

VASAB contribution to the 15th Ministerial Session of the CBSS

A non-paper by VASAB Chairmanship

VASAB (Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010) is a co-operation of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development in the Baltic Sea Region countries, including Belarus. The main mission of this inter-governmental pan-Baltic organization is to prepare policy options for spatial development of the Region and to provide a forum for exchange of know-how on spatial planning and development between the Baltic Sea Region countries. Since 1992 based on its mandate VASAB has been working with macro regional spatial planning and development issues in the Baltic Sea Region.

The Council of the Baltic Sea States in its Communiqué of 13th Session of 9-10 June 2005 encouraged the VASAB ministers responsible for spatial planning to update the vision of long-term territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region together with relevant regional stakeholders.

VASAB 6th Ministerial Conference in Gdansk on 19 September 2005 instructed the Committee on Spatial Development of the Baltic Sea Region to prepare a long-term perspective for spatial development of the Region under active participation of the regional authorities and in dialogue with relevant pan-Baltic organizations.

Since 2005 VASAB in coordination with relevant stakeholders have been engaged in developing the Long Term Perspective (LTP) document and it will be presented to the VASAB 7th Ministerial Conference to be held on 16 October 2009 in Vilnius, Lithuania. The LTP document will set a long-term perspective and an action plan for prioritised issues of transnational relevance which spatial planning systems, tools and methods are capable of influencing.

The LTP document will have a manifold purpose. Firstly, it will position the Baltic Sea Region in the European framework by introducing VASAB concepts and priorities into the ongoing discussion on the territorial dimension of the EU Cohesion Policy, and on the territorial context of the EU cooperation with the neighbouring countries. Secondly, it will sustain a dialogue between the BSR stakeholders on connecting potentials across the borders and strengthening trans-border synergies between national/regional plans, strategies and programmes in the Baltic Sea Region. Thirdly, it will emphasise a need and promotes involvement of the BSR countries themselves by urging them to plan appropriate financial resources for the implementation of the guidelines and actions settled by the Perspective. Fourthly, it may provide ground for the monitoring and evaluation of territorial cohesion processes in the BSR.

The development of a long term perspective has revealed important territorial development issues to be addressed on a pan-Baltic level.

For example, negative demographic trends and labour force movements in the Baltic Sea Region have created social challenges shared by all BSR countries. A pan-Baltic dialogue is necessary to work out measures to counteract impact of the demographic trends and labour market developments on the urban-rural polarisation and social cohesion of the Region.

In the context of rapidly increasing seaborne cargo volumes, including transport of dangerous goods, an introduction of intelligent sea transport corridors in the BSR with high traffic volumes in environmentally sensitive areas would be encouraged.

A common, pan-Baltic approach is required for planning and management of the Baltic Sea space, based on a clear vision, goals and principles. Taking into account ongoing EU and regional initiatives VASAB would suggest arranging a BSR conference together with relevant stakeholders in order to develop a common approach for Baltic Sea maritime spatial planning.

Peter Pouplier
VASAB Chairman

Copenhagen, 28 May 2009