CONFERENCE OF PERIPHERAL MARITIME REGIONS

BALKAN & BLACK SEA COMMISSION

MINUTES

BBSC PRE-GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND POLITICAL BUREAU MEETINGS

5 November 2015, Florence (Tuscany, IT)

PARTICIPATING MEMBERS: Calarasi, Central Macedonia, Galati, Ionian Islands, Kirklareli, North Aegean, Peloponnisos, Shkodër, South Aegean, Tirana, Tulcea

OBSERVERS: Crete, Association of Cross-Cooperation “Lower Danube Euroregion”

BBSC PRE-GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

Mr Mircea Stoian, President of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission (BBSC) and Tulcea County Councillor, opened the meeting. Since his election and the nomination of Ms Christiana Kalogirou, Governor of North Aegean Region and 1st Vice-President of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission, he acknowledged and welcomed the strong start in compliance with EU Neighbourhood Policy. Applications for membership received from Moldova and Albania demonstrated the extension of the BBSC’s activities. The economic and political crisis that the Region is facing confirms the importance of maintaining a climate of stability and unity as well as the need for partnerships. In addition, he stressed that the BBSC is currently very active in preparing project proposals to be submitted under the EASME Call for Proposals "Projects in the context of the Integrated Maritime Policy in the Black Sea and/or Mediterranean Sea regions", Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 and ENI CBC Black Sea Basin 2014-2020 Programmes. The BBSC Tourism Working Group is currently working on ACCESS (“smAll Cruise blaCk aEgean SeaS”) and WEBLA (“Wetlands and Estuaries in the Black Sea Area”) project proposals, while the CPMR BBSC Secretariat is working on the Vasco Da Gama for the Black Sea project proposal together with stakeholders from the Black Sea basin. He underlined the importance of EU Neighbourhood Policy and the collaborative and cooperative relationship inside the CPMR BBSC. He reminded participants of the efforts undertaken by the CPMR BBSC Secretariat for closer cooperation with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and expressed his hope for successful work in the future. (Read introductory speech)

The draft minutes of the BBSC General Assembly held in Brussels on 29 May 2015 were unanimously adopted.

Regarding the BBSC Political Bureau members, the college of Regions of Turkey will email their decision once their Full and Alternate Members are nominated.

The proposed budget for 2016 was presented and adopted unanimously by the Members.

Mr Patrick Anvroin, CPMR Director responsible for the follow-up of the BBSC, presented the 2015-2016 BBSC Work Programme (see PowerPoint presentation). He reminded participants of the priorities of the Commission, which are to promote its collaboration between Members and non-Member regional and local authorities and related institutions in the wider Black Sea area and their interest regarding economic and territorial cohesion, Integrated Maritime Policy, tourism, transport and accessibility, Neighbourhood Policy and environment. He reminded the Members that the CPMR and the BBSC contributed to the ENP...
Consultation “Towards a new Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)”, issued by the European Commission and European External Actions Service (EEAS). This contribution highlighted in particular the importance of the local and regional authorities, people-to-people cooperation. A collaboration was also proposed with the Black Sea NGO Forum to participate in a reflection at regional and EU levels on macro-regional strategies in relationship with the Black Sea Synergy, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). Setting up and implementing specific projects as mentioned by Mr Stoian are crucial in order to boost the development of this Region, to increase awareness and spread the good work through organising national events in Black Sea countries.

He then reminded participants of the current projects under preparation: ACCESS, dealing with cruise tourism and WEBLA, dealing with environmental tourism and estuaries. A project dealing with maritime education VASCO DA GAMA is also being prepared for submission in the context of the ENI CBC Black Sea Basin Programme 2014-2020.

In early September 2015, the BBSC renewed its status as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of the BSEC in order to work closely with them on the issues that our members are active in. The BBSC Secretariat also works with the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS).

Workshops on issues such as transport and tourism would be of high interest to the BBSC members. The BBSC Secretariat shall examine all possibilities and will inform Members in due course. He underlined the need to relaunch the External Cooperation Working Group led by Odessa. He ended his speech by inviting Members to feed into, and give their contributions to, this working programme.

Mr Miltiadis Nikolau, Regional Officer of the Department of Tourism, Region of Central Macedonia and Member of the Coordinating Team of the BBSC Tourism Working Group expressed his satisfaction for the productive discussions that followed the last meeting held in Brussels on 28 May 2015, which led to the creation of two solid partnerships for the project proposals BLANC and WEBLA. He mentioned the presentations from the Members of the Coordinating Team, Ms Evdoxia Dermedesioti (read the full speech), Mr Leonidas Tsiantis (read the full speech) and his own presentation (read the full speech) that were made during the meeting of the Tourism Working Group (which met earlier in the morning on 5 November) and that highlighted the future actions and objectives that could be undertaken and carried out by the Members of the Tourism Working Group over the coming period. The preparation of an assessment report was recommended, as he felt it would bring together existing challenges and measures to support and facilitate the process of putting forward proposals on promoting the implementation of thematic tourism. As a long-term goal, to strengthen institutional capacity, he stressed the importance of establishing cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation of the Black Sea (BSEC), the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), other international organisations and the private sector as well.

Regarding the Business Cooperation Working Group, Mr Mircea Stoian mentioned that the Members’ replies to the questionnaire on BBSC priorities demonstrated the desire to maintain the Business Cooperation Working Group but that the methods of work should change. The President invited the Members to discuss this issue during the Political Bureau meeting that will follow-up the possible ways to relaunch this group.

Regarding the External Cooperation Working Group led by Odessa Region, Mr Stoian expressed his hope that this Working Group shall become more effective and active once the political situation in Ukraine stabilises.

Further to the applications received from the Governorship of Kirklareli and the Union of County Councils of the Republic of Moldova (UCRM) to host the 2016 BBSC General Assembly, the Members decided that the 2016 General Assembly will be hosted by Kirklareli. The BBSC President suggested that the UCRM hosts the 2017 General Assembly.

Mr Vasile Strat, Vice-President of Tulcea County Council expressed his hope that the political situation in 2017 will become stable and clear in the area.

There followed presentations from the Region of Tirana, (see the PowerPoint presentation) and the Union of County Councils of the Republic of Moldova (detailed presentation in word).
Ms Natalia Budescu, Board Member of the Romanian NGDO (Non-Governmental Development Organisation) Platform – FOND, Black Sea NGO Forum, took part as an observer in the meeting. She reminded participants of the existence of the civil society forum in this area and suggested using the Black Sea Cooperation Programme to actually build connections relating to the public administration forum and also to finance the first edition of the Black Sea Regions Forum, coordinated by the CPMR.

Mr Stoian considered this issue important and proposed discussing it in more depth during the next meeting.

Dr Apostolos Papafotiou, Regional Councillor of Peloponnese in charge of International Affairs and European Programmes, stressed the necessity to extend the membership of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission to Georgia, Russia and Serbia.

This last suggestion attracted the attention of the President who proposed discussing this issue and envisaging the possibility to do this in the near future. He concluded the meeting by stressing the necessity to strengthen cooperation between Regions in order to create a proper framework for common and sustainable development and thanked the representatives for their participation.

POLITICAL BUREAU MEETING

PARTICIPATING MEMBERS: Kirklareli, North Aegean, Tirana, Tulcea

Mr Mircea Stoian, President of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission (BBSC) and Tulcea County Councillor, opened the Political Bureau meeting. As the Regions of Turkey had not confirmed their participation in the BBSC Political Bureau, the election of the 2nd and 3rd Vice-Presidents had to be postponed.

The delegates from Albania confirmed Mr Aldrin Dalipi, President of the Regional Council of Tirana as the Albanian Full Member in the BBSC Political Bureau and Mrs Greta Bardeli, President of Shkodër Region as their Alternate Member in the BBSC Political Bureau.

Regarding the activities of the Working Groups on Business Cooperation and External Cooperation and following the decision from our Member Regions to maintain these groups, President Stoian invited Members to put forward proposals in order to make them more dynamic in the next period. He underlined the importance of staying connected to EU policies, applying for future projects and therefore creating interregional synergies. Exchange of best practice and creation of transport infrastructure in the extended Balkan and the Black Sea area are the means to achieve our goals.

Mr Nikos Lampropoulos, Brussels office representative from North Aegean Region indicated that transport is the main priority for his Region and proposed the creation of a Transport Working Group. He will be delighted to update Members with information on on-going work within the EU institutions in Brussels and proposed organising an online meeting in order to decide the way to proceed.

Mr Stoian thanked Mr Lampropoulos and considered it crucial to stay close to EU Transport Policy. Good infrastructure provides accessibility to more Regions and is important for the development of tourism in the Balkan and Black Sea area.