

# Management response – Recommendation from the external evaluation of PA Hazards’ working strategies in the EU Baltic Sea Region strategy



## BACKGROUND

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has engaged Professional Management AB to carry out an evaluation of PA Hazards' (Policy Area Hazardous Substances) working strategies within the EU Baltic Sea strategy. The purpose of the assignment is to evaluate the impact and results of PA Hazards' working strategies, followed by recommendations for developing and improving the work.

In the evaluation report the evaluators present how PA Hazards' work in the EU Baltic Sea strategy has developed and the results that have been achieved. Based on an analysis of the material collected the evaluators draw certain conclusions and provide concrete recommendations for serious consideration.

At the heart of PA Hazards' organisation is its relationship to the objectives of the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region (EUSBSR), relevant policy frameworks and conventions as well as current scientific and technical knowledge and advances. It's against this background that PA Hazards works with its prioritised issues and activities.

The analysis of PA Hazards' working strategy shows that there has been a continuous development of working methods and processes and its work in progress, which means the work must be constantly adapted to new conditions. At the same time, it's also possible to influence development and contribute to new solutions and forms of collaboration.

In the light of the analysis and drawn conclusions, the evaluators present the following recommendations as below.

A majority of recommendations target working strategies and formats of the policy area coordinator and PA working group directly. However, over some of the recommendations, the PAC cannot steer over. These recommendations will be conveyed to relevant responsible actors/ bodies within other forums.

## REKOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

- 1. Make sure the minutes from the steering group meetings are drawn up according to a template so that the same type of information is provided by the meetings and that resolutions are clearly shown.**

**Response:** The PAC will provide a revised master template to the next steering group meeting that shall be used for documentation of meeting results in the future. The template will be circulated among steering group members to ensure the revision is meeting the needs of the group and the intention of the recommendation above.

- 2. The minutes from the steering group meetings should include a follow-up to ensure all of the resolutions adopted at the previous meeting are actioned.**

**Response:** See above. In addition, the PAC will add an item to the template of the meeting agenda targeting the follow-up of previous meetings and minutes.

- 3. Easily accessible information about flagship projects and their results and PA Hazards in general are crucial for achieving the intended effects. Ensure that results are made visible through published reports, which are available or easily searchable via the website.**

**Response:** The PAC will add a website dedicated to ‘results of flagships and policy change achieved’ to the currently available information on the policy area on the Swedish EPA website. The PAC will include an activity to the work plans with the flagships that are currently in use, adding the task to publish an info-brief on project results and undergo an ex-post evaluation of these results with a view to the projects’ actual contribution to achieving EUSBSR objectives and sub-objectives as well as implementing PA Hazards actions. This ex-post evaluation will be made available on the PACs website. This will ensure easy accessibility of results and outcomes of projects and other activities to the policy level and can serve as information material to influence policy makers.

- 4. Also, to work *together with other actors* in the upcoming flagship projects to ensure that the balance between the scientific and policy approaches is such that they reinforce each other's positive aspects both in reporting and in the conditions provided to enable the use of project results in policy development.**

**Response:** The PA is currently revising its working approach shifting the focus from individual projects to more strategic processes in order to being able to work more efficiently towards achieving EUSBSR goals under objective ‘Save the Sea’. The PAC will present a non-paper on future working strategies to the next steering group meeting 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018. This is also meant to inform the process of updating the EUSBSR Action plan, expected in late 2018. The PAC has also been in contact with Swedish Institute as one of the actors in HA Capacity on the possibility to arrange for a Baltic Leadership Programme, BLP for the PA. This approach could be used to establish a relevant network in the region to kick-off a new topic under PA Hazards. Multilevel-governance in the way as described above is of the very nature of cooperation within the framework of the EUSBSR and PA Hazards will continue to follow-along with this principle also in the future.

- 5. Undertake road shows, in accordance with the concept drawn up.**

**Response:** The undertaking of Roadshows according to the concept currently in use is rather time- and resource intense. With the human resources currently restricted to one full-time employment, the Swedish EPA does not see the possibility to arrange Roadshows on a regular basis. However, PA Hazards will continue with information- and dialog seminars on the work of the PA currently ongoing and the results so far. For 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018 the PA is planning an information and dialog seminar at the European Parliament in Brussels in cooperation with the EP Intergroup on seas, rivers, islands and coastal areas, the informal intergroup Baltic Sea of the Committee of the Regions as well as the Committee of the Peripheral Maritime Region - Baltic Sea Commission. The aim of this dialog seminar is to update the participants on the ongoing activities and results from projects in the Baltic Sea Area, initiate a policy discussion and prepare policy recommendations for the future. Furthermore, it aims for a closer dialogue with relevant bodies and actors in Brussels, especially the European Parliament as the initiator of the first EU macro-regional strategy and convey relevant results and recommendations to the policy level. In 2019, we might come back to the regular Roadshow concept, dedicated to cooperation and information sharing on the national level. Potential hosting countries for upcoming Roadshows 2019 – 2020 are Estonia, Denmark and Germany.

- 6. Ensure an active exchange of information between the Government Offices of Sweden and PA Hazards. This collaboration should continue to be a top priority, where opportunities for deeper cooperation are taken. The exchange of information should not only seek to keep Government Offices up to date on developments in policy related issues to facilitate decisions that involve a change in policy direction stemming from the work of PA Hazards and its results, but also to keep PAC updated regarding the policy agenda.**

**Response:** Once a year the PAC is meeting with the Government office in order to update and exchange information on the latest developments within the PA. Furthermore, the PAC is planning on a more regular basis to include the Government office in the relevant email communication concerning planned events, results achieved and the overall development of the PA. This also includes a standing invitation to the regular PA Hazards steering group meetings, especially where those are held as virtual meetings, in Stockholm or at relevant back to back events where it would be expected that Government office representatives would be present. The Government office is listed as one of the main target groups for communication in the overall communication plan of the PA and the Government Commission on the implementation of the EUSBSR at the Swedish EPA. The PA will increase efforts to implement and follow-up on planned activities as listed in the communication plan.

- 7. To continue to develop and make use of the links between the work in PA Hazards and HELCOM to achieve synergies at the policy level. HELCOM has a legal structure that also provides the tools for policymaking at the political level for PA Hazards.**

**Response:** Currently the task of the Policy Area Coordinator at the Swedish Environment Agency is closely linked with the agencies tasks related to cooperation within Helcom and OSPAR. Thus, there are mutual links between both conventions and the work of PA Hazards that will be even more streamlined in the future. The PAC will participate in at least one meeting of Helcom Pressure working group per year and closely cooperate with the Helcom Correspondence group on Pharmaceuticals.

The PAC has started discussions with represented member states in the Helcom Pressure working group to open the policy recommendation concerning anti-fouling practices in leisure boats for revision based on the recommendations elaborated in the flagship project Change. Sweden, Finland and Germany indicated interest to support this process. The issues need to be followed up by the PAC.

Also, PA Hazards is supporting the currently on-going application for project platform support for the 'BSR Water platform' that the Union of the Baltic Cities in cooperation with other relevant organizations such as HELCOM has been submitted to INTERREG Baltic Sea Region Programme. In case of the project being approved for funding PA Hazards will be following the project as an associated partner, especially under work package 4 on hazardous substances.

**8. In general, increased opportunities for participation are created using communication technologies in the different types of meetings organised within PA Hazards to increase attendance. Experiences from the web-based steering group meetings should be put to use in this context.**

**Response:** The PAC will consider the use of virtual communication tools in the arrangement of any future meetings. This is well in line with the overall strategy on travel free meetings and conferences of the Swedish EPA. The PAC will follow closely this policy in the future, were applicable.

**9. PA Hazards should identify and communicate ideas linked to innovation, funding and investments as a complement to the projects, as project funding is not sustainable.**

**Response:** In relation to the review of the EUSBSR action plan, the PAC will come up with suggestions and concrete ideas how processes and activities to implement goals and actions in PA Hazards might be better linked and respond to the conditions of horizontal issues like innovation. We expect this to be integrated part of the input from the PA to contribute to the update of the EUSBSR action plan. Especially the issue of funding in order to convey recommendation informing policy development will be discussed in a future steering group meeting based on a non-paper produced by the PAC in preparation of the meeting. This would be expected for the 2<sup>nd</sup> steering group

meeting in autumn 2019 when there is a clearer picture on the EU-long term budget post 2021 and the revision process of the EUSBSR action plan. This also goes along with a possible review of the PA's working strategy shifting from individual projects to more long-term oriented processes as mentioned above.

**10. The successful concept used in the development of the pharmaceutical platform should also be used in other areas, where similar working conditions pertain or can be created.**

**Response:** It is intended to replicate the approach of the development and further implementation of the pharma platform also with other topics that have been identified as being of macro-regional relevance in the field of hazardous substances. These topics are defined in the strategic working plan for 2018 – 2020. The PAC in cooperation with the steering group will discuss and decide on which next topic to drive in a similar way. However, this is also a resource issue. According to the recently submitted application for technical assistance for PA Hazards (PA Hazards-Nutri 2.0) there will be continued focus on the development of the pharmaceuticals, especially in the second half of 2018. Another topic that has been identified for similar cooperation processes and that might become relevant in 2019 is PFAS.

**11. Update and concretise the document that describes what the flagship projects are, the expectations placed on future flagship projects and what they can expect from PA Hazards.**

**Response:** The PAC will present an updated description of the flagship status to the next steering group meeting on 8th May 2018 for discussion.

**12. At the beginning of the next three-year period, the PA Hazards steering group should hold a reflection seminar for the presentation of results thus far and discussions concerning future priorities with additional interested parties invited from the countries concerned, and broad participation from Swedish civil authorities, researchers and flagship projects.**

**Response:** The PAC is foreseeing to implement such an activity in relation to the process of updating the EUSBSR Action plan. We deem that this would be a more suitable occasion to reflect on what results has been achieved in PA Hazards over last 9 years, what to focus on in the future, what would be a most suitable working process and set-up for PA Hazards, how to revise indicators, actions and sub-objectives accordingly and how to create a better intervention logic among all denominators with a view to the Agenda 2030, potential future funding available etc. The process will ideally start in autumn 2018 with a potential event in spring 2019.

**13. The three-year plan for PA Hazards should be given the distinct character of a strategic plan, with details concerning implementation set out in annual work plans.**

**Response:** The PAC will present a more streamlined strategic plan for the year 2018 – 2020 at the next steering group meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018 based on the activities applied for in the TA application to the INTERREG Baltic Sea Region Programme as well as based on discussions from the latest steering group meeting in November 2017. Based on the overall strategy plan the PAC will draw-up an annual working plan for internal use. Both the strategic three year plan and the one year working plan shall be available shortly after the spring meeting of the steering group.

**14. PA Hazards should explore opportunities to expand resources for policy coordination at SEPA from 1.5 to 2.0 full-time positions, among other things to increase initiatives within strategic development, dissemination of results and the implementation of a reflection seminar and road shows.**

**Response:** The role of the PAC is mainly depending on availability of Technical assistance (TA) from the INTERREG Baltic Sea Region Programme, TA funding is covering costs for about 0.7 employee and Swedish EPA is co-funding the position to one full-time position.

**The following recommendations are not in the responsibility of the Swedish EPA. Swedish EPA will ensure that those recommendations are conveyed to relevant bodies and actors.**

15. By providing concrete, well-supported information ensure that the steering group members enjoy the best possible conditions for fulfilling their commitments.
16. Baltic Sea cooperation should be given higher priority within the Government Offices of Sweden and at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.
17. KemI and HaV [Chemicals and the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management] should be given a clear assignment in the letter of authorisation (and funding) as regards involvement by national authorities in PA Hazards. This is a necessary condition if their efforts are to enjoy the influence their content justifies.
18. It's important that the government's planned national network for the partial Baltic Sea strategy objective 'Save the Marine Environment' be given a stable form and structure and that conditions are provided for stronger links to the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the EU Water Framework Directive.