

# BRIDGING THE OLD WITH THE NEW: THE VASAB LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE FROM TODAY TO 2040

26 NOVEMBER 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 3<sup>rd</sup> external workshop took place on 26 November and discussed the four metaphors of the vision, i.e. the pearls, the strings, the patches and system with a large audience that was engaged in discussions through different questions. During the workshop the vision process has been presented, which was then followed by a presentation that 'bridged the old with the new', i.e. it went through the journey of the vision development by looking for each metaphor at the current challenges and situation of the Baltic Sea Region and then linking them to the vision for 2040.

## Key workshop take-aways

The vision document is being prepared and the 3<sup>rd</sup> external workshop helped in checking the robustness and relevance of the document with a wider audience, the majority of which came from the research sector. The key questions of the session focused on asking participants the key elements that need to be considered per metaphor, whether the vision for each metaphor sounds rather like a desirable future of the Baltic Sea Region, as well as propose possible actions that can bring us a step closer to the vision. The participants of the workshop were had a positive approach towards the vision and its metaphors, reflecting a desired future of the region.

When it comes to *pearls*, resilience, cooperation, sustainability and accessibility have been considered as most important elements to carry over in the vision by the majority of the participants. This reflects the respective vision document highlighting that the pearls are promoters of sustainability and carbon neutrality by 2040. The large development of networks by 2040, which is a key characteristic for future pearls, also links to stronger cooperation. Last but not least resilience appears in the vision, too, highlighting that pearls are adjusting to new developments and hence becoming more resilient. As regards the *strings*, participants answers confirmed that the most important elements to carry over in the vision are integrated and intermodal carbon free transport. The elements discussed under patches also reflect elements of the vision text, appearing either under *patches* (e.g. sustainability, blue-green infrastructure, symbiosis, natural reserves), or *system*, e.g. maritime spatial planning. What was highlighted most under *system* was the need for multi-level governance and cooperation, two elements that form the system metaphor in the vision text. Further elements, such as sharing of best practices, open data, learning and knowledge are also well reflected in the vision.

A vision needs actions so that it does not end up being wishful thinking. During the workshop concrete actions were proposed. Some interesting examples are for instance existing practices and projects, such as the STRING network project and the 'Nordic Baltic Belt' project, as examples of the development of different 'Baltic lighthouses' in the region, i.e. places in the region that can increase or showcase the importance of the Baltic Sea Region around the globe.

## Next steps

The vision is under development and regularly updated through the designed co-creation approach. The key inputs of the workshop will be included in the draft version of the vision text, adjusting a few formulations and complementing a few action examples. The draft vision will be publicly available in Spring 2022.