



VASAB Webinar on Spatial Resilience and Spatial Planning

29 February 2024

Summary

REGARDING PLANNING SYSTEMS – How is your country's planning system able to anticipate unexpected situations? What good practices or new methods have you implemented or recognized?

1. Streamlining and Expediency in Planning Systems

- Lithuania has the concept of "Plans of State Importance" which allows for faster planning processes with fewer procedures, and the ability to bypass local plans when necessary.
- Estonia is working on streamlining the process specifically for renewable energy planning, aiming to shorten the typically lengthy procedures.
- Germany, on the other hand, is mentioned as having formal spatial planning instruments that lack the necessary flexibility to respond quickly to unexpected situations, indicating a need for a more adaptable approach.

2. Rapid Response to Urgent Situations

- Despite the generally slow nature of planning systems, there are instances such as in Germany, where an LNG terminal and its landlines were established within 7 months after February 2022, demonstrating that rapid development is possible under certain conditions.

3. Citizen Engagement and Renewal of Visions

- The importance of involving citizens more deeply in planning processes is emphasized, with the use of citizen science practices to collect data and engage social networks.
- Some presenters discussed the renewal of visions and development perspectives in light of current pressures, suggesting a trend towards updating and modernizing planning approaches to better address contemporary challenges.
- Finland is described as having a competent planning system, but one that is rigid and slow, which suggests a movement towards more strategic and thematic planning to improve responsiveness and flexibility.

RELATING TO CONTENT THEMES – How security of supply and comprehensive security appear now and in the future in planning (e.g., agricultural areas and food supply, power lines, and other critical infrastructure)?

1. Strategic Changes in Power Supply and Planning Tools

- Lithuania executed a significant shift in its power supply by disconnecting from the Russian grid and connecting to the Western power network. This strategic move was facilitated by using the "Plans of State Importance" tool, indicating that it was not only an energy decision but also a political compromise to address state security issues.



VASAB Webinar on Spatial Resilience and Spatial Planning

29 February 2024

Summary

2. Energy Planning and Land Use Considerations

- In Sweden, there is a noted lack of interest from municipalities in planning sea-based energy solutions within their territorial seas, possibly indicating challenges or priorities that diverge from national or international renewable energy goals.
- Conversely, in the dialogue between County Administrative Boards and municipalities, there is a growing importance placed on reserving land for farming and food production within comprehensive plans, reflecting a prioritization of food security and sustainable land use.

3. Sector-Specific Strategies and Spatial Use Conflicts

- Estonia is emphasizing the strengthening of sector-specific future-proofing, such as advocating for centralized and strong rules to protect high-value agricultural land, which suggests a move towards policies that secure long-term sustainability over short-term spatial planning goals.
- The concept of smart combined use of space in Estonia reflects an effort to resolve conflicts between preserving natural areas and developing new infrastructure, pointing towards an integrated approach in spatial planning.
- Germany prioritizes energy security, with a focus on diversifying its energy sources in the short term (wind, solar, gas) and looking towards hydrogen in the mid-term, indicating a strategic approach to energy resilience and a balance of environmental and energy production needs.

REGARDING INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS – have there been any changes in international connections and their consideration in planning in recent years?

REGARDING INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS – have there been any changes in international connections and their consideration in planning in recent years?

Yes	10
no	3

1. Shift in Geopolitical and Infrastructure Orientations

- There is a noted shift in connectivity priorities, with a decreased focus on connections towards the east and an increased emphasis on western and north-south connections. This change has not yet been reflected in current plans due to the lengthy nature of planning processes but is expected to be evident in upcoming plans.



VASAB Webinar on Spatial Resilience and Spatial Planning

29 February 2024

Summary

2. Enhanced Information Sharing and Best Practices

- There is an increase in the dissemination of information and knowledge regarding examples of good practices, suggesting an improvement in the sharing of successful strategies and approaches within the field of planning.

3. New Initiatives and Changes in Cooperation

- New programs for municipal-level cooperation between Lithuania and Scandinavian countries have been initiated, indicating a strengthening of ties and collaboration in the region.
- Cross-border programs have been discontinued, leading to a situation where 'border areas' are becoming even more isolated or defined as 'border areas', possibly due to shifting political landscapes or redefined priorities.

Short summary of presentations

The presentation by Toni Ahlqvist during the VASAB webinar on February 29, 2024, on "**Futures Knowledge Foresight and Long-term Spatial Planning**" highlights three main points:

1. The importance of considering temporal dimensions in regional development, which include historical continuums, present selections, and future expectations.
2. The need for systemic thinking in understanding the complexities of the future, recognizing interconnected trends like climate change, pandemics, and geopolitical shifts, and the need for regional foresight in planning.
3. The presentation emphasizes scoping future alternatives, outlining plausible development trajectories, and learning from past options to build spatially sensitive scenarios that are not just linear projections but consider weak signals and wild cards.

These points reflect a comprehensive approach to spatial planning that is adaptive, forward-thinking, and contextually grounded.

Reports from different countries, were sharing following topics:

1. **Focus on Regional Resilience and Security.** Many presentations emphasize the need for spatial planning to account for national security and resilience at various levels, from local to national. There's an acknowledgment of the changing conditions and the need for planning systems to adapt to ensure both immediate and long-term security and functionality.
2. **Planning for Future Challenges.** The presentations share a focus on preparing for future challenges, including energy crises, climate change, and societal shifts, by utilizing foresight and strategic planning to anticipate and address these issues.



VASAB Webinar on Spatial Resilience and Spatial Planning

29 February 2024

Summary

3. **Integration of Different Sectors and Stakeholders.** There is a call for integrating different industries, organizations, and sciences, and for public and private sectors to work together. This would help identify new opportunities and ensure that planning is inclusive and comprehensive.
4. **Innovative Approaches to Spatial Planning.** Several countries are exploring new approaches to spatial planning, such as using ICT platforms for data management, employing informal instruments, and conducting exercises to test planning assumptions and build alternative scenarios.
5. **Prioritization of Sustainable Development.** Across the presentations, there is a consistent theme of prioritizing sustainable development within the planning processes. This includes consideration for the environment, energy supply, and socio-economic factors that contribute to a region's resilience and security.
6. **Challenges of sparsely populated areas.** Rural and small cities especially in eastern parts of countries is a geopolitical question.

These points indicate a collective movement towards innovative, integrated, and strategic spatial planning that prioritizes resilience, sustainability, and future-proofing against a backdrop of global and regional changes.

Finally, Jens Kurnol reminded that in **VASAB workshop “New spatial challenges in the BSR”** in September 2022 issues of co-operation between planners, refugee flow and energy questions (which were not that much touch upon in presentations) were raised. Following topics were recognised important: energy infrastructure (inc. energy grids), military safety needs, sectoral policies esp. transportation, efficiency and resilience in planning (alternative options) and pearls (cities and towns).