



## **VASAB chairmanship statement on cooperation with Helsinki Commission on marine spatial planning issues in the Baltic Sea Region**

VASAB (Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010) is a co-operation of the Ministers on spatial planning and development in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) countries, preparing policy options for spatial development of the region and promoting exchange of know-how on spatial planning and development between the Baltic Sea countries, including Norway and Belarus. Currently VASAB is preparing a Long Term Perspective 2030 for the spatial development of the Baltic Sea Region recognizing its maritime identity.

Latvia as current VASAB chairing country would like to make the following statement on cooperation with Helsinki Commission.

VASAB chairmanship welcomes an initiative of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) supporting elaboration of a common broad-scale marine spatial planning principles for the Baltic Sea aiming at facilitation of protection and sustainable use of the marine potentials. As it has been pointed out by the European Commission in its Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union ("The Blue Book"), "an integrated governance framework for maritime affairs requires horizontal planning (...) that cuts cross sea-related sectoral policies and support joined up policy making. Maritime spatial planning is therefore a fundamental tool for the sustainable development of marine areas and coastal regions, and for the restoration of Europe's seas to environment health."

VASAB has started its work on maritime spatial planning in 2001 with documents "VASAB 2010 Plus Spatial Development Action programme" in which foundations for such a planning has been established. The testing ground was offered by the INTERREG project "BaltCoast" which has resulted in recommendations pointing out the main tasks for smooth introduction of marine and coastal zone spatial planning in the Baltic Sea region (BSR). Those recommendations have been presented to the sixth Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning and Development in Gdansk, Poland in 2005.

Therefore, VASAB sees the initiative of the Helsinki Commission as an important part of the ongoing efforts both at Baltic and European level offering synergy to what has already been initiated and launched by the EU Commission, VASAB and Baltic 21 spatial planning lead party.

This initiative is in line with the basic spatial planning principle of participation. It is clear that development and then implementation of the broad-scale spatial planning principles for marine and costal part of the Baltic Sea region can not be achieved without broad consensus i.e. participation of all relevant stakeholders including private sector, regional and local governments and authorities responsible for management of the land and sea space in the BSR countries. The need to apply participatory principle has been proved by efforts of Germany and Poland where the attempt of developing such principles on the national level has recently been observed.

Having in mind what has been achieved so far by the EU Commission and VASAB on sea use planning and ICZM, VASAB proposes to use the national principles as significant source for jointly prepared common broad-scale marine spatial planning principles for the Baltic Sea Region.

VASAB is looking forward to co-operation aiming at elaboration of the mentioned principles and is ready to contribute with expertise and knowledge of spatial planning for the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Looking forward to successful co-operation in future,

Edgars Zalans

Minister