

# TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES THROUGH COMMON VISION IN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH BALTIC SEA REGION NEIGHBOURS

20 OCTOBER 2021

## Prevailing discussion themes

How would a desired Baltic Sea Region look like by 2040? How do we envision its urban networks and settlement structure, its physical and digital connectivity, the management of its 'commons' that ensure a good quality of life, and how do we envision its maritime and spatial planning by 2040? What do we wish to look different from today? The 2<sup>nd</sup> external workshop (in Russian and English language), targeted to Russian stakeholders took place on 20 October and discussed the four metaphors of the vision, i.e. the pearls, the strings, the patches. Besides the presentation of the vision, the workshop was complemented by the following inputs and presentations:

- Limonov Leonid, Director General, ICSEER Leontief Centre, Director-Coordinator Research Programmes on the *pearls* metaphor by reflecting on urbanisation issues in Russia and its North-Western region, in particular;
- Khodachek Alexander, President, Higher School of Economics - Saint Petersburg on the *strings* metaphor;
- Petrov Pavel, Head of Department for International Cooperation, Karelian Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences presenting their understanding of the *patches* metaphor and its use. Ideas of underwater / underground as well as cultural patches categories was proposed;
- Andrei Lappo, Executive Director, Scientific and Research Institute of Maritime Spatial Planning Ermak NorthWest (ErmakNW) on the *strings* metaphor pointing at the possible directions for maritime planning and international cooperation for Russia. Presently these themes in Russia are centrally governed with the regional and local authorities not being sufficiently involved;
- Danilova Larisa, General Director, Scientific and Research Institute of Maritime Spatial Planning Ermak Northwest reflected on the necessity to share the open data on spatial resources and referred to the INSPIRE project;
- Aleksei Ignatev, Kaliningrad Regional Economic Development Agency reminded that Kaliningrad oblast should not be seen as a dead-end in terms of *strings* but should be integrated into the overall network. He also stressed the necessity of cross-border co-operation on the natural *patches* that has now been impacted by COVID-19.

## Key workshop take-aways

The key questions of the session focused on whether the vision for each metaphor sounds likely to be the future or sounds rather like a desirable future of the Baltic Sea Region. The participants of the workshop agreed that the vision and its metaphors are well-reflecting their desired future of the region. They concluded that in several areas Russia needs to catch up with what is being done in the other BSR countries, including the increased role of cycling and the necessary infrastructure, also yachting tourism to complement BSR 30 Miles project.

When it comes to *pearls*, the inclusion of small and medium-sized cities in the vision has been considered very positive by the majority of the participants, as small cities are the backbone of development in the region. As regards the *strings*, the idea of night trains has also been embraced. At the same time the participants were not completely confident that alternatives to fossil energy sources would be fully reliable to achieve carbon neutral energy by 2040. The advantages of knowledge economy were noted and the need for further development of electronic services also at the governmental level. Coming to *patches*, participants referred to the underground / underwater patches and the cultural element to be included in this section of the vision, as both may be an interesting addition. The participants touched upon the issue of green *patches* and the present agricultural practises not being compatible. At the same time there was an unanimity that a coordinated cooperation is needed to manage the blue and green patches stretching over the national borders as single ecosystems. The need for citizen involvement and participation, as well as the continuation and importance of cooperation were highlighted for the *system*.

A vision needs actions so that it does not end up being wishful thinking. During the workshop concrete actions were proposed. Examples are for *pearls* the dialogue and knowledge exchange also with citizens across metropolitan pearls, for *strings* the development of Baltic Sea Region bike routes connecting different places together, for *patches* the cross-border eco-tourism for green and blue patches, while for *system* the sharing of data and knowledge across topics and more citizen involvement have been proposed.

## Next steps

The vision is under development and being regularly updated through the designed co-creation approach. The key inputs of the workshop will be included in the draft vision text, such as the reference to the patches as places representing the natural and cultural heritage in the Baltic Sea Region, as well as the remark on the valuable underground patches of the region, both as regards the blue, as well as the green patches of the vision. In addition, where relevant additional actions proposed during the workshop have been included in the same draft, or complemented existing actions of the document. The collected actions will be further discussed during the 4<sup>th</sup> internal workshop of the VASAB CSPD / BSR Committee, on 29 October 2021.