

Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010

6th Conference of Ministers for Spatial and Development

Gdańsk Declaration

Gdańsk, September 2005

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Adopted at the Sixth Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial Planning and Development in the Baltic Sea Region,
Gdańsk 19 September 2005

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Sixth Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Development in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region, held under the chairmanship of the Polish Government Centre for Strategic Studies,
Gdańsk, 19 September 2005

The Baltic Sea Region is one of the most promising regions in Europe with regard to economic growth, competitiveness, innovations, the improvement of the general well-being of its citizens, and quality of life. The Sixth Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea States is aware of the spatial effects of these developments on both land and on the Baltic Sea itself. Therefore, cooperation on spatial planning and development is necessary to strengthen the positive effects as well as alleviating and preventing the negative ones.

We recognize that both the Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010, adopted by the Ministerial Conference in Tallinn in 1994, as well as the VASAB 2010 Plus Spatial Development Action Programme, adopted in Wismar in 2001, continue to provide a good basis for co-operation between our countries.

The Tallinn and Wismar strategies can continue to serve as a basis for the development of new programmes and projects on cross-border and transnational co-operation. However, more emphasis should be put on priorities related to the changes in situation and the challenges brought about by EU enlargement and the strengthening of the territorial dimension of the EU cohesion policy.

These new challenges have emerged partly because of the scale of recent developments, and increase the demand for better coordination through spatial planning and integrated spatial development. The recommendations in the Policy Document "**Connecting Potentials**", prepared for this Conference, are intended to help to react to these changes and prepare for future challenges.

The Policy Document is a first step in creating a new long-term perspective for the spatial development of the Baltic Sea Region, in line with the encouragement of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, and taking into account the priorities of the EU Territorial Cohesion Policy, the conclusions from the Rotterdam and Luxembourg Ministerial Meetings, as well as the work undertaken by the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning, CEMAT.

The Policy Document addresses priorities, opportunities and instruments brought about by the territorial dimension of the Cohesion Policy of the European Union as well as the new approach to spatial planning and development in the Federation of Russia.

A major goal of the VASAB cooperation is the better spatial integration of the Baltic Sea Region, and the improved integration of the Baltic Sea Region with other areas of Europe, resulting in territorial cohesion. Spatial development cooperation undertaken so far in the Baltic Sea Region needs to be strengthened in order to overcome the evident lack of territorial cohesion in our Region.

The provision of convenient, efficient and environmentally friendly transport systems is important to connect existing potentials. However, improved accessibility is not sufficient for achieving spatial integration. Equally important is the cooperation between cities, firms and scientific institutions within the Region and within transnational development zones. Improvements to transport infrastructure and logistics should be considered in this context. The spatial co-ordination of policies for urban development, transport and innovation should be enhanced in the Baltic Sea Region. Spatial planning in intensively used maritime areas should be supported. Adequate attention should be paid to natural and cultural assets.

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We address the European Union by pointing out the following issues:

- In future, EU Cohesion Policy could be better adjusted to the specific features and diversity of the different pan-European regions. It should take advantage of their specific potential and address key development issues. The Structural Funds Programmes, within all the three objectives, and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument should take the consequences of their actions for spatial development into account.
- It is important to continue the future transnational cooperation programme in the Baltic Sea Region within the current INTERREG III B boundaries in order to maintain strong instruments for the implementation of a coherent spatial development policy in the Baltic Sea Region.
- Relevant research should be undertaken to provide a more precise specification of the needs and means for connecting Baltic Sea Region potentials into synergic network systems. Research programmes, such as ESPON 2, could provide more focused research on the specific territorial characteristics of European macro regions such as the BSR.

We ask the pan-Baltic organisations to pay attention to the spatial effects of their agreements, co-operation programmes and policies.

We instruct the Committee on Spatial Development of the Baltic Sea Region to focus the work of VASAB, until the Seventh Conference, on the following issues:

- to prepare a long-term perspective for the spatial development of the Baltic Sea Region under active participation of the regional authorities and in dialogue with relevant pan-Baltic organisations;
- to actively influence the preparation and the implementation of Baltic programmes for transnational and cross-border territorial co-operation making use of the Policy Document "Connecting Potentials" and other VASAB documents;
- to actively take part in the European process of territorial cohesion as outlined in the conclusions of the Ministerial meetings of Rotterdam and Luxembourg;
- to stimulate and support projects that create model solutions in addressing common social, economical and ecological trends that have significant spatial effects;
- to initiate and organise an exchange of knowledge and expertise on innovative spatial planning and development approaches, and to present and discuss these in international fora.

Referring to the above mentioned tasks and responsibilities, the Sixth Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea States asks the VASAB national governments to provide the Committee of Spatial Development with the resources needed to implement the tasks highlighted in this Declaration. Furthermore, the Conference instructs the Committee to decide on the role and practical arrangements of secretarial services after the year 2006.

The Ministers thank Poland for hosting and organising the Conference and ask for this Declaration to be distributed to the institutions of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Council of the Baltic Sea States, requesting them to promote the objectives set out in their respective spheres of responsibility.

“It is a first step in creating a new long –term perspective for the spatial development of the Baltic Sea Region”

Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010

Committee for Spatial Development of the Baltic Sea Region

Policy Document
Connecting Potentials

Gdańsk, September 2005

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POLICY DOCUMENT

CONNECTING POTENTIALS

Chapter 1 Spatial policies in the light of development

The 6th VASAB Ministerial Conference has been arranged in the light of the enlargement of the European Union and the rapid development experienced in the Baltic Sea Region, in addition to the fundamental change that the Region had already undergone during the past decade. The BSR has become an effective market area with growing potential. This development has considerable spatial effects in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and, consequently, for the integration of the BSR within the enlarged EU territory as well as with neighbouring states. This is reflected in the current discussions in the EU institutions and the member states about the need for the cross-sectoral integration of policies with a spatial impact, taking into account the principles of sustainable development.

A more coherent spatial approach is required in order to achieve synergy between different spatial impacts of sector policies in time for the introduction of the new Cohesion Policy in the Baltic Sea Region. Socio-economic integration as a result of the single market should be supported by spatial planning and development policies which can help to solve the partly contradictory impacts of sector policies.

Furthermore, the new approach towards spatial planning in the neighbouring countries, especially in the Russian Federation, can enhance spatial cooperation in the BSR. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) could also entail a framework for such cooperation, as well as providing the financial instruments. Moreover, the enlargement of the EU has significantly increased the number of border regions, which will have the potential to merge into dynamic functional regions with their neighbours.

Recent developments stemming from economic growth, have also had some alarming effects on the environment, for example on the biodiversity of land and sea as well as on cities and rural areas. Road traffic has increased more than expected, resulting in pollution and congestion, with just marginal signs of achieving a decoupling of transport growth and increase in GDP. Rail and maritime transport must still be promoted in order to respond to the challenge of becoming a real competitive alternative to road transport. Urban development trends demand policy efforts to achieve a polycentric settlement pattern as well as a more effective prevention of uncontrolled urban sprawl. The condition of the Baltic Sea itself also poses a considerable challenge for countries and organisations in the BSR. This emphasises the importance of regional co-operation in order to tackle the numerous threats to biological and landscape diversity. Spatial planning strategies and policies should be adjusted to decrease the emissions of hazardous substances into the atmosphere, land and sea.

Over the last decade, the multilateral cooperation on spatial development in the BSR has steadily increased and achieved considerable successes. Cooperation has evolved from the early 1990's dedicated work to build an information network and to contribute to the regional exchange of knowledge and experience, and led to the formulation of a Baltic Sea vision in a European context. The vision served as a basis for the elaboration of transnational cooperation programmes and inspired many spatial development projects.

Those in turn have verified the vision and prepared ground for its further adjustment.

Moreover, awareness was raised for spatial planning as a cross-sectoral and integrative activity at the transnational scale.

An advantage of the Baltic Sea Region, in comparison to other pan-European regions,

has been the existence of established intergovernmental and subregional co-operation structures to address the spatial aspects of sectoral policies in different fields. This advantage should be further exploited for the benefit of harmonised spatial development also within the framework of the new EU Cohesion Policy as well as the European Neighbourhood Policy. The BSR countries have shared spatial interests, common opportunities as well as challenges, all of which tie the Region together and encourage countries to cooperate. For instance, strengthening the competitiveness of the BSR might reinforce the global role of the main cities in the Region. At the same time this could cause spatial consequences such as a concentration of economic activities around the best performers, relocation of industrial capacity and out-migration of the labour force from less successful regions. Transnational cooperation in spatial development can alleviate some of those effects, for example by strengthening the polycentric structure of the BSR. Support from the pan-Baltic organisations should be welcomed, as they have an important role in stimulating the spatial development of the Region.

Chapter 2 Achievements and future challenges

The 6th Ministerial Conference continues the efforts begun in Conferences over the past ten years. The Spatial Development Action Programme, adopted in 2001, operationalised the 1994 Vision and Strategies in six key themes. The Action Programme addresses all major stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region and has, to some extent, been implemented through various Interreg III B BSR and TACIS-CBC cooperation projects. Nearly half of all Interreg III B BSR projects are directly related to one of the six key themes of VASAB. For example, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in the project “Baltcoast”; accessibility in the “Baltic Gateway” project; trans-national spatial development zones in the “South Baltic Arc”, “Via Hanseatica Development Zone” and “Bothnian Arc” projects; and networks of

urban regions in the projects “Metropolitan Areas Plus” and “Baltic Palette II”.

The countries around the Baltic Sea are entities with a diverse range of cultures, languages and traditions. VASAB has contributed to a better connection of the potentials of these countries by arranging fora and other opportunities for the exchange of expertise in the light of new emerging planning challenges. These planning challenges range from transnational development zones and sea use planning to thematic cultural heritage routes. Integrated planning methods for protected areas, such as the Natura 2000 network, and for built-up areas have been promoted. Within the VASAB framework, the Russian Federation has initiated a capacity-building programme, entitled the “East-West Forum”, which provides an opportunity for cooperation between planners from Russia and the member states of the European Union.

The development in the Baltic Sea Region emphasises the need to focus future work on networking among cities, environmentally friendly transport modes and transnational development zones in order to connect potentials and thereby increase spatial integration of the BSR.

Chapter 2.1 Cities: *Polycentric urban networking*

A polycentric settlement structure is an important factor for regional integration and regional competitiveness. Cities, at different spatial scales, have a substantial significance as nodes in the Baltic Sea Region’s system of interaction: as the services and high technology production centres as well as gateways for international trade and information.

The networking of cities, together with actions to secure the liveability of the countryside, are key factors to achieving better spatial integration of the Region. This helps to address spatial development issues such as the quality of urban life and regional specialisation, as well as access to services and markets both nationally and transnationally.

Urban networking across national administrative boundaries can also have a multiplying effect on resources for liveability and development. The close cooperation between Copenhagen in Denmark and Malmö in Sweden, Tornio in Finland and Haparanda in Sweden, Valka in Latvia and Valga in Estonia and between Imatra in Finland and Svetogorsk in Russia, as well as Helsinki and Tallinn, are illustrative examples. Another example is the crossborder zone of accelerated development on both sides of the Odra/Oder and Nysa/Neisse rivers stretching from Szczecin to Zittau. Spatial planners should take these examples as an encouragement to adopt a transnational approach in their work, which also constitutes a mutual learning process for the profession.

The capital cities and the metropolitan areas are the main engines of city networking in the Baltic Sea Region. Indeed, the capitals in Poland and the Baltic States as well as St. Petersburg have experienced an intense and dynamic process of change, thereby strongly increasing their international role. Co-operation between Vilnius and Kaunas can serve as an illustrative example of that. At the same time a number of cities, apart from the capital cities, have gained considerably in importance over the last ten years. Gdansk-Gdynia and Turku can serve as examples. Other cities, like Minsk and Kaliningrad, could further develop functionally complementary profiles in order to better use their potential for enhanced spatial integration of the Baltic Sea Region.

In summarising the tendencies mentioned above, there is still a basis for the assumption that so far concentration trends prevail. The growth of new service activities, especially business services, is mainly concentrated in and around capitals and metropolitan regions. Such a tendency might reinforce the development gap between highly urbanised regions and more rural areas as well as contribute to an increased competition between metropolitan areas. In the light of these tendencies towards a more monocentric development, actions should be taken to avoid further concentration and polarisation, for example through efficient networking and the creation of a critical mass

for development. Urban networking in the BSR has yet to reach a better balance between concentration and polycentricity, that is, between the benefits of competition and benefits of co-operation.

The European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) suggests to strengthen the development of the largest BSR cities in order to make them complementary to the cities of the European core, often referred to as the Pentagon. At the same time, supplementary development policy is required at the BSR level in order to strengthen the second or third-best performers and their networking, i.e. cities with potential among which Baltic co-operation can arise.

This policy should take into consideration the co-operation of smaller cities as well as rural-urban co-operation over state borders in cases where such development would bring bilateral or multilateral benefits.

A more systematic approach is needed to strengthen urban networks in the Region. A number of Interreg projects have identified strengths that should be taken into account when developing a strategy for the consolidation of spatial co-operation among cities and universities and for the strengthening of their Baltic relations in addition to the global ones. The challenge is to channel the financial flows towards the most promising transnational clusters and projects and to support local and regional governments in consolidating existing clusters and in developing new ones. A strengthening of the regional institutions of higher education and of their co-operation within the Baltic Sea Region might also be considered as a part of this challenge.

Thus, leading scientific and technology clusters need to be promoted in fields such as life sciences, energy/bio-energy, oil-, gas- and bio-technology, medicine/health care, electronics/mechatronics, and forestry. Human resources, such as the highly skilled labour force, as well as key technologies and competences should be strengthened and used as regional development factors. The institutional co-operation model, extending the co-operation of public authorities to also

embrace private enterprises, should be developed and implemented. A study of existing potentials and flows would be needed to identify possibilities for the development of new transnational clusters. This could be one focus for BSR-oriented research, especially in the framework of the ESPON2 programmes but also in other studies.

Chapter 2.2 *Spatial accessibility*

Transport serves practically all public and private sector actors, and is therefore an important factor for connecting BSR potentials. Access to and from central regions as well as from peripheral ones is at the heart of cohesion policy. For instance, the successful integration of the new member states will to a large extent depend on the development and modernisation of their transport networks. Better integration of transport planning with spatial planning and regional policies is also necessary in order to implement the concept of a polycentric settlement structure in the BSR.

Long distances, sparse population and harsh climate conditions in the North, and urban clustering -even congestion- in the South of the Region are examples of the mosaic-type spatial structure of the BSR. The Region has to develop its networks, both in transport as well as in information, taking into account the very different types of spatial and geographical conditions in a cost-efficient way.

The Nordic countries and Germany have for a long time been allocating national resources for internal and external accessibility. The TEN-transport Nordic Triangle, which connects the Nordic capitals and aims at improving connections with the Russian Federation, through the Helsinki-St. Petersburg -Moscow transport axis, is a good example of what can be achieved. The Nordic Triangle includes a development zone and all modes of transport: rail, sea-links, ports and their hinterland connections. Another good example for improved multi-modal accessibility across national borders is the Öresund Bridge, which turns Malmö and Copenhagen into an integrated urban entity.

Furthermore, the arrangement of better border crossing points between the Russian Federation and the European Union has positively influenced the integration of the Region.

However, in spite of all these efforts, connections in both passenger and freight transport are unevenly distributed in the BSR. Missing links and the relatively poor condition of infrastructure in the eastern part of the Region severely hamper the spatial integration of the BSR. A specific example is Kaliningrad, for which connections with the rest of the Russian Federation as well as for the transit from northern Poland to Lithuania have to be furthered developed.

In the Baltic States and Russia, transport infrastructure need improvements in order to facilitate internal BSR connections. Road and rail connections in Northern Poland, in particular those leading westward, northward and southward from Suwałki and those leading from Gdańsk in all directions, are also in need of improvement. This is one of the key preconditions for the better spatial integration of the Baltic States with the rest of Europe. The Rail Baltica Tallinn-Riga-Kaunas-Warsaw with fast link to Berlin should be complemented by fast rail links between Poland and Czech Republic. Belarus transport and traffic infrastructure also needs improvement to both facilitate internal BSR connections as well as links between the BSR and its eastern and southern neighbours, in particular the Black Sea Region.

There is no competitive alternative to road transport between Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius and Warsaw, both in the passenger and freight transport sector, though this would be important to ensure the functional polycentricity of the eastern part of the Region. Although Rail Baltica and the motorway from Gdańsk southwards - providing a necessary extension to a possible motorway of the sea from Helsinki and Tallinn- are EU transport priorities, their implementation should be given special attention in order to strengthen the networking between the urban nodes which are of importance for spatial integration in the BSR.

Increasing the sustainability of transport provision is an important task in the context of climate change. New solutions such as the Motorways of the Sea are being created to enhance cohesion and transport sustainability. Their aim is to introduce a new inter-modal logistical chain that improves accessibility both to central and peripheral regions and reduces pollution by shifting heavy transport from road to sea. Efficient icebreaking is also an integrated part of the maritime infrastructure in the BSR and thus incorporated into the Motorways of the Sea concept. A reliable maritime transport system that works all year round is an important prerequisite for the sustainable mobility of persons and goods in the Baltic Sea Region, as well as between the BSR and other parts of Europe and the world. It is important that the Motorways of the Sea cooperation continues. However, the increasing oil transport by sea should be considered as an environmental risk, and the BSR states should prepare themselves for the prevention of possible oil spills. While developing the sea transport in the intensively used and shallow Baltic Sea, particular attention should be paid to the issue of maritime safety, which might benefit from a comprehensive spatial approach.

Short sea shipping is a chance for the development of small ports undergoing structural change, which seek their chance in both the development of sea leisure tourism and in filling the niche for the transport of local products. The transnational inland waterways routes in the Baltic Sea as well as in the Barents Regions also need development and strengthening.

St. Petersburg has due to its size and potential a considerable impact on the BSR transport system, which in turn influences the spatial integration of the BSR. Being one of the main economic centres of the BSR, with good hinterland connections inside the Russian Federation, St. Petersburg could, however, become a more important node in the polycentric development of the BSR.

It could also play a decisive role in the European infrastructure through the organisation of transit cargo shipments. Respective concepts of spatial and transport

development, such as Via Baltica/Rail Baltica or the Helsinki-Moscow transport corridor and the Motorways of the Baltic Sea, as well as concepts of spatial and transport development in Russia should therefore pay attention to inter-connections with the St. Petersburg agglomeration.

The concept of accessibility as used in the 3rd Cohesion Report pays attention mainly to the economic aspects of accessibility, i.e. the size of the markets accessible from a given point in space. This interpretation might favour densely populated areas, and thus further contribute to congestion and urban sprawl. Urban development in the Baltic Sea Region has historically been polycentric with rather compact cities and little urban sprawl. Such structures should be further strengthened.

Planned investments in the Trans-European Transport Network will considerably improve the accessibility of the EU core area. However, to prevent a situation where investments will benefit mainly those regions which already today have a relatively good location with respect to transport infrastructure, complementary actions at the BSR level are necessary. They would be important to achieve a spatial vision of accessibility, which would focus on saving travel time from lower to higher order centres.

One of the most important tasks of transport actions in the BSR is to improve the cohesion of the Region itself. This implies an improvement of the accessibility of urban centres, even from the more remote parts of every BSR country. Attention should also be paid to connect regions outside metropolitan areas to efficient, sustainable and safer means of transport. This encompasses the enhancement of sea links and an establishment of railway connections, which are fast enough to compete with road transport and short-distance air transport. However, for the accessibility of those areas of the BSR with low population density, road transport is also important.

The improvement of the internal integration of the BSR should be complemented with an enhanced integration of the BSR with other pan-European regions, in particular the

Barents, Mediterranean and Black Sea regions. For the Baltic Sea Region to become a global player, the already existing and planned links westwards will need appropriate extensions through the development of southern, eastern and northern connections.

Chapter 2.3 *Transnational Development Zones*

In the BSR a concept has been further developed, which promotes the integration of the Region in larger territories, which cover parts of several countries and extend beyond the typical crossborder areas. This concept was implemented under the name of transnational development zones, and its implementation has had a considerable impact on the geography of cooperation within the Region. It is characterised by the integration of all spatial development issues from city networking to accessibility in a larger sub-area of the BSR. The concept is process-oriented, based on political networking, and comprises the elaboration of spatial development perspectives, the definition of key development themes and the generation of concrete pilot projects.

The initiative to establish transnational development zones comes most often from the local or regional level. An example for this is the cooperation in the southern BSR between Germany, Poland, Kaliningrad and the Baltic States, the so called “South Baltic Arc”.

Other examples are the cooperation in the south-western BSR/the Öresund region known as “String”, the co-operation along the Via Baltica transport corridor between Sweden, Finland, the Baltic States, Poland and Germany called “Via Baltica and Via Baltica Nordica Spatial Development Zone”, as well as the cooperation in the central part of the Region named “Baltic Palette”. A similar approach has been applied in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region and in the Euregio Karelia connecting the Swedish-Finnish Bothnian Arch to the White Sea and Lake Onega in the Russian Federation. Another example is the E-18 corridor connecting Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki and St.

Petersburg as a chain in the form of an integrated development zone. In order to further extend such an approach, it is necessary to analyse and highlight previous experiences such as appropriate themes, political and organisational framework.

The experiences with and level of implementation of the individual transnational spatial development zones are different. Such zones are well developed in the central and South-western part of the Region. However, there are far too few development zones which cross EU external borders. For instance, the specific conditions of the spatial development of Kaliningrad Oblast as an exclave region of the Russian Federation inside the EU require the elaboration of a spatial development concept and the promotion of spatial links of Kaliningrad with the neighbouring countries and regions both by land and by sea. A strong political will, both nationally and from the EU, is necessary to extend development zones beyond the EU external borders. But equally important is the capacity-building on both sides of the external EU border. This has been one of the main observations by the East-West Forum project, which was initiated by Russia.

Existing economic differences between the different countries could be considered as an important factor for the further extension of transnational development zones, whereby both parties can gain mutual benefits from cooperation. In the long term, increased interaction is likely to even out the differences, which might in turn lead to the emergence of other forms of cooperation.

The transnational development zones could be further developed as a tool for the elaboration of innovation strategies in a spatial context. Equally important is that transnational co-operation, which uses the development zone concept, will contribute to a high quality environment in the BSR.

Chapter 2.4 *Management and planning of sea and coast*

The Baltic Sea itself constitutes not only the common denominator but also a common resource. The use of the Baltic Sea for

transportation, for recreation as well as for economic and other purposes may create conflicts, which should be managed jointly.

Building upon the relevant VASAB recommendations of 1996 and the Ministerial Declaration of 2001, spatial planning should be used to achieve a successful Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in our Region. The comprehensive, integrative approach of ICZM requires the strategic coordination of the whole planning and management process and is the responsibility of political bodies at all levels. However, there is no apparent need to create specific ICZM institutions as these tasks could be dealt with by existing institutions.

Sea use planning could serve as a tool to prevent conflicts of use in intensively used offshore areas. This requires the continuation of systematic information exchange concerning offshore uses, such as maritime transport, fishery, tourism, mining, energy production, etc. The preparation of spatial plans for offshore areas, wherever appropriate, and a cross-sectoral assessment of specific offshore projects would support such a tool.

Chapter 3: Implementation

The Policy Document will be implemented through three lines of actions. First, by influencing the EU Spatial Development and Cohesion Policy and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Second, by providing an input into the next transnational territorial co-operation programme in the BSR, and third, through dialogue with all relevant BSR actors.

Chapter 3.1. EU Spatial Development and Cohesion Policy

The EU Spatial Development and Cohesion Policy for the period 2007-2013 will entail considerable changes in the regional development process. The preparation of the document “Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union”, the future Community Strategic Guidelines for the EU, the corresponding National Strategic

Reference Frameworks, as well as the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument demand a strategic process in developing and implementing all three Cohesion Policy Objectives. Therefore, there is a need to achieve strategic coherence in, and integration of spatial development at transnational scale.

The Cohesion Policy proposes the preparation of strategies at EU level as well as at Member State level for the three Structural Fund objectives. Transnational cooperation, such as the current INTERREG III B programmes, will certainly have to take these strategies into account, but they probably will not constitute a sufficiently coherent thinking for transnational cooperation areas such as the Baltic Sea Region. Thus, there is a need to complement the EU Spatial Development and Cohesion Policy strategies and Russian regional development strategy with a transnational strategic perspective.

When elaborating policies for the spatial development of the BSR, focus should be on urban development, strategic development zones and cultural and natural heritage in addition to the themes mentioned in the draft ERDF regulation, such as the environment, integrated water management, accessibility, information society, risk prevention and R&D. It is of great importance to avoid a narrow focus on a too limited number of fields of actions at EU-level, and instead to take the specificities and the diversity of the European regions, such as the BSR, into account.

The European Commission Cohesion Reports could contribute to a better understanding of the development trends within transnational cooperation areas. Introducing such a level also in the field of research on regional development could increase efficiency of the public support and improve the understanding of regional development trends in the Baltic Sea Region. The European Spatial Planning Observation Network 2 could be instrumental to this end, by adding systematic observations of specific macro-regions, such as the Baltic Sea Region, to the coverage of the whole European territory.

Structural Funds programmes within all three Cohesion Policy objectives, as well as the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, should pay attention to spatial development effects. Such an approach facilitates the identification of synergies in order to maximise the output from the resources used, and thus enhance investment efficiency overall.

Given the necessity to pay attention to the territorial dimension of sectoral policies, relevant sectoral programmes should incorporate an assessment of the spatial effects of the programme in question, following the example of the assessment of environmental impacts under the SEA Directive. At the same time, territorial cooperation programmes should analyse and incorporate spatially relevant sector policies.

The assessment procedures for large-scale infrastructure projects of national or transnational nature should allow an early assessment of spatial benefits and shortcomings of a given project proposal. The assessment should show ways for an optimal project design or location in accordance with existing spatial plans and development concepts.

Chapter 3.2. *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument*

It is of utmost importance that the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument will be decentralised and implemented in a flexible way, especially in relation to the territorial co-operation programmes at cross border and transnational scale. The special situation in the Baltic Sea Region, with eight EU member states, Norway and only two eastern non-EU partner countries, must be taken into account.

The future participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus in the next transnational programme for the BSR is of great importance for a coherent spatial development of the Region. The European Commission’s proposal for transnational cooperation gives considerable importance to these programmes. This underlines the

significance to continue the integration of the Russian Federation and Belarus into the programme structure on an equal basis.

Chapter 3.3. *Transnational territorial cooperation programme*

Territorial Co-operation is one of three main objectives in the proposal from the European Commission for a new Cohesion Policy in the next financial period 2007-2013.. The upgrading from a Community Initiative to a mainstream objective demonstrates the recognition of the value of cross border and transnational cooperation, for example in adding a territorial aspect to the Lisbon strategy. This is in line with the aim of the Baltic Sea cooperation which is to strengthen the BSR as a European growth area and support its internal integration.

The geography of the Baltic Sea cooperation area has a clear logic as it corresponds well to a functional region with a strong identity. It coincides with numerous political as well as business cooperations with an eastward focus, enhancing the integration of new member states as well as of Russia. Therefore, the composition of the Region should neither be extended by adding the Northern Periphery nor be reduced through extracting southern BSR metropolitan areas in Poland and Germany.

In the Baltic Sea Region, Territorial Cooperation projects should focus on solutions for the development of transnational territorial structures, which in particular improve accessibility and spatial integration of the BSR, that is, contribute to connecting potentials.

Transnational co-operation projects should preferably create model solutions that are applicable in different parts of the BSR. This calls for a stronger involvement of transnational bodies and national authorities in order to give guidance on such issues and to help with the multiplication of results. It also calls for a new partnership between national and regional authorities, the latter being responsible for developing demonstration projects in the regions. In order

to improve the quality of transnational projects, a stronger involvement of professional experts and public-private partnerships should also be encouraged.

Transnational strategic development zones should be further developed as a tool. Such cooperations should have the option to apply for funding for framework projects from a transnational programme in the BSR to support the implementation of their high quality concepts. This would allow regional actors to deepen relations and to have a longer-term planning horizon.

It should also allow them to grant funding for high quality sub-projects within the framework project, thus providing them with more flexibility than in ordinary large projects. Such an approach would be a logical next step for a number of macro region projects that have been funded under the present (BSR) INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme.

Better links should be established between transnational co-operation programmes and national programmes on convergence, competition and employment. Investments as part of transnational co-operation projects should be carefully considered by national Structural Funds interventions.

Chapter 3.4. *Dialogue within the BSR*

VASAB should lead the formulation of a strategic perspective on spatial development in the BSR, which considers the Community Strategic Guidelines, the National Strategic Reference Frameworks as well as the input from relevant inter-governmental organisations in the Region, sub-regional organisations and NGO's of relevance to regional development such as the Baltic Development Forum.

A BSR *strategic perspective* should be considered by relevant programmes which are being implemented in the Region: subregional-, national-, transnational- as well as cross-border programmes. This calls for a strategic dialogue and mutual exchange of information between the different administrative levels and all relevant BSR

actors. Altogether this should lead to an improved coherence between the different programmes, which is particularly relevant in the case of large investment projects with a considerable spatial impact.

The co-operation between transnational and national bodies responsible for spatial planning and co-operation on the one hand, and the structures to implement spatial development programmes on the other, should be strengthened and extended.

This requires co-ordinated efforts between many relevant actors in the Baltic Sea Region, including: the VASAB Committee on Spatial Development, pan-Baltic organisations dealing with national, regional and local level issues, and the prospective programming group. Particular attention should be given to organisations whose work both influences and draws inspiration from the VASAB co-operation, for example. the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Baltic Development Forum as well as the European Commission's Northern Dimension. The Baltic Sea Action Plan of Helcom should be considered when dealing with spatial planning issues related to the marine environment. Equally important is the dialogue with structures and working bodies of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Baltic Agenda 21, the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation, the Baltic Sea Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe, the Union of the Baltic Cities and the Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association, which offer liaison with actors who are important for the implementation of the recommendations from the Policy Document.

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