

COMMITTEE ON SPATIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
THE BALTIC SEA REGION

**Summary of the 94<sup>th</sup> CSPD/BSR Meeting**

Tallinn, 19-20 March 2025

**Chairperson:** Mr. Tiit Oidjärv (EE)

*Participants: CSPD/BSR members:* Mr. Jens Kurnol (DE), Mr. Piotr Piekut (DE), Ms. Helen Madison (EE), Ms. Mari Pohja-Mykrä (FI), Ms. Algimantė Treinienė (LT), Ms. Kinga Stańczuk-Olejniak (PL), Ms. Maxi Nachtigall (SE), *invited guests:* Ms. Julia Fredriksson (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency), Ms. Britta Bockhorn (ARL), Mr. Eedi Sepp (Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture), Ms. Lembe Reiman (Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture), Ms. Svea Horn (Baltic Sea Strategy Point, Senate Chancellery of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg), *VASAB Secretariat:* Ms. Egija Stapkēviča, Ms. Jana Patmalniece, Ms. Margarita Vološina, Ms. Tīna Šipkēviča and Ms. Liene Strazdiņa.

**1. Adoption of the report of 93<sup>rd</sup> VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting**

*The Committee* adopted the Report of 93<sup>rd</sup> CSPD/BSR meeting held on 12-13 December 2024 in Tallinn, Estonia without changes.

**2. Adoption of the summary of 93<sup>rd</sup> VASAB CSPD/BSR meeting**

*The Committee* adopted the Summary of 93<sup>rd</sup> CSPD/BSR meeting held on 12-13 December 2024 in Tallinn, Estonia without changes.

**3. Information on Open Troika meeting**

*The Committee* took note of the Report of the VASAB Open Troika online meeting on 4 March 2025.

**4. Open Troika meeting name change to Open Trio meeting**

*The Committee* agreed to change the name of Open Troika meeting to Open Trio meeting and agreed that VASAB Secretariat organises a written procedure to update 'VASAB Cooperation Rules of Procedure' section 'VASAB Troika' (Points 24, 25 and 26).

**5. News and major challenges regarding national spatial planning issues**

**Lithuania:** news in spatial planning:

- Currently, we are working on implementation of national level Comprehensive Plan as well as on the monitoring how it is being implemented.
- Public Institution Construction Sector Development Agency, Urban Planning Unit is dealing with these issues, in consulting municipalities on development and implementation of municipal level planning documents. Agency analyses and assesses the urban development characteristics of the country's residential areas and their systems, in order to identify trends and predict of changes.
- In addition, from our point of view, the Agency has developed a very useful tool to support the preparation of spatial planning documents at municipal level. Spatial data for 2011 and

2021, linked to built-up areas, were opened. The interactive maps display data at the city, town and village, neighbourhood levels and allow to see a wide range of data, such as population, age, socio-demographic data, to analyse change over decades. The visually presented data allow municipalities, public authorities, developers of spatial planning documents and strategic planning documents, urban planners, and other researchers to analyse and plan cities much more efficiently - in studying the processes of internal migration and population dispersal and assessing the effectiveness of urban structures.

**Sweden:** news in spatial planning:

The Swedish government has presented a **national strategy for liveable cities**.

- On 30 January 2025, the Government decided on a new strategy for liveable cities, which includes amongst others a new goal for urban development throughout the country.
- The strategy constitutes a new direction for urban development policy and takes its starting point in the notion of vibrant, safe and robust city environments. The strategy contains thirteen focus areas.
- With this strategy, the Government wants to strengthen the conditions for municipalities to develop vibrant, safe and resilient urban environments and strengthen the opportunities for regions, government agencies, businesses and civil society to contribute to the work.

**Poland:** news in spatial planning:

- Work on the National Development Concept 2050 (NDC 2050), a strategic document that will guide Poland's development by integrating socio-economic and spatial planning, has been completed. The document is expected to be adopted later this year.
- Currently, work is underway on the medium-term national development strategy, which will operationalise the development vision with a time horizon through 2035. The main framework of the strategy has been approved, and work on its final version is ongoing. An environmental impact assessment will be conducted before the summer, followed by public consultations to be held by September 2025. The strategy will be adopted by the Council of Ministers by the end of the year.
- Poland is undergoing a major reform of the spatial planning system, with full implementation by the end of 2025. The reform introduces a new requirement for all municipalities to prepare and adopt a general spatial development plan, which will become a local law act. This plan will set out general rules for building within the municipality, establish zones for supplementary construction, and must align with the municipal development strategy. The general plan will replace the current study of conditions and directions of spatial development. The reform also aims to increase stakeholder participation in the planning process and requires that new investments contribute additional benefits to the municipality, such as improved public services.
- The reform is linked to Poland's commitments under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (KPO). The introduction of general spatial development plans and the obligation for municipalities to adopt local development strategies are milestones for the disbursement of EU recovery funds. These changes aim to address long-standing challenges in Poland's spatial planning system, such as ineffective spatial policy, insufficient coverage of local plans, and uncontrolled suburbanisation, while also fulfilling KPO requirements for more effective, transparent, and sustainable spatial development.

**Finland:** news in spatial planning:

- **The reform of the Land Use Act** is progressing, but not according to the initially planned schedule. The aim is still to have the Act come into force in 2026. The draft law includes national land use guidelines, regional plans, local master and detailed plans, as well as maritime spatial plans. The proposed law introduces changes to streamline planning and updates the objectives and content requirements of plans to better address the challenges posed by changes in the operational environment.

- **‘One-Stop Environmental Permits: A Smoother Path to Green Transition’** legislative project, aimed at streamlining environmental permitting procedures, is progressing according to schedule. The project is part of the broader national goal of launching the new agency, 'LVV,' by autumn 2025. The head office will be in Tampere, and the network of regional offices will expand to 17.
- **The Offshore Wind Power Act for the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** came into force in 2025. The Government decides maritime areas for offshore wind development in the EEZ based on a submission by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (TEM). When selecting the areas, TEM 1) considers the overall public interest particularly in the terms of the environment, fisheries, and transport 2) uses the Maritime Spatial Plan 2030 for Finland as a source of information, and 3) conducts SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) for the selected areas. The aim is to put the areas out to tender in autumn 2025.
- **The update of the Wind Power Construction Planning Guide** is being prepared at the Ministry of the Environment. The aim of the guide is to promote the consistent application of legislation in wind power construction guidance and permitting, facilitate wind power planning, and improve its quality. One of the heated topics is the distance of wind turbines from human settlements.
- In **Maritime Spatial Planning, the Vision Phase will take place** in 2025. National and regional consultation meetings, as well as broader stakeholder workshops, will be organized to build a shared vision for the use of marine areas. The focus is on overall maritime security and security of supply, the green transition in the marine environment, climate-smart planning, and promoting multi-use areas. The plan will be updated between 2024 and 2027, and a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will be conducted in 2026.
- The **Finnish Coastal Strategy** was adopted by the Ministry of Environment in February 2024. The goal of the Strategy is to promote the sustainable use of the coast, addressing the threats of biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution. The Strategy guides and steers development and planning activities along the coast. The implementation is ongoing, and a national *Forum for Best Practices* will be established in 2025 to serve as an interactive channel for sharing best practices and knowledge concerning the coastal zone.

**Germany:** news in spatial planning:

- In the beginning of 2023, the Federal Ministry for the Environment (BMUV) and BMWSB began their work on key points of a ‘Natural Area Law’:
  - On the one hand, this should have promoted the designation of nature conservation areas and, in particular, the upgrading of existing areas to a higher protection status.
  - On the other hand, these areas should have been networked with each other to form a cross-border biotope network, among other things with the support of spatial planning, via connecting elements and areas.
  - However, since the BMUV and BMWSB were unable to agree on some key points of the Nature Area Law in a timely manner, the process never progressed beyond the initial key points stage.
  - With the end of the coalition government in November 2024, the work on both the Natural Area Law and a federal spatial development plan has been discontinued.
  - In the future, it is possible that the project or elements of it could be revived when the EU Nature Restoration Law, which has been in force since the end of last year, is implemented.
- The German - Polish border area action had applied for TSI (Technical Support Instrument), an EU programme that provides tailor-made technical expertise to EU Member States to design and implement reforms. The focus was on energy and climate change. Unfortunately, the current decision of EU COM is negative. However, the Commission encouraged the applicants to repeat the application in the new round this year. Decision would be in 2026.

**Estonia:** news in spatial planning:

- National level governance of spatial planning policy has gone through many changes recently. From January 2025 spatial planning is the responsibility of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, also the new Spatial and Land Board was initiated that is now responsible for policy implementation in many activities in spatial planning.
- The new coalition government that is in the forming highly prioritises economic development, largely impacting also spatial planning practice and policy.
- Together with other digital transition activities on the national level, a planning portal is being developed that will serve as the sole portal for all planning proceedings in the future, that also helps to streamline planning proceedings.
- On the local level, wind energy planning proceedings are a challenge, especially with the upcoming local elections.

**The Committee** took note of the information about news and major challenges regarding national spatial planning issues.

**6. Terrestrial spatial planning country fiches**

The Committee was informed that Sweden and Finland have sent updated terrestrial country fiches to VASAB Secretariat and updated versions have been published at VASAB website: <https://vasab.org/home/about/country-fiches/>. The Committee was informed that VASAB Secretariat will send the current country fiches versions to the rest Committee members to look through and update if necessary.

**The Committee** was reminded that all VASAB member countries are invited to regularly update the Country fiche on terrestrial spatial planning and send it to VASAB Secretariat for publishing on VASAB website.

**The Committee** agreed to update the Country fiche on terrestrial spatial planning with additional questions to be prepared by Mr. Tiit Oidjärv, and agreed that VASAB Secretariat sends the updated Country fiche template to all Committee members for filling in.

**7. Results of VASAB webinar on national level spatial planning on 11 February 2025**

The Committee was informed on the results of VASAB webinar on national level spatial planning organised on 11 February 2025. Recording of the webinar is available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8WWVIZ0C\\_M&t=6s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8WWVIZ0C_M&t=6s). Presentations of the webinar are available here: <https://vasab.org/event/vasab-webinar-on-national-level-spatial-planning/>. During the webinar participants could put down their questions and reflections in Mural board: <https://app.mural.co/t/vasab5607/m/vasab5607/1739098351483/d76ecd5bbfccf2f67eb36eec41500c57584a8d52?sender=uf9f66ffbe43fa51be423260>.

**The Committee** took note of information on the results of VASAB webinar on national level spatial planning organised on 11 February 2025.

**8. Towards Polish VASAB chairmanship**

The Committee was informed that Polish VASAB chairmanship will build up on the topics of previous chairmanships of Finland and Estonia: resilience, territorial resilience, and spatial resilience. First Committee meeting under Polish chairmanship would be organised in the end of September 2025 in one of Poland's regional cities – Olsztyn. Back-to-back with this Committee meeting Land-based Planners' Forum project webinar will be organised. Polish chairmanship would like to organise a Directors General meeting in May 2026 in Zakopane (Poland) which would be a bigger event but not a Ministerial Conference where the Committee could present VASAB's work. Last Committee meeting during Polish chairmanship could be organised in November 2026. A young planners' summer school could be organised in August 2026 in

Gdansk if a funding source would be found. Polish chairmanship would like to prepare a proposal for ESPON targeted analysis on measuring resilience in Baltic Sea Region. Deadline for submitting the proposal is November 2025. The Committee was invited to join ESPON Seminar 'Exaptive Resilience in Border Regions' in Gdansk on 25-26 June 2025 during which many projects on territorial cohesion and resilience will be presented.

*The Committee* took note of the information about the upcoming Polish VASAB chairmanship.

## **9. Discussion on spatial resilience related activities between CBSS PA Secure and PA Spatial Planning**

The Committee was informed that Estonian chairmanship has contacted Policy Area 'Secure' in order to develop a dialogue between VASAB and Policy Area 'Secure' as VASAB is moving more towards spatial resilience, hazard related, defence related topics and it is vital for VASAB and Policy Area 'Secure' to be aligned. VASAB, of course, focuses on spatial/territorial/regional aspects. Due to a changed security situation in the Baltic Sea Region, Estonian chairmanship is highlighting topics as dual use of infrastructure, food security, community resilience, energy, resilience etc.

*Ms. Julia Fredriksson* presented EUSBSR Policy Area 'Secure' which focuses on risk reduction management and builds a common societal security culture in the Baltic Sea Region. Policy Area 'Secure' is coordinated by the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). Policy Area 'Secure' activities are related to four areas: better risk assessment and crisis management, building up resilience and prevention towards emergencies and threats at a local level, enhancing effective cooperation in protecting human beings against criminal threats and preventing serious crime through developing efficient framework for law enforcement cooperation.

*The Committee* took note of the information about EUSBSR PA 'Secure' and potential common spatial resilience related activities with VASAB as PA 'Spatial Planning' co-coordinator.

*The Committee* agreed that VASAB Secretariat looks into the possibility for VASAB as PA 'Spatial Planning' co-coordinator together with PA 'Secure' and PA 'Culture' to organise a workshop at EUSBSR Annual Forum 2025.

## **10. Update of VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026**

*The Committee* adopted VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 and agreed that the Work Plan should be published at VASAB website stating - 'Adopted in March 2025', and it should be mentioned that this is a living document, subject to periodic updates or changes as needed.

*The Committee* agreed that VASAB Secretariat shares adopted VASAB Work Plan 2025-2026 with the Committee to update the living document when necessary.

## **11. Russia & Belarus suspension from VASAB**

The Committee was reminded that on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022 the Committee made following decision: Due to the armed aggression by the Russian Federation with support of Belarus against the sovereign state Ukraine, the Member States of the European Union participating in VASAB decide to suspend Russia and Belarus from the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region and Steering Groups of the EUSBSR Policy area 'Spatial planning' for land-based and maritime spatial planning and participation in related activities. It was noted that Russia and Belarus were suspended from VASAB Committee, not Ministerial Conference and invited all Committee members to think what to do next with Russia and Belarus participation in VASAB.

*The Committee* agreed that VASAB Secretariat in cooperation with Secretariat's hosting organisation's (State Digital Development Agency's) lawyers prepares a background document

by the end of April on how to exclude Russia and Belarus from VASAB. The document shall also inform about the reasons given for both countries never contributing to VASAB budget.

## **12. Ministerial Declaration & amendments to VASAB Vision 2040**

The Committee was reminded that one of Estonian Chairmanship goals has been to discuss more in detail spatial resilience topics and Estonian Chairmanship has prepared analytical background paper 'VASAB Vision 2040 and spatial resilience. How is the whole-of-government all-of-hazards logic represented in the long-term spatial strategy?'. The final version of the background document will be prepared taking into account Committee members comments and suggestions. Estonian Chairmanship suggested to prepare a Ministerial Declaration which would highlight the resilience topic and afterwards in Polish Chairmanship possibly VASAB Vision 2040 could be opened for amendments. The Committee was informed that draft Ministerial Declaration has been prepared and will be sent to the Committee for comments/suggestions. The aim is to sign the final Ministerial Declaration version via written procedure by the end of June 2025.

*The Committee* agreed that VASAB Secretariat should contact Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia to find out how a written procedure between ministers can be carried out to sign a Ministerial Declaration.

*The Committee* took note that Mr. Tiit Oidjärv will send the draft ministerial declaration to the Committee to comment until mid-April and in mid-April an online discussion will be organised to go through the declaration in order to prepare the final version.

## **13. ARL – Memorandum of Cooperation**

The Committee was informed about Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association (ARL) and introduced ARL's interest in signing Memorandum of Cooperation with VASAB.

*The Committee* agreed that VASAB Secretariat should elaborate why a 'Memorandum of Understanding' should be signed with ARL (Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association), what would be an added value for VASAB, pros and cons for signing a 'Memorandum of Understanding', who would sign the document from VASAB side.

*The Committee* agreed that VASAB Secretariat should prepare a list of organisations VASAB is in close cooperation with and with whom 'Memorandum of Understanding' could be signed and the added value of such a process.

## **14. VASAB Coastal Recommendations, 2<sup>nd</sup> webinar**

The Committee was reminded that VASAB is currently implementing project 'Baltic Sea2Land' and one of project's tasks is to look at VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region which were adopted by the Ministerial Conference in 1996. These recommendations are quite old and there is a need to look at them to understand how relevant they are and should they be revised. This decision should be made by the Committee.

The Committee was informed that VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region were sent to the Committee to get acquainted with and these recommendations have influenced a lot of cross-border cooperation and agreements that followed later on, for example, discussions on the integrated coastal zone management, not only in Baltic Sea Region but in European scale, and also the maritime spatial planning and maritime spatial planning framework directive. On 20 November 2024 as one of project 'Baltic Sea2Land' activity was organised a webinar 'Towards updated Coastal Planning and Development Recommendations for the Baltic Sea Region. From webinar discussion, VASAB 1996 Recommendations provide a strong foundation for coastal spatial planning but lack modern

perspectives on: climate change adaptation, geopolitical cooperation, blue economy & sustainable economic transition, public engagement & transparency, marine spatial planning (MSP) & Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), innovation, funding and capacity building.

The Committee was informed about the results of project 'Baltic Sea2Land' survey which aimed to get insights on coastal planning and development in the Baltic Sea Region. Because of the low participation rate (received only 17 responses), the survey served as a qualitative data source to extract opinions from local, regional and national level practitioners such as regulations that are relevant to coastal planning and development issues. Topics that need attention and are relevant: Climate-related issues; governance, cooperation, security; nature-based solutions, renaturalisation, impact on environment; community & social planning issues; coastal/offshore multi-use. Also relevant: ecosystem services, landscape-related, coastal infrastructure and data sharing. Work within 'Baltic Sea2Land' project has been presented also at Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group held on 18-20 September 2024 in Riga, Latvia and VASAB Secretariat was informed that HELCOM has HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R on Implementation of integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea which is also being revised.

*The Committee* agreed that VASAB Secretariat should explore if and how VASAB Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region (1996) could be merged with HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R on Implementation of integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea.

## **15. EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)**

### **An overview of Policy Area 'Spatial Planning' activities**

The Committee was informed about the latest developments and activities within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Area 'Spatial Planning'. Policy Area 'Spatial Planning' initiated and submitted two project platforms to Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme on 9 December 2024 and both have been selected for funding: 1) Baltic Climate-Resilient Coastal Planning Network (Baltic PlaNet) and 2) Strategic Ecosystem-Based Planning for the Sustainable Future of the Baltic Sea (SEABAS Project Platform). VASAB Committee supported two other project platforms where VASAB is foreseen as an associated partner and one project platform was also selected for funding - BSR Urban Mobility. Regarding EUSBSR Action Plan update, Policy Area coordinators have submitted 1<sup>st</sup> drafts approved by Steering Groups (in PA 'Spatial Planning' case – approved by VASAB Committee and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG) by the end of January 2025. The drafts will be reviewed in National Coordinators group meeting and the process will continue in late spring 2025. Bilateral meeting between National Coordinators group and Policy Areas will be organised in April.

*The Committee* took note of the information about EUSBSR Policy Area 'Spatial Planning' news and activities, technical assistance project 'PASPS'.

### **Data expert subgroup on 18 February 2025 online**

The Committee was informed about the outcomes of 6<sup>th</sup> informal consultation session of the BSR MSP Data Expert Sub-group online meeting which was held on 18 February 2025 and reminded that the aim of BSR MSP Data Expert sub-group is to support data, information, and evidence availability for MSP processes with regard to cross-border / trans-boundary planning issues to ensure comparability of maritime spatial plans in the Baltic Sea Region.

*The Committee* took note of the information about the outcomes of 6<sup>th</sup> informal consultation session of the BSR MSP Data Expert Sub-group online meeting held on 18 February 2025.

### **MSP Planners' Forum on 25 March 2025 online**

The Committee was informed that 6<sup>th</sup> MSP Planners' Forum within 'PASPS' project will be held online on 25 March 2025 and hosted by VASAB Secretariat. During Planners' Forums participants discuss each country's pressing MSP issues, knowledge gaps and future MSP project needs. Planners' Forum is dedicated for informal exchange among maritime spatial planners. Each meeting is focused on a different topic and the topic is chosen by asking participants of the Forum what the most relevant topic for them is currently, and this time it is maritime defence.

*The Committee* took note of the information about upcoming 6<sup>th</sup> MSP Planners' Forum within 'PASPS' project which will be held online on 25 March 2025 and hosted by VASAB Secretariat.

### **EUSBSR Annual Forum, 29-30 October 2025 in Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland**

The Committee was informed that EUSBSR Annual Forum will be held on 29-30 October 2025 in Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland. This year's main theme is 'Securing the Future: Stronger Together –Building Stability in Times of Uncertainty'. VASAB Secretariat is planning to participate with a workshop and a stand at an exhibition.

*The Committee* took note of the information about EUSBSR Annual Forum which will be held on 29-30 October 2025 in Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland.

## **16. Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)**

### **Informal consultation session of Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting, 7-9 April 2025 in Rostock, Germany**

The Committee was informed that upcoming informal consultation session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group will be held on 7-9 April 2025 in Rostock, Germany, and main focus currently in on interim assessment on Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation, as well as progress of EBA (Ecosystem-based approach) Guideline revision. Previous EBA guidelines for countries date back to 2016 and are based on the principles what to follow. Since 2023 a task force that involves almost all Baltic Sea countries led by Swedish colleagues and with the help of HELCOM Secretariat is trying to build new guidelines so that they are not just listing the principles but more understanding the basic elements that you have to consider in all planning phases. In a way content wise it is quite the same as previous ones, but a new important chapter 'Climate smart MSP' has been added to tackle the challenge on building resilience of our seas through the ecosystem-based approach. New EBA guidelines will be more concrete in a way with examples countries can adopt to do ecosystem-based approach. Unfortunately, in the case of climate smart MSP there are not so many examples which showcases the situation that countries don't know yet how to adopt this climate smart MSP. The first draft of EBA guidelines is ready and the aim is to adopt them in year 2025.

*The Committee* took note of the information about upcoming informal consultation session of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group to be held on 7-9 April 2025 in Rostock, Germany.

## **17. Information about VASAB projects**

### **Baltic Sea2Land project, final conference – 5<sup>th</sup> Baltic MSP Forum**

The Committee was informed that VASAB Secretariat is currently organising the 5<sup>th</sup> Baltic MSP Forum which will bring together spatial planning experts working in marine and coastal domains. Forum will be held on 11-12 November 2025 and will serve as Baltic Sea2Land project's final conference. The Committee was introduced with Forum draft agenda and asked for input on key topics, emerging challenges and essential considerations that should be addresses during the discussions/sessions.



**The Committee** took note of the information about Baltic Sea2Land project final conference – 5<sup>th</sup> Baltic MSP Forum which will be held on 11-12 November 2025 in Riga, Latvia.

### **Information about Land-based Planners' Forum project stakeholder mapping, survey, possible interaction with Estonian spatial planners**

The Committee was introduced with Land-based Planners' Forum project logo and visual identity which have been developed and added that stakeholder mapping for the planners in the Baltic Sea Region and in countries individually is finalised and thanked all Committee members who helped to map the stakeholders. A survey has been prepared and launched on 6 March 2025 in order to investigate what are cooperation needs and possibilities of planners from different levels. Survey will run until 6 April 2025 and has been sent to mapped stakeholders by project partners and the Committee. The Committee was informed about current survey results and informed about idea with Estonian chairmanship to organise a seminar/interaction with Estonian spatial planners in the end of May 2025 to test/discuss survey results on cooperation needs, gaps, and themes. Project partners Nordregio and Stockholm University is preparing a comparison of planning systems. A webinar is planned back-to-back with Committee meeting in September 2025 on good planning and cooperation practices, including results from feasibility study, planning systems an examples of good planning/cooperation practices. And final event of the project will be organised in February 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia.

**The Committee** took note of the information about project 'Land-based Planners' Forum' stakeholder mapping, survey and possible interaction with Estonian spatial planners and agreed that reminders about the survey should be sent out to attract more respondents.

### **NESBp project**

The Committee was reminded that project 'NESBp' (Northern European Sea Basin project) has started on 15 November 2024 and is led by Netherlands Enterprise Agency. The project is financed by European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund. Project focuses on further elaborating crucial MSP components as ocean governance, ecosystem-based approach, multi-use and data sharing. Project also intends to establish MSP dialogue platform between the North and Baltic Sea regions. VASAB Secretariat leads work package 2 'Ocean governance' with overall objectives: 1) To enhance (multi-level) governance in the Greater North Sea and Baltic Sea regions. This will provide both the processes (in the form of meetings and workshops) and the necessary analyses to progress the topics. The organizations hosting these processes are the task leaders, supported by scientists, and in collaboration with marine experts and decision makers from authorities and other interested parts from both sea basins. The concrete aims include to enable the exchange of knowledge and sharing of know-how on multi-level governance for MSP between both sea basins. 2) Support the development of an integrated and ecosystem-based governance in the Greater North Sea Basin. 3) Review current mechanisms for cooperation and collaboration on MSP related governance in the BSR/GNSR and explore their further development. VASAB Secretariat also leads work package 6 'Project communication'.

**The Committee** took note of the information about project 'NESBp' (Northern European Sea Basins project) progress.

## **18. Upcoming project calls and VASAB's role**

### **Young Planners Summer School**

**The Committee** supported that VASAB Secretariat prepares a project application for the Swedish Institute Ukraine Cooperation Programme to organise a VASAB Young Planners Summer School in 2026, with the Secretariat coordinating the process and Committee members from at least Poland, Sweden, and Germany contributing ideas and contacts.

## **19. VASAB Secretariat news**

### **List of VASAB-related events, Administrative Report, VASAB Newsletter**

The Committee was informed about VASAB newsletter issued in December 2024, VASAB-related events, and administrative report.

*The Committee* took note of the information about operations of the VASAB Secretariat.

### **New VASAB webpage**

*The Committee* took note of the information about the new VASAB website and suggested not to create on the website a 'registered users' access but instead use, for example, Microsoft SharePoint.

### **VASAB social media accounts (X.com, Bluesky social)**

*The Committee* took note of the information about VASAB social media accounts and agreed to open a new account on Bluesky social and stop posting on X.com (keep the account but be silent) and agreed that VASAB Secretariat organises a written procedure to update 'VASAB Cooperation Rules of Procedure' section 'Communication' (Points 20 and 22).

## **20. Changes in VASAB Secretariat**

*The Committee* agreed to organise open selection process for the Head of VASAB Secretariat.

## **21. AOB**

*The Committee* agreed to change the name of State Regional Development Agency to State Digital Development Agency in the 'Rules of Operation of the VASAB Secretariat' and agreed that VASAB Secretariat organises a written procedure to update 'Rules of Operation of the VASAB Secretariat'.

## **22. Next meeting**

*The Committee* agreed to hold 95<sup>th</sup> CSPD/BSR meeting in June 2025.