



26 May 2026

STANDARDIZED REPORT: BSR Urban Mobility session at EUSBSR Annual Forum 2026

Date & time: 12 May 2026, 15:15 – 16:15

Place: Tallinn, Estonia

Projects involved: SUMPS for BSR, BATS, BSR Urban Mobility

Policy Areas involved: Transport, Spatial Planning

1. ABOUT THE EVENT

The 17th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) took place on 11–13 May 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia, under the theme “Resilience Edition”. The Forum brought together representatives of governments, cities, regions, EU institutions, academia, civil society and project organisations to discuss how the Baltic Sea Region can address growing challenges related to climate change, security, competitiveness and societal resilience through stronger cooperation and coordinated action.

As part of the Forum, the session “From Plans to Reality: Governing Urban Mobility for Resilience” was organised on 12 May 2026 by the BSR Urban Mobility platform including SUMP for BSR project, BATS, PA Transport, PA Spatial planning.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSIONS

The discussion focused on a key challenge faced by many cities across the Baltic Sea Region: while Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) and TEN-T-related mobility objectives are increasingly in place, implementation often remains difficult. Drawing on survey findings from Baltic Sea Region urban nodes and the experiences of cities, regions and policymakers, the session explored the political, governance and institutional factors that influence implementation, identified barriers to delivering planned measures, and highlighted the importance of cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation. The discussion also generated policy-relevant messages to support the development of the BSR Urban Mobility Policy Framework and contribute to the implementation of the EUSBSR Action Plan.

During the session, Mentimeter was used to encourage audience participation and interaction. Participants shared their views and experiences, contributing additional perspectives to the discussion. The types of organisations represented in the session are shown in Figure 1.

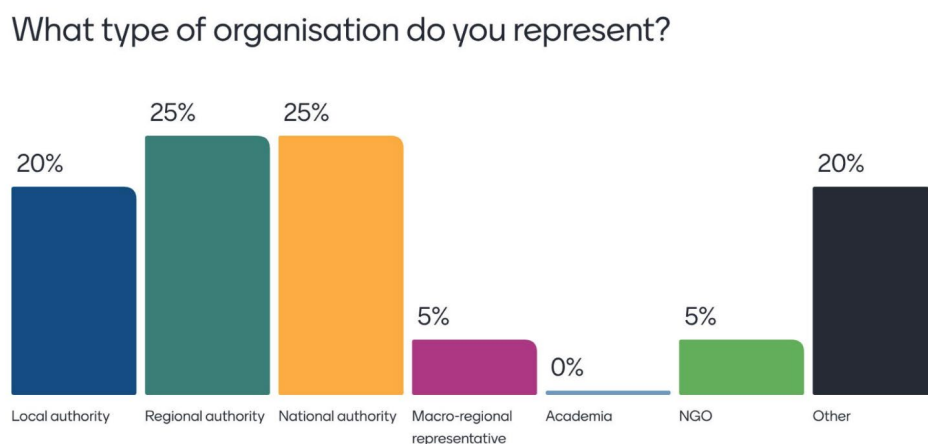


Fig. 1 Type of organisation

3. SURVEY FINDINGS

The session began with a presentation by Ms Maija Rusanen (City of Turku), who presented key findings from surveys conducted among Baltic Sea Region urban nodes and National SUMP Contact Points. The results provided an evidence-based overview of governance, cooperation and implementation challenges faced by cities across different national and institutional contexts, setting the scene for the subsequent discussion.

The survey received 86 responses from all Baltic Sea Region countries, providing a comprehensive overview of sustainable urban mobility and logistics planning across the region. Most respondents (70%) represented urban nodes and local public authorities. The survey also achieved a good balance in terms of city size, with 30% of responses coming from cities with 100,000–300,000 inhabitants and participation ranging from cities with fewer than 50,000 residents to metropolitan areas with more than one million inhabitants.

The survey showed that SUMP implementation is already well advanced in the Baltic Sea Region. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) reported having a SUMP in place, while a further 12% are currently preparing their first plan. Another 18% have a mobility plan that is not yet fully aligned with the European

SUMP concept. Most SUMP focus on the core city territory (48%) or the functional urban area (38%), while only 13% cover the wider regional level (Fig. 2).

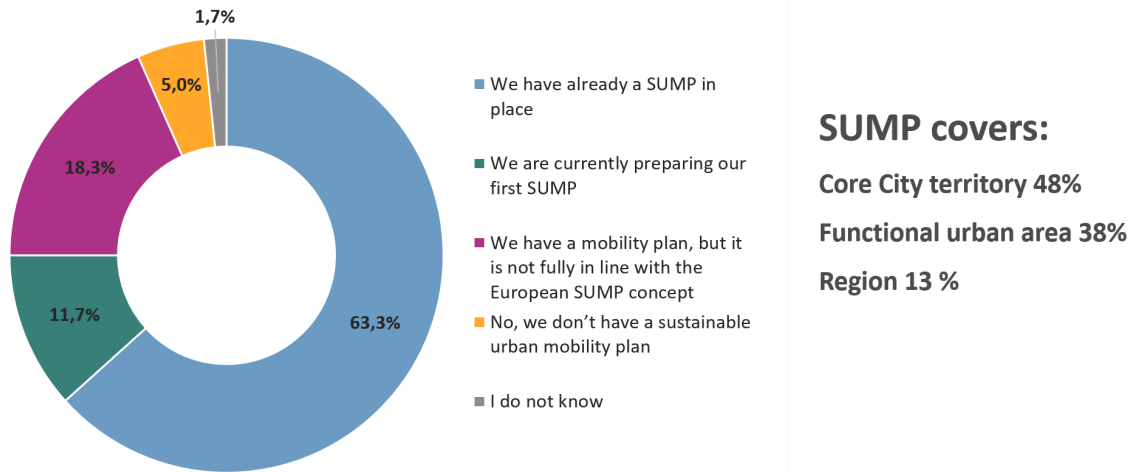


Fig. 2 Status of SUMP in our region's urban nodes

The survey provided valuable insights into the priorities, challenges and implementation capacity of cities and regions across the Baltic Sea Region. Respondents identified public transport as the highest priority for addressing urban mobility challenges, with 50% selecting it among their key priorities. Other frequently mentioned priorities included supporting sustainable modal shift (34%), reducing environmental impacts (31%), promoting active mobility (28%) and improving safety (27%). These results indicate that public transport, modal shift and active mobility remain key priorities for cities across the Baltic Sea Region (Fig.3).

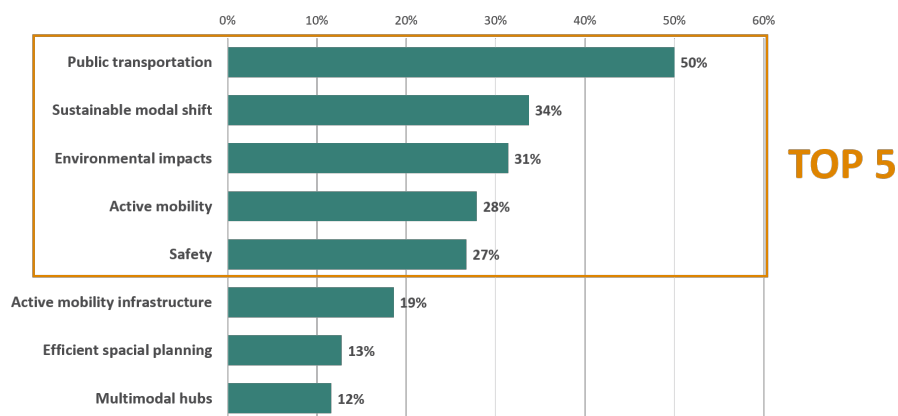


Fig. 3 Top priorities for addressing urban mobility challenges

Despite these ambitions, respondents reported a number of barriers to implementation. Funding constraints emerged as the most significant challenge, followed by limited staff resources and political priorities. Existing infrastructure-related issues, public acceptance and land-use constraints were also identified as important obstacles. Several respondents highlighted that long planning and approval processes, combined with changing political priorities, often delay implementation and increase project costs.

The survey also revealed a gap between planning objectives and actual outcomes. Only around 24% of respondents considered that the current modal split reflects the targets set in their mobility plans, while less than 19% believed that current planning efforts are effective in shifting travel behaviour towards more sustainable transport modes. This indicates a gap between planning objectives and implementation outcomes.

Monitoring and evaluation remain a challenge. While most respondents reported having some form of monitoring framework for SUMP, only 24% considered it well-defined. For SULPs, this share was even lower at 12%. Clear monitoring indicators were also reported less frequently, particularly in the area of urban logistics.

Five key priorities were identified to improve the effectiveness of mobility planning:

- ✓ Build durable political consensus and commitment.
- ✓ Strengthen coordination and governance across borders, levels and sectors.
- ✓ Ensure stable, predictable, long-term funding for sustainable modes.
- ✓ Improve data collection, monitoring and evidence-based planning.
- ✓ Increase public acceptance through communication, engagement and behaviour-change tools.

4. PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussion, entitled *From Plans to Reality: Governing Urban Mobility for Resilience*, was moderated by Ms Noemi Christ (Scandria Alliance). The discussion brought together representatives of cities, regions and national authorities and was supported by targeted questions and audience interaction. It focused on governance, political and implementation gaps, with particular attention given to how political change, electoral cycles and shifting priorities affect the continuity of sustainable urban mobility measures. Participants explored the gap between formal TEN-T and SUMP requirements and real political commitment at the local level, examining why agreed plans often fail to translate into concrete decisions and implementation.

The session featured a panel discussion with representatives from cities and national and macro-regional levels, including:

- **Heike Bunte**, Head of Section Active Mobility, Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg – Borough of Altona
- **Merlin Rehema**, Sustainable Mobility Specialist, National SUMP Contact Point, Estonian Ministry of Climate
- **Miglė Panasenkienė**, International Project Manager and EUSBSR PA Transport Coordinator, Transport Innovation Association
- **Tina Šipkēvica**, Spatial Planning Expert and EUSBSR PA Spatial Planning Coordinator, VASAB Secretariat
- **Alicja Pawłowska**, Sustainable Mobility Senior Expert, City of Gdynia
- **Jokūbas Leipus**, Head of City Development Department, Panevėžys City Municipality

During the panel discussion, panelists were asked to share their views on three key topics: implementation challenges and solutions, political priorities and commitment, and governance.

IMPLEMENTATION: CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

The discussion focused on key challenges affecting the implementation of sustainable urban mobility measures and possible solutions to overcome them.

Participants identified several bottlenecks between planning and implementation. Fragmented governance structures and differing local challenges were identified as obstacles to delivering mobility measures. The discussion also pointed to an imbalance between planning and implementation processes, including limited time for stakeholder engagement and the influence of short-term political priorities. Long-term funding was identified as a major challenge, alongside the need for better communication and stronger public understanding of mobility measures. Participants further noted that major TEN-T developments are not always sufficiently integrated into urban mobility planning. At the same time, EU-funded projects were recognised as important tools for testing innovative solutions and supporting implementation.

Participants highlighted public engagement as one way to increase acceptance of mobility measures and gain political support. SUMPs were described as useful tools for defining responsibilities, setting long-

term goals and supporting communication. The discussion also pointed to the value of flagship projects that can help demonstrate proposed changes and attract wider attention. Participants noted that support from national ministries can facilitate implementation. The importance of maintaining a clear long-term vision despite political changes was also emphasised.

POLITICAL PRIORITIES & COMMITMENT

The discussion focused on how political priorities influence the continuity of sustainable urban mobility measures and on mechanisms that can help maintain long-term mobility goals despite political changes.

The discussion highlighted that political changes can affect support for sustainable urban mobility measures. One example raised was the changing political attitude towards cycling and walking measures in Hamburg. Participants also noted practical implementation challenges, including issues related to winter service operations.

Participants noted that SUMP can be used as tools for setting long-term mobility goals. They highlighted the importance of assigning responsibilities to the right institutions and using data to support decisions. Funding linked to SUMP objectives was mentioned as one possible mechanism. Participants also stressed the need to communicate mobility goals in ways that are relevant to people's daily lives, such as quality of life and health.

At the same time, it was noted that SUMP alone cannot address all developments and challenges. One practical suggestion was to prepare short fact sheets explaining proposed measures, their costs and who they are intended for.

GOVERNANCE

The discussion focused on governance challenges affecting sustainable urban mobility, the role of national frameworks in supporting urban nodes, and how macro-regional cooperation can contribute to better coordination and implementation across the Baltic Sea Region.

Participants identified that coordination often breaks down due to the lack of a dedicated coordinator at local level to drive processes forward. At regional level, insufficient cooperation and competition between municipalities were identified as challenges. Lack of trust and hierarchical barriers between different governance levels were also mentioned. Participants highlighted the need for more regular platforms for exchange and open dialogue between local, regional and national authorities.

It was noted that national authorities can play an important coordinating role, particularly where regional cooperation platforms do not exist. Support can be provided by bringing urban nodes together, facilitating dialogue and cooperation, and providing data, standards and practical assistance. Participants also highlighted the role of national authorities in communicating the funding needs of urban nodes to the national level and helping to ensure political predictability and long-term funding.

From the PA Spatial Planning perspective, sustainable urban mobility contributes to Action 1, which focuses on increasing the capacities of spatial planners and strengthening territorial cohesion. It was noted that transport and urban mobility planning is often carried out at the local level and that a number of barriers exist, including language-related challenges. Reference was also made to efforts to provide platforms that support cooperation and exchange.

From the PA Transport perspective, it was noted that sustainable urban mobility is well reflected in the EUSBSR Action Plan and contributes to all three PA Transport actions through urban node integration, multimodal connections, modal shift, active mobility, and innovative and digital mobility solutions. Reference was also made to activities supporting low-emission mobility, alternative fuels infrastructure and digital transport solutions.

From the PA Spatial Planning perspective, support can be provided through experience exchange and regular platforms for dialogue between stakeholders. Reference was also made to the role of projects and platform initiatives in bringing together different actors, facilitating cooperation and sharing knowledge across the Baltic Sea Region.

From the PA Transport perspective, the EUSBSR serves as a coordination platform connecting cities, regions, ministries and projects across the Baltic Sea Region. It was noted that support can be provided through long-term thematic platforms, regular dialogue between cities, regions and ministries, peer learning activities, and the transfer of project results into policies, investment planning and funding priorities. It was also highlighted that many urban mobility challenges are shared across the region and can benefit from macro-regional cooperation.

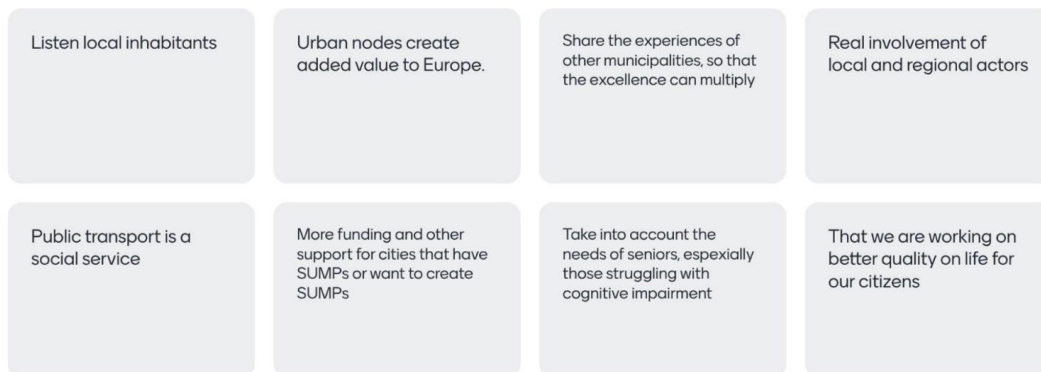
What is the message you want to deliver to the EU?

- Prioritise active mobility, which contributes to all 17 SDGs.
- While discussing resilience, do not forget active mobility.
- Improve planning and implementation processes.
- Citizens should have a real choice between different travel modes.
- Cooperation is key.

- Despite the challenges, including funding, SUMP is a good tool for putting decisions on paper – do not be afraid to develop a vision.
- SUMP are often considered local instruments, but they should also be recognised at the national level as tools for delivering national goals and objectives.
- Improve communication.
- Ensure stable and predictable long-term funding for SUMP implementation.
- SUMP is not only about mobility, but also about economy, health and spatial planning.
- Cooperation across sectors and breaking down silos is essential.

Key messages from the audience are showed in Fig. 4.

What one message would you send to EU and national actors to make SUMP more effective?



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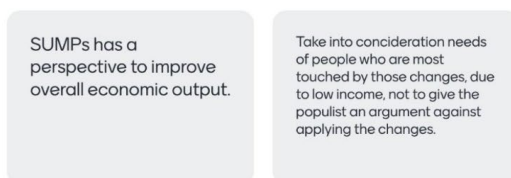


Fig. 4 Key messages from the audience

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Governance and coordination

- Strengthen coordination between local, regional and national authorities.
- Establish regular cooperation platforms that bring together urban nodes, regions and national authorities.
- Assign clear responsibilities and dedicated coordinators to support the implementation of mobility measures.
- Improve cooperation between neighbouring municipalities and reduce institutional barriers that hinder implementation.

Political commitment and implementation

- Use SUMP as long-term strategic frameworks that support continuity beyond electoral cycles.
- Strengthen political commitment to agreed mobility objectives and implementation plans.
- Ensure that major transport infrastructure developments, including TEN-T projects, are better integrated into urban mobility planning.
- Support the use of pilot and demonstration projects to test solutions and build confidence for wider implementation.

Funding

- Ensure stable and predictable long-term funding for sustainable urban mobility measures.
- Strengthen the link between mobility plans and funding instruments.
- Improve the ability of national authorities to communicate urban mobility funding needs and priorities at national level.

Communication and public acceptance

- Involve citizens and stakeholders throughout planning and implementation processes.
- Communicate mobility measures through practical benefits such as improved quality of life, health, safety and accessibility.
- Use flagship projects and real-life examples to demonstrate benefits and increase public acceptance.

Capacity building and cooperation

- Support exchange of experience between cities and regions facing similar mobility challenges.
- Promote peer learning on governance models, implementation approaches and stakeholder engagement practices.

- Continue macro-regional cooperation activities that help cities learn from each other and share practical solutions.

Monitoring and evidence

- Strengthen data collection and monitoring systems for sustainable urban mobility and urban logistics.
- Use clear indicators to track implementation progress and policy impacts.
- Promote evidence-based decision-making at all governance levels.

6. MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE SESSION

The session confirmed that cities across the Baltic Sea Region face similar challenges in translating mobility plans into implementation. While the survey highlighted common barriers related to funding, governance and monitoring, the discussion provided practical examples of how political priorities, public acceptance, institutional arrangements and local contexts influence implementation in practice. The session also demonstrated that many of these challenges are shared across cities and countries, creating opportunities for mutual learning and exchange of experience at the macro-regional level.

Finally, the session demonstrated the value of macro-regional cooperation in supporting peer learning, sharing practical experience and helping cities address common implementation challenges across the Baltic Sea Region.

Partners involved:

Union of the Baltic Cities Sustainable Cities Commission/City of Turku, Scandria Alliance/Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin-Brandenburg, EUSBSR Policy Area Transport/Transport Innovation Association, EUSBSR Policy Area/VASAB