Interreg Baltic Sea Region project, assistance to the policy area coordinators of the EUSBSR

Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2021-2027 project

Assistance to the policy area coordinator Spatial Planning of the

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

**Feedback from the Steering Group of the PA Spatial Planning on land-based planning**

From July 2024 till June 2025 Estonia, the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture is chairing the Steering Group (SG) of the policy area Spatial Planning on land-based spatial planning of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. In my capacity as Chair of the SG on land-based spatial planning, I would like to inform the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat of Interreg Baltic Sea Region about the SG’s feedback on the implementation by the policy area coordinators within the PAC assistance project “Policy Area ‘Spatial Planning’ Support’ (PASPS) co-financed by the Programme.

The Steering Group of PA Spatial Planning took note of the progress and achievements of the policy area during January – December 2024, jointly coordinated by HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats. The SG exchanged view on the achieved progress and has agreed on the following feedback:

* The SG is satisfied with the progress achieved by the PA in the above-mentioned period and the work of the policy area’s coordinators (PACs).
* The SG emphasizes the following aspects of PACs’ work as key factors of the PA’s progress in this period:
	+ Work on PASPS project prolongation application together with the updated PASPS Work Plan 2025-2026 has resulted in approved project extension by Interreg BSR Monitoring Committee. The project is extended until December 2026.
	+ Organization of a webinar on project idea development on January 19, 2024. Spatial planners, practitioners and project developers discussed potential project ideas in 4 topics:
		- Good quality of life and adaptation policies in carbon neutral and resilient cities
		- Multimodal and integrated mobility and transport connections
		- Secure, climate proofing and decentralized energy systems
		- Sustainable blue economy and environmental protection in coastal areas and at the sea
	+ PAC presence in EUSBSR and PA relevant events: Blue Mission BANOS Mission Arena 2 (April 25-26, Riga), European Maritime Day (May 30-31, Svendborg), EU Macro-regional and Sea Basin Strategies Days (June 12-13, Brussels), Opening event of Poland's EUSBSR Presidency (September 10, Warsaw), The Annual Event 2024 of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027 (September 25, Stralsund), European MSP Week (October 22-24, Marseilles), EUSBSR Annual Forum 2024 (October 29-31, Visby) and two ESPON Seminars (June 5-6, Mons and November 6-7, Budapest).
	+ PAC assistance has been valuable in continuing the dialogue of MSP practitioners towards more coherent planning in the Baltic Sea and organisation of MSP Planners’ Forum meetings. During 2024 the two Planners’ Forums have worked on the pressing topics for BSR and EU – multi-use and coexistence (April 18) and cumulative impacts (October 17), as well as served as a platform for project idea development on MSP-related issues.
	+ Regular communication and exchange with PA relevant projects (such as – SUMPs for BSR, We Make Transition!, Liveability, CCC, BEACH-SOS, MSP GREEN, eMSP NBSR, Baltic Sea2Land, MSP4BIO, ReMAP) has been ensured. Projects have had the opportunity to present themselves at VASAB / PA Spatial Planning stand at EUSBSR Annual Forum 2024 in Visby and in our SG meetings.
	+ PACs’ work on EUSBSR Action Plan update to submit first draft of Policy Area description by the end of January 2025.
	+ Initiation and partnership in Interreg BSR’s Project platforms: Baltic PlaNet, SEABAS.
	+ Regular meetings and updates with Baltic Sea Strategy Point.
	+ Work on the updated EUSBSR website: designing and maintaining PA Spatial Planning page for PA promotion.
* The SG has been informed about the progress made by the PACs in supporting project idea generation during the 91st SG meeting on 14-15 March 2024. The SG is satisfied with the achievements so far, in particular, concerning project ideas to support land-based spatial planning of all governance levels.

Furthermore, the SG would like to give the following recommendations that should be considered by the PACs in their work during the upcoming year:

* contribute to revision of EUSBSR Action Plan,
* continue the work on organizing different events: webinars, workshops, MSP Planners’ Forums, Land-based Planners’ Forum. Assist organizational work of 5th Baltic MSP Forum in November 11-12, 2025.
* explore possibilities in organizing third Young Planners Summer School to include youth stakeholders in generating ideas for future BSR,
* assist PA`s Estonian and Polish Chairmanship by ensuring discussion and exchange of spatial planning practices based on their priorities.

**Mr. Tiit Oidjärv**

Chair of VASAB CSPD/BSR / Steering Group of Policy Area Spatial Planning on land-based spatial planning issues

Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture of Estonia