



11 March 2016

To: Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities

RE: Invitation for closer cooperation on pan-Baltic spatial planning issues

VASAB (*Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea*) is an intergovernmental cooperation of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development in Baltic Sea Region (BSR) countries. VASAB is part of the network of the Council of the Baltic Sea States. VASAB prepares policy options for the territorial development of the BSR and provides a forum for exchange of know-how on spatial planning and development between the Baltic Sea countries. VASAB recommends transnational policy measures, promotes methodology development and cooperation projects, co-operates with other pan-Baltic initiatives, and promotes a dialogue with sector institutions. For fulfilling those tasks, VASAB takes into account also strategies and policies on European, European Union, pan-Baltic and national levels and provides inputs into these. Within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region VASAB is a coordinator of Horizontal Action "Spatial Planning".

The 8th VASAB Ministerial Conference in 2014 emphasized that a new approach to regional development is needed that recognises both the importance of metropolitan areas and large urban regions as drivers of growth and innovation and the potential of other types of regions. In that respect ministers asked VASAB to continue to co-operate closely with other relevant pan-Baltic organisations and stakeholders. In addition, ministers asked the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the BSR to contribute to better adaptation of strategies to different types of areas, drawing on the experiences from case studies and on co-operation with the BSSSC and the UBC.

Against this background, on behalf of VASAB, I would like to encourage closer cooperation between the VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the BSR and the UBC Commissions. In addition to already well-established relations with UBC Sustainable Cities Commission, I see potential in discussing the planning and entrepreneurship aspects of urban development.

In particular, I would like to invite you to the **VASAB Conference "Achieving Good Living Environment: territory matters. What's beyond 2030 for macro-regions?"** taking place in Warsaw, Poland on 7 June 2016. Over the last decade there have been significant changes in the territorial and regional development trends, influencing quality of life of the citizens. Countries, regions and cities have been looking for different solutions for those challenges, such as Urban Agenda of the EU, common territorial visions beyond administrative borders, integrated urban regeneration or thematic urban platforms. The conference will provide opportunity to compare and evaluate such approaches pursuing in the place-based manner. I would very much appreciate the UBC input to the discussion on place-based approach in policy development.

Yours sincerely,

Jacek Zaucha
Chairman of the VASAB CSPD/BSR