



VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040

REPORT ON STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT



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ABBREVIATIONS

EU	European Union
EUSBSR	European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
HELCOM	Helsinki Commission
MSP	Maritime Spatial Planning
VASAB	Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea
VASAB CSPD/BSR	VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development in the Baltic Sea Region

1. WHY STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

The visioning has been a co-creative process, during which the key elements of the vision have been developed in close cooperation with the VASAB CSPD/BSR and also communicated to other relevant stakeholders through different workshops and other activities. This interactive process has been a characteristic of the process and has been used to continuously adjust and improve the document.

To increase awareness and ownership of the vision document, it is important to spread the word and engage further stakeholders at different levels, as well as inform a wider audience about it. Therefore, besides the co-creation process, introduced above, the vision document has been run through a further stakeholder consultation between March 2022-July 2022, during which VASAB has collected inputs and suggestions for the draft Vision.

This short report, gives a reminder on the need of a stakeholder consultation, briefly introduces the stakeholder consultation process concept proposed and followed during the process, gives a short overview of the co-creation elements that took place during the drafting VASAB Vision 2040 and presents the stakeholder consultation process that took place in spring-summer 2022.

Running a stakeholder consultation is an additional process to the visioning and an important one for the fine-tuning and finalisation of the vision document. The reasons and benefits of the consultation process are mutual, both for the stakeholders as well as for the VASAB CSPD/BSR who runs this process. In short:

- **More informed policies.** The future planning and decision making of the different stakeholders will be more informed and aligned across different levels, as all will share the joint Baltic vision.
- **Greater confidence of the result.** Stakeholders who will be engaged in the process, sharing their views and opinions on the content will feel more confident about the final document. This is both because their views and opinions will also be checked with the other stakeholders and hence be regarded solid, as well as because if their views are shared and included in the document they will feel more engaged to the document.
- **Linked to getting closer to the vision.** Having the views and engagement of a larger group of stakeholders results in a higher chance for developing steps for getting closer to the vision and contributing to actions that aim to realise parts of it.

The following shortly presents the process for implement the stakeholder consultation and what needs to be taken into account.

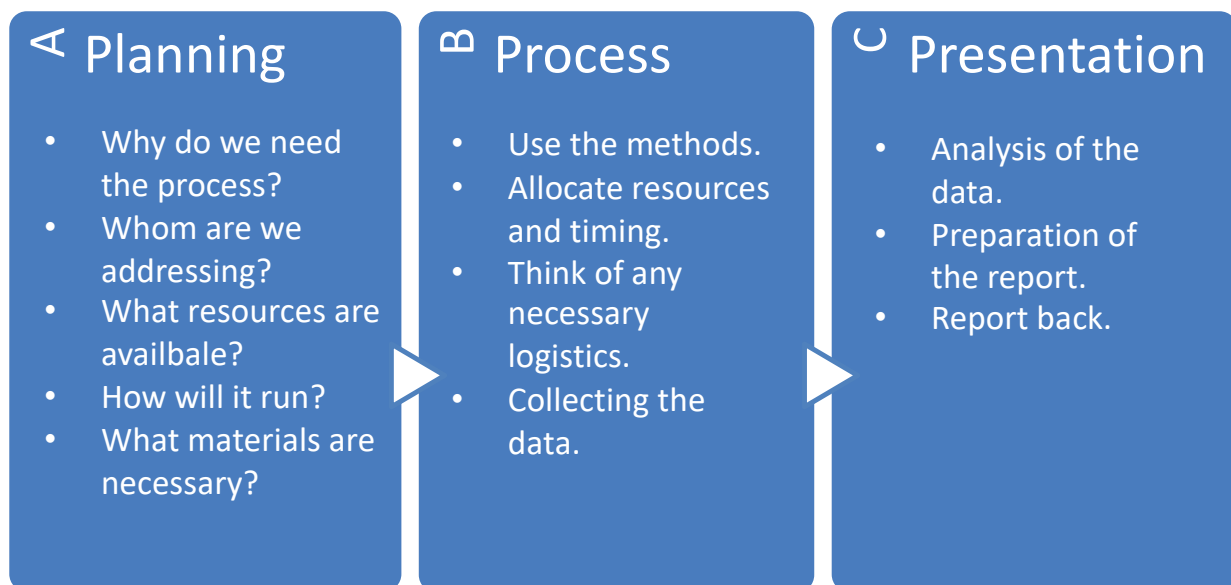


Figure 1 The stakeholder consultation process

Source: Authors' own, based on <https://www.b2binternational.com/publications/stakeholder-research/>

A) Planning

The planning stage sets the cornerstones, aim and objectives of the process, it identifies the players to address the stakeholder process, the available resources, the design and collects the available necessary material to use.

B) Process

The process is the actual stakeholder consultation, which ensure the running of the process, ensures the logistics and resources that need to be in place and runs the process to collect the necessary feedback.

C) Presentation

The last part regards the analysis of the stakeholder consultation. The inputs received through the consultation will be collected in a systematic way to then be analysed and used for the purposes of the process. The refined version of the document will then be finalised and shared with the stakeholders.

Therefore, the stakeholder consultation increases the ownership, not only of the VASAB stakeholders, but also of relevant Baltic Sea Region stakeholders and also provides additional feedback, checks the possible uptake of the vision and eventually improves and refines the document.

Different ideas were proposed as inspiration for the stakeholder consultation in spring-summer 2022, ranging from (but not restricted to) targeted interactive events, targeted person-to-person consultations, awareness raising consultations, social media communication. In addition, a number of materials were prepared by the project team, such as PowerPoint presentations, recorded presentations, vision summary documents etc., which could be used for the facilitation of different types of interactions. The following sections

present an overview of the stakeholder consultations to a wider audience carried out throughout the whole vision update process.

2. STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT – FROM CO-CREATION TO CONSULTATION

The stakeholder consultation process has been a substantial and long process of the VASAB Vision 2040. It has been part of the co-creation process and then complemented with the consultation process ran by VASAB CSPD/BSR members and Secretariat.

1.1. CO-CREATION PROCESS

This section presents a short overview of the wider stakeholder involvement during the co-creation process of the project, going briefly through the activities and presenting how the results of the co-creation were used in the drafting process.

1.1.1. WHAT ACTIVITIES TOOK PLACE?

The co-creation process has been based on three key types of co-creation:

- **The internal online workshops.** These have been in total five workshops with the VASAB CSPD/BSR. During these workshops, the vision document has been discussed from different perspectives each time to ensure that relevant insights are collected and agreed within the VASAB CSPD/BSR. The workshops have helped to incorporate important elements, find the right balances of terms, notions and concepts throughout the vision text and also improve the robustness of the document each time.
- **The external online workshops.** In total three external workshops addressed a wider stakeholder group, going beyond the VASAB CSPD/BSR. The external workshops served as a reality and quality check of the VASAB vision text with a wider audience, identifying any missing points, highlighting important elements and discussing possible ideas for actions to get closer to the vision. Hence, the external workshops helped to verify and nuance the findings of the process.
- **Outreach activities.** Outreach activities regard the representation of draft VASAB Vision 2040 in at least three outreach events to present the vision text and process. The outreach activities spread the word about the update process work, introduce the vision text and its results to the community outside the VASAB CSPD/BSR and receiving, where possible, additional input.

Although the internal online workshops have been the cornerstone for the development of the VASAB Vision 2040, the external online workshops and the outreach activities have been key in reaching a wider audience and checking the uptake of the vision document.

More specifically, the following external online workshops have taken place:

- **External workshop 1:** Bridging the old with the new: How can we build a better Baltic Sea future for 2040 and beyond? The first external workshop was organised in the framework of the 12th EUSBSR Annual Forum on 28 September 2021. Going through the four metaphors of the vision, i.e., the pearls, the strings, the patches and the system, each representing a different territorial element, and how they would look like by 2040, the workshop engaged participants in discussing desirable futures for the Baltic Sea Region.
- **External workshop 2:** Towards sustainable societies through common vision in strategic partnership with Baltic Sea Region neighbours. The 2nd external workshop took place on 20 October 2021 and was targeted at Russian participants, with presentations and inputs in both English and Russian. The workshop ran in a presentation-feedback style, opening the floor to possible questions or reflections through the mentimeter tool. The workshop aimed to enrich the vision with additional inputs from relevant policies, priorities, themes of the Baltic Sea Region neighbours and see which players and what actions could facilitate its implementation.
- **External workshop 3:** Bridging the old with the new: The VASAB Long-Term Perspective 2040. The 3rd external workshop closed the series of the external workshop which helped in bringing the vision to a wider audience with a large share of academics. The last external workshop, which took place on 26 November 2021, discussed the VASAB vision, bridging 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.

Overall, the events have shown that the vision document has been perceived positively by the participants, with most of the vision elements depicting a desirable future for the region for each of the four metaphors presented in the vision document. In addition, the external workshops have shown that stakeholders would be willing to participate more actively in going a step closer to the vision, by participation in different actions. As regards the latter, the workshops have given the opportunity to propose several possible actions that can be implemented.

As regards the outreach activities carried out during the co-creation process, the vision document was presented in the following events:

- **HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group, 20 April 2021.** The update process was presented in a small session during the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group meeting. The presentation coincided with the early phase of the update process and the presentation aimed to highlight the importance and relevance of land-sea

interactions for the region and asked for any leads, reflections and information throughout the process on maritime spatial planning related issues.

- **Towards an Atlantic Vision for MSP, 18 May 2021.** The event offered the opportunity to receive insights from the development on a vision on maritime spatial planning in the Atlantic area, as well as present in a joint presentation with the VASAB Secretariat, VASAB's work on maritime spatial planning and the current work on the update process of the VASAB vision.
- **4th Baltic Forum on Maritime Spatial Planning, 1-2 June 2021.** The perspective of VASAB Vision was pitched during the 4th Baltic Forum on Maritime Spatial Planning. The pitch highlighted the inextricable link of the Baltic Sea Region with the Baltic Sea and highlighted that an integrated picture of the land and the sea is envisaged in the VASAB vision update, as changes on the land influence the sea and vice versa.
- **European Week of Regions and Cities, 12 October 2021.** VASAB organised the workshop on 'Baltic Sea Region vision and strategies for thriving regions and cities' at the annual European Week of Region and Cities. The vision was presented together with other regional and national examples of national and regional players.
- **Capacity for Maritime Spatial Planning, 2 December 2021.** The lead partner of the VASAB vision was invited to present the VASAB vision at the workshop 'Vision and strategies for coherent maritime spatial planning framework', which took place on 2 December 2021. The event focused on maritime spatial planning and on different experiences from maritime vision development across the Baltic Sea Region and beyond, presenting different challenges and lessons learnt from such processes. The draft VASAB Vision 2040 was also presented, going through the four key metaphors of the vision and engaging participants in reflecting how desirable such vision would be from a maritime spatial planning perspective.
- **Macro-regional strategies Week, 8 March 2022.** The lead partner of the VASAB vision project was invited to present the VASAB vision at the 3rd EU macro-regional strategies week, 'Spatial Strategies supporting green and just transition in European macro-regions'. The focus of the workshop was on the Green Deal efforts to turn climate and environmental challenges into opportunities. During the workshop different inputs on the four macro-regional strategies were presented to show the link between them and vision and scenario processes.
- **Baltic Sea Region Cooperation in challenging times, 16 June 2022.** The VASAB vision was presented at the event 'Baltic Sea Region cooperation in challenging times', organised by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Delegation to the European Union and the Eastern Norway County Network. The event had a special focus on strengthening the strategic and practical cooperation with organisations and networks representing local and regional authorities and highlight opportunities of closer cooperation within the EUSBSR.

In addition, a survey had been launched to the wider public in order to receive feedback and see the take up of the vision from a wider audience on the different vision elements. Besides these activities, also blogspot and social media contributions contributed to reaching a wider audience.

1.1.2. HOW WERE THE RESULTS USED?

All activities, from the workshops to the presentations, the survey and the communication activities have played a role in checking, adjusting and improving the vision document. The external workshops helped in reaching out to other BSR players, getting ideas for actions and interest of different players in being involved in the implementation or actions of the vision. Those workshops have also provided valuable ideas for adjusting the text and adding new elements. The outreach activities helped in reaching out not only to BSR but also beyond and go through specific audiences. For instance, the events linked to the EUSBSR have sparked interest for further cooperation between the strategy and the vision process, strengthening in the future the links between them, while the events on maritime spatial planning helped to further nuance the maritime elements in the vision text, keeping the necessary balance for the VASAB territorial vision.

The outcomes helped in continuously adjusting and improving the document. These new versions were then discussed and further commented by the committee to improve and adjust every new version. This included for instance elements on the maritime aspect, the smart shrinking concepts, the local pearls and tasty patches diversifications, the clarification on possible actions and players to involve etc. helped the vision to reach its final form.

1.2. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION PROCESS

The consultation process led by VASAB was initiated on 8 March 2022 and ran until 15 July 2022. The consultation process involved a wide number of stakeholders for the BSR and aimed at raising awareness of the VASAB vision, as well as receive additional feedback to further improve the vision document. To support the process, the lead partner has provided the VASAB with a stakeholder consultation concept, including several materials to use for presentation, online tools questions, recorded presentations, summary versions of the vision document and others. The most final version of the vision document was used for this stakeholder process. In addition, in the framework of the German Presidency of VASAB, some additional wider stakeholder events were organised.

1.2.1. WHAT ACTIVITIES TOOK PLACE?

The following list presents the events that took place during the stakeholder consultation process:

- VASAB / PA Spatial Planning session at EU MRS Week / launching Stakeholder consultations, 8 March 2022.
- Final event of Capacity4MSP project – Secretariat informed about draft VASAB Vision 2040 and stakeholder consultations, 9 March 2022
- BSR Access final conference – VASAB Chair participates in panel discussion, 9 March 2022.
- German national stakeholder meeting on draft Vision, 7 April 2022.
- ESPON Peer learning workshop on climate change and how to address them in draft VASAB Vision 2040 / align with work of PA Spatial Planning, 5 May 2022.
- Secretariat presents draft Vision at CBSS EGSD meeting, 13 May 2022.
- Stakeholder workshop on draft VASAB Vision 2040 and exchange of first reflections, 14 May 2022.
- Webinar „Offshore wind energy: Challenges and opportunities emerging from new European expansion targets” – draft Vision presented, 9 June 2022.
- Latvian national consultations event – online discussion on draft Vision, 17 June 2022.

Further to the events, more targeted bilateral meetings took place with specific players.

These were:

- Bilateral meeting with PA Culture, 6 April 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with PA Ship and PA Safe, 11 April 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with PA Transport, 12 April 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, 12 April 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with PA Innovation, 13 April 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with PA Tourism, 21 April 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with PA Energy, 29 April 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with PA Education, 3 May 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with UBC Planning Cities commission, 6 May 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with PA Health, 11 May 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with Euroregion Baltic – Mobility Core Group, 30 May 2022.
- Bilateral meeting with PA Secure, 8 June 2022.

In addition to the events and meetings, written feedback has been provided by the following players:

- National level:
 - Estonian national level.
 - Ministry of the Environment, Finland.
 - Ministry of Environmental protection and Regional Development, Latvia.
 - Ministry of Welfare, Latvia.
 - Ministry of Transport, Latvia.
 - Ministry of Interior, Lithuania.

- Ministry of Culture, Lithuania.
- German national consultations.
- Ministry of Climate and Environment, Poland.

- Macro-regional level:
 - Euroregion Baltic Mobility Core Group.
 - Kvarken Council, EGTC.
 - EUSBSR, PA Secure.
 - EUSBSR, PA Transport.
 - EUSBSR, PA Tourism.

- Regional / local level:
 - Helsinki-Uusima Regional Council experts, Finland.
 - City of Helsinki, Finland.
 - Regional Council of Ostrobothnia, Finland.
 - Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia, Finland.
 - Regional Council of Central Finland, Finland.
 - Liepaja Municipality, Latvia.
 - Investment and Development Agency of Latvia.
 - The Marshal's office of the Warminsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, Poland.

- Others:
 - HafenCity University Hamburg, Institute of Urban Planning and Regional Development.

1.2.2. HOW WERE THE RESULTS USED?

The stakeholder consultation process shows that a large variety of players have been approached and involved in the process, ranging from the national to the macro-regional and regional / local level. The stakeholder consultation concept has been useful in collecting the input in a structured way and also in the process of asking for inputs.

The project team went through the various documents and comments, including the survey responses and made a first assessment. This assessment has taken into account all comments collectively as a whole, to the extent that they are meaningful to the process and the document, are not contradictory, do not shift the vision document from its transnational concept and do not alter the core ideas and decisions already taken on the vision and agreed during the internal co-creation process.

Looking at the collective responses, the vision has been widely positively perceived by the stakeholders. The comments have provided useful inputs and clarifications to improve the

draft Vision. In their feedback stakeholders have proposed additional possible actions, as well as expressed commitments to have an active part supporting the implementation of the VASAB Vision 2040. Furthermore, some suggestions on the alternative future sketches of the vision have been proposed and accommodated in the latest version. All those changes have been directly implemented in the vision text, upgrading it to match the results of the stakeholder consultation process.

- **Estonian national feedback.** The comments concerning spatially balanced development, community-led economies at local level, cities in Estonia and internal and external connectivity of the Region, cross-border digital services have been implemented in the revised texts.
- **Euroregion Baltic Mobility Core Group.** The comments have been introduced in the text. The comments on the string sketch have been taken into consideration. Other comments were considered as valuable additional information which offered more detailed insights.
- **Finnish national feedback.** A paragraph on trends has been included in the introduction, the differences in population density and settlement structures in the North and South of the Baltic Sea Region has been further emphasised the introduction to the Pearls section. The importance of trains for regional transport is emphasised in the last section of the physical strings and by the introduction of the first mile and last mile concept. Archipelagos have been taken on board in the final section of blue patches. The comments on the maps have been taken into consideration for the revision of the maps. The remaining comments on the text were considered as valuable additional information which offered more detailed insights.
- **German national consultation.** The detailed track change comments provided have been implemented. Also the comments on Vision statements have been implemented. As for the various comments on the metaphors a clarifying sentence has been put in the introduction. Suggestions on redefining or changing the understanding of the metaphors have been considered but not implemented as the reasoning for this was not always comprehensible and it would not be in line with the previous discussions during the co-creation process.
- **HafenCity University.** The comments provide valuable insights for the further work on the dissemination and application of the strategy. In parts they also seemed to be targeted more towards certain stakeholder events than the text of the strategy. Comments on the vision to be more radical have not been taken into account as that would not be in line with the results of the processes leading to the vision text. Also comments concerning linking the vision to concrete goals and deadlines have not been taken into account, as that opposes the nature of a vision (see introduction text). A vision is not a policy with clear objective and targets, it defines a desirable picture of the future. This picture is based on a core set of ideas, values and principles.

- **Helsinki city.** The comments have been very valuable offering more detailed insights, which however sometimes were too detailed to be included in the vision text. The comment on the illustration of the internet access has been taken into account and the map has been changed. The comment no carbon negative cities and comment on unbreakable networks has been integrated.
- **Helsinki-Uusimaa regional council.** As concerns the comment on more concretisation and detailed recommendations, this would be the task of a concrete policy paper following up on the vision. A vision is not a policy with clear objective and targets, it defines a desirable picture of the future. This picture is based on a core set of ideas, values and principles. Also the concretisation of the actions, would need to be elaborated in cooperation with stakeholders implementing the actions, once the vision has been adopted. Some of the concrete proposals have been taken up. The Helsinki-Tallinn tunnel has been included and highlighted in the sketch. Energy storage has been introduced.
- **Kvarken Council.** The comments on the maps have been considered and especially the ferry connecting Umeå-Vasa and the railway line Storuman-Umeå have been included.
- **Latvian consultation.** The comments have been very valuable offering more detailed insights, which however sometimes were too detailed to be included in the vision text. Furthermore, the comments are a mix on comments on the vision and the background report. Some of the comments on the vision were highly interesting also with regards to future developments, e.g. such as the inclusion of air taxis. Development and integration of transport technologies has been addressed.
- **Lithuanian national consultation.** The comments have been taken on board and addressed in the text.
- **Ostrobothnia region.** The comments have been very valuable offering more detailed insights, which however sometimes were too detailed to be included in the vision text. The idea of capabilities and security has been included. The Link Vasa-Umeå has been included. The pearls in Finland have been double checked and some changes have been made in sketches.
- **PA Secure.** The proposal to put more emphasis on prosperity has been included in the Vision statements. The idea of risk reduction strategies and cyber security has been addressed.
- **PA Transport.** Generally, transport issues have been collected in the strings section and are not addressed in the pearls chapter. The focus on railways under physical strings is a result of the emphasis given to sustainable development and carbon neutrality, however more sustainable and carbon-neutral transport modes and technologies have been addressed. Intelligent transport systems, the last mile solutions and innovation have been introduced.
- **Polish stakeholder consultation.** Most of the comments have been taken into account. Climate resilience has been added in the systems section.

- **Pomorskie Tourist Board.** Tourism has been strengthened.
- **Regional Council of Central Finland.** The comments have been very valuable offering more detailed insights, which however sometimes were too detailed to be included in the vision text. Climate resilience, bioeconomy, circular economy has been introduced.
- **State Sustainable Development Planning Department, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development.** The comments have been very valuable offering more detailed insights, which however sometimes were too detailed to be included in the vision text. The actions are so far only ideas and proposals collected in the course of the stakeholder participation. They need to be further developed and refined by the stakeholders interested in taking them forward. The cartographic language and spatial inaccuracy used for the sketches, shows that they cannot be considered as detailed plans but are just illustrations of the text. The names of the pearls and its sub-parts have derived from the co-creative and participatory process in which the document has been elaborated. Education has been included.

Furthermore, the comments collected via the online survey have been taken into account. Many survey respondents provided valuable insights to the revision process. The following are selected responses to more elaborated comments provided through the online survey:

- **CBSS.** The approach to sustainable development reflected in the text is the result of the co-creative and participatory approach on which the document is based. Additional emphasis on sustainable and resilient development has been made.
- **EUSBSR PA Safe / PA Ship (Swedish Maritime Administration / Finnish Transportation and Communications Agency).** The idea of autonomous shipping and 'save haven' have been strengthened.
- **Finnish Heritage Agency.** First ideas for projects in the field of cultural heritage etc. have been addressed.
- **Upių atkūrimo centras (UAC) (Lithuanian River Restoration Centre).** River aspects have not been specifically addressed in the co-creative and participatory process on which the document is based. However, they are certainly important for a healthy and prosperous environment and the future of biodiversity. In principle the river specific features addressed can be subsumed under the environmental aspects addressed.
- **Region Blekinge.** The last mile concept has been introduced. The ferry connections between Karlshamn and Klaipeda have been taken into account. Forestry has been addressed.
- **Regionalie projekti Ltd.** The cartographic elements are merely spatial illustrations of the vision and not meant as spatial plans. Translation into national languages might be considered in future.

In addition to the comments represented above, many stakeholders also mentioned necessity to address the current situation in the neighbourhood vis à vis the Russian invasion to Ukraine. As Russia had been a member of VASAB it was included in the vision text and visualisation from the beginning of the process. Although a disclaimer on suspension of Russia and Belarus was added in the beginning of the VASAB vision document, it was necessary to consider, how to concretely address the current circumstances and newly arisen spatial challenges and consequences of the war and how to reflect on them in the vision.

3. FURTHER STEPS AFTER CONSULTATIONS

The consultation process was finalised on 15 July 2022, followed by adjustment phase during which expressed opinions and suggestions have been thoroughly considered and draft VASAB Vision adjusted accordingly. Additionally, few events have been hosted, namely:

- VASAB webinar “**New spatial challenges in the Baltic Sea Region**” organized in the framework of the EUSBSR Annual Forum. Webinar shared the views and thoughts on current challenges caused by war and discussed what would be the conceptual and strategic way forward in the context of spatial development in the Baltic Sea Region, how updated VASAB Vision 2040 should better address new challenges and consequences raised by war, how VASAB work could help to mobilise green transition (and energy independency) in more focused way and how to build further the cooperation at macro-regional, national or sub-national level.
- **EUSBSR Annual Forum** – VASAB and its draft Vision 2040 represented at Session 1, 28-29 September 2022
- **EU Regions Week 2022** – VASAB workshop “**Visions and strategies in new reality: adaptive spatial measures for European regions and cities**” – draft Vision presented, 13 October.

Opinions and suggestions expressed during these events were considered and final adjustments to the draft VASAB Vision 2040 made. In addition, further exchanges with several stakeholders may be necessary to agree and plan the implementation of the different agreed actions for the Vision.

After final circulation among stakeholders for last refinements, VASAB Vision 2040 is expected to be adopted by the VASAB CSPD/BSR in its meeting in December 2022. Endorsement of the Vision 2040 is planned in early summer 2023 by VASAB Ministerial Conference.

After the adoption of the VASAB Vision 2040, promotional activities and outreach events will be launched to raise awareness and promote the VASAB Vision 2040.