

Minutes of the 25th Joint Baltic Earth Science Steering Group (BESSG) and Baltic Earth Senior Advisory Board (BESAB) Meeting

Date: 12 April 2026

Time: 15:00–19:00 CEST

Location: Villa Esplanade, Heringsdorf, Germany

Mode: Hybrid

Participants:

In person:

BESSG: Juris Aigars, Leonie Barghorn, Inga Dailidienė, Georgia Destouni, Matthias Gröger, Kari Hyytiäinen, Karol Kuliński, Taavi Liblik, Urmas Lips, Markus Meier, Kevin Parnell, Piia Post, Heta Rousi, Marc J. Silberberger, Tarmo Soomere, and Ralf Weisse; BESAB: Jüri Elken, Jan Harff, Sirje Keevallik, Sławomir Sagan; IBES: Sonja Ehlers, Agnieszka Jędruch, Katarzyna Kozirowska

Online:

BESSG: Tamara Zalewska, BESAB: Andris Andrusaitis, Petra Kääriä

Minutes prepared by: Agnieszka Jędruch (International Baltic Earth Secretariat, IBES)

ACTION ITEMS

- 1) Submit suggestions for external guest editors for the BEARs special issue in Earth System Dynamics (deadline: April 2026, all members).
- 2) Submit Baltic Earth-related publications and associated metadata to the IBES for inclusion on the Baltic Earth website (ongoing, all members).
- 3) Provide final comments on the Baltic Earth Science Plan editorial version (all members).
- 4) Explore opportunities for collaborative funding initiatives and report progress at the next BESSG/BESAB meeting (interested members).
- 5) Continue discussions regarding future Baltic Earth Winter School hosting opportunities (ongoing).

INTRODUCTION

The 25th Joint Baltic Earth Science Steering Group (BESSG) and Baltic Earth Senior Advisory Board (BESAB) Meeting was convened as a half-day hybrid session at the Villa Esplanade in Heringsdorf, Germany. The meeting took place on the eve of the 6th Baltic Earth Conference, scheduled from 13 to 17 April 2026. Members of both the BESSG and BESAB were invited to attend.

The meeting was opened by Markus Meier, Chair of the BESSG, who welcomed all participants and introduced the agenda. The introductory session included a brief round of self-introductions to facilitate engagement and exchange.

DISCUSSION AND OUTCOMES

1. Organizational Matters

- The agenda for the meeting was reviewed and approved without amendments.
- The minutes of the previous 24th BESSG and BESAB Meeting were accepted.
- Progress on action items from the previous meeting was reviewed, including development of the Baltic Earth Science Plan, preparations for the Baltic Earth Assessment Reports (BEARs), and activities related to Baltic Earth communication and outreach.
- Membership composition was discussed. Participants highlighted the need to further improve gender balance and strengthen representation from atmospheric sciences within the Baltic Earth community. Members were encouraged to suggest potential candidates.

2. Recent Baltic Earth Activities

- Recent Baltic Earth activities were reviewed. The 8th Baltic Earth Winter School in Tallinn was reported as highly successful, attracting 41 participants and 16 lecturers from several countries. Participant feedback was very positive.
- The special issue associated with the previous 5th Baltic Earth Conference, held in Jurmala in 2024, was successfully completed in *Frontiers in Earth Science*. Participants acknowledged the contributions of authors, reviewers and editors.
- The 6th Baltic Earth Conference received endorsement as a United Nations Ocean Decade activity, increasing visibility of both the conference and Baltic Earth.
- Since the previous meeting, four Baltic Earth Colloquia have been organised, attracting participation from both within and outside the Baltic Earth community.
- The IBES reported increased outreach activities, including social media communication, promotional materials, newsletters and conference support.

3. Future Baltic Earth Activities

- The 12th Baltic Earth Summer School will be organised in Askö, Sweden. Due to local construction work, participant numbers will be reduced.
- The possibility of organising a future Baltic Earth Winter School in Finland was discussed. Heta Rousi also agreed to investigate local opportunities to organize the next Baltic Earth Conference and report back to the group. *Update: The University of Turku has now approved the request, meaning that the next Baltic Earth conference will take place in Turku in 2028.*

- Participants discussed the possibility of hosting the GEWEX Pan-Regional Hydroclimate Conference in Stockholm in 2027. Baltic Earth expressed willingness to contribute scientific support and coordination.
- Oceanologia was identified as the preferred journal for the special issue associated with the 6th Baltic Earth Conference.

4. Baltic Earth Working Groups

- Updates were presented by several Baltic Earth Working Groups (BEWGs).
- The BEWG on Teleconnection between the North Atlantic and Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea region reported progress on an ongoing review paper. The review paper is published in Earth System Dynamics.
- The BEWG on Small-Scale Processes presented recent activities related to review publications and future roadmap development. The review paper is published in Progress in Oceanography.
- The BEWG on Natural Hazards and Extreme Events in the Baltic Sea Region is being revitalised under new leadership and plans to organise an online meeting following the conference.
- The BEWG on Sea Level Dynamics in the Baltic Sea continues collaborative activities and preparations for future Baltic Earth Assessment Reports (BEARs).
- The BEWG on Land-Sea Biogeochemical Linkages in the Baltic Sea Region highlighted increasing interdisciplinarity and stronger integration of biological and contaminant-related research.
- The BEWG on Multiple Drivers for Regional Earth System Changes reported progress on activities related to low-probability, high-impact “wildcard events” and preparation of a related scientific publication.
- The BEWG on Marginal Seas – Humans and Environment continues to expand internationally and reported progress on comparative analyses of marginal seas worldwide.
- Activities related to future climate projections and Earth system education were also presented. Progress was reported on international climate projection initiatives (related to CORDEX and CLIVAR and four ongoing EU projects on regional ocean climate projections) as well as preparation of a new educational book expected to be published in 2027.
- Participants acknowledged the substantial progress achieved across the BEWGs and emphasised their central role in implementing the Baltic Earth Science Plan and future BEAR activities.

5. Baltic Earth Science Plan

- Markus Meier presented the final version of the Baltic Earth Science Plan and summarised the revisions made since the previous meeting.
- Participants discussed the relationship between the Science Plan, the activities of the Baltic Earth Working Groups, and the future Baltic Earth Assessment Reports (BEARs). The importance of maintaining coherence between these activities was emphasised.
- It was noted that the Science Plan should serve as a strategic framework for future Baltic Earth activities while remaining sufficiently flexible to accommodate emerging research priorities.
- Following discussion and minor editorial comments, the Baltic Earth Science Plan was formally approved.

6. EN Clime and HELCOM Cooperation

- Updates were provided on ongoing HELCOM activities, including preparations for the fourth Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS 4). It was noted that data collection is expected to begin in 2027, with assessment activities continuing until 2029.
- Participants discussed the future update of the HELCOM Climate Change Fact Sheet. The importance of maintaining strong scientific support from the Baltic Earth community and ensuring consistency between Climate Change Fact Sheets, HELCOM assessments and Baltic Earth Assessment Reports (BEARs) was emphasised.
- The role of EN Clime in facilitating cooperation between HELCOM and Baltic Earth was reviewed. Participants highlighted the value of continued collaboration in translating scientific knowledge into policy-relevant information products and supporting climate-related assessments for the Baltic Sea region.
- Members agreed that close coordination between Baltic Earth, HELCOM and EN Clime will remain essential for future assessment activities and communication of climate change impacts in the Baltic Sea region.
- It was noted that the next update of the Climate Change Fact Sheet is expected to require less effort than the original compilation and could benefit from shared leadership within the Baltic Earth community.

7. Baltic Earth Assessment Reports (BEARs)

- Markus Meier presented the current status of the Baltic Earth Assessment Reports (BEARs) initiative. Participants were informed that 19 article concepts have already been confirmed, while an additional contribution is awaiting final confirmation.
- Several Working Groups have submitted preliminary author lists and article descriptions. Participants expressed appreciation for the strong engagement across the Baltic Earth

community and acknowledged the substantial progress achieved since the previous meeting.

- The proposed structure and overall concept of the BEARs were discussed and endorsed. Participants agreed that the planned collection of assessment papers has the potential to become an important synthesis of current knowledge on the Baltic Sea Earth system.
- Strong support was expressed for submitting a proposal for a special issue in *Earth System Dynamics*. Initial feedback from the journal has been positive, although formal approval by the editorial board is still required. *Update: Our proposal for a special issue in the journal Earth System Dynamics has been accepted.*
- The composition of the guest editorial team was discussed. Participants emphasised the importance of ensuring disciplinary breadth, international representation, gender balance, and the involvement of both senior and early-career scientists. Members were invited to suggest suitable external candidates for the editorial board following the meeting.
- It was agreed to continue preparations for the special issue and to proceed with the formal application process.

8. Future Publication Database

- Participants revisited the idea of maintaining a Baltic Earth publication database.
- It was agreed not to develop a searchable database but instead establish a publication repository on the Baltic Earth website highlighting recent Baltic Earth-related publications.
- Authors will be encouraged to submit publication metadata together with short summaries that can be used for website updates and social media communication.

9. Joint Funding Opportunities

- Participants exchanged information on current and future funding opportunities, including Horizon Europe, JPI Oceans, COST Actions, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Networks and activities linked to the European Marine Board.
- The group discussed how Baltic Earth could better support networking, matchmaking and information exchange for collaborative proposal development.
- It was agreed that funding opportunities should remain a recurring discussion topic at future meetings.

10. Preparations for the 6th Baltic Earth Conference

- The Secretariat presented organisational information regarding the conference programme, as well as procedures for evaluating Early Career Scientist presentations and posters.

- Session chairs were reminded to adhere strictly to presentation timing in order to maintain the conference schedule.

11. Other Issues

- No additional issues were raised.

The meeting was officially closed by Markus Meier.



Participants in the 25th Joint Baltic Earth Science Steering Group (BESSG) and Baltic Earth Senior Advisory Board (BESAB) Meeting, Heringsdorf, Germany.

Front row (from left): Katarzyna Koziorowska, Markus Meier, Leonie Barghorn, Heta Rousi, Marc J. Silberberger; middle row (from left): Ralf Weisse, Sirje Keevallik, Georgia Destouni, Piia Post, Agnieszka Jędruch, Kari Hyytiäinen; back row (from left): Matthias Gröger, Kevin Parnell, Tarmo Soomere, Urmas Lips, Jüri Elken, Juris Aigars, Taavi Liblik, Sławomir Sagan, Jan Harff, Karol Kuliński. (Photo: Sonja Ehlers)