

COMMITTEE ON SPATIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF
THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Summary of the 95th CSPD/BSR Meeting

Online, 16 June 2025

Chairperson: Mr. Tiit Oidjärv (EE)

Participants: CSPD/BSR members: Mr. Piotr Piekut (DE), Ms. Mari Pohja-Mykrä (FI), Ms. Algimantė Treinienė (LT), Ms. Donata Paulauskaitė (LT), Ms. Diāna Rasuma (LV), Ms. Kinga Stańczuk-Olejnik (PL), Ms. Emilia Malak-Pętlicka (PL), Ms. Maxi Nachtigall (SE), invited guests: Mr. Uģis Zanders (Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat), Ms. Sintija Vanaga (Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat), Mr. Tom Schumacher (Baltic Sea Strategy Point, Senate Chancellery of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg), Mr. Tõnis Nirk (CBSS Committee of Senior Officials, Ambassador-at-Large for Baltic Sea Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia), Mr. Andreas Sepp (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia), Mr. Jacek Zaucha (Maritime Institute in Gdansk, University of Gdansk), Mr. Jan Schmidtbauer Crona (SwAM), Mr. Peter Schmitt (Stockholm University), Ms. Kerstin Bly Joyce (Nordregio), Ms. Lotta Ruokanen (HELCOM Secretariat), VASAB Secretariat: Ms. Egija Stapkēviča, Ms. Jana Patmalniece, Ms. Margarita Vološina, Ms. Tīna Šipkēviča and Ms. Liene Strazdiņa.

1. Adoption of the report of 94th VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting

The CSPD/BSR (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) adopted the Report of 94th CSPD/BSR meeting held on 19-20 March 2025 in Tallinn, Estonia without changes.

2. Adoption of the summary of 94th VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting

The Committee adopted the Summary of 94th CSPD/BSR meeting held on 19-20 March 2025 in Tallinn, Estonia without changes.

3. Information on Open Trio meeting

The Committee took note of the Report of the VASAB Open Trio online meeting on 2 June 2025.

4. Information on Draft Tallinn Declaration of VASAB on Spatial Resilience

The Committee was thanked for contributing to Tallinn Declaration of VASAB on Spatial Resilience and was informed that official letters have been sent to all ministries of VASAB countries to approve Tallinn Declaration.

The Committee took note of the information on Draft Tallinn Declaration of VASAB on Spatial Resilience and approval process in VASAB countries, as well as further steps after approval of declaration.

5. Update of VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026

The Committee was informed that the adopted VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 is published at VASAB website and states that it is adopted on 19-20 March 2025 and is a living document, subject to periodic updates and changes as needed. The Committee was also informed that VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 will be shared with the Committee via MS Teams platform

where each Committee member could write their comments/suggestions. VASAB Secretariat has updated VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 (version of 19-20 March 2025) by putting additional information for implemented activities and links to VASAB website to get more information about events.

The Committee adopted the latest version of VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 and agreed that the Work Plan should be published at VASAB website stating - 'Updated on 16 June 2025'.

The Committee agreed that VASAB Secretariat shares via MS Teams platform adopted VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 with the Committee to update the living document when necessary.

6. Transfer of VASAB chairmanship

Concluding Estonian chairmanship in VASAB

The Committee was informed that Estonian chairmanship successfully concludes with an adopted VASAB Ministerial Tallinn Declaration on Spatial Resilience – a milestone that reaffirms the shared commitment to foster spatial and territorial resilience and cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Estonian chairmanship shared that is very satisfied with VASAB webinar on national level spatial planning organised on 11 February 2025 (Recording of the webinar is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8WWVIZ0C_M&t=6s. Presentations of the webinar are available here: <https://vasab.org/event/vasab-webinar-on-national-level-spatial-planning/>).

Transfer of VASAB chairmanship to Poland and information about the priorities of Polish VASAB chairmanship

The Committee was informed about the outcomes of Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Warsaw Joint Declaration and main points regarding territoriality, future of Territorial Agenda and ESPON seminar 'Exaptive resilience in border regions' to be held on 25-26 June 2025 in Gdansk, Poland.

The Committee was informed that Polish VASAB chairmanship's main strategic focus will be on territorial resilience by operationalising the theme of spatial resilience and territorial cohesion in all activities. Flagship activities during the chairmanship would be: 1) Development of Guidelines for Territorial Resilience in the BSR to be endorsed by VASAB Directors General; 2) Preparation of ESPON Targeted Analysis: 'Territorial Resilience in BSR'; 3) Organisation of high-level events: CSPD/BSR meetings, DG meeting, 5th Baltic MSP Forum; 4) Enhancing cooperation and joint initiatives with ESPON, HELCOM, CPMR, KE, UA. 1st Committee meeting back-to-back with a workshop and a webinar under Polish chairmanship will be organised on 16-18 September 2025 in Ilawa, Poland. VASAB Directors General meeting is planned for May 2026 in Zakopane, but exact date depends on the readiness for endorsement of the Guidelines for Territorial Resilience in the BSR.

Mr. Jacek Zaucha presented the concept of the ESPON targeted analysis initiated by Polish VASAB chairmanship: justification of the research topic, main objectives of targeted analysis, research methodology and expected outcomes.

The Committee took note of the information about the outcomes of Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Warsaw Joint Declaration and main points regarding territoriality, future of Territorial Agenda and ESPON seminar 'Exaptive resilience in border regions' to be held on 25-26 June 2025 in Gdansk, Poland.

The Committee took note of the information about the upcoming Polish VASAB chairmanship.

The Committee took note of the information about the proposed concept of the ESPON targeted analysis and agreed that written comments should be sent to Ms. Kinga Stańczuk-Olejniak until 15 July 2025.

7. Information on Vihula Declaration of the CBSS, adopted in May 2025

Mr. Tõnis Nirk informed about Vihula Declaration of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) which was adopted by Foreign Ministers at CBSS Ministerial Session in May 2025, and which reaffirms united support for Ukraine, condemns Russia's aggression and hybrid threat, and highlights regional cooperation and youth engagement.

The Committee took note of the information about Vihula Declaration of the Council of the Baltic Sea States which was adopted in May 2025.

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

An overview of Policy Area 'Spatial Planning' activities

The Committee was informed about the latest developments and activities within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Area 'Spatial Planning'. Regarding EUSBSR Action Plan update, Policy Area coordinators have submitted 1st drafts approved by Steering Groups (in PA 'Spatial Planning' case – approved by VASAB Committee and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG) by the end of January 2025. The drafts will be reviewed in National Coordinators group by 30 June 2025. In April 2025 a Policy Area Coordinators – National Coordinators dialogue meeting was held with each Policy Area as a forum for exchange, alignment, and building a shared vision. The National Coordinators group will provide all Policy Areas with both general and individual feedback to consider in refining the Actions to their final form. Baltic Strategy Point will provide a shortened and streamlined template to finalise the Actions in a uniform manner. The final draft of updated Action Plan is expected until 31 October 2025, so the document can be approved by National Coordinators group by the end of 2025. The Committee was informed that EUSBSR Live Meeting took place in Turku, Finland on 1-2 April 2025. In these Live meetings Policy Area Coordinators meet with National Coordinators to exchange experiences and ideas and work together on mutual challenges within the BSR. The Policy Area Coordinators - National Coordinators Meeting 2025 was a key step in supporting the ongoing development of the EUSBSR Action Plan, ensuring that Policy Areas have the opportunity to refine their Actions to be well-structured, fundable, and strategically aligned. The meeting provided an important opportunity moment to ensure overall coherence across the Strategy and support Policy Area Coordinators in positioning Actions strategically in relation to national priorities and funding realities. National Coordinators also play a key role in shaping the external messaging of the Action Plan. The Committee was informed that Interreg BSR Programme Conference took place back-to-back with Project Platform kick-off event on 20-22 May 2025 in Tampere, Finland. The conference explored transnational cooperation benefits of the Interreg BSR Programme in greater depth through parallel sessions, panel discussions, study visits and networking.

The Committee took note of the information about EUSBSR Policy Area 'Spatial Planning' news and activities, technical assistance project 'PASPS'.

MSP Planners' Forum on 25 March 2025 online

The Committee was informed that 6th MSP Planners' Forum within 'PASPS' project was held online on 25 March 2025 and addressed maritime defence with presentations from Annika Koch on 'Example of dealing with defence issues in the Site Development Plan (North Sea)' and Jaak Viilipus on 'National and regional approaches in managing hybrid threat in current situation in the Baltic Sea'. During Planners' Forum participants discussed each country's pressing MSP issues, knowledge gaps and future MSP project needs. Planners' Forum is dedicated for informal exchange among maritime spatial planners.

The Committee took note of the information about 6th MSP Planners' Forum within 'PASPS' project which was held online on 25 March 2025 and hosted by VASAB Secretariat.

EUSBSR Annual Forum, 29-30 October 2025 in Sopot, Poland

The Committee was informed that EUSBSR Annual Forum 2025 will take place on 29-30 October 2025 in Sopot, Poland. This year's main theme is "Securing the Future: Stronger Together – Building Stability in Times of Uncertainty". This year's Forum takes place in a period of significant change and will focus on building stability and securing the future across geopolitical, economic, social, and environmental dimensions. As always, it will serve as a platform for cooperation, policy discussions, and networking opportunities. The EUSBSR Annual Forum 2025 is promised to be highly participatory, combining high-level discussions with interactive activities. In preparation for EUSBSR Annual Forum 2025, Policy Area 'Spatial Planning' together with Policy Areas 'Energy' and 'Secure' submitted and got approved a workshop application for a session "Towards a Climate-Resilient Baltic Sea Region". The speakers and final agenda for the session have to be confirmed by 30 September 2025. This session aims to promote collaborative, cross-sectoral climate adaptation across the Baltic Sea Region, fostering a more climate-resilient macro-region through knowledge exchange, practical tools, and innovative planning approaches. Featuring insights from the Baltic PlaNet project platform as well as other Interreg BSR projects that tackle climate change mitigation, the session will explore solutions for coastal planning, disaster risk reduction, and energy transition. It will bring together leading experts and initiatives to address how municipalities can integrate climate risk and adaptation into local planning and decision-making. To reach the full and strategic communication potential of the work put into the sessions at the EUSBSR Annual Forum and to highlight the connection between the work of the Policy Areas, the sessions at the forum and the developments in the Baltic Sea Region, all Policy Areas had to submit a Securing the Future report that connects Policy Area work with their workshops at the Forum and highlights the developments and megatrends in the Baltic Sea Region now and in the near future. The reports will be published individually on EUSBSR website and LinkedIn account, starting from mid-August. The detailed publication calendar will be confirmed closer to autumn. All Policy Areas texts combined in a full report will be released at the Annual Forum.

The Committee took note of the information about EUSBSR Annual Forum 2025 (including information about parallel session "Towards a Climate-Resilient Baltic Sea Region" organised by VASAB / Policy Area 'Spatial Planning' jointly with Policy Area 'Energy' and Policy Area 'Secure') which will take place on 29-30 October 2025 in Sopot, Poland.

9. Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)

Baseline report on marine digital twins and green shipping corridors in the Baltic Sea Region

Mr. Uģis Zanders informed about Baseline report on marine digital twins and green shipping corridors in the Baltic Sea Region. This report presents key findings from a comprehensive survey conducted during the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and outlines the current landscape of marine data collection in the region, assesses the feasibility of a unified Baltic Sea Region marine digital twin, and showcases innovative practices in green shipping. Most importantly, it emphasizes the need for intentional, collaborative action to ensure a resilient, competitive, and climate-smart maritime future for the region. By mapping out both challenges and solutions, this report aims to inform and inspire coordinated efforts that align with the CBSS vision of a Sustainable and Prosperous Region. The report is available at this link: <https://cbss.org/publications/baseline-report-on-marine-digital-twins-and-green-shipping-corridors-in-the-baltic-sea-region/>.

The Committee took note of the information about Baseline report on marine digital twins and green shipping corridors in the Baltic Sea Region prepared by the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

Revised Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the BSR

The Committee was informed that *Mr. Jan Schmidbauer Crona* will introduce the Committee with revised Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea Region which was developed by a task force consisting of leading experts from Baltic Sea Region in maritime spatial planning. Decision from the Committee will be needed to follow the steps to finalise the document. The document has been communicated with relevant HELCOM working groups, as well as HELCOM Heads of Delegation, and now it is time to communicate this document with VASAB Committee. It is planned to finalise the document by the end of year 2025.

Mr. Jan Schmidbauer Crona informed that revised Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea Region is not a new document, but it is a revision of existing document which was adopted in 2016 and the document is based on the principles what to follow. Since 2023 a task force that involves almost all Baltic Sea countries led by Sweden and with the help of HELCOM Secretariat is trying to build new revised guidelines so that they are not just listing the principles but are more relevant, specific, give inspiration and contribute more to harmonisation of MSP in the Baltic countries. A new important chapter ‘Climate smart MSP’ has been added to tackle the challenge on building resilience of our seas through the ecosystem-based approach. New EBA guidelines will be more concrete in a way with examples countries can adopt to do ecosystem-based approach.

The Committee took note of the information on the second draft of the revised Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea Region developed by the task force of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group.

Informal consultation session of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting, 7-9 April 2025 in Rostock, Germany

The Committee was informed that the last informal consultation session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group was held on 7-9 April 2025 in Rostock, Germany and added that VASAB Secretariat is involved in several task forces to implement joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG Work Plan 2025-2027: 1) Task force to update MSP country fiches; 2) Task force to revise EBA (Ecosystem-based approach) Guideline; 3) Task force to compare HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R on Implementation of integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea and VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region (1996), and to see if both recommendations can be aligned. VASAB Secretariat and HELCOM are involved in two projects ‘NESBp’ and ‘Baltic PlaNet’: 1) ‘Baltic PlaNet’ project is a new project, and its main focus will be on climate change; 2) One of VASAB’s task in ‘NESBp’ project is to prepare a report on how Baltic Sea Region countries are working to achieve climate change goals. Both these projects and tasks of the projects will be presented at the next Informal consultation session of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting on 15-17 October 2025 in Helsinki, Finland.

The Committee took note of the information about outcomes of informal consultation session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group held on 7-9 April 2025 in Rostock, Germany.

10. Information about VASAB projects

Progress of Land-based Planners' Forum project stakeholder mapping, survey, comparison of seven Spatial Planning Systems in the Baltic Sea Region

The Committee was reminded that Land-based Planners' Forum project survey was launched on 6 March 2025 to investigate what are cooperation needs and possibilities of planners from different levels. Survey was sent to mapped stakeholders by project partners and the Committee. The Committee was introduced with two Land-based Planners' Forum project partners' representatives: Ms. Kerstin Bly Joyce from Nordregio and Mr. Peter Schmitt from Stockholm University who will present recently finished survey results and comparison of seven Spatial Planning Systems in the Baltic Sea Region.

Ms. Kerstin Bly Joyce presented the draft feasibility study which explores the key actors involved in land-based spatial planning across the seven countries of the Baltic Sea Region and assesses their networking needs. To achieve this, the study includes a comprehensive stakeholder mapping of the land-based spatial planning community throughout the region, along with the results and analysis of a detailed stakeholder survey conducted in early 2025. The findings offer valuable insights into current collaboration gaps, opportunities, and priorities - providing a solid foundation to inform future initiatives and capacity-building efforts in the BSR. The stakeholder mapping was done by all 5 project partners, including VASAB Committee and it considered actors at all governance levels but focused primarily on the local and regional levels. This focus is justified by the fact that cooperation already exists at the national/ministerial level through frameworks such as PA Spatial Planning and VASAB, whereas collaboration among local and regional planners remains fragmented. The exact number of mapped stakeholders will be included in the next version of feasibility study. This survey was specifically designed for land-based spatial planners currently employed by local, regional, or national public authorities in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, and Sweden. Its purpose was to inform the development of the Land-Based Planners' Forum - a future platform intended to promote knowledge exchange and cooperation among spatial planners across the Baltic Sea Region. The survey investigates participants' involvement in existing international spatial planning networks and their perceptions of the importance of various types of networks. Respondents rated the relevance of national, regional, and local-level networks, as well as specific focus areas such as urban-rural partnerships and cross-border collaboration, using a High / Medium / Low scale. In addition, the survey assessed the perceived importance of different spatial planning themes - including urban and rural development, climate change, and land use management - using the same rating scale. Finally, it gathered input on preferred support tools and platforms for knowledge sharing. A total of 96 professionals participated in this survey (37 chose to remain anonymous) providing a comprehensive insight into the current state of spatial planning networks and practices across various levels and regions. Insight into answers on each survey question can be seen in the draft feasibility study. Main conclusions from survey results: there is a strong engagement across the Baltic Sea Region; there is currently limited active participation in existing networks; respondents have strong overall interest across all themes; there is high demand for web-based interactions; there is demand for strategic planning and visualization tools.

Mr. Peter Schmitt presented brief comparison of seven Spatial Planning Systems in the Baltic Sea Region. The main purpose of this short document is to support cross-country dialogues on national spatial planning systems around the Baltic Sea. In other words, this document shall facilitate mutual understanding of some carefully selected similarities and differences of spatial planning systems in seven Baltic Sea Region countries. The document does not offer a comprehensive introduction to each of the seven BSR countries' national spatial planning systems, its focus is to highlight and compare four carefully selected characteristics: (1) Legal definitions or explanations of spatial planning; (2) Territories relevant for statutory spatial planning; (3) Distribution of competences for spatial planning among policy levels; (4) Character

of statutory spatial planning instruments at different policy levels. Main sources for preparing the document were: ESPON Compass project 'Comparative Analysis of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning systems in Europe', ARL (Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association) country profiles and VASAB country fiches on terrestrial spatial planning. VASAB Committee is welcome to give feedback on correctness of the information provided in the document.

The Committee took note of the information about progress of project 'Land-based Planners' Forum' (Swedish Institute) stakeholder mapping, survey, and comparison of seven Spatial Planning Systems in the Baltic Sea Region.

The Committee is invited to check the document 'Comparison of seven Spatial Planning Systems in the Baltic Sea Region' in relation to each VASAB country and provide feedback until 4 August 2025 to egija.stapkevica@vasab.org.

The Committee was informed that 'Land-based Planners' Forum' project online workshop on good planning & cooperation practices in the Baltic Sea Region will be organised on 18 September 2025 back-to-back with the next Committee meeting.

The Committee took note of the information on upcoming 'Land-based Planners' Forum' project online workshop on good planning & cooperation practices in the Baltic Sea Region to be held on 18 September 2025.

Progress of NESBp project

The Committee was informed that Northern European Sea Basin project (NESBp) is focused on further development and elaboration of crucial MSP related components as ocean governance, ecosystem-based approach, multi-use and data sharing. Most recent task VASAB Secretariat was contributing to and leading - coordination of the objective on enhancing the effectiveness of trans-boundary governance. Existing cooperation formats, organisations and mechanisms in both sea regions were scoped and mapped and resulted in a matrix where effectiveness and impact of different organisations and cooperations such as: OSPAR Commission, the North Sea Energy Corporation, HELCOM Commission, VASAB, HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group and MSP Planners' Forum were analysed. All of this was mapped as the highest priority for a deeper investigation and interviews. Several VASAB Committee members have already received an invitation to take part in the interview. If there is a suggestion for additional organisation and cooperation related to maritime spatial planning, the Committee is invited to share the information. In the project VASAB is also responsible for cross sea-basin dialogue and VASAB Secretariat has started to map upcoming events. These events are important for dialogue between experts. NESBp project also foresees to prepare an Overview report on the progress of policy instruments and actions aiming at obtaining climate neutrality. Preparation of the Terms of Reference for the report is in early stage, however there is a big alignment with HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021-2030 which has an objective that spatial planning should contribute to climate change mitigation, adaptation, and increased resilience in the Baltic Sea Region. The task itself also contributes to VASAB Vision 2040 actions.

The Committee took note of the information about NESBp - Northern European Sea Basins project (EMFAF) progress.

Progress of Baltic Sea2Land project, final conference – 5th Baltic MSP Forum

The Committee was informed that VASAB Secretariat is currently organising the 5th Baltic MSP Forum which will bring together spatial planning experts working in marine and coastal domains. Forum will be held on 11-12 November 2025 and will serve as Baltic Sea2Land project's final conference. Registration for the event is open and preliminary agenda, parallel session descriptions, registration link is available on the website: www.BalticMSPforum.eu.

VASAB leads the Task Force meetings with the Baltic Sea2Land project partners to organise the parallel sessions. Session sequence is agreed with session organisers. Session descriptions and first speakers are published on the website. Full information on parallel sessions will be available in September. VASAB Secretariat has regular meetings with event moderator Ms. Natalia Zajac during which panels and main sessions are discussed. Invitations have been sent to first speakers. VASAB Secretariat has signed an agreement with event venue – VEF Cultura Palace. Opened procurement has been organised for event organiser services, including catering, technical equipment and assistance, organisation of expo, evening reception, video recordings and the deadline for submitting applications is 26 June 2025. Few more procurements for design, print and photographer services will be organised in August/September. At this point there is an active event promotion phase during which VASAB Secretariat sends out invitation to VASAB network. Committee members have also received an invitation to 5th Baltic MSP Forum and are invited to share the invitation with colleagues/relevant stakeholders.

The Committee took note of the information about the progress of Baltic Sea2Land project (Interreg BSR) and its final conference – 5th Baltic MSP Forum which will be held on 11-12 November 2025 in Riga, Latvia.

The Committee was reminded that all Committee members have received an invitation to 5th Baltic MSP Forum and are invited to share the invitation with colleagues/relevant stakeholders.

Project platform Baltic PlaNet

The Committee was reminded that VASAB Secretariat as Policy Area ‘Spatial Planning’ initiated and submitted project platform ‘Baltic Climate-Resilient Coastal Planning Network (Baltic PlaNet)’ to Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme on 9 December 2024 and project platform was selected for funding. Project platform ‘Baltic PlaNet’ Lead partner Climate Service Center Germany (GERICS) has received a subsidy contract last week which means that clarification process has been finalised. From 1st July 2025 starts project implementation phase. VASAB Secretariat has started to look for a project manager who could join Secretariat team to coordinate VASAB activities promised in the project. Kick-off meeting is planned in September-October 2025 potentially in Lääne-Harju Municipality in Estonia.

The Committee took note of the information about Interreg BSR project platform ‘Baltic PlaNet’ (Baltic Climate-Resilient Coastal Planning Network) progress.

Preparation process for the Young Planners Summer School 2026

The Committee was reminded that it has been previously mentioned that during Polish chairmanship it is planned to organise a VASAB Young Planners Summer School in August 2026 in Gdansk, Poland. In order to organise this event, VASAB Secretariat is looking for funding opportunities. On 11 April 2025 VASAB Secretariat attended online informative seminar for the Swedish Institute Ukraine Cooperation Programme and was convinced this exact programme doesn’t meet our requirements. Currently there are three potential funding opportunities: 1) Swedish Institute Baltic Sea Neighbourhood Programme; 2) Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme small projects call. VASAB Secretariat has already submitted project idea to Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme and has received green light to continue to elaborate this application; 3) Funding from Nordic Council of Ministers. There might be some VASAB internal resources as well to finance VASAB Young Planners Summer School, but first Gdansk University should give an estimate how much it would cost to organise a summer school.

The Committee took note of the information on preparation process for the Young Planners Summer School in August 2026 in Gdansk, Poland.

11. Comparison of VASAB and HELCOM recommendations

Information on VASAB Workshop “Towards updated Coastal Planning and Development Recommendations for the Baltic Sea Region” on 17th June

The Committee was reminded that the Committee in last meeting (March 2025) agreed that VASAB Secretariat should explore if and how VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region (1996) could be merged with HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R on Implementation of integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea. In April the meeting of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG took place where a question was raised whether to merge both recommendations and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG supported the plan on aligning the process of revising the related HELCOM and VASAB Recommendations during 2025, aiming for submitting the revised HELCOM and VASAB Recommendations to the October 2025 session of the group for recommendation for approval and further to aim for the December HELCOM Heads of Delegation (HOD) for the HELCOM Recommendation and VASAB CSPD/BSR for the VASAB Recommendation, or alternatively to aim submitting a joint Recommendation to HOD and CSPD/BSR. HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG invited the HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats to first do a preliminary analysis on comparing the current Recommendations and then the drafting group formed by Finland, Sweden and the Secretariats to consider the analysis before the June webinar, taking into account the differences in the scope and mandates of the existing Recommendations as well as technical possibilities to merge them. Drafting group consisting of HELCOM Secretariat representative Ms. Lotta Ruokanen, VASAB Secretariat representatives Ms. Egija Stapkēviča, Ms. Margarita Vološina and Ms. Tīna Šipkēviča, as well as HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG members Ms. Mari Pohja-Mykrä, Mr. Jan Schmidtbauer Crona, Mr. Joacim Johannesson, Ms. Penina Blankett have prepared a desk study (comparison, new topics, monitoring) and have met in 2 online meetings and discussions on 16 May and on 27 May. Next meetings planned for 30 June and (tbc) 18 August with HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG. HELCOM Secretariat together with VASAB Secretariat has prepared a document ‘Comparison of VASAB and HELCOM planning recommendations. This document has been shared with the Committee. This Comparison document was prepared to understand how actually both recommendations are organised and identified what basic principles, general guidance, specific activities/sectors are reflected in both recommendations. There is a need for terminology modernization in VASAB Recommendations as they are from 1996. The document also describes similarities and differences in both recommendations. Within the Baltic Sea2Land project a survey was done to see what topics and challenges spatial planners and countries are facing regarding coastal zone, and the survey, as well as 1st webinar ‘Towards updated Coastal Planning and Development Recommendations for the Baltic Sea Region’ (held on 20 November 2024) identified absent or new relevant topics for VASAB recommendations. Furthermore, in connection with the new topics, relevant EU-level regulations, strategies, and approaches were identified and compiled. Monitoring (national stocktaking exercise) of VASAB recommendations was done for specific activities/sectors among VASAB countries. Most of the specific activities/sectors for VASAB recommendations are addresses (at least partially) in national level spatial planning documents/regulations of the BSR countries.

The Committee was informed that a decision is needed to decide what should be the next steps regarding the VASAB recommendations. While the existing VASAB recommendations reflect an earlier policy context, they remain a valuable foundation for coastal planning. However, they no longer fully capture today’s challenges. New and pressing issues - such as climate change, biodiversity loss, the sustainable blue economy, crisis preparedness, and land-sea interactions - require updated guidance and more coordinated planning efforts across all levels. The next decision is needed on what should be the next steps regarding the VASAB recommendations, particularly in relation to the ongoing revision of the HELCOM recommendation: alignment with the HELCOM recommendation revision - to ensure consistency in terminology and

incorporate cross-references between the two documents; merging - to closely coordinate the guidance provided by both recommendations. In any case, an updated version of the VASAB recommendations is needed, as well as the format. It is important also to identify the main target group of the updated VASAB recommendations and what should be the main goal – e.g. addressing new topics, compiling best practices, or both, as well as should a background or monitoring report be developed, similar to previous VASAB reports (e.g. on Accessibility or Urban Development in the BSR).

The Committee agreed to update VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region (1996) and align with the HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R on Implementation of integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea revision to ensure consistency in terminology and incorporate cross-references between the two documents, as well as look into possibility to merge both recommendations.

The Committee took note of the information about upcoming VASAB Workshop ‘Towards updated Coastal Planning and Development Recommendations for the Baltic Sea Region’ to be held on 17 June 2025 (organised within Interreg BSR Baltic Sea2Land project).

12. VASAB Secretariat news

List of VASAB-related events, Administrative Report, VASAB Newsletter

The Committee was informed about VASAB newsletter to be issued in June 2025, VASAB-related events, and administrative report.

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

13. VASAB Budget

Audit Report of VASAB Budget 2024, VASAB Income and Expenditure 2024

The Committee was introduced to the auditor’s Review Report of 2024.

The Committee acknowledged the execution of VASAB Budget 2024 and took note of the auditor’s Review Report by SIA “Auditorfirma Padoms”.

Amendments to VASAB Budget 2025, Preliminary VASAB Income and Expenditure 2025

The Committee was introduced with amendments to VASAB Budget 2025 based on the execution of VASAB Budget 2024.

Taking into account the audited VASAB Budget 2024, *the Committee* decided to amend the VASAB Budget 2025, allowed payout of the non-taxed salary bonuses in 2025 for the staff members of the Secretariat.

14. Changes in VASAB Secretariat

The Committee took note of the information regarding launched competition for Head of VASAB Secretariat position, evaluation process of received applications and potential time of organising interviews.

15. Update of VASAB Cooperation Rules of Procedure and VASAB Secretariat Rules of Operations

The Committee agreed that VASAB Secretariat organised a written procedure to update VASAB Cooperation Rules of Procedure: 1) update a sentence ‘VASAB Long-Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (LTP)’ to ‘VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040’; 2) update a sentence ‘Relevant international policies’ to ‘Relevant international and EU policies’; 3) update a sentence ‘VASAB is a

coordinator for the EUSBSR Policy Area (PA) Spatial Planning and implementation of LTP supports achieving the targets of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)' to 'VASAB is a coordinator for the EUSBSR Policy Area (PA) Spatial Planning and implementation of VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040 supports achieving the targets of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)'; 4) update point No.2 to following wording 'VASAB CSPD/BSR is composed of the nominated representatives of the respective ministries/regional authorities represented in VASAB cooperation from Estonia, Finland, Germany (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Schleswig-Holstein regions), Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden. CBSS participates as an observer. It is possible for other BSR countries to become members of VASAB Cooperation. Due to the war in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia are suspended from the VASAB cooperation as of 4th of March 2022 based on a decision by the EU Member States participating in VASAB'; 5) update point 3.b to following wording 'CSPD/BSR has given a mandate on MSP matters to the Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group (WG), including those of the MSP within the EUSBSR and PA. CSPD/BSR oversees activities of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG'; 7) delete point 7; 6) update point No.20 to following wording 'Materials of the VASAB CSPD/BSR meetings are available prior each meeting on MS Teams platform'; move section 'VASAB Trio' with points No.24, 25 and 26 to section 'Modus Operandi.

The Committee agreed that VASAB Secretariat shares with the Committee VASAB Secretariat Rules of Operations for commenting, and a separate meeting should be organised online to discuss necessary changes in the document.

16. AOB

The Committee took note of the information about the need of the Latvian Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development for a partnership (national, sub-national level) to submit a project application to Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme on coastal monitoring topic, probably under priority "Resilient economies and communities".

17. Next meeting

The Committee agreed to hold 96th CSPD/BSR meeting on 16-18 September 2025 in Ilawa, Poland.