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Background

The 8th VASAB Ministerial Conference was held on 26th September 2014 in Tallinn, Estonia. The Ministerial Conference adopted the Tallinn Declaration that defines future tasks for VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development in the Baltic Sea Region

Action required

The Meeting is invited to take note of the VASAB Tallinn Declaration.



8th VASAB Conference of Ministers Responsible
for Spatial Planning and Development
of the Baltic Sea Region

TALLINN,
26 September
2014

Tallinn Declaration

Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB) is an intergovernmental co-operation of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation and Sweden. VASAB is part of the network of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

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, promotes methodology development and co-operation projects, co-operates with other pan-Baltic initiatives and promotes a dialogue with sector institutions. For fulfilling those tasks, VASAB takes into account also strategies and policies on European, European Union, pan-Baltic and national levels and provides inputs into these.

The Ministers, having met at the 8th Conference in Tallinn on 26th September 2014, upon the invitation of Estonia, and on the 20th anniversary of the first VASAB common strategic document – “Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010”, agreed at the 3rd Ministerial Conference in 1994, and having agreed to follow the implementation progress of previous decisions and to deliberate on new planning and development challenges the Baltic Sea Region is facing, have adopted the following Declaration.

The Ministers,

Recognising the importance of the integrated and balanced territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region, taking into account social, economic and environmental aspects,

Emphasising the leading role of VASAB in spatial planning and development co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region, both on land and on sea,

Underlining the long tradition and importance of currently 22 years of close and exemplary intergovernmental co-operation, between all 11 countries on equal terms, which has led to the formulation of visions, strategies, joint actions and projects, raised awareness about spatial planning and development, and influenced the designing of policies, planning processes and legislation at different levels,

Acknowledging the importance of the goals set out in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Declaration on the implementation of the Vilnius Declaration on A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2020 of 20 June 2014,

Expressing satisfaction with the work done between ministerial conferences by the Committee on Spatial Planning and Development in the Baltic Sea Region (the Committee) in implementing the VASAB Long-Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region till 2030 (VASAB LTP) and the Vilnius Declaration, adopted by the 7th Ministerial Conference in 2009,

Taking note of the macro-regional strategies relevant for the Baltic Sea Region and VASAB co-operation,

Emphasising that VASAB, acting as a co-leader for Horizontal Action Spatial Planning in the EUSBSR, has obtained new opportunities to promote maritime and land-based spatial planning, important for the Baltic Sea Region,

Welcoming the progress in the introduction of maritime spatial planning by the Member States,

Welcoming with satisfaction the well-established co-operation between VASAB and the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) on the introduction of coherent maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea, the jointly developed Baltic Sea Broad-Scale Maritime Spatial Planning Principles, the Regional Baltic Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2013-2020 and other results of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group, which was formed after the 7th VASAB Ministerial Conference in 2009,

Recognising the achievements of the Member States and the Committee in implementing the VASAB LTP and tackling the important challenges pointed out in the Vilnius Declaration such as promoting accessibility and connectivity in the Region, urban

networking and urban-rural cooperation, developing a territorial monitoring system for the Region, supporting joint capacity building in maritime spatial planning, and initiating joint actions and transnational co-operation projects, all of which contribute to the solving of respective territorial development issues in the Baltic Sea Region,

Highlighting the need to continue the implementation of VASAB LTP, while also tackling the new challenges,

Ministers would like to point out the following main challenges for spatial planning and development co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region:

Territorial development

1. The global competitiveness and attractiveness of the Baltic Sea Region is crucial. A coordinated policy response is needed to tackle the following main territorial challenges: adverse territorial consequences of population changes, e.g. ageing and migration; continued growth of metropolitan areas, land take, urban sprawl, resulting in more commuting; new configurations of trade routes; growing pressure on marine resources and greater conflicts over the use of the sea; and climate change affecting the living conditions and the environment. Consequently methods for spatial planning and development have to be further advanced.
2. Over the last decade there have been changes in the trends influencing territorial and regional development in the Baltic Sea Region. The former economic divide in the Region has become more complex, where social differences play a more important role. The capital cities and other large urban regions in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea Region are catching up with other regions in the western part in terms of economic wealth. The polarisation between urban and rural areas has increased in many of the Baltic Sea Region countries.
3. Place-based and integrated territorial development approaches contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of development policies by accurately identifying territorial resources and stimulating internal development potentials, and by enabling different policies to be adjusted to local conditions. This requires enhancing the dialogue, consultation and co-operation between authorities in different policy areas and at different administrative levels, and enhancing the public participation including the participation of stakeholders and local communities.

Maritime spatial planning coherent with land-based planning

4. The Regional Baltic Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2013-2020 directs all Baltic Sea Region countries to draw up and apply maritime spatial plans in a coherent way across the borders, including in their exclusive economic zones.
5. Interactions between marine and terrestrial space demand coherent interlinking of maritime spatial planning with land-based spatial planning in ways that reconcile the needs of different human activities with the safeguarding of the environment.
6. The pan-Baltic and national tools for maritime spatial planning need to be improved. The legal basis and modes of consultation and co-operation between countries and with stakeholders have to be further developed, taking into account a common Baltic Sea approach.

Urban networking and urban-rural co-operation in functional regions

7. A new approach to regional development is needed that recognises both the importance of metropolitan areas and large urban regions as drivers of growth and innovation and the potential of other types of regions. An advanced urban–rural partnership is of additional value to both types of territories while metropolitan areas have a specific responsibility for initiating such partnerships.
8. Countries are witnessing a growing development gap between metropolitan areas and other regions. Smaller urban areas and rural areas could contribute significantly to aggregate growth by developing appropriate strategies, at both national and international levels. Urban development should contribute to the resilience and competitiveness of regions and countries.
9. Many regions face the challenge of planning under conditions of declining populations, while, at the same time, trying to promote better living conditions and quality of life. Flexible solutions are needed to promote development alternatives.

Territorial integration of the Baltic Sea Region, connectivity and accessibility

10. The Baltic Sea Region poses specific challenges regarding physical accessibility: long distances, large sea areas, the combined use of all different transport modes, and significant differences in population density, which demands maintenance of infrastructure with limited efficiency. Connectivity and accessibility in the Baltic Sea Region, links between the Region and Europe's core areas, and between the Region and other neighbouring regions are amongst the key development issues in the Baltic Sea Region.
11. There are important transport links missing or inadequately developed, especially in the North–South direction. Wider transnational co-operation is needed to address these missing links and overcome bottlenecks. The key challenge for the countries and regions is to interconnect Trans-European, national and regional intermodal transport networks in the best way possible.

Sustainable production and use of energy

12. Energy efficiency and access to energy are of high importance for all societies. In the Baltic Sea Region the important energy challenges are: the interconnection of national energy networks, development of sustainable and green energy, achievement of a proper balance between centralised and decentralised energy production, and increased energy efficiency and energy savings, all of which need to be promoted through appropriate planning solutions.
13. Energy production, distribution and consumption have considerable territorial implications in land and sea areas and concerning their development, but these implications often go beyond national borders. Spatial planning can contribute to the wider use of varied renewable energy sources and the promotion of more environmentally sound solutions. One of the growing interests and challenges in the years to come will be the building of offshore wind farms and related grid connections. When developing energy solutions, public awareness and participation should be ensured from an early phase and throughout the planning process.

Future tasks for VASAB

The Ministers,

1. Ask the present and upcoming chairmanships and Member States to implement this Declaration and the VASAB LTP by allocating adequate resources and making use of existing structures, by ensuring better visibility of the VASAB LTP, by taking the decisive responsibility for its execution, by evaluating on a regular basis the implementation progress of the VASAB LTP, and – as needed – by deciding on new actions.
2. Encourage the Member States to make use of and consider the VASAB strategic documents when designing national policies, sectorial strategies and planning documents.
3. Urge the Member States and the Committee to initiate and support territorial development and maritime spatial planning projects, fully exploiting the potential of all relevant financing instruments, especially the trans-national Baltic Sea Region Programme.
4. Instruct the Committee to observe the territorial development processes in the Baltic Sea Region, using the monitoring system developed by the ESPON BSR-TeMo project and to report the findings to the Ministers and relevant stakeholders.
5. Ask the Member States and the Committee to analyse correlations in specific thematic fields between relevant macro-regional strategies and to explore their potential for joint actions and projects on territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region.
6. Ask VASAB to continue to co-operate closely with other relevant pan-Baltic organisations and stakeholders.
7. Encourage the Committee to continue introducing, promoting and following up maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region by using the potential of the Joint HELCOM–VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group and other relevant fora and legislation as well as to enhance co-operation between Member States.
8. Encourage the Member States to implement the Regional Baltic Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap 2013-2020.
9. Encourage the Committee to facilitate blue growth through spatial planning and development.
10. Call upon the Committee to organise networking and encourage maritime spatial planning experts and practitioners to network in order to gather and share experiences to be used in planning, and to initiate and arrange Baltic Sea Region-wide events on maritime spatial planning.
11. Encourage the Member States and the regions to co-operate closely in the planning and development of intelligent multi-modal green transport corridors as the main transport links— especially the Bothnian Corridor, the Scandinavian–Mediterranean Corridor and the North Sea–Baltic Corridor, including fast railway connections such

as Rail Baltica. The concept of Motorways of the Sea should be used for greening transport across the Baltic Sea.

12. Ask the Committee to observe closely the regional effects of the European transport infrastructure and to support actions and projects, using the potential of Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) for regional development and improving their connectivity to regional transport networks, in order to promote territorial cohesion.
13. Instruct the Committee to co-operate closely with the Baltic Sea Region Energy Co-operation (BASREC), in order to address important territorial challenges of sustainable production, distribution and use of energy, and to develop joint solutions, especially those related to renewable energy and energy efficiency.
14. Ask the Committee to contribute to better adaptation of strategies to different types of areas, especially: Baltic Sea Region metropolises and large cities, small and medium-sized towns and their functional areas, and rural areas, with the focus on supporting the development of cross-border functional areas, enhancing the development role of the metropolises in their wider vicinity, promoting urban–rural partnerships, and promoting success stories of innovative small and medium-sized towns, drawing on the experiences from case studies and on co-operation with the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Co-operation (BSSSC) and the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC).
15. Underline the need to apply place-based approaches to development policies at national, regional and local levels, and encourage the Committee to act as a platform for sharing knowledge and best practices on such approaches and on co-operation inside functional areas.
16. Reconfirm the commitment to co-operate on spatial planning and development of the Baltic Sea Region. To ensure smooth co-operation, the Ministers hereby agree to continue co-operation in the form of ministerial conferences and meetings of senior officials (the Committee), reinforce the previous commitment to continue the work of the VASAB Secretariat, and ask the Member States to provide the Committee and the Secretariat with resources needed to implement the tasks highlighted in this Declaration, according to the rules used by the CBSS and according to national annual budgetary decisions. Further cooperation with the CBSS is to be encouraged.
17. Ask the Estonian chairmanship, in co-operation with the Committee and the Secretariat, to distribute this Declaration to relevant national, Baltic, European and global actors.