

COMMITTEE ON SPATIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF
THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Summary of the 97th CSPD/BSR Meeting

Warsaw, Poland, 18-19 February 2026

Chairperson: Ms. Emilia Malak-Pętlicka (PL)

Participants: CSPD/BSR members: Mr. Jens Kurnol (DE), Mr. Tiit Oidjärv (EE), Ms. Mari Pohja-Mykrä (FI), Ms. Donata Paulauskaitė (LT), Ms. Anete Bērziņa (LV), Ms. Kinga Stańczuk-Olechnik (PL), Ms. Martyna Gajowniczek (PL), Ms. Maxi Nachtigall (SE), Mr. Jon Fransson (SE), *Invited guests:* Mr. Lukasz Marciniak (Ministry of Development and Technologies), Mr. Wiktor Szydarowski (ESPON EGTC), Mr. Jacek Zaucha (Gdańsk University), Ms. Anna Kuna-Kasprzyk (Ministry of Economic Development and Technology), Mr. Jakub Tarnacki (Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy), Ms. Hilma Salonen (Nordregio), Mr. Szymon Faruga (Pomorskie Voivodeship), Mr. Emil Walendzik (Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship Office), Mr. Karol Ostrowski (Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship Office), Mr. Sebastian Żukowski (Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship Office), Mr. Odd Godal (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development), Ms. Ann Martensson (Region Halland), Ms. Nina Kvello (DG REGIO), Ms. Natalia Zajac (Ministry of Infrastructure), Mr. Kamil Rybka (Ministry of Infrastructure), Mr. Pasi Pitkänen (Regional Council of North Karelia), *VASAB Secretariat:* Mr. Mārtiņš Ulāns, Ms. Egija Stapkēviča, Ms. Jana Laiviņa, Ms. Margarita Vološina, Ms. Tīna Šipkēviča, Ms. Liene Strazdiņa and Mr. Aksels Ruperts.

1. Adoption of the report of the 96th VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting

The CSPD/BSR (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) adopted the Report of the 96th CSPD/BSR meeting held on 17 September 2025 in Ilawa, Poland without changes.

2. Adoption of the summary of the 96th VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting

The Committee adopted the Summary of the 96th CSPD/BSR meeting held on 17 September 2025 in Ilawa, Poland without changes.

3. Information on Open Trio meeting

The Committee took note of the Report of the VASAB Open Trio online meeting on 4 February 2026.

4. Presentation about spatial planning in Poland at local level

The Committee took note of the information about spatial planning system in Poland at local level.

5. News and major challenges regarding national spatial planning issues

Sweden - news in spatial planning:

- Among other measures, the government intends to carry out a review of existing systems and regulations with the aim of establishing a more coherent system for national spatial planning, based on a comprehensive socio-economic analysis. The review will aim to

improve the conditions for considering different interests against each other, provide increased national equivalence, increased legal certainty and better coordination between public actors. This is done against in the light of the government's assessment that the current system for the state's claims to land and water can be improved in terms of efficiency, predictability and transparency.

- The Swedish national board of housing building and planning has been tasked by the government to support the Swedish ministry for rural affairs and infrastructure in the work with VASAB. Thus, the national board from 1st of January 2026 acts as Swedish vice representative in the CSPD/BSR and supports the ministry in the planning of the coming Swedish presidency in VASAB, starting in 2027. During the latest Swedish chairmanship, the national board was chairing VASAB CSPD/BSR.

Lithuania - news in spatial planning:

- The main spatial planning document of the Republic of Lithuania – the Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania – remains unchanged. It was approved in 2021 and is valid until 2030, with no current plans to amend it before the end of its term.
- In the field of territorial/spatial planning, legislative documents are being actively prepared, and information systems are being adapted with the aim of further digitalizing existing and future spatial planning documents. The objective is not only to create a more convenient spatial planning documentation system and improve data for monitoring processes, but also, in the long term, to optimize subsequent construction permit issuance procedures. The intention is that part of the data verification process would be carried out automatically by systems rather than by individuals. Such parameters as permitted building height and key development indicators (e.g., density and intensity) would be checked automatically, while the role of the chief architect or other authorized persons would shift more towards qualitative aspects of project assessment.
- Amendments to the Law on Territorial Planning provide that municipalities may establish incentive measures in spatial planning documents. This means that higher development intensity, density, or building height (with defined additional allowances) may be permitted if, for example, a project includes municipal housing, allocates ground floors to services or commercial uses, or provides separate green spaces and similar elements that create added value for urban vitality but are often not implemented due to a fragmented or short-term developer approach.
- The “15-minute city” concept has also been incorporated into territorial planning norms, introducing new definitions and parameters - such as what constitutes a block, its optimal size, and the required relationship between buildings and streets. Previously, these important urban elements were described in a highly abstract manner, allowing for broad interpretation.
- Other areas to mention - maritime spatial planning (MSP). Currently under consideration and coordination is the Law on the Development of the Southern Part of Klaipėda State Seaport, which aims to accelerate planning processes for the southern expansion of the Port of Klaipėda - primarily addressing issues related to land plot formation.
- The Lithuanian offshore wind farm project is in progress (currently in the design stage), but progress has not been as fast or smooth as initially planned. The project faces higher costs, increased risks, potential delays until 2035, political debates, and difficulties in attracting additional competitors for the second tender.

Latvia - news in spatial planning:

- The revision of the Maritime Spatial Plan was launched on 13 January 2026 by order of the Minister of Smart Administration and Regional Development. The updates will incorporate research results, reflect the latest regulations, include recommendations for new maritime uses - including multi-use of maritime space - and provide updated maps and graphical materials. Information regarding transboundary consultations for the SEA has been sent to

the responsible authorities to initiate the respective procedure. Coastal municipalities have also been informed.

- In Latvian land-based spatial planning, the municipalities established during the 2021 administrative-territorial reform were expected to prepare the first versions of their new local government spatial plans (land-use plans) by December 2025. To date, 5 of the planned 29 land-use plans have been reviewed by the ministry. One of the emerging challenges concerns the limited designation of areas suitable for wind energy development in some territorial plans, as well as the introduction of various conditions for such projects. These issues have prompted active discussions within society.
- In addition, the evaluation of the administrative-territorial reform, together with the mid-term review of regional policy 2021-2027 implementation, is currently underway. Both assessments will serve as the basis for regional policy settings after 2027, with particular attention to the development needs of the eastern border region in the current geopolitical context.
- As mentioned at the previous VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting, amendments are also being drafted to the Spatial Development Planning Law to strengthen early public engagement to give opportunity to society to engage more in the early planning process steps. This will ensure that discussions on specific proposals take place before development of plan is launched. The proposal in the Law was supported in the first reading in the Latvian Parliament.
- Within the framework of the LIFE LATESTadapt project, work has begun on the preparation of guidelines for nature-based solutions, scheduled for completion in November 2026. The guidelines will also include the Estonian perspective, as Viimsi municipality is the lead partner in the LIFE LATESTadapt project.

Finland - news in spatial planning:

- Preparation of the new Land Use Act is progressing: the Government will submit the bill to Parliament in spring 2026, and the Act is expected to enter into force at the beginning of 2027. The reform's purpose - aligned with the Government Programme - is to promote efficient land use and a good living environment, streamline planning and appeals, support urban and municipal growth and sufficient housing supply, strengthen regional vitality and business competitiveness, and improve Finland's attractiveness for investment, while keeping the planning tiering coherent and unchanged.
The planning system remains familiar: national land-use guidelines, regional plans, and municipal master and detailed plans, with municipalities retaining the decisive role in plan-making. The regional plan is refocused on issues of national or regional significance, and its prescriptiveness/light legal effects are eased, shifting more inter-municipal coordination to municipal planning. At the municipal level, procedures are streamlined - for example, master and detailed plans may be processed together - and new tools are introduced, including landowner-initiated planning and partnership zoning. Appeals are targeted more precisely so that, in specified cases, challenges to detailed plans are limited to directly affected parties, while associations retain standing where they have submitted comments.
Energy provisions were a focal point of the public debate. Following an extensive consultation (about 450 responses) that focused especially on wind/solar rules and appeals - as well as on the role of regional plans, initiative and partnership zoning, and compensation in forestry - the Government set a national line to include in the bill: outside designated areas, wind turbines must keep a fixed minimum distance from housing and large solar farms require zoning. Concretely, the wind setback is 1.25 km with a possible opt-out if 4/5 of affected landowners' consent, and the zoning threshold for solar is ≥ 50 ha (i.e. 1.25 km instead of the earlier $8 \times$ height concept, and 50 ha instead of 10 ha).
- Regional administration reform. At the beginning of 2026, Finland implemented a major regional administration reform in which the former 15 Centres for Economic Development,

Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) were discontinued and replaced by two new actors: the national Lupa - ja valvontavirasto (Permit and Supervisory Agency) and ten regional Elinvoimakeskukset (Centres for Regional Vitality).

For spatial planning, the most relevant change is that area-use-related supervision, permits and oversight - previously handled within ELY environmental branches - have been transferred to the new Permit and Supervisory Agency, which now acts as the competent authority for environmental permitting, supervision, impact assessment procedures and several land-use and environmental control functions. The new agency also consolidates tasks from multiple former authorities and operates nationwide with offices across the country.

The newly established Centres for Regional Vitality assume the bulk of the former ELY Centres' development-oriented tasks. They operate in every region and work on a wide portfolio including regional development, business and employment services, agriculture and rural development, transport and mobility, natural resources, environmental protection, and importantly the promotion of sustainable land use and spatial planning coordination at the regional level. Their remit includes advancing nature conservation, climate adaptation, water management, and biodiversity objectives.

The reform aims to create a more coherent and efficient state regional administration by clarifying responsibilities, improving coordination, and moving toward more uniform permit and supervisory practices. From the perspective of land use, it results in a clearer division between permitting/supervision (national) and development/coordination (regional) - a structure intended to support both sustainable land-use planning and the broader green transition.

- Maritime spatial planning. The update of the Maritime Spatial Plan for Finland is underway, and the updated plan is expected to be adopted by the end of 2027. Three alternative planning solutions have been developed: a climate-smart MSP, a comprehensive maritime safety MSP, and a multi-use MSP. National and regional MSP Cooperation Platforms were organized in autumn 2025 to gather feedback on these alternatives. The draft Map Plan is currently being prepared and is expected to be completed by May 2026. After that, the draft will be consulted with neighbouring countries, Sweden and Estonia, and an informal national digital hearing will also be conducted. An environmental assessment will be carried out later in 2026, and a cumulative impact assessment will be co-created as a pilot within the SEABAS project. The international and national hearing phases are scheduled for early 2027.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has identified four potential offshore wind areas in Finland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Gulf of Bothnia. The consultation phase of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the draft decision on potential offshore wind power areas took place in October-November 2025, and the assessment is expected to be finalized in February 2026. The Government may issue a decision to reserve a site within the EEZ for wind energy production, initiate a competitive tendering process for the site, and determine the conditions for its use.

Estonia - news in spatial planning:

- In conjunction with Estonia's current national government priorities, the main focus of spatial planning policy is on streamlining and reducing the need for statutory planning procedures. Numerous changes in the Planning Act are currently in the Parliament (Riigikogu), further changes are being prepared.
- On the national level, the in-progress new national spatial plan "Estonia 2050" will be on public display in February and March, expected to be enforced by the end of 2026.
- On local level, many municipalities are managing updates to their comprehensive plans and planning for wind, which can be challenging in some areas.

- Digital solutions are being prepared to reduce administrative burden for all stakeholders involved in planning procedures.

Germany - news in spatial planning:

- In a decision of November 2025, the Ministerial Conference for Spatial Planning (RMK) emphasizes that recent multiple crises and the geopolitical “turning point” necessitate stronger action in spatial planning and development to address spatial risks in an integrated manner. Resilience - defined as the capacity to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from disruptions - should be anchored as a guiding principle in spatial planning. The goal is to design spaces, settlements, and critical infrastructures in such a way that they remain functional even during crises and are capable of sustainable adaptation and development. Central places, as hubs for essential services and critical infrastructure, are of particular focus. The RMK calls for a reassessment of spatial planning tools to operationalize resilience and asks its chair to consult with the Federal Ministry of Defence on aligning spatial planning requirements with security policy needs. Additionally, the Main Committee is tasked with developing action recommendations for federal, state, and regional planning, in close coordination with sectoral ministerial conferences. The ministry has initiated a revision of the national spatial planning law (“*Raumordnungsgesetz*”).
- In another decision the conference agreed on a new guiding principle (*Leitbild*): “Shaping Land Demands and Land Use Conflicts.” It acknowledges the positive trend of reduced land take for settlement and transport areas in recent years, thanks to efforts by planning authorities, sectoral policies, and civic engagement. However, growing land demands - driven by renewable energy expansion, housing, industry, and transport - conflict with Germany’s sustainability target of reducing daily land take to below 30 hectares by 2030 and achieving net-zero by 2050. The conference reaffirms the need to protect agricultural land, forests, and open spaces for climate and biodiversity, while promoting efficient and sustainable land use. It calls for greater transparency in land use monitoring, critical review of sectoral land demands, and active support from federal, state, and local governments in implementing the new guiding principle: “Shaping Land Demands and Land Use Conflicts.” The conference adopts this principle to update the 2016 spatial development guidelines, emphasizing fair balancing of interests, effective use of planning tools, promotion of multi-use and inter-municipal cooperation, and transparent, digitalized planning processes. A broad communication campaign is planned for 2026 to engage all relevant stakeholders.

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

6. Terrestrial spatial planning country fiches

The Committee was informed that Committee members of Sweden and Finland have notified VASAB Secretariat that their terrestrial country fiches are up to date. Secretariat has republished both country fiches at VASAB website with an updated date - February 2026. The rest Committee members were kindly asked to look through current country fiches and send updated versions if necessary or inform is the country fiche up to date.

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.

The Committee members informed that terrestrial country fiches of Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden are up to date and VASAB Secretariat was tasked to republish these country fiches at VASAB website <https://vasab.org/support-for-planners/country-fiches/> with an updated date - February 2026.

7. Update on VASAB Vision 2040 implementation approach

The Committee took note of the information about VASAB Vision 2040 implementation approach.

8. Enhancing resilience in the Baltic Sea Region

The Committee took note of the information about 'ESPON TERRES' project learnings and results. All project materials are available at ESPON website: <https://gis-portal.espon.eu/arcgis/apps/experiencebuilder/experience/?id=9e3c7ccaabdd4cf2b1bc32b5bf30199f&page=Home>.

The Committee was informed about VASAB cooperation and spatial resilience in the Baltic Sea Region: regional trends, VASAB Vision 2040 and synergy with EUSBSR, as well as objectives and added value of the new ESPON project 'Baltic ReSeaLand - Territorial Resilience of Land and Maritime Space in the Baltic Sea Region'.

The Committee took note of the information about ESPON Targeted Analysis 'Baltic ReSeaLand - Territorial Resilience of Land and Maritime Space in the Baltic Sea Region' indicative timeline and agreed that Lead stakeholder of the project will send an e-mail to all project stakeholders and VASAB Committee members inviting to suggest representatives for procurement preparation (development of Terms of Reference, evaluation and selection of service provider). These representatives will be obliged to sign a declaration of confidentiality.

9. Update of the VASAB Work Plan 2025 - 2026: achievements in 2025 and key tasks for 2026

The Committee was reminded that VASAB's joint work for 2025-2026 is summarized in VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026. VASAB's work is summarised in 5 work blocks which include: 1) VASAB cooperation itself, including the priorities of VASAB chairmanships; 2) Development, promotion and implementation of the VASAB Vision 2040; 3) Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Management. The Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group is the main driver of this work, and the VASAB Committee oversees it through the Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021-2030; 4) EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning: A forum and cooperation platform for regional, transboundary and cross-sectoral dialogue to promote more coherent planning; 5) VASAB communication and visibility. VASAB Secretariat supplements the work plan for each VASAB Committee meeting with information on what has been accomplished and provides links to important information. This allows users to track activities and familiarize themselves with the results. The updated VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 was sent to the Committee for consideration. In general, VASAB's work is proceeding according to plan without substantial deviations.

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 18 February 2026'.

The Committee was informed that while VASAB is implementing Work Plan 2025-2026, work on the new VASAB Work Plan 2027-2028 should start. Current Work Plan 2025-2026 was created so that the Committee and VASAB Secretariat would have a common document providing an overview of VASAB's work. Regarding the new Work Plan 2027-2028 there is a question whether there is a desire to change the current approach. At the next Committee meeting and interactive sessions could be organised to work together on the new Work Plan and set priorities and tasks jointly.

The Committee agreed that VASAB Secretariat in close cooperation with upcoming Swedish chairmanship start working on the new VASAB Work Plan 2027-2028, considering improving the template.

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

An overview of Policy Area Spatial Planning activities and PA relevant projects, 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 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. PA coordinators (PACs) are key operational stakeholders at PA level, and their tasks are as follows: to ensure general overview of PA; to manage, coordinate and develop PA; to monitor and report to Steering Group/s on progress; to ensure PA communication and visibility. 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 Committee was informed that the most important thing that has been going on for a while is the EUSBSR Action Plan update. Policy Area Coordinators (PACs) submitted 1st drafts approved by Steering Groups (SG) on 31 January 2025. They were reviewed by National Coordinators (NC) and all PAs after individual call with National Coordinators Group (NCG) were provided with feedback. After receiving the final template in June 2025, PA Spatial Planning on 26 August 2025 submitted the filled template to Baltic Sea Strategy Point (BSP) for reviewing. After receiving feedback from BSP, the final version of the draft, approved by both PA Spatial Planning Steering Groups has been submitted on 28 October 2025. The final updated Action Plan has been approved by the NCG, and it has now entered the European Commission consultation process. It is expected that it will be approved and published in April 2026.

The Committee was informed that Interreg BSR project GreenIndustrialAreas held their final conference in Schwerin (Germany) on 25-26 November 2025. During this conference PA Spatial Planning coordinator Ms. Tīna Šipkēvica delivered a keynote speech 'Building spatial resilience in the Baltic Sea Region: changes, challenges, and trends'. EU Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies Days were held on 24-25 September 2025 in Brussels, Belgium. Co-organised by DG REGIO and DG MARE, this two-day event served 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 took 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 took place on 28 October 2025 in Sopot, Poland. Under the title 'Breaking Down the Silos in Baltic Sea Region Cooperation' it 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 took 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 was held in Slupsk,

Poland on 4-7 November 2025. This conference focused on strengthening the role of cities in the EU, ensuring their priorities influence policy and funding decisions. ESPON Seminar ‘Making Space for the Renewable Energy Transition’ took place on 19-20 November in Aalborg, Denmark. This event gathered 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. The European Ocean Days 2026 will be held on 2-6 March 2026 in Brussels, Belgium. A week-long event with a series of dynamic and interconnected sessions will focus on key ocean-related themes, all designed to encourage participants to engage across topics and contribute to a shared vision for prosperity, competitiveness, security and sustainability of our ocean. Workshop ‘Climate Change Effects & Maritime Spatial Planning in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea’ will be held online on 9 March 2026. Workshop will provide insights into current experiences and approaches for addressing climate change in MSP across both sea basins and will highlight the latest results from science and research. Seminar ‘Bridging Vision and Action: Smart Rural Development That Leaves No Region Behind’ will take place on 24 March 2026 in Sofia, Bulgaria. The first cross-macroregional event on smart rural development is organized by representatives of the 4 EU macro-regional strategies and the SMART ERA project. The event focuses on territorial cohesion of different EU macro-regions. BSSSC Day of Cities and Regions ‘Co-Governing Resilience: Shaping Secure, Connected and Thriving Societies’ will be held on 11 May 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia. This event will bring together mayors, regional leaders, policymakers, young people and programme stakeholders from across the Baltic Sea Region. Together, they will discuss how cities and regions can strengthen security, resilience, and competitiveness in times of growing geopolitical uncertainty. European Maritime Day 2026 will be held on 21-22 May 2026 in Limassol, Cyprus. It is the annual event during which Europe’s maritime community meets to network, discuss and outline joint action on maritime affairs and sustainable blue economy. EU Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies Days will be held on 1-2 July 2026 in Brussels, Belgium. The Strategies Days 2026 event is co-organised by the DG REGIO and DG MARE to address themes and challenges of interest both for the Macro-regional strategies and the Sea Basin Strategies.

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.

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

The Committee was informed that EUSBSR Annual Forum 2025 took 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”. PA Spatial Planning together with PA Energy and PA Secure organised a session ‘Towards Climate-Resilient Baltic Sea Region’. This session showcased collaborative climate change adaptation efforts in the Baltic Sea Region, highlighting tools and strategies for a climate-resilient macro-region, featuring insights from the Baltic PlaNet project platform as well as Interreg BSR projects ClimaResponse and CommitClimate.

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) held 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 was 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 reflected on the 5th Baltic MSP Forum.

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

Preparation for EUSBSR Annual Forum 2026, 11-13 May 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia

The Committee was informed that EUSBSR Annual Forum 2026 will be held on 11-13 May in Tallinn, Estonia. The Annual Forum is the yearly gathering for collaboration in the Baltic Sea Region within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which has been held since 2009. This year's slogan is "The tides are shifting, and so must we". Policy Area Spatial Planning has started preparations by submitting 4 breakout session applications: 1) The Story and Vision of VASAB: Engaging cross-sectoral actors across the Baltic Sea Region; 2) Shifting Tides, Resilient Territories: Advancing Spatial Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region; 3) Resilience under Climate Change: Spatial Planning, Culture, Tourism (together with Policy Area Culture and Policy Area Tourism); 4) From Plans to Reality: Governing Urban Mobility for Resilience (together with Policy Area Transport).

The Committee took note of the information about upcoming EUSBSR Annual Forum 2026 to be held on 11-13 May in Tallinn, Estonia and 4 breakout session applications submitted by Policy Area Spatial Planning.

11. Organisation of Young Planners Summer School on 2-8 August 2026 in Gdansk, Poland

The Committee was informed about the progress of organising VASAB Young Planners Summer School in August 2026 in Gdansk, Poland.

The Committee agreed that VASAB Young Planners Summer School should be organised in August 2026 in Gdansk, Poland and Summer School's title should be – Navigate Planning Through Changes.

The Committee supported proposed content of the Young Planners' Summer School.

The Committee agreed that list of participants should be decided by organisers (VASAB Secretariat and Gdansk University of Technology) and participants from all VASAB members countries plus participants from Ukraine, Norway and Denmark are welcome to apply.

The Committee approved to finance organisation of Young Planners' Summer School from VASAB 2026 Budget line 'Activities to be decided by CSPD/BSR' according to the proposed budget estimate 46 054,70 EUR.

The Committee tasked VASAB Secretariat to continue attraction of external funding for the organisation of Young Planners' Summer School.

12. Information about VASAB projects

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 (OSPAR Commission, the North Sea Energy Corporation, HELCOM, VASAB, HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group and MSP Planners' Forum) in both sea regions were scoped and mapped, interviews with representatives

were carried out, and all materials are being assessed and analysed to understand effectiveness and impact, as well as qualitative dimensions important for transboundary cooperation. Through cross sea-basin dialogue the project aims to accomplish several tasks: 1) Identify shared questions and upcoming issues; 2) Inspire improvements in marine governance structures; 3) Define topics for thematic cooperation; 4) Develop common terminology and understanding; 5) Share skills and knowledge. Practical outputs planned: 1) Joint statement GNSBI and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG (e.g., on EBA in MSP); 2) Methodological recommendations on sea-basin governance; 3) Data flow models for intra-/inter-basin data exchange. Past and upcoming cross sea-basin dialogue events: Special joint session of MSP data experts from the North Sea and Baltic Sea regions on 13 October 2025 in Helsinki (7th informal consultation session of the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group); At the 5th Baltic MSP Forum on 12 November 2025 in Riga session ‘Advancing Transboundary Governance: Baltic and North Sea Challenges and Prospects’, session ‘Effective Use of Space for a Sustainable Blue Economy: Baltic Approaches to Multi-Use in Marine and Coastal Areas’, panel discussion ‘What Do We Mean as EBA Planning & Management?’, EBA & CIA Synthesizing workshop on 30-31 March 2026 in Gdansk; Workshop ‘Making the Sea-Basin approach work through MSP’ at European Maritime Day 2026 on 21-22 May 2026 in Limassol; EU MSP Week - GNSBI Stakeholder event and NESBp Partner meeting on 2-4 June 2026 in Brussels. VASAB Secretariat has prepared Terms of Reference for the overview report ‘How Maritime Spatial Planning and Related Instruments Contribute to Climate Neutrality in the Baltic Sea Region’. 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 report shall provide a concise synthesis of findings across countries, including key differences, common challenges, and successful practices. The findings should support: updates of maritime and coastal spatial plans in Baltic Sea countries; implementation of climate-related actions through spatial planning; macro-regional implementation of the VASAB Vision 2040 and the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Roadmap 2021–2030 (Objective 5 Spatial planning contributes to climate change mitigation, adaptation and increased resilience of the Baltic Sea Region).

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

Finalisation and key results of Baltic Sea2Land project

The Committee was informed that VASAB Secretariat organised the 5th Baltic MSP Forum “Navigate Planning Through Changes!” on 11-12 November 2025 in Riga, Latvia. This Forum was organised together with the Baltic Sea2Land project, serving as its final conference, and broadening the scope to strengthen linkages between maritime spatial planning (MSP) and coastal zone planning. The Forum gathered 169 participants from 14 different countries representing a diverse and truly international community of maritime spatial planning and coastal planning professionals. The Forum featured insights from 59 speakers, who contributed to discussions across plenary sessions, keynote speeches and 9 parallel sessions, offering a wide range of perspectives and expertise. The Baltic MSP Forum continues to serve as a key platform for planners, policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders to meet, exchange knowledge and experience, share good practices, and strengthen transnational cooperation for dynamic and future-ready spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond.

All materials/videos of the Forum are available below:

- Summary report of the Forum is [here](#);
- Session recordings are available in the YouTube [playlist](#);
- Presentations and other visual materials from the event are [here](#);

- A recap video “A Journey Through the Baltic MSP Forums” is [here](#).

The Committee was informed that Baltic Sea2Land project has prepared a report on Multi-Level Dialogue on Land-Sea Interactions and Coastal Governance (https://interreg-baltic.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/D3.1_multilevel_dialogue.pdf) and Annex 2 to the report ‘Towards updated Coastal Planning and Development Recommendations - Analysing existing recommendations’ (https://interreg-baltic.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/D3.1_Annex3_Towards_updated_VASAB_Recommendations.pdf).

Project also developed Baltic Sea2Land Navigator tool which will be developed further in two new platform projects: Baltic PlaNet and SEABAS.

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

Progress of Baltic PlaNet project

The Committee was informed that project ‘Baltic Climate-Resilient Coastal Planning Network’ (Baltic PlaNet) brings together coastal municipalities to unify their responses to extreme weather events. Project objectives are to support municipal adaptation, integrate climate into planning, develop knowledge sharing platform and empower local authorities. Project platform ‘Baltic PlaNet’ is based on 11 existing EU climate and spatial planning projects. VASAB Secretariat leads work package 3 ‘Knowledge sharing and capacity building to advance climate-resilient coastal planning in BSR’. As the first deliverable VASAB Secretariat at the end of 2025 prepared Stakeholder Engagement, Communication, and Outreach Plan (https://interreg-baltic.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Baltic-PlaNet_Stakeholder_Engagement_and_Communication_Plan.pdf). The plan outlines: who the stakeholders are, how the project team will communicate and engage with stakeholder and how to build a long-term capacity for spatial planners across the region.

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, results of the final event on 11-12 February 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia

The Committee was informed that within ‘Land-based Planners’ Forum’ project several tasks have been accomplished: 1) Mapped stakeholders – spatial planners in 7 BSR countries (for survey); 2) Prepared document ‘Comparison of 7 spatial planning systems in BSR’; 3) Prepared document ‘Feasibility study’ (based on survey results) and made a Recommendations for the Planners’ Forum; 4) On 18 September 2025 hosted online seminar and discussion to validate findings and learn from other BSR networks & groups. The project team has learned that there is interest in Planners’ Forum but there is also caution. Stakeholders want low administrative burden, informality, inter-generational exchange, flexibility, tangible outputs and practical value. There is a need for a phased approach to develop Land-based Planners’ Forum for local and regional spatial planners, and start with more informal connection, gradually build more structured cooperation. On 11-12 February 2026 in Tallinn (Estonia) was organised project’s final event ‘Launch of the Land-based Planners’ Forum’ – effective cooperation mechanism of land-based spatial planners (platform for informal, mutual learning, exchange of best practices and eventually improved capacities). During the event different formats of Land-based Planners’ Forum were discussed and participants chose these three as priority formats: community launch, lightweight online workshops/webinars, knowledge hub/repository.

The Committee took note of the information about ‘Land-based Planners’ Forum’ project (co-funded by Swedish Institute) results and final event held on 11-12 February 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia.

Further steps of Land-based Planners' Forum

The Committee was invited to discuss the potential & expected benefits for VASAB and to make a decision whether to continue with pilot of the Land-based Planners' Forum based on priorities identified during 'Launch of the Land-based Planners' Forum' event.

The Committee agreed to continue Land-based Planners' Forum and tasked VASAB Secretariat to prepare a short-term action plan on how to pilot the Forum, as well as explore possibilities for external funding.

13. Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP):

Approval of revised EBA Guideline

The Committee was informed that Task Force of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group, consisting of leading experts from Baltic Sea Region in maritime spatial planning have developed Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea Region. HELCOM Heads of Delegation has approved the document on 15 January 2026. VASAB Committee is invited to approve the document as well.

The Committee agreed that VASAB Secretariat organises a written procedure to approve the revised Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in maritime spatial planning (MSP) in the Baltic Sea area.

Outcomes of informal consultation session of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting on 15 - 17 October 2025 in Helsinki, Finland

The Committee was informed about outcomes of 7th Informal Consultation Session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group held on 15-17 October 2025 in Helsinki, Finland: 1) 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 structure of this report and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG supported it. The aim is to submit the report to VASAB Committee for approval in June 2026; 2) 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. HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG discussed the proposal and pointed out that VASAB and HELCOM have different legal basis and strength of the mandate of the organisations. HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG supported continuing the process of revising the recommendations as proposed by the drafting group and invited further interested group members to join the drafting group, as well as proposed to check if the legal basis of both organisations might have any effect on the process;

The Committee took note of the information about outcomes of 7th Informal Consultation Session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group held on 15-17 October 2025 in Helsinki, Finland.

Candidates for Vice-chair position (VASAB side) of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group

The Committee was invited to nominate a Vice-chair for Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group.

The Committee nominated Mr. Kamil Rybka from Ministry of Infrastructure of Poland for Vice-chair position (VASAB side) of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group.

Information on the progress of updating the VASAB coastal recommendations - Terms of Reference for the VASAB report on the current situation analysis of the Baltic Sea coast/coastal regions

The Committee was informed about the progress of updating VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region (1996) and prepared Terms of Reference for the VASAB report on the current situation analysis of the Baltic Sea coast/coastal regions.

The Committee took note of the information on the need to analyse the current situation of the Baltic Sea coast and coastal regions and on the Baltic Sea MSP Task force initiated by the HELCOM Secretariat to draft a comprehensive recommendation on maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea and spatial planning of the coastal zone, applying an ecosystem-based approach and addressing protection of the coastal strip. The aim is to develop one joint HELCOM-VASAB recommendation replacing the existing: HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R on implementation of integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea, HELCOM Recommendation 15/1 on protection of the coastal strip, and VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region (1996).

The Committee took note of the information on prepared Draft Terms of Reference for Report on current spatial development situation in the region's coastal areas and feasibility study on estimated budget and timeline.

The Committee agreed that Committee members will consider their participation in the Baltic Sea MSP Task force or nominate other relevant national representatives from the VASAB side.

The Committee tasked VASAB Secretariat to send an invitation to Committee members to indicate their willingness to engage in the Baltic Sea MSP Task force.

14. Proposal on stakeholder engagement and distribution of VASAB work results

The Committee took note of the proposal on stakeholder engagement and distribution of VASAB work results.

17. VASAB Secretariat news

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

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

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

VASAB participation at the round table discussion at the World Planning Schools Congress 29 June - 3 July 2026, Helsinki

The Committee took note of the information about VASAB participation at the round table discussion at the World Planning Schools Congress on 29 June – 3 July 2026 in Helsinki, Finland.

New VASAB webpage

The Committee tasked VASAB Secretariat to make several changes in the new VASAB website according to the Committee feedback and send the final version to the Committee for approval before making the website public.

18. Next meeting

The Committee agreed to hold the 98th CSPD/BSR meeting on 2 June 2026 online at 9:00 CET and VASAB Open Trio meeting on 19 May 2026 online at 14:00 CET.