

Regulation of the VASAB Young Planners' Summer School 2026

General issues – context

1. The regulation determines the order in which the VASAB chooses or determines the participants who will participate in the international contest - Young Planners' Summer School 2026 that will be held in Gdansk, Poland (hereinafter – Summer School).
2. Summer School has been made possible by the support of VASAB (Visions and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea) and Gdansk University of Technology (Poland).
3. VASAB is an intergovernmental multilateral co-operation organization of 7 countries of the Baltic Sea Region (hereinafter – BSR) in spatial planning and development. VASAB prepares policy options for the territorial development of the BSR and provides a forum for exchange of know-how on spatial planning and development between the Baltic Sea countries. More information about the VASAB can be found [HERE](#).

The aim

1. VASAB has initiated Summer School “Navigate Planning Through Changes” to engage young professionals in shaping the future of the BSR, and to provide a possibility for young professionals to get new contacts, present themselves to the spatial planning community and enhance their visibility professionally.
2. The best ideas will be presented at the high-level VASAB meeting and could serve as the input in VASAB's future strategic documents.

What ideas are looked for

1. Theme for the Summer School is “Navigate Planning Through Changes”. In the recent years, BSR faces significant challenges (pandemic, climate change, Russia's aggression against Ukraine). Therefore, spatial planning systems should be resilient to adapt to these challenges and be prepared for them both now and in the future. The aim of the contest is to discuss the development opportunities of the BSR in the era of constantly changing circumstances, at the same time considering VASAB Vision 2040 and other policy documents of the BSR.
2. Young professionals and students are invited to apply and submit their propositions on how to address future challenges of the BSR that could be solved by spatial planning tools and processes.

Who can apply?

Selection requirements for participants:

- Young professionals with a Master's or doctoral degree, or who are currently studying at the Master's or doctoral level or other postgraduate levels from a wide variety of disciplines related to geography, spatial planning, and regional studies in a broad sense;
- no older than 35 years, but have not worked in the same field for more than 5 years;
- are studying or working in one of the VASAB countries (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Sweden) and Norway, Denmark, Ukraine;
- have an interest in regional development and/or spatial and/or strategic planning;
- participants of the Baltic Sea Region Young Planners Contest, Poznan 2019 and Greifswald 2022 are not allowed to apply again;
- participants must be willing and available to participate in the Summer School in Gdansk, Poland, from 23 to 29 August 2026.

Application submission (procedure)

1. The submission of applications is announced on the VASAB website www.vasab.org.
2. An application must be submitted by completing the Summer School's application form (in English) and sending it via e-mail young.planners@vasab.org **no later than 7 April 2026**.

Procedure of selecting participants for the Summer School

The evaluation of applications takes place in two stages:

1. VASAB Secretariat verifies if the formal requirements of the applications are met by the applicant. If the application does not match any of administrative criteria, it is excluded from further participation in the Summer School.
2. Applications are evaluated according to the criteria and formulas (Annex 2) by the VASAB Secretariat, Gdansk University of Technology and Polish Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy. In the process of evaluating applications, external experts might be involved.

Proceedings of the Contest and Summer School

Contest starts in Spring 2026 with selection process of participants for the Summer School. Until 7 April 2026, participants meeting the selection criteria are invited to complete the application form and apply to the Summer School.

After the application process will be finalized, up to three participants from each of the VASAB countries, up to two participants from Ukraine, one participant from Norway and one from Denmark will be selected and invited to participate in the Summer School (25 participants in total). Organizers maintain the right to increase the number of participants.

Summer School will take place in Gdansk (Poland) from 23 to 29 August 2026 and is the highlight of the whole competition. The event will be held in English.

Selected participants will be invited to join the Summer School in Gdansk. Multinational and cross-sectoral teams will be formed within the Summer School, and they will have to prepare propositions on challenges regarding resilience, climate change, mobility and effective land-use. Teams will be provided with introductory workshops, and mentors will be available through the whole Summer School. On the final day of the Summer School teams will have to present their results.

During the Summer School, a jury will evaluate the ideas presented in the contest. The best team will be rewarded and invited to present their work at the high-level VASAB meeting.

The event for participants is free of charge. After the event, applicants can apply for reimbursement to cover their travel costs (max. 200 EUR per participant). A reimbursement form will be provided after the event. During the Summer School organizers will provide accommodation and meals for participants.

Contact information

VASAB Young Planners Summer School coordinator: Mr. Aksels Ruperts, + 371 27767659, aksels.ruperts@vasab.org

VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and
Development of the Baltic Sea Region
(CSPD/BSR) Chairperson

Emilia Malak-Pętlicka

Application form – VASAB Young Planners’ Summer School 2026 in Gdansk, Poland

1. Name, Surname
2. E-mail
3. Date of birth
4. BSR Country, you work or study (Choose one - Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Ukraine)
5. Why would you like to participate in the Summer School and what is your interest in strategic and/or spatial planning? (Maximum 2000 characters)
6. What can you contribute for the Summer School? (Maximum 2000 characters)
<p>Application form includes 2 attachments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Your CV and/or portfolio Challenge description (maximum of two pages) <p>Choose and describe one major challenge that the Baltic Sea Region faces today and that is of particular importance for its future spatial development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge 1. Preparedness and resilience. Resilience is the aspect which currently is being related to many topics and areas, including safety and security of supply and it will for sure become more important. The key question to be addressed: How resilience is linked to spatial dimension and what can be practical solutions? • Challenge 2. Climate change adaptation and mitigation, including green energy investment. The key questions to be addressed: How to apply the outcomes of multiple spatial planning projects related to climate change and what are the most important aspects of spatial planning when finding the solutions to climate change? How to balance the interests and how to prioritise the land use for renewable energies above other uses in the coastal areas? • Challenge 3. Connections between people and places. The key question to be addressed: How to ensure physical and virtual connectivity for goods and people in a green, secure, efficient, reliable, and affordable way in the Region to the rest of the world, as well as small and big places in the Region with each other? • Challenge 4. Effective use of space, incl. no net land take and multiuse concepts. The key question to be addressed: How can smart policy making, and spatial planning tools promote effective use of space in both – land (areas of different densities and challenges) and sea? • Challenge 5. Different challenge that in your opinion BSR faces and is not mentioned here (your free choice).

Please describe - **who would need to be involved in addressing this challenge, and how would you involve them?**

The statement can be provided in any form and may include other media (essay, infographic, speech, map etc.). It should clearly illustrate the relevance of the described challenge and present your thoughts and creative ideas on potential involvement.

When describing the challenge, we strongly suggest integrating perspective of digital tools and digital transitions. The key question to be addressed: The effective use of currently available digital tools for spatial planning and future role of artificial intelligence (AI) in spatial planning.

By submitting this application:

- *I confirm that the data I have provided is accurate and I have fulfilled the tasks myself. By applying to the Summer School.*
- *I confirm that I am willing and available to participate in the Summer School in Gdansk, Poland (23-29 August 2026) if I am selected among the candidates.*
- *I agree that the information provided during the application of the Summer School will be collected, stored, and processed by the VASAB Secretariat and may be used and shared with co-organisers, experts and mentors of the Summer School. If I am selected to participate in the Summer School, I authorize the VASAB Secretariat to collect, store, and process my personal data, including photographs, audio recordings, and video footage made during the event, for the purposes of organising and promoting the Summer School. This includes necessary organisational communication, media coverage during the event, and the dissemination of related materials through websites, social media channels, and publications before, during and after event. For any questions regarding my personal data, please contact VASAB Secretariat via email info@vasab.org.*

VASAB Young Planners' Summer School Application's Evaluation Criteria

Each applicant will be evaluated based on their application forms (ANNEX I). Evaluation will be based on four criteria with different weight:

1. Applicant has clearly shown their interest in regional development and/or spatial and/or strategic planning (20%);
2. Applicant has named advantages that make them appropriate candidates to join the Summer School. (10%)
3. CV and/or portfolio (Attachment 1) complement their motivation as well as confirm compliance with the formal requirements (30%);
4. Challenge description (Attachment 2) encloses following components:
 - Description of the challenge is clear, and it gives the impression that it is relevant for the BSR.
 - Solution to the challenge is well explained and reasonable. It is creative, concrete, feasible and spatial.
 - Description and potential solution of the challenge is aligned with the VASAB Vision 2040 and/or other relevant policy documents.

Challenge description will have the highest value in evaluation process (40%).

Each criterion will be evaluated with 1-5 points. Then, it will be multiplied by respective weight of each criterion:

- Criterion 1 (motivation): $1-5 * 0,2$
- Criterion 2 (advantages): $1-5 * 0,1$
- Criterion 3 (CV and/or portfolio): $1-5 * 0,3$
- Criterion 4 (challenge description): $1-5 * 0,4$

Maximum overall rating: 5 points

Evaluation will be done by VASAB Secretariat, Gdansk University of Technology and Polish Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy. Applicants will be listed, based on average ratings. As the Summer School will be organized in teams, it is possible that the overall composition of the group is more important than qualification of individual participants.