



Mandate for the joint, co-chaired Working Group on Maritime Spatial Planning between HELCOM and VASAB

1. The Rationale

The Baltic Sea is an important common resource for the Baltic Sea Region countries and further neighbouring countries. It represents an important economic potential and at the same time a vulnerable ecosystem. The current environmental status requires intensive efforts towards stabilisation and improvement. Many sea use conflicts call for a wise management and coordinated introduction of continuous Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP). Development potential for future uses needs to be preserved.

2. Political Context

The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (2007) commits the HELCOM Contracting Parties to jointly develop by 2010, as well as test, apply and evaluate by 2012, in cooperation with other relevant international bodies, broad-scale, cross-sectoral, MSP principles based on the Ecosystem Approach that reflect the specific conditions and needs in the Baltic Sea Region.

The VASAB Long Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (2009) has specified concrete activities towards developing the Baltic Sea Region into a European Model Region for MSP.

In its Green Paper on the future Maritime Policy (2006) and its Blue Book/Action Plan "An integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union" (2007), the European Commission has emphasised the need for MSP. In the Communication on a "Roadmap for Maritime Spatial Planning: Achieving common principles in the EU" (2008), the European Commission has outlined relevant issues, steps and principles. The European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive (EU MSFD, 2008) promotes spatial measures as one of the means to reach Good Environmental Status of European Seas. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (2009) has attributed HELCOM and VASAB a prominent role in promoting maritime spatial planning in the region together with other stakeholders.

The "Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation to the year 2020" supports cooperation similar to MSP in fields like integrated management of sea resources, conflict resolution, future-oriented use of sea space, research, information, legislation and education.

3. The Joint Working Group and its overall aims

In order to address these challenges the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region (CSPD/BSR) and Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) sets up a joint co-chaired Working Group on Maritime Spatial Planning to ensure cooperation among the Baltic Sea Region countries for coherent regional Maritime Spatial Planning processes. It will:

- Provide a forum for regional, trans-boundary and cross-sectoral dialogue on Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Maritime Spatial Planning -enabling a common approach
- Assist the CSPD/BSR and its member states in implementing the actions decided 2009 in VASAB Long Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region towards the next Ministerial Conference
- Assist HELCOM and its member states to implement the Maritime Spatial Planning relevant actions decided in HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan 2007 and its follow-up

- Provide Baltic Sea Region countries a platform to discuss the links between relevant International Agreements, EU legal instruments and policies, Baltic Sea Region and national policies,
- Assist the Baltic region in profiling itself as a global and European forerunner in maritime spatial planning

4. Anticipated Tasks

In order to achieve these goals the Group will:

- Promote the development of maritime spatial planning in the region and follow up its implementation as outlined in VASAB Long Term Perspective as well as HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and relevant HELCOM Recommendations, including supporting the setting-up of governing structures, legislative basis, transboundary consultations as well as developing concepts for common Maritime Spatial Planning Principles.
- Propose to organize workshops and events as well as information material on maritime spatial planning.
- Follow and examine as well as make use of the outcomes and findings of regional project activities relevant to MSP, such as BaltCoast, East-West Window, PlanCoast, BaltSeaPlan, PlanBothnia
- Promote the development of compatible datasets and information relevant to BSR maritime spatial planning and thus ensure keeping HELCOM GIS and other regional GIS data portals up to date with best available information.
- Prepare decision proposals on Maritime Spatial Planning in the BSR for the forthcoming VASAB Ministerial Conferences and HELCOM Ministerial meetings.

The Group will develop a Working Programme, for adoption by VASAB CSPD and HELCOM HOD.

5. Membership

Participation is open to representatives from relevant ministries or government agencies in all VASAB and HELCOM Member Countries/Contracting Parties as well as for experts delegated by them. The members should be nominated by the Member Countries/Contracting Parties. A representation of all VASAB and HELCOM countries with sea coast is envisaged.

VASAB and HELCOM observers can participate. Other guests, organisations and initiatives from around the Baltic Sea and from other parts of Europe with a substantial maritime spatial planning interest can be invited as observers.

6. Organisation

The Working Group will be jointly co-chaired by a VASAB CSD/BSR chair (nominated by group and adopted by VASAB CSD/BSR) and HELCOM chair (nominated by group and adopted by HELCOM HOD). The two chairs will, with the assistance of both HELCOM and VASAB secretariats, jointly prepare meetings and Agendas for the Working Group.

The Working Group will document its meetings. A concise outcome will be adopted before the end of each meeting. The outcome is agreed by consensus. All meeting documents and the outcome will be made freely available to the public shortly after the meeting through the HELCOM and VASAB websites.

Meetings will take place up to three times a year. The Group may change the frequency of meetings according to need, . In addition to meetings, exchange of e-mails will be used for intersessional work. The Group will send its outcomes and progress reports for approval both to the CSPD-BSR and HELCOM, including proposals for creation of sub-groups. The working language is English.

7. Timeframe

The mandate of the Group is valid for three years, starting from its first meeting. The Group may request a prolongation jointly from the CSPD/BSR and HELCOM.

8. Resources

Costs for the participants including travel costs to meetings will be covered by the delegating institutions. Direct costs for meetings will be borne by the host country if not arranged within HELCOM or VASAB Secretariat premises. Staff support from the VASAB and HELCOM Secretariats will be provided for technical support (e.g. preparation of meeting documents including minutes, registration of participants, etc.) and Secretariat attendance at meetings.