



VASAB Expert Workshop “Urban-Rural Partnerships in the Baltic Sea Region”

21 September 2010, Minsk, Belarus

As of 15.09.2010

The VASAB Long Term Perspective has revealed challenges for growing urban-rural divide in the Baltic Sea Region and therefore stipulated a number of actions, among them the preparation of a pan-Baltic conference to work out measures for counteracting the impact of demographic trends and labour market development on urban-rural polarisation and social cohesion. The workshop is an element in that process.

The goal of the workshop is an exchange of ideas about urban-rural partnerships. The outcome will be a paper serving as basis for policy-makers in the BSR. The speakers of the input statements should prepare a short written abstract with the main points of the statements (~ ½ page) and send it preferably in advance to Rupert Kawka. The other participants should give interventions during the workshop in relation to the theses and questions below. The contributions during the discussions will be recorded in writing and included in the policy paper. Written amendments to the thesis and questions by the participants in advance are welcome. After the workshop, the policy paper will be sent to all participants for final concertation.

The following theses and questions can be completed with further aspects. Please do not hesitate to send your ideas to rupert.kawka@bbr.bund.de.

Language: English

Agenda

Tuesday, 21 September **The Institute for Regional and Urban Planning**
Masherov Ave., 29, 3rd floor, Conference hall, Minsk.

9:00 – 9:40 **Opening – Arve Skjerpen, VASAB CSPD/BSR Chairman (5 min)**

Welcoming – Valentina Nazaruk, Ministry of Architecture and Construction of the Belarus (5 min)

New possibilities of development of rural settlements of Belarus. Experience of creation of "agrorodki".
Valentina Nazaruk, Ministry of Architecture and Construction of the Belarus (15 min)

Self-introduction of participants (15 min)

9:40 – 10:45 **Three input statements:**

- a) Expectations from VASAB (Urban-rural partnerships and VASAB -Long Term Perspective)
Wilfried Görmar, VASAB CSPD/BSR member (15 min)
- b) Urban-rural divide and partnership in Europe from the perspective of European Commission/ EU BSR
Jean Peyrony, DG Regio (15 min)

- c) Demonstration project “Supraregional partnership in Germany”
Rupert Kawka, *The Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (20 min)*

Discussion, questions, clarification (15 min)

10:45 – 11:15

Coffee break

11:15 – 13:10

First discussion: Status of urban-rural partnerships in the BSR and other EU-regions

(→ focus on examples and prior experience in regional cooperation)

Moderator Rupert Kawka

Two input statements:

- a) Situation in the BSR
Petri Kahila, *Nordregio (15-20 min)*
- b) NSR Interreg project ”URBAL” - URBan and ruRAL
Development Reaching a balance in space.
Rolf Oldejans, *Municipality of Enschede, Netherland (15-20 min)*

Discussion (75-85 min)

Some basic observations:

- Urban-rural partnerships have since long been a topic in spatial planning – mainly as a lip-service. It is now the right time for their implementation, as e.g. new documents from the EU have highlighted the topic. Furthermore, the regions themselves see an increased need for large-scale cooperation.
- There is a need to collect good examples of urban-rural partnerships from all over Europe. This can, first, promote the idea of this approach and encourages a discussion about the benefits by good examples. Second, the variety of different examples is a basis for research about promoting and hindering factors, strategies and achieved results etc. The results of these investigations can support regional actors when establishing urban-rural partnerships.
- Urban-rural relationship is not yet urban-rural partnership. The difference is the existence of a kind of governance. Partnership includes a kind of governance, i.e. a way to communicate and establish strategies. Relationships between different types of regions or parts of regions are rather natural and can be the basis and starting point for a partnership. There is a need to understand strategies of individuals, households, enterprises or municipalities in order to transfer informal contact into more formalized ones.
- Projects are important to organize and to bring urban-rural partnerships into action. Successful projects bring trust into a group of actors from different regions and pave the way for a governance structure. Thus, more knowledge about the topic is necessary. Furthermore, it has to be transferred to local and regional actors in order to promote learning processes.
- Urban-rural partnerships are an open concept. They are not necessarily bound to the existence of metropolitan regions. On the contrary, they can be a strategy on any regional level. But they have to include different types of regions, i.e. urban and rural ones, central and peripheral ones as well as economically strong and weak ones. A mere concentration of an urban-suburban context and an exclusion of less favourably located regions are rather counteracting.

Open questions:

- Does the communist legacy concerning rural-urban disparities have a lasting effect in post-socialist countries? How does it reveal?
- Is the settlement structure in the BSR appropriate for urban-rural partnerships?
- Is it possible to integrate very peripheral regions into urban-rural partnerships? On which scale could this happen?
- Which urban places can serve as motors?
- Which good examples for urban-rural partnerships already exist?
- Do local actors see the chances and/or necessity for urban-rural partnerships?
- Is there a need to convince local actors of the idea of regional cooperation?

13:10 – 14:10

Lunch

14:10 – 16:00

Second discussion: Vision for urban-rural partnerships in the BSR

(→ focus on need, chances, potential topics, policies and actions)

Moderator Rupert Kawka

Two input statements:

- a) Urban-rural interactions – Finnish experience
Petri Kahila, Nordregio (15 min)
New interdependencies of Helsinki and rural Finland - some policy experiences”
Pekka M. Sauri, BaltMet, Deputy Mayor of Helsinki (10 min)
- b) BSR Interreg III B project “Baltic Balance” – rural and urban areas in cooperation for a balanced settlement structure – video presentation (18 min)

Discussion (70-80 min)

Some basic observations:

- Urban-rural partnerships have to be a bottom-up process, as cooperation between regions cannot be established by order or demand. But support from higher governance levels can be a promoting factor. Barriers need to be removed due to European and national sectorial policies. Good governance, inter-institutional and trans-sectorial cooperation are needed.
- Economic, social and territorial cohesion is not only a topic between the EU member states. It is also relevant within the states, as an overall harmonious development, as written in Article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty, cannot be reached if too vast spatial disparities exist on a lower regional level. Urban-rural partnerships are a central tool to reduce disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions. They are a way to integrate the development perspectives of rural and urban regions and enable rural regions to benefit in a better way from the possibilities offered by urban centres. Urban-rural partnerships can be relevant for services delivery and can improve the quality of life.
- There is a need for promoting urban-rural partnerships through structural funds.
- There are problems in measuring urban-rural interactions and in

monitoring the implementation of urban-rural partnerships due to their complexity and nature.

Open questions:

- How is it possible to promote the idea of urban-rural partnerships in local actors and regional/national policy-makers?
- How is it possible to integrate the idea in EU structural funds regulations (e.g. ERDF)?
- Will urban-rural partnerships form part of future EU-cohesion policy?
- Are cross-border urban-rural partnerships an option for the BSR?
- Which topics/suited projects are relevant for the BSR-regions?
- Which expectations are related to successful urban-rural partnerships? Which solutions for which problems can they contribute?
- Which institutions have to be incorporated? How to motivate e.g. associations and the civil society to participate in urban-rural partnerships?
- Which legal provisions need to be established to better enable urban-rural cooperation and partnership?
- What has to be done with regions having no real experience in regional or even local cooperation?

16:00 – 16:30

Coffee break

16:30 – 17:30

Final discussion Towards political recommendations and the preparation of the above-mentioned BSR conference