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Background

The attached document contains an extract from the latest version (February 2013) of the [Action Plan](#) of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) on Horizontal Action (HA) Spatial Planning for which HELCOM and VASAB act as Horizontal Action Leaders (HALs). The text of the chapter was discussed and agreed on by [HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 5-2012](#) (paragraphs 2.4-2.9).

A review process of the Action Plan was launched in 2014 by the European Commission and the Member States including among other things prioritisation of Priority Areas (PAs) and HAs and a new structure of the Action Plan. An agreement on the revised Action Plan is expected in March 2015 and political endorsement is expected during the 6th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR on 15-16 June 2015 in Jurmala, Latvia.

According to the [working document](#) on roles and responsibilities of the implementing stakeholders of the EUSBSR (see page 10 concerning HALs) the HALs, with the assistance the Steering Committee of the HA (concerning the MSP part of HA Spatial Planning it is the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG), are to:

- implement and follow-up the HA towards targets and indicators defined and whenever relevant, review the indicators and targets,
- review regularly the relevance of the HA as described in the Action Plan and propose necessary updates to the European Commission.

The text of the chapter on HA Spatial Planning is expected to reflect the prioritisation and composition of the flagship projects belonging to the horizontal action. As the [PartiSEA project](#) ended in 2014 there are currently no flagship projects under HA Spatial Planning.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to:

- review the current chapter on HA Spatial Planning including objectives, targets and indicators and update according to recent developments.

HA Spatial Planning – Encouraging the use of Maritime and Land-based Spatial Planning in all Member States around the Baltic Sea and develop a common approach for cross-border cooperation

Coordinated by: VASAB and HELCOM

http://www.helcom.fi/groups/en_GB/MSPWG/

This horizontal action is of key importance in ensuring consistency between actions and in maintaining an integrated approach. Without a clear picture of the region, and an awareness of sensitive areas, populations, economic pressures and other factors, sustainable development is not feasible. This is true both for the situation at sea and for that on land.

Increased activities in the Baltic Sea have led to competition for limited marine space between sectoral interests, such as shipping and maritime transport, extraction of gravel and minerals, offshore energy, ports development, tourism, fisheries and aquaculture in addition to environmental concerns.¹ Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) are an important tool and process for improved decision making. It helps users to balance sectoral interests that compete for marine space, and contributes to achieving sustainable use of marine areas to the benefit of economic and social development as well as the marine environment. The development of a Maritime Planning and coastal management (CM) framework for the Baltic Sea, by applying the ecosystem approach, is encouraged at national level as well as common cross-border cooperation for the implementation of MSP in the Baltic Sea according to the regional set of MSP principles adopted by all Baltic Sea countries within VASAB (Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea Region) and HELCOM. These regional MSP principles which are tailor-made for the Baltic Sea are in line with the key common EU principles set out in the Commission's Roadmap for MSP.

The EU and the HELCOM Contracting States have agreed in the context of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan to develop an integrated MSP process. Furthermore, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to advance MSP within VASAB, HELCOM, the Baltic Regional Advisory Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Through the now completed Plan Bothnia project, the European Commission launched preparatory actions to test the implementation of the Baltic MSP principles in a cross-border context in the Baltic Sea region. The transnational INTERREG project BaltSeaPlan is another important project that has already been carried out in that respect.

The joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group, which was established in 2010, has become the regional platform to ensure cooperation between BSR countries to ensure coherent MSP

¹ See e.g. WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme, *Future Trends in the Baltic Sea*, WWF 2010.

processes in the cross-border context. This important process needs support at the highest political level in the participating countries.

Land-based spatial planning has been carried out by all BSR countries at national, regional and local level. VASAB² has established a common platform to allow partners to meet, network, exchange knowledge and experiences and sketched a first common spatial vision for the Baltic Sea region – ‘Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010’ – (VASAB 2010) that was adopted by ministers responsible for spatial planning in Tallinn in 1994. The VASAB Long Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region³ (LTP) is the latest contribution to these efforts and should be taken into account by the coordinators of other priority areas when they address spatial objectives, conditions and impacts of their actions. The LTP concentrates on issues which require transnational solutions such as urban networking and urban-rural cooperation, improving external and internal accessibility and the development of maritime spatial planning.

As part of the implementation process of the EUSBSR, the LTP is being implemented through a number of short-to-medium and long-term actions together with stakeholders of the region. In particular, attention has to be paid to the territorial disparities in the BSR: 1) the East-West divide, 2) the North-South divide (especially the better integration of the northernmost territories to the Baltic Sea region networks). The implementation of LTP should be continued through further actions in different priority fields and through transnational projects.

An example is the ESPON project BSR-TeMo, which will provide evidence on territorial development and cohesion in the BSR by developing an indicator-based monitoring system. This monitoring system shall comprise a policy dimension, related to the promotion of territorial cohesion in the BSR, and a methodological dimension aimed at developing an indicator-based to monitor territorial development in the BSR.

The VASAB Committee for Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region should continue acting as a coordination platform for territorial development activities in the region, in close cooperation with the Council of Baltic Sea States.

Targets and indicators

A comprehensive system for the design, the monitoring and the follow-up of indicators and targets will be set up in 2013, under the responsibility of the horizontal action leaders. The still missing targets and deadline, baseline, and statistics/information sources related to the below indicators will be defined.

² VASAB – Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea – is an intergovernmental network of 11 countries of the Baltic Sea region promoting cooperation on spatial planning and development in the Baltic Sea region.

³ Adopted by the Ministers responsible for spatial, planning and development of Baltic Sea region countries in October 2009 in Vilnius.

Implementation of this horizontal action is directly linked to indicators and targets at a strategic level for the EUSBSR under the objective ‘Save the Sea’.

The understanding of the indicator is such that the Baltic Sea countries should aim at developing national maritime spatial plans by applying an ecosystem approach, and that the planning should be coherent across

Indicator	Baseline	Target/deadline	Data sources
Drawing up and application of trans boundary, ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Plans.	None in 2011.	Pilot plans in 2013. Drawing up and application throughout the region in 2020.	European Commission, DG MARE, national ministries, HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group, European Territorial Cooperation programmes’ reports where relevant: Plan Bothnia, BaltSeaPlan projects.

borders, which entails close cross-border cooperation.

This indicator is also linked to indicators and targets at a strategic level for the EUSBSR under several objectives, including sub-objective ‘Good transport conditions’ (improved internal and external connectivity) and sub-objective ‘Improved global competitiveness of the Baltic Sea region’ (positive influence on reducing differences in the average GDP and Human Development Index between the best and worst performing Member States in the region).

The overall goal of this horizontal action is to achieve territorial cohesion perspective in the BSR by 2030, i.e. the region is a well-integrated and coherent macro-region, and it has overcome the socio-economic development divides between its individual parts and turned the global challenges into assets.

Actions and flagship projects

Flagship project

- ***PartiSEApate – Multi-level Governance in MSP (Maritime Spatial Planning) throughout the Baltic Sea Region.*** The project’s main goal is to develop a pan-Baltic approach to marine topics that have a spatial dimension that go beyond the national borders (i.e. nature protection areas, grid connections, shipping lanes) and thus to create a transnational framework for multi-level governance in MSP. Partners will develop a concept for an institutional framework for MSP and governance model for coherent planning of cross-border issues (including transnational consultation, MSP data exchange network), which will provide input to policy decisions taken at the ministerial level in the BSR countries. The project builds on the results of existing network, the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group, and the completed Baltic projects: PlanBothnia, BaltSeaPlan, PlanCoast, East-

WestWindow and BaltCoast. The project was designed in line with their findings to promote and improve the quality and performance of result-oriented transnational efforts in maritime spatial planning. The project is composed of two pillars. The first one aims at practical testing of the existing in the BSR documents, guidelines and principles related to the cross-border MSP. The second pillar is devoted to strengthening transnational stakeholder involvement in the BSR in MSP. The project was initiated by the authorities responsible for MSP in the BSR, the research community and non-governmental organisations. Altogether 11 partners from almost all BSR countries joined the project. The HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group has assumed the role of project Advisory Group. The project received co-financing from the EU Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013. Duration of the project is from June 2012 until September 2014. Lead: Maritime Institute in Gdańsk, Poland. Deadline: 2014. Progress review: HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in 2013 and VASAB Ministerial Conference in 2014.