



VASAB statement on cooperation with Helsinki Commission on maritime spatial planning issues in the Baltic Sea Region

Agreed in Helsinki, 25 September 2013

VASAB (Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea) is a cooperation of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of eleven countries in Baltic Sea Region (BSR) – the EU countries Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden as well as Norway, Russia and Belarus. The main mission of the inter-governmental pan-Baltic organization is to prepare policy options for spatial development of the Region and to provide a forum for exchange of know-how on spatial planning and development between the BSR countries. Since 1992 VASAB had been working with macro-regional spatial developments issues in the Region. It is part of the network of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS). VASAB is steered by the Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region (CSPD/BSR) composed of representatives of the respective ministries responsible for spatial planning and development as well as of regional authorities of Germany and Russia.

VASAB appreciates the work carried out jointly by VASAB and HELCOM towards better coordination of maritime spatial planning processes in the Baltic Sea Region. The work has mutually benefited both organisations by bringing closer together the VASAB experience on long-term territorial development as well as on terrestrial and maritime spatial planning with HELCOM experience on safeguarding the marine ecosystem of the Baltic Sea.

Since the adoption of HELCOM Ministerial Declaration in Moscow in 2010 considerable progress have been achieved by the established Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group.

Work carried out by the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group has contributed to the implementation of VASAB Long Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (LTP), endorsed by the 7th VASAB Ministerial Conference on 16 October 2009. The LTP covers policies for which the transnational cooperation in spatial planning may contribute substantially and maritime spatial planning and management is one of the three prioritised issues underlined by the LTP and its action agenda.

This approach followed in the Baltic Sea Region is also a concrete example of implementing the Territorial Agenda 2020 of the European Union at macro-regional level and in close collaboration of EU and non-EU states.

The Baltic Sea Broad-scale Maritime Spatial Planning Principles adopted by HELCOM Heads of Delegations and VASAB CSPD/BSR have already been applied via pilot maritime spatial planning projects as well as by regular maritime spatial planning activities commenced and carried out by the Baltic Sea Region countries.

VASAB is looking forward to evaluate how the practical use of these Principles affects maritime spatial planning and accordingly how and to what extent they contribute to

the improvement of the environmental state of the Baltic Sea and the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

VASAB notes the prominent role that both organizations - VASAB and HELCOM have been designated by the EU Member States in relation to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) - Leaders of the Horizontal Action "Spatial planning". In addition, the "Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation to the year 2020" and the "Development Strategy of the North-West Federal District of the Russian Federation" show efforts made by the Russian Federation in tackling environmental problems and promoting economic development in the Baltic Sea area.

The EUSBSR Horizontal Action "Spatial planning" is encouraging the use of maritime and land-based spatial planning in all EU Member States around the Baltic Sea and develops a common approach for cross-border cooperation. A strategic target of the Horizontal Action "Spatial planning" is to draw up and apply of trans-boundary, ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Plans throughout the Baltic Sea Region in 2020 and to better integrate land-based and maritime spatial planning.

VASAB supports necessary steps for drawing up and implementing Maritime Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea region proposed by the Joint HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG in the Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap. Furthermore, VASAB also supports extension of the mandate of the Working Group in order to implement the Roadmap. The Roadmap shall be periodically updated according to the need.

VASAB underlines the need to take into consideration all existing knowledge on maritime spatial planning in the Region inter alia gained via pilot cases and transnational projects and utilize full potential of multi-level and cross-sectoral stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the Roadmap.

VASAB urges to make further use of programmes in particular the transnational Baltic Sea Region programme 2014-2020 in order to tackle the challenges for sustainable spatial planning and management of the Baltic Sea through respective projects.

VASAB as a community with spatial planning competence deems maritime spatial planning as a steering wheel for ensuring sustainable use of sea resources and its space. VASAB also consider that at the moment it is of the utmost importance to find solutions how to use natural capital of the sea for development of the regions that are being suffering from economic decline (due to fishery downturn for example). Innovative activities with foreseeing appropriate spaces have to be looked for these regions.

Furthermore, new ideas and solutions might be to be looked for purification of the marine waters. Spatial measures can be very helpful there. Along with traditional land-based activities that are being widely recognised and applied for improvement of the quality of sea water, much significance should be paid to the promotion of measures/activities that can be properly planned and carried out in marine waters, like development of aquacultures and planting of suitable vegetation useful for water purification and diminishing of nutrients.

VASAB is looking forward to close collaboration with HELCOM in further application and assessment of Baltic Sea Broad-scale Maritime Spatial Planning Principles in practice.