

# VASAB COOPERATION RULES OF PROCEDURE

## ABOUT VASAB COOPERATION

**VASAB** (Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea) cooperation is macro-regional intergovernmental collaboration with common spatial vision and joint actions among ministries on spatial planning and territorial development in the Baltic Sea Region.

VASAB prepares policy options for the territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region and provides a forum for exchange of know-how on spatial planning and development between the Baltic Sea countries. VASAB recommends transnational policy measures, reports on the territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region, promotes methodology development and cooperation projects, cooperates with other pan-Baltic initiatives, and promotes a dialogue with sectoral institutions.

VASAB cooperation is organised and carried out within the framework of:

- VASAB Ministerial Declarations,
- VASAB Long-Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (LTP),
- VASAB Chairmanship priorities,
- National and regional strategic and spatial development documents and initiatives,
- Relevant international policies.

VASAB cooperation operates under the umbrella of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and contributes and collaborates with other networks and frameworks (e.g. EUSBSR, HELCOM), particularly regarding the territorial dimension.

VASAB is a coordinator for the EUSBSR Policy area (PA) Spatial Planning and implementation of LTP supports achieving the targets of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR),

VASAB cooperation is carried out via:

- Regular VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region (CSPD/BSR) meetings,
- Thematic workshops/webinars,
- VASAB conferences/Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Forums,
- Ministerial Conferences organised according to the need,
- Other activities agreed by VASAB CSPD/BSR.

## VASAB COMMITTEE ON SPATIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION

1. During the periods between the Ministerial Conferences VASAB cooperation is steered by the VASAB CSPD/BSR, as appointed by VASAB Ministerial Conference in 1994. The main **objectives** of the VASAB CSPD/BSR are:
  - a) to offer a **forum for the macro-regional, trans-boundary and cross-sectoral dialogue** and the exchange of know-how on spatial planning and development between BSR countries,
  - b) to create **common spatial policy perspective**.
2. VASAB CSPD/BSR is composed of the nominated representatives of the respective ministries/regional authorities represented in VASAB cooperation from Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Germany (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Schleswig-Holstein regions), Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia (Kaliningrad, Pskov, Leningrad Oblasts and St. Petersburg)<sup>1</sup> and Sweden. CBSS participates as an observer. It is possible for other BSR countries to become members of VASAB Cooperation.
3. In addition to policy building and know-exchange, VASAB CSPD/BSR:
  - a) acts as **steering group of the EUSBSR PA Spatial Planning**,
  - b) CSPD/BSR has given mandate on the MSP matters to the Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group (WG), including those of the MSP within the EUSBSR and PA,
  - c) decides on participation and interaction with relevant projects,
  - d) acts as national contact/focal points for VASAB cooperation.

### MODUS OPERANDI

4. VASAB CSPD/BSR is led by rotating annual Chairmanship, based on the CBSS chairmanship rotation principle, unless otherwise decided. In cases when CBSS is chaired by country that is not a member of VASAB, the chairmanship is shared by previous and upcoming chairmanships equally, unless otherwise decided.
5. Chairmanship sets the agenda for meetings and guides the preparations of VASAB CSPD/BSR meetings and activities according to the chairmanship priorities and VASAB CSPD/BSR work-plan approved by CSPD/BSR.
6. Meeting agenda and documents are delivered to the CSPD/BSR 7 days prior to the meeting. Agenda is approved at the beginning of the meeting.
7. CSPD/BSR follows methodological guidelines of VASAB cooperation in their work.
8. Representation of VASAB in relevant international and national events and activities is ensured by VASAB CSPD/BSR Chair, VASAB CSPD/BSR members and VASAB Secretariat.
9. VASAB CSPD/BSR meetings are held at least two times per year, according to the decision of VASAB CSPD/BSR and ongoing chairmanship. Both online and face-to-face meetings are possible.
10. In between meetings communication is carried out via e-mail correspondence and decisions are made via written procedure. The written procedure shall be organised for at least 7 days. In the case of no answer, the proposed decision is considered approved.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the war in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia are suspended from the VASAB cooperation as of 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2022 based on a decision by the EU Member States participating in VASAB.

11. Decisions of VASAB CSPD/BSR are taken by consensus during the meetings or via written procedure.
12. Decisions and the summary of the meetings of the CSPD/BSR meetings are published on VASAB website.
13. VASAB CSPD/BSR is supported by VASAB Secretariat (Rules of Operations of the VASAB Secretariat).
14. The working language of VASAB is English.
15. External guests can be invited to the CSPD/BSR meetings.
16. The member of VASAB CSPD/BSR bears the costs of the hosted meetings, events and activities, unless otherwise decided.
17. The members of VASAB CSPD/BSR cover their travel and accommodation expenses in the VASAB CSPD/BSR meetings.
18. CSPD/BSR can change the Rules of Procedure upon need.

## COMMUNICATION

19. Communication is maintained primarily by e-mail.
20. Materials of the VASAB CSPD/BSR meetings are available prior each meeting on the VASAB webpage for registered users ('VASAB library').
21. Materials of the other VASAB events or activities are published in the VASAB website [www.vasab.org](http://www.vasab.org) and social media accounts.
22. VASAB has the following social media and network accounts: X (@VASAB\_org), Facebook (@VASAB2040), LinkedIn (@VASAB), YouTube (@VASABsecretariat), Bluesky social (@vasaborg.bsky.social).
23. VASAB Secretariat issues online VASAB newsletter up to 2-3 times per year.

## VASAB TRIO

24. To ensure continuity of actions and prepare VASAB CSPD/BSR meetings, a Trio format is used to prepare CSPD/BSR meetings.
25. VASAB Trio is composed of the representatives of the previous, present and upcoming chairmanship. Trio meetings can be organised as open meetings with participation of other VASAB CSPD/BSR representatives and invited guests.
26. VASAB Trio meetings are held in advance of the VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting and are hosted by ongoing chairmanship.