



9th VASAB Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region

Statements and Documents

2 June 2023, Wismar, Germany

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On 2 June 2023, the VASAB Ministers responsible for spatial planning and development in the Baltic Sea Region countries met for the 9th time to jointly discuss the complex challenges related to the geopolitical and energy policy changes in the Region and beyond.

The main focus of the VASAB Ministerial Conference was the endorsement of the VASAB Vision 2040 and the adoption of the Wismar Declaration 2023, which underlined the commitment of participating countries to implement the VASAB Vision 2040.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations from VASAB countries, including Germany, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Sweden, along with invited organisations and networks, such as the CBSS, EUSBSR, HELCOM, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, and UBC Planning Cities Commission welcomed well-established collaboration, emphasized the enduring necessity of close cooperation and shared vision for the resilient development of the Baltic Sea Region. The Ministers acknowledged that considerable spatial challenges in the Baltic Sea Region can be tackled only through integrated multi-level cooperation and highlighted the importance of collaboration across various networks, such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in which VASAB has been given a prominent role as the Policy area 'Spatial Planning' lead coordinator. In this regard the open and co-creative elaboration process of the VASAB Vision 2040 was acknowledged as a prime example of the successful cooperation to address the challenges facing the Region.

With the noticeable appreciation of the valuable work of the VASAB Secretariat, the Ministers affirmed the continuity of the VASAB Secretariat and its location in Riga, Latvia as functionally independent entity until the 31st of December 2029.

In conclusion, the Ministers expressed their gratitude to Germany for its successful 2022-2023 Chairmanship of VASAB and welcomed Finland with incoming Chairmanship starting from July 2023. The conference was hosted by the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building of Germany and the city of Wismar.

The 9th VASAB Ministerial Conference was launched with 20th Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Ministerial Session by joint session on 1st June.

This document consists of statements and documents presented at 9th VASAB Ministerial Conference on 2nd June in Wismar.

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Opening statement at joint kick-off session of 9th VASAB Ministerial Conference and 20th CBSS Ministerial Session on 1st June

Klara Geywitz
Federal Minister for Housing, Urban Development and Building

Dear Minister President Schleswig,
Dear Foreign Minister Baerbock, esteemed Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Sea Council, honourable Ministers of Spatial Planning from VASAB,
Dear honourable guests,

I am delighted to be here today in Wismar, together with all of you!

Alongside the Foreign Ministers of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Ministers of Spatial Planning of the Baltic Sea organization VASAB have gathered here today and tomorrow to discuss the future of the Baltic Sea region in the face of multiple challenges. At this point, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and, in particular, to the city of Wismar for making it possible for two ministerial conferences to take place here in parallel.

In the past decade, new challenges have emerged globally and in the Baltic Sea region, particularly due to the recent Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The Russian aggression in Ukraine has direct implications for the Baltic Sea region, whether it is the security of the NATO Eastern border, the vulnerable infrastructure, or the refugee situation in cities and communities.

Furthermore, we need an accelerated energy transition that makes us independent of fossil fuels. The consequences of climate change are becoming more noticeable every year and are affecting the fragile ecosystem of the Baltic Sea.

Every solution, whether in the field of renewable energy, security, transport connections, or nature conservation, requires space and therefore forward-looking, integrated spatial planning at land and at the sea for example when expanding offshore wind energy.

With the VASAB Vision 2040, which we will adopt during our spatial planning Ministerial Conference, the Baltic Sea neighbouring states have developed positive future perspectives and possible future actions in a broad and inclusive participatory process to find spatial responses to the diverse challenges. We aim to implement these approaches more vigorously at the national and pan-Baltic levels in the future.

We as Baltic States are facing common challenges. I'm confident that we will still stand together to develop common solutions, too.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my ministerial colleague, Ms. Baerbock, for her openness to start our two ministerial conferences with a joint opening! It is a clear signal of our shared responsibility in addressing challenges that have both foreign policy and spatial consequences.

Thank you very much!

Introductory statement

Klara Geywitz
Federal Minister for Housing, Urban Development and Building

Dear VASAB Ministers for Spatial Planning and Development, dear colleagues, distinguished representatives of pan-Baltic organizations, dear honourable guests,

A warm welcome here in the venerable Wismar Town Hall for the opening of today's VASAB Ministerial Conference. It is a pleasure to gather here today to address the challenges in the Baltic Sea region and strive for sustainable development.

Yesterday evening we had the pleasure of joint dinner in the impressive St. George's Church. The interesting and lively exchange shall set the tone for our discussions today.

The last meeting of VASAB Ministers and pan-Baltic organizations in this format took place in 2014 in Tallinn. Since then, the Baltic Sea region has undergone significant changes, and we are facing new challenges.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has painfully reminded us of the importance of standing together for peace and security in our region.

In this regard, our meeting with the Foreign Ministers of the Council of the Baltic Sea States at the Wismar Harbor yesterday was of great significance. It sent a clear signal of our shared responsibility in addressing the challenges that have both foreign policy and spatial consequences.

However, it is not only geopolitical developments that shape our Baltic Sea region. Climate change and loss of biodiversity, ageing and outmigration, socio-economic developments and the energy transition also present us with enormous tasks. The impacts of climate change are already acutely felt, affecting the fragile ecosystems of the Baltic Sea and disparities remain a driving force in many regions.

As I emphasized yesterday, every approach, whether in upscaling renewable energy, more robust security, transportation connectivity or nature conservation, requires space and therefore forward-looking and integrated spatial planning.

It is our collective responsibility to find sustainable answers to the diverse spatial challenges and strengthen the resilience of our region. Therefore, I am particularly pleased that we will adopt the VASAB Vision

2040 as the successor document to the "Long Term Perspective 2030" at this Ministerial Conference.

The VASAB Vision 2040 is the result of intensive exchanges and close collaboration between our countries and many other key stakeholders. It provides a clear perspective for the spatial development of the Baltic Sea region and establishes a framework for sustainable and future-oriented growth.

Before we adopt the VASAB Vision 2040, we have a tight program ahead of us.

In the beginning the heads of delegations will have the honour to sign the Golden Book of the City of Wismar together with some explanation by the mayor of Wismar, Mr. Thomas Beyer. More than twenty years ago, VASAB had its 5th Ministerial Conference in Wismar, and you will still find the respective signatures from the past.

We continue with keynote speeches by Mr. Szydarowski, Director of ESPON, and Mr. Stempel, Executive Secretary of HELCOM, who will update us on the status quo in spatial development and dynamics on land and sea in the Baltic Sea region.

I am also curious about the project from the winning team of last year's VASAB Summer School that was organised in Greifswald. It is wonderful to have young people engaged and represented here to bring in their ideas and perspectives for a sustainable Baltic Sea region. The presentation will be endorsed by Mr. Linkaits, deeply linked to VASAB's history and as a former transport minister well versed in the railway thematic.

Following that, three experts, Mr. Kai Böhme from Spatial Foresight, Ms. Alda Nikodemusa from the VASAB Secretariat and Prof. Danielzyk from the German Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association will speak about different aspects of the VASAB Vision 2040, the drafting process and the expectations on implementation.

After a short coffee break, we will then have a central part of the conference. You, as representatives of the different VASAB member states and pan-Baltic organizations, have the opportunity to make up to four-minute statements that will give a diverse view on our common values and goals but also national and organisational perspectives and priorities.

Before we gradually conclude and I hand over the VASAB Chairmanship from Germany to Finland, we will endorse the Wismar declaration and by this also the VASAB Vision 2040.

As you can see, an exciting program awaits us. Let us not waste any more time and with that I would hand over to the mayor of Wismar Mr. Beyer Meyer for its welcoming words.

Statements by the Heads of delegations

Estonia

Kristi Grišakov
Ministry of Finance
Head of policy and analysis
Department of Spatial Planning

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed ministers, dear colleagues and partners,

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the organizers of this esteemed VASAB Ministerial Conference. It is a privilege to stand before you today and address the significance of our long-standing cooperation with VASAB.

Estonia's journey with VASAB has been one of continuous collaboration and shared visions. Over the years, we have witnessed how VASAB's ideas have influenced and shaped our spatial planning strategies. It is worth noting that almost three decades have passed since the first groundbreaking international VASAB vision 2010.

Estonia has developed its strategic spatial plans hand-in-hand with the maturing VASAB vision throughout the decades, absorbing and responding to new challenges that need to be jointly faced. One of the paramount objectives introduced by the VASAB vision is the development of territorial cohesion and cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. One of the examples concretely expressing the ongoing momentum of the cohesion strategy is the linking of Estonia and the Baltic States through Rail Baltica. Additionally, the idea of a Helsinki-Tallinn tunnel, proposed back in 1994, has further fuelled our commitment to fostering seamless connectivity within the region.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that alongside the advancements in spatial planning, we are now also facing serious challenges in our national defence due to Estonia's special geographic location.

Being on the front line, a strip of land between the east and west, brings new and unseen challenges to spatial planning. Maintaining a democratic planning system and the need for spatial planning in general must be upheld even in these difficult circumstances, such as when facing pressures to expand military training areas. As a positive development, Estonia is investing in defence systems that not only enhance our security but also allow for the development of offshore wind farms, symbolizing our commitment to sustainable energy solutions.

Moreover, we take great pride in the remarkable achievements in maritime planning, which have enabled us to address our energy needs at sea. Nevertheless, we are well aware of the challenges associated with protecting the unique nature of the Baltic Sea, and we are actively working on finding suitable spatial solutions.

In line with our dedication of implementing the VASAB vision, we are commencing the process of creating a new strategic national spatial plan for Estonia 2050. This process inter alia strongly emphasizes the importance of cooperation with our neighbouring countries, as we seek to learn from their experiences and integrate best practices into our own spatial planning strategies.

A historical milestone in Estonian government administration has been the establishment of a new Ministry of Regional Affairs from 1st July 2023 onwards, tasked with navigating the new regional challenges that lie ahead. One such challenge is how to support regions in the face of smart shrinking, where we aim to adapt to population decline by promoting circular land use, addressing climate change, and enhancing the quality of the living environment.

To effectively tackle these challenges, it is crucial that we establish new supporting networks. Even the smallest communities must recognize their value as integral components in the pearls and strings of the VASAB vision. We must work together to develop best practices for dialogue and the development of transnational policy measures. We look forward to jointly developing further practices and formats, both digital and physical, to elevate and support international cooperation and knowledge sharing among spatial planning practitioners and local communities.

Thank you for your attention. Let us continue our shared journey towards sustainable and inclusive spatial planning in the Baltic Sea region.

Finland

Anna-Leena Seppälä
Ministry of Environment
Director, Land Use Unit
Built Environment Department

On behalf of my minister, I would like to thank you for the invitation to participate in this VASAB Ministerial Conference. I would also like to thank Germany for the very interesting conference and for the side activity yesterday. For three decades, VASAB has been pursuing ambitious spatial planning and spatial development. The new VISION 2040 sets us a task to continue, so that “the Baltic Sea Region in 2040 will be one of the first regions to achieve a sustainable, digital and just transition utilising its territorial specificities. It is a spatially balanced and interconnected Region, where a healthy Baltic Sea is the central asset around which the Region prospers.”

Finland considers as very important the acknowledgement, in the Ministerial Declaration, of the key role of spatial planning and development in safeguarding critical infrastructure, providing energy security and strengthening the capacity to act. Finland shares a long border with Russia. Its length is 1300 kilometres in total. The end of collaboration and trade affects Finland as a whole. This has impacted business, security of supply, wellbeing and services, especially in Eastern Finland. The same applies to the Baltic states and the entire Baltic Sea Region. As a northern state, Finland is extremely reliant on maritime transport corridors and other connections to the rest of Europe. We also depend on connections to the Arctic Ocean.

VASAB is faced with a new challenge because of the war. It affects regional structure and regional development. We must work together even harder to prevent and address regional inequalities. The collaboration in VASAB will allow us to meet this challenge and to make the Baltic Sea Region more resilient.

VASAB’s new version of the Long-Term Perspective, VASAB Vision 2040, sets a strategic policy framework for a sustainable, spatially balanced and interconnected Baltic Sea Region in 2040. The vision consists of four metaphors which, for nostalgic reasons, have the same names as in the first VASAB Long-Term Perspective: Pearls, Strings, Patches and System.

Achieving the vision requires funding and networking, and VASAB’s network is well established. The collaboration with the EU’s Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region has become very important in recent years. VASAB and HELCOM jointly coordinate the Strategy’s policy area, Spatial Planning. The policy area has two thematic action fields: land-based spatial planning and maritime spatial planning (MSP). This has increased VASAB’s recognition and influence and has strengthened VASAB’s collaboration with other stakeholders across the Baltic Sea Region. Finland encourages VASAB to keep up the good collaboration and to implement VISION 2040 with its stakeholders.

At the Ministerial Conference in Tallinn in 2014, the participants committed to continue the MSP collaboration between HELCOM and VASAB. The combination of VASAB’s spatial planning collaboration and HELCOM’s objectives for the protection of the Baltic Sea has been a success story. For instance, the EU and IOC UNESCO have taken inspiration from this collaboration when developing MSP collaboration in other areas.

The MSP collaboration must continue according to the new HELCOM-VASAB Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021–2030. This collaboration must also answer new challenges and questions, such as integrating climate change mitigation, wind power, marine energy, the preservation of biodiversity and environmental protection in a sustainable way.

Finland considers VASAB to be an important platform for international spatial planning developments, and we encourage VASAB towards further cooperation. VASAB has been integral to Finland’s planning of its national spatial development and transport systems.

I would like to conclude by saying that, together with our partners, we have systematically created a collaborative platform for developing the Baltic Sea Region. We also have all the means to develop it even further and to implement the new Ministerial Declaration and VISION 2040. Finland is next in line to assume VASAB chairmanship, and we will do our very best to support their implementation.

Lithuania

Daiva Matusevičė
Vice-Minister of Environment

Madame Minister, Ministers, Delegates,

We would like to thank Germany and welcome its efforts under the VASAB chairmanship in completion of the "VASAB Vision 2040" that is adopted today by the Ministers responsible for spatial planning and development in the VASAB countries of the Baltic Sea.

The process on updating of the VASAB Long-Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region has started during previous VASAB chairmanships' countries, including Lithuania, and yesterday the results were celebrated on the special event - Expert's Conference here in Wismar.

This new version of the "VASAB Vision 2040" is a positive strategic-visionary framework for a vibrant, well-connected, and resilient spatial development of our Region. It will strengthen the territorial dimension of the EU for the Baltic Sea Region.

We will continue to promote, and use agreed approaches as reference framework for development. At the same time, we are aware of what challenges lie ahead in the face of geopolitical and energy policy changes in the Baltic Sea Region.

Also, we would like to remind, that Lithuania supports and implements agreements and principles of the EU policies and strategies such as, the Urban Agenda for the EU, Territorial Agenda 2030, Leipzig Charter, and others.

The effective implementation of these ambitious agendas is of key importance, and we are proud of our efforts done in this field.

We see our national level spatial planning document – Comprehensive Plan – as the main instrument and tool for implementing all these respective initiatives. The Implementation program until 2030 has been prepared and will be adopted by the Government this year. While implementing this program we will link it with EU programming and initiatives, as well as with VASAB vision and other documents.

We are building grounds for the sustainable development of cities. From the 1st of January 2024, the Law on Land regulates that the state land of cities and towns located in the territory of the municipality shall be transferred to the municipality for management in trust. Related changes continue and necessary legislative amendments are being prepared to establish administrative procedures.

Accordingly, we are preparing guidelines for sustainable cities. The guidelines shall include an evaluation of the status and principles for spatial-strategic development. The cities will be evaluated spatially and statistically using specific indexes and indicators. The guidelines highlight urban development problems and the principles to solve them. This holistic approach is a big step in integrating the EU initiatives, programs and simplifying the evaluation of the urban environment in Lithuania.

Lithuania stands united with Ukraine and will make every appropriate effort in supporting Ukraine in its reconstruction to rebuild it sustainably and in line with common vision of reliable, affordable, green, energy neutral and secure development of the Baltic Sea region.

It is important to continue efforts among countries, regions, and cities in implementing the Vision in the future as well as to recognize it in our relevant policies and documents.

We fully agree with the issues reflected in the Wismar declaration and support its adoption.

We will make every effort to increase the visibility "VASAB Vision 2040", to involve citizens and other stakeholders in actions at national and regional levels, and to communicate the results achieved.

Thank you for your attention.



Latvia

Māris Sprindžuks
Minister of Environmental Protection and Regional Development

Dear Ms Chair, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank Ms Chair and German colleagues for the warm welcome and organising this conference!

Latvia appreciates the extensive work by all involved in elaborating the VASAB Vision 2040 and highlights the significance of the VASAB Vision 2040 to ensure the spatial development of the Baltic Sea Region and pave the way for energy independence in Latvia and Baltic Sea Region.

We would like to stress the new reality since the 24th of February 2022 – there is the “new Iron Curtain” between the aggressor countries, Russia and Belarus, and the EU and VASAB Member states bordering these aggressor countries. It indicates a need to build new policies to minimise the effect of this aggression on our border regions. Rather than making West to East partnerships a focus, we now need to prioritise South-North collaborations and rely on our own resources for prosperity.

A number of the VASAB cooperation countries have cities on the Eastern border already being isolated from the rest of the region due to the divide war has deepened – peace in Europe is now distributed unequally. Thus, we would like to invite both countries represented here and the European Commission more broadly to work towards common regional policy to develop equitable access to public services, transport and technology that include, integrate and protect Eastern regions and cities. It is not only a question of protecting several municipalities, here the cohesion of the European Union and the integrity of its common outer border is at stake.

The VASAB Vision 2040 can become a key support for border regions. I propose we evaluate how every activity, initiative and measure encompassed by the Vision can contribute to the security and peace of the Baltic Sea Region. I encourage all ministers and representatives present to view the issue of war in Ukraine from our border perspective. I hope this will bring us to common action to support Eastern regions and allow us to explore new partnerships.

These partnerships are also crucial for addressing the development of renewable energy that has presented common challenges for all of us. The VASAB Vision 2040 also highlights the development and extension of offshore wind and solar energy networks in cooperation between the countries of the Baltic Sea region in cross-border infrastructure projects. To allow Latvia and the Baltic Sea region as a whole to stabilise the energy market, gain energy independence and use our renewable energy potential fully, experience sharing between ourselves is key.

By discussing our successes and mistakes on issues from environmental impact assessments to dealing with land use and planning conflicts in such platforms as VASAB we can achieve our energy related goals faster and smoother. Currently this is critical not only to severing dependence on Russian resources, but also to striving for EU climate goals.

We invite all Baltic Sea Region countries to use the VASAB Vision 2040 as a supporting tool for future initiatives and partnerships, our current situation shows – together we will achieve more!

Poland

Piotr Żuber
Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy
General Counsellor

Dear Madam Minister, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me express my sincere gratitude to the German presidency for leadership and organising this important Ministerial meeting, accompanying the excellent VASAB experts' conference and for all preparations on the way to adapt the VASAB Vision 2040.

Today, when the circumstances are being changed significantly after the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing war at our borders, we need a unified vision to act jointly to protect and develop the EU and the Baltic Sea region. The armed aggression by Russian Federation against the sovereign Ukraine, destroyed our feeling of continuity, stability and safety and we need to work even harder for the future development of our region. In a rapidly changing reality, we are facing also new challenges related to climate resilience, energy transition and new shape of globalisation.

The VASAB vision 2040 is a good example of what can be achieved acting together. I strongly believe that the implementation of the Vision would be an important step towards more prosperous and stronger in the EU Baltic Sea region - more green and healthy environment, happier society and more balanced territory. It will also help in implementing of the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2030 and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

It is worth mentioning that VASAB was one of the pioneers in developing spatial visions in the EU: already in 1994 was accepted by all cooperating countries document *VASAB 2010. Towards a Framework for Spatial Development in the Baltic Sea Region*. Now we are coming back to the roots of terrestrial development and 4 metaphors: Pearls, Patches, Strings and System. Looking at the future from territorial perspective allow to better understand the impact of

various sectoral policies and to find the best strategies for resolving potential policy conflicts.

Looking back to the previous visions, every of them had a significant impact and was different according to the challenges at the time. Today we are struggling with climate change and depopulation in the BSR. Just to mention the example as a sign of the times: we don't need more and better jobs as it was before but more workers to fill vacancies.

A place-based and integrated approach in planning helps to better understand the needs of territories and prepare better policies for the future. Land and maritime spatial planning are crucial for the VASAB Vision 2040. MSP is the success story of VASAB and HELCOM collaboration and I hope that it will be continued as the Baltic Sea is the heart of our region and need to be carefully protected.

At this point, I would like to thank the VASAB Committee and the Secretariat for its hard work to prepare both the documents and the Wismar events.

Finally, I would like to give my best wishes to the upcoming Finnish presidency. I wish you all the best in implementing the VASAB vision and declare Poland's commitment to the process.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sweden

Anders Sjelvgren
Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning
Director General

Dear Chair, Ministers, Dear colleagues,

I am very honoured to represent the Swedish government on the occasion of the 9th VASAB ministerial conference and would like to start by conveying the Swedish Minister for Infrastructure and Housing, Andreas Carlson's best wishes for a successful implementation of this meeting.

Let me also express Sweden's gratitude to the German presidency who has arranged for this extraordinary VASAB ministerial in the Northern parts of Germany, in Wismar, a city symbolising the long-lasting relations between Germany and Sweden and overall cooperation across the Baltic Sea.

In 2017 – 2018, Sweden last held the chairmanship in VASAB. Back then, the Swedish Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the national agency I am heading, had the trust of the Swedish government to hold space and arrange for the meetings during the presidency. I am happy to be back in this forum.

Allow me to recall that VASAB was founded on Swedish initiative in 1992 to promote knowledge transfer and exchange of experience regarding methods for terrestrial and maritime planning as well as regional development issues.

For the first time, a comprehensive understanding of the long term spatial future of the region was developed jointly, across the former cold-war borders. About 30 years later, we are about to enter the next level of cooperation in VASAB marked by the endorsement of the VASAB vision: a Baltic Sea Region for the next generation, VASAB 2040.

It is important that the VASAB Vision 2040 can capture both today's and tomorrow's challenges, but also that the ideas in the agenda can inspire and be implemented within different policy frameworks at various levels of governance.

Current issues like Green Transition, more Remote Work, Renewable Energy production and changing demographic patterns will shape the territories of tomorrow and will have to be worked on in a systemic approach. For this work we see VASAB and its Vision 2040 offering a strategic framework.

Sweden, with its diverse landscapes and different regional characteristics, is a good example of the need for a comprehensive and tailor-made approach to territorial spatial development. From the densely populated urban areas in the south to the sparsely inhabited regions in the north, the challenges and opportunities faced by Swedish regions vary significantly.

A place-sensitive approach in spatial planning is central both in Swedish Regional Policy and the EU Territorial Agenda. In Sweden we now put a lot of efforts into the Green Industrialisation, which indeed has consequences for planning and territorial development. Large investments, especially in northern Sweden mean new possibilities, but also challenges such as potential land conflicts. The development of the green industry and a growing bioeconomy is vital for rural areas, which Sweden has highlighted during our EU-presidency that ends this month.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The challenges in the Baltic Sea Region remain complex and multifaceted. Fostering sustainable cooperation between EU Baltic Sea Region countries is crucial for societal development.

Sweden endorses the new VASAB Vision 2040 for the Baltic Sea Region.

VASAB plays a role in the future development of the region. We need a forum where the territorial consequences of policies affecting our region is discussed in a multilevel governance setting not least by VASAB and its secretariat being a policy area coordinator in the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region for terrestrial and maritime spatial planning.

Finally, I would like to thank the Committee and the Secretariat for the work to prepare for this meeting and for laying the basis for a further future cooperation. I would also like to wish Finland all the best for their incoming chairmanship.

Thank you very much of your attention.



Statements by invited organisations

Council of the Baltic Sea States

Ignė Stalmokaitė
Policy Officer

Yours Excellencies, dear Colleagues and Friends,

On behalf of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, I would like to thank the Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (i.e., VASAB), its Secretariat and the German Chairmanship for hosting the 9th VASAB Ministerial Conference. It sends a strong political signal for a more resilient Baltic Sea Region and enduring necessity for intergovernmental cooperation to tackle the challenges facing the region.

The CBSS and VASAB are sister organisations. The establishment of VASAB followed swiftly the establishment of the CBSS more than 30 years ago – as a practical side of established Baltic Sea Region collaboration. Over the past years our cooperation has come so close that we are organising the Ministerial Meetings at the same time and at the very same location.

The CBSS and its just adopted (as we speak) Ministerial Declaration welcomes the renewed Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040 which is referred in the CBSS Wismar Declaration as a successful example of strategic cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. It contributes to the general goals of the Baltic Sea Region and Europe in general. Furthermore, it serves building more sustainable, connected, and prosperous region, resistant to challenges of the XXI century. These goals fall perfectly under the CBSS long-term priorities of building Sustainable and Prosperous as well as Safe and Secure Region.

Over the past years, VASAB has been an active and reliable partner supporting the implementation of the CBSS Baltic 2030 Action Plan and providing expertise in a number of CBSS expert groups and project activities such as BSR Cultural Pearls and Baltic Sustainable Boating 2030 projects.

To conclude, we strongly believe that the CBSS and VASAB very close collaboration should continue. The CBSS's wide networks, strong connections with subregional and local (municipal) partners in the region, as well as expanding youth networks – such as Baltic Sea Youth Forum, should be seen by VASAB friends as assets in promoting the implementation of the Long-Term Vision 2040.

Once again, I wish you an inspiring conference and fruitful discussions paving the way for stronger, more resilient, and sustainable future in our common Baltic Sea Region.

Thank you for your attention.

Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions / Baltic Sea Commission

Tomas Mörtzell
President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

Dear Ministers, dear VASAB representatives, dear representatives of pan-Baltic organisations, dear colleagues,

It is a great honour to be here with you in this beautiful city of Wismar. Thank you to VASAB for the invitation. My name is Tomas Mörtzell. I represent Region Västerbotten, located in the north of Sweden. I am delighted to address you today, as President of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. It is a 25 year old organisation, representing regional authorities around the Baltic Sea. In the Baltic Sea Commission, we are 20 regions cooperating for a more prosperous Baltic Sea Region. We are part of CPMR, a larger network of 150 regions across whole Europe. Our focus of work is on transport, energy, maritime affairs and arctic.

The elaboration of a new VASAB long-term Vision is an important exercise for the development and stability in the Baltic Sea Region. The BSR has not escaped the pressing challenges related to climate change, energy, demography, inflation and rising geopolitical tensions. The world has changed rapidly over the last decade and ever more rapidly the last months. All these changes require us to adapt, reshape our priorities and align our cooperation accordingly.

Congratulations to VASAB for the inclusive elaboration process and having come up with a solid and comprehensive VISION. Let me react on some aspects of this VISION, that are in particularly important for the Member Regions of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:

1. We welcome the priority of the VASAB to better connect the Baltic Sea Region. More efforts should be made to enable seamless transport flows of people and good, both on land and on Sea. Enhancing sustainable cross-border mobility is a priority. For example, the green industrial transition happening in northern Sweden and Finland depend on better transport connections and infrastructures. We hope that the ongoing revision of the TEN-T regulation will improve the transport mobility in the Baltic Sea Region and connect us better with the rest of the Europe.

2. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission welcome the priority set in the VASAB vision for a carbon neutral economy. A transition towards a circular economy is a priority for the next decade, and we are already in the right direction. The challenge though is to ensure a green transition that us just and fair, leaving no region and people behind. Stronger collaboration to secure clean energy and become independent from fossil energies is a priority. In many ways, the BSR has potential

related to renewable energies, to the Nordic battery belt, sustainable extraction and bioenergy.

3. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission fully support the need for increased efforts for a healthier Baltic Sea. Our Member Regions are mostly coastal regions, so we are in particular sensitive to this topic.

4. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission also believe that an ambitious cohesion policy is essential to guarantee a balanced territorial development for the Baltic Sea Region, now and in the future. As the debate on the post 2028 is already ongoing, we are calling on the EU decision-makers for safeguarding this long-term investment policy that is the only EU policy that guarantees a place-based approach.

5. As regards to agri-food in the Baltic Sea Region, let me just say, that coming from Region Västerbotten, I am particularly pleased to see that the VASAB new VISION identifies Västerbotten cheese as an important regional specifically. Of course, there would be much more aspects of the VASAB new VISION to comment on.

In a nutshell, from the regional perspective, the VASAB vision sets solid ground for a more prosperous, sustainable and cohesive Baltic Sea Region. Now, our common responsibility will be to deliver this VISION and ensure the people of the Baltic Sea Commission are on board.

As indicated in the VISION, the current challenges require joint actions and solutions across borders and among different levels of governance. Only together, we can build a safe, prosperous place for people to live and businesses to flourish. But the Baltic Sea Region, is well equipped. In many sectors, the Baltic Sea Region is a frontrunner. But also, in the Baltic Sea Region, we have a UNIQUE tradition of collaboration and a strong established networks of actors complementing each other's. The meeting in Wismar is a perfect illustration of our common commitment to work for a more prosperous Baltic Sea Region.

In the new VASAB Vision, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission is identified as an important actor to achieve this Vision. I am grateful about that recognition and assure you that you can count on our Member Regions to be part of the implementation. As you know, every change happens locally!

To continue the constructive dialogue with regional authorities, I would like to share an invitation to a VASAB representative to join the General Assembly of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission that will take place in September in Umea in Sweden and Vaasa in Finland. We will also cross the Baltic Sea on one of the most environmental ferries in the world. This is to show the strong cross-border cooperation and importance of sustainable transport.

Thank you!

European Commission

Virginijus Sinkevičius
European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Dear Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

It's a great pleasure to address you today at the 9th VASAB Ministerial Meeting. First of all, I'd like to use this occasion to thank Germany for its successful 2022-2023 Chairmanship of VASAB and to welcome Finland's incoming Chairmanship from July 2023.

I would like also to commend the Committee on Spatial Planning and Development in the Baltic Sea Region for its impressive work since the last Ministerial Conference, especially on initiating the update of the Long-Term Perspective from 2030 to 2040. In fact, the new Long-Term Perspective - VASAB Vision 2040 is an innovative, forward thinking, strategic framework for a vibrant, well connected and resilient spatial development of the Baltic Sea Region. Furthermore, it strengthens the territorial dimension of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

This Region has the potential to become one of the world's leading regions for fostering green growth and a sustainable blue economy. This is also the focus of the Baltic and North Sea Lighthouse, part of our Horizon Europe Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters' by 2030, making the Baltic blue economy carbon neutral and circular.

Regional collaboration is a fundamental factor for success. And fortunately, this Region has long been a shining model of effective partnership, not only through VASAB, but also through the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - HELCOM and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. And I am happy to see how synergies are created when these organizations start working together. A good example is VASAB and HELCOM joint coordination of spatial planning under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

Our Baltic is one of the busiest seas. It also faces many challenges brought on by climate change. So we need to see more of this kind of cooperation, especially now that we are planning to rapidly expand offshore wind in the sea basin. The Baltic Sea Region is already a front runner in maritime spatial planning. No doubt, thanks to this kind of cooperation, all Baltic EU countries - VASAB countries have adopted and are implementing their maritime spatial plans. Some are already reviewing them to tackle new, challenging energy and nature targets.

And speaking of Baltic operation, we have already seen it in action at the 'Our Baltic Conference', which I had the pleasure of hosting in 2020. I plan to organize another edition of the 'Our Baltic conference' in Palanga, Lithuania on 29 September 2023. It will be an opportunity to take stock of what has been done and what more we can do for our Baltic. I hope to see you there in person, and I wish you a constructive and successful meeting in Wismar.

Thank you.

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Baltic Sea Strategy Point

Tom Schumacher
Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg
Baltic Sea Strategy Point

The time span 1992 to 2040 that VASAB covers is remarkable if compared to the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), which only was approved in 2009. However, also the Strategy is historically remarkable since it was the first of today four macro-regional strategies in the EU.

EUSBSR and VASAB are closely linked to each other in several respects. First and foremost, regarding their long-term goals. The three main objectives of the EUSBSR are saving the sea, connecting the region, and increasing prosperity. These objectives correspond very much to the main goals of the VASAB Vision for 2040 which is built around the concepts of resilient patches of ecosystems, well-connected strings and vibrant pearls. EUSBSR and VASAB are also closely linked institutionally. This is made clear by the fact that VASAB, together with HELCOM, coordinates EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning including the actions: land-based and maritime spatial planning.

EUSBSR and VASAB supplement each other. The Strategy is there to make more effective use of existing EU funds, structures, and legislation to deal with the challenges faced by the region. The EU spends a lot of money on various funding programs. The Strategy aims at directing these funds to where they make the best possible use. This means not to subsidize something here and there to achieve short-term effects, but to focus support on the achievement of long-term goals such as the VASAB Vision for 2040. The Strategy aims at integrating EU funded activities into long-term processes where one step builds on another. In this way, it ensures that results from projects, conferences, discussion processes etc. do not disappear in the shelf but instead form the basis for the next activities.

Furthermore, the Strategy facilitates cross-sectoral and multi-level approaches. This means that activities in one policy area and one governance level are not carried out isolated from what is going on in other policy areas and other governance levels. Instead, all activities are seen in a common context and directed towards common goals.

To conclude, the Strategy is like a ship that picks up passengers from everywhere and brings them to a common destination. We from the EUSBSR are looking forward to this cruise together with VASAB!



The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission – Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)

Rüdiger Stempel
HELCOM Secretariat
Executive Secretary

Dear Ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to be here at the 9th VASAB Conference of Ministers and to address you on behalf of HELCOM.

Spatial planning on land, but also at sea, involves various processes and stakeholders, administrative sectors, and levels of governance to address spatially competing interests. This is why we need regional collaboration across policy fields and maritime spatial planning, especially in these unpredictable times.

Since 2010, the joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group has coordinated the MSP processes in the region and acted as the Steering Committee of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Area Spatial Planning.

Two years ago, the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting adopted a Regional MSP Roadmap that steers the Group's work until 2030. The goal of the Roadmap is to strengthen joint efforts and coherence throughout the Baltic Sea Region to implement Maritime Spatial Plans, aiming for sustainable development of the region and to build a sound basis for an adaptive MSP process applying the ecosystem-based approach, so central to the work of HELCOM.

VASAB's work complements HELCOM's aims, providing synergies and supporting the implementation not only of our joint MSP Roadmap but also of the 2021 Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP).

We need to work together as a region to achieve the ambitious goals of the BSAP and the MSP Roadmap, but also to tackle the new challenges emerging from the current geopolitical crisis. This necessitates continued and enhanced interagency cooperation in our region and we are happy to have VASAB as a strong partner. Your organization aims for a region that is coherent, balanced in development and accessible physically and virtually – all this in an inclusive and transparent way. This is exactly what is needed and more so than ever in times like these.

In closing, I would like to thank the German chairmanship of VASAB, the City of Wismar and the VASAB Secretariat for organizing and hosting this inspiring conference.

We look forward to a continued, productive cooperation between VASAB and HELCOM.

Thank you.

Union of the Baltic Cities, Planning Cities Commission

Paulina Szewczyk
Chairperson of the UBC Planning Cities Commission

Your Excellencies, Dear Conference Participants and Organizers,

The history of cooperation between VASAB and UBC is rich and strong, as it is based on many common elements. VASAB is a much needed and invaluable intergovernmental co-operation on spatial planning and development in the Baltic Sea Region, that prepares policy options for the territorial development for the Region and provides a forum for the exchange of know-how on spatial planning and development between the Baltic Sea countries. The UBC is a network of cities and municipalities in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) mobilizing the shared potential of its member cities. The UBC works through eight commissions. One of them is the Planning Cities Commission, which has been led by the City of Gdynia for more than 4 years now. The Commission was established to promote interaction and cooperation between Baltic Sea cities and towns in the field of urban planning and construction in practice.

VASAB and UBC successfully work on spatial planning in different scales. VASAB's domain is transnational level while the UBC has worked more locally, focusing on cities and towns in the Baltic Sea Region for more than 30 years now. As of today, 67 cities from 10 countries have joined the network. Areas of interests of VASAB and the UBC complement and interpenetrate each other. VASAB is one of the key stakeholders with which the UBC works. That creates an excellent basis for continuation of our successful cooperation.

It is a special pleasure for the UBC to congratulate VASAB on the adoption of the Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040. It was also our great pleasure to contribute to the process of its creating as a representative of Pearls, as described in the Vision 2040 document.

For the last three years we have experienced a series of unforeseen and unprecedented situations and circumstances. First the Covid-19 pandemic has affected our lives and added a new unexpected layer of questions. Then Russia's invasion of Ukraine added significant consequences for the Baltic Sea region. Still we have to mitigate the consequences of the climate changes in our cities.

The key topic for the UBC is the resilience. UBC Strategy 2022-2030 adopted two years ago emphasises that building the cities' overall resilience is crucial nowadays, both for the network and for its member cities. It is also the way to make the Vision 2040 a reality these days. But the most important for us today is the sense of togetherness that we need more than ever. It is reflected in good cooperation, networking and a constant exchange of experience.

The UBC Strategy and the Vision 2040 have the same mindset toward the sustainable, safe, resilient and inclusive Baltic Sea Region. Possible future actions indicated in the Vision 2040 correspond with the aims of the UBC. The role of the UBC is to implement practical steps on a local level through collaborative work, targeted activities and taking part in high-potential programmes and projects.

VASAB Vision 2040, adopted in December 2022, defines a desirable picture of the future, based on core ideas, values and principles, supported by insightful research. For the UBC Planning Cities Commission in particular, being the network of architects and urban planners from UBC member cities around the Baltic Sea, it is really important.

Let us keep complementing and strengthening each other's approaches and continue to make the Vision 2040 possible together!

Forward looking statement by Finland as incoming VASAB chairmanship

Anna-Leena Seppälä
Ministry of Environment
Director, Land Use Unit
Built Environment Department

First of all, I would like to thank Germany for a very successful Chairmanship! During the German Chairmanship, we finalised the VASAB Long-term perspective update and formulated the new VASAB Vision 2040, which was endorsed at this ministerial meeting today.

Germany's initiative to hold the VASAB Ministerial Conference in connection with the CBSS Ministerial Conference was excellent. This provides more visibility and highlights the importance of VASAB's work on spatial planning.

The Summer school for young planners organised by Germany in August 2022 at the University of Greifswald gave young people the opportunity to present their ideas for the sustainable future of the Baltic Sea area.

It is now Finland's turn to assume the Chairmanship. After Germany, Finland has very big shoes to fill.

Of course, the most important task will be to implement the Ministerial Declaration and VISION 2040.

Spatial planning has an important role in improving security of supply, as noted in the Declaration. Through VASAB, we can collaboratively answer the following questions: how spatial planning can be of most use in improving and safeguarding energy security and food supply, and in redeveloping transport systems. Renewable energy, including offshore wind power, has an important role in this.

The main theme during Finland's Chairmanship will be security of supply. Connections and collaboration with Russia and Belarus have been suspended for now. This has serious impacts on spatial development in Finland and on the Finnish economy. It also affects the whole VASAB region but, together, we can find solutions to these challenges.

VASAB is going to establish a Planners Forum, similar to HELCOM-VASAB maritime spatial planning Planners Forum, to facilitate more detailed discussions on questions related to planning. During Finland's Chairmanship, we aim to promote the new VASAB Planners Forum, the implementation of the Declaration and the new VISION 2040, and discussions about security of supply and energy.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone for the good collaboration we have in the VASAB family. I also wish to thank the organisers and all participants for this excellent VISION 2040 Conference and Ministerial Conference.



Wismar Declaration 2023

Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB) is an intergovernmental co-operation of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of the Baltic Sea Region. VASAB is part of the network of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, as well as coordinates the policy area 'Spatial Planning' within the EU Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region jointly with HELCOM.

VASAB prepares policy options for the territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region and provides a forum for exchange of knowledge on spatial planning and development among the Baltic Sea countries. VASAB recommends transnational policy measures, promotes methodology development and co-operation projects, co-operates with other pan-Baltic initiatives and pro-motes a dialogue with sector institutions. For fulfilling those tasks, VASAB takes into account also strategies and policies on global, European, European Union, pan-Baltic and national levels, and provides input into these.

The Ministers, having met at the 9th Conference in Wismar on 2nd June 2023, upon the invitation of Germany, discussed the complex challenges facing the Baltic Sea Region in the face of geopolitical and energy policy changes, with a particular focus on the challenges posed by the unjustified and unprovoked full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and building on the Declaration of the last Ministerial Conference of VASAB in 2014, in which we set out our common vision for addressing the current challenges based on our shared values have adopted the following Declaration:

[Russia/Ukraine]
The Ministers,

1. express deep concern and condemn in the strongest terms the illegal war of aggression of the Russian Federation and it's accomplice Belarus against Ukraine,
2. confirm the decision from March last year to suspend Russia and Belarus from the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region, from the steering groups of the EUSBSR policy area "Spatial Planning" for land and maritime spatial planning, and from participation in related activities due to these circumstances,
3. commit to support cities and regions in their efforts to tackle direct consequences of war, e.g., influx of refugees, and acknowledge the important role of spatial planning and development to safeguard critical infrastructure, provide energy security, strengthen the capacity to act and enhance the resilience of the Baltic Sea Region,
4. emphasize the necessity of close cooperation and coordination between the Baltic Sea States to ensure peace and security, as well as democracy and human rights in the whole region.



[VASAB]

The Ministers,

5. underline the importance and enduring necessity of over 30 years of intergovernmental cooperation. This has led to the formulation of visions, strategies, joint actions and projects, raised awareness about spatial planning and development. Furthermore, it has influenced the designing of policies, planning processes and legislation at various levels,

6. recognize the Baltic Sea Region as a forerunner in Maritime Spatial Planning and acknowledge the implementation of maritime spatial planning by the VASAB Member States,

7. welcome the well-established co-operation between VASAB and the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and macro-regional policy framework on coherent maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea and endorses the Baltic Regional Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2021-2030 as a guiding document for the continuation of these joint efforts,

8. appreciate the cooperation between the CBSS and VASAB, including in the context of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and noted the adoption of the VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040 by the 9th VASAB ministerial conference as an example of successful cooperation to tackle the challenges facing the region,

9. acknowledge the role of VASAB as the Policy area 'Spatial Planning' lead coordinator within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region providing a platform for collaboration with other thematic policy areas,

10. acknowledge that we can tackle the considerable spatial challenges in the Baltic Sea Region only through integrated multi-level cooperation and highlight the importance of collaboration with our partners in the Baltic Sea Region in this context, by using and applying various cooperation platforms, networks and formats targeted to spatial planners and other stakeholders,

11. welcome the VASAB initiative to organise Young Planners Summer Schools by bringing together young professionals in the field of spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region,

12. express its gratitude to Germany for its successful 2022-2023 Chairmanship of VASAB and welcome Finland as incoming Chairmanship from July 2023,

13. extend our gratitude to the VASAB Secretariat for their valuable work in facilitating international cooperation in spatial planning and appreciate their contributions to achieving a more balanced spatial planning throughout the Baltic Sea Region,

14. affirm the continuity of the VASAB Secretariat located in Riga, Latvia as functionally independent entity until 31 December 2029 enabling the Secretariat to benefit from the established local networks and the competent team in Riga,

15. reaffirm our commitment to provide VASAB with the necessary financial resources to execute their tasks efficiently.



[VASAB VISION 2040]

The Ministers,

16. acknowledge and express concern about the new challenges and trends that have emerged in the Baltic Sea Region and globally in recent years, including the changing security situation, the impact of climate change and demographic trends,

17. express satisfaction with the work done since the last Ministerial Conference by the Committee on Spatial Planning and Development in the Baltic Sea Region, especially in initiating in 2019 the update of the "Long-Term Perspective 2030" for the time horizon of 2040,

18. welcome the open and co-creative elaboration process of the VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040 that were carried out in close cooperation with relevant partners and stakeholders,

19. endorse the new version of the Long-Term Perspective "VASAB Vision 2040" as a positive strategic-visionary framework for a vibrant, well-connected and resilient spatial development of the Baltic Sea Region thereby strengthening the territorial dimension of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region,

20. emphasize the importance of continuing efforts between countries, regions and cities, as well as the Baltic Sea organisations in implementing the VASAB Vision 2040 in the future as well as recognizing it in their relevant policies and documents and support with the help of the VASAB Secretariat, networks of all relevant actors,

21. ask the German chairmanship, in co-operation with the Committee on Spatial Planning and Development and the Secretariat, to distribute this Declaration and the VASAB Vision 2040 to relevant national, Baltic, European and global actors.

Other conference documents

Invitation to the Conference

Dear Minister,

on behalf of the German Presidency of the Inter-ministerial Spatial Planning Cooperation "Vision and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea" (VASAB), I cordially invite you to the

9th VASAB Ministerial Conference
June 1-2 2023
in Wismar / Germany.

The conference will begin with an evening reception on June 1 and will start and deliberate on the morning of June 2.

Since our last ministerial meeting in 2014 in Tallinn many developments in the Baltic Sea Region have occurred. New spatial challenges have emerged in the meantime, especially most recently due to the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine. Various areas like energy or mobility are affected as is VASAB as a platform for intergovernmental cooperation for spatial planning and sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region.

The Council of Baltic Sea States' (CBSS) foreign ministers will meet in Wismar at the same time. In view of the institutional and thematic links between the CBSS and VASAB, I have agreed with Federal Minister Baerbock to link the two ministerial conferences and thus send a strong political signal for the future of the Baltic Sea Region.

With the VASAB Vision 2040, which we will adopt at the Ministerial Conference, we have succeeded in creating an innovative and forward-looking guiding document for the entire Baltic Sea Region that focuses on the challenges and provides positive perspectives.

In view of the numerous challenges in the entire Baltic Sea region, it is a personal interest of mine to cordially invite you to the Ministerial Conference. Especially in these difficult times, the development of joint solutions for challenges that do not stop at borders is more important than ever.

I am therefore very much looking forward to your participation and the opportunity to meet you in person.

Further documents and more detailed information on the format, travel and transfer options as well as hotel arrangements will follow with a registration option at a later date.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my office (Min@bmwsb.bund.de) or the colleagues in Unit S III 3 (SIII3@bmwsb.bund.de).

Sincerely yours,
Klara Geywitz

Programme of the Conference

1 June 2023

- 17.30 -18.40 **Joint kick-off with family photo of VASAB and CBSS ministers**
Joint walk to location in the Wismar harbour for presentation by
State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
- 19.00 – 21.00 **Reception and dinner of VASAB ministers**

2 June 2023

- 8.30 - 9.00 *Registration and coffee*
- 9.00 – 9.15 **Welcome and opening of the conference** by **Klara Geywitz**, Federal
Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building
- 9.15 – 9.30 **Enrolment in the Golden Book of the city of Wismar** by **Thomas
Beyer**, Mayor of the City of Wismar
- 9.30 – 9.45 **Spatial dynamics in the Baltic Sea Region** by **Wiktor Szydarowski**,
Director ESPON
State of art in Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea Region by
Rüdiger Stempel, Executive Secretary HELCOM
- 9.45 – 10.00 **Splashing Benefits of Rail Baltica: Connecting Rural Areas of the Baltic
States to the European Rail Network** by **Katharina Csillak**, **Tina
Sipkevica**, **Yahya Habeeb**, VASAB Summer School winner team
Talis Linkaits, former Minister for Transport, Latvia
- 10.00– 10.30 **The VASAB Vision 2040 – process and content** by **Kai Böhme**, Director
Spatial Foresight, and **Alda Nikodemusa**, Head of VASAB Secretariat
Results and expectations from the VASAB expert conference by **Prof.
Rainer Danielzyk**, Secretary-General ARL, rapporteur and
representative of the German National Advisory Group
- 10.45 – 11.30 **Statements by the Heads of delegations:**
Kristi Grišakov (Estonia)
Anna Leena Seppälä (Finland)
Daiva Matusevičė (Lithuania)
Māris Sprindžuks (Latvia)
Piotr Żuber (Poland)
Anders Sjøelvgren (Sweden)
- Statements by invited organisations:**
Ignė Stalmokaitė (CBSS)
Tomas Mörtzell (CPMR-BSC)
Virginijus Sinkevičius (European Commission)
Tom Schumacher (EUSBSR)
Rüdiger Stempel (HELCOM)
Paulina Szewczyk (UBC)
- 11.30 – 11.35 **Adoption of the Wismar declaration**
- 11.35 – 11.45 **Ceremonial passing the baton from Germany to Finland -**
Forward looking statement by Finland as incoming VASAB
chairmanship
- 11.45 – 11.50 **Official Closing** by **Klara Geywitz**, Federal Ministry for Housing,
Urban Development and Building
- 11.50 – 12.00 **Family photo**
- 12.00 – 13.00 *Lunch break*
- 13.00 – 15.00 **Departure of delegations**

List of Participants

Representatives of countries

Country	Name	Surname	Institution
Germany	Klara Vera	Geywitz Moosmayer	Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building
	Daniel	Meltzian	Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building
	Gabriele	Hoffmann	Ministry of Economy, Infrastructure, Tourism and Labour of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
	Estonia	Kristi Lembe	Grišakov Reiman
Finland	Anna-Leena Tiina	Seppälä Tihlman	Ministry of the Environment Ministry of the Environment
Latvia	Māris	Sprindžuks	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
	Andris	Miglavs	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
	Ilze	Oša	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
Lithuania	Daiva Asta	Matusevičė Rokickienė	Ministry of Environment Ministry of Environment
Poland	Piotr Patrycja	Zuber Artymowska	Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy
Sweden	Anders	Šjølvgren	Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning
	Mikael	Forsberg	Ministry of Rural Affairs and Infrastructure

Invited organisations and speakers

Institution	Name	Surname
Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association	Rainer	Danielzyk
Council of the Baltic Sea States	Ignė	Stalmokaitė
Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions / Baltic Sea Commission	Tomas Lucille	Mörtzell Ehrhart
ESPON	Wiktor	Szydarowski
EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Baltic Sea Strategy Point	Tom	Schumacher
The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission – Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)	Rüdiger Dmitry	Stempel Frank-Kamenetsky
Former Minister of Transport in Latvia	Tālis	Linkaits
Spatial Foresight GmbH	Kai	Böhme
Union of the Baltic Cities, Planning Cities Commission	Paulina	Szweczyk
Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea - VASAB	Alda Elīna	Nikodemusa Veidemane
Winning Team of VASAB Summer School 2022	Katharina Yahya Tina	Csillak Habeeb Šipkēvica



VASAB Vision 2040

Vibrant, Resilient, Well-connected -
The Baltic Sea Region in 2040

VASAB
Vision 2040
9th VASAB
Ministerial Conference
2 June 2023