

VASAB Stakeholder Meeting
„Creating synergies for well-integrated and coherent Baltic Sea Region”
12 December 2013, Helsinki
Summary

The purpose of the VASAB Stakeholder Meeting was to:

- Bring together policy makers and experts from various sectors and governance levels interested in spatial planning and regional development concepts for the Baltic Sea Region,
- Make an overview of how the actions of pan-Baltic organisations and projects contribute to the VASAB Long-Term Perspective,
- Summarise the current implementation status of the VASAB Long-Term Perspective in the three pillars of the territorial development (urban networking and urban-rural cooperation; internal and external accessibility; and maritime spatial planning),
- Discuss ways to carry out a harmonised stakeholder dialogue towards a well-integrated and coherent macroregion,
- Come up with interesting ideas on the monitoring and evaluation of the territorial development in the Baltic Sea Region,
- Contribute to the upcoming VASAB Ministerial Conference by supporting policy development and devising new approaches towards territorial cohesion in the Region.

The structure of the meeting:

The three interactive sessions were conducted introducing and discussing (1) the Draft Progress Report on the Implementation of the VASAB Long-Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (LTP), (2) the work of several pan-Baltic organisations dealing with the thematic aspects addressed in the LTP document, (3) outcomes of the relevant territorial cooperation initiatives, and (4) results of the ESPON and other projects addressing territorial development processes in the Baltic Sea Region.

The sessions were focused on:

- Performing a pan-Baltic dialogue of the invited pan-Baltic organisations and transnational networks for a well-integrated and coherent macroregion;
- Introducing territorial cooperation projects relevant for achieving the LTP goals;
- Presenting and discussing how to monitor and evaluate territorial development processes in the Baltic Sea Region.

The key messages resulting from the presentations and discussions:

The LTP has received positive reviews in the Baltic Sea Region community as a transnational strategy with ambitious agenda towards territorial cohesion. It adds a territorial dimension to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EU SBSR) and proposed concrete measures to tackle the territorial disparities. However, as all LTP actions require stakeholder cooperation, the success of the LTP relies on the ability to communicate it to the groups of interest and mobilise them to work on the proposed actions.



The LTP document is rather well known in executive structures responsible for the EU SBSR and the pan-Baltic intergovernmental networks because of perceived correlation with their development objectives. Actions performed in the area of urban-rural issues, demographic/labour market trends and the maritime spatial planning have been assessed as the most successful.

The main achievements and challenges:

- **Installed framework of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region for executing the specific LTP actions**

In the governance framework for the EU SBSR, VASAB (together with HELCOM) has been given a prominent role. The two organisations lead the Horizontal Action on Spatial Planning (HA Spatial Planning), which aims to draw up and apply of trans-boundary, ecosystem-based maritime spatial plans throughout the Region in 2020. It may ensure a better consistency of activities by relevant MSP stakeholders, their commitment to the defined targets and indicators for the Horizontal Action through a commonly agreed Regional Baltic Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2013-2020 (Road map), and to convey collaboration results to the policy level.

VASAB Committee for Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region (Committee) acts as a coordination platform for the territorial development in the Region, in close cooperation with the Council of Baltic Sea States and has a leading role for the land – based spatial planning.

Through the Horizontal Action Leader role VASAB may better promote the territorial cohesion perspective and the inclusion of the territorial disparities in the actions under other priority areas of the EU SBSR.

- **VASAB (together with HELCOM) has a leading role in the Baltic Sea Region maritime spatial planning**

The joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Working Group, established in October 2010, puts together expertise in spatial planning and environmental protection. The Working Group is actively promoting MSP in the Baltic Sea Region. Further steps for a successful implementation of the Road map need to be taken now.

- **Pushed forward macroregional transport development perspective and implementation of crucial transport infrastructure projects**

The launched new TEN-T policy put infrastructure investment on the core network, set for the year 2030, in the centre of attention. The three core network corridors crossing the Baltic Sea Region contain sections that were listed in the VASAB LTP document as necessary for the integration of transport networks in the BSR. Among them are: Rail Baltica and North-South routes from Scandinavian countries via Central Europe (eastern Germany, Poland) to the Adriatic Sea.

The macroregional transport development perspective has been put high on the agenda of the EU SBSR (PA Transport) by means of initiatives carried out by the national transport ministries and the territorial cooperation projects. In these processes the VASAB Committee members have taken an active role stimulating discussion on connecting territorial potentials through efficient and reliable transport infrastructure. Continued coordination of transport policies, for instance, with Northern Dimension Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL) is clearly needed. In some cases VASAB could take a



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mediator role for multimodal transport planning in cities, also in the development of Rail Baltica project VASAB is being seen as a perfect hosting stakeholder.

- **Activated commitment to solving some urgent development issues in the Baltic Sea Region**

In several thematic areas featured in the LTP VASAB succeeded in liaising with broad partnerships representing various governance levels and sectors to jointly address the identified problems and work out possible solutions.

In the urban networking, urban-rural relations or demographic and labour market trends activities conducted by the respective pan-Baltic cooperation networks as well as transnational and cross-border projects. VASAB managed to raise political awareness on the territorial disparities in the evolving tendencies and to communicate a need to see long-term policies in all planning levels.

VASAB role in that respect has also been to stimulate and support specific projects co-funded by the territorial cooperation programmes (e.g. 'New Bridges') to develop and demonstrate cross-sectorial approaches and policy recommendations. In the implementation of EU SBSR PAs that are generally sectorial VASAB role as a HAL needs to be strengthened.

Recommendations for improved performance of LTP and harmonized stakeholder dialogue towards a well-integrated and coherent macroregion:

- **Better communicate the LTP to stakeholders**
 - Being more efficient in using the forums of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region) to promote the territorial cohesion perspective of the BSR by 2030, functional city-region development and the role of other priority areas in tackling the territorial disparities;
 - Presenting the perspective of Russia and Belarus in achieving the territorial cohesion perspective of the BSR by 2030;
 - Initiating/strengthening dialogue on incorporation of the LTP aspects in strategic work of the relevant pan-Baltic organizations;
 - Establishing dialogue with the related PACs and HALs in the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy, particularly with HA Sustainable Development, HA Neighbours, PA Transport, PA Energy;
 - Initiating cooperation with the Secretariat of the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL) for broadening perspective of the NDPTL with spatial planning viewpoint;
 - Capitalizing LTP implementation achievements by various dissemination activities (presentations, brochures, etc).
- **Track the policy and market processes of relevance to the LTP**
 - Preparing information materials for decision-makers to present territorial development implications of the high level policies, e.g. transport;
 - Establishing a meeting place for relevant ongoing territorial cooperation and research projects to discuss their findings and contribution to the LTP;
 - Considering further thematic studies in some relevant fields.
- **Stimulate new projects based on the gathered evidence**



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- Review outcomes of completed cooperation projects in the areas that have a clear potential for further joint activities;
 - Analyse measures/investment projects included in the 'Strategy of social and economic development of the North-West Federal District of Russia until 2020' as a departure point for any joint work with the Russian partners;
 - Initiate/encourage new projects in cooperation with other relevant pan-Baltic organisations as possible flagship or strategic projects under the EUSBSR HA Spatial Planning
 - Contribute to the projects initiated by other pan-Baltic organisations as a facilitator or expert.
- A new field of possible VASAB engagement is **spatial/territorial planning at the landscape level**. Here, VASAB could assist the projects, which investigate the subject and put forward solutions on local landscape governance, to promote policy recommendations at the national and international forums.
 - As emphasized and expected by several external stakeholders, there is a clear role of **VASAB** to act as **an observatory of trends and processes** related to the **territorial cohesion in the Baltic Sea Region** and to provide evidence either proving a right development of the taken initiatives and actions or flagging necessary changes. The monitoring should take into account a need of collecting the existing evidence on territorial development processes, impacts of policies with a territorial dimension and outcomes of territorial cooperation projects. Also, the VASAB Committee should create a meeting place for relevant ongoing territorial cooperation and research projects to discuss their findings and contribution to the LTP. In effect, VASAB may become a catalyst of new initiatives to be supported, promoted and progress-tracked in the next turn. One important aspect of the observatory role to be potentially assumed by VASAB is a possibility to analyse correlations between the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the 'Strategy of social and economic development of the North-West Federal District of Russia until 2020' in the specific thematic fields and propose solutions (together with HA Neighbours) how to better synchronise the two coordination instruments.

Representatives from various Baltic Sea Region pan-Baltic organizations, like the Council of the Baltic Sea States, Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation, Union of the Baltic Cities, Baltic Metropolises Network, HELCOM, BONUS programme, Gulf of Finland 2014 initiative, other VASAB cooperation partners and flagship projects representatives participated and shared their views.

Participants expressed a satisfaction on a meeting recognising a necessity and usefulness of the regular exchange of information, clearly stated their interest and the will to cooperate with VASAB as well as to contribute with their expertise to the further implementation of the LTP and the coming VASAB Ministerial Conference. Project representatives are also willing to present and share project results. Need for a continuity of the projects was underlined.



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