

## **VASAB workshop** **„Cultivating new ideas for the territorial development** **of the Baltic Sea Region”**

28 November 2013, Riga

Summary

VASAB as an intergovernmental multilateral co-operation of 11 countries of the Baltic Sea Region for spatial planning and development arranged the workshop for policy makers, experts and practitioners to highlight the needs and facilitate project ideas for the next EU programming period 2014-2020 in its role of the Horizontal Action Leader of the [EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region](#) Horizontal Action “Spatial Planning” to contribute to the implementation of the VASAB Long Term Perspective. More than 60 participants of eight countries gathered in a one day meeting.

The workshop was moderated by *Philipp Schwartz*, Project Manager of INTERACT Point Turku. The [INTERACT](#) provided support to the workshop in its capacity of being a hub for knowledge and expertise by exchanging information and best practises among cooperation programmes.

### **The purpose of the workshop was:**

- Bring together policy makers, experts and practitioners from various sectors and governance levels interested in better spatial planning and regional development,
- Make an overview of spatial trends, demands and challenges in the Baltic Sea Region,
- Summarize actions needed to implement VASAB Long-Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region during the next EU programming period 2014 -2020,
- Make an overview of funding sources available for the three pillars of VASAB Long-Term Perspective (territorial development and urban-rural cooperation, internal and external accessibility and maritime spatial planning),
- Generate new project ideas relevant for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Horizontal Action "Spatial Planning", considering some of them could potentially materialize into new Flagship Projects,
- Contribute to the upcoming VASAB Ministerial Conference in 2014 by highlighting new steps to territorial cohesion in the Region.

### **Key findings on spatial trends in the Baltic Sea Region identified by [ESPON project “BSR-TeMo - Territorial Monitoring for the Baltic Sea Region”](#)**

In the Baltic Sea Region an increasing spatial polarisation across most socioeconomic realms is taking place, thus further aggravating already existing unbalanced regional structures.

Territorial disparities between adjacent regions have exploded in the past 15 years and the urban hierarchy is a decisive factor in dictating the magnitude of these disparities. The specific types of BSR territories (like predominantly rural, border and sparsely populated regions) are generally lagging behind in most aspects of socioeconomic development but at the same time harnessing the potential of such territories does pose considerable possibilities. Multivariate analysis of driving forces behind migration demonstrates that the handicapping socio-economic and locational characteristics of challenged types of areas are imminent. The status as the national capital or a secondary city, being a predominantly urban or an intermediate region, as well as lying by the coast, have stronger effect on



net migration than does e.g. GDP per capita. Such specific territories as external border regions represent also an asset, like significant share of the total BSR economic growth during the last financial and economic crisis accounts to these regions. An overall conclusion is that territory matter.

Regarding social inclusion and quality of life, the eastern BSR displays huge internal variations in life expectancy and the gap to western BSR is substantial. The development trends are however cohesive. In terms of general health, the east-west divide is not clear-cut. Economic welfare only partly explains existing patterns in health. East-west differences in particularly absolute poverty are very large within the BSR, but no straightforward territorial pattern is discernible.

Present conclusions on three principal territorial divides of the BSR, acknowledged by the VASAB Long-Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (endorsed in 2009):

- The North-South and Urban-Rural gap of the BSR is growing further still
- The East –West gap also exists, but in a changing form – from having been a primarily economic gap sharpest along the former iron curtain, it has now changed into a far more multifaceted divide, where social differences nowadays are possibly the most pronounced ones.

#### **Key findings identified by ESPON project “TRACC - TRansport ACCessibility at regional/local scale and patterns in Europe”**

- Different transport modes have very different spatial patterns of accessibility in Europe ranging from traditional core-periphery pattern to new forms of core-periphery pattern with respect to European and global accessibility
- Spatial disparities of accessibility continue to exist for all modes of transport
- Capital regions of the Baltics perform around European average, rural areas are clearly behind
- Priority in new member states was given to road infrastructure development, rail projects are lagging behind.
- Transport infrastructure development is clearly motivated by national interests, i.e. there seems to be a lack of common European sense.
- Cohesion: Past and future transport infrastructure developments reduce disparities in accessibility and GDP per capita between the old and new member states in relative terms. However, in absolute terms, they widen the gap in accessibility and GDP per capita between the old and new member states.
- In particular the Nordic countries demonstrate that other regional assets might overcome low accessibility.
- Local and regional accessibility: Huge differences within the Baltic States exist concerning accessibility to opportunities relevant for daily life. In particular, access to services of general interest varies enormously within the countries.
- Freedom of choice, e.g. in the selection of secondary schools, not supported by the combination of locations of services and the transport system. Vicious circle with rural areas at risk to be underserved.

#### **Needs and challenges for maritime spatial planning (MSP) in the Baltic Sea Region countries:**

- In general - integration of MSP into routine policy making as a decision making tool
- Cross-sectorial and cross domain practical work transnationally – proactive planning with other sectors focusing on key BSR projects, e.g. *BalticGrid*
- Understanding what MSP can do for other policies and what other policies expect from MSP: incorporation of an idea of ecosystem services into MSP, development of MSP provisions in

line with agreed societal goals and EU directives, collecting knowledge on impacts of different maritime activities and making it MSP relevant, stakeholders involvement at an early MSP stage

- Better emphasized land-sea integration in MSP
- Implementing BSR Governance model in line with an idea of coherent Baltic wide MSP (building trust) establish a network of BSR MSP practitioners (portal, yearly conferences, experience sharing), exchange with the North Sea (UK/NL) experience, proceed a 'Baltic MSP School', assess BSR targets in spatial terms, branding VASAB BSR Long-term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the BSR 2030 and Baltic Sea Broad-Scale MSP Principles, data sharing and coordination of data collection, knowledge brokerage activities between researchers & planners, development of MSP tool-box: evaluation, monitoring, exploring new fields for MSP where no sufficient knowledge exists.

## **Funding opportunities for the next EU programming period**

Information on European Territorial Cooperation programmes is available [here](#) and on cross-border programmes [here](#).

### **Themes addressed by the draft Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020:**

- Capacity of Innovation (wide range of research and innovation infrastructures- to enhance market uptake of innovation; diverse competencies and strengths for the generation of innovation – strengthen smart specialization).
- Efficient Management of Natural Resources (increase production and use of sustainable renewable energy, advance sustainable and resources-efficient blue growth (significant part will cover MSP)).
- Sustainable Transport increase efficiency of transporting goods and persons in north-south and east-west connections, improve accessibility of remote areas, particularly in the northern and eastern part of the BSR, advance sustainable and resource efficient blue growth, enhance environmentally friendly transport systems at urban areas.

### **Priorities (related to accessibility, maritime spatial planning and management, urban planning) of the draft Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020:**

- *Sustainable use of common resources.* Examples of actions to support - more sustainable marine and coastal areas; more integrated urban development processes.
- *Well-connected region.* The goal- improved commuting and faster transport by developing integrated transport solutions and transport corridors, as example – planning and investing into ICT solutions to improve transport nodes and corridors efficiency, marketing activities of developed and improved transport corridors.

### **European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (2014-2020) in Latvia:**

#### **Latvia-Lithuania Cross Border Cooperation Programme**

##### **Thematic objective 6: Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency Selected investment priorities:**

- Protection, promotion and development of cultural and natural heritage.
- Protection and restoration of biodiversity, soil protection and promotion of ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures.
- Actions to improve the urban environment, including regeneration of brown field sites and reduction of air pollution.

##### **Thematic objective 8: Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility**

##### **Selected investment priorities:**

- Development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, microenterprises and business creation.
- Integrating cross border labour markets, including cross border mobility, joint local employment initiatives and joint training.

#### **Thematic objective 9: Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty**

##### **Selected investment priorities:**

- Investing in health and social infrastructure which contribute to national, regional and local development, reducing in social inequalities in terms of health status, and transition from institutional to community-based services.
- Support for physical and economic regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities.

#### **Thematic objective 11: Enhancing institutional capacity and efficient public administration Selected investment priority:**

- Promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions.

### **Estonia – Latvia Cross Border Cooperation Programme (CBC)**

#### **Selected Target Objectives (TO):**

- TO3: enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs.
- TO6: protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (Baltic Sea and coastal protection, sustainable development of coastal areas, cross-border planning of nature conservation areas, development of green infrastructure, eco traffic systems and eco-friendly transport across borders, etc).
- TO7: promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures (development of small harbours, multimodal public transport hubs and cross-border roads, etc.)
- TO8: Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility.

There might be envisaged implementation of pre-defined projects of strategic relevance.

### **Latvia – Russia European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) Programme**

#### **Agreement on the following TO:**

- Promotion of border management and border security.
- Environmental protection, climate change adaption, disaster prevention/management.
- Business and SME development.

There might be envisaged implementation of pre-defined large scale investments projects.

### **Latvia – Lithuania – Belarus ENI CBC Programme**

#### **Discussions on the following TO:**

- Business and SME development / Promotion of social inclusion and fight against poverty.
- Support to local & regional good governance.
- Environmental protection, climate change adaptation and disasters prevention/management.
- Promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage.

#### **Agreed on:**

- Promotion of border management, and border security.

There might be envisaged implementation of pre-defined large scale investments projects.

## **ESPON 2020 (European Territorial Observation Network) Programme**

### **Objectives:**

- Continued production of territorial evidence.
- Knowledge transfer and analytical user support.
- Improved territorial observation and tools for territorial analyses.
- Wider outreach and uptake of territorial evidence.

### **Priority Axes:**

- Territorial Evidence, Monitoring, Tools Outreach and, Knowledge Transfer.
- Technical Assistance.

## **Project ideas for the next EU programming period**

### **developed in line with three pillars of the VASAB Long-term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region and relevant for the EUSBSR Horizontal Action "Spatial Planning"**

#### **Urban-rural inter-linkage:**

- Integration of spatial and economic planning
- Urban-rural linkages at the local scale (East-West to North –South traffic)
- Local food supply chain distribution concepts- “local for local”
- Research on impact on rural development from sustainability point of view
- Research on small-medium size towns, their smart specializations impact on rural development
- Joint urban –rural energy saving systems
- Life quality in metropolises, cities and towns
- Establishment of networks (discussing, sharing experiences, learning)
- International talents in urban areas as promoters to develop export for the companies in rural areas

#### **Urban - rural transport initiatives:**

- Usage of urban- rural multimodal transport
- Practical examples for integrated transport systems in suburban areas (public transport + cars + bicycles +electric vehicles), ride together tools
- Improving rural accessibility: pilot projects in sparsely populated areas , linking with neighbourhoods
- Usage of urban- rural multimodal transport
- Research on urban –rural transport linkages/transport systems
- Environmentally friendly transport systems (parking, cooperation of different organizations, transport flows)

#### **Accessibility:**

- Distant employment tool for regional cohesion in rural areas
- Overcoming of demographic challenges: labour migration and population aging
- Intermodal terminals for Rail Baltica, especially in the Gulf of Finland (linkage to MSP)
- Green linkages – intermodal transport to connect to TEN-T Core Network Corridors, linking urban nodes
- Pop-in! Encouraging to use multimodal passenger transportation solutions

- Green routes (internal accessibility, social entrepreneurship))
- Network of cycling routes
- Development of a Single Baltic Sea Region transport ticket (each country, all transport mode, incl. taxi)

**Maritime spatial planning:**

- Development of research basis for MSP
- Capacity building on MSP
- Regular meeting avenues for maritime spatial planners as MSP process launches momentum
- Proceed a 'Baltic MSP School'
- Ecosystem services, Blue growth and MSP
- Involvement of stakeholders in MSP
- Terrestrial planning interlinkages to the sea and MSP
- Follow up of pilot MSP projects BaltSeaPlan, PartiSEApate, etc by more practical level for actual MSP
- Consideration of climate change in spatial planning
- Usage and marketing of the BSR nature assets, seasonality, recreation potential for tourism development
- Socio-economic decision making tool for evaluating use of the sea
- Improvement of technologies for wastewater treatment plants for removal of hazardous substances
- Coastal monitoring system for coastal sustainability
- Mussel's cultivation in the cleaner Baltic Sea- to improve ecological situation (?)

## List of participants

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