

VASAB Expert Workshop
“Urban-Rural Partnerships in the Baltic Sea Region”
21 September 2010, Minsk, Belarus

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**Report of the VASAB Workshop on Urban-Rural Partnerships in the
Baltic Sea Region**

VASAB, a cooperation of 11 Baltic Sea Region countries on spatial planning and development at its 7th Ministerial Conference in October 2009 adopted Vilnius Declaration stating that one of its thematic areas would be promoting urban networking and urban-rural cooperation. Within this direction VASAB has planned several activities for the next years.

VASAB expert and stakeholders meeting on Demographic Trends and Labour Market Development on 8 June 2010, held in Kaunas, Lithuania was followed by the VASAB Expert Workshop “Urban-Rural Partnerships in the Baltic Sea Region” on 21 September 2010 held in Minsk, Belarus and organised in cooperation with the Belarus Ministry of Architecture and Construction and the Institute for Regional and Urban Planning. In total there were 27 participants from twelve countries representing international organizations, national governments and agencies, regional authorities, municipalities and universities and scientific institutes. The moderation of the meeting was provided by Mr. **Arve Skjerpen**, VASAB CSPD/BSR Chairman and Mr. **Rupert Kawka**, from the German Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning. The reporting was performed by Ms. **Laila Kule**, University of Latvia. The VASAB meeting in Minsk had four sessions.

1. Contributions on existing policies concerning urban-rural partnerships

During the first part of the meeting there were presentation from hosts and three input statements on policies and experiences on urban-rural partnerships. Ms. **Valentina Nazaruk** from the Ministry of Architecture and Construction of the Belarus introduced with the experience of policy and its implementation concerning “agrorodki” or “agro-towns” and provision of basic services to rural settlements. She noted that statistics and typologies of urban and rural areas are important to understand patterns of urban and rural population distribution. She noted that Current Belarus national policy on urban-rural partnership creates activities in both urban and rural areas and has a positive impact on rural areas where higher more comfortable living standards are provided for both rural and urban population.

The country is divided in six regions (oblast) that are subdivided in 118 administrative regions in total. Minsk Region is most populated where 20% of total Belarus population lives and 91.6 % of total population of the region lives in the capital. Currently urban population lives in 111 urban and 94 town-type settlements in total. Since 1999 the number of cities grows by 8, at the same period the number of town-type settlements is reduced by 14.

The Belarus average population density in 2009 was 47 persons per km². She emphasized the tendency that negative demographic processes cause the decrease of the density. Rural density in 2001 was 14,3 persons per km²; in 2007 respectively 12,7 persons per km². In 2001 there were 20 administrative districts with rural density less than 10 persons per km²; in 2007 this indicator was observed in doubled number of districts.

The second part of the presentation V.Nazaruk devoted to the Belarus National Program on Rural Settlement Revival and Development 2005-2010 that was developed as the response of the urban-rural discrepancies observed in the country like low density of rural population, inefficient use of rural land and low transport accessibility of rural lands, out-migration and aging in rural areas, and lower living standards in rural areas in terms of housing, services and infrastructure and the higher growth rates in urban areas

The program is seen as an instrument to create more attractive rural life style, to increase the scale of the production, to combine both social and industrial spheres based on the concept of agro-complex and thus is a continuation and further development of the former Soviet policy towards agricultural development.

She noted that the national program is a good example of implemented urban-rural partnership that can be characterised as intensive and strong. Partnerships with industrial enterprises in agrogorodoks create new jobs, the in-flow of rural population in these settlements and thus are the base for the growth. Partnerships in terms of issues providing accessibility and security of urban and rural settlement based on the complex reconstruction of new transport infrastructure create also international, national and regional significance. Partnerships are also an important aspect in terms of food security for Belarus.

Mr. **Anatoly Nichkasov**, vice-minister of the Ministry of Architecture and Construction made an intervention in the last part of the workshop and provided the short summary of Belarus involvement in VASAB activities. He stressed that the participation of Belarus experts in the VASAB activities has particular significance for spatial planning and cross-border development.

Mr. **Wilfried Görmar**, member of the VASAB CSPD/BSR provided information on the VASAB expectations in relation urban-rural partnerships in the context of the VASAB -Long Term Perspective and its implementation activities. He cited the LTP that addresses growing urban-rural divide as really serious problem and challenge for the BSR and cohesion in the region especially in effects of aging population, outward-migration from many areas and low access to modern services. He pointed that there are different situation in more urbanized, more densely populated, and thus might be a reason to apply different strategies in different regional situations.

The last part of the presentation he devoted to actions foreseen in the VASAB LTP. He pointed that there are two actions – firstly, the launch of joint transnational and cross-border initiatives to combine the development of metropolitan areas and their rural surroundings in a better way, meaning also certain projects, including these that are already running in transnational Interreg context; and, secondly, as it was mentioned already by Mr. A.Skjerpen, there is a plan to organise a Pan-Baltic

conference on acting demographic trends and counteracting urban-rural polarisation and increasing social cohesion in the Region.

He provided short information on investigation prepared within the implemented Interreg project “EAST-WEST Window”. He noted that within the framework of the project the investigations on urban-rural situation and urban-rural partnerships in Russia were prepared and Natalya Klimenko from Russia was responsible. VASAB developed methodology on this issue that was recommended to the Russian Government and other countries, many was interested but was not applied so far and collected examples on urban-rural partnerships in other countries. The VASAB discussed this issue of urban-rural partnerships with Pan-Baltic organisations and the European Commission concerning the BSR strategy that is one of the missing elements of the strategy and VASAB hopes it will be included in the later stage.

Mr. **Jean Peyrony** from the DG Regio presented a view of the European Commission on urban-rural divide and partnerships in Europe. He highlighted existing policies and future policy development that can contribute to the development of urban-rural partnerships as a policy instrument. He underlined that idea on urban-rural partnership came from the ESDP (1999) as one of the “big” ideas and emphasised that it still important to recall the vision of ESDP including polycentric objective and this new urban-rural relationships as still interesting for overall picture. The European Commission emphasised that the new forms of partnership and territorial governance are needed between urban-rural areas. In the Green paper on Territorial Cohesion (2008) the support was given to territorial cohesion that includes three Cs - concentration, connection, cooperation that is close to the ESDP as these are close to polycentric development.

In the framework of the Territorial Agenda's Action Plan, Spain during its presidency contributed with the document “Urban and rural narratives and spatial development trends in Europe” prepared by MCRIT based in Barcelona, the document is good synthesis of the existing policies and it is available on the web. He underlined that there is need to move away from the paradigm of core and periphery, arguing that there are different patterns, for instance peripheral areas are also connected to other parts of the world, and there is need to consider that as well. He noted that the despite that connexity and inter-linkages are important the territorial identity still matters. Mr. J.Peyrony noted that the issue of cooperation is crucial and the variable geometries and functional areas exist and thus meaning that real areas where we have to deliver services are different from administration areas. He also pointed that there is no need to change administrative areas in but to consider these soft spaces and make soft planning.

In last part of the presentation Mr. J.Peyrony provided the information of current development of territorial cohesion. He repeated that territorial cohesion includes urban-rural partnership and it can contribute to local development practises. He recalled the definition of the territorial cohesion that means polycentric and sustainable development, and enabling citizens and enterprises to make the most of territorial capital, to participate to and benefit from European integration meaning single market – in all areas where citizens are living and business is happening. He summarized that territorial cohesion is territorial dimension of sustainable development.

He also emphasised that there is no final decision taken yet on future cohesion policy, however there are new proposals prepared how the EC should change their policies. First, better territorial programming in every program cycle, meaning to increase support of territorial and urban development initiatives is needed. In this issue coordination with other DG are important, cross-cutting sectors. Functional areas like travel-to-work areas need to be considered more by the programmes; however no administrative change will be suggested. Possible option might be mandatory territorial dimension in the national contracts (which will replace NSRFs after 2014) and OPs, and to include urban-rural dimension. Another possibility is to provide greater flexibility in designing programmes (e.g. by developing multi regional programmes) and to improve the partnership approach, to involve more local authorities, even in urban-rural context.

He concluded that the last pillar is a need for evidence based policy-making, need to measure assets of territories and the need for prospective studies, territorial visions and scenarios, for instance ESPON study EDORA, which deals with meta-narratives, where one is on urban-rural. He noted that Eurostat cannot be the only solution, there is need is to cooperate more with national statistical offices, for instance for functional areas of travel to work that are different in each national state.

Concerning the Baltic Sea Region he emphasised that the menu of the trans-national co-operation regulations already includes support to urban networks and urban-rural links; strategies to tackle common urban-rural issues. The EC encourages that VASAB to show that it can contribute to develop the territorial dimension of the macro regional BSR Strategy; the VASAB has possibility to demonstrate its experience.

He concluded the presentation by providing the insight of the coming events with relevance to territorial cohesion at the European level. He noted that the 5th Cohesion report is coming out in November 2010 that will include proposal for cohesion policy reforms, draft regulations will be prepared and presented in summer 2011. He also informed that the Hungary Presidency is going to propose the revision of Territorial Agenda in the 1st semester 2011 and it will be coordinated with the intergovernmental cooperation for urban development. The Polish Presidency will prepare the new TA Action plan in the 2nd semester 2011.

He agreed that improved reporting and exchange of experiences are important as there are existing good examples throughout Europe that need to better communicate and that trans-sectorial approach are crucial for understanding and supporting urban-rural relations.

Mr. Rupert Kawka from the German Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning informed the audience about German national demonstration project “Surpraregional partnership in Germany” and its experiences in the field of urban-rural partnerships at various spatial levels. He noted the demonstration projects and financial support can contribute to the development of new ideas and to distribution of successful experiences in the area of urban-rural partnerships.

The demonstration project on urban-rural partnership started in 2008, the first period was ended in 2010, but it was prolonged and will continue for two more years. There

was a national call for ideas on urban-rural partnership, out of 65 ideas that were received finally 7 demonstration regions with 38 projects were selected. These regions are large scale including different types of urban-rural partnerships, not only suburbs but real urban and rural areas. There are funding for central project management to coordinate these activities, to have workshops and publications, but, it is important that regions provided their own funding showing that they are also interested in this topic. In the end of the project there were the analysis of the results and the political advice to national and regional policy level was provided.

He provided examples from the demonstration project on urban-rural partnerships:

- In Nürnberg region the emphasis was on regional networks between urban and rural regions and to increase of value added in the region.
- The real success was the Siemens canteen that started to use for catering fresh food from the region that will bring some 4 million Euro for regional agriculture additional.
- In Stuttgart region the demonstration project focused on spatial planning. The scale of planning was increased by combining five development plan areas into one (Stuttgart and surrounding) in order to decrease competition and this permitted to have better cooperation with the national railway company concerning negotiating for the timetable for public transport in this large area and there were agreement to provide land for logistics beneficial for development but formerly complicated due to high price region.
- The demonstration project on strategic level in Hamburg region was conducted where two conferences for an exchange of ideas between regions and actors were organized as well as the survey among 325 actors from urban and rural areas about their topics and goals were conducted, and finally a strategy paper was prepared that incorporated the needs and potentials of rural areas.
- The project located in the periphery of the Brandenburg/Mecklenburg Western Pomerania region involves medium and small size cities, having good plants but lacking skilled labour. The solution was found in the cooperation in terms of distant learning for labour that permitted to combine training and working.

Different topics were covered by the demonstration projects of urban-rural partnership and these were knowledge networks, external and internal marketing to promote actors and ideas, transport infrastructure, networks and clusters, natural heritage and tourism concepts and cross-border cooperation with neighbour countries. He emphasised that it is important to find an appropriate governance model and to provide that these urban – rural partnerships are sustainable and there is a continuation after the projects are ended.

The most promising observations are:

- Urban-rural partnerships are possible even on a large scale.
- If there is one common problem it will foster the establishment of urban-rural partnerships, so at the beginning the win-win or win-stand-by meaning one wins and other one does not lose that will create trust and in the end the conflict management possible.
- Many different topics possible but these topics need to be based on functional regional linkages as basis for partnerships; if there are no linkages there are no basis of urban-rural partnerships.

- As in any cooperation the trust among actors is crucial and broad approach that partners comes from politics, economy, and civil society so that they have different understanding and aims concerning the partnership are needed.
- It is important to understand that the goal is that regions can contribute with their potentials on urban-rural partnerships and have to benefit from the results.

2. Discussion on the status of urban-rural partnerships in the BSR and other EU-regions

The next part of workshop was devoted to the discussion on the status of urban-rural partnerships in the BSR and other EU-regions and the focus was on examples and prior experience in regional cooperation.

Mr. **Petri Kahila** from Nordregio presented the BSR trans-national project “New Bridges” that have focus on the quality of life aspects in relation to urban-rural divide and relations. He highlighted that in “New Bridges” project there are three elements of the quality of life that are of main focus: 1) provision of services, 2) residential preferences and 3) mobility. He noted that local identity and different life styles play significant role. The investment in the quality of life will improve the prerequisites for economic growth or economic vitality of the region. He concluded that there are new trends of new urban-rural lifestyles observed so called flexible life styles and the comprehensive quality of life in city-regions incorporating both urban and rural areas.

Mr. **Rolf Oldejans** from the Municipality of Enschede, the Netherlands presented the outcomes of the NSR Interreg project ”URBAL” - URBan and rurAL with its follow-up project the D(emographic) C(hange) Noise (DC Noise) and ongoing project the Sustainable URban Fringes (SURF). URBAL was a project implemented in 2004-2006 and it was based on the perspective of growth, as the management of the possible collision and mismatch between urban and rural needs that were observed. He pointed that URBAL project has three main problems: the imbalanced opportunities and imbalanced dynamics, fragmented governance and the competition for land. The project has four main objectives: to raise awareness amongst local decision makers, to develop understanding on the better land management and the implications of sectoral policies and to develop practical actions leading to a balanced development. The URBAL project had four themes:

- 1) Developing spatial strategies and new forms of cooperation.
- 2) Promoting quality of space and sustainable accessibility.
- 3) Developing social and cooperative strategies.
- 4) Developing economic and marketing strategies.

The lessons learned within the themes:

- 1) Developing spatial strategies and new forms of cooperation having the motto “Towards Shared Visions”;
 - the need for real demonstration projects to influence the political agenda;
 - the most urban-rural issues are multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral and must be tackled with the involved disciplines and sectors;
 - existing familiar approaches from one country can be very new and problem solving in other countries, and it included transnational learning, and learning from both good and bad experiences.

2) Promoting quality of space and sustainable accessibility with the motto “Towards Spatial Balance”;

- better attention is given for projects at European level;
- the win-win situations can be achieved by broadening the scope of projects;
- policies and local problems might be solved by the increase of the geographical scale (region).

3) Developing social and cooperative strategies having the motto “Live Close to a Quality of Life”;

- some negative trends amplify each other, for instance in social sphere. These trends can be changed by innovations in services and management, for instance case farming.

4) Developing economic and marketing strategies with the motto “Towards a Balanced Spatial Economy”;

- the inspiration by marketing strategies from other countries;
- the that economic strategies need to be developed as part of a wider spatial-economic strategy, especially for market towns.

He noted that the transnational project SURF is about exchange of information and the development of a common approach towards urban fringe development. The aim of the project is to unlock the potential of urban fringes meaning the areas between urban and rural landscape, both recognising their value to local communities and protecting their environmental quality for future generations. The reason for this action is that these spaces are often neglected and are under threat from growth and expansion and often have inconsistent spatial planning policies, but these areas have lots of opportunities. The challenges that are observed in urban fringes and are concerned with spatial planning and sustainable development, are due to the complex issues of ownership and administration, fragmented spaces, declining biodiversity, deteriorating water quality, low green space value, poor access and lack of engagement with local communities and changing demographics and their impact on the urban fringe.

Moderator **Rupert Kawka** summerized the inputs by concluding that;

- 1) Self defined projects from regions are important as they know what is best for regions and where are real possibilities for cooperation.
- 2) Project can contribute to an initial resistance.
- 3) Projects need not to cover all territory but only that part that is helpful meaning that variable geometry is important.
- 4) There is a need to promote and to exchange solutions within Europe. For this European model projects are needed in spite at which level they are funded national or European level. Such projects are good platforms to bring actors together and to create arenas for discussion.
- 5) Larger spatial scale is needed in order not to think only on urban or rural areas, but encouraging the thinking in broader scale.

During the discussion on the status of urban-rural partnerships in the BSR the inputs from Poland, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia was provided that mentioned such aspects as sustainability of partnerships established by the projects, the importance of basic public services provision and accessibility particularly in sparsely populated

areas where exist a competition for urban functions and where is possibilities to establish new innovative ways of provision of public and private services for both population and businesses. To ensure that the aspects of mobility, transport and spatial levels of governance and the inputs and needs of various stakeholders need to be taken account.

Mr. **Mirosław Grochowski** from the Polish Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization opened debates. He stressed he satisfied with presentations but this activity opened some kind of Pandora box as urban-rural partnership might be about everything. He noted that two questions need to be answered, first, for what partnerships are needed, and, second, who is interested in these partnerships. He argued that if there are answers on these questions, then there is possible contribution to these partnerships. He noted that originally he believed that these are instruments to guide development supporting regional development by the central or regional government. Grochowski informed that comes from his professional background working in this field. He also stressed that projects are needed as they are extremely important and Europe can afford to have them but these urban-rural partnerships need to be sustainable after the additional financing is gone, local communities need to be interested in such urban-rural partnerships to sustain in longer period then projects duration.

Mr. **Carl-Johan Engström** from the Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden agreed with the argument that sustainability is extremely important and until now he missed that discussion. He also argued that climate change and peak oil threats are extremely import, not taken account these no new strategies are possible to create. He argued that regional level is a key where new products can be marketed and consumed, like local food, energy products, particularly biogas that cab be used for public transport. He concluded that it is important for people living in rural areas to be able to provide the quality of life equal to urban and for this commuting and mobility is important. He noted that new ways of establishing settlement in the countryside is needed and thus there is a need to integrate with development of transport corridors. He concluded that sustainability depends from new economy at global and European level and this issue has to be discussed.

Mr. **Mirosław Grochowski** argued that common interest is needed for establishing partnerships and that the best strategy would be focus not on competitiveness but on attractiveness of areas, as in such way potentials of areas can be developed. He underlined that current policies are too much urban oriented and that agriculture or rural areas are not seen as a part of knowledge-based economy or a component of something that is really competitive. People do not see assets and potentials of rural areas, particularly if they are neighbouring urban. He concluded that aspect to see urban and rural as interlinked is missing and that the key is focusing on place-based development strategies.

3. Discussion on vision for urban-rural partnerships in the BSR

Third part of the workshop was devoted to the second round table discussion on vision for urban-rural partnerships in the BSR with focus on needs, chances, potential topics, policies and actions. The discussion started with two input statements from Finland.

Mr. **Petri Kahila** from Nordregio provided the presentation on “Urban-rural interactions – Finnish experience” he highlighted that urban-rural interactions are related to territorial and social cohesion and their practical implications that differs at modes and spatial scales and has institutional barriers. He provided a short insight in the Finnish regional policy and concluded that there is a lack of explicit goal of national/regional policies for urban-rural interaction.

In Finland the latest policy response to urban-rural interaction is the Regional Cohesion and Competitiveness Programme (COCO) that is a government’s special programme for period 2010-2013 with no finances for projects that has an aim to bring actors together in order to have arena to discuss about regional development issues including urban-rural interaction aspects. The Regional Centre Programme, the Regional Section for Rural Areas of the Special Rural Policy Programme and the Island Development Programme are merged into this new program. The idea of the program is to bring actors together in order to have arena to discuss regional development issues. COCO includes urban-rural interaction aspects. The program is implemented in some 30-40 regions and it requires that each region consists of at least one strong urban centre. It develops networking of economic and other activities in the region, between regions and internationally. The program creates opportunities for development. The program does not have finances; it is only instrument to bring different actors, projects together with aim to have better coordination. Despite of the coordinating efforts by COCO the institutional obstacles exist concerning financial instruments at EU, national or regional level if these do not include options for covering urban-rural interactions,

Mr. **Pekka Markus Sauri**, Deputy Mayor of Helsinki from Finland and representative of the BaltMet Network provided the presentation “New Interdependencies of Helsinki and Rural Finland – Some Policy Experiences”. He pointed that within the BaltMet network until recently urban-rural partnerships have not recognized as a policy instrument that can contribute to the competitiveness of urban regions and therefore this aspect is not included in the BaltMet Network’s priorities. The BaltMet is a network of major cities in the Baltic Area, focusing on developing the competitiveness of the area and its cities and within the BaltMet network’s cooperation projects between cities and actions to safeguard their interests are organised.

He provided the examples of Helsinki city cooperation with rural areas, both within metropolitan regional as well as remote ones. He noted that for rural areas connection to urban areas is crucial for their development. Linkages between urban and rural areas are weakened due to the fact that agricultural and raw material extraction sectors are becoming global. New urban-rural linkages are being developed by recreational residents and tele-work employees. He concluded that a new regional policy stems from existing functional cooperation between urban and rural, particularly in the area of climate change and challenges of energy production and supply, particularly bio-energy and alternative energy and that comparing and share good practises are a topical challenge, cooperation where major cities should take and an active role alongside national ministries responsible for regional policies.

During the discussion the inputs from Poland, Germany, Latvia, Russia, Belarus, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands and the representative from the European Commission highlighted such aspects of urban-rural partnerships as practicality and functionality of demonstration projects in particular in energy sector, services, including health care and the need of specific land policies for urban and rural areas and development/transport corridors in sparsely populated areas. Participants emphasised the need to for the governance models and adequate funding in order to support urban-rural partnerships.

Moderator **Rupert Kawka** underlined that is particularly import meaning if there is no actors this activity will not continue. He had a question concerning the EU regional and agricultural policies on the possibility to open the missing element between urban and rural areas as some programs are focusing more on rural some on urban areas.

Mr. **Jean Peyrony** responded that from the three seminars on urban-rural partnerships organized by the EC can be concluded that interesting experiences exist, but the overall picture is not known to the EC as at the moment different countries and regions implement activities in the frame of several programs.

From the consultation about Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion the EC received many contributions. He stressed that there will be an opportunity with the impulse from the European Parliament; they propose a preparatory action RURBAN that would be implemented by DG REGIO; it would include a survey on what happens in the regions concerning this issue and public awareness events. In future there could be a role for the EU providing general guidance in this field.

He noted that there are things done in ESPON and in another programs, but these need to be capitalise, for instance through networking. He underlined that what is going to happen at national level or at operational program level is up to countries. During the debate on the green paper, many regional authorities, such as Scotland, claimed to be responsible for vertical coordination between levels and horizontal coordination between funds and policies. Urban-rural national differences exist; spatial patterns and governance models differ.

He emphasised that spatial patterns are quite different due to different ways how space is organized, for instance these patterns are different in Germany or in the North Sweden. He concluded that in the future territorial cohesion should have to be supported, but it needs to have flexible approach. He highlighted that in the future EU guidelines should address the territorial dimension that includes urban-rural relationships but the implementation should be left to national and regional level.

Mr. **Wilfried Görmar** remained that need to improve reporting as urban-rural problems are left behind other problems and often are not reported and as consequence urban-rural issues are missing in strategies and programs, particularly at regional level. He argued that it is important to discuss with relevant responsible authorities to bring this problem of addressing urban-rural issues on the front in the programs preparation phase.

Mr. **Mirosław Grochowski** underlined that partnerships are important, not only urban-rural, but also rural-rural or urban-urban. He noted that the major problem of barriers to area partnership development is that funds are distributed not based in

functional problems but in accordance to administrative authorities and other aspects creating barriers is that regional policies are focussing on activities that will bring immediate results, for instance support to industrial activities.

Moderator **Rupert Kawka** added the cooperation between responsible sectoral ministries is crucial in order to promote urban-rural partnerships. He mentioned a good experience with the observation done in Bavaria that 60% of funding is concentrated in cities and their adjacent areas. He called for a need to bring different kind of experiences together and that there is a need to have different spatial levels at the same time.

Ms. **Nina Oding** from the St.Petersburg Leontief centre, Russia informed that experiences of urban-rural partnerships are fragmented, some good examples exist where national businesses, national and regional government and an international organization are involved in multi-level cooperation.

She provided an example where business is initiating urban-rural partnership - in the Leningrad region the information technology company from St, Petersburg established educational activities for young people in rural area as the company needed new labour for their future services. Another example was provided when such partnership was initiated on the basis of institutional activities. Multi-level cooperation was established where several national ministries, the World Bank, regional and local authorities are involved in terms to ensure the protection and the use of cultural monuments in rural areas.

Mr. **Pekka Markus Sauri** emphasised that urban-rural relationships need to be based on real economy. He mentioned examples from city of Helsinki cooperation with remote rural municipalities in the field of wood industry and information technology sector. He pointed that the win-win situation is needed to be established and public sector relations are not enough

4. Final discussion on urban-rural partnerships and activities towards the BSR political recommendations

Additionally inputs on urban-rural partnerships from Lithuania, Sweden, and Germany were provided. Mr. **Aleksandras Gordevicius** from the Lithuanian Ministry of the Environment highlighted the importance to indicate settlement structure at spatial plans of national and regional level. He concluded that concerning local level there is voluntary approach towards rural- urban cooperation in Lithuania. From the Lithuanian national policy side the municipal cooperation is facilitated. There are experience to work together in such areas are as infrastructure, tourism, cultural heritage and environmental protection issues.

Mr. **Carl-Johan Engström** stressed that a partnership is institutionalized cooperation that is not a starting point but the result and that objectives should be the strengthening of urban-rural relations and therefore a possible ways of cooperation needs to find. For that the investigations and analyses to find win-win situations in urban-rural relations, for that bottom-up process are needed. Bottom-up processes with mature and in-mature self government, local authorities need long local processes. He underlined that these processes should be guided by stronger partners.

He also noted that if you are 'strong' you should be also 'kind' that means these processes should be funded and guided by larger cities.

He concluded that such urban-rural relations models are needed to be developed, instead of creating rural-urban partnership and then filling them with contents.

Moderator **Rupert Kawka** provided the outlook of the workshop and informed about the next steps to be taken in order to prepare policy document on urban-rural partnerships. In short, Kawka stressed that the workshop indicated that both shared and different opinions exist, that projects are important to provide real examples for people and enterprises, and authorities. He remained that sustainability, governance, funding, various spatial levels (local, regional, state, national and European) and the involvement and participation of both formal and informal actors are important aspects. Many topics exist and to define goals for urban-rural partnerships are more difficult. The aims of urban-rural partnerships could be political, for economical or supporting the quality of life.

He underlined that one conclusion is that we have to learn from each other, from other countries, from other experiences, and there are good examples and we have to identify what are obstacles, for instance institutions, who is initiating, what makes it at the beginning - major urban region, state, national level, or a strategic plan.