

VASAB Ministerial Tallinn Declaration on Spatial Resilience

Adopted by the Ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, and Estonia during the Estonian Chairmanship of the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region in a written procedure 29 June 2025

Responding to the increased natural and man-made hazards and mounting geopolitical instability in the Baltic Sea Region, the Ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, and Estonia, participating in VASAB intergovernmental multilateral co-operation of the Baltic Sea Region,

- recognising that the Baltic Sea Region, an integral part of the European Union and its neighbourhood, is navigating a time of fundamental transformation marked by growing geopolitical tensions, intensifying climate and biodiversity crises, accelerating digital, energy and demographic transitions, and increasing socio-economic disparities. These developments call for renewed strategic coordination and deepening cooperation across regions, borders, and sectors in spatial development and planning,
- noting that as a response to Russia's continued efforts to dismantle the existing European security architecture, the Baltic Sea Region is witnessing an ongoing shift in defence and security policies, including the reconfiguration of critical infrastructure, which have significant spatial and territorial implications. Spatial planning and territorial development are essential tools to shape resilient, inclusive and future-proof regions and communities,
- stressing that VASAB as an intergovernmental cooperation significantly contributes to the implementation of the Territorial Agenda 2030, the Urban Agenda for the EU, further emphasised and operationalised in the New Leipzig Charter, and the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, as well as supports the territorial

implementation of European Union policies including the European Green Deal, Joint White Paper for the European Defence Readiness 2030, the Competitiveness Compass for the EU,

- highlighting the importance of the EU Cohesion Policy and underlining the relevance of territorial and spatial resilience as a strategic dimension to be further embedded in Cohesion Policy beyond 2027,
- recognising the topicality of the Vihula Declaration, agreed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), highlighting the need to refocus CBSS to effectively meet the challenge of the new security environment,
- elaborating on the comprehension of the relevance of spatial and territorial resilience, gained during German, Finnish and Estonian chairmanships of the VASAB Committee,
- building on the Declaration of the 9th Ministerial Conference of VASAB in Wismar in 2023, which endorsed VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040 as a strategic-visionary framework for the development of the region,

have adopted the following Declaration.

The Ministers

1. unequivocally condemn Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as the activities of Russia's accomplice, Belarus. We fully support Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders,
2. re-confirm the VASAB decision from 2022 to suspend Russia and Belarus from the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region, from the steering groups of the EUSBSR policy area "Spatial Planning" for land and maritime spatial planning, and from participation in related activities,
3. commit to closely engaging with Ukraine in spatial planning and regional development on its way to further European integration, its recovery and reconstruction activities by

sharing know-how and best practices for harmonious sustainable territorial development, as well as to utilise Ukraine's knowledge in spatial preparedness,

4. stress the importance of VASAB as a collaboration of European democratic, like-minded countries to further spatial and territorial cohesion, as well as democracy and human rights in the Baltic Sea Region, implementing the VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040.

The Ministers

5. note the importance of VASAB as the platform of more than 30 years of spatial collaboration in the Baltic Sea Region to turn challenges into opportunities through spatial planning and territorial development. In close collaboration with HELCOM, VASAB has played a key role in coordinating maritime spatial planning activities across the region to promote synergies and joint approaches to agree on future uses on sea-areas. Through the decades, VASAB has engaged with planners on all governance levels to develop best practices and expertise related to territorial development and spatial planning, supporting the implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region,
6. celebrate 30 years from the endorsement of the first spatial development perspective and first European macro-regional strategy, "Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010" that has strengthened spatial planning and territorial development in the Baltic Sea Region and sparked cross-border and macro-regional initiatives. The document, approved by VASAB Ministerial Tallinn Declaration 1994, developed the spatial structure of the region consisting of Pearls (network of urban centres), Strings (links between centres) and Patches (regions supporting the spatial structure) that has inspired several national spatial visions across the region,

7. emphasise the value of engaging the next generation of planners through Young Planners Summer Schools, organised by VASAB and chairing countries, contributing to continued innovative solutions, sustainable development, and resilient communities,
8. highlight the VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040 endorsed by the Conference of Ministers in 2023 as the backbone for spatial and territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region.

The Ministers

9. express concern about increased natural and man-made hazards in the Baltic Sea Region that have spatial and territorial implications,
10. emphasise the significance of spatial and territorial resilience, the ability of territories and communities to develop spatial preparedness and adapt their functional and structural integrity, as well as continuous development in the face of disruptions,
11. underline the importance of spatial planning and territorial development in implementing the all-of-hazards and whole-of-government security approaches throughout the Pearls, Strings and Patches in the VASAB countries, across all governance levels. Spatial policies and future-oriented development of territories can help regions cope with current and future impacts of climate change, contribute to making energy accessible to everyone, increase food security and sustainable economic development through balanced and forward-looking land use, advance community and infrastructure resilience, enhance infrastructure integrity and civilian and defence dual-use, respond to shifting regional demographics,
12. commit to coordinated efforts for promoting the sustainable development, security, livelihoods and cohesion based on European values in the external border regions of the European Union within the framework of European and national programmes, initiatives and financial instruments, with the objective of enhancing social, economic, territorial and spatial resilience,

13. reaffirm their commitment to continuing the green and digital transitions in a mutually reinforcing and territorially balanced manner; ensuring that both visions support regional cohesion, environmental protection and inclusive development across the Baltic Sea Region,

The Ministers

14. thank the German, Finnish and Estonian chairmanships of the VASAB Committee for approaching territorial and spatial resilience amid increased climate-related risks and an altered security situation in the region,
15. acknowledge with appreciation the ongoing work of the VASAB Committee, highlighting its dedication to advancing shared goals and bridging national perspectives with the broader macro-regional dialogue,
16. express their gratitude to VASAB Secretariat, including all its current and former members for their continued contribution to achieving VASAB priorities, and recognize their efforts in fostering regional cooperation, enhancing spatial planning practices, and supporting sustainable development initiatives across the Baltic Sea Region,
17. ask the forthcoming Polish chairmanship, the VASAB Committee and the Secretariat to continue to contribute towards strengthening adaptive and exaptive spatial resilience to crises and integrating the spatial and territorial aspects of the whole-of-society security approach into VASAB strategic activities and documents.