# Interreg Baltic Sea Region

# Mid-term evaluation of Programme impact

# FINAL REPORT

## OVERVIEW ON CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Approved by the Monitoring Committee
20 December 2018

# Overview of main conclusions and key recommendations

| Evaluation Task | Main conclusion | Key recommendation |
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| Task 1 Monitoring the state of institutional capacities | • Overall, a consistent path towards achieving the targets established in 2014 is underway. | • For the next update measurement, work with a larger database of thematic experts.<br>• Add questions about the level of influence of the IBSR Programme as one factor that contributes to changes in institutional capacities. |
| Task 2.1 Impact of projects in reaching the Programme's Specific Objectives | • Most projects aim at various dimensions of institutional capacities. Projects do not focus on only one dimension. The capacities supported and developed by IBSR projects add value compared to other regional or national projects.<br>• 97% of project partners estimate that they benefit as an organisation from an Interreg BSR project.<br>• Main benefits of participating in Interreg mentioned by project partner are almost all related to the generation and adoption of new knowledge: "Learning from other regions/countries", "New contacts and access to networks", "Learning in a specific thematic field" and "Learning with practical examples and applications". | • Important to increase efforts on monitoring and collecting project 'learning experiences' as key project results and a valuable input for the final evaluation. |
| Task 2.2 Involvement of different types of partners | • The initial expectations were that 2% (in Priority 1) or 1% (in Priorities 2 and 3) of project partners should be private, for profit bodies. These goals have been widely exceeded, with 7% private partners in Priority 1, 11% in Priority 2 and 14% in Priority 3. A low level of involvement of private, for profit partners in Priority 1 cannot be interpreted as leading to a lower quality or effectiveness of projects under Priority 1.<br>• Projects in general benefit from the inputs provided by academic and research experts. At the same time, there is a risk, when too many research and academic partners are in a project that the projects gets too expert-driven and too academic. In | • A reduced administrative burden for private partners could make their involvement easier.<br>• Local, regional and national public authorities should be specifically targeted in campaigns to attract applicants and partners. Their benefits should be pointed out to any project promoter.<br>• If desired, the share of research and academic partners in a project can be limited to a degree (60%) by the Call requirements (maybe with an exception for SO 1.1 that focuses widely on large |

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| | this sense, it is important to have a balance of different types of organisations in the project to avoid this institutional 'lock-in' effect.<br><br>• The participation of public authorities is lower than in the previous Programme. Possible reasons: they no longer count as a 'public authority', there are fewer resources for cooperation projects in local, regional and national authorities, an increased competition for cooperation resources, a shift in the IBSR towards promoting and developing new business products and services that reduces the potential benefit for public authorities, or even cooperation fatigue to participate in 'yet another' Interreg project. | research infrastructure and universities). |
| Task 2.3 Contribution to EUSBSR | • The separation into flagship and non-flagship projects in IBSR seems to be artificial, not strict across all Policy and Horizontal areas, and ambiguous in some cases.<br><br>• Alignment with EUSBSR increased awareness of the Programme, even if it was known to many stakeholders from before the EUSBSR existed.<br><br>• The IBSR should not be the only funding source for the EUSBSR. | • A regular update of the survey of thematic experts to check the awareness of IBSR is recommended and to be able to compare over time. |
| Task 2.4 Effectiveness of programme support to EUSBSR coordination (priority 4) | • The support is generally appreciated by EUSBSR stakeholders, but the drawbacks (administrative burden) are also highlighted.<br><br>• The support is especially important as it covers costs which would have been challenging to cover otherwise, such as staff and travel costs, meeting costs, communication activities and the Annual Fora.<br><br>• Countries should show and increase their commitment, for example, by financing governance staff and capacity-building. | • Support for governance and capacities of EUSBSR stakeholders can and should continue but reducing administrative burden. |
| Task 2.5 Communication Strategy | • Most useful communication activities of the Programme are the project websites and the Programme events. A high level of usefulness is also seen for the programme newsletter and the project library. | • For management purposes it is recommended to adjust some strategy targets for 2023 in order to facilitate meaningful |

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| | • Social media channels and tools are generally are appreciated as less useful.<br><br>• The level of communication strategy effectiveness is high. | monitoring and evaluation in the future.<br><br>• For the next programming period, a more detailed communication strategy and intervention logic for communication is recommended, with intermediate objectives, and measurable ('SMART') output indicators, regular monitoring with more specific identification and monitoring (on 'awareness') of target groups and multipliers. |
| Task 2.6 Performance of the MA/JS | • The MA/JS carries out all the assigned tasks. Implementation seems to be of sufficient quality.<br><br>• Monitoring Committee members regard the MA/JS as very professional and competent. The support to projects can be considered as highly useful and effective.<br><br>• The MA/JS is efficient in spending its resources. The programme should offer more support to stimulate the dissemination and transfer of results.<br><br>• The annual internal operational evaluation is a very good instrument to summarise and reflect what has been done. | Proposed improvement with regard to the internal operational evaluations:<br><br>• To carry out regular satisfaction surveys to project partners, applicants or specific target groups, independently from the external evaluations.<br><br>• Hiring an external expert/moderator to accompany internal evaluation processes. The external expert could, for example, review the methodology for internal evaluations, raise points for further analysis and manage an internal reflection process (workshop). |