



Wismar Declaration on transnational spatial planning and development policies for the Baltic Sea Region to 2010

Fifth Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial Planning and Development in the Countries of the Baltic Sea Region held under the chairmanship of the German Federal Minister for Transport, Building and Housing in Wismar on 21 September 2001

The Ministers note with satisfaction that the States of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) are developing together by re-vitalising their close historical relationships. The common "Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea" of Ministers responsible for spatial planning and development (VASAB) and the transnational cooperation between countries, regions, cities and municipalities have contributed to economic and social cohesion and sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region.

The Ministers thank the regions, cities, municipalities, sector institutions and pan-Baltic Organisations of the Baltic Sea Region for their active participation in the preparation and the concertation process of the common new strategy VASAB 2010 Plus.

Challenges for spatial policies - Mission for VASAB cooperation

1. Spatial planning is increasingly acknowledged as an interactive, interdisciplinary and democratic instrument to promote sustainable and balanced spatial development and spatial cohesion in the Baltic Sea Region. National governments and PAN-Baltic organisations should use this instrument more actively in promotion of integration and competitiveness of the BSR.

2. EU enlargement will have considerable spatial impacts for the whole region. Therefore, cooperation in the framework of VASAB has to contribute to defining the main spatial development needs for integration of the BSR territory and to initiate necessary actions; special attention should be dedicated to impacts caused by borders between present and future EU member states and their neighbouring countries and regions, such as North-western Russia and regions of Belarus and cooperation should be intensified.

3. Transnational cooperation on spatial planning and development is a strategic approach to foster integration, competitiveness and sustainability around the Baltic Sea. The Ministers stress the importance of the Community Initiative Interreg III B, of the common operational programme for the Baltic Sea Region and of its inter-linked Joint Programming Document for Phare CBC in contributing to this aim. These programmes were drawn up in close association with the revised VASAB 2010 Plus strategy of the Ministers responsible for spatial planning and development. The implementation of this strategy and priorities through the programmes of Interreg, Phare as well as Tacis are a main common challenge for the present decade.

VASAB Work Priorities - Projects and Action

4. The outcome of "VASAB 2010 Plus" is acknowledged as a common platform. It will guide the cooperation on spatial planning and development for the coming years. Based on that, common actions and projects were discussed. The great interest of the European Commission in implementation is welcomed. The offer of the European Investment Bank is also greatly appreciated to consider financing of investments related to the implementation of priorities set out in VASAB 2010 Plus. The Ministers invite all actors to initiate transnational spatial planning and development projects and actions according to these priorities, thus preparing future investments. This will also contribute to the implementation of Europe- and Baltic-Sea-wide initiatives and programmes for spatial development.

5. Based on the priority themes, emphasis will be placed on projects in need of transnational cooperation:

- Fostering cross-sectoral cooperation and pilot actions for all strategic development zones and axes which significantly support integration in the Baltic Sea Region, for example cooperation in the South Baltic Arc, incorporating also the Kaliningrad region, cooperation in the South-western, South-eastern and Central BSR
- Evaluating and complementing activities on pan-Baltic intermodal transport systems and pan-European Transport Networks from spatial planning and development point of view, taking into account balanced regional structures and environmental impacts, for example railway connections between the Baltic States and Central Europe
- Enhancing integrated development of coastal zones and islands, extending spatial planning also to off-shore side
- Promoting transnational thematic cultural routes, for example Route of Brick Gothic, as well as green networks and corridors, ensuring cross-border continuation and better binding together of national green networks.

6. Cooperation in the framework of VASAB is supported also as forum for exchange of spatial planning experience needed in the participating countries, especially based on projects concerning:

- Encouraging pilot examples and methodology on how regional and local authorities can use integrated spatial planning to promote sustainable spatial development, also taking the CEMAT “Guiding Principles” into consideration
- Supporting implementation of the conclusions of the Interreg II C project “Urban Systems and urban networking”
- Strengthening and diversification of rural areas
- Encouraging environmentally friendly transport solutions.

7. A more active cooperation with other transnational organisations under the umbrella of the Council of Baltic Sea States, will be supported focusing on:

- Elaboration of transnational spatial policy recommendations i.a. based on experience from the implementation of transnational projects
- Intensification of dialogue with sector institutions with the aim of enhanced consultation for spatially relevant development measures
- Implementation of Spatial Planning Actions of the Baltic 21 Action Programme including the carrying out of territorial impact assessments for major transport projects in combination with already established environmental impact assessments.

Financing and Organisation

8. Decision-making and management of transnational projects require financing systems with the same rules for all participating countries. The Ministers therefore suggest to create a common instrument on the basis of Interreg (strand for transnational cooperation), and parts of Phare and Tacis for funding common transnational spatial development projects in the BSR.

9. The Ministers instruct their working body, the Committee on Spatial Development in BSR (CSD-BSR), to clarify possible financing to their VASAB cooperation for example according to the rules used by the Council of the Baltic Sea States and according to national annual budgetary decisions and to manage the arrangements on locating of secretariat.

10. The Ministers underline the importance of cooperation between the Member States of the EU and the countries applying for EU-membership in the “CSD PLUS” (Committee of Spatial Development of the Member States of the EU plus 12 candidate countries) and appeal to the EU Commission to give the necessary support for this cooperation.

11. The Ministers will disseminate the declaration to relevant national actors and ask the Chairman to send it to cooperation partners in the Baltic Sea Region, to the institutions of the European Union and to the Council of Europe, including the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, requesting them to promote the objectives and the measures in their respective spheres of responsibility. The Ministers urge the CSD-BSR to co-operate with respective European bodies and to promote the results of their co-operation.