



The early years of the Baltic Sea Commission

Foreword

Today, in 2011, fifteen years have elapsed since the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission came into existence and its first General Assembly was held on the Silja Symphony ferry in the middle of the Baltic Sea.

The challenges facing the Baltic Sea Region at the time of the organisation's birth were tough. The Iron Curtain, lifted only a few years previously, had been an obstacle to mobility and interaction. Exchange of culture and trade across the Baltic Sea had been hindered for more than 50 years. Social division and poverty, an inadequate infrastructure and environmental threats are examples of problems that had to be contended with.

At the same time, there was a strong belief in the prospects for the future. The level of enthusiasm for taking advantage of the new opportunities for cooperation and exchange was high. It was a commonly held belief that all parties would benefit from social, cultural and economic integration in the area. It was also believed that the Baltic Sea region had the potential to contribute to the development of the whole of Europe. A common understanding in the Baltic Sea area was that everyone – individuals, companies, municipalities, regional administrations and national governments – had a role to play in this effort. Many were willing to contribute.

It was in this spirit that the Baltic Sea Commission was founded as part of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions of Europe, with the aim of enhancing the subnational levels and actors as vital participants in the political arena. The intention behind this booklet is to present a brief picture of how and why this endeavour came about.

The initiative for this booklet came from Stockholm County Council and the Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council. The authorities in both these regions took great responsibility for the organisation from the start.

Stockholm May 2011

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The Birth of the BSC

The First General Assembly in the middle of the Baltic Sea

On 12 September 1996, 67 delegates representing 34 regional or county councils from eight countries gathered in the conference room of the Silja Symphony ferry. Also present at the occasion were some of the major cooperative networks in the area, a representative from the Finnish Government and representatives from the head office of CPMR in France.

When the Assembly began, the ferry had left the harbour of Stockholm and was crossing the Baltic Sea on its voyage to Helsinki. The task at hand was to hold the first General Assembly of the Baltic Sea Commission and in so doing to launch the new organisation.

The Assembly was opened by Mr Hannu Tapiola, member of the CPMR Political Bureau, Chairman of the Provisional Executive Committee of the Baltic Sea Commission, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Regional Council of Kymmenlaakso and Mayor of Kotka. Mr Tapiola emphasised the crucial role of the democratic local and regional authorities in encouraging economic development, environmental protection and cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Mr Tapiola also underlined the long-term aim of furthering peace and stability in the region. Mr Tapiola called for the regional and local authorities to be fully involved in the preparation of the European Union programmes for interregional cooperation.

Regions and organisations present at the first General Assembly

Denmark	Bornholms Amt City of Copenhagen Fredriksborgs Amt Fyns Amt Storströms Amt Vestsjaellands Amt
Estonia	Harjumaa Hiiumaa Ida-Viru Läänemaa Pärnumaa Saaremaa Tallinn City
Finland	Åland Itä-Uusimaa Kymmenlaakso Northern Ostrobothnia Ostrobothnia Salakumla South West Finland
Germany	Seleswig Holstein
Latvia	Jurmala Tukuma
Lithuania	Klaipeda Silute
Poland	Koszalin
Sweden	Gävleborg Gotland Malmöhus County Council Öland Sörmland Stockholm County Council Uppsala Västerbotten
Organisations	Finnish Government Association of Finnish Local Authorities Union of the Baltic Cities Helsinki Commission CPMR

After a general discussion, the Assembly took several important decisions:

- Approval of the Charter for the Commission
- Election of members of the Executive Committee
- Location for the secretariat
- Approval of the working programme for the Commission

The Assembly elected Mr Hannu Tapiola from Kymmenlaakso as President and Mr Bo Krogvig, Stockholm County Council, as Vice-President.

The General Assembly accepted the proposal made by Mr Krogvig, that Stockholm County Council would put at the disposal of the Baltic Sea Commission and finance a secretariat in Stockholm, which would work in close collaboration with the President and his staff.

Charter of the Baltic Sea Commission
Article 2: Objectives

"The Baltic Sea Commission is established to further partnership between Regional authorities, i.e. regional popularity-elected or in other way approved by regional public wherever possible according to the individual country's legislation, around the Baltic Sea and to manage the challenges and opportunities presented by the Baltic Sea. Through dialouge and formal partnership it will seek to promote common interests, especially in relation to the institutions of the European Union, the national governments and the Baltic Sea organisations."

The ferry trip also included a first Executive Committee meeting. The main purpose of the meeting was to set up a Technical Group for Strategy.

The Strategy Group was created with representatives of each country under the chairmanship of Mr Johan Träff, Chief Executive of Gotland, Sweden.

The Executive Committee 1996-1998

<i>President</i>	Mr Hannu Tapiola, Kymmenlaakso
<i>Vice President</i>	Mr Bo Krogvig, Stockholm City Council
<i>Denmark</i>	
Member:	Mogens Sommer, Bornholms Amt
Subst:	Orla Kristiansen, Bornholms Amt
<i>Estonia</i>	
Member:	Hannes Danilov, Läänemaa
Subst:	Toomas Kivimägi, Pärnumaa
<i>Finland</i>	
Member:	Stig Östdahl, Ostrobothnia
Subst:	Kimmo Kajaste, Itä-Uusimaa
<i>Latvia</i>	
Member:	Ligita Zacesta, Jurmala
Subst:	Agris Jaunkjavins, Tukums
<i>Lithuania</i>	
Member:	Sarunas Lauzikas, Silute
Subst:	Alaxendras Agafonovas, Klaipeda
<i>Poland</i>	
Member:	Jerzy Mokrzycki, Kozalin
Subst:	Joanna Soroka-Kloczko, Kozalin
<i>Sweden</i>	
Member:	Jan lundgren, Gotland
Subst:	Rose Eriksson, Gävleborg
<i>Executive Secretary</i>	Dag Boman, Stockholm County Council (1996,1997) Tommy Karlsson, Stockholm County Council (1997-1998)

CPMR Baltic Sea Commission – the Prelude

Three strong forces driving interest in developing interregional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area can be identified.

First, there was the collapse of the USSR leading to the liberation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the opportunities this presented for people, companies and others on either side of the previous border between east and west to interact and move freely.

Secondly, the accelerated integration within the European Union with the internal market and the enlargement of the Union to include Finland and Sweden was an important factor.

Last but not least, the shared historical backgrounds based on many ties, historical trade patterns and cultural similarities meant that the superficial gaps between the nations in the area could be closed.

Strengthening the Baltic Sea Area was a shared aspiration among all parties, in which also the regions and subnational parties were anxious to play a role.

Aim one – gain support from the CPMR

The initiative to approach the CPMR came from Finland.

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities in 1994 started preparing for the forthcoming Finnish membership of the European Union and studying what effects membership might have at the regional level. The CPMR, with its focus on maritime issues combined with the idea of a poly-centric Europe resting on strong regional participation, was found interesting by the Baltic Sea Horizon.

In the spring of 1995, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities invited the secretariat of the CPMR to make a presentation of the organisation and its attainments for the regions. The result of this initiative was that the regional councils of Kymmenlaakso, Ostrobothnia and Itä-Uusimaa applied for membership and were accepted as members of the CPMR. At the same time, at the CPMR General Assembly in Donegal in 1995, the regions of Viborg and Storstrøms Amt in Denmark and Gotland also became members of the CPMR.

The new Finnish CPMR members, in co-operation with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, carried out intensive work in order to gain support for the establishment of a new geographical commission within the CPMR for the Baltic Sea region. They were successful in their endeavour and were able to present a proposal for a resolution in collaboration with Åland, Bornholm, Gotland, Itä-Uusimaa, Kymenlaakso, Ostrobothnia, Schleswig-Holstein and the North Sea Commission.

The resolution was unanimously adopted by the CPMR General Assembly.

However, this was not done without objections from other members of the CPMR. Some of them were of the opinion that the Baltic Region should instead be included in the North Sea Commission.

- 3 -

Resolution on the Establishment of a Baltic Sea Commission organised under the umbrella of CPMR

**(Presented by Åland, Bornholm, Gotland, Itä-Uusimaa, Kymenlaakso, Ostrobothnia,
Schleswig-Holstein and the North Sea Commission)**

1. Considering that the enlargement of the European Union to the North and the agreements with the three Baltic States, Poland and Russia have highlighted the Union's interest in the affairs of the Baltic Sea Region.
2. Bearing in mind that overall state level policies in the Baltic Sea Region aim to strengthen stability in this Region by supporting security and the reform process.
3. Wishing to strengthen the legal principles and practices of democracy, to support an economically, socially and culturally sustainable development and the integration of the area in the European economy, as well as to improve the environmental conditions of the Region.
4. Considering the "Report of the past year's activities and outlook" by the North Sea Commission, which supports the establishment of a Baltic Sea Commission.

THE XXIIIrd GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CPMR SUPPORTS:

- * The setting up of a Baltic Sea Commission organised under the umbrella of the CPMR,
- * The setting up of a body - under the guidance of CPMR - to prepare the creation of a Baltic Sea Commission together with the Regions around the Baltic sea.

Unanimously adopted

Aim two – realisation of the resolution

At the invitation of Mr Hannu Tapiola, the Political Bureau of CPMR held one of its regular meetings in Kotka, Finland on May 6, 1996.

In conjunction with the meeting of the Political Bureau, a parallel seminar was organised on 7 May with the aim of discussing the establishment of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. All the Baltic Sea maritime regions were invited to discuss this issue and to decide on further actions. Thirty-two Baltic Sea Regions from seven countries attended the seminar. Attempts were also made to involve representatives from Russia.

The seminar was prepared in collaboration between the CPMR Secretariat and the office of the Kymenlaakso region. During the preparations Mr Gizard, the Secretary General of CPMR, was informed that Schleswig-Holstein had decided to withdraw its AER (Assembly of European Regions) and CPMR memberships. Its idea was to concentrate the Baltic Sea co-operation on the activities of the Conference of Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC). The altered policy of Schleswig-Holstein as a leading player in the area caused some confusion, but did not change the minds of the other regions. After Schleswig-Holstein opted out, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern instead became an active representative from Germany.



CONFÉRENCE DES RÉGIONS PÉRIPHÉRIQUES MARITIMES D'EUROPE
CONFERENCE OF PERIPHERAL MARITIME REGIONS OF EUROPE
KONFERENZ DER PERIPHEREN KÜSTENREGIONEN EUROPAS
CONFERENZA DELLE REGIONI PERIFERICHE MARITIME D'EUROPA
CONFERENCIA DE LAS REGIONES PERIFÉRICAS MARITIMAS DE EUROPA
ΔΙΑΣΚΕΨΗ ΤΩΝ ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑΚΩΝ ΠΑΡΑΚΤΙΩΝ ΠΕΡΙΟΧΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΥΡΩΠΗΣ

SEMINAR FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGIONS

Tuesday 7 May 1996 - KOTKA (Kymenlaakso, Finland)

DRAFT AGENDA

Monday 6 May 1996

1745 Registration and welcome of the Seminar participants from the CPMR Political Bureau

1800 Words of greeting to the Baltic Regions
Mr Jouni Backman, Minister of Internal Affairs, Government of Finland

Tuesday 7 May 1996

9.00 am - Inaugural Session

Official Opening of the Seminar by **Mr Kari Häkkinen**, Finnish Minister of Justice
Welcome Address from **Mr Hannu Tapiola**, Chairman of the Board of the Regional Council of Kymenlaakso

9.20 am - 1st working session

Chaired by **Mr Juha Tahvilä**, Head of Structural Policy Unit, Association of Finnish Local Authorities

1. THE CONFERENCE OF PERIPHERAL MARITIME REGIONS

- Presentation of CPMR's Objectives, Strategy and Actions
Mr Alberto Jardim, President of CPMR, President of Madeira
Mr Xavier Glazod, Secretary General of CPMR
- Experience of the CPMR North Sea Commission
Mr Bent Hansen, President of the North Sea Commission, County Mayor of Viborg
Mr Henrik Bruch Pedersen, Executive Secretary of the North Sea Commission

Coffee break

2. POSITION OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION IN THE EUROPEAN SPACE

- **Mr Bengt Holmström**, leader of the sub-committee for the Baltic in the Committee of the Regions (to be confirmed)
- **Mr Filip Hamro-Drota**, Member of the Regional Development Section of the European Economic and Social Committee
- **Ms Ieva Kalina**, Initiatives Officer, Ecom-Öuverture Vestjaglands Amt
- **Mr Jacques Robert**, European expert on maritime affairs

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There were many issues to resolve and many interests to consider. Mr Juha Talvitie, at that time at the secretariat of the Finnish Regional Councils, recalls:

"After the presentations in the fourth session - A Baltic Sea Commission - Why and How, there was general discussion about the establishment of the Commission. As the chairman of the session I sensed some tension in the air. During the next coffee Break I invited Knud Andersson and Anders Gustav to the same table. I already knew both these men because they both were members of the Committee of the Regions and we had met several times, especially at the meetings of the Nordic representatives. We discussed how to proceed in the meeting. I proposed a package deal: that the first meeting of the Provisional Executive Committee would be held in Bornholm and that the first General Assembly would be held in Stockholm and that Mr Tapiola would chair the provisional executive committee. This deal included the adoption of the Final Declaration.

Both men agreed with this proposal. Then I told them that at the start of the session following the coffee break I would make a proposal which included all the elements discussed. They agreed with this procedure. That's how it happened, and the goal that had been set for the seminar was achieved."

The result of the seminar was that the participants in the Kotka seminar agreed to set up a Baltic Sea Commission within the framework of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe. The participating regions also decided to set up a provisional Executive Committee under the chairmanship of Mr Hannu Tapiola representing the Kymenlaakso region.

The participating region concluded as follows in the minutes of the seminar:

"The coastal regions of the Baltic Sea wish to stress that while cooperation in numerous sectors has already been promoted in the Baltic Sea Area at governmental level, through bilateral or multilateral agreements, cooperation between regional authorities still needs to be strengthened and expanded, in particular in the framework of regional cooperation."

The first years of the Baltic Sea Commission

The way forward was already established at the first General Assembly on the ferry. The following declaration was made:

"The chief task of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission is to create uniform and coherent development programmes for all the coastal regions of the Baltic Sea, so that successful development activities in the Baltic Sea economic region can be carried through. In the first stage, close cooperation should be launched, especially concerning the INTERREG II C programme. The programme must be prepared in close cooperation with the coastal regions, and they should be connected accordingly with the TACIS and PHARE programmes.

In the view of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, the process of creating networks between the Baltic Sea regions and islands must be launched very soon in order to attain the targets mentioned and secure the development of the economic region"

(Communiqué of the First General Assembly).

The Provisional Executive Committee at its first meeting on Bornholm on 19 June 1996 formulated preliminary main aims for the Baltic Sea Commission, which were later adopted by the General Assembly. The main aims were also the starting point for developing a programme of work for the BSC.

In order to develop the cooperation among members of the Baltic Sea Commission, the Bornholm meeting identified the need to organise a number of technical groups:

- a) Strategy for the Baltic Sea Coastal and Islands Regions
- b) Infrastructure, Transport and Communication
- c) Regional Development
- d) Economic Development and Tourism industry
- e) Research Technology Development (RTD) and Education
- f) Solidarity and Social Services

The main tasks during the first years

General Assembly the Executive Committee decided to promote the Baltic Sea Commission by focusing on a few prioritised topics.

- Spread information on the BSC to members, to potential members, to authorities and to other organisations active in the Baltic Sea Area.
- Actively visit members and potential members. The Executive Committee held its meetings in various countries. The executive secretary was encouraged to travel to the various parts of the region.
- To consolidate a working culture and make it possible for delegates and others to get to know one another.
- Put effort into concluding the work within the strategy group and formulating an action plan and visions and objectives for the Commission
- Actively promote the general interest of the regions in the Baltic Sea Area in the arena provided by the CPMR.

The main aims of the Baltic Sea Commission:

1. To contribute to the peace and stability of the Baltic Sea Area by promoting its economic and social well-being and by fostering the development of relationships between all its people.
2. To put forward the views of a "Baltic Sea Vision", and to raise all the issues of specific concern to the Baltic Sea Coastal Regions with the decision making centres in the Baltic as well as with the European Institutions.
3. To ensure that the Baltic Sea Coastal Regions become active partners in the elaboration and implementation of a European Union Baltic Sea Policy, specially with regards to Community Programs.
4. To take active part in the development of the Baltic Sea Economy Area through the action of transnational networks between coastal regions, especially on themes and issues such as
 - The development of a maritime economy.
 - The development of trans European networks in the field of transport and communication.
 - The management of energy
 - The production and marketing of goods and services, specially with the food industry and chemical industry.
 - The development of opportunities offered by information technology.
 - Environmental management, coastline protection and maritime safety.
 - The improvement and sharing of experience about the management of public finances and public services, specially in the fields of social welfare and education.
5. To develop cooperation and joint political action with other regions of Europe and specially with other peripheral maritime regions of the European Union, through close cooperation with the CPMR Inter Mediterranean, North Sea, Atlantic Arc and Islands Commissions.

The members

It was important to incorporate new members. The interest in taking part in the BSC was evident, especially from the regions of the Baltic States. Curiosity about European matters and an ambition to establish contacts with other maritime European regions were common reasons for joining the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission.

Visiting the member regions was a top priority for the secretariat. The idea was to visit all the 25 member regions. Within a couple of years this had almost been accomplished.

As one of several new organisations in the Baltic Sea Area, it was important for the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission to be recognised as an interesting actor in the area. Besides informal contacts with other organisations and networks, the BSC established close contact with the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) and the Union of the Baltic Sea

In several of the former eastern block countries, formalisation of the regional level was in a state of transition. These regions also had very limited economic resources, restraining their ability to become full members of the CPMR and travel to the frequent meetings, participate in working groups etc. At this time it was possible for interested regions to become “observers”, which made it possible to take part in CPMR meetings and similar events before applying for formal membership.

The number of members of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission increased rapidly during its first few years, and in 1998 there were 25 member regions.

Promoting the Baltic Sea perspective within the CPMR

As a new geographical commission within CPMR a vital task for the Baltic Sea Commission was to promote and to present the Baltic Sea perspective to the parts of the CPMR.

The regions in the Baltic Sea area were unified in their interest to see Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland as full members of the European Union. Many regions in southern Europe at the same time expressed their uncertainty about the consequences of enlarging the EU.

BSC took on the task to inform other CPMR members of the preconditions in northern Europe. In order to strengthen the cooperation with the Mediterranean Area a project called Medbalt was introduced. One activity within the Medbalt was a participation of young people the Inter-Mediterranean Commission's General Assembly in Livorno 6-7 May 1998

The dialogue between "north and south" was mutually to benefit.

BSC took part in CPMR intercommission activities and took an initiative to start the "Inter com group for tourism in maritime areas".

National initiatives

In the 1994 and forward the Swedish government initiated several initiatives in order to promote the Baltic Sea Area. One of those were the Visby summits in which prime ministers from all countries around the Baltic Sea took part.

At the summit 1995 the CPMR got the opportunity to present its activities and goals for a sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region with focus on sub regional contributions

One of the outcomes of the Visby summit was the establishment of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, CBSS. The Baltic Sea Commission was asked to be a special partner to the CBSS together with other regional actors. The Baltic Sea Commission also established a exchange with the Parliamentary Conference.

Thematic groups and fields of interest

The BSC made great efforts to establish interregional working groups.

One of these was the BSC working group known as the Spatial Development Group. The Spatial Development Group was originally launched at the 27th CPMR General Assembly in Vaasa in September 1999. The main objectives of the group were decided to be observation and monitoring of important spatial development initiatives that have an impact on the member regions. The other objective was to launch and elaborate new project ideas and proposals.

At the BSC Executive Committee meeting in Florence in October 2000, the Spatial Development Group was changed from a nominated group to a network of contacts. Each region could choose its representative depending on the current issue to be addressed at the Spatial Development Group meeting. This was an amendment to the charter of the Spatial Development Group which was originally adopted at a BSC Executive Committee meeting in Mariehamn in November 1999.

The first chairman of this group was Mr Ulf Johansson, Gotland County Council, and the secretary was Mr Jaakko Mikkola, BSC Executive Secretary.

Time to act - Visions and objectives for BSC

The result of the work of the strategy group was presented as "Visions and Objectives, Action Plan for the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission 1999-2000". The Action Plan was adopted by the General Assembly in Oulu on 20 November 1998.

It is stated in the Action Plan that the Baltic Sea Area is facing one of the major challenges in its history. Now history has given us an opportunity to revitalise our regions and to build a prosperous and peaceful future together.

The "vision" acknowledges on the one hand the prospect of internationally successful economic development and on the other the unacceptable differences in living standards in the region. Actions were called for in order to achieve true cohesion within the area.

The Action Plan also pointed to the unavoidable consequence of fifty years of East -West division, namely the poor condition of the infrastructural links, unsuited to the demands of modern trade and travel. Action was called for to support the construction and reconstruction of infrastructure such as harbours, railway links, roads, airports and telecommunications.

The regions of the Baltic Sea Area were considered to have two fundamental tasks:

- To utilise their strategic positions and resources in order to contribute to the integration and progress of the whole region
- To cooperate among themselves in order to achieve balanced development so that all maritime regions have the opportunity to develop their own culture and values and at the same time offer their inhabitants a safe and rich life.

The goals of the Baltic Sea Strategy

The goals for the Baltic Sea strategy of the BSC, according to the adopted "Visions and Objectives", were:

- Achievement of a common economic area around the Baltic Sea
- Responsibility for the environment
- Preservation of cultural heritage of the Baltic Sea Region
- Utilisation of the human resources of the Baltic Sea region

As a consequence of these goals, the following important tasks were identified:

1. Create a strategy for international competitiveness
2. Develop the infrastructure systems
3. Pay attention to maritime regions
4. Mount joint action to attract visitors and tourists to the Baltic Sea
5. Develop short sea shipping
6. Consider human resources
7. Support regional participation
8. Try to achieve an integrated economic space around the Baltic Sea
9. Take responsibility for the environment
10. Preserve the cultural heritage of the Baltic Sea Region
11. Create better co-ordination between international and local/regional efforts

EU-projects

To encourage the member regions to take part in EU projects was one of the first decisions made by the new Baltic Sea Commission. This also fitted with the ambition to be an active spokesman for a north- south dialogue. This was recognised as a vital part of the EC strategy to develop the North- South perspective expressed in the Interreg programme.

The first project initiated and govern by the Baltic Sea Commission was Planet, Baltic Sea Planners network within the Phare Partner Ship programme.

The BSC also initiated the project Small-scale Maritime Eco Tourism around the Baltic Sea, SMETAB, an Interreg IIIC project in order to develop a sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Area. This project was linked to another Interreg programme, the Baltic Sea Palette.

I - PROJECT IDENTIFICATION SHEET (max. 1 page)

Project title (max. 1 line)

Baltic Sea PLANET (Baltic Sea Planners Network)

Country(ies) and regions/towns/villages that will be benefit from the project (please attach a map)

1/ ESTONIA - Hiiumaa and Saaremaa

2/ LATVIA - Tukums, Jurmala

3/ LITHUANIA - Silute

Name, place of establishment and nationality of all partners

1/ **CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, Stockholm, Sweden - Lead applicant**

(A multinational, non-profit NGO working in the interest of Peripheral Maritime Regions in the Baltic Sea Area.)

2/ Kuressaare Town, Kuressaare, ESTONIA

3/ Union of Municipalities of Hiiumaa, Kärkla, ESTONIA

4/ Regional Municipality of Tukums, Tukums, LATVIA

5/ Jurmala Town Council, Jurmala, LATVIA

6/ Silute District Municipality, LITHUANIA

7/ Municipality of Gotland, Visby, SWEDEN

Presidents of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission



1996-2000 Mr Hannu Tapiola
Kymenlaakso region



2000-2004 Mr Anders Gustav
Stockholm region



2004-2006 Mr Inge Andersson
Västerbotten region



2006-2010 Mrs Christel Liljeström
Itä-Usimaa region



2010- Mr Erik Bergkvist
Västerbotten region

List of General Assemblies

- 1st, 1996 Silja Line, on board from Helsinki to Stockholm
- 2nd, 1997 Riga, Riga District, Latvia
- 3rd, 1998 Oulu, Northern Ostrobothnia, Finland
- 4th, 1999 Borgholm, Öland, Sweden
- 5th, 2000 Rønne, Bornholm, Denmark
- 6th, 2001 Tallinn, Harju, Estonia
- 7th, 2002 Klaipeda, Klaipeda County, Lithuania
- 8th, 2003 Umeå, Västerbotten region
- 9th, 2004 Schwerin, Mecklenburg Vorpommern
- 10th, 2005 Naantali, South West Finland
- 11th, 2006 Karlskrona, Blekinge region
- 12th, 2007 Bodö, Nordland Fylke
- 13th, 2008 Herning, Viborg amt
- 14th, 2009 Visby, Gotland
- 15th, 2010 Rostock Warnemunde

Activities and members in 2011

The Baltic Sea Commission today encompasses 26 regions in seven countries around the Baltic Sea, including Nordland in Norway. The BSC counts several national capitals as members, and the organisation also has the majority of the Baltic Sea Islands among its members. The BSC speaks for a population of approximately 15 million.

In the Baltic Sea Area, reforms are being conducted on the national structure of governance. A result of this was that a long-standing member, Riga, Latvia, was forced to leave the organisation in 2009 as it no longer exists as a region. Similarly, Itä-Uusimaa merged with Uusimaa Region in 2011.

The current members are:

FINLAND:	Helsinki-Uusimaa, Kymenlaakso, Päijät-Häme, Oulu Region, Ostrobothnia, South-West Finland, Åland
SWEDEN:	Stockholm, Blekinge, Gotland, Gävleborg, Norrbotten, Skåne, Västerbotten, Västra Götaland, Västernorrland, Örebro
GERMANY:	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
ESTONIA:	Hiiumaa/Dagö, Saaremaa/Ösel, Pärnumaa, Idavirumaa
POLAND:	Podlaskie
NORWAY:	Nordland
DENMARK:	Central Denmark, Southern Denmark

Working groups in 2011 are:

- Energy & Climate Change
- Fisheries
- Transport
- Tourism
- Innovation (work completed and WG closed)
- Social Inclusion
- Employment and Training/Life Long Learning
- Aquamarina/Maritime Surveillance
- "158 Group"
- Baltic Master II

Achievements

"For several years I had to face the disapproval of the representatives of the House of Hansa in Brussels, who were constantly questioning the existence of the Baltic Sea Commission. The disagreement was about two topics. First, the cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area: can it be independent in relation to other European areas or in work aimed at influencing European policies? Secondly, is there a need for an independent organisation representing the regions, and how does this need differ from the needs of other actors such as municipalities, chambers of commerce, industrial organisations etc., and how can this development be supported in an area which is based on the execution of power by national governments? The 15 years in which the Baltic Sea Commission has existed have shown me strengthening of a progressive regional level, through the reforms that have been carried out in Denmark, Finland and Sweden. I pay tribute to the founders of the Baltic Sea Commission for their persistence in providing frank answers to both these questions."

(Xavier Gizard, former Secretary General of the CPMR)

The Baltic Sea Commission has been working in an ever-changing environment.

During the past ten years there have been significant changes in the role and structure of the regional levels in the Baltic Sea Area which have influenced participation in the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. A major regional reform in Denmark has given the regions limited responsibility for regional development and other issues related to the main topics of the CPMR. Administrative changes in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have almost eliminated the regional administrative levels. Changes for the regional actors have also taken place in Finland. In Sweden, administrative changes are under way

which may lead to a different regional structure in due course.

These reforms certainly affect the work of the Baltic Sea Commission both in activities and in structure. Adapting these to the new conditions will be a challenge for the organisation for the next few years.

In the early years, the organisation fulfilled many functions. It was able to mobilise and act in relation to the decision-making process in the Baltic Sea Area in national governments and in European institutions. Working "under the umbrella of CPMR" has created accessibility to these processes that would otherwise be difficult to achieve.

The history of the BSC is also a history of learning. Personal networks, formal and informal, have been created. A multilateral understanding of preconditions for actions and needs has developed and deepened over the years.

Dialogue and consensus have laid the foundation for well-timed interventions in a wide range of areas. The organisation has been acknowledged as a reliable partner and spokesman on maritime issues such as transport environment and regional development. The cooperation with other actors, which was one of the remits given by the first General Assemblies, has been fulfilled.

Many people involved in the early years of the BSC take pride in "north-south" dialogue with regions from Mediterranean regions and other parts of Europe, leading to understanding and support for the enlargement of the EU in northern Europe.

Future perspectives

The Baltic Sea Region 1996 - 2011

The Baltic Sea Region has seen tremendous development during the fifteen years the Baltic Sea Commission has existed.

In 1996 the disparity in GDP per capita was among the widest for neighbouring regions in Europe, ranging from 1,500 USD in Lithuania to 31,500 USD in Denmark, a ratio of 1 to 20. Today the economic gap between east and west is still significant but has narrowed from 1 to 20 in 1996 to 1 to 3 measured in GDP per capita.

The dawn of a new era

An important part of the cooperation between west and east earlier consisted in aid programmes. These have now been replaced by regular trade, capital investments, tourism and a significant exchange of human capital.

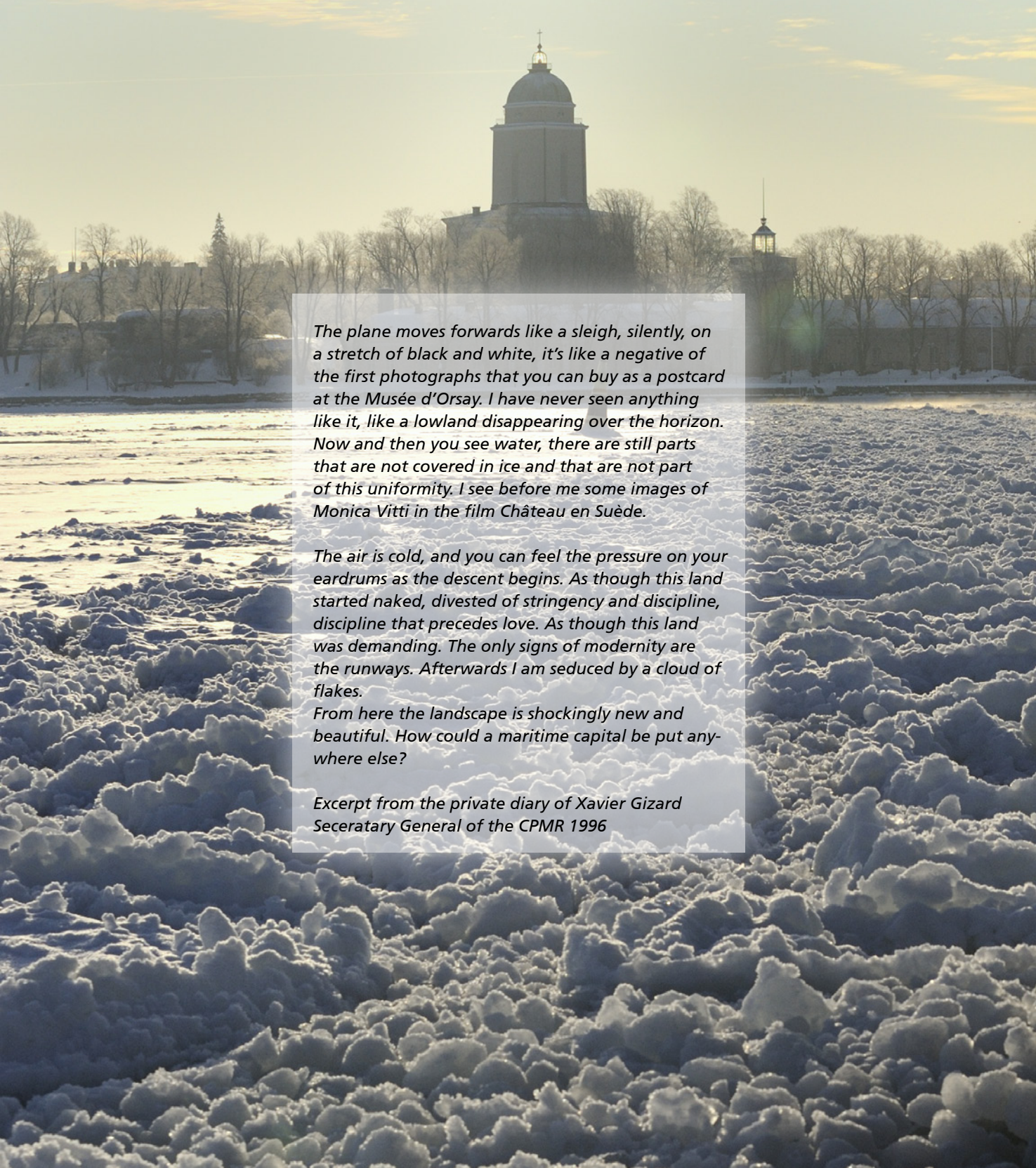
The new era is also reflected in the European strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Conclusions concerning the Strategy were adopted in 2009. The conclusions of the European Council state that the Strategy constitutes an integrated framework to address common challenges, such as environmental concerns, and that it will help the region, and ultimately the EU, to

improve its competitiveness in the prevailing economic climate.

The strategy contains four challenges requiring our urgent attention:

1. an environmentally sustainable region
2. a prosperous region
3. an accessible and attractive region
4. a safe and secure region.

The European strategy for the Baltic Sea Region includes the eight member states of the EU around the Baltic and is the EU's first macro-regional strategy.

A wide-angle photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, a vast field of snow is covered with numerous small, rounded mounds of snow, creating a textured surface. In the background, a large, light-colored building with a prominent dome and a small lantern on top is visible. The building is surrounded by bare trees and a line of snow-covered roofs. The sky is a pale, hazy blue with some light clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

*The plane moves forwards like a sleigh, silently, on a stretch of black and white, it's like a negative of the first photographs that you can buy as a postcard at the Musée d'Orsay. I have never seen anything like it, like a lowland disappearing over the horizon. Now and then you see water, there are still parts that are not covered in ice and that are not part of this uniformity. I see before me some images of Monica Vitti in the film *Château en Suède*.*

The air is cold, and you can feel the pressure on your eardrums as the descent begins. As though this land started naked, divested of stringency and discipline, discipline that precedes love. As though this land was demanding. The only signs of modernity are the runways. Afterwards I am seduced by a cloud of flakes. From here the landscape is shockingly new and beautiful. How could a maritime capital be put anywhere else?

*Excerpt from the private diary of Xavier Gizard
Seceretary General of the CPMR 1996*



Production: TMR

Foto: Visit Helsinki, Visit Åland



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