

BalticSea-GSC: facilitating zero-emission shipping

by Lena Lorenc, *External Consultant, BPO*

Green shipping corridors (GSCs) have emerged as a promising mechanism to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels in shipping. However, there are significant practical barriers standing in the way of establishing these zero-emission maritime routes, including high costs, limited availability of alternative fuels and infrastructure for bunkering them, a lack of operational experience with new technologies, and insufficient policy instruments tailored to corridor-level implementation. Addressing these challenges requires transnational collaboration that brings together ports, shipowners-operators, fuel suppliers, forwarders, shippers, financiers, and policymakers across multiple countries and sectors.

To advance this work, the Baltic Ports Organization (BPO) has partnered with IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute and the Port of Klaipėda to launch Baltic Sea Green Shipping Corridors (BalticSea-GSC) – a seed funding project under the Swedish Institute Baltic Sea Neighbourhood Programme, running from October 2025 through September 2026. The project, explicitly positioned as a stepping stone toward a larger transnational initiative, maps stakeholder needs alongside financial and regulatory instruments supporting GSCs at the EU and national levels in Estonia, Lithuania, and Sweden. It evaluates which shipping segments, fuel types, and routes to target, as well as expands the partnership through targeted stakeholder engagement.

One large green shipping corridor

The project strongly aligns with key policy frameworks, including the EUSBSR PA Ship objective of making the Baltic Sea a model region for sustainable shipping, the EU Mission on Oceans and Waters (carbon-neutral blue economy), the EU Green Deal suite (FuelEU Maritime, EU ETS, Fit for 55, the Alternative

Fuels Infrastructure Directive), and the Clydebank Declaration commitment to establish GSCs globally. BalticSea-GSC has been registered as an umbrella project under the EUSBSR Policy Area Transport, providing enhanced visibility and access to regional decision-maker networks.

According to Sami Vesterinen, Advisor for EUSBSR PA Ship and the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency, projects such as this play an important role in advancing green corridor development: “The participation of PA Ship in an advisory function ensures that project results are communicated to policymakers. Our ultimate goal is for the Baltic Sea to become one large green shipping corridor.”

A broad dialogue

At the beginning of December last year, IVL hosted a successful two-day kick-off meeting in Stockholm, bringing together project partners, reference group members from Swedish and Finnish transport authorities, the Estonian Climate Ministry, and industry leaders, including Wasaline – operator of the *Aurora Botnia*, one of Europe’s most advanced hybrid ferries

that plies on the world’s first GSC, the ferry crossing between Vaasa and Umeå.

“The purpose of the meeting was to begin the project with a broad dialogue, bringing together perspectives from both public and private actors to guide implementation and establish a strong foundation for the work ahead,” shared Ignė Stalmokaitė, BalticSea-GSC’s Project Leader, from IVL. The meeting formed a shared vision, validated the work plan, and started a dialogue on potential corridor routes for further assessment.

At this year’s Transport Week in Gdynia in late March, BPO’s Secretary General Bogdan Ołdakowski presented the BalticSea-GSC seed project, emphasizing: “The transition to zero-emission shipping is accelerating, and Baltic ports need to be ready. This project ensures we’re proactively shaping the infrastructure and partnerships that will define green maritime transport in our region.”

Running through September 2026, the project will develop a comprehensive concept for a larger EU-funded initiative. The BPO is seeking ports, shipping companies, cargo owners, fuel suppliers, and research institutions committed to advancing corridor development. ■