

COMMITTEE ON SPATIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF
THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Summary of the 96th CSPD/BSR Meeting

Łąwa, Poland, 17 September 2025

Chairperson: Ms. Emilia Malak-Pętlicka (PL)

Participants: CSPD/BSR members: Mr. Piotr Piekut (DE), Mr. Tiit Oidjärv (EE), Ms. Mari Pohja-Mykrä (FI), Ms. Donata Paulauskaitė (LT), Ms. Diāna Rasuma (LV), Ms. Kinga Stańczuk-Olejniak (PL), Ms. Martyna Gajowniczek (PL), Ms. Maxi Nachtigall (SE), VASAB Secretariat: Mr. Mārtiņš Ulāns, Ms. Egija Stapkēviča, Ms. Jana Laiviņa, Ms. Margarita Vološina, Ms. Tīna Šipkēvica, Ms. Liene Strazdiņa and Mr. Aksels Ruperts.

1. Adoption of the report of 95th VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting

The CSPD/BSR (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) adopted the Report of 95th CSPD/BSR meeting held on 16 June 2025 online without changes.

2. Adoption of the summary of 95th VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting

The Committee adopted the Summary of 95th CSPD/BSR meeting held on 16 June 2025 online without changes.

3. Information on Open Trio meeting

The Committee took note of the Report of the VASAB Open Trio online meeting on 4 September 2025.

4. News and major challenges regarding national spatial planning issues

Poland - news in spatial planning:

- Poland is implementing a major reform of the spatial planning system, based on the amendment to the Spatial Planning and Development Act (September 2023). Key elements include: municipal development strategies, new general spatial development plans, and stronger stakeholder involvement. Full implementation is foreseen by June 2026.
- KRK - National Development Concept 2050 (Konceptcja Rozwoju Kraju 2050). Adopted by the Council of Ministers on 25 July 2025. A long-term, interdisciplinary framework document setting development scenarios until 2050. Defines strategic trends, spatial challenges, and directions for balanced territorial development.
- ŚSRK - Medium-term National Development Strategy (Średniookresowa Strategia Rozwoju Kraju) „Strategia Rozwoju Polski do 2035” (“Poland’s Development Strategy to 2035”). It is the most important national development strategy document. The previous strategy, adopted in 2016, is being replaced by a new integrated document. The new ŚSRK is in the final stage of consultations; it will combine socio-economic and spatial dimensions. Will introduce a National Model of Functional and Spatial Structure, strengthening coherence between development and spatial policies. Public consultations of the main document as well as the Environmental Impact Assessment are currently underway and will conclude at the end of October. The horizontal objective of the document is sustainable territorial

development. The remaining strategic objectives are: Mitigating and adapting to demographic changes; Creating conditions for a competitive and fair economy that respects the environment and climate; Strengthening the security, resilience, and efficiency of the state. The document is scheduled to be adopted by the Council of Ministers at the end of this year.

- KSRR - National Strategy for Regional Development (Krajowa Strategia Rozwoju Regionalnego). Will be updated in line with the new strategic planning framework. Provides guidelines for regional development strategies, which should be updated by end of 2026. Work on the document has begun, starting with preparing the diagnosis which indicated the key medium-term objectives: 1) Enhancing territorial competitiveness – by fostering productivity, innovation, and technological development through structural transformation, use of competitive advantages, development of territorial specialisations, and promotion of networking and economic cooperation across Poland and the EU. 2) Reducing socially unacceptable disparities – by improving access to quality jobs and ensuring that residents across all territories have equitable access to essential goods and services, thereby promoting equal development opportunities. 3) Improving coordination and governance – by strengthening cooperation and management of territorially oriented actions within the public sector, including between government, local and regional authorities, public entities, business, and civil society organisations. 4) Building territorial resilience – by enhancing the capacity of all regions, especially those facing particular risks or opportunities, to withstand environmental, climate-related, socio-economic, and military shocks. Depending on the direction of interventions, this objective may contribute both to increasing competitiveness and to reducing regional disparities.

The plan is to focus not only on large cities, but also on other areas, including small and medium-sized towns. The document will identify OSI (Areas of Strategic Intervention), i.e. areas that have specific development problems or have particular potential that can be better exploited through concentrated action. This document will strengthen the integration of spatial planning at the voivodeship level, ensuring consistency with both KRK 2050 and the new ŚSRK.

Finland - news in spatial planning:

- The public consultation on the draft Land Use Act (LUA) closed on 11 July 2025. The proposal covers national land use objectives, regional and municipal planning, and maritime spatial planning. It aims to streamline planning procedures, clarify responsibilities, and introduce new tools such as landowner-initiated planning and partnership zoning. Key elements include: 1) Reduced legal weight of regional plans, especially in detailed land use regulation. 2) Simplified municipal planning procedures, including joint processing of master and detailed plans. Limited appeal rights: appeals on detailed plans would be restricted to directly affected parties; associations must have submitted comments to retain appeal rights. 4) New provisions for renewable energy: wind power siting guided by regional plans; a minimum distance of 8× turbine height from housing applies only outside designated areas and can be waived with landowner consent. Solar farms over 10 hectares would require zoning. The draft also strengthens the role of climate change mitigation and adaptation, and biodiversity in all planning levels. Landowners would be entitled to compensation for significant economic losses caused by zoning restrictions, particularly in forestry. Coordination of land use, housing, and transport planning in major urban regions would be enhanced. Public feedback was extensive and diverse. A key concern raised by stakeholders - particularly from the renewable energy sector - was the proposed fixed minimum distance for wind turbines. Critics argued that this would significantly hinder new onshore wind development and jeopardize Finland's green transition and clean energy targets. The current impact-based permitting system, which includes environmental assessments and noise modeling, was seen as more flexible and effective. The Ministry of

the Environment is currently reviewing the feedback and preparing revisions to the draft. The government aims to submit the final legislative proposal to Parliament during the autumn session 2025.

- The review on the relevance of the National Land Use Objectives (VATs) has been completed. The VATs are issued by the Finnish Government and guide land use planning on matters of national importance under the Land Use Act. According to the review published by the Ministry of the Environment, the VATs are widely regarded as necessary and functional tools for addressing national land use needs in planning and public administration. While the objectives of the VATs adopted in 2017 are still largely relevant, several significant changes in the operational environment have emerged including increased emphasis on national security and resilience, the clean energy transition and growing needs for energy infrastructure, demographic shifts, and increasing regional disparities as population growth and new development concentrate in fewer areas. Other drivers include climate change, biodiversity loss, and the need to manage the impacts of public finances on spatial development. The objectives will be updated as part of the implementation of the new Land Use Act. The review also highlights the importance of improving the clarity, concreteness, and regional applicability of the objectives. It recommends strengthening inter-ministerial cooperation to support coordination, foresight, and the evaluation of the objectives' implementation and relevance, as well as developing a more systematic monitoring framework.
- Finland has notified Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden on May 23rd about the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) concerning the draft decision on potential offshore wind power areas within Finland's exclusive economic zone. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has identified four potential offshore wind areas in the EEZ in the Gulf of Bothnia. Following the consultation phase of the SEA in September-October 2025, the Government may issue a decision regarding the reservation of a site within EEZ for wind energy production, launching a competitive tendering process for the site, and setting the conditions for its use.
- The draft Decree on Offshore Wind Power in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) was under consultation during July-August 2025. The proposed Decree would set out the eligibility requirements for participants in the tendering process and define the selection criteria for awarding the tender.
- In Maritime Spatial Planning, Finland notified Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden on May 30th about the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the revision of the Maritime Spatial Plan for Finland. The revision process of the Plan takes place between 2024-2027, and the revised plan is expected to be adopted by the end of 2027. Currently, three alternative planning solutions are being developed: a climate-smart MSP, a comprehensive maritime safety MSP, and a multi-use MSP. National and regional *MSP Cooperation Platforms* will be organized in autumn 2025 to gather feedback on the alternative planning solutions. Strategic Environmental Assessment will be conducted in 2026.

Germany - news in spatial planning:

- RED III. With the “RED III Implementation Law for Onshore Wind Energy”, in force since 15 August 2025, Germany has implemented the regulations of the Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2023/2413 (RED III) regarding onshore wind energy. Based on existing national regulations on the development of wind energy and the existing category of Wind Energy Areas, the new law introduces a new area category: Acceleration Areas for Onshore Wind Energy and Accessory Energy Storage (Beschleunigungsgebiete für die Windenergie an Land und Energiespeicher). The Federal States are free to decide whether the designation of Wind Energy Acceleration Areas shall be regulated through spatial planning (i.e. regional plans) or through communal land-development planning (i.e. land development plans).

Currently, the largest share of Wind Energy Areas is designated by regional plans so that future designation of new Wind Energy Acceleration Areas most probably will also largely take place in regional plans.

- Biotope Network. Germany is starting the process of examining the feasibility of a new National Spatial Plan on the Biotope Network that, by connecting elements and areas, would support the formation of a biotope network, crossing the borders of various federal states and connecting nature preservation areas.

Latvia - news in spatial planning:

- The Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development is continuing work on repairing to the Latvian Maritime Spatial Plan (MSP). Updates will reflect new research and regulations, recommendations for new maritime uses, including multi-use of maritime space, as well as updated maps and graphical materials.
- In land-based planning, municipalities created in the administrative-territorial reform must prepare the first versions of their new local government spatial plans (land-use plans) by December 2025. A key issue is the designation of areas for wind park development: while national energy policy supports expansion, municipalities and communities often oppose it by introducing restrictions that may conflict with state priorities. The Ministry will review these plans, and some municipalities may be required to revise their restrictions.
- Amendments are also being drafted to the Spatial Development Planning Law to strengthen early public engagement, ensuring discussions on specific proposals before local plans are formally prepared. While the concept has been debated in a national co-creation platform aimed at improving spatial planning system in Latvia and an agreement with social partners was made to follow this path, currently different views remain and parliamentary approval to such approach is uncertain.

Lithuania - news in spatial planning:

- The solutions of the Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania (CPRL) are valid until 2030, and there is currently no need for early renewal of the CPRL document. At the moment, municipal administrations are updating their existing general plans, taking into account the decisions adopted at the national level in 2021.
- A significant contribution to the continuity of this spatial planning process from the national to the local level is made by Urban Planning Division - a part of the Construction Sector Development Agency, which operates under the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania. One of the main focus areas of this Urban Planning Division is CPRL monitoring, data collection, digitization, and analysis. This is a consistent part of the CPRL implementation, because without high-quality monitoring, it is difficult to identify problems, opportunities, and other specific issues for a fluent further planning process.

Sweden - news in spatial planning:

- The Swedish rural development bill. Amongst others, the government describes, divided into four main areas, how the coherent policy for Sweden's rural areas and other policy areas have contributed to viable rural areas during this term of office, November 2022 – today (status 2025 with budget proposition for 2026 at hand): 1) Basic conditions for the development of rural areas; 2) Simplifications for residents and businesses in rural areas; 3) Better conditions for construction, entrepreneurship and investments in rural areas. 4) Safer, more attractive, more robust and interconnected rural areas. The bill is expected to be presented by the government before summer 2026.
- Under area three (3), the following measures could be highlighted: 1) The investigation into improved conditions for national spatial planning. It is proposed to let an investigator, among other things, review the existing state land and water claims and develop justifications and criteria for existing and future identified claims, review existing national planning processes and review the authorities' tasks and mandates regarding the claims and,

if necessary, submit proposals that improve cooperation on the issues. The investigation must submit a final report no later than 31 December 2027 to the Government Offices... - not yet decided. 2) Increased regional capacity and collaboration for good community planning. In May 2024, the government commissioned the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Swedish Transport Administration and the county administrative boards to offer the regions and the Municipality of Gotland support for strategic planning, through, among other things, increased knowledge and developed collaboration from a territorial perspective, in regional development work (LI2024/01013). The support aims, among other things, to increase the regions' conditions to take into account different planning processes, such as physical planning and transport planning, and to take advantage of synergies in regional development work. 3) Strengthened expertise in the planning and construction area. Funds have been allocated to strengthen the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning's work with guidance in planning and construction (Prop. 2024/25:1 Expenditure area 18). During the period 2025–2030, 10 million will be allocated per year. Furthermore, the Government has allocated funds to strengthen the work with knowledge bases for the cultural environment in municipal planning (Prop. 2024/25:1 Expenditure area 17). During the period 2025–2030, 5 million will be allocated annually.

Estonia - news in spatial planning:

- One of the current government's priorities is to streamline planning procedures which defines a great part of the work of spatial planning policy. Currently, one set of legislative changes is in the Parliament and next sets are being prepared. Recently, the new state architect position was filled, activities include support and oversight of local municipalities' planning activities, managing state-owned land, and others. Many projects are ongoing related to further digitalisation of spatial planning. Devising the national spatial plan is ongoing.

The Committee took note of the information about news and major challenges regarding national spatial planning issues.

5. Terrestrial spatial planning country fiches

The Committee was informed that Sweden and Finland have sent updated terrestrial country fiches to VASAB Secretariat and updated versions have been published at VASAB website: <https://vasab.org/home/about/country-fiches/>. The Committee was informed that VASAB Secretariat will send the current country fiches versions to the rest Committee members to look through and update if necessary.

The Committee was reminded that all VASAB member countries are invited to regularly update the Country fiche on terrestrial spatial planning and send it to VASAB Secretariat for publishing on VASAB website.

6. Update of VASAB Secretariat Rules of Operations

The Committee was reminded that VASAB Secretariat Rules of Operations were revised by VASAB Committee via written procedure on 17 April 2025 and was informed that Ms. Maxi Nachtigall has given comments/suggestions on different aspects of the Rules of Operations. Couple of meetings have taken place between VASAB Secretariat and Ms. Maxi Nachtigall to discuss proposed updates and questions. **The Committee** discussed all comments and proposed suggestions by Ms. Maxi Nachtigall.

The Committee agreed that VASAB Secretariat organises a written procedure to update 'VASAB Secretariat Rules of Operations' as discussed at this Committee meeting.

7. 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 16 June 2025 and is a living document, subject to periodic updates and changes as needed. VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 is shared with the Committee via MS Teams platform where each Committee member can write their comments/suggestions. VASAB Secretariat has updated VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 (version of 16 June 2025) by putting additional information for implemented activities and links to VASAB website to get more information about events and several parts of the Work Plan were discussed between Committee members.

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 17 September 2025'.

Mr. Mārtiņš Ulāns gave presentation about proposals for future VASAB Work Plan on 4 main blocks: 1) VASAB Strategic and operational documents; 2) Reaching spatial planners on all levels; 3) Best practices in BSR and beyond; 4) International cooperation.

The Committee took note of the information on Mr. Mārtiņš Ulāns proposals for future VASAB Work Plan.

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

An overview of Policy Area Spatial Planning activities, EUSBSR Action Plan update

The Committee was informed about the latest developments and activities related to the EUSBSR and reminded that the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is an agreement between the European Commission and the EU member states bordering the Baltic Sea: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. It fosters cooperation and finds common solutions to joint challenges on a macro-regional level. To achieve these objectives, the Strategy's Action Plan identifies the most important actions for implementation. The actions are thematically divided into Policy Areas (PAs) which are all linked and contribute to achieving these objectives from different angles and in diverse ways. Policy Area (PA) Spatial Planning ensures a transnational approach in spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region and creates a forum and cooperation platform for regional, trans-boundary and cross-sectoral dialogue towards more coherent planning. PA Spatial Planning is jointly coordinated by VASAB and HELCOM. EUSBSR gives VASAB cross-sectoral dialogue, multi-level cooperation and policy building. VASAB gives EUSBSR territorial dimension, established network/stakeholders, know-how and institutional memory. The most important thing that has been going on for a while is the EUSBSR Action Plan update. Policy Area Coordinators (PACs) have submitted 1st drafts approved by Steering Groups (SG) by 31 January 2025. They have been reviewed in National Coordinators group (NCG) in June, and all PAs after individual calls with NCG were provided with both general and individual feedback. In June there was a new final template provided for PA Actions, and PA Spatial Planning submitted the draft to Baltic Strategy Point (BSP) for reviewing on 26 August 2025. On 9th September, a feedback call with BSP was held, after which Action 1 indicators will be reviewed. The final SG approved version must be submitted until 31 October 2025, so that the final updated Action Plan can be approved by NCG by the end of 2025.

The Committee was informed that ESPON Seminar 'Exaptive resilience in border regions' took place in Gdansk, Poland on 25-26 June 2025. This event brought together leading researchers and policymakers from around Europe to explore a new frontier in regional development and resilience. EUSBSR Estonian Presidency kick-off meeting took place on 11 September 2025 in Tallinn, Estonia. This meeting was an important step in the update of the EUSBSR Action Plan and brought together NC's, PACs, SG Presidencies, and representatives of funding programmes

ERDF/ESF+, Interreg, and the European Commission to reflect on the Actions now drafted and prepare for their finalisation in the autumn. EU Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies Days will be held on 24-25 September 2025 in Brussels, Belgium. Co-organised by DG REGIO and DG MARE, this two-day event will serve as a communication and networking platform, bringing together participating countries, pillar coordinators, stakeholders, and representatives of EU institutions. 7th informal consultation session of the Baltic Sea Region Maritime Spatial Planning Data Expert Sub-group will take place on 13 October 2025 in Helsinki, Finland. The aim of BSR MSP Data Expert sub-group is to support data, information, and evidence availability for MSP processes with regard to cross-border/trans-boundary planning issues to ensure comparability of maritime spatial plans in the Baltic Sea Region. BSSSC Day of Cities and Regions will take place on 28 October 2025 in Sopot, Poland. Under the title ‘Breaking Down the Silos in Baltic Sea Region Cooperation’ it will be focused on enhancing multi-level engagement in Baltic Sea cooperation and on strengthening the exchange and links between different thematic areas and policy-making levels. Network meeting of Interreg programmes in the Baltic Sea Region: enhancing cooperation will take place on 30 October 2025 in Sopot, Poland, back-to-back with EUSBSR Annual Forum 2025. This meeting builds on the outcomes of previous discussions among the EUSBSR PACs and Interreg programmes and focuses on practical ways to improve cooperation. XVIII UBC General Conference will be held in Slupsk, Poland on 4-7 November 2025. This conference will focus on strengthening the role of cities in the EU, ensuring their priorities influence policy and funding decisions. The agenda will address navigating new EU financial frameworks, enhancing advocacy, maximizing funding opportunities, building policy engagement capacities, fostering inter-city cooperation, and maintaining urban issues on the EU agenda. ESPON Seminar ‘Making Space for the Renewable Energy Transition’ will take place on 19-20 November in Aalborg, Denmark. This event will gather European policymakers, researchers, planners, and stakeholders to tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time: accelerating renewable energy deployment while safeguarding social cohesion, biodiversity, and economic competitiveness. Final conference of Interreg BSR project “GreenIndustrialAreas” will take place on 25-26 November in Schwerin, Germany. The aim of the event is to present the project’s results and use examples to show ways of sustainably redesigning industrial areas. VASAB Secretariat has been invited to give a keynote speech at the event.

The Committee took note of the information about EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning news and activities, technical assistance project ‘PASPS’ and EUSBSR Action Plan update.

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, PA Spatial Planning together with PA Energy and PA 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.

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.

MSP Planners’ Forum on 12 November 2025 in Riga, Latvia

The Committee was informed that 7th MSP Planners’ Forum meeting within ‘PASPS’ project will be held on 12 November 2025 in Riga, Latvia back-to-back with 5th Baltic MSP Forum. During MSP Planners’ Forum participants discuss each country’s pressing MSP issues, knowledge gaps and future MSP project needs. Planners’ Forum is dedicated for informal exchange among maritime spatial planners. Forums are usually focused on one topic, but this time it will reflect on the 5th Baltic MSP Forum.

The Committee took note of the information about 7th MSP Planners’ Forum meeting within ‘PASPS’ project which will be held in-person on 12 November 2025 in Riga, Latvia and hosted by VASAB Secretariat.

Participation in project TOGETHER4HEAT: Collective and Inclusive Energy Futures for Rural Areas

The Committee was informed that VASAB Secretariat has received an invitation to become an associated partner in the project proposal ‘TOGETHER4HEAT: Collective and Inclusive Energy Futures for Rural Areas’ led by Heinrich-Böll-Foundation Schleswig-Holstein, to be submitted for Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2021-2027 Programme call for small projects on 8 October 2025. The project aims to enable small municipalities to manage the heat transition by facilitating the engagement of citizens in decarbonising heating/cooling (H/C) systems and developing collective, inclusive, and non-commercial solutions in rural regions. Potential role for VASAB Secretariat: 1) Joint workshop at EUSBSR Annual Forum 2028 (as an associated partner the role of VASAB is to take part in organising a transfer workshop at EUSBSR Annual Forum 2028 together with Policy Area Energy who have already expressed interest); 2) Participation in the Project Advisory Group (the Advisory Group would be mainly guiding the project team with regard to the transfer activities and advising on how to best set the focus of / share the Policy Brief, e.g. propose networking events, policy-makers). Project ‘TOGETHER4HEAT’ contribution to VASAB Vision 2040: Project is connected to 3.5 Energy Strings, supporting the transformation to net zero in the field of energy; Project directly addresses the topic of energy poverty, since it will be implemented in rural areas, where citizens are specifically prone to being affected by energy poverty; The foreseen consortium includes four small municipalities, hence representing the group of local authorities, identified in the VASAB 2040 strategy as one key stakeholder group for implementing the energy strings. Project ‘TOGETHER4HEAT’ contribution to EUSBSR PA Spatial Planning: Project would support the objectives of PA Spatial Planning by fostering place-based, community-driven solutions for the heat transition in rural areas, enabling small municipalities to plan and implement inclusive, sustainable, and climate-resilient energy systems; By promoting transnational knowledge exchange and empowering local actors to jointly develop and finance off-grid heating and cooling solutions, the project strengthens territorial cohesion and advances the decarbonization of the Baltic Sea Region.

The Committee supported VASAB Secretariat participation as an associated partner in the project proposal ‘TOGETHER4HEAT: Collective and Inclusive Energy Futures for Rural Areas’ led by Heinrich-Böll-Foundation Schleswig-Holstein, to be submitted for Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2021-2027 Programme call for small projects.

9. Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)

Informal consultation session of Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG) meeting on 15-17 October 2025 in Helsinki, Finland; Information on the progress of updating the VASAB coastal recommendations

The Committee was informed that the next informal consultation session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG will be held on 15-17 October 2025 in Helsinki, Finland and informed about main activities of the Working Group: 1) There is ongoing work to assess the progress of Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030. The Task Force consists of national representatives of Germany, Latvia, the EU Assistance Mechanism, and HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats. HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG will be introduced with the progress of the implementation of the interim assessment. There was performed the survey of authorities and stakeholders, and the other task was to review existing MSP country fiches. According to the findings of the Task Force on MSP Roadmap interim assessment and based on the results of the survey it was proposed to review the current country fiches. The main conclusion that they are an important source of information for MSP planners, but their structure needs to be improved. The structure is being revised for simplification. 2) According to the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG Work Plan, the Interim Assessment Report shall be drafted by the end of 2025. The outcome of the interim assessment will be a report titled 'Interim Assessment Report on the Progress of the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021–2030'. The Task Force has drafted the initial structure of this report. 3) VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region (1996) have been analysed during Baltic Sea2Land project and with the help of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG it was recognised that there are two HELCOM recommendations which are content-related: HELCOM Recommendation on implementation of maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management in the Baltic Sea area (2019) and Revised HELCOM Recommendation 15/1 Protection of coastal strip (2019). The overall conclusion and decision of VASAB Committee was to look into the possibility to merge those documents to support spatial planners navigate through all those recommendations, and if not possible, to align them and ensure linkages between all three documents. This decision has been made by VASAB Committee and decision has to be made also by HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG. 4) The Fourteenth Informal Consultation Session of the Task Force on the Revision of the Guideline on ecosystem-based approach in MSP (IC 14-2025 TF on EBA Guideline) took place online 11 September 2025. When the final version of this document will be ready, it will be introduced to VASAB Committee. The Committee will be asked to approve the document.

The Committee took note of the information about upcoming informal consultation session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group to be held on 15-17 October 2025 in Helsinki, Finland.

The Committee took note of the information on the progress of updating VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region (1996).

10. Information about VASAB projects

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. The Committee is welcome to the 5th Baltic MSP Forum and is invited to register for the event, as well as is invited to share invitation with their network and colleagues. *Ms. Liene Strazdiņa* introduced the Committee with 5th Baltic MSP Forum agenda, sessions, speakers.

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 invited to register for the 5th Baltic MSP Forum and share invitation with their network and colleagues.

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. VASAB's responsibility in this project lies in two work packages: Ocean Governance and Communication. To support one of the objectives of the project – to enhance the effectiveness of transboundary 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, VASAB, HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group and MSP Planners' Forum are being analysed. Part of the research is based on the interviews which are currently being performed in the North Sea & Baltic Sea Regions. Upcoming first cross sea-basin dialogue events: MSP Data experts meeting on 13 October 2025 in Helsinki, Finland (7th informal consultation session of the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group), Sea-basin governance session at the 5th Baltic MSP Forum on 12 November 2025 in Riga, Multi-use session at the 5th Baltic MSP Forum on 12 November 2025 in Riga, GNSBI DG meeting on 25-26 November 2025, GNSBI stakeholder event in the first part of 2026. VASAB Secretariat is currently preparing terms of reference for the Overview report on the progress of policy instruments and actions aiming at obtaining climate neutrality. The purpose of this procurement is to produce a comprehensive and policy-relevant stocktaking and overview Report that explores how Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and related coastal and spatial planning instruments contribute to achieving climate neutrality in the Baltic Sea Region, with consideration of developments in the North Sea.

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

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. The Baltic PlaNet project platform brings together coastal municipalities to unify their responses to extreme weather events through joint spatial planning, offering practical tools, training, and peer exchange to protect natural and urban areas. Baltic PlaNet platform project consolidates outcomes from 12 EU funded projects. This project is evaluated as of a strategic importance for the Baltic Sea Region, and it is expected that project partners will report the results of this project to the European Commission. The main target group of the project is local municipalities, mainly spatial planners at local municipalities. The Lead Partner of this project is Climate Service Center Germany (GERICS) and partners are following: HELCOM, Latvian Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development, VASAB Secretariat, Town of Międzyzdroje (Poland), Kurzeme Planning Region (Latvia), Tallinn University (Estonia) and Lääne-Harju Municipality (Estonia).

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

Progress of Land-based Planners' Forum project, information on VASAB webinar on good planning & cooperation practices in the Baltic Sea Region on 18 September and upcoming project seminar in February 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia

The Committee was informed that two documents 'Comparison of planning systems in the BSR' and 'Feasibility study' have been finalised. Feasibility study is based on the results of the survey done in spring 2025. On 18 September 2025 VASAB Secretariat is organising a webinar on good planning & cooperation practices in the Baltic Sea Region. There will be presentations from representatives of different cooperation groups and networks. After presentations a panel discussion will be organised to reflect on needs and opportunities, then move to what is missing and finally conclude with what's next. The aim is to help understand how existing cooperation works and where there are opportunities for Land-based Planners' Forum. Final event of the project - a face-to-face event with stakeholder involvement and engagement to develop cooperation (Planners' Forum) proposals – will be organised on 11-12 February 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia and all Committee members are invited to save the date and join the event.

The Committee took note of the information about 'Land-based Planners' Forum' project (co-funded by Swedish Institute) progress.

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.

Expected results and future of Land-based Planners' Forum project

The Committee was invited to share their expectations about Land-based Planners' Forum project, expected results.

The Committee agreed to continue develop Land-based Planners' Forum especially considering and highlighting following aspects: 1) continuation of stakeholder mapping, attraction and involvement; 2) selection of the most actual spatial planning topics across BSR; 3) relevant forms of Forum organisation and dissemination of practices.

11. Next steps towards Young Planners Summer School

The Committee was informed that it is still on VASAB Secretariat's agenda and in VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 to organise VASAB Young Planners' Summer School in 2026. VASAB Secretariat thanked Ms. Maxi Nachtigall for helping to identify possible funding sources and informed that will get in touch with Gdansk University of Technology to work on budget estimate for organising a Young Planners' Summer School.

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

12. VASAB Secretariat news

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

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

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

13. AOB

VASAB Secretariat thanked VASAB Committee members for their suggestions on new VASAB website structure in March meeting and informed that it helped VASAB Secretariat to prepare Terms of Reference. The Committee was informed that procurement procedure for new VASAB website development services finished in May 2025 and contract has been signed. Currently

VASAB Secretariat is working together with the website developer. Design of the new website is approved, and developer is now preparing the test version of the website. The Committee was introduced with approved design of the new website and asked for feedback about the map on the first page, should it be zoomed in or not.

The Committee gave suggestions on several features on new VASAB website first page.

14. Next meeting

The Committee agreed to hold 97th CSPD/BSR meeting on 18-19 February 2026 in Warsaw, Poland and VASAB Open Trio meeting on 4 February 2026 online.