Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2021-2027 Programme document

SUMMARY

The **overall programme objective** constitutes the umbrella for the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2021-2027:

> **'To put into practice innovative, water-smart and climate-neutral solutions through transnational cooperation for the benefit of the citizens across the Baltic Sea region.'**

The following three elements describe the **value statement** of the Programme:

Supporting transition: The Programme creates suitable framework conditions in the Baltic Sea region for supporting the transition towards greener and more resilient societies and economies through transnational cooperation. Digitalisation is a central enabler in this transition.

Customer orientation: The Programme is demand-driven and support public authorities in meeting the needs of their target groups (e.g. companies and communities).

Transfer of knowledge and capacity building: Transfer of knowledge is an important component of transnational activities in all policy objectives. Future projects support capacity building to increase public awareness and behaviour-change.

In line with Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, the Programme ensures that the principles of **gender equality** and **non-discrimination** will be applied.

As in previous funding periods, the Programme has carefully been aligned with the **EUSBSR** (European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region) and its **action plan** in order to maximise benefits for the BSR citizens.

The Programme **targets** public authorities at local, regional and national levels, business support organisations, specialised agencies, and infrastructure and service providers as the main forces responsible for the structural transition into a more resilient and innovative region. The Programme emphasises citizen involvement through NGOs. Wherever appropriate, e.g. for the purposes of practical testing of the solution, the Programme supports directly involving enterprises. Higher education and research institutions as well as education and training centres may join transnational cooperation actions to support the main target groups with additional expertise and competence. This particularly concerns building structures to strengthen the innovative potential of the Baltic Sea region. Furthermore, the Programme supports linking competences across different sectors.

More information on the programming process is available at https://interreg-baltic.eu/get-funding/programme-2021-2027/

Programme area

Interreg Baltic Sea Region covers **eleven countries**, eight of them EU Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden) and three partner countries (Belarus*, Norway and Russia*). The Programme covers an area of around 3.8 million km² with a population of more than 103 million inhabitants. It stretches from central parts of Europe up to its northernmost periphery, comprising European metropolitan areas, while major parts of the programme area are counted as rural.

* on the condition that financing agreements with the EU are signed

Strategy and thematic focus

Four priorities including nine Programme objectives best reflect the needs for transnational cooperation identified by the Programme countries for the next seven years.

Innovative societies	Water-smart societies	Climate-neutral societies	Cooperation governance
PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 3	PRIORITY 4
Programme objective: 1.1 Resilient economies and communities	**Programme objective: 2.1** Sustainable waters	**Programme objective: 3.1** Circular economy	**Programme objective: 4.1** Project platforms
Programme objective: 1.2 Responsive public services	**Programme objective: 2.2** Blue economy	**Programme objective: 3.2** Energy transition	**Programme objective: 4.2** Macro-regional governance
		Programme objective: 3.3 Smart green mobility	

Interreg Baltic Sea Region

Co-funded by the European Union

Priority 1: Innovative societies

Policy objective 1) Smarter Europe (a more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity)

Specific objective RSO1.4 Skills for smart specialisation

Programme objective 1.1: Resilient economies and communities

Building sustainable, fair, innovative and resilient economies and communities across the Baltic Sea rregion

Resilience is understood as the **ability to respond to external disturbances** such as severe recessions and financial crises, downturns of particular industries or major health crises. The Programme encourages actions that **help to avoid unwanted external impacts**, **withstand them** or **recover quickly** from them.

The focus of the Programme objective 1.1 is to:

- strengthen European identity based on common values, culture and heritage
- increase innovativeness of the region
- adapt smart specialisation approaches
- adjust innovation ecosystems
- untap digitalisation
- consider uneven territorial development

Examples of transnational cooperation actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Redesigning smart specialisation approaches and redefining connections to global value chains;
- Developing and testing mechanisms that manage economic and societal challenges in the BSR macro-region in a coordinated fashion, e.g. piloting smart health solutions;
- Exploring the potential of sustainable consumption patterns based on local services and goods;
- Exploring solutions to assist business with recovery following unexpected external disturbances.

Specific objective RSO1.1 Enhancing research and innovation

Programme objective 1.2: Responsive public services

Experimenting with new ways of delivering public services using innovative, data-driven and participatory methods to improve the lives of citizens

In relation to a growing complexity of societal challenges, the Programme supports actions that improve organisational set-ups and processes to **respond to public needs** and to deliver **less bureaucratic and more cost-efficient public services**.

The focus of the Programme objective 1.2 is to:

- deliver tailor-made, needs-based and cost-efficient services

- harmonise systems and standards
- develop solutions responsive to change
- apply emerging digital technologies
- trigger interactions between service providers and the community
- develop public responses across sectors and borders

Example *of transnational cooperation actions (non-exhaustive list):*

- Developing integrated public services tailored to the needs of functional regions and specific territories;
- Developing common standards and establishing sustainable, inclusive and trustworthy digital public services in the Baltic Sea region including by piloting interoperable public services;
- Testing approaches that establish "innovation partnerships" by combining research and public procurement with the objective to create new business opportunities;
- Piloting solutions that increase citizen engagement in transforming public services.

Priority 2: Water-smart societies

Policy objective 2) Greener Europe (a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation and risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility)

Specific objective RSO2.5 Sustainable water

Programme objective 2.1: Sustainable waters

Intensifying implementation of good practices by public authorities, industries and local communities to make the Baltic Sea and regional water resources cleaner and adapted to the impacts of climate change

The Programme supports actions that **improve the state of water** in the region and make its **management more sustainable**. These waters include the Baltic Sea, coastal waters and inland waters like rivers, lakes and groundwater.

The focus of the Programme objective 2.1 is to:

- adapt existing solutions, develop and implement new solutions in order to prevent and reduce water pollution
- adapt water management practices to the changing climate
- implement cross-sectoral actions

Examples of transnational cooperation actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Engaging authorities, companies, advisories and local communities to introduce good practices to prevent nutrient and hazardous substance emissions in water;
- Introducing procedures to remove nutrients and hazardous substances from waterways and wastewater treatment;
- Rethinking planning processes for more effective water management, also developing greening plans, nature-based and digital solutions;

- Piloting actions to shift consumer and production patterns to prevent water pollution.

Programme objective 2.2: Blue economy

Strengthening blue economy and mitigating potential conflicts among users of the Sea space to enable sustainable use of water and marine resources adapting to the changing climate
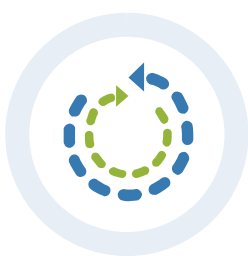
The Programme supports actions on **sustainable use of fresh and sea waters** as well as **marine resources** in **innovative business development** in the whole region in emerging and established sectors. These include aquaculture, blue biotechnology, shipping, fishery, and coastal and maritime tourism.

The focus of the Programme objective 2.2 is to:

- encourage actions for blue businesses
- facilitate joint use of sea space and help mitigate potential conflicts
- strenthen resilience of blue businesses
- mitigate impact of blue businesses on climate change

Example of transnational cooperation actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Creating new business opportunities by developing value chains for sustainable fresh water and marine-based products and services in line with smart specialisation strategies and marketing them;
- Developing governance, communication and cooperation models among public authorities and industry to mitigate conflicts and promote the joint use of the sea and land space, through maritime spatial planning and land-sea interaction;
- Integrating climate change mitigation measures in blue economy development plans;
- Introducing common environmental standards and clean, digital, eco-efficient solutions on ships and in ports to reduce emissions, process and recycle waste and wastewater, prevent species from entering water bodies.

Priority 3: Climate-neutral societies

Policy objective 2) Greener Europe (a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation and risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility)

Specific Objective RSO2.6 Circular economy

Programme objective 3.1: Circular economy

Moving towards circular economy through strengthening the role of the cities and regions and re-thinking contribution of business

The Programme supports actions **that facilitate the shift from linear to circular** resource use. This implies **keeping products and materials in use** for as long as possible. The Programme encourages **holistic** approaches that go beyond waste management to **connect with water, energy, transport** and **land use.**

The focus of the Programme objective 3.1 is to:

- create and promote circular environments
- redefine smart specialization approaches
- create business opportunities for environmental and societal benefits
- untap digitalisation
- mind uneven territorial effect and disadvantaged by transition processes

Example of transnational cooperation actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Integrating circular economy policies into territorial strategies and testing their implementation;
- Rethinking urban and regional planning processes in sectors key to achieving circularity (e.g. transport, water, energy, and waste management);
- Coordinating and supporting entrepreneurial and civil society initiatives in promoting circular economy and supporting change in attitudes;
- Providing support services that help businesses adopt more circular approaches.

Specific objective RSO2.1 Energy efficiency

Programme objective 3.2: Energy transition

Moving towards decarbonisation of energy systems through increasing energy efficiency and investing in renewable energy in urban and rural areas

The Programme supports actions for the **decarbonisation of energy systems** in the region in order to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions**. The solutions shall increase **energy efficiency in industrial production** processes as well as in public and private building stock. The Programme also encourages actions that develop and test solutions to **increase renewable energy production** from **locally available resources**.

The focus of the Programme objective 3.2 is to:

- adapt and update policies
- increase distribution of renewable energy across sectors
- coordinate plans and share solutions across borders
- mobilise industry and citizens to apply energy solutions

Example of transnational cooperation actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Addressing administrative, legal and financial barriers to speed up a 'renovation wave' of public and private buildings;
- Strengthening integration of different energy systems and interconnecting energy consumers from different sectors;
- Designing public support policies to encourage wider production, supply and storage of renewable energy;
- Testing guidelines for energy districts and standards for green industry certification.

Specific objective RSO2.8 Sustainable urban mobility

Programme objective 3.3: Smart green mobility

Moving towards more efficient, intelligent and low-carbon transport and mobility systems

A **green mobility system well-functioning cross-borders** is vital for the development of the BSR. The Programme supports actions that ensure the **smooth movement** of people and goods in and across urban and rural areas while **saving resources** by increasing efficiency, **integrating different transport modes** and **accelerating digitalisation.**

The focus of the Programme objective 3.3 is to:

- harmonise mobility systems across borders
- mobilise transport companies and citizens to use smart green solutions
- support public authorities in introducing smart green solutions and reducing air pollution in cities

Example of transnational cooperation actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Developing common standards to harmonise mobility systems in order to ensure the compatibility of green solutions between cities, towns, their hinterland and across borders;
- Using innovative technologies and planning infrastructure to advance low-emission, green, smart solutions in multimodal transport;
- Testing, introducing and applying digital solutions that regulate traffic flow, optimise the transport of people and goods and predict changing mobility patterns;
- Advancing freight mobility through introducing shared solutions and distributed centres using digital platforms to maximise the efficiency of vehicle utilisation.

Priority 4: Cooperation governance

Interreg-specific objective `Cooperation Governance´

Interreg specific objective ISO6.6 Other actions to support better cooperation governance

Programme objective 4.1: Project platforms

Connecting results from different EU funding programmes and making them work

The Programme **supports the cooperation of EU-funded projects** in project platforms. These actions **bring the results of various projects** from different EU funding programmes to stakeholders in the Baltic Sea region **in a structured way**. They show how the different results complement each other, making use of **synergies across EU funds.**

The focus of the Programme objective 4.1 is to:

- synthesise and interlink project solutions relevant for the region
- help public authorities and other organisations access project results
- communicate and transfer solutions to broader target groups
- target public authorities, pan-Baltic organisations and EUBSR stakeholders

Example of transnational cooperation actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Identifying solutions developed by different Interreg and other EU funded projects relevant for the Baltic Sea region, structuring them and making syntheses based on the needs of the target groups;

- Analysing know-how developed in research and innovation projects as well as experiences with investment projects co-financed from EU funds and combining them with the findings of Interreg projects;
- Introducing syntheses of solutions into the daily work of public authorities, specialised agencies and other organisations working in these thematic areas;
- Reaching out to relevant policy and decision-making authorities and other organisations at the national and pan-Baltic level and providing them streamlined results from projects.

Interreg specific objective ISO6.1 Institutional capacity of public authorities

Programme objective 4.2: Macro-regional governance

Strengthening coordination and communication of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region

The Programme supports actions that **implement and strengthen governance and communication activities** in the **EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** (EUSBSR). These actions may **facilitate policy discussions** and **trigger policy changes**, build up networks to develop projects and other initiatives in line with the EUSBSR Action Plan, or investigate and secure potential funding sources on the EU, national or regional level to ensure their implementation.

The focus of the Programme objective 4.2 is to:

- support the coordinators of the EUSBSR policy areas in implementing their policy areas and engaging with stakeholders
- provide assistance to the national coordinators of the EUSBSR and a strategy point
- support informing about the developments within the EUSBSR Action Plan and the achievements of the EUSBSR policy areas,
- encourage synergies between the EUSBSR and the strategies of the partner countries

Support provided to the EUSBSR governance:

- Assistance to the policy area coordinators of the EUSBSR;
- Organisation of Strategy forums;
- Assistance to a Strategy point.