PA Safe and PA Ship: Charting a new course

Denmark is stepping down as policy area coordinators (PACs) for the two key maritime Policy Areas (PAs) under the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) – Clean Shipping (PA Ship) and Maritime Safety & Security (PA Safe). From January 1st 2022, the role as PAC for PA Ship will be safely in the hands of Finland, who will also continue to serve as PAC for PA Safe. Sweden will join Finland as the new co-PACs for PA Safe.

As a final contribution to the EUSBSR as PAC, Denmark, together with the other current and future PAC-nations, presents a new strategy for enhancing the value of the maritime PAs for its members and the civil society in the region. The paper highlights the possibilities of network effects with other maritime strategy organisations, common areas of interest for maritime collaboration, and funding opportunities for future projects.

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1. Introduction

In the Baltic Sea Region, maritime transport is the backbone of trade and tourism, and a hotbed for maritime technological development. As such, the region is a testbed for new and innovative products, services, methods, and practices addressing global challenges, such as environmental degradation and climate change, creating prosperous opportunities for blue growth in the Baltic Sea Region.

While shipping is an energy efficient mode of transport when measured as emissions per tonnes of cargo carried, more work is still needed to decrease emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) in order to reach the climate goals set out by the European Union. The consequences of human activity related to shipping in combination with the Baltic Sea's geographical vulnerability due to its shallow, semi-closed waters and sensitive ecosystems, present a challenge for the region. With 1,500+ ships operating in the area at any given time, uncertain weather conditions, and an increase in cyber threats, cooperation to ensure that maritime transport and operations remain safe, secure, and efficient is essential.

The aim of the two key maritime PAs under the EUSBSR – PA Ship and PA Safe – is to advance collaboration to tackle the maritime challenges facing the Baltic Sea Region. PA Ship helps to facilitate the transition to sustainable shipping, while PA Safe provides a sound platform for reinforcing maritime safety and security in the region. Both PAs contribute to the main objectives of the EUSBSR Action Plan, and many of its sub-objectives, such as 'Clean and safe shipping' and 'Clear water in the Sea'. Since the adoption of the EUSBSR in 2009, Denmark has served as a PAC for PA Ship, as well as for PA Safe, together with Finland. Over the past decade, the PACs have facilitated several successful joint-transnational projects known as Flagships, in

addition to cross-sectoral collaboration and knowledge-sharing between a wide range of stakeholders. Together, the two PAs have also produced a communication film, describing the benefits for private stakeholders to take part in EU funded projects. The work with PA Safe and PA Ship has mainly been funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.

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2. How we work

The maritime PAs serve as fora for various public and private bodies across society – including but not limited to maritime authorities, government agencies, academia, industries, regional organisations and the European Commission – to come together and bring forward ideas and solutions to the challenges within the Baltic Sea Region. The PACs facilitate collaboration through Flagship projects, assisted by the International Steering Committees, consisting of representatives of the national and regional governments of the EUSBSR Member States. The role of the Steering Committees is to – amongst other things – provide strategic guidance to the PAs, in close dialogue with the Commission endorse proposals to update the targets of the Action Plan, and ensure linkages to relevant national and regional policy-making.

Besides coordinating Flagships, the PACs together with the Steering Committees have disseminated knowledge through conferences, workshops, regular Steering Committee meetings, and newsletters. These activities have also contributed to developing a large network with stakeholders from academia, international organisations, the private sector, and governmental entities. Through a combination of Flagship projects, public-private partnerships, and dissemination of information, the maritime policy areas facilitate policy recommendations for sub-regional, European and UN maritime policy makers.

PA Safe

PA Safe acts as a platform to reinforce maritime safety and security, and to manage the risk of maritime accidents and pollution in the Baltic Sea Region. PA Safe is steered by the following four actions outlined in the EUSBSR Action Plan: 1) providing reliable navigational conditions to the Baltic Sea; 2) developing winter navigation to meet future challenges; 3) to be a frontrunner in digitalisation and automation; and 4) ensure accurate preparedness and response for maritime accidents and security issues.

An ongoing PA Safe Flagship project is STM Baltsafe (Sea Traffic Management – Baltsafe), which increases safety of navigation by providing STM enabled maritime services to the tanker traffic in the Baltic Sea. The project improves the ability to exchange voyage plans with other ships and with public authorities in Baltic Sea countries, and as such not only enhances situational awareness, but also increases efficiency and just-in-time arrivals, benefitting both business and the environment. The project builds on the methods, results, and the maritime service infrastructure

developed in previous Flagship projects such as EFFICIENSEA 2 (Efficient, Safe and Sustainable Traffic at Sea II) and STM Validation (Sea Traffic Management – Validation).

Another successful PA Safe Flagship is FAMOS (Finalising Surveys for the Baltic Motorways of the Sea), which focuses on surveying shipping routes and ports in the Baltic Sea, contributing to more accurate sea charts and thus safer navigation through the narrow straits of the Baltic Sea. FAMOS is a truly international project, comprising fifteen organisations from seven countries around the Baltic Sea in its project partner catalogue.

Furthermore, PA Safe focuses on reducing accidents in maritime activities, minimizing risks related to transportation of dangerous goods at sea, facilitating exchange of knowledge and innovation in the field of maritime safety, and enhancing project-based policy dialogue on maritime safety and security issues among stakeholders. As such, national maritime safety agencies have and are continuously working together to improve search & rescue operations, winter navigation, as well as cross-national collaboration in cases of emergency.

More Flagship projects under the PA Safe can be found below.

- List of on-going Flagships
- List of completed Flagships

PA Ship

The objective of PA Ship is for the Baltic Sea Region to become a model region for clean shipping. PA Ship is steered by the following three actions as defined in the EUSBSR Action Plan: 1) support measures reducing emissions from shipping including digitalisation; 2) support research on emerging thematic challenges related to clean shipping and its impact on the environment and wildlife in the Baltic Sea; and 3) support development of shore-side facilities to enhance clean shipping measures including infrastructure for alternative fuels.

PA Ship also connects actors to facilitate the transition to sustainable shipping and to make it a positive business opportunity, inter alia by bringing together results from clean-shipping projects around the Baltic Sea Region. The Clean Shipping Project Platform (CSHIPP) has facilitated such cooperation by bridging the gap between research, business, and policy making, bringing together actors from various projects focused on clean shipping. In addition, PA Ship by facilitating conferences and other stakeholder events, has contributed to creating dialogue and knowledge exchange on clean shipping measures, such as the infrastructure and value chain for alternative fuels.

An example of a Flagship project under PA Ship is ECOPRODIGI (Eco-efficiency to maritime industry processes in the BSR through digitalization), which found that by utilising existing data, ships can reduce their carbon emissions. More specifically, the Flagship showed that smaller ferries can reduce their bunker consumption by 10-20 %, whilst larger ships can reduce their bunker consumption by 2-4 %.

PA Ship has also devoted attention to the topic of ballast water – an essential safety feature on vessels. As one of its side effects has been the introduction of new species into our marine environments, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopted the Ballast Water Management Convention in response. Whilst a big step in the right direction, it is critical to ensure that the regulation works. One important piece of work on this topic is the PA Ship Flagship project COMPLETE (Completing management options in the BSR to reduce risk of invasive species introduction by shipping), which worked on developing a regionally harmonised structure for ballast water management of ships in the Baltic Sea Region.

More Flagship projects under PA Ship can be found below.

- List of on-going Flagships
- List of completed Flagships

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3. Future focus areas

PA Ship and PA Safe are mature PAs with established networks and stakeholders. The results achieved by the two PAs have been recognised and disseminated broadly, both by regional organisations such as the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), as well as through wider-reaching contexts, such as IMO council meetings. Going forward, the maritime PAs will explore the potential for cross-regional cooperation and collaboration with other regional maritime organisations to unlock synergies, avoid duplication of efforts, and find common solutions to maritime issues at hand. The two PAs will achieve this by:

Growing into a centre for knowledge creation and dissemination

PA Ship and PA Safe have several ambitions for the future. The first aspiration is for the two PAs to develop into centres for knowledge creation and dissemination for the Baltic Sea Region. Knowledge will be created by continuing to use the Baltic Sea as a testbed for new technologies and regulation. PA Ship and PA Safe will disseminate knowledge by hosting physical and online thematic events, making information more accessible to the broader public, as well as facilitating information sharing between stakeholders. A key stakeholder group is the private sector, with whom closer collaboration should be enhanced.

Becoming a frontrunner in digitalisation

Another shared future ambition between PA Ship and PA Safe is to become frontrunners in digitalisation and automation. Maritime transport can benefit from digital solutions in many ways. For example, through digitalisation, navigation could be made safer, as collisions could be better prevented and severe weather conditions foreseen, thereby reducing risks for the crew. Digitalisation also makes navigation

more reliable, as it allows problems to be detected and addressed early on, ensuring accurate preparedness and response to maritime accidents. Lastly, digitalisation can improve efficiency, for example by reducing fuel consumption, thus reducing the harmful climate effects of shipping until cleaner means of propulsion become prevalent.

Green shipping

PA Ship and PA Safe will ensure to retain a special focus on climate, prioritizing inter alia environmental protection and lowering carbon intensity. Aligning with international commitments such as the European Green Deal and the objective of making the European Union climate neutral by 2050, the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, the Zero pollution action plan, the EU Fit for 55 package, and the Sustainable Europe investment plan is also of importance and is considered a priority moving forward. Similarly, the two PAs are to continue contributing to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly to SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth, SDG 9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG 13 – Climate action, and SDG 14 – Life below water. Addressing climate change and cooperating with non-EU neighbouring countries and organisations will also be a focus area moving forward. Moreover, the PAs will consider allocating future resources to supporting research on emerging thematic challenges related to clean shipping and its impact on the environment and wildlife in the Baltic Sea. Lastly, increased collaboration should be considered concerning the switch to alternative, less polluting fuels, and the electrifying potential of shore-side power generation in ports, in line with the renewed EU regulation for alternative fuels infrastructure.

Maritime safety and security of alternative fuels

At the moment, the shipping industry heavily relies on fossil fuels. While making the switch to alternative fuels is beneficial from an environmental and climate standpoint, it also poses new safety risks that must be addressed. PA Ship and PA Safe will continue to collaborate on guiding the dialogue on the impacts of alternative fuels on maritime safety and the environment in the Baltic Sea Region.

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4. How do we get there?

Strengthening cooperation

Continuing to strengthen the cooperation between PA Ship and PA Safe will be of importance, as the PAs have several synergies and are the only two maritime areas within the EUSBSR. Collaboration particularly across the areas of digitalisation, autonomous shipping, and green transitioning shall be pursued further.

Liaising further with other PAs under the EUSBSR will also be beneficial. PA Safe and PA Secure have in the past collaborated with inter alia PA Innovation and PA Transport. For example, in 2020, the four PAs joined forces to develop and submit a

workshop proposal for the EUSBSR Annual Forum. In addition, PA Safe and PA Secure have established a joint project platform. Other policy departments within the European Commission with whom collaboration is particularly relevant include DG MARE, DG MOVE, DG ENV and DG REGIO.

Additionally, the PAs shall continue to exchange knowledge and best practices with authorities and stakeholders from other macro-regions with a maritime focus, especially the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), with whom dialogue already has been initiated. It is worth looking further into the EUSAIR's different thematic pillars, in particular pillar 1 ('Blue Growth'), which focuses on blue technologies, fisheries and aquaculture, and maritime governance and services, as well as pillar 2 ('Connecting the Region'), which focuses inter alia on maritime transport and energy networks. Furthermore, exchanging knowledge on pillar 3 ('Environmental Quality') and the ways in which the EUSAIR aligns with international climate commitments will be of relevance.

Other important organisations to work together with include HELCOM, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Nordic Council of Ministers, as well as various regional actors. PA Ship and PA Safe also align and contribute to IMO's High-level Action Plan, as well as the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) including Blue growth and other maritime policies of the European Union.

Financing

The work of the PAs has been made possible through several European Union funding programmes, particularly the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. In the spring of 2022, the new €8 billion Baltic Sea Region Programme for 2021-2027 is expected to be approved by the European Commission. The funding programme is structured along the following four priorities: 1) Innovative societies; 2) Water-smart societies (with the objectives 2.1 Sustainable waters, and 2.2 Blue economy); 3) Climate-neutral societies; and 4) Cooperation governance. Previously, funding priorities have been centred around innovation, sustainable transport, and efficient management of natural resources (with a focus on inter alia blue growth, renewable energy sources, and clear waters). The PACs work in close cooperation with the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, both by informing stakeholders of the financing opportunities provided by the programme, as well as by ensuring that the priorities of PA Safe and PA Ship are aligned with the ones of the funding programme.

Additional financing for Flagships under the two PAs has been provided by for example the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), which is a key EU funding instrument offering financial support in the form of both grants and innovative instruments such as guarantees or bonds, for infrastructure related projects within the sectors of transportation, energy, and digital services. The programme budget of the CEF is €30.4 billion. Other potential financing sources include Horizon 2020 – EU's biggest Research and Innovation programme with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020) – and COSME, the programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, which funds many initiatives that help small businesses access new markets.

5. Conclusion

The maritime PAs have delivered solid outputs and value during the last decade, demonstrated by several successfully completed Flagship projects, a broad network of stakeholders, and various initiatives facilitating cross-sectoral collaboration and knowledge-sharing. However, the framework for future impact has the potential to be expanded. Thus, this paper outlines four future focus areas to guide the continued work of the two PAs: knowledge creation and dissemination, digitalisation, green shipping, and maritime safety and security of alternative fuels. In addition, future collaboration and funding opportunities are presented. With this new strategy, the PACs firmly believe that the maritime PAs will be able to strengthen their impact, outreach, and level of engagement on key maritime issues going forward.