



**VASAB Expert and Stakeholder meeting  
on Demographic Trends and Labor Market  
Development  
8 June 2010, Kaunas, Lithuania**

VASAB, a cooperation of 11 Baltic Sea Region countries on spatial planning and development at its 7<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in October 2009 adopted Vilnius Declaration stating that one of its thematic areas would be promoting urban networking and urban-rural cooperation. Within this direction VASAB has planned several activities for the next years. We think it is important to raise awareness in the Baltic Sea Region about **the impact of demographic trends and labour market development on urban-rural polarisation and social cohesion**. In other words, ageing, out-migration and thus depopulation has significant impact on the territory (quality of life, provision of services, accessibility etc.). To this extent it is planned to organize a pan-Baltic conference in 2011-2012 and develop policy recommendations how to mitigate the negative effects of this trend.

VASAB expert and stakeholders meeting on demographic trends and labor market development **on 8 June 2010 in Kaunas, Lithuania** will be the first step towards identification of main topics and proposing the policy recommendations at the Baltic Sea Region level. This meeting will bring together pan-Baltic, regional and local policy makers, national experts from the Baltic Sea Region countries and representatives of relevant transnational projects.

VASAB meeting in Kaunas will be followed by more thorough workshop on urban-rural relations in the Baltic Sea Region in September 2010, in Minsk, Belarus. The Minsk workshop will concentrate on urban-rural partnership issues; particularly it will discuss urban-rural relations towards knowledge -based development, new forms of urban-rural partnership in a view of the growing urban-rural divergence and present best urban-rural partnership cases in the Region. The theme coordinator of the Belarus event is Dr. Rupert Kawka from the German Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning. The conclusions and recommendations of the Kaunas meeting will be used as a starting point for the workshop.

The VASAB meeting in Kaunas will have three sessions. It will be opened with the introduction and presentations given by the representatives of the projects dealing with the demographic trends and labour market development on urban-rural polarisation and social cohesion. The opening part will be followed by the round table discussion where national experiences will be shared and discussed. Participants of the round table will also comment on the findings of the projects presented in the first session. Experts from Germany, Poland, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia will participate in the discussion. The last session will be devoted to the main conclusions of the presentations; experts will outline common problem areas for the Baltic Sea Region, research steps taken so far and policy measures needed.

Moderators of the meeting will be Garri Raagmaa, PhD, University of Tartu and Prof Zaiga Krisjane, PhD, University of Latvia.

All the four transnational projects that will be presented in the meeting are related to the research of demographic trends and labour market development on urban-rural polarisation and social cohesion:

- **DEMIFER** – ESPON project on Demographic and Migratory Flows Affecting European and Cities – deals with the effects of demographic and migratory flows on European regions and cities and examines the implications for regional competitiveness and European cohesion. It is led by Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute and it involves 7 partners from Austria, Poland, UK, Netherlands, Sweden and Italy.

- **DC NOISE** is an Interreg IVB North Sea Region project which unites 9 regions from 5 countries in Europe to work together and to deal with the consequences of demographic changes. Main objectives of this project are - to raise the public awareness, to develop better understanding of and find solutions for demographic changes, to implement strategies and to communicate the outcomes and best practices of the DC NOISE project.

- **NSPA Foresight 2020**, Northern Sparsely Populated Areas (NSPA) of Norway, Sweden and Finland - deals with the future predictions for a substantial potential for growth and development. NSPA Foresight 2020 has studied the impact of demographic trends and labour market development on urban-rural polarization and social cohesion in NSPA and has come up with policy recommendations which would be interesting to observe.

- **HINTERLAND** is an Interreg IIIB Baltic Sea Region project which involved 15 partners from 5 Baltic Sea Region countries - Germany, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland and Russia, including Karelian Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Science, Baltic Institute for European Regional Concern, Lithuanian University of Agriculture and University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. This project aims to manage the processes of decline in the Hinterland region by modern, innovative spatial development approaches. HINTERLAND project involved triangle partnership between local authorities – regional coordinators – decline experts which builds on strong horizontal and vertical cooperation in spatial planning and development. Due to fact that HINTERLAND project is finished by now, it will be interesting to hear the results and outcomes of this research.

VASAB expert and stakeholder meeting on 8 June in Kaunas, Lithuania will be a joint meeting with **NEW BRIDGES** project 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop. The three-year project (2009 - 2011) was approved in the 1<sup>st</sup> call of the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013; it has received the status of Baltic 21 Lighthouse Project. The project aims to improve the management of the urban rural interactions and to strengthen the quality of life within certain key elements – mobility & accessibility, provision of services and residential preferences by linking together individual perspective, planning and policymaking in seven city-regions in the Baltic Sea Region. The project will build up new urban rural partnerships and identify new ways for cooperation and lessons for best-practices by implementing pilot actions in the partner city-regions.

**NEW BRIDGES** consists of three content related work packages: potentials for quality of life in BSR city-regions (WP 3); piloting actions for improved management of urban rural interactions (WP 4); and multilevel cooperation for quality of life in BSR (WP 5).

The expected outcomes of the project include: partner city-regions' implemented pilot actions and integrated management plans; methodological guide for better management of urban rural interactions; and set of policy and practice recommendations on coherent planning, implementation and management of urban rural interactions in BSR.

**NEW BRIDGES** will organize its 2<sup>nd</sup> Project Workshop on 7 – 9 June 2010 in Kaunas. The main aim of the workshop is to sum-up project activities so far and for partners to present their pilot action plans, discuss how partners can proceed with their plans and how these planned actions could best be implemented. For more information about the project, visit [www.urbanrural.net](http://www.urbanrural.net).

**VASAB** is an intergovernmental network of 11 countries promoting cooperation on spatial planning and development in the Baltic Sea Region. The member countries are: Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden. The highest decision making body of VASAB is the Ministerial Conference. During the periods between the ministerial conferences VASAB is steered by the Committee on Spatial Planning and Development (CSPD/BSR) composed of representatives of respective BSR ministries and regional authorities of Russia and Germany. For more information, visit [www.vasab.org](http://www.vasab.org)