

Statement of the Member States of the European Union participating in the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region

VASAB (Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea) is a cooperation of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of the Baltic Sea Region countries, established in 1992.

The main VASAB mission is to prepare policy options for the territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region, to provide forum for exchange of knowledge, promote and participate in cooperation projects which provide added value to achieve well - integrated and coherent region as well as collaborate with other pan-Baltic, macro-regional, European and other international organisations and initiatives. VASAB also coordinates Policy area 'Spatial planning' of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in two action fields – land-based and maritime spatial planning aiming to increase the territorial cohesion in the Baltic Sea Region.

The Member States of the European Union participating in VASAB – Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden – are deeply concerned and strongly condemn the military aggression to Ukraine by the Russian Federation, supported by Belarus. This unprovoked and illegal military attack breaks international laws and violates the fundamental principles and aims of peace, cohesion and democracy. Due to these circumstances, we have decided to suspend Russia and Belarus from the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region and Steering Groups of the EUSBSR Policy area 'Spatial planning' for land-based and maritime spatial planning and participation in related activities. Our countries are at the same time also founding members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States where a similar decision on suspension of participation by Russia and Belarus has been made and is in effect.

The current decision may be reassessed when cooperation under the fundamental principles of international law has become possible again.

Decision

Due to the armed aggression by the Russian Federation with support of Belarus against the sovereign state Ukraine, the Member States of the European Union participating in VASAB decide to suspend Russia and Belarus from the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region and Steering Groups of the EUSBSR Policy area 'Spatial planning' for land-based and maritime spatial planning and participation in related activities.

4th March, 2022