been vital by communicating the goals to the people from the start, also by bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, offering fresh perspectives. Regarding climate change, carbon emissions in Åland had been going down since 2005, with heating, road traffic, and commercial shipping still the major contributors. Further reductions were targeted in those areas. In biodiversity, Bärkraft focused on invasive species, the restoration of locally lost species, and rewilding.

On 10 May, the working group heard expert presentations on the Åland government's efforts towards a sustainable society and from the LEADER group about local action groups.

Mr Alfons Röblom, Minister for Environment, Climate, Energy, Housing and Higher Education of Åland, praised international cooperation in this field. As for eutrophication, he noted negotiations with fish farms to find good solutions. The government had put great effort into communicating the benefits of renewable energy, such as the planned offshore wind farms, which could produce hydrogen, not least as a possible energy storage. Connecting the power grids of countries could be helpful by distributing excess energy to regions needing it at that time.

Ms Alexandra de Haas explained that her group was part of LEADER, an EU-funded method for grassroots links between activities for the development of rural economy.



Through partnerships and networks, the local needs were analysed from the local perspective to design a local development strategy for a seven-year period. Åland's LEADER group, launched in 2007, encompassed one land- and one sea-based area. Until 2013, the focus had been mostly on village development and cultural heritage. After that, it had shifted to nature, the environment, and sustainability. More than 120 local projects targeted increasing biodiversity, restoration efforts, or reducing eutrophication but also leisure areas. She cited examples such as urban farming, "slow tourism", and pond or ditch building to trap water and thus nutrients from entering the ocean.

The Working Group also visited a Wetland for increased biodiversity and climate-adapted stormwater management as part of Mariehamn's environmental programme (information [here](#)). Mr Ulf Simolin, Environmental Coordinator for the City of Mariehamn and Ms Linda Sundström gave detailed information about the Wetland, the environmental programme and the goals that reduce the city's environmental impact on coastal waters, beaches and watercourses and discussed the results with the working group members.

More details and the expert presentations are published [here](#) and [here](#).

4.5 29 – 30 August 2022, Schwerin

The meeting in the German federal state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern was split into two days, the first in the capital of Schwerin, the second in the Schaalsee biosphere reserve. The working group also visited a battery factory.



Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby chaired her final meeting before leaving parliament. The expert presentations across both days dealt with forests and the sea, energy, and peatland but also the recent Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum.

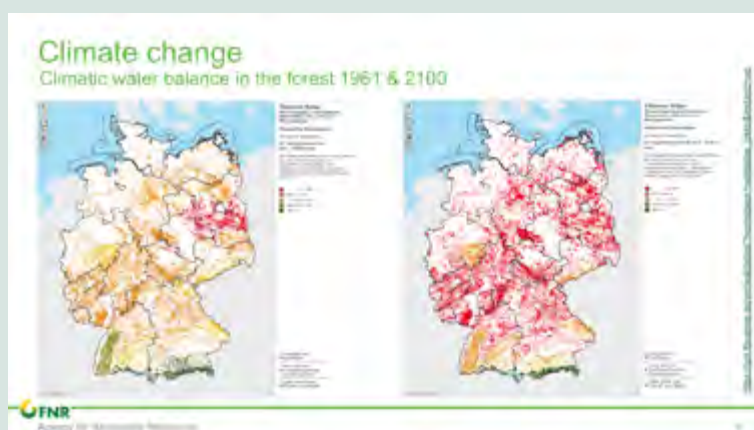
Co-organiser Ms Aline Mayr from the CBSS Secretariat praised the integration of young people into policymaking. The youth representatives Mr Andreas Schoop from Germany and Ms Simona Jakaitė from Lithuania presented the forum's recommendations, such as carbon sequestration through restoration of forests and wetlands, investing in innovative and renewable energy sources as well as the circular economy. They also called for resilient cities – green, more affordable, healthier, and allowing free movement – as well as resilient seas and coastlines, curbing nutrient influx.

The section on forests and the sea began with Dr Sandra Kleine, Ministry for Climate Protection, Agriculture, Rural Areas and the Environment of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, who explained her state's scheme of eco-certificates to translate ecosystem services into economic value.



This allowed rural areas to funnel in urban money for their ecosystem services. She highlighted functional peatlands as the most powerful terrestrial carbon storage, yet drained peatlands were greenhouse gas emitters. In the rewetting efforts, the land had been bought from farmers.

Mr Marcus Kühling, Team Leader, Competence and Information Centre Forest and Wood, Agency for Renewable Resources, noted Germany as one of the most-forested countries in Europe, its people identifying with the forest.



The low diversity of tree species lowered their resilience to climate change, exemplified by drought, windstorms, snow, and ice but also insect infestation as major threats. Federal aid had been provided to forest owners, along with research into e.g., diversification through new species like Douglas firs and redwoods or other forest management approaches. He stressed the wide range of ecosystem services provided by forests, including timber, water, biodiversity, and food.

Prof Dr Uwe Freiherr von Lukas, Ocean Technology Campus Rostock (OTC), explained that the campus was seeking to establish an innovation ecosystem bringing research scientists together with politicians and companies.

Ocean Technology Campus Rostock (spatial view)

Regional innovation ecosystem for sustainable ocean usage

Located in the former fishery port of Rostock

Connecting business, research and regional development

– 70 Mio. € Funding infrastructure projects

Our services

- Forming R&D consortia
- knowledge brokerage
- International collaboration
- Industrial location
- Retention of highly skilled workers


At its start, it was focusing on skill development to provide education both on the academic and practical level. Another aspect was creating the necessary infrastructure and environment for companies and other partners. The OTC concentrated on the sustainable use of the oceans through various pilot projects in the Baltic Sea, through projects such as autonomous underwater vehicles or an intensely monitored coastal area as a Digital Ocean Lab.

The presentations on energy began with Dr Peter Sponholz, CRO (APEX Group), who spoke about hydrogen and hydrogen storage. APEX provided the machinery for the processes from energy source to usable hydrogen, including electrolyser, hydrogen storage and fuel cell systems or refuelling stations.



Any kind of high-heat environment needed for production would end up using hydrogen. Hydrogen storage, often overlooked, was a key technology. Compression allowed massive amounts of energy to be stored. Regarding transport, he warned that hydrogen cars would not be viable.

Mr Henrich Quick, Head of Offshore, 50Hertz Transmission GmbH, outlined the exponential growth in offshore wind power but also the drop of installation costs.



Renewable Energies in the Baltic Sea


BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity

August 2019 | 02:02 | Dr. Henrich Quick, Head of Offshore

Transmission System Operator 50Hertz

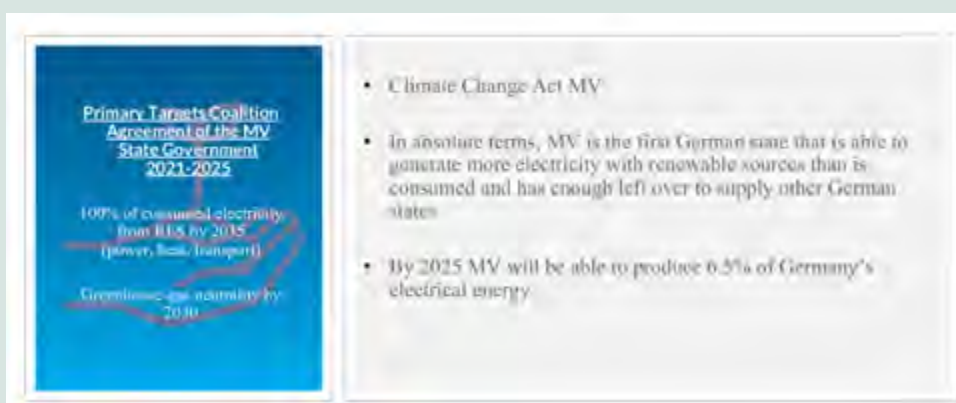
Responsible for...

- The reliable electricity supply to 18 million people in the northern and eastern part of Germany
- The electricity system in Berlin, Brandenburg, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia



The German transmission system operator model was preferable in creating standardised connections optimised not for the energy producers but recipients. The goal for 50Hertz was that 100 % of the energy in their control zone, covering about 20 % of the German population, would be available from renewable energy sources in 2032.

Mr Thomas Murche, Technical Director, WEMAG AG, remarked that sector coupling was indispensable for the German-wide plans to reach climate neutrality by 2045. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern intended to cover the entire energy demand via renewables by 2035.

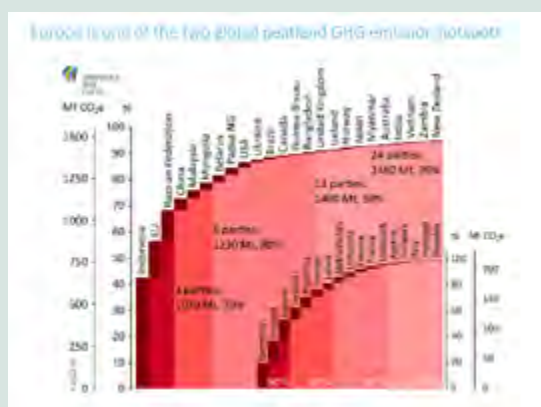


Consumption and generation were rarely perfectly matched, requiring new energy storage technologies and quadrupling the installed renewable energy capacity.

On peatland, Ms Anke Hollerbach, Head of Administration of the Biosphere Reserves Schaalsee and Elbe, said that the UNESCO programme encompassed 738 reserves worldwide, 18 of them in Germany.



Biosphere reserves were required to re-confirm their status every 10 years. A dialogue with nature, poverty reduction, and human well-being were at the heart of the global approach. They had to fulfil three functions: compiling natural diversity, economic development with social and environmental sustainability as well as logistics support for research, monitoring, education, and training. The local reserves primarily dealt with peatland restoration, a difficult and long-term undertaking, requiring studies on impacts to surrounding areas – including agriculture and forestry – and planning. Ms Hollerbach also stressed the importance of having experts on site, networked with the local population. Dr Franziska Tanneberger, landscape ecologist at Greifswald University, Director of the Greifswald Mire Centre, stressed the benefits of functional – wet – peatlands as carbon sinks while the drained bogs were major carbon emitters. After Indonesia, the EU was the second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world in peatland emissions, with Germany leading.



The German government had assigned two billion euros for peatland protection, also considering establishing a peatland rewetting authority. Aside from paludiculture – harvests from moors –, she further suggested alternative land uses, such as building solar panel installations on highly degraded peatland. Dr Jenny Schulz, CEO, PaludiMed GmbH, was growing sundew – a medicinal plant for the treatment of asthmatic bronchitis – as paludiculture within the biosphere reserve. Offering a habitat for many species, paludiculture conserved and could even expand the peat layer. Sundew cultivation in other areas had proved unsuccessful or overly expensive, so she found her efforts promising to provide a stable supply, countering the sundew imports from China with little active substances.

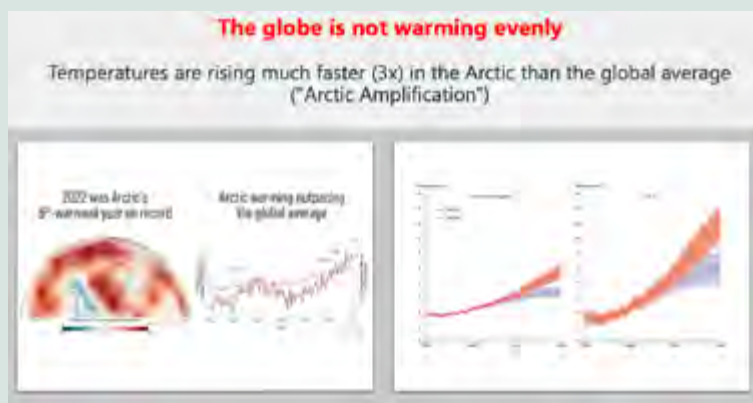
More details and the expert presentations are published *here*.

4.6 20 March 2023, Tromsø

After Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby had left parliament, Mr Philipp da Cunha had been appointed chairman of the working group and welcomed the members to Tromsø in Norway within the Arctic Circle for information on climate change and the Arctic.



Ms Nalan Koc, Research Director, Norwegian Polar Institute, spoke about the century-long tradition of Norwegian Arctic and Antarctic research, with a wide array of research infrastructure at both the North and South Pole, including the class 3 icebreaker Kronprins Haakon and research stations. All were open to scientists from other countries to share. Among the Polar Institute's multidisciplinary research, she highlighted climate change and monitoring, biodiversity, glaciers, and oceanography. Ice core data documenting the last 800,000 years showed the current levels of carbon dioxide as unprecedented. Furthermore, "Arctic Amplification" showed the poles warming 3 – 4 times faster than the rest of the globe.



This led to accelerated loss of sea ice, changing patterns in weather and water distribution.



Dr Lis Lindal Jørgensen, Institute of Marine Research, noted the vast expanse and diversity of Norway's ocean area, requiring an equally vast research network as well as innovative measures.



Among the latter was searching fish trawl for evidence of benthic, deep-water bottom populations. In the high north, she stated that Arctic species populations were shrinking, being replaced by Atlantic species. Areas that had recently lost their ice shield were being investigated now. The Institute was seeking to build a holistic understanding of how the ecosystem was functioning, using cross- and trans-disciplinary approaches.

The goal for Dr Jørgensen was a "weather forecast", giving simple advice on how to act responsibly in the environment.

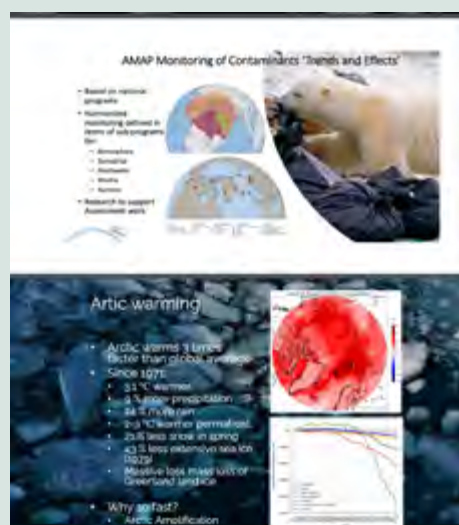


Ms Kristina Bär, Head of Communications, Arctic Council Secretariat, explained the workings of the Arctic Council, bringing together the eight Arctic states with six organisations representing either one or several indigenous peoples.

Added to that were 38 observers. All were involved in the working groups on various themes, such as biodiversity, sustainable development, or emergency prevention. The chairmanship rotated every two years at the ministerial meetings.



Mr Rolf Rødven, Arctic Council, Executive Secretary for the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, confirmed the Arctic Amplification effect, with rain replacing snow, the permafrost thawing, and the sea layers mixing more pronouncedly than before, disturbing nutrient and temperature flows.



Ocean acidification was increasing at an alarming rate, e.g., dissolving some sea snail shells and increasing the mortality of young cod. Thus, he called for strictly curbing fishing quotas. Mr Jens Toft, Arctic Council Secretariat, Project Coordinator on Youth Engagement, related the Arctic Council's efforts to involve young people from their region, such as the Arctic Youth Network and various fellowships. Young people were to develop skills in biodiversity and other fields for application at home. One problem was that youths tended to move to more resilient, southern areas. A guided Polaria tour through the world's most northerly aquarium opened a deep insight into the Arctic environment. Ms Anne Grete Johansen, the director of Polaria, provided insightful information about the Polaria future plans. The WG also discussed international cooperation with similar institutions in this field. A guided tour with the director of the Polar Museum, Mr Geir Rudolfson and a profound presentation by Ms Vilde Ørsje Utby was an impressive experience on the on the history of Arctic exploration and the region's cultural heritage.

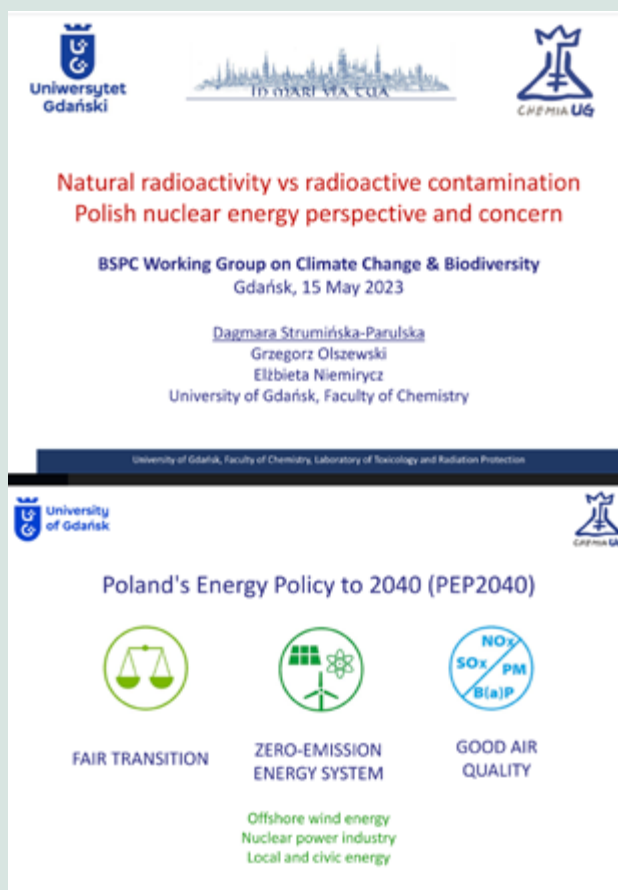
More details and the expert presentations are published *here*.

4.7 15 May 2023, Gdańsk

The final meeting of the working group was held in Gdańsk, Poland. The members explored the long history of Baltic cooperation manifest in the city. Chaired by Mr Philipp da Cunha, two expert presentations dealt with nuclear energy and one with the Slovinski National Park and Biosphere Reserve.

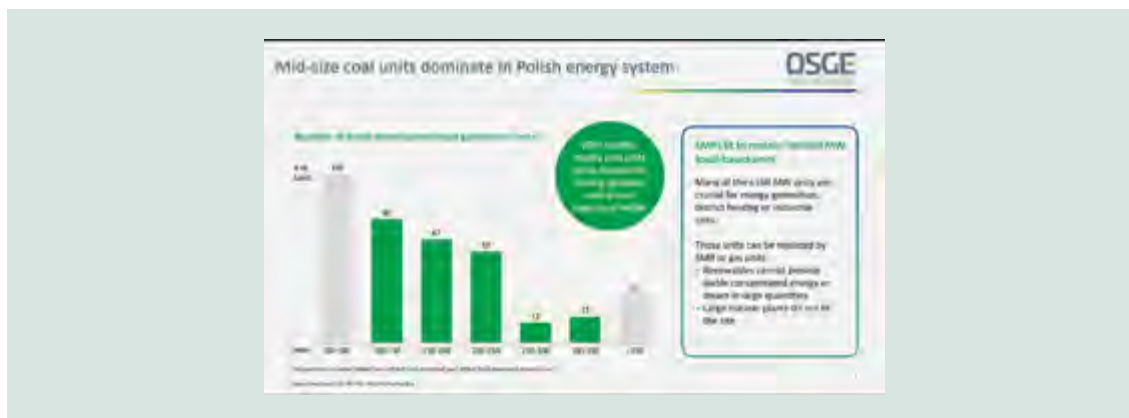


Professor Dagmara Strumińska-Parulska, PhD, Assoc. Prof., Faculty of Chemistry, Laboratory of Toxicology and Radiation Protection, University of Gdańsk, first explained the country's plans to build six nuclear reactors until 2040 to allow Poland to become climate-neutral.



Noting the various legal limits for radiation dosage, the professor explained the great range and amount of natural radiation found in water or food but also emitted as radon gas. She regretted that this rarely was reflected in the debate about the perceived danger of nuclear plants. Natural radiation should be more concerning than man-made radiation. In particular, she spoke about the effects of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 on Poland which were far more marginal than originally expected.

Prof Dr hab. Waclaw Gudowski, National Centre for Nuclear Research – Świerk and Royal Institute of Technology – KTH, Stockholm, Senior Advisor to Orlen Synthos Green Energy – OSGE, argued for nuclear power plants, in particular the small nuclear reactors (SMRs) Poland was interested in. The country's energy system was not only based primarily on coal but also aging so that most of the generating units would have to be replaced in the near future.



Renewable energies could not close the gap opened by this. Thus, nuclear power was necessary as it was highly efficient, and future reactors would allow 95 % of nuclear material to be recycled. Citing examples from Sweden, he dismissed concerns about long-term storage. He further stressed the safety mechanisms of the reactors currently being designed which would prevent large-scale disasters along with faster construction times, less space needed, and increasingly falling costs. He expected Poland to build the VWRX 300 model of SMR around 2030. Prof Gudowski underlined that he saw nuclear energy as safe and inexpensive.

Mr Grzegorz Kupczak, Slovinski National Park, said that the park had had the status of a biosphere reserve since 1997.



This had been called into question because it had met only the protective function demanded by the UNESCO-funded programme. As such, the park had worked hard, with the aid of stakeholders, to also develop the functions of development and logistical support for science. Plans were ongoing to expand the park, also into the Baltic Sea. Mr Kupczak noted the efforts to honour the culture and traditions of the Slovenian people for whom the park was named, establishing an open-air museum. He highlighted the recently formed network Biosphere for Baltic, which brought together several biosphere reserves from around the Baltic Sea. Their joint efforts focused on educating about the effects of human activities across rivers and deltas into the Baltic Sea as well as improving ocean literacy. He also discussed the different interpretations of biosphere reserves in the various countries, such as Poland and Germany.

More details and the expert presentations are published *here*.

5. Intergovernmental Survey

The BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity (CCB) adopted on 4 October 2021 an intergovernmental survey to inquire the Baltic Sea region governments about their efforts and plans regarding climate change and biodiversity. In the meantime – mostly during the spring 2022 -, 11 governments have sent their statements and answers to their respective parliaments.

The detailed questions concern general information on the measures and strategies on climate change and biodiversity in the BSPC member states and regions, the legal basis of the measures and strategies in the BSPC member states, specific areas and aspects such as maritime areas and protected zones, eutrophication, sea-dumped munitions, efforts towards zero pollution, the economy, innovation, international cooperation, adaptation and the involvement of citizens and stakeholders.

Intergovernmental survey Adopted by the BSPC WG CCB on 4 October 2021

The answers provide a deep and unique parallel insight into the relevant activities of the governments in the Baltic Sea Region.

The statements of the governments can be downloaded *here*.



The Working Group saw a necessity to update the positions on the strategies and approaches since numerous energy policy measures are being initiated in the member countries because of the Ukraine war, also affecting the respective climate policy strategies.

Therefore, it was important to explore: To what extent do the war in Ukraine and related changes in political priorities have an impact on climate policy goals and their implementation?

Governments have commented on this mainly as part of their statements on this year's BSPC resolution (see chapter 8 of this report).

6. Best practices – Examples

One of the purposes of the Working Group was to share best practices regarding Climate Change and Biodiversity.

The experts who have participated in the working group meetings have also presented several best-practice examples in their presentations. In this respect, reference is made to the corresponding remarks on the beforementioned presentations.

This chapter presents some further examples of the best practices which delegations of the working group have highlighted:

The Baltic States

The Baltic States have expressed strong support for regional cooperation in order to maintain a clean environment, protect biodiversity, as well as to mitigate climate change, and have been looking for further possibilities to increase this cooperation. The countries have also called for incentives to ensure a cost-effective, just, socially balanced, and fair implementation of climate targets. This is also proven by the fact that the Baltic States have welcomed the European Commission's 2030 Climate Target Plan and are fully committed to achieving a climate-neutral EU by 2050.

One of the best practice examples of cooperation in the field of climate change and biodiversity include the project "Integration of climate change policy in sectorial and regional policies" (LV-CLIMATE-0001, funded under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 Programme "Climate Change Mitigation, Adaptation and Environment"). It was organized and coordinated by the Latvian forest research institute "Silava" and included participation from both Estonian and Lithuanian Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) experts. The aim of the project was to share experience, expertise and plans for further development in land use, land use change and the forestry sector's greenhouse gas accounting with a special focus on complicated wetland categories and organic soils.

Another project dealing with the forestry challenges is Interreg Baltic Sea Region three years project (2023-2025) "CEforestry-Innovation in forestry biomass residue processing: towards circular forestry with added value product" which involves 12 partners and 17 associated partners from Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Sweden. The objective of "CEforestry" is to develop new and innovative practices (circular economy concepts) in forestry and novel solutions to utilize forestry side stream in the Baltic Sea region. This will be achieved through innovative means of collaboration across sectors (researchers, target SMEs, large companies and other relevant actors) and demonstrated in pilot facilities. A Circular Economy business model will be developed based on the project results and the aim is to propose recommendations to utilize forestry side streams in Baltic Sea countries in order to meet EU Green Deal, EU Circular Economy and Baltic Sea region bioeconomy strategy goals.

LIFE Peat Restoration project (LPR) (2016-2021), which was composed of nine partners across five countries (Germany, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia), can also be mentioned. The aim of the project has been achieved: the restoration of over 5,300 hectares (ha) of degraded peatlands. The

overall goal was to stop the degradation of peatlands caused by drainage, thus, via adapted management and annually high water levels, peatland growth will be supported to fix carbon dioxide. It is estimated that the restoration will lead to a reduction of 30% of the global warming potential and that the restoration measures will be positive for biodiversity characteristic peatland species, which are highly adapted to the wet ecosystems and their extreme conditions. The project restored 11 sites, covering a wide range of peatland types and states of degradation; various techniques and materials were used and tested. The project partners were also actively involved in efforts to raise awareness of peatlands' essential role in climate change mitigation.

The Baltic States in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) are also involved in the three years Interreg Baltic Sea Region technical assistance project (2022-2024) of the Policy Area (PA) "Energy". The project implementation is coordinated in close cooperation with the European Commission and all relevant stakeholders from Baltic Sea Region countries, regional and local authorities, and intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies. The PA "Energy" focuses on ensuring competitive, secure and sustainable energy in the Baltic Sea region. The aim of the PA "Energy" is to improve the implementation of the EUSBSR Action Plan and Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP). These two action plans have been merged together since 2015. Regional cooperation in the energy sector is conducted within the framework of the BEMIP plan, whose actions are to be implemented mainly in the areas of energy infrastructure, gas and electricity markets, power generation, security of energy supply, energy efficiency and renewable energy. Regarding electricity and gas markets the focus is on achieving an open, competitive and fully integrated regional energy market in the Baltic Sea region.

Best practice examples from Estonia:

- **Restoration of the habitats of the Pärnu River basin:** the aim of the project was to restore protected habitat types and habitats of protected species in the Pärnu River basin. As a result of the project, a dozen of dams was opened for fish to move, live and breed freely in the Pärnu River and a total of 1 220 ha of habitats was restored. One of the most important activities was the opening of the Sind dam and the construction of a natural rapid in its place as it blocked 90% of spawning and habitats in the Pärnu River basin. The project budget was 15,000,000 euros and 85% came from the EU Cohesion Fund. The project was funded in 2015 and was finished in the upcoming years.
- **Restoration of swamps:** in the framework of the project, at least 8820 ha of marshland and swamp forest habitats have been restored. In the course of the project activities, design, necessary expertise and restoration works have been carried out, as well as the elimination of ditches, the construction of water barriers and the cutting of woody vegetation that prevents the recovery of the water regime have been implemented. The total cost of this project is 5,168,669 euros and the contribution from the EU Cohesion Fund is 85%. The project is still being exercised.
- **Remediation of drained, exhausted and abandoned peatlands:** as part of the project, abandoned peatlands on a total area of about 2,000 ha will be rehabilitated across Estonia. This project is important as abandoned peat mining areas grow very slowly without interference, and a lot of carbon dioxide is released from these areas, therefore, it is important to direct them to reforestation. In general, the project focuses on closing the drainage ditches and building barriers. The total cost of activities financed by the EU Cohesion Fund is 4,630,840 euros (85%). Most of the restoration works have been completed, but some are still in the design stages.
- **The joint Estonian-Latvian LIFE project (LIFE20 NAT/EE/000074) “Restoring and promoting long-term sustainable management of Fennoscandian wooded meadows in Estonia and Latvia”:** the project focuses on restoring wooded meadow areas in both countries while creating sustainable solutions for maintenance and raising public awareness of the natural and cultural heritage of wooded meadows and their protection and management. There are a total of 33 project areas in Estonia and Latvia, of which 25 project areas are in Estonia and 8 - in Latvia. The project began on 1 November 2021 and will continue until 31 December 2026. The European Commission finances 75% of the project or 5,023,229 euros.

Best practice examples from Lithuania:

- LIFE OrgBalt project “Demonstration of climate change mitigation potential of nutrients rich organic soils in the Baltic States and Finland”: the general aim of the project is the implementation of innovative climate change mitigation measures in the management of nutrient-rich organic soils in cool and TCM climate regions to contribute to the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change Paris Agreement, EU policies (e.g. Regulation (EU) 2018/841 on Inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry in the 2030 climate and energy framework) and national climate policy targets in post-2020 commitment period by reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from cropland, grassland and forest land on nutrient-rich organic soils. The Lithuanian Center for Agriculture and Forestry is participating in this project. The duration of the project was from 2019 and it will be held until 2023 August.
- The Norway Grants partnership project “Cooperation on GHG inventory” between Lithuania and Norway (under program No 25 “Capacity-building and institutional cooperation between beneficiary state and Norwegian public institutions, local and regional authorities”): the objective of the project was capacity building and improvement of Lithuania’s National system for the preparation of GHG inventory to comply with the relevant UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol reporting requirements. The main purpose of this project was to share experiences of implementing the new guidelines (2006 IPCC) in GHG inventory. The project was implemented in 2015 and 2016 and the outcomes were:
 - A training program for Lithuanian inventory experts to raise their technical competence in the GHG inventory and GHG emissions projections development process.
 - The improvement of Quality assurance/Quality control (QA/QC) procedures as well as documenting, and archiving systems.
 - Implementation of studies to fill in the reporting gaps in several LULUCF sector areas:
 - Study for evaluation of carbon stocks in forest and non-forest land in soil and forest litter – it will cover the sampling of soil and litter on the national forest inventory sample plots and the analysis of these samples.
 - Study for evaluation of carbon stocks in soil and forest litter of forests that were afforested on non-forest land – it will include the determination of sample plots and sampling and analysis of samples.
 - Study for evaluation of carbon stock in dead organic matter (dead wood) analyzing various degrees of dead wood decomposition rates – it will cover the determination of sample plots and sampling and analysis of samples.
 - Study for the development of the harvested wood products (HWP) accounting system and preparation of accounting methodology – it should cover an analysis of legal regulation, practices of neighbouring countries and accounting principles of harvested wood products in Lithuania.

Best practice examples from Latvia:

- EU LIFE project “Restoring EU priority grassland habitats and building a new narrative for their management” (GrassLIFE2): started in 2023. GrassLIFE2 is a continuation of the GrassLIFE project that has successfully introduced a range of innovative restoration approaches in Latvia while restoring 1,320 ha of EU-priority grassland habitats in fourteen Natura 2000 sites.
 - The objective of the GrassLIFE2 project is to upscale the work done in GrassLIFE and tackle all major factors that have led to an unfavourable conservation status of grassland habitats in Latvia.
 - The project promotes synergies with climate change issues by supporting grazing management that promotes carbon capture in grasslands, by ensuring good soil quality in the restoration and grazing areas.
 - The project will assess ecosystem services (including carbon sequestration and soil biodiversity) and produce relevant recommendations on improving soil quality and carbon-friendly farming for landowners and farmers. It will also promote the introduction of a “less is more” approach to farm profitability that allows farmers to focus on farming that is balanced with natural conditions.
 - The lead partner of the project is the Latvian Fund for Nature, and the University of Tartu is project partner from Estonia.
- LIFE Climate Action subprogramme five years project (2022-2027) “Peatland restoration for greenhouse gas emission reduction and carbon sequestration in the Baltic Sea region”: started in 2022. The project is based on the cooperation of Latvian, Finnish, German and Danish partners.
 - The project aims at the implementation of Climate Change Mitigation (CCM) measures in peatlands, adaptation and demonstration of innovative tools and applicable methods for greenhouse gas (GHG) monitoring.
 - The project represents the successful cooperation among various scientific communities from the project partner countries as well as communication and dissemination of the achieved results including implementation and monitoring CCM measures, harmonized GHG measurement and data processing methods and an ecosystem model for degraded and abandoned peatlands in the Baltic Sea region.

7. Political Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations of the BSPC working group on climate change and biodiversity to the 32nd BSPC resolution

Based on its mandate and deliberations, the following recommendations of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity to the draft resolution of the 32nd BSPC on 30 August 2023 in Berlin have been unanimously agreed on 15 May 2023 in Gdańsk:

Regarding mitigation of climate change, preserving biodiversity and adapting to climate change to:

Climate Change

1. increase the efforts and speed to implement ambitious national climate targets and adapted extensions – corresponding to the current scientific and measurement results – in line with the Paris Agreement’s goal of limiting the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1,5 degrees Celsius above those;
2. strengthen regional collaboration and information exchange among the democratic Baltic Sea countries and the Arctic to intensify joint strategies and policies addressing climate change and regularly adapt them to the newest research results;
3. urge at every opportunity the world’s three largest CO₂ emitters, which currently account for more than 50 % of global CO₂ emissions, to step up their efforts to achieve ambitious climate targets;
4. incentivise renewable energy development by shortening the permitting process for wind, solar, other clean and stable energy sources;
5. taking into account the risks connected with the increasing dependence of the European market on the suppliers of rare metals and other raw materials;
6. increase the speed in implementing national strategies for transitioning away from fossil fuels and towards low-carbon energy systems, including phasing out coal-fired power plants;
7. acknowledging the different energy strategies and focuses in different states to reach these goals;
8. increase the focus on the communal and regional levels on implementing adequate climate change measures and to raise awareness in the responsible administrations;
9. implement coastal management plans to protect and restore coastal ecosystems, which can act as carbon sinks and buffer zones against sea-level rise;

10. support increased research and innovation in climate change mitigation and adaptation technologies, encouraging collaboration between academic institutions, industries, and governments;
11. develop incentives and support for integrating climate change education and awareness-raising programmes into curricula, public campaigns, and professional development programmes;
12. foster cross-border cooperation on regional climate initiatives, engaging neighbouring countries and international organisations in joint efforts to address climate change in the Baltic Sea region;
13. convene annual Baltic Sea Climate and Biodiversity Summits to raise public awareness, track progress, share best practices, and refine regional strategies to accelerate increased climate action and adaptation;

Biodiversity

14. make every effort to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 while ensuring inclusive, socially and environmentally sustainable economic growth and development as well as energy security and contribute to making the democratic Baltic Sea Region as much as possible a macro-regional best practice example in this regard for the world;
15. fully implement as fast as possible the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) adopted at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD-COP15) on 15 December 2022 with its mission to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, adapt the existing national and Baltic Sea broad strategies and programmes and to cooperate intensively among the democratic Baltic Sea States to realise a swift and effective implementation of the GBF so that the Baltic Sea region becomes a global best practice example in implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework;
16. contribute to the rapid entry into force of the landmark international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) from 4 March 2023 and use its tools and possibilities in intensive cooperation within the CBSS and HELCOM to reach the goals mentioned above;
17. expand the existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) network and improve cooperation and transboundary management between marine protected areas in the Baltic Sea to ensure proper enforcement to protect vulnerable habitats and species;
18. consider an ecosystem-based management approach when revising and adapting action plans and strategies to achieve these goals and implementing these measures. This means management that considers the whole ecosystem and all human activities, which is aware of and incorporates all pressures and interactions and aims to protect, restore, or enhance the resilience and sustainability of the aquatic ecosystem to ensure the sustainable provision of ecosystem services and maintain the biodiversity;

19. establish and enforce recognisable, legally binding sustainable fishing quotas in the Baltic Sea Region with diversification for species, including regulations on fishing nets or other methods, ensuring that fish stocks remain healthy and sustainable in the long term. All actions should be based on respected, up-to-date research;
20. further commit to protecting biodiversity and increasing carbon sequestration and natural storage with common and national policies for:
 - a. conservation of carbon-rich ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, and natural rivers; c
 - b. continuation of sustainable forest management;
21. develop and execute plans to enhance the resilience of the Baltic Sea ecosystem to climate change, including protecting coastal habitats and restoring wetlands;
22. reverse land degradation by 2030, and promote sustainable forest management given their importance for climate and biodiversity;
23. significantly increase efforts to fundamentally improve nutrient management in agriculture, industry, and wastewater treatment plants to reduce nutrient runoff into the Baltic Sea, which contributes to eutrophication and biodiversity loss;
24. ensure a quick and strict implementation of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan and its associated action documents within the agreed timelines to achieve a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea by the end of the decade and consider as far as possible implementing further measures from the policy-relevant suggestions for various policy areas in the HELCOM 2021 Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Fact Sheet to reach this goal;
25. develop and adopt regional strategies to deal with transboundary emergencies caused by climate change and pollution, including forest fires, eutrophication and the spread of pathogens. The strategies should include research into the causes of such emergencies, cooperation between rescue services and joint monitoring programmes that indicate the risks of such emergencies.

7.2 Recommendations of the BSPC working group on climate change and biodiversity to the 31st BSPC resolution

Based on its mandate and deliberations, the following recommendations of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity to the draft resolution of the 31st BSPC have incorporated in the resolution of the 31st BSPC on 14 June 2022:

1. support the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and its associated action documents agreed by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021 under the current German chairmanship and to ensure – through regular monitoring of its implementation – that its objectives are implemented in all countries of the Baltic Sea Region more quickly and consistently than before to achieve a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea and its environment by the end of the decade;
2. derive and implement further measures from the policy-relevant suggestions for various policy areas in the ‘HELCOM 2021 Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Fact Sheet’ that will enable an even faster and more extensive reduction of climate-relevant emissions to achieve the targeted climate neutrality as early as possible;
3. intensify all efforts and cooperate closely in several fields at the same time to having a chance of limiting the temperature rise on less than 2° to the end of the century by the reduction of emissions, less energy use, increased energy efficiency at the same time as increasing natural sinks for CO₂ and research and development of technologies that were needed regarding for example carbon capture and utilization;
4. particularly in those countries that are still more dependent on gas and oil imports, consider pushing forward the use of zero emission energies especially domestic ones in combination with innovative applications of hydrogen in the heat and mobility sector, in order to achieve their own, more independent and resilient energy security and energy sovereignty and at the same time to contribute to the achievement of the climate goals;
5. significantly boost even more intensive research as well as the introduction and deployment of innovative low carbon solutions, particularly in green hydrogen technologies, and develop as fast as possible hydrogen strategies and road maps to complement the European hydrogen strategy and the new green deal and bring by joint efforts and close cooperation the Baltic Sea Region in a pole position in green transition;
6. concerning sea-dumped munitions, also in the current times of war continue unabated to strengthen efforts recovering and neutralising explosive ordnance in the Baltic Sea with concrete measures through multinational cooperation according to the 28th, 29th and 30th BSPC Resolutions as well as the interim and final BSPC rapporteur’s reports on sea-dumped munitions and establish the Baltic Sea Region as a global model region for the environmentally sound, rapid and affordable salvage and decontamination and removal of explosive ordnance dumped in the sea;

7. implement methods of nature-friendly farming and actively phase out the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers by local farmers as well as allocate funds to researching into less hazardous alternatives, and make sure that the policies are well connected to science;
8. support sustainable innovation in green energy, reduce the use of non- renewable sources of energy and support innovation to make urban life more sustainable by enhancing green transportation solutions, and make sure that the policies are well connected to science;
9. develop and implement policies and regulations around fishing and other industries, together with companies in power, that harm the biodiversity in the Baltic Sea, that aligns with the needs from the IPCC report/Paris agreement;
10. promote the building of facilities from recycled materials to develop regulations regarding the re-use of construction materials, establish plans for the re-use of materials as a requisite for demolition permits as part of the effort of finding sustainable supply lines along the Baltic Sea and to introduce public bail systems for plastic bottles in the Baltic Sea Region and furthermore support cascading use in every possible field;
11. communicating and developing strategies to implementing a new innovative lifestyle to make the difference by intensive communication about the fact that each individual making a change for themselves made a difference overall;

7.3 Recommendations of the BSPC working group on climate change and biodiversity to the 30th BSPC resolution

Based on its mandate and deliberations, the following recommendations of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity and its delegations have been incorporated in the draft resolution of the digital 30th BSPC on 30 August 2021:

The participants, elected representatives from the Baltic Sea Region States, assembling in digital form on 30 August 2021,
call on the Governments in the Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS and the EU,

Regarding Safeguarding the Baltic Sea and our Environment for Future Generations, Climate Change and Biodiversity to

take significant steps in line with UN Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the Baltic 2030 Action Plan to reach climate resilience of key economic sectors, including industry, transport and construction, as well as enhancement of natural sinks, such as forests;

acknowledge that global action and cross-border cooperation is needed to mitigate the effects of climate change, preserve and protect biodiversity and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a focus on climate (SDG13), oceans (SDG14) and biodiversity (SDG15);

promote and financially support both regional and local projects that, based on research, aim to improve and preserve the marine as well as the land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea;

further involve and inform the local communities in the current situation to gain support and commitment in all parts of society, including businesses and civil society in long-term work to regain a good ecological status in coastal areas;

support the development of technology and innovations that will reduce the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea;

take further actions in order to reduce ship emissions in the Baltic Sea;

continue to support investments in hydrogen technologies in order to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide;

concerning the impacts of plastics on the environment, climate change and biodiversity,

consider that due to the transboundary nature of marine litter and the particular vulnerability of the enclosed Baltic sea area, prevention of plastic entering the environment by reduction of unnecessary plastic at source and the sustainable management of plastic waste is of mutual interest;

therefore, commit to intensify the implementation of the HELCOM Regional Action Plan against

Marine Litter and measures contained therein, being part of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan, at regional level and

support the start of negotiations on a new ambitious global agreement at UNEA 5.2 to take the next decisive step at international level;

concerning the impacts of increased shipping and cruise-ship tourism on climate change and loss of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea,

- a. recognize that the Baltic Sea is the sea with the highest shipping levels, inland water with low water exchange;
- b. acknowledge that global action and cross-border cooperation is needed to mitigate the emissions of increasing cruise-ship tourism and other shipping in the Baltic sea;
- c. promote and accelerate transition of ships and in particular cruise-ships away from fossil fuels towards sustainable renewable fuels in order to make shipping climate neutral, and less polluting, and aim to improve and preserve the marine as well as the land-based environment and ecosystems in the Baltic Sea;
- d. support the development of technology and innovations that will reduce the littering of the Baltic Sea through ballast water and disposal of waste from ships;
- e. take further actions in order to reduce black carbon ship emissions in the Baltic Sea, including support in technologies and infrastructure on shore power supply of harbours.

8. Excerpts from Statements of the Governments of the Baltic Sea Region to the 31st BSPC resolution related to environment, climate change and biodiversity

Governments of the BSPC members had submitted statements on the implementation of the 31st BSPC Resolution which included the calls for action of the Working Group.

These relate to all sections of the resolution.

Since a number of demands of the 31st BSPC Resolution relate to the areas of environment, climate change and biodiversity and their implementation is of particular importance for the activities of the Working Group, the excerpts from the government statements on the 31st resolution dealing with environment, climate change and biodiversity are included in this report below:

Åland

Point 19

It is important that all HELCOM countries implement and enforce the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) as quickly as possible to achieve a good status for the Baltic Sea by the end of this decade. Regular monitoring is needed to follow the process. The Government of Åland implements as much as possible of BSAP's recommended measures, primarily through the statutory program of measures and through EU-funded projects. The Government of Åland has a well-developed surveillance of coastal waters, except in the outermost marine waters, due to logistical reasons. Otherwise Åland cooperates with the rest of Finland and other Baltic Sea countries.

Point 20

The Government of Åland participates in the HELCOM work, which fulfils several important functions. The Government of Åland works actively with e.g. offshore wind power, shipping, aquaculture with catch crops and favor carbon sequestrations in nature. Within a planned EU-funded marine project, the value of carbon-fixing species in the sea will be raised even more, through knowledge-raising efforts.

Point 21

The Government of Åland works comprehensively to reduce eutrophication and improve water quality, especially through water action programs and within various EU projects. An important aspect is the water sources, which are affected in the same way.

Point 22-23 and 29

The Government of Åland has initiated a startup process to establish large-scale offshore wind power production (project Sunnanvind) in parts of the public water areas of Åland. An important part in the

beginning stage are the process for planning and environmental impact assessment, where cross-border aspects are handled through the Espoo Convention.

Project Sunnanvind's goal is to enable the establishment of large-scale offshore wind power production in the sea areas north of Åland that are defined as energy areas in the Maritim Spatial Plan for Åland which was adopted in March 2021. The project is still in the planning phase but sees a great potential for cross-border climate action.

Local wind power already produces on an annual basis approximately 65% of the electricity consumption (~320 GWh) in Åland. The output of a fully developed wind farm (~20 TWh) is approximately 200 times as large as the remaining (35%) electricity demand in Åland. This means that offshore wind power production will be an export product for Åland and thus a cross-border climate action.

Project Sunnanvind will possibly use part of the electricity to be further refined through power-2-x into other forms of energy carrier, primarily into hydrogen, but possibly further into ammonia or other forms of e-fuel. The cross-border distribution can thus take place through electric cable or gas pipeline. The most potential delivery areas for electricity are Finland and Sweden but possibly also Estonia. The hydrogen can also be delivered to Central Europe and primarily to Germany.

The project has collaborated with international contacts, with Finnish ministries and Swedish ministries as well as with the national grid companies in both countries. The project also had a close cooperation with the Danish Energy Agency, which has a long and solid experience of offshore wind power. Similarly, the project has built up a wide network of contacts with international industry actors.

Åland's offshore wind power has a great potential to significantly contribute to the achievement of the sustainability goals set by the EU. The establishment of offshore wind power will be preceded by a thorough environmental impact assessment and likewise the EU's "do no significant harm" will be followed.

Latvia

To what extent do the war in Ukraine and related changes in political priorities have an impact on climate policy goals and their implementation?

Latvian farmers and food producers are facing abnormal working conditions due to the war in Ukraine. The pressure from climate goals and their implementation is creating additional challenges to the operation of agriculture sector. Therefore, it would be reasonable to postpone some of the ambitious environmental and climate goals to reach stability in agriculture market. It is also important to stick to the primary goal of CAP - to ensure food security.

In general, there are no changes to the environmental and climate policy goals requirements, except for European Commission's decision* that allows to use fallows for growing food and feed. The purpose of this derogation is to maximise the agricultural land available for food production to meet the populations' demands for food.

It is important to balance the environmental, social and economic needs and there is an urge in strategic support activities for agriculture and food production industry.

*Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/184 of 23 March 2022 providing for derogations from Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council and from Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 639/2014 as regards the implementation of certain conditions relating to the greening payment for claim year 2022 (notified under document C(2022) 1875)

Answers provided by the Ministry of Climate and Energy

22. intensify all efforts and cooperate closely in several fields at the same time to obtain the chance of limiting global warming to well below 2°C above preindustrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels through the rapid, comprehensive expansion of renewable energies and their technologies, by the reduction of emissions, less energy use, increased energy efficiency at the same time as strengthening and increasing natural sinks for CO₂ and research and development of innovative and sustainable technologies;

Latvia has reached the share of renewable energy of 42.1% of total gross energy consumption, which exceeds the set 2020 goal by at least 2 percentage points. Thus, within 10 years, the share of renewable energy has increased by almost 12 percentage points. The share of renewable energy has increased mainly due to enhanced use of biomass in cogeneration as well as incremental development of wind and solar powered-based electricity generation capacities. A slight increase in the share of renewable energy has also taken place in the transportation sector due to the increased use of biofuels.

23. particularly in those countries that are still more dependent on domestic and imported fossil energy sources and uranium imports, push forward the use of zero and low emission renewable energies from domestic sources and in the long-term those imported from democratic and reliable partner countries in combination with innovative applications of hydrogen and hydrogen derivatives on the basis of renewable energies in industry and commerce as well as in the heating and mobility sector, in order to achieve their own, affordable, more independent and resilient energy security and energy sovereignty and at the same time to contribute to the achievement of the climate goals;

In the field of strengthening the output of wind energy-based generation capacities, in recent years Latvia have been actively working on reducing various bureaucratic obstacles for the roll-out of renewable electricity-focused technologies, for example by simplifying the permitting, approval and environmental impact assessment procedures for large-capacity wind farms, developing compensation mechanisms for local communities near wind farms. Simultaneously, Latvia is continuously cooperating with Estonia in the field of developing a joint offshore wind park project, while national state-owned companies i.e. cooperating with international partners in order to begin construction of on-shore wind parks, located in less populated areas and forest lands.

24. cooperate with countries that are most dependent on fossil fuels and uranium imports from Russia in their efforts to switch to more reliable and environmentally friendly energy sources;

A legal prohibition of imports of natural gas from the Russian federation had entered into force as of the 1st of January 2023.

25. widely deploy the extensive existing low-cost and efficient renewable energy generation technologies, and effectively and significantly boost even more intensive research as well as the introduction and deployment of innovative green solutions, particularly in green hydrogen technologies, and develop as fast as possible hydrogen strategies and road maps to complement the European hydrogen strategy and the new green deal and bring by joint efforts and close cooperation the Baltic Sea Region in a pole position in green transition;

The development of industrial-scale wind farms and the introduction of decentralized solar energy usage solutions could provide the necessary amount of clean electricity that would allow transforming both the heat supply and transport sectors, especially in the centralized and light-weight vehicle segments. At the same time, options for providing base-load capacities are being evaluated, including the assessments of the possibilities to develop a small modular nuclear reactor and - in the future – hydrogen production, storage and transmission capacities by means of retrofitting the existing natural gas infrastructure.

30. develop and implement policies and regulations around fishing, shipping and other industries, together with all relevant stakeholders, that harm the biodiversity in the Baltic Sea and the global climate, that aligns with the needs and challenges from the IPCC report and the internationally binding targets of the Paris Agreement;

At the end of 2022 the Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre has developed and published local government climate profiles, which contain information on climate indicators for each Latvian municipality and state city, with climate indicators of individual local governments based on weather observation data and future climate models. The information gathered in climate profiles will be used by municipalities in developing local government adaptation strategies as well as, for example, in updating civil protection plans.

To what extent do the war in Ukraine and related changes in political priorities have an impact on climate policy goals and their implementation?

There is no direct impact of war in Ukraine to the climate change policy and currently it is still too early to assess war's impact upon the achievement of its goals. Latest published National Greenhouse Gas Inventory shows situation as of 2021. However, of course war has influenced many greenhouse gas (GHG) sectors.

In order to improve the development and implementation of the climate change and energy policies, at the beginning of 2023 the Ministry of Climate and Energy was established.

Latvia is committed to the European Green Deal and the advancement of the Fit for 55 package as these legislative proposals will contribute to the implementation of more ambitious climate goals.

Latvia continues working on more ambitious climate goals and policies in order to reduce the GHG emissions of the non-ETS sector by 17% by 2030 compared to 2005 and to achieve the climate neutrality by 2050. On 31 August 2022 the Environmental Policy Guidelines for 2021-2027 were adopted. Currently, Latvia is working on the development of the national Climate Law and the review of the National Energy and Climate Plan (adopted at 4 February 2020). Additionally, Latvia is planning also to review its low carbon strategy (The Strategy of Latvia for the Achievement of Climate Neutrality by 2050).

Answers provided by the Ministry of Economics

31. promote the building of facilities from recycled materials to develop regulations regarding the re-use of construction materials, establish plans for the re-use of materials as a requisite for demolition permits as part of the effort of finding sustainable supply lines along the Baltic Sea and to introduce public bail systems for plastic bottles in the Baltic Sea Region and furthermore support cascading use in every possible field;

Currently, the situation regarding the problem of reused construction materials is being identified in Latvia in order to prepare proposals for further actions within 2023. The purpose of the evaluation is to identify the currently existing legal and factual obstacles to the use of these materials.

Answers provided by the Ministry of Education and Science

22. intensify all efforts and cooperate closely in several fields at the same time to obtain the chance of limiting global warming to well below 2°C above preindustrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels through the rapid, comprehensive expansion of renewable energies and their technologies, by the reduction of emissions, less energy use, increased energy efficiency at the same time as strengthening and increasing natural sinks for CO₂ and research and development of innovative and sustainable technologies;

25. widely deploy the extensive existing low-cost and efficient renewable energy generation technologies, and effectively and significantly boost even more intensive research as well as the introduction and deployment of innovative green solutions, particularly in green hydrogen technologies, and develop as fast as possible hydrogen strategies and road maps to complement the European hydrogen strategy and the new green deal and bring by joint efforts and close cooperation the Baltic Sea Region in a pole position in green transition;

28. implement methods of nature-friendly farming and actively phase out the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers by local farmers as well as allocate funds to researching into less hazardous alternatives, and make sure that the policies are well connected to science;

Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia (hereafter - MoES) supports points 22 and 25 of the Conference Resolution dated 14.06.2022, Ministry of Climate and Energy is planning to invest 1 IM EUR (2023-2025) in National Research program (NRP) for the development of research projects in the field of climate and energy. 1M EUR foreseen in NRP and administrated by the Ministry of Agriculture includes activities related to nature-friendly farming and actively phase out the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers (point 28).

To what extent do the war in Ukraine and related changes in political priorities have an impact on climate policy goals and their implementation?

MoES informs that an impact on climate policy goals does not have direct implications to its activities. During the period of 2018-2022 MoES financed 15 Fundamental and Applied research projects (FARP), administrated by Latvian Council of Science, in the field of energy, hydrogen, climate change, and the problems of ecology with a total budget of -4.4M EUR. The principal scientific institution in fundraising was Riga Technical University with -50% of total amount of the projects in the field.

During 2019-2022 National Research program (NRP) “Energy” was financed by Ministry of Economics with a total budget of 5.3M EUR, and 11 scientific projects had been implemented.

During 2016-2020 4 calls of PostDoc projects were announced and during this period 29 PostDoc projects were supported in the field of smart energy and climate change with a total budget of -3.8M EUR. The main research institutions were the University of Latvia and Riga Technical University.

Answers provided by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development

19. support the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan and its associated action documents agreed by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021 under the current German chairmanship and to ensure a more quickly and consistent implementation of the agreed objectives than before in all countries of the Baltic Sea Region in order to achieve a good ecological status of the Baltic Sea by the end of the decade; regular monitoring of the implementation is essential to support the process;

20. derive and implement further measures from the policy-relevant suggestions for various policy areas in the ‘HELCOM 2021 Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Fact Sheet’ that will enable an even faster and more extensive reduction of climaterelvant emissions to achieve the targeted climate neutrality as early as possible;

26. concerning sea-dumped munitions, also in the current times of war continue unabated in close cooperation with HELCOM and CBSS to strengthen efforts exploring, identifying, recovering and neutralising explosive ordnance in the Baltic Sea with concrete measures through multinational cooperation according to the 28th, 29th and 30th BSPC Resolutions as well as the interim and final BSPC rapporteur’s reports on sea-dumped munitions and establish the Baltic Sea Region as a global model region for the environmentally sound, rapid and affordable salvage and decontamination and removal of explosive ordnance dumped in the sea;

Latvia is holding the rotating Chairmanship of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) for the two years period from July 2022 till June 2024.

The priority for Latvia’s presidency is the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, which was updated in 2021 (hereafter - BSAP 2021). The Baltic Sea Action Plan recognizes the cross-cutting nature of climate change, and it also reflects on how activities in different areas can have an impact on Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the Agenda 2030.

The focus areas of the Latvian Chairmanship are the protection of marine biodiversity and advancing ecosystem-based sustainable marine management, as envisioned in BSAP 2021, and enhancing the effectiveness of HELCOM as a regional organization.

Latvia took over the HELCOM Chairmanship from Germany in a challenging time of changed geopolitical situation due to Russia's invasion in Ukraine which also impacted the HELCOM work. Despite the strategic pause when all official HELCOM meetings with Russian involvement are suspended, HELCOM's operation is not ceased but continues in a format of informal consultation sessions of nine HELCOM parties,

namely, Contracting Parties who are also the EU member states and the European Union, represented by the European Commission.

Also work on the Third Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea (hereafter - HOLAS 3) is going on as planned. Approval of the HOLAS-3 as well as mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the BSAP 2021 is planned by HELCOM Ministerial meeting in 2024 which will be organized by Latvia under its Chairmanship.

Concerning sea-dumped munitions, HELCOM is cooperating with CBSS. The successful Expert Round Table on Dumped Munitions took place on 12-13 December 2022 in Kiel, Germany. At the round table many aspects were discussed, such as the regional but also global scale of the issue.

31. promote the building of facilities from recycled materials to develop regulations regarding the re-use of construction materials, establish plans for the re-use of materials as a requisite for demolition permits as part of the effort of finding sustainable supply lines along the Baltic Sea and to introduce public bail systems for plastic bottles in the Baltic Sea Region and furthermore support cascading use in every possible field;

In 2022 the packaging deposit system successfully launched its operation, showing good results during the first year. From 2023 the coverage of the packaging deposit system has already been extended to the packages of syrups and alcoholic beverages of the specified types. According to the deposit-system operator's forecasts, more than 485 million deposit packaging units will be placed on the market in 2023, of which about 30 million will be made up of the new-capture beverage packages.

Project "Raising awareness on packaging deposit and strategic approach to harmonize packaging deposit systems in Estonia and Latvia (PACKGDEPO)" within the INTERREG Estonia - Latvia Cross - Border Cooperation Program 2014 - 2020. Its aim is to raise awareness about the deposit of packaging and to evaluate a strategic approach in harmonising the packaging deposit system in Estonia and Latvia. In line with the EU Directives to increase recycled total packaging waste and raise the amount of recycled disposable plastic beverage packaging collected.

General information:

- The project has been extended until 30 April 2023.
- The first data analysis of the assessment on the knowledge of residents was performed in the beginning of 2021, prior to introduction of the deposit system in Latvia.
- Information and educational materials have been developed for education institutions and public.

- Seminars are organised regularly workshop cycles for deposit system participants, exchange of opinion on system harmonisation between Latvia and Estonia and sharing of experiences between countries.
- Several seminars have been held for teachers from Latvian and Estonian schools and preschool, both online and in person. The final seminar was on 10 February 2023 and prepared educational materials for the primary school were presented.
- Valka Valga Pilot Project took place in January 2023, during which the joint border deposit vending machine points were available. Thus, demonstrating the practical benefits of a harmonised deposit system between the two countries. For a short time, there were the common deposit vending machines in both countries. In both vending machines, the packaging of the beverage deposit could be passed on with both the Latvian and Estonian deposit mark.
- Policy and technical guidelines for the deposit system improvements and harmonised deposit packaging system assessment will be developed in the closing phase of the project.

Answers provided by the Ministry of the Interior

Regarding climate change mitigation, preserving biodiversity and adapting to climate changes

Regarding the prevention and prosecution of environmental crimes, in 2019 a close cooperation between the State Police, the State Environmental Service and State Prosecution was developed to improve the investigation and prosecution of such crimes and to develop a new approach in investigative and prosecution practice. The collaboration with the State Environmental Service is significant, as this institution is responsible for the use of resources and maintenance of environmental quality in the country. Among their tasks is the supervision of adherence to the law in the field of environmental protection. Additionally, citizen attention and timely reporting of contamination cases are important. As a result of this cooperation, the methodology for determining the amount of waste disposed of and the harm committed has been updated.

With the support of the State Environmental Service, the determination of the amount of waste disposed of and the harm committed has importance in the further prosecution of criminal intent, as the offence can only be considered a crime if significant harm is caused. A partnership agreement with the Italian Arma dei Carabinieri was signed within the scope of the project Nr.869144 “Mechanisms to combat the trade of illegal waste” (OFPA-WASTE) as part of the European Commission program “Internal Security Fund - Police Cooperation”. From March 2020 until February 2022, the State Police Central Criminal Police Economic Crimes Department (ENAP), as leading project experts, conducted a study on the role of Latvia in the transportation of waste at the global level.

Experts from the Economic Crimes Department also participated in the EEZ2014-2021 period co-financed program “International police cooperation and combating crime”, in the project “support to the State Police to accelerate the investigation of economic crimes and to improve the quality of investigation in Latvia”. During the project, guidelines for the investigation of environmental crimes were developed, several seminars were organized. In 2023, a pilot project with Norwegian colleagues will be implemented, during which several experience exchange visits are planned as well as training for Economic Crimes Department experts in Norway.

In order to ensure a better ecological situation in the Baltic Sea and to improve an operational response to the pollutions along of the Baltic Sea, team and observers of the State Fire and Rescue Service on 24-25 August 2022 participated in the exercises Balex Delta 2022, in Rostock, Germany organized by HELCOM.

Answers provided by the Ministry of Transport

30. develop and implement policies and regulations around fishing, shipping and other industries, together with all relevant stakeholders, that harm the biodiversity in the Baltic Sea and the global climate, that aligns with the needs and challenges from the IPCC report and the internationally binding targets of the Paris Agreement;

“Appropriate bodies and experts thereof are following up the issues related to biodiversity in the Baltic Sea and the global climate, as pointed out in paragraph 30 of the Conference Resolution adopted by the 31st Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), being discussed within the EU and at the international level - International Maritime organisation (IMO).”

Schleswig-Holstein

Reply of the Minister for Energy Transition, Climate Protection, Environment and Nature to the question of the BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity on the impact of the war in Ukraine on the climate policy goals and their implementation

European and German climate change efforts have been facing major challenges in the light of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine. In order to safeguard energy supply the life span of some coal-fired power plants had to be extended and permits for the construction of LNG terminals granted. At the same time, however, the necessary strategic decisions for an accelerated energy transition were taken at national policy level, for instance by adopting the Onshore Wind Energy Act (Wind-an-Land-Gesetz), in order to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and on politically questionable regimes.

Furthermore, international cooperation on climate change with Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia has come to a standstill as a result of the war in Ukraine. This concerns in particular the protection of the large moorland areas in this region. The Succow Foundation, for instance, has stopped the project IKI PeatRus, that had the aim peatland rewetting and restoration, for an indefinite period as a reaction to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

For the Schleswig-Holstein Government implementation of goals related to energy transition and climate change are a very high priority on the political agenda. This is why Schleswig-Holstein makes an important contribution to an independent and secure energy supply at favourable prices by further developing and funding renewable energies. At the same time this also protects the climate. In addition, the conservation and (re-)construction of natural sinks (forests and peatland) are a high priority in Schleswig-Holstein and the efforts in this field are continued with the same intensity.

The governments of the Baltic Sea states submitted also statements on the implementation of the 30th and 31st BSPC resolution. These can be downloaded it under the following links:

<https://www.bspc.net/statements-of-the-governments-in-the-baltic-sea-region-to-the-30th-bspc-resolution/>

<https://www.bspc.net/statements-of-the-governments-in-the-baltic-sea-region-to-the-29th-bspc-resolution/>

List of Chairmanship

Since September 2022

Member Parliament	Member MP	Staff Point of Contact
Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Mr Philipp da Cunha Chair of the WG Substitute: Ms Beate Schlupp	Mr Georg Strätker/Ms Evgeniya Bakalova State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Lennéstr. 1 19053 Schwerin Germany Tel: +49 385 525 1530/+49 385 525 1531 (International Secretariat) <i>Georg.Stratker@landtag-mv.de</i> <i>evgeniya.bakalova@landtag-mv.de</i> <i>international@landtag-mv.de</i>
Parliament of Åland	Mr Jesper Joseffson Vice-Chair of the WG	Mr Sten Eriksson Assistant to the Parliament The Åland Parliament PB 69 AX-22101 Mariehamn Åland Islands Tel: +358 18 25 474 / +358 457 529 2964 <i>sten.eriksson@lagtinget.ax</i>
Parliament of Poland	Mr Jarosław Wałęsa Vice-Chair of th WG	Mr Piotr Koperski Secretary of the Delegation of the Sejm and the Senate of the Republic of Poland to the BSPC, International and European Union Affairs Office, Chancellery of the Senate of the Republic of Poland 6 Wiejska Str. 00-902 Warsaw Poland Tel: +48 22 694 95 65 <i>Piotr.Koperski@senat.gov.pl</i>

August 2020 till September 2022

Member Parliament	Member MP	Staff Point of Contact
Parliament of Sweden	Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby Chair of the WG Substitute: Ms Pernilla Stålhammar	Ms Johanna Ingvarsson/Mr Dan Alvarsson International Department of the Swedish Parliament Swedish Delegation to the BSPC, Riksdagen SE-10012 Stockholm Sweden Tel: +468 08-786 50 48 johanna.ingvarsson@riksdagen.se dan.alvarsson@riksdagen.se
Parliament of Åland	Ms Liz Mattsson Vice-Chair of the WG	Mr Sten Eriksson Assistant to the Parliament The Åland Parliament PB 69 AX-22101 Mariehamn Åland Islands Tel: +358 18 25 474 / +358 457 529 2964 sten.eriksson@lagtinget.ax
Parliament of Iceland	Mr Kolbeinn Óttarsson Proppé Vice-Chair of the WG	Mr Helgi Thorsteinsson Secretary to the Icelandic Delegation to the Nordic Council Althingi Austurstræti 8-10 IS - 150 Reykjavík Iceland Tel: +354 6666 790 helgith@althingi.is

List of Members

Member Parliament	Member MP	Staff Point of Contact
Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Mr Philipp da Cunha Chair of the WG Substitute: Ms Beate Schlupp	Mr Georg Strätker/Ms Evgeniya Bakalova State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Lennéstr. 1 19053 Schwerin Germany Tel: +49 385 525 1530/+49 385 525 1531 (International Secretariat) Georg.Stratker@landtag-mv.de evgeniya.bakalova@landtag-mv.de international@landtag-mv.de
Parliament of Åland	Mr Jesper Joseffson Vice-Chair of the WG Substitute: Mr Simon Pavals	Mr Sten Eriksson Assistant to the Parliament The Åland Parliament PB 69 AX-22101 Mariehamn Åland Islands Tel: +358 18 25 474 / +358 457 529 2964 sten.eriksson@lagtinget.ax
Baltic Assembly	Mr Erki Savisaar, Chair of the Natural Resources and Environment Committee of the BA; Substitute: Ms Urve Tiidus, Chair of the Security and Defence Committee of the BA	Ms Agnija Antanoviča/Ms Rovenā Berga Secretariat of the Baltic Assembly Citadeles Street 2, room 616 Riga LV-1010, Latvia Tel: +371 67225178 agnija.antanovica@baltasam.org rovena.berga@baltasam.org
Parliament of Denmark		Mr Peder Pedersen Chefkonsulent, Secretary General at SCPAR/ Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region The Parliament of Denmark, Christiansborg 1240 Copenhagen Denmark Tel. +45 3337 5500/ +45 61623007 Peder.Pedersen@ft.dk

Member Parliament	Member MP	Staff Point of Contact
Parliament of Estonia	Ms Urve Tiidus Mr Erki Savisaar followed by Mr Andres Metsoja	Ms Merilin Reepalu Foreign Relations Department Riigikogu of the Republic of Estonia Lossi plats 1A 15165 Tallinn Estonia Tel: +372 631 6397 GSM: +372 53089818 Regina.Sepp@riigikogu.ee
Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany	Mr Johannes Schrapf Substitute: Ms Petra Nicolaisen	Ms Katalin Zador/Ms Pia-Sophie Brandenburg Deutscher Bundestag Division International Parliamentary Assemblies Platz der Republik 1 11011 Berlin Germany Tel: +49 30 / 227-32553 katalin.zador@bundestag.de pia-sophie.brandenburg@bundestag.de bspc@bundestag.de
Parliament of Finland	Ms Mai Kivelä Substitute: Mr Joonas Könttä	Mr Mika Laaksonen/Ms Maarit Immonen The Parliament of Finland 00102 Eduskunta Finland Tel: +358 9 4321 mika.laaksonen@eduskunta.fi maarit.immonen@parliament.fi
Parliament of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg	Mr Alexander Mohrenberg	Ms Friederike Lünzmann State Parliament of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg Administration of the Parliament Schmiedestraße 2 20095 Hamburg Germany Tel: +49 40 4 28 31-1352 Fax: +49 40 4 27 31-2271 friederike.luenzmann@bk.hamburg.de internationales@bk.hamburg.de

Member Parliament	Member MP	Staff Point of Contact
Parliament of Iceland	Mr Kolbeinn Óttarsson Proppé	Mr Helgi Thorsteinsson Secretary to the Icelandic Delegation to the Nordic Council Althingi Austurstræti 8-10 IS - 150 Reykjavík Iceland Tel: +354 6666 790 helgith@althingi.is
Parliament of Latvia	Mr Arvils Ašeradens Prof Jānis Vucāns	Ms Ingrida Sticenka Saeima Interparliamentary Relations Bureau of the Parliament of Latvia Jēkaba Street 10/12 Rīga LV-1811 Latvia Tel: +371 6 7087335 Ingrida.Sticenka@saeima.lv
Parliament of Lithuania	Mr Eugenijus Gentvilas Mr Andrius Kupčinskas	Mrs Renata Godfrey Seimas Gediminas Ave 53 2002 Vilnius Lithuania Tel: +370 5239 6220 Renata.Godfrey@lrs.lt
Nordic Council	Ms Rebecca Le Moine Substitute: Ms Alexandra Anstrell	Mr Arne Fogt Bergby/Ms Mette Gervin Damsgaard Nordic Council Ved Stranden 18 DK-1061 Copenhagen K Denmark Tel: +45 33 96 04 00 arfber@norden.org metdam@norden.org
Parliament of Norway	Ms Lene Westgaard-Halle	Mr Thomas Fraser The Norwegian Parliament 0026 Oslo Norway Tel: +47 23 31 35 91/+47 40 45 54 50 thomas.fraser@stortinget.no

Member Parliament	Member MP	Staff Point of Contact
Parliament of Poland	Mr Kacper Płażyński Substitute: Mr Jarosław Wałęsa	Mr Piotr Koperski Secretary of the Delegation of the Sejm and the Senate of the Republic of Poland to the BSPC, International and European Union Affairs Office, Chancellery of the Senate of the Republic of Poland 6 Wiejska Str. 00-902 Warsaw Poland Tel: +48 22 694 95 65 Piotr.Koperski@senat.gov.pl
Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein	Ms Silke Backsen	Ms Mareike Wotalla Head of Division State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein Postfach 7121 24171 Kiel Germany Tel: +49 431 988 1159 mareike.wotalla@landtag.ltsh.de
Parliament of Sweden	Ms Emma Nohrén	Ms Johanna Ingvarsson/Mr Dan Alvarsson International Department of the Swedish Parliament Swedish Delegation to the BSPC, Riksdagen SE-10012 Stockholm Sweden Tel: +468 08-786 50 48 johanna.ingvarsson@riksdagen.se dan.alvarsson@riksdagen.se

Mr Bodo Bahr
Secretary General of the BSPC
Schlossgartenallee 15
19061 Schwerin
Germany
Tel: +49 171 5512557
bodo.bahr@bspcmail.net
<http://www.bspc.net>

Mr Georg Strätker/Ms Evgeniya Bakalova
State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Lennéstr. 1
19053 Schwerin
Germany
Tel: +49 385 525 1530/+49 385 525 1531 (International Secretariat)
Georg.Straetker@landtag-mv.de
evgeniya.bakalova@landtag-mv.de
international@landtag-mv.de