

# TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION NETWORK OF VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS AND AUTHORITIES (BSR-NOVA)



**1.** The Baltic Sea Region Network of Volunteer organisations and Authorities (hereinafter - Network)\* is a platform established to improve coordination and cooperation among volunteer organisations and authorities at the national and international level in the field of civil protection. The Network is established based on the groundwork laid by the subgroup of volunteers and local actors (2020-2024). This subgroup was initiated by Finland under the EUSBSR Policy Area Secure and CBSS Civil Protection Network.

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## 2. The objectives

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The objectives of the Network are:

- To serve as a platform to enhance practical international cooperation and joint preparedness among authorities, volunteer organisations and citizens in the field of civil protection;
- To act as a source of ideas, tools, reliable data and information, analysis, and policy guidance on issues related to civil protection;
- To increase the appeal of volunteering including among youth and promote the culture of volunteerism in the Baltic Sea Region;
- To promote the role/mission of volunteers and share information on relevant international and regional standards relating to voluntary work in civil protection;
- To engage with various stakeholders, including state authorities, civil society, local authorities and communities, the private sector, academia, and other relevant stakeholders, utilizing and creating synergies with other existing mechanisms at all levels.

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## 3. Working Principles

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In its work, the Network is guided by the following principles:

- Human rights-based, gender-responsive and child-sensitive approach: The Network upholds and advocates the laws and principles to respect, protect, and fulfil the human rights of all people.
- Unity of purpose: All members of the Network are jointly committed to its success, placing emphasis on the added value of their coordinated work and of collaborating to achieve common goals.
- Inclusivity: The Network, in its own working methods and in engaging others, operates in an inclusive, systematic, predictable and transparent manner.
- Results-oriented: The Network focuses on supporting the CBSS Member States towards strengthening their resilience and active involvement of volunteers in civil protection.

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## 4. Membership and structure of the Network

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### 4.1. Composition of the Network

The Network comprises volunteer organisations in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region that align with the criteria specified in Annex 1 and authorities.

Each member shall designate a point of contact for the purposes of communication of Network's activities.

There should be at least one contact person in each participating country, with whom the Network can communicate.

Relevant organisations can apply for membership of the Network by writing to the Chair and the Coordinator. The Chair introduces the application to the members of the Network. The Chair and the Coordinator must agree on whether to accept the application for membership.

If members choose to withdraw their membership, they should inform the Chair and the Coordinator of the Network so that membership details may be amended, and other documents can be modified.

## 4.2. Hands-on co-operation between members of the Network

The Network builds on the concrete results achieved and lessons learned during the previous work carried out by the subgroup on volunteers established under the umbrella of the EUSBSR Policy Area Secure and CBSS Civil Protection Network.

The Network can establish temporary committees on specific topics, projects or initiatives and invite other countries or organisations to participate in meetings and join the efforts on an ad-hoc basis or at a specific stage.

## 4.3. Meeting arrangement

There should be 2 to 3 online meetings per year to approve the priorities and to discuss relevant topics, activities and progress in achieving concrete results.

Additional meeting can be organised, if necessary.

Members are responsible for covering their own expenses associated with attending Network meetings, including but not limited to travel, accommodation, and meals.

## 4.4. Decisions

Decisions are to be taken by consensus.

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## 5. Network Coordinator

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The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) coordinates the activities of the Network.

The Network Coordinators bear primary responsibility for acting as a Secretariat for the Network. Providing secretarial support for the Network's operations entails:

- a. Ensuring Network Functionality:** Ensuring seamless operation of the Network, including capacity-building initiatives.
- b. Agenda Formulation and Approval:** Proposing agendas for Network meetings in co-operation with the Chair and Members of the Network, ensuring a comprehensive and productive discussion.
- c. Communication and Dissemination:** Coordinating internal communication and regularly disseminating information to promote cooperation and continuous sharing of information among Network's members, disseminating the Network's work at international, regional, and national events and networks. Briefing relevant stakeholders on Network's activities; providing, in liaison with the Chair and upon request, information about Network and possibility to become a member to any interested organisation;
- d. Proactive Fundraising and Collaboration:** Actively identifying funding opportunities for

Network's activities, collaborating with the Chair and Network's members to leverage support.

- e. Election of the Chair:** Facilitating the process of the election of the upcoming chair(s).

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## 6. Network's Chair

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The Network's Chair is elected by the Network's members for a 2-year period with a possibility of re-election. Any member can become Chair of the Network after one year of active and regular participation in the Network. Network's members interested in chairing should express their interest to the Coordinator.

Two Network's members could express interest in co-chairing the Network. The expression of interest would need to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities of the Co-Chairs.

The Finnish National Rescue Association (SPEK) is a chair of the Network till February 2026.

The Chair will perform the following tasks, in close consultation with the Coordinator:

- a. Strategic Prioritization:** Collaborating with the Coordinator and Network's members to identify priorities and opportunities for Network's activities, focusing on the added value of coordinated work.
- b. Facilitating Collaborative Engagement:** Fostering effective collaboration among Network's members across all aspects of its functioning and work.
- c. Monitoring:** Coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Network's activities.
- d. Consensus building:** Facilitating discussions and seeking to build consensus amongst Network's members.
- e. Representation:** Representing the Network in official functions, conferences and meetings, and in external communication with other networks and stakeholders.
- f. Implementation of the activities:** Leading arrangements for Network's meetings; as well as the implementation of the Network's activities.

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## 7. Role of the Network' members

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The members of the Network:

- a. Participate in the Network's meetings.
- b. Have voting rights and can apply to chair or co-chair the Network after one year of active and regular participation in the Network.
- c. Contribute to shaping and implementing the Network's objectives, addressing common

challenges and needs. Share experiences and best practices and information about, for example, structure, conditions and other matters within the country that affect civil preparedness.

- d. Provide inputs to coordination. Offer insights to the Coordinator and the Chair for the effective preparation of Network's meetings and other activities.
- e. Propose agenda items to the Network's meetings.

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## **8. Revision**

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Terms of references are adopted and shall be revised, as appropriate, by decision of the Network.

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