

COMMITTEE ON SPATIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF
THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Summary of the 92nd CSPD/BSR Meeting

Online, 11 June 2024

Chairperson: Ms. Anna-Leena Seppälä (FI)

Participants: CSPD/BSR members: Mr. Jens Kurnol (DE), Mr. Tiit Oidjärv (EE), Ms. Helen Madison (EE), Ms. Tiina Tihlman (FI), Ms. Algimante Treiniene (LT), Ms. Anita Līvija Rozenvalde (LV), Ms. Kinga Stańczuk-Olejniki (PL), invited guests: Mr. Uģis Zanders (Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat), Mr. Odd Godal (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Norway), VASAB Secretariat: Ms. Alda Nikodemusa, Ms. Egija Stapkēviča, Ms. Jana Patmalniece, Ms. Margarita Vološina, Ms. Tīna Šipkēvica and Mr. Emīls Rode.

1. Adoption of the report of 91st VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting

The Committee adopted the Report of 91st CSPD/BSR meeting held on 14-15 March 2024 in Koli, Finland without changes.

2. Adoption of the summary of 91st VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting

The Committee adopted the Summary of 91st CSPD/BSR meeting held on 14-15 March 2024 in Koli, Finland without changes.

3. Potential amendments to VASAB Vision 2040

The Committee was informed that Estonian chairmanship would like to continue spatial resilience, security and emergency preparedness topics which have been focus also in previous chairmanships. VASAB Vision 2040 was approved by VASAB Committee in December 2022 and endorsed by Conference of Ministers in June 2023. In relation to Russian invasion in Ukraine, the disclaimer on Russia' and Belarus' participation in VASAB was added to the Vision, however, no significant changes were made in the vision content-wise. In the everyday practice of spatial planning, topics related to spatial resilience have gained importance in the VASAB countries, as also highlighted during Finland's VASAB chairmanship 2023-2024. These topics include: 1) Emergency preparedness, 2) Connectivity and resilience of critical infrastructure, 3) Economic and energy resilience (de-centralised energy supply, re-industrialisation), 4) and numerous other focus areas. Estonian chairmanship proposed to consider the need to amend the Vision 2040 with spatial resilience topics to support ongoing and future activities of member countries through a long-term spatial vision. First step which would be done by Estonian chairmanship is preparing a thorough analysis of VASAB Vision 2040 in order to see what could be amended or should be amended. Afterwards some further expertise would be engaged from Estonia to understand in depth issues which are not included currently in the Vision. And finally, the Committee would decide whether there is a need to open up the Vision and amend with certain aspects or not, if yes then approve the amended Vision through a dedicated procedure. Stakeholder engagement for amended Vision should be decided on, as well as approval mechanism – as the current Vision was endorsed by the Ministerial Conference.

The Committee agreed that Estonian Chairmanship of VASAB Committee undertakes to explore the links between the emerging topic of spatial resilience and VASAB Vision 2040, and afterwards a decision will be made on how to proceed further.

4. EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

EUSBSR PA ‘Spatial planning’ Work Plan 2022-2024 evaluation

The Committee was informed that VASAB Secretariat together with HELCOM who both are coordinators of EUSBSR Policy area ‘Spatial Planning’ are preparing evaluation of the implementation of the Policy area work for 2022-2024. VASAB Committee acts as Steering Group responsible for land-based spatial planning actions and some of the main tasks of the Steering Group is to monitor and evaluate PA ‘Spatial Planning’ coordinators’ work, by endorsing PA ‘Spatial Planning’ work plan, reports and achievements. The Committee was introduced with the results achieved so far, as well as PASPS project importance for VASAB and importance of being one of EUSBSR PA ‘Spatial Planning’ coordinators.

The Committee took note of the information about EUSBSR Policy Area ‘Spatial Planning’ Work Plan 2022-2024 evaluation and suggested to include in the document organisation of VASAB Ministerial Conference on 2nd June 2023 in Wismar, Germany.

South Baltic Programme Annual event, 24-27 September, Stralzund, Germany

The Committee was informed that VASAB Secretariat has received invitation from South Baltic Programme Secretariat to participate at their annual event in Stralzund, Germany on 24-27 September 2024. Secretariat has asked some Committee members whether anyone would like to participate and give a speech but, in the end, Ms. Egija Stapkēviča will participate and represent VASAB.

The Committee took note of the information about South Baltic Programme Annual event which will be held on 24-27 September 2024 in Stralzund, Germany and VASAB’s participation in the event.

EUSBSR Annual Forum, 30-31 October 2024 in Visby, Sweden

The Committee was informed that the next EUSBSR Annual Forum will be held on 30-31 October 2024 in Visby, Sweden. VASAB Secretariat has been invited by UBC to join a workshop on liveable cities and Ms. Egija Stapkēviča will present VASAB Vision 2040 regarding liveable cities. VASAB Secretariat will also participate at the networking village with a stand and will offer policy area ‘Spatial Planning’ relevant projects a chance to be promoted at the stand.

The Committee took note of the information about EUSBSR Annual Forum which will be held on 30-31 October 2024 in Visby, Sweden and VASAB’s active participation: 1) with a seminar ‘Designing Liveable Cities in the Baltic Sea Region’ together with Interreg BSR project “Liveability” and UBC Planning Cities Commission, 2) with a VASAB stand in Networking Village where policy area ‘Spatial Planning’ related projects are welcome to promote their projects/results.

5. 1st draft of EUSBSR PA ‘Spatial Planning’ Work Plan in frame of VASAB Vision 2040 implementation

The Committee was informed that the Monitoring Committee of Interreg BSR Programme offers to extend duration of Policy area coordination assistance projects for 2 more years and has offered programme funding. Extension requires support from the Steering Group – i.e. the Committee. In order to extend the project and apply for funding, a new work plan for years 2025-2026 has to be developed and approved by the Steering Group. The Committee was introduced with PASPS project Work Plan for EUSBSR Policy area ‘Spatial Planning’ for years 2025-2026 in frame of VASAB Vision 2040 implementation. This Work Plan is very integrated into VASAB work therefore it is logical to start with PASPS project Work Plan. Work Plan was developed together with PA ‘Spatial Planning’ co-coordinator HELCOM.

The Committee took note of the information on 1st draft of EUSBSR PA ‘Spatial Planning’ Work Plan 2025-2026 in frame of VASAB Vision 2040 implementation and discussed what should be added.

The Committee agreed to support VASAB participation in extension of EUSBSR policy area ‘Spatial Planning’ coordinators assistance project ‘PASPS’ by 2 years from January 2025 until December 2026 with an aim to coordinate policy area ‘Spatial planning’ and to support project generation and development.

6. Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) issues

Informal consultation session of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting 19-21 March 2024 in Gothenburg, Sweden

The Committee was informed about the main outcomes of informal consultation session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group Meeting which was held on 19-21 March 2024 in Gothenburg, Sweden: coordination of the EUSBSR Policy area ‘Spatial Planning’, MSP related projects and initiatives; progress of EBA (Ecosystem-based approach) Guideline revision; interim assessment on Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation; next informal consultation session of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting will be held on 18-20 September 2024 in Riga (Latvia) back-to-back with MSP Green project conference dedicated to maritime European Green Deal and climate change mitigation.

The Committee took note of the information about the outcomes of informal consultation session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group held on 19-21 March 2024 in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Planners’ Forum on 18 April 2024 online

The Committee was informed that 4th MSP Planners’ Forum organised within ‘PASPS’ project took place online on 18 April 2024. Main topic of the Forum was multi-use and co-existence in maritime spatial planning and six presentations were given on this topic. Participants of the Forum also shared latest MSP developments in their countries, national MSP status, pressing issues and national approaches on multi-use and co-existence. Next MSP Planners’ Forum will be organised online in autumn 2024 and the main topic will be – cumulative impacts.

The Committee took note of the information about the outcomes of 4th MSP Planners’ Forum within ‘PASPS’ project held online on 18 April 2024 and hosted by VASAB Secretariat.

HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 25 April 2024

The Committee was informed that celebration of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Convention was held in Riga (Latvia) on 25 April 2024. The event was preceded by a HELCOM Ministerial Meeting. The Committee was informed that Ms. Alda Nikodemusa was invited to give a statement during Ministerial Meeting on behalf of VASAB.

The Committee took note of the information about the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting held on 25 April 2024 and VASAB’s participation in the event.

Progress of Baltic Sea2Land project

The Committee was informed about the progress of project ‘BalticSea2Land’ and reminded about VASAB’s tasks in the project. VASAB Secretariat will elaborate recommendations for coastal development and planning in the Baltic Sea Region. A survey derived from recommendations of 1996 (Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region) will be developed and shared with the Committee and other stakeholders, for example, project partners, relevant networks. VASAB Secretariat will invite the Committee to consider one or a couple of experts who might be relevant in this subject of coastal planning and share the survey to fill in. VASAB Secretariat will organise 2 thematic webinars

(one in November 2024 and one in spring 2025). Webinars will tackle coastal planning and management issues exchanging of knowledge and good practice, discussing needs and gaps in LSI. During Baltic Sea2Land project partners' meeting in May 2024 in Hamburg, partners agreed to organise 5th Baltic MSP Forum which will also serve as a project final conference in November 2025. VASAB Secretariat is responsible for organising this event. Concrete dates will be announced, and event advertised by the end of 2024.

The Committee took note of the information about the progress of project 'Baltic Sea2Land' and update of VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region.

Progress of eMSP NBSR project

The Committee was informed about the progress of project 'eMSP NBSR - Emerging ecosystem-based maritime spatial planning topics in North and Baltic Seas Regions' and that project ends on 30 June 2024. Final results of the project are available at this link: www.emspproject.eu/results. Project podcast series are available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4oc0-9wErk&list=PLJ_SMXI-ifK6YEs7cIiaD-tQmhLOcLNdo&t=3s

The Committee took note of the information about the progress of project 'eMSP NBSR' (Emerging Ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Planning Topics in North and Baltic Sea Regions).

NESBp project application

The Committee was informed that new project application 'Northern European Sea Basins project' which was submitted on 26 February 2024 by lead partner Netherlands Enterprise Agency to European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund call was rejected due to technical error. Project application will be resubmitted today on 11 June 2024. This project has six work packages: project coordination, ocean governance, energy transition and biodiversity in MSP, multi-use in practice: from mariparks to basic-scale multi-use, knowledge transfer & sharing, project communication. VASAB Secretariat will co-lead work package 2 'Ocean governance' with Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (the Netherlands). Main objective of this work package is to enhance multi-level governance in the Greater North Sea and Baltic Sea regions. VASAB Secretariat will also lead work package 6 'Project communication'.

The Committee took note of the information on resubmission of project application 'NESBp' by lead partner Netherlands Enterprise Agency to European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund call which is a continuation of the 'eMSP NBSR' project.

7. VASAB Budget

Audit Report of VASAB Budget 2023, VASAB Income and Expenditure 2023

The Committee acknowledged the execution of VASAB Budget 2023 and took note of the auditor's Review Report by SIA "Auditorfirma Padoms".

Amendments to VASAB Budget 2024, Preliminary VASAB Income and Expenditure 2024

Taking into account the audited VASAB Budget 2023, *the Committee* decided to amend the VASAB Budget 2024, allowed payout of the non-taxed salary bonuses in 2024 for the staff members of the Secretariat.

8. VASAB Secretariat news

Potential changes of VASAB Secretariat

The Committee took note of the information on potential changes of VASAB Secretariat.

List of VASAB-related events & administrative report

The Committee took note of the information about operations of the VASAB Secretariat.

9. Transfer of VASAB chairmanship

Concluding Finnish chairmanship in VASAB & Transfer of VASAB chairmanship to Estonia and information about the priorities of Estonian VASAB chairmanship

The Committee was informed that thematic focus of the VASAB Finnish Chairmanship was spatial resilience and what role the spatial planning has in it. A webinar on spatial resilience and spatial planning was organised on 29 February 2024 where experts from the Baltic Sea Region countries shared their experience and a seminar ‘Challenges of changing circumstances in Eastern Finland for regional development and spatial planning’ was organised on 13 March 2024 in Koli, Finland which focused on how to be prepared for changing circumstances in Eastern Finland in regional development and spatial planning. During Finnish Chairmanship 3 committee meetings were organised and one of them in person in Koli, Finland.

Estonian chairmanship thanked Finland for chairing and informed that will undertake to explore the links between the emerging topic of spatial resilience and VASAB Vision 2040. Russian aggression against Ukraine has shifted the focus of spatial planning, highlighting the importance of resilient spatial structures and communities. Similar issues were stressed during Finland’s 2023-2024 VASAB Chairmanship. Possible amendments to VASAB Vision 2040 will be discussed with the Committee. Additionally, Estonian Chairmanship will endorse strengthening collaboration between land-based spatial planners to fully utilise VASAB as informal knowledge and best practice hub for practitioners in spatial planning. Estonia is preparing a new national spatial strategy to support regional equity and support high quality and sustainable spatial decision across governance levels. To share best practices and experiences of national level spatial policies, an international webinar will be held in early 2025 where experts from the Baltic Sea Region countries will be invited to share their experience. First Committee meeting within Estonian Chairmanship in autumn 2024 will be organised as a physical meeting in Estonia.

The Committee took note of the information about the upcoming Estonian chairmanship.