BEA-APP
BALTIC ENERGY AREAS
A PLANNING PERSPECTIVE

EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION
FLAGSHIP

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region

EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Transnational recommendations for improving the perspectives of spatial planning for renewable energies in the Baltic Sea Region

Summary for policy makers

Transnational recommendations for improving the perspectives of spatial planning for renewable energies in the Baltic Sea Region

- Summary for policy makers -

1 Introduction

The further expansion of renewable energies (RE) is of central importance for the countries of the Baltic Sea Region. It is an essential prerequisite for increasing their energy security, for climate change mitigation and for strengthening their economies.

In addition to their geographical proximity, the countries in the Baltic Sea Region share many other similarities and commonalities, e.g. in the socio-economic area and technological performance or in terms of potentials for renewable energies. These commonalities are predestined for joint activities in the development of renewable energies. The transnational use of renewable energies for joint energy supply and also for the development of the Energy Union in the Baltic Sea Region can be of great additional benefit for the countries (e.g. increase in regional added-value).

In order to achieve these benefits and to exploit the advantages of renewable energies for the countries in the Baltic Sea Region, it is necessary to improve the perspectives for transnational spatial planning for renewable energies in the Baltic Sea Region.

The following recommendations are intended to lead to improvements. They are targeted on the one hand at policy makers in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region and on the other at the bodies and institutions in the Baltic Sea Region dedicated to transnational cooperation, in particular at *Visions And Strategies Around The Baltic Sea* (VASAB) committee.

The recommendations are a result of the Interreg project *Baltic Energy Areas - A planning perspective* (BEA-APP) - a flagship project for the Horizontal Action "Spatial Planning" within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). The horizontal action 'Spatial planning' focuses on promoting maritime and land-based spatial planning in all Baltic Sea Member States and developing a common approach to cross-border cooperation. One goal is to overcome socioeconomic development disparities between their regions, thereby strengthening territorial cohesion in the Baltic Sea Region by 2030.

The recommendations also include, for example, the results of surveys conducted among experts and institutions in the participating countries. The report "Optimising spatial planning instruments for sustainable growth of renewable energies" outlines the results of the surveys as well as numerous other aspects of spatial planning for renewable energies.

2 Key Insights

In order to supply the countries in the Baltic Sea Region with secure and affordable energy, to limit climate change, to save non-renewable resources and the environment and to generate regional economic growth and employment, a continued and increased expansion of renewable energies is necessary. This must not only be prepared, but also accompanied by spatial planning. An intensified expansion of renewable energies rather increases the requirements for planning, criteria and conflict management. Therefore, harmonisation and improvement of joint planning perspectives in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region are indispensable.

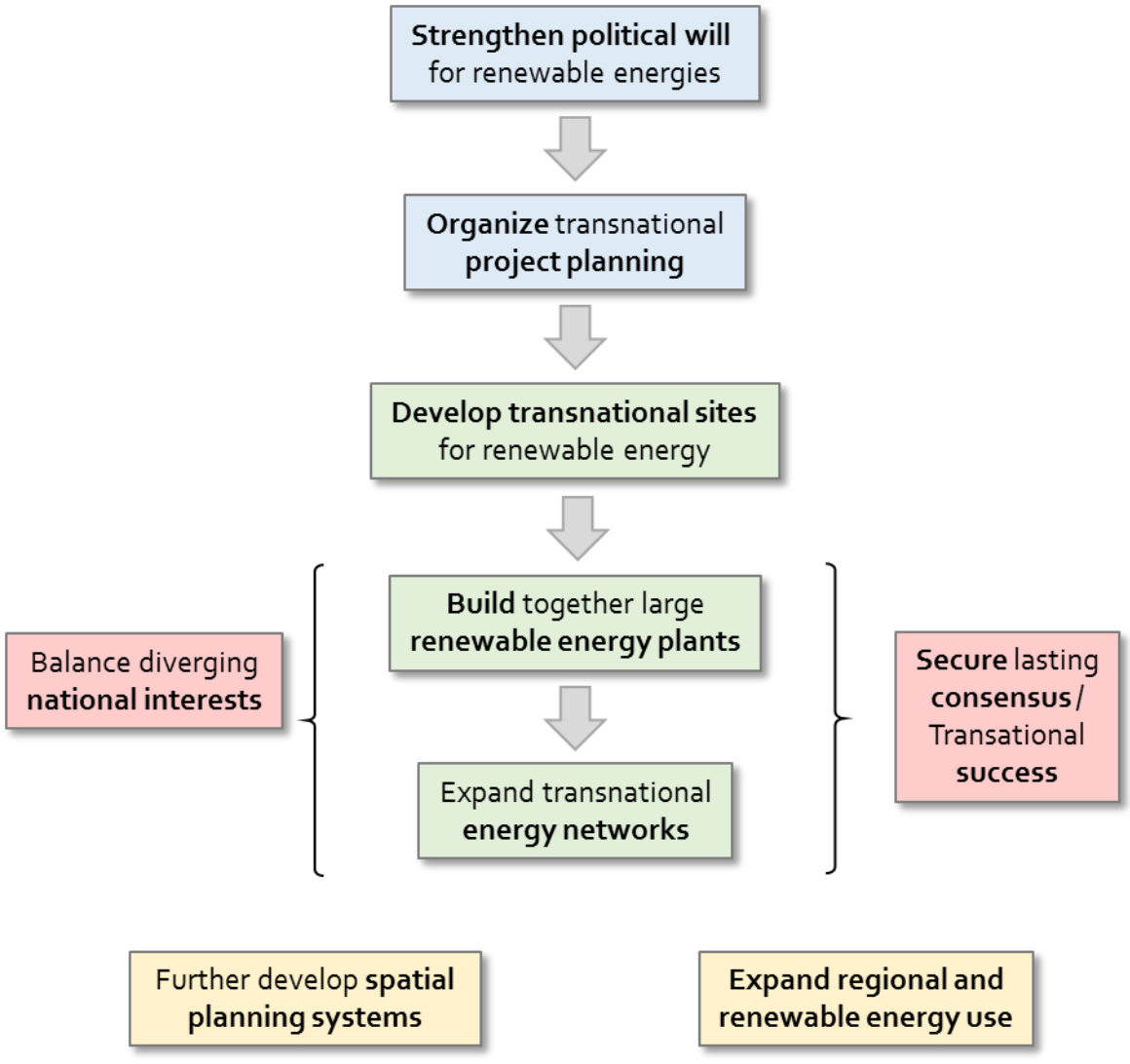
The countries in the Baltic Sea Region are not uniform in their political systems. This influences the possibilities for forming political opinions, the ability to reach consensus on long-term goals and political decision-making, including the field of renewable energies. There are also certain differences in socio-economic conditions, which in turn influence energy consumption and thus the possibilities of satisfying demands with renewable energies. Further differences are reflected, for example, in the energy policy objectives of the countries. Also planning systems as

well as political and legal framework conditions for spatial planning for renewable energies show not only similarities but also differences that cannot or only gradually be reduced by cohesion in the European Union.

An important common feature, however, are the similar or partially identical national targets that the participating countries have set themselves for the expansion of renewable energies by 2020, 2030 and 2050. Another important common feature are the socio-economic similarities, partially due to their geographical proximity. They are also expressed in comparable energy structures. Last but not least, all participating countries have large renewable energy potentials that are comparable in their structures as well infrastructures that can be connected.

A first possibility to improve the perspectives of spatial planning for renewable energies in the Baltic Sea Region is the gradual improvement of planning systems and their legal basis. By sharing and learning from each other about proven planning approaches and methods, spatial planners can achieve a gradual *best practice* alignment of planning systems. However, this takes a lot of time and effort before success can be seen.

A second way to improve the perspectives for spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region is its expansion and empowerment to plan cooperatively for an increasingly collective energy supply with the necessary national and transnational renewable energy sites and networks.



3 Key challenges

An improvement in the planning perspectives for renewable energies can only be achieved if there is a firm political will to further expand renewable energies. Therefore, the first challenge is to **consolidate the political will in the countries**.

The second challenge is to **translate this political will into national and transnational spatial planning**. This requires corresponding planning contracts, the improvement of spatial planning in the countries - using the exchange of experience between the spatial planners of the countries and learning from one another, the expansion of joint planning activities as well as their orientation towards renewable energies and international energy networks.

A third challenge is to **design the expansion of renewable energies in the Baltic Sea Region** in such a way that it also contributes to the fulfilment of EU targets. As a result, the EU's cohesion policy and its financial instruments can provide valuable support for measures in the Baltic Sea Region.

A fourth challenge is growing with the expansion of renewable energies: **Spatial planning must further develop its methods, planning criteria and data basis** for planning, participation and conflict management. With the increasing number of renewable energy plants and the expansion of energy networks, also demands on planning as well as conflict potential will increase.

If spatial planning accepts these challenges, it will become considerably more important and responsible. This simultaneously supports and requires the improvement of planning perspectives.

A large number of measures can contribute to meeting these challenges: They affect in particular the Baltic Sea Region as a whole, but also its countries and regions.

4 Key recommendations

A general recommendation is to encourage the European Union in all its bodies (Commission, Council, Parliament) to continue the common energy policy and cohesion policy and to increase the importance of renewable energy and climate change mitigation.

To meet the ***first challenge*** - the strengthening of political will - it is recommended:

1. Strengthening of national political will to expand renewable energies by developing common energy policy guidelines, renewable energy strategies and renewable energy targets, in line with the energy policy interests and renewable energy potentials of the countries in the Baltic Sea Region,
2. Establishment of a joint institution for the development of large transnational renewable energy projects (e.g. a further developed form of BASREC).

Meeting the ***second challenge*** - transnational planning:

3. Strengthening renewable energies in the common Baltic Sea strategy: The strategy identifies the improvement of energy security, energy access and energy efficiency as important tasks for the region. It also underlines the significance of joint infrastructure projects. However, it should also highlight the key role that renewable energies play within.
4. The establishment of bodies or institutions that contribute to strengthening and intensifying informal cooperation in spatial planning.
5. Further development of informal instruments for spatial planning for renewable energies, e.g. a joint planning handbook for transnational renewable energy projects (plants and infrastructures)

Meeting the ***third challenge*** - coordination with EU objectives and Energy Union:

6. Development and tendering of ideas competitions for joint renewable energy (demonstration) projects,
7. Strengthening transnational thematic cooperation between universities and colleges to improve accompanying research and development,
8. Strengthening motivation for cooperation in the expansion of renewable energies and acceptance through information, communication, participation and financial participation, e.g. by countries and regions reporting increasingly on their contributions to cohesion in the Baltic Sea Region and describing the benefits achieved so far,
9. Provision of information and communication on the requirements and benefits of joint renewable energy projects, special sites and linear energy infrastructures,
10. Invitation to tender for site and project competitions for the establishment of joint renewable energy projects (e.g. power to heat), possibly to initially demonstrate the technical feasibility and the achievable regional economic advantages,
11. Development of forms of participation for local people and other regional actors as well as generation of participation models for regions in which transnational (demonstration) projects are realised (evaluation of the transferability of existing participation models (e.g. in Germany) to strengthen local participation, acceptance and participation).

Meeting the ***fourth challenge*** - further development of spatial planning:

12. Improvement of links between spatial planning and renewable energy planning as well as the spatial planning of energy infrastructures,
13. Further development of procedures and methods for transnational, i.e. cooperative planning of sites, routes and infrastructures and connection of these procedures to national planning systems - e.g. by improving the compatibility of spatially adjacent plans for cross-border planning - using findings from joint maritime spatial planning (e.g. experiences from the transnational planning of the offshore wind park “Kriegers Flak”),
14. Harmonization of specific planning criteria for the planning of renewable energy plants (e.g. priorisation of nature- and species protection),
15. Development of shared guidelines for major transnational renewable energy projects,
16. Development of compensation mechanisms for diverging national interests,
17. Development of common planning methods for transnational energy projects,
18. Linking transnational planning with national planning systems - using knowledge and experience from the joint maritime spatial planning (MSP) of HELCOM and VASAB,
19. Development of instruments that can support the planning of transnational renewable energy projects, e.g. checklists with sections such as criteria, acceptance, participation, technical aspects, value creation,
20. Improving spatial planning processes by providing INSPIRE-compliant data sets, particularly in the scope of Annex III, e.g. solar radiation maps, wind atlases and other approaches; by reporting requirements for the provision of energy geodata,
21. Conduct of studies on the respective national interests which may hinder the development, planning and implementation of joint renewable energy and infrastructure projects,
22. Development of tools to strengthen local opinion-forming processes,
23. Development of intergovernmental concepts for sites with large renewable energy facilities and
24. Development of concepts for their connection to networks/pipes.

5 Concluding remarks

The use of renewable energies can strengthen regional economies, make them less dependent on fossil energies and energy imports as well as limit global climate change to a tolerable level.

That is why the countries in the Baltic Sea Region have set themselves ambitious targets for renewable energies: they are to be achieved by 2020, 2030 and 2050, respectively, and lead to a largely renewable and thus climate-neutral energy supply in the long term. An example of an approach to achieving these goals is e.g. the development of "Green Industrial Areas", where companies are largely self-sufficient with renewable energies. There are many ways to achieve this – from energy production to sector coupling and industrial symbiosis - there are numerous development options for making renewable energy an integral part of industrial parks.

With the expansion of renewable energies, also spatial planning must develop further: it should not only carry out national spatial planning for renewable energies, but also claim and assume a leading role in the planning of transnational renewable energy plants and infrastructures.

In the end, existing collaborations between the countries of the Baltic Sea Region in spatial planning, particularly in the field of renewable energies, must be expanded and intensified. The described recommendations are intended to improve the perspectives for this transnational spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region.