Adopted 28.10.2026.

COMMITTEE ON SPATIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Summary of the 98th CSPD/BSR Meeting

Online, 2 June 2026

Chairperson: Ms. Emilia Malak-Pętlicka (PL)

Participants: CSPD/BSR members: Ms. Katharina Voss (DE), Ms. Sarah Wieschmann (DE), Mr. Jens Kurnol (DE), Mr. Tiit Oidjärv (EE), Ms. Mari Pohja-Mykrä (FI), Ms. Donata Paulauskaitė (LT), Mr. Dāvis Bičkovičs (LV), Ms. Anete Bērziņa (LV), Ms. Kinga Stańczuk-Olejnik (PL), Ms. Martyna Gajowniczek (PL), Ms. Maxi Nachtigall (SE), Mr. Jon Fransson (SE), *Invited guests:* Mr. Markus Helavuori (Council of the Baltic Sea States), Mr. Kamil Rybka (Ministry of Infrastructure), *VASAB Secretariat:* Mr. Mārtiņš Ulāns, Ms. Egija Stapkēviča, Ms. Jana Laiviņa, Ms. Margarita Vološina, Ms. Tīna Šipkēvica and Mr. Aksels Ruperts.

1. Adoption of the report of the 97th VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting

The CSPD/BSR (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) adopted the Report of the 97th CSPD/BSR meeting held on 18-19 February 2026 in Warsaw, Poland without changes.

2. Adoption of the summary of the 97th VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting

The Committee adopted the Summary of the 97th CSPD/BSR meeting held on 18-19 February 2026 in Warsaw, Poland without changes.

3. Information on Open Trio meeting

The Committee took note of the Report of the VASAB Open Trio online meeting on 19 May 2026.

4. Preparation for VASAB DG meeting

The Committee was informed about the proposal for a new cooperation format for ministries responsible for spatial planning and development - VASAB Directors-General meeting and added that the 1st VASAB Directors-General meeting is planned during Polish chairmanship on 27-28 October 2026 or 20-21 October 2026 in Gdansk, Poland. Five point set of Conclusions were proposed to the Committee to agree on during the 1st VASAB Directors-General meeting: 1) VASAB mandate (spatial planning and development, spatial resilience, territorial cohesion); 2) Roadmap (spatial resilience in the BSR and external border regions); 3) Macro-regional input (BSR contribution to the future territorial vision and foresight of the EU); 4) DG meetings(regular high-level input); 5) Role of VASAB (planners' forum, sectoral cooperation). The Committee was invited to give feedback on 4 points:

- Date of 1st VASAB Directors-General meeting: 27-28 or 20-21 October 2026;
- Meeting format: choice between 2 DG (VASAB + territorial cohesion) +2 experts or 1 DG VASAB + 2 experts;
- Agreement on adoption of the Conclusions: whether the Conclusions should be the expected outcome of the DG meeting;

- Agreement on 5 topics: mandate, roadmap, macroregional input to EU process, regular Directors-General meetings, role of VASAB.

The Committee was informed that feedback on the text of the 1st Draft Conclusions from the Committee members are expected until 26 June 2026. 1 August 2026 until 8 September 2026 the second draft of the Conclusions will be shared for a final round of comments. In mid-July official written invitation for the DG Meeting will be sent out.

The Committee took note of the information about proposal for a new cooperation format for ministries responsible for spatial planning and development - VASAB Directors-General meeting.

The Committee agreed to held 1st VASAB Directors-General meeting on 27-28 October 2026 in Gdansk, Poland and to keep the format flexible to accommodate each country's needs.

The Committee agreed to prepare Conclusions for adoption including all five topics: mandate, roadmap, macroregional input to EU process, regular Directors-General meetings, role of VASAB and agreed to send feedback on the text of the 1st Draft Conclusions until 26 June 2026.

The Committee agreed to send to Polish chairmanship colleagues' full names and titles of the Directors-General (DG) who should be invited to upcoming 1st VASAB Directors-General meeting in October 2026 for written invitations to be sent out in mid-July 2026.

5. ESPON Baltic ReSeaLand project progress

The Committee was informed about the new ESPON Targeted Analysis project 'Baltic ReSeaLand – Territorial Resilience of Land and Maritime Space in the Baltic Sea Region'. Proposal was submitted under the 5th. cut-off date for the submission of proposals for Targeted Analyses for the ESPON Programme 2030. ESPON selected the proposal for implementation as one of 6 proposals out of 14. The project budget was set at EUR 280,000. The thematic action plan under which the project will be implemented was changed from "Governance of New Geographies" to "Places Resilient to Crises". 'Baltic ReSeaLand' project is the first integrated land–sea resilience assessment in Europe, responding directly to the priorities set out in the VASAB Ministerial Tallinn Declaration on Spatial Resilience adopted by Ministers responsible for spatial planning and development in the Baltic Sea Region in June 2025. Russia's war against Ukraine has fundamentally reshaped security conditions across a region that forms almost half of the EU's external border. In this new geopolitical reality, strengthening territorial resilience has become an urgent priority. The project examines how both terrestrial and maritime spaces can withstand, adapt to, and recover from sudden and unpredictable hazards - including geopolitical threats, energy insecurity, climate change, socio-economic risks, and pandemics. By analysing spatial factors (territorial capital) and developing new methodological tools, Baltic ReSeaLand supports decision-makers at pan-Baltic, national, regional, and maritime levels in building coordinated and evidence-based responses to complex challenges. A major strength of the project is the diversity of stakeholders involved - from pan-Baltic organisations to national, regional and maritime authorities. This ensures that the analysis captures the full territorial complexity of the region and is firmly rooted in real policy needs across different governance levels. Stakeholders: Ministry of Funds and Regional Development (PL) – Lead Stakeholder, VASAB Secretariat, BBSR (DE), Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (NO), North Karelia Region (FI), Kymenlaakso Region (FI), Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (PL), Pomorskie Voivodeship (PL), Region Halland (SE). Project implementation has started in early 2026, first results are planned to publish in the beginning of 2027. ESPON prepared a draft ToR, which was reviewed and refined by five stakeholder representatives who voluntarily joined this stage of the work (the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, the VASAB Secretariat, BBSR, the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, and the Pomorskie Voivodeship). The ToR was published, which opened the call for tenders. The same representatives will take part in the evaluation of the tenders submitted under the call for tenders. Following the selection of the service provider, all

stakeholders will be involved in the subsequent stages of the project. Kick-off meeting is planned between 27 July and 5 August 2026 and all Committee members are invited to join the meeting.

The Committee took note of the information about ESPON Targeted Analysis project 'Baltic ReSeaLand - Territorial Resilience of Land and Maritime Space in the Baltic Sea Region' progress and expected kick-off meeting planned between 27 July and 5 August 2026.

6. News and major challenges regarding national spatial planning issues

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 in force. 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 spatial planning, legislative proposals continue to be actively prepared and information systems are being further adapted to enable the **digitalisation** of both existing and future spatial planning documents. Significant attention is also being given to the **revision and revocation of outdated spatial planning documents** - primarily at the local level. From next year, municipalities will be required to review their existing spatial planning documents, identify those that remain relevant and of sufficient quality, and eliminate those that are no longer relevant, already implemented, or unnecessary. This process will include a **public consultation stage** to ensure transparency and openness.
- The aim is not only to create a more user-friendly spatial planning documentation system and improve data quality for monitoring purposes, but also, in the long term, **to streamline construction permit issuance procedures**. It is expected that part of the data verification process will be carried out automatically by information systems rather than manually, while municipal chief architects and other authorised professionals would focus more on qualitative project assessment. In this context, **key definitions** are also being further clarified and refined.
- At the same time, amendments to the Law on Territorial Planning continue to be implemented, enabling **municipalities to introduce incentive-based measures within spatial planning documents**. This means that higher development intensity, density, or building height may be permitted in exchange for specific solutions- such as the provision of public spaces, active ground-floor uses in city centres, municipal housing, and similar elements that contribute to urban vitality.
- **As regards maritime spatial planning**, Lithuania - like the rest of Europe - **continues to await clearer definitions under the forthcoming Ocean Act.** This is particularly relevant given that Lithuania will take on the Presidency of the Council of the European Union **in January 2027**, during which this issue is expected to be among the important policy topics.

Germany - news in spatial planning:

- The Federal Government on 28 May 2026 approved the draft bill on the modernisation of urban planning and regional development law, presented by the Federal Minister for Housing, Urban Development and Construction. The present draft bill introduces various legal amendments to the **Building Code (BauGB),** among others: 1) For residential development where a local development plan in a tight housing market designates a development area that serves at least in part for residential purposes, an overriding public interest is established by law. This also applies to certain uses that complement the residential development in the plan. In nature conservation law, it is to be clarified that housing development interests may constitute a compelling reason of overriding public interest; 2) The environmental assessment process is being simplified. Whilst the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment must continue to be applied in every environmental assessment, the requirements for an Environmental Impact Assessment

(EIA) will in future only need to be observed in the case of development plans replacing planning approval for projects subject to an EIA or a preliminary EIA; 3) The urban planning process will be streamlined and made fully digital. The *XPlanung* standard will be mandated for local authorities across the country, in accordance with the binding guidelines issued by the IT Planning Council.

- The **Spatial Planning Act (ROG)** is also being modernised, with particular focus on regulating the full digitalisation of the public consultation process for the preparation of spatial planning plans and for spatial compatibility assessments. Furthermore, to ensure resilient spatial structures, including the interests of military defence and civil protection, a legal basis for federal spatial planning plans is being created and a corresponding principle of spatial planning introduced. Furthermore, spatial planning is to work towards the creation of urgently needed housing land in conurbations.

Sweden - news in spatial planning:

- Sweden continues to strengthen the integration of resilience, civil preparedness and security into spatial planning processes, both on land and at sea.
- Since 22 July 2025, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has been the emergency preparedness authority within the new emergency preparedness sector for industry, construction and trade. The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth is responsible for the sector, which also includes the Geological Survey of Sweden (SGU). This reflects a growing recognition that spatial planning contributes to resilience, civil preparedness and the functioning of society during crises.
- Sweden notes that recent EU policies increasingly expect Member States to be able to plan land use strategically at the national level. This creates new challenges, especially in countries like Sweden where planning is mainly carried out at the regional and local levels. One example is the proposed Industry Acceleration Act (IAA), which requires Member States to designate at least one Industrial Manufacturing Acceleration Area to facilitate and cluster industrial development. This illustrates a growing expectation that Member States have the capacity to make strategic spatial priorities and land-use decisions at the national level.
- On September 13th there will be elections in Sweden. Sweden will have a new government and a new minister responsible for regional policy issues and infrastructure, as well as a new minister responsible for urban planning issues.
- On June 1st, Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard presented the government's new Arctic strategy and submitted the strategy to the national parliament for consideration. With the new strategy, the government clarifies Swedish interests and priorities for Arctic policy. Swedish Arctic policy is strengthened by clarifying the connections between security policy, resilient societies, the economy, and the environment and climate. The new Arctic strategy reflects a new security situation – the most serious for Sweden since the Second World War.

Finland - news in spatial planning:

Land-use planning

- Preparation of the new Land Use Act is progressing: the Government has submitted the bill to Parliament on 17 April, and the Act is expected to enter into force at the beginning of 2027. The Environment Committee will hold a public hearing in autumn 2026.
- The updated *Landscape impact assessment in the construction of wind farms* has been published in Finnish and Swedish.
- A legislative project concerning the dismantling of decommissioned onshore wind turbines is underway and scheduled for fall 2026.
- The Ministry of the Environment has initiated a revision of the National Land Use Guidelines. The aim is to ensure that land use planning supports the functionality, security

of supply, and safety of the energy system in the long term. The National Land Use Guidelines will not be comprehensively reformed in this context. The goal is for the Government to decide on the revision of the Guidelines during 2026.

Maritime spatial planning and Coastal Strategy

- 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.
- The preliminary draft Map Plan has been prepared. The informal national digital hearing will open on 16 June at the open MSP Webinar and will continue throughout the summer. An environmental assessment will be carried out later in 2026. The international and national hearing phases are scheduled for early 2027.
- Maritime spatial planning and Finland's Coastal Strategy (2024) are coordinated processes that complement each other. The preliminary draft MSP Plan Map includes a new map designation, the *coastal belt*, which represents a key area of land-sea interaction, linking catchment areas with the marine environment. The coastal belt is a critical hub for the economy, infrastructure, and supply chains. It aligns with the Coastal Strategy by focusing on land–sea nutrient flows, coastal biodiversity, ports, tourism, settlements, energy infrastructure, and climate adaptation.
- The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for implementing the *Forum for Sharing Best Practices* action package included in Coastal Strategy. The Forum is an open event held twice a year together with maritime spatial planning events: MSP-webinar in June and MSP Days in November. 1st Forum for Sharing Best Practices, themed *Coastal and Archipelago Resilience,* was held on 25 November 2025. 2nd Forum for Sharing Best Practices, themed *Integrated Coastal and Maritime Spatial Planning,* will be held on 16 June 2026. 3rd Forum for Sharing Best Practices, themed *Ocean Pact priority*: *Supporting coastal areas, island communities, and the outermost regions,* will be held on 17 November 2026.

Estonia - news in spatial planning:

- Revision of Estonian Maritime Spatial Plan is ongoing and soon will be finalised.
- A lot of legislative changes in Spatial Planning Act. The president of Estonia enforced some changes that streamline planning procedures, make it quicker, lessen the need for spatial plans, but also give central state authority - Land and Spatial Board - more strict supervision powers regarding deadlines and some content of spatial plans in municipalities. Also, recently in the Spatial Planning Act were made changes initiated by the Defence Ministry - no spatial planning needed anymore for most of defence constructions. Some of it is temporary but some is permanent. A couple of new changes are still in preparation phase – streamlining and making planning stronger content wise, including spatial resilience as a guiding principle in the Spatial Planning Act for spatial plans.
- In Estonia, specific plans on national level are being prepared: 1) One regarding power lines, new hydrogen pipe between Finland and Latvia. The positioning of this is done through a national spatial plan; 2) Nuclear power station plan, the first in Estonia. There is no nuclear legislation in Estonia.
- National strategic spatial plan is being finalised. Public hearings took place across Estonia couple of months ago and the discussions were really good. The new plan will bring some changes, for example, more compact development, spatial development, more focus on centres outside Tallinn.
- Larger spatial planning reform is in process, and a roadmap is being created on how to get there. New reform is not just a new planning act, but also responsibilities of different parties (what do the landowners do in the spatial planning system, what is the responsibility of the decider, who pays what, and so on). Also making the whole planning proceeding digital.

- Wind planning is still tricky in Estonia. It is the responsibility of local municipalities, but there has been debates on whether it should have been done nationally. A few years ago, it was decided with municipalities that it should be done at local level, but it is challenging for local municipalities to come to an understanding of what is acceptable and how to meet the national goals.
- A new innovation project has started for state agencies and the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture on how to automate certain spatial pre-decisions. The aim is not to automate spatial decision making, but to make all spatial conditions interact and be machine readable, to automate as much as possible (this includes spatial planning, construction, but also conditions coming from heritage protection, natural protection, geology).

Poland - news in spatial planning:

- First, the new medium-term national strategy is being finalised: the Strategy for Poland's Development 2035. This document sets the main development framework for the country. It has three main goals: to mitigate and adapt to demographic change; to create conditions for a competitive and fair economy, respecting the environment and climate; and to strengthen the security, resilience and capacity of the state. It also has one horizontal goal: balanced territorial development based on a polycentric settlement network. The strategy is now at the stage of consultations within the Council of Ministers.
- Second, the work is ongoing on the new National Strategy for Regional Development 2035. This will be the key strategic document for regional policy in Poland. Its role is to translate national development goals into territorial action. The strategy will focus on four objectives: territorial competitiveness, territorial cohesion, territorial resilience and better governance of territorial development. The document is still being prepared. Its assumptions have been adopted recently, so we are now moving from the conceptual stage to more detailed programming.

Latvia - news in spatial planning:

- The revision process of the Latvian Maritime Spatial Plan (MSP) is currently in an active phase. First consultations have been conducted with the key stakeholder platform - the Joint Maritime and Coastal Spatial Planning Group, where targeted work has been carried out with the energy and shipping sectors, focusing on revising existing sectoral criteria and refining overall approaches. It all goes in line with the established Terms of Reference. The Communication Plan for the MSP revision has been finalised, and a series of thematic stakeholder meetings are scheduled. Work on the analytical and informative components is ongoing, with the scenario-building process planned to commence in late summer.
- The application of the ecosystem-based approach (EBA) continues to present challenges. The concept itself is complex and requires substantial data availability and integration, making its practical implementation demanding. At the same time, transboundary consultations have been successfully initiated.
- As reported previously, following the 2021 administrative-territorial reform, municipalities in Latvia were expected to prepare the first versions of their new local government spatial (land-use) plans by December 2025. At the moment, 6 out of the planned 29 land-use plans have been reviewed by the ministry. One of the principal challenges in preparing these plans has been achieving a balance between competing development interests, economic activities, and the preservation of environmental and landscape values. This has often resulted in extensive public consultations, particularly regarding areas designated as suitable for wind energy development.
- Regarding ESPON 2030 activities, it has been recognised that organising joint seminars and combined events increases effectiveness and provides a valuable platform for addressing specific spatial planning issues. For example, previous events have focused on demographic challenges (December, 2026), while an upcoming seminar in June, 2026 will address, both,

the landscape dimension in planning and strategies to strengthen it in an effective and balanced manner and illustrate, how complementing research activities with practical examples from URBACT IV and the European Urban Initiative (EUI) has proven to be a useful approach, offering municipalities and planning regions practical guidance on leveraging Interreg support in their work.

- The Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development (MoSARD) is participating in the Horizon Europe project SELINA, which aims to support evidence-based decision-making for the protection, restoration, and sustainable use of the environment, contributing to the objectives of the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the European Green Deal. Latvia serves as a demonstration case for the application of the ecosystem-based approach in MSP. The 8th project partner workshop is planned to take place in Latvia in late September, and the ministry will host it together with BEF Latvia.

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

7. Terrestrial spatial planning country fiches

The Committee was reminded if there are any updates in the terrestrial spatial planning country fiches, the Committee is invited to share the updated version.

The Committee was reminded that all VASAB member countries should regularly update the Country fiche on terrestrial spatial planning and send to Secretariat to publish on VASAB website.

8. Update of the VASAB Work Plan 2025 - 2026: Update of key tasks for 2026 and preparation of VASAB Work Plan 2027-2028

The Committee was informed that in roughly 3.5 months since adoption of the latest Work Plan 2025-2026 version, the Work Plan has moved significantly. Five deliverables completed, several work streams have progressed, and the Committee's own decisions have generated new initiatives. Beyond the Work Plan - 3 project applications developed in response to the 97th CSPD/BSR meeting mandate to support tasks of chairmanship and to continue and pilot the Land-based Planners Forum.

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 2 June 2026'.

The Committee was informed that the next Work Plan 2027-2028 needs to be developed and suggested the Committee to take part in shaping the new Work Plan. The Committee was introduced with three questions up for discussion:

1) Content - what should drive the next Work Plan? (Chairing countries' priorities (Sweden, Latvia), Tallinn Declaration, setting priorities of VASAB Vision 2040 actions, ongoing workstreams);
2) Committee member country needs – spatial planning challenge/-es VASAB cooperation could help address;
3) Process – how should it be developed? (Consolidation of ongoing work streams (CSPD/BSR decisions, HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, PASPS, projects etc.), short online survey, bilateral calls, dedicated thematic consultation session – (online) specifically, for VASAB Work Plan 2027-2028 inputs.

The Committee was informed that VASAB Secretariat would like to use existing workstreams as the foundation or starting point - it includes CSPD/BSR decisions, the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG Work Plan, PASPS project and its work plan - and complement those with targeted consultations. The Committee was asked to give feedback on this approach.

The Committee agreed with VASAB Secretariat proposed 3-point approach in developing new VASAB Work Plan 2027-2028.

9. 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. PAs are managed operationally by Policy Area Coordinators (PACs), supported and guided strategically by their respective Steering Groups (SGs). 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. As of 18 May 2026, Norway became a full member of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. As a member state, Norway becomes a part of the joint strategic leadership and agenda setting for transnational cooperation in the Region. EUSBSR logo has changed since Norway has become a full member of EUSBSR adding an extra star to the logo. 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.

The Committee was reminded that PACs submitted 1st drafts approved by SGs 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. The final drafting has been done, and the draft has been submitted to BSP for reviewing on 26 August 2025. After receiving feedback from BSP, the final version of the draft, approved by both PA Spatial Planning SGs has been submitted on 28 October 2025. The final updated Action Plan has been approved by the National Coordinator Group (NCG), and it has now entered the European Commission consultation process. It is expected that it will be approved and published in 2026.

The Committee was informed that PA Spatial Planning relevant Interreg BSR projects 'Future Cities Platform' and 'Together4Heat' have been selected for funding during the final call of this programming period. VASAB Secretariat is an associated organisation for both these projects. In total 7 PA Spatial Planning relevant projects have been selected for funding during this Interreg BSR call. Workshop 'Climate Change Effects & Maritime Spatial Planning in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea' was held online on 9 March 2026. Workshop provided insights into current experiences and approaches for addressing climate change in MSP across both sea basins and highlighted the latest results from science and research. Seminar 'Bridging Vision and Action: Smart Rural Development That Leaves No Region Behind' took place on 24 March 2026 in Sofia, Bulgaria. The first cross-macroregional event on smart rural development was organised by representatives of the 4 EU macro-regional strategies and the SMART ERA project. The event focused on territorial cohesion of different EU macro-regions and addressed what it takes to support successful and smart rural development and how the vision can be brought into concrete action. EUSBSR Live Meeting took place in Copenhagen, Denmark on 14-15 April 2026. In these Live Meetings PACs meet with NCs to exchange experiences and ideas and work together on mutual challenges within the BSR. BSSSC Day of Cities and Regions 'Co-

Governing Resilience: Shaping Secure, Connected and Thriving Societies' took place on 11 May 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia, back-to-back with EUSBSR Annual Forum 2026. This event brought together mayors, regional leaders, policymakers, young people and programme stakeholders from across the Baltic Sea Region. Together, they discussed how cities and regions can strengthen security, resilience, and competitiveness in times of growing geopolitical uncertainty. European Maritime Day 2026 took place in Limassol, Cyprus on 21-22 May 2026. It is the annual event during which Europe's maritime community meet to network, discuss and outline joint action on maritime affairs and sustainable blue economy. Interreg BSR Small Project kick-off event will be held on 16-17 June 2026 in Kiel, Germany. This event brings together Lead Partners of the 28 Small Projects selected for funding in the last Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme call. PA Spatial Planning and PA Innovation have been invited to represent EUSBSR. ESPON Seminar 'Mind the gap: Addressing cognitive distance to territorial cohesion' will be held on 17-18 June 2026 in Larnaca, Cyprus. The seminar is built around a core policy tension - does a region need to close its cognitive gap before it can become competitive or is low competitiveness itself what causes the gap to persist. The seminar brings together leading researchers, regional policymakers, and EU institutions to examine new evidence and explore practical solutions. EU Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies Days will be held on 8-9 July 2026 in Brussels, Belgium. The Strategies Days 2026 event is co-organised by DG REGIO and DG MARE. The event will provide a platform to reflect on challenges and opportunities ahead, and to support dialogue on how Macro-regional and Sea Basin Strategies can remain relevant and responsive to EU instruments for territories, citizens and stakeholders in the years to come.

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.

Extension of EUSBSR PA Spatial Planning technical assistance project PASPS for 2027-2028

The Committee was informed that extension of the PAC assistance project (PASPS) for 2027-2028 was approved by the IBSR Monitoring Committee members on 25 March 2026. PASPS Work Plan 2027-2028 and the Letter of Support from PA's Steering Groups were drafted by PA Coordinators and sent for both SGs for commenting. All comments received were included in the final document. To proceed with the signing of Letter of Support (by each SG's chair(s)), the PASPS Work Plan 2027-2028 must be approved by the Committee.

The Committee agreed to support VASAB Secretariat participation in extension of EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning Coordinators assistance project 'PASPS' by 2 years from January 2027 until December 2028 and approved PASPS Work Plan 2027-2028, as well as authorised Chair Emilia Malak-Pętlicka to sign the Letter of Support for the extension of PASPS project on behalf of the PA Spatial Planning Steering Group on land-based spatial planning.

Review of EUSBSR Annual Forum 2026, 12-13 May 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia

The Committee was informed that EUSBSR Annual Forum 2026 was held on 12-13 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 was "The tides are shifting, and so must we". PA Spatial Planning was represented in the Forum's Networking Village in a joint stand for Policy Area, VASAB and HELCOM. The stand featured an opportunity for VASAB and PA relevant projects to use time slots to present their insights, results and findings at the stand, approaching the current stakeholders as well as gathering new ones. The projects that were represented at the stand were: Baltic PlaNet, NESBp, Land-Based Planners' Forum, SEABAS and Protect Baltic. PA Spatial Planning in preparations for the Forum submitted 4 breakout session applications. Two of them were accepted and were held at the Forum:

1) Session ‘Shifting Tides, Resilient Territories: Advancing Spatial Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region’ (organisers: PA Spatial Planning, VASAB Secretariat). The session brought together spatial planning experts, policymakers, and practitioners from across the Baltic Sea Region to examine how territories can strengthen resilience in the face of growing environmental, economic, and geopolitical uncertainty. The discussion was opened with a keynote by Mr. Tiit Oidjärv, who outlined how spatial planning can support resilience and introduced the audience to the spatial resilience concept used in Tallinn Declaration. Participants then engaged in interactive discussions around four dimensions of spatial resilience: territorial resistance, engineering spatial resilience, evolutionary spatial resilience, and territorial exaptability. The exchanges focused on how regions can better withstand shocks, recover from crises, adapt to future disruptions, and creatively repurpose existing assets and infrastructure. A key takeaway was that spatial resilience extends far beyond crisis management, requiring long-term preparedness, flexibility, adaptability, and transformative thinking. Despite differing national contexts and challenges, participants highlighted a shared need across the Baltic Sea Region for more integrated and forward-looking spatial planning approaches.
2) Session ‘From Plans to Reality: Governing Urban Mobility for Resilience’ (organisers: PA Transport, PA Spatial Planning, BSR Urban Mobility, SUMPs for BSR). The session, organised by BSR Urban Mobility project platform and SUMPs for BSR project, presented survey insights from different governance contexts and brought together stakeholders from PA Transport and PA Spatial Planning. Discussions focused on urban mobility challenges that require coordinated action across sectors and governance levels, emphasising the importance of collaboration in building resilient and sustainable mobility systems.

Two breakout sessions contributed to the implementation of PA Spatial Planning: 1) The regional recipe for a strategic environmental assessment for maritime spatial planning (organiser: SEABAS project); 2) Hidden "treasures" of BSR – munitions and wrecks in the sea: risks, challenges and solutions (organisers: BRISK II and Open Risk II projects).

The Committee took note of the information about EUSBSR Annual Forum 2026 (including information about parallel sessions ‘Shifting Tides, Resilient Territories: Advancing Spatial Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region’ and ‘From Plans to Reality: Governing Urban Mobility for Resilience’ held on 12-13 May 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia.

Review of MSP Planners` Forum on 26 March 2026, online

The Committee was informed that 8th MSP Planners’ Forum meeting within ‘PASPS’ project was held online on 26 March 2026, this time focusing on scenario development. The VASAB & HELCOM updates and the tour-de-table of the countries were followed by 3 presentations covering different perspectives on scenarios in MSP. The discussion part was very interactive this time and was highly evaluated by the participants. It featured a workshop guided by the NESB project on the values and risks of scenario development as well as the willingness and ability of transboundary cooperation. The participants worked in breakout rooms filling a Miro board and held fruitful discussions on the outcomes in each group afterwards.

The Committee took note of the information about 8th MSP Planners’ Forum meeting within ‘PASPS’ project held online on 26 March 2026 and hosted by VASAB Secretariat.

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

The Committee was informed about preparations for the VASAB Young Planners Summer School 2026, which is less than three months away. VASAB Young Planners Summer School is an international contest and collaborative learning event for young spatial planning professionals from across the Baltic Sea Region. This year it will take place on 23-29 August 2026 in Gdańsk,

Poland. The event is jointly organised by VASAB Secretariat, Gdansk University of Technology, under the VASAB Polish Chairmanship. The format: study visits, experts' presentations, learning sessions and group work (25 participants divided into 5 groups of 5, each tackling one of four current Baltic Sea Region spatial planning challenges). A jury will evaluate the ideas, and the best team will be invited to present their work at the high-level VASAB meeting (e.g. DG Meeting). VASAB Secretariat has received 53 applications in total, which shows very strong interest in the event. At the beginning, VASAB Secretariat checked whether these applications comply with the regulation. Then, 39 applications passed to qualitative assessment. Group of 7 people evaluated all 39 applications. Broad geographical coverage across nearly the entire Baltic Sea Region has been achieved. Applications were received from all 7 VASAB countries, and from Denmark and Ukraine. The highest interest came from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, but overall, the distribution is quite balanced across the region. The final list includes 3 participants from each of 7 VASAB countries, plus 2 from Ukraine and 1 from Denmark. Since no application was received from Norway, one place can be offered to someone from the waiting list. VASAB Young Planners Summer School agenda has been designed to balance structured learning with practical fieldwork and networking. The agenda is planned to give participants opportunity to have a rich experience on local and regional spatial planning challenges. The jury for the Summer School has a proposed composition of five members: Head of the VASAB Secretariat, representative of the VASAB Polish Chairmanship, representative of Gdańsk University of Technology and two Committee members. Serving on the jury means being present in Gdańsk on 28 August 2026 full day for the final presentations and the award session, but it is recommended to be already on 27 August 2026. The Committee members are invited to express their willingness to join the jury. The second item requiring the Committee's input is the spatial planning challenge to the fifth group. Participants will work on four emerging challenges in the Baltic Sea Region. Four of the challenges have already been assigned to groups, with the numbers in brackets indicating how many participants described these challenges in their application forms:

- Preparedness and resilience (6 participants);
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation, including green energy investment (7 participants);
- Connections between people and places (17 participants);
- Effective use of space, including no net land take and multiuse concepts (5 participants).

The event format requires five groups and therefore the Committee is invited to share their opinion which challenge should the 5th group work on.

The Committee took note of the information about preparations for the VASAB Young Planners Summer School 2026 to be held on 23-29 August 2026 in Gdańsk (Poland) and opportunity to join the jury.

The Committee agreed that the challenge for the 5th group of VASAB Young Planners Summer School 2026 should be - Connections between people and places.

11. Development of Land-Based Planners' Forum Short-Term Action Plan/Roadmap

The Committee was reminded the Committee that during its 97th meeting in Warsaw, Poland (18-19 February 2026) it was agreed to continue Land-Based Planners' Forum and VASAB Secretariat was tasked to prepare a short-term action plan on how to pilot the Forum, as well as explore possibilities for external funding. VASAB Secretariat since the last Committee meeting has been working on development of multi criteria analysis framework to compare implementation of pre-defined Land-Based Planners Forum formats; has prepared and submitted project proposal 'Baltic Planners Exchange Network' to Swedish Institute Baltic Sea and Eastern Partnership Programme, Strand: Strengthened cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, project competition; has prepared and submitted project proposal 'CoPlanCoast' to BlueActionBANOS open call 'Community-Led Actions' project competition. 'Baltic Planners Exchange Network'

project proposal was approved by the Committee via written procedure on 14 May 2026. Project partnership: Region Sörmland (Lead Partner), VASAB Secretariat, Swedish Association for Urban and Regional Planning, Society of Polish Town Planners, Estonian Association of Spatial Planners, Latvian Territorial Planners Association. Project implementation period: January 2027 - June 2028. Overall project budget: 185 000 EUR, proposed budget of VASAB Secretariat: 58 500 EUR. Activities of VASAB Secretariat: organise 3 online exchange workshops and produce 4 Planners' Café podcast/video episodes featuring planners from across the BSR; build and manage the Baltic Planners' Expert Directory (100+ experts) and LinkedIn professional community; provide VASAB website infrastructure and editorial support for 20+ good-practice cases for Baltic Planners' Knowledge Hub; coordinate overall project content, partner cooperation, partnership enlargement (including LT, DE, FI and UA); present project results at the EUSBSR Annual Forum, ensuring uptake at the macro-regional policy level; co-organise final event in Sweden (~ May 2028). 'CoPlanCoast: Community-led action for coastal resilience - long-term impact through co-planning' project proposal was approved by the Committee via written procedure on 27 May 2026. Project partnership: Finnish Environment Institute/SYKE (Lead partner), VASAB Secretariat, Nordregio, Swedish Geotechnical Institute, Hushållningssällskapet – AgriKnowledge (SE), Kymenlaakso Regional Council (FI) Fisheries Local Action Group FLAG 'Sea Land' (LV), Schleswig-Holstein Agency for Coastal Protection, National Park and Marine Conservation (DE). Project implementation period: November 2026 - October 2028. Overall project budget: ~ 2 000 000 EUR. Proposed budget of VASAB Secretariat: 150 000 EUR. Activities of VASAB Secretariat: organise 4 physical thematic working groups for local planners and coastal stakeholders (FI, LV, SE, DE), utilising Land-Based Planners Forum formats; organise 1-2 international webinars for spatial planners, presenting living lab results in connection with VASAB Coastal Planning Recommendations and facilitating peer reflection across the BSR; policy dialogue with relevant Policy Areas of EUSBSR on coastal development challenges in the Baltic Sea Region; contribution to VASAB Coastal Planning Recommendations based on project pilot examples and local stakeholder inputs; project communication and visibility, incl. website, social media, newsletter and project final event at BlueActionBANOS.

The Committee took note of the information about development of multi criteria analysis framework to compare implementation of pre-defined Land-Based Planners Forum formats and two new project proposals: 'Baltic Planners Exchange Network' submitted to Swedish Institute Baltic Sea and Eastern Partnership Programme and 'CoPlanCoast' submitted to BlueActionBANOS open call 'Community-Led Actions' project competition.

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 (www.NESBproject.eu). VASAB Secretariat is co-leading WP2 Ocean Governance with the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. WP2 focuses on MSP dialogue between North Sea and Baltic Sea regions, and the aim is also to exchange experiences, review and strengthen multi-level governance, and improve sea-basin and cross-sea-basin cooperation. To support one of the objectives of the project – to enhance the effectiveness of transboundary governance - existing transboundary cooperation formats, organisations and mechanisms (OSPAR Commission, the North Sea Energy Cooperation, 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, presentation and validation of the research outcomes was done at the 5th Baltic MSP Forum on 11-12 November in Riga, and all materials are being assessed

and analysed to understand effectiveness and impact, as well as qualitative dimensions important for transboundary cooperation. Within WP2 a policy brief will be prepared to: 1) promote integrated, ecosystem-based MSP governance in the Greater North Sea Basin and Baltic Sea Region; 2) exchange strengths, best practices, and lessons learned between both sea basins; 3) strengthen transnational MSP governance; 4) to give recommendations on how to enhance MSP development and implementation through improved networks, organisational memory, and informed decision-making. At European Maritime Day 2026 on 21 May 2026 in Limassol, Cyprus a workshop 'Making the Sea-Basin approach work through MSP' took place with representatives of Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI), HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group, UNEP/MAP - PAP/RAC (The Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre of the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan). Few points from the workshop: Sea-basin approach as key for coherent MSP; Growing ambitions for environmental protection, offshore renewables, food security, and competitiveness make sea-basin cooperation essential; Baltic Sea: strong joint guidelines create shared accountability across countries; North Sea: extreme spatial pressure (the challenge is no longer vision, but pathways, timelines, and trade-offs); Mediterranean: diverse governance contexts (long-standing cooperation through the Barcelona Convention / Mediterranean Action Plan is the main common ground); Key message: future Ocean Governance (upcoming Ocean Act) should strengthen regional cooperation, policy coherence, and simplification - not add more bureaucracy. Another topicality: VASAB Secretariat together with WP2 project partners developed Terms of Reference for the overview report 'How Maritime Spatial Planning and Related Instruments Contribute to Climate Neutrality in the Baltic Sea Region'. Procurement was carried out and the contract is signed with BEF Latvia experts to carry out the work from April 2026 until April 2027. 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.

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

Progress of Baltic PlaNet project

The Committee was presented project 'Baltic Climate-resilient coastal planning network' (Baltic PlaNet) progress. Baltic PlaNet is an Interreg Baltic Sea Region project that brings together coastal municipalities to strengthen their capacity to respond to extreme weather events through better spatial planning. The project has four core objectives: supporting municipal adaptation, integrating climate considerations into planning processes, establishing a knowledge-sharing platform, and empowering local authorities with practical tools. The project runs from July 2025 to June 2028. Project has a diverse composition of partnership (8 partners from 5 BSR countries, 2 higher education institutions, 2 international organisations, a NGO, a national, local and regional public authority). A central feature of Baltic PlaNet is that it capitalises on and synthesises the outputs of 11 previously EU-funded projects focused on climate adaptation and spatial planning. By synthesising existing work, Baltic PlaNet aims to create a coherent knowledge base and practical toolbox that spatial planners can apply in their work. Project has three work packages: WP1 provides the digital infrastructure and centralized data repository about climate change adaptation in the Navigator tool; WP2 generates the planning guidance for climate change adaptation; WP3 (which VASAB Secretariat is responsible for) ensures that the project knowledge reaches and is applied by the planners who need it most. VASAB Secretariat has prepared first project deliverable – stakeholder engagement, communication and outreach plan. VASAB Secretariat has participated in several EU-wide and Baltic Sea Region events (EUSBSR Annual Forum 2026, European Maritime Day) to raise awareness of the project and to

establish contacts with relevant stakeholders in coastal planning and climate adaptation. Also, at the beginning of May project had a first pilot workshop in Jūrmala (Latvia) which brought together participants from Latvian coastal municipalities, planning regions and state institutions for knowledge exchange on the climate change adaptation and multi-level governance. Similar workshops will be held in Latvia, Estonia and Poland engaging the main project target audience - local and regional planners, and local communities. Currently VASAB Secretariat is working on stakeholder contact lists in each participating country, forming the basis for targeted outreach to local and regional spatial planners. An important deliverable for VASAB this year is to start a capacity-building programme of three online workshops for spatial planners: the first on understanding climate change in the overall and BSR context; the second on available climate action tools and techniques; and the third on collaborative climate action and governance issues regarding the climate change. In 2027 and 2028 it is planned to take part in the EU or BSR wide events (hopefully with specific Baltic PlaNet breakout session) to integrate Baltic PlaNet outputs into real planning discussions and exercises. The project will also promote the Navigator (knowledge platform) and produce a Policy Brief for the Baltic Sea Region. Closer to the end of the project an Operation of Strategic Importance event will be organised to disseminate results widely.

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

13. Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP):

Outcomes of informal consultation session of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting on 21-23 April 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia

The Committee was informed about outcomes of 8th Informal Consultation Session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group held on 21-23 April 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia: 1) The Session considered the draft 'Interim Assessment Report on the Progress of the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021–2030'; 2) The Session considered the proposal for a new structure of the Baltic Sea Region MSP platform; 3) The Session noted the progress of NESBp, Baltic PlaNet and PASPS projects; 4) The Session noted outcomes of 5th Baltic MSP Forum; 5) The Session supported establishing a task force and recommended approval of the workplan for the task force for HELCOM and VASAB recommendations update; 6) The Session elected Kamil Rybka, Poland, as the Vice Co-Chair from VASAB side; 7) The Session recommended to organise the next session of the group on 9-10 November 2026 online.

The Committee took note of the information about outcomes of 8th Informal Consultation Session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group held on 21-23 April 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia.

Information on the progress of updating the VASAB coastal recommendations and Task Force

The Committee was informed about the background of updating VASAB Coastal Recommendations:

- At the 94th Committee meeting in Tallinn on 19-20 March 2025, the Committee 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.
- At the 95th Committee online meeting on 16 June 2025, the Committee agreed to update VASAB Coastal Recommendations and align with the HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R to ensure consistency in terminology and incorporate cross references between the two documents, as well as look into possibility to merge both recommendations.

- At Informal consultation session of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG meeting in Helsinki on 15-17 October 2025, the Session considered the proposal and analyses from the HELCOM and VASAB internal point of view and made considerations about the timeline.
- At 97th Committee meeting in Warsaw on 18-19 February 2026, 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 & 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.
- At Informal consultation session of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG meeting in Tallinn on 14-16 April 2026, the Session supported establishing a task force and recommended approval of the workplan for the Task Force for HELCOM and VASAB recommendations update.

The Committee was informed that the Task Force has been established and workplan approved and ensured that the required support, including legal expertise, will be provided for the task implementation. It was recommended by VASAB Secretariat to consider following a more flexible timeframe bearing in mind related EU processes such as the Ocean Act and EU Strategy for Coastal Communities. First meeting of the Task Force will be held online on 10 June 2026. The Committee members once again are invited to join the Task Force and/or nominate national experts. VASAB Secretariat together with project consortium prepared a project proposal 'CoPlanCoast' and submitted to BlueActionBANOS open call 'Community-Led Actions' project competition (March-May 2026). Project would contribute to VASAB Coastal Planning Recommendations based on project pilot examples and local stakeholder inputs.

The Committee took note of the information about background of updating VASAB Coastal Recommendations and established Task Force.

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

Interim assessment of the progress in the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation

The Committee was informed that Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021-2030 was adopted by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2021 and the VASAB CSPD/BSR 85th meeting. Interim Assessment of the progress in the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation was done by the Task Force consisting of national representatives from Germany and Latvia, the EU Assistance Mechanism, and the HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats. Interim Assessment was supported by 8th Informal Consultation Session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group. HELCOM Heads of Delegation (HOD) will take decision of approval during their next meeting on 10-11 June 2026. The Committee is invited to approve the Interim Assessment Report of the progress in the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation.

The Committee approved Interim Assessment Report of the progress in the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation.

14. VASAB Secretariat news

List of VASAB-related events, Administrative Report, new VASAB webpage

The Committee was informed about VASAB-related events, administrative report and new VASAB webpage.

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

15. VASAB Budget

Audit Report of VASAB Budget 2025, VASAB Income and Expenditure 2025

The Committee was introduced to the auditor's Review Report of 2025.

The Committee acknowledged the execution of VASAB Budget 2025 and took note of the auditor's Review Report by SIA "Auditorfirma Padoms".

Amendments to VASAB Budget 2026, Preliminary VASAB Income and Expenditure 2026

The Committee was informed about necessary amendments to VASAB Budget 2026 based on the execution of VASAB Budget 2025.

Taking into account the audited VASAB Budget 2025, ***the Committee*** decided to amend the VASAB Budget 2026, allowed payout of the non-taxed salary bonuses in 2026 for the staff members of the Secretariat.

16. AOB

The Committee was reminded that the Committee has received on 20 May 2026 the final draft version of Analytical Background Document on Territorial Resilience (dated June 2025) which serves as background material for the Tallinn Ministerial Declaration on Spatial Resilience. The Committee is invited to approve the document.

The Committee approved Analytical Background Document on Territorial Resilience (dated June 2025) which serves as background material for the Tallinn Ministerial Declaration on Spatial Resilience.

17. Next meeting

The Committee agreed to hold the 1st VASAB Directors-General meeting 27 October 2026 and 99th CSPD/BSR meeting on 28 October 2026 in Gdansk, Poland.