Interreg Baltic Sea Region

Mid-term evaluation of Programme impact

Case Study Report

SMART BLUE REGIONS

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1 Executive Summary

Impact on Target Groups by SMART BLUE REGIONS

SO	Target Group	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups	Dimension of institutional capacity
1.2	Regional authorities and institutions involved in designing and implementing blue RIS3	1) Establishment of a multi-level implementation scheme (including organisational structure and responsibilities) for blue RIS3 in each participating region. 2) Partners will also elaborate and test blue growth specific indicators to monitor blue RIS3 implementation. 3) Improvement and development of Blue growth implementation plans. 4) Transnational dialogue on functional RIS3 implementation. 5) Periodic dissemination to the ERDF MA network in the BSR.	1) Estonia is currently involved in developing a "Regional Blue Economy Action Plan" with the support of this project. 2) Riga region develops its own Blue Growth Strategy. 3) 6 Regions (Schleswig- Holstein, Skane) will use the project multi-level implementation scheme and the M&E indicator system to improve their RIS3 strategies in the mid-term review. 4) A Pilot Call on Blue Growth is prepared by the EUSBSR PA Innovation on joint projects. 5) An S3 network for blue growth is created that facilitates planning and implementation of better and more effective policy measures.	Increased operational capacity of regions to implement blue growth RIS3; Optimised thematic capacity for implementing innovative measure in blue growth fields Machinery & Technology, Life Science & Blue Medicine and Energy; Improved understanding of macro-regional synergies and transnational cooperation for blue growth	Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence; Improved governance structures and organisational set-up; More efficient use of human and technical resources (databases, technical solutions, small infrastructure etc.);
1.2	Blue Growth stakeholders like innovation support networks and clusters with a focus on blue growth, business associations and individual entrepreneurs/SMEs working on blue growth innovations as well as relevant academic and research institutions	1) Regional Stakeholder Events such as the "Workshop: Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain – future outlook for technologies and cooperation" 2) Multiple engagement of regional innovation actors with targeted information material on blue RIS3 3) Transnational partner meeting with participation of blue growth stakeholders, study visits etc. 4) Participation in conferences 5) Smart Blue Specialisation Web Portal. 6) Synergies with the BSR SUBMARINER network.	1) Learning about business opportunities in the blue growth value chains, e.g. nearly 90 participants at a Workshop on Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain. Still to come: Development of key technology development topics with stakeholders in each region. Development of 2 transnational project ideas in each of the 3 blue growth fields.	Improved understanding of macro-regional synergies and transnational cooperation for blue growth	Increased capability to work in transnational environment

2 Project description

The project "Smart specialisation and blue growth in the Baltic Sea Region" (SMART BLUE REGIONS) seeks to enhance blue growth opportunities based on increased capacity of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) to implement research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation (so called RIS3).

The lead partner is the Regional Ministry of Economic Affairs, Transport, Employment, Technology and Tourism Schleswig-Holstein (Germany). Six regions from the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) are cooperating in the project that involves also various stakeholders from the research and business sectors as associated organisations.

The project is included under the Specific Objective 1.2 Smart specialisation: To enhance growth opportunities based on increased capacity of innovation actors to apply smart specialisation approach. The project started in 2016 and will end in 2019. It has a total budget of EUR 1.84 million.

Challenges for the project partners are the need for capacity building measures to implement smart specialisation strategies and the existing disparities between the regions in their advancement with introducing RIS3, in particular, in novel areas of blue growth. There is still only a limited base of experience of proven policy measures when it comes to blue biotechnology / life science, maritime surveillance / technology or new propulsion technologies based on marine energy resources. Even at the European level there is no RIS3 specific guidance for blue topics. The aim of this project is thus to solve this lack and develop targeted support measures. In order to tackle these challenges, Smart Blue Regions will:

- 1. Increase the operational capacity of the six Baltic „Smart Blue Regions" to implement Blue Growth RIS3 by:
  - o Developing a multi-level implementation scheme on the regional level;
  - o Organising transnational policy stakeholder workshops for the regional authorities;
  - o Developing a monitoring and review system for evaluating, monitoring and benchmarking Blue Growth.
- 2. Help the six Regions optimise their own set of Blue Growth specific RIS3 implementation measures by integrating good practice cases from other regions by:
  - o Developing an engagement strategy for regional innovation actors with targeted information material on blue RIS3;
  - o Selecting, adapting and taking up new policy measures supporting Blue Growth.
- 3. Improve the understanding of macro-regional synergies and transnational cooperation by:
  - o Elaborating a Baltic Sea Region-wide study identifying Blue Growth cooperation opportunities;
  - o Operationalising joint transnational projects in the field of Blue Growth.

The Smart Blue Regions project promotes transnational cooperation with a particular focus on developing critical mass and integrated value chains in specific sectors.

3 Expected results, outputs and activities

In the framework of this project, three main outputs will be produced. First, the „Multilevel Implementation Scheme", which is a management plan for RIS3, will be developed and piloted by Smart Blue Regions. Second, the „Blue Growth M&E System" will help not only while monitoring the RIS implementation but also making blue growth more visible. As a main output at the end of the project the participating regions can draw on optimised "Blue RIS3 implementation plans". The focus is on the blue value chains of Machinery & Technology, Life Science & Blue Medicine and Energy.

Expected project results and outputs

Expected Project Results
1. Increased operational capacity of regions to implement blue growth RIS3. The RIS3 are a new policy instrument and no region can draw on well-established implementation procedures, yet. Thus there is currently still a good degree of uncertainty how the RIS3 are implemented. Especially in an area like Blue Growth that is often of cross-cutting importance for several identified key sectors. It is expected that – if approved - the "Smart Blue Regions" project will start in early 2016, by which all regions should have their RIS3 in place. RIS3 capacity building for regions in the project will therefore focus on defining the responsible authorities that are steering the implementation process for blue growth and determining the actions in this process and elaborating and integrating evaluation and monitoring mechanisms. This contributes to enhanced institutional knowledge and competence and improved governance structures and organisational set-up.
2. Optimised policy mix for blue growth smart specialisation by implementing innovative measures. While the first result is aiming primarily at a functional improvement of RIS3 implementation this second result is mainly focusing on thematic capacity building. Also the concept of Blue Growth is new and (opposed to mature sectors) only very few proven policy measures exists for this area. The participating regions aim to optimise their own set of policy instruments by integrating good practice cases from other region and / or sectors. In doing so they aim for the best feasible policy mix for blue growth smart specialisation (for their specific region), together with implementation partners from the business and innovation sectors, taking into account the environmental challenges and the economic potential. This contributes to enhanced institutional knowledge and competence and the more efficient use of human and technical resources.
3. Improved understanding of macro-regional synergies and transnational cooperation for blue growth. A third key result of the project will be the initiation of transnational interregional cooperation ventures based on identified macroregional synergies, with a particular focus on developing critical mass and integrated value chains in specific sectors. This will require the active involvement of the business sector (innovation actors, clusters, business and SME organisations), as well as an improved visibility of blue growth (both on the micro- regional as well as on the macroregional level, i.e. through joint representation at macro-regional events). This contributes to increased capability to work in transnational environment and the more efficient use of human and technical Resources.
Expected Documented Learning Experience
The regional authorities participating in "Smart Blue Regions" will develop (as result of a transnational learning experience) one Multi-level Implementation Scheme per region. Thus a total of 5 Multi-level Implementation Schemes will be developed in our project.
Regional authorities participating in "Smart Blue Regions" will improve territorial development strategies (action plans for the implementation of the RIS3) as result of a transnational learning experience). In 4 participating regions (LV, DE, FI, and SE) the partners are aiming to optimise their own set of implementation measures by integrating good practice cases from other region and / or sectors.
Expected Other Outputs
No. of local/regional public authorities/institutions involved: 5
No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support: 10
No. of enterprises cooperating with research institutions: 10
Amount of private investments matching public support in innovation or R&D projects: EUR 5 million
Amount of documented planned investments to be realised with other than the Programme funding: EUR 1 million

Source: Application Form Sections 3.8, 5.1 and 5.2.

The project's activities cover mostly the analysis and conceptual work at regional level (in each region with additional stakeholders), the organisation of regional stakeholder events, the preparation and implementation of transnational thematic workshops, and regular project team meetings (usually combined with transnational workshops or other transnational events). Examples are, in particular:

- Thematic workshops related to the three Smart Blue Regions topics (Machinery & Technology, Energy and Life Science) were planned for spring 2018 gathering business stakeholders from 6 BSR countries gathered in the project.

- Regional events: For example, the project together with Regional Council of Southwest Finland (as project partner) as well as the City of Turku organised a stakeholder event on 1st February 2017 in Turku (Southwest Finland) dedicated to regional key actors on blue growth. Some 70 participants from the public sector, universities and companies took part to the "Sea Day of Southwest Finland". Within the framework of the project Smart Blue Regions, Maritime Institute in Gdańsk together with Pomorskie in the EU Association (both project partners) organised a Consultation Seminar of Pomorskian Blue Growth Stakeholders on 18th July 2017. The seminar was attended by people representing the following sectors: biotechnology, seaports, shipbuilding and marine clusters.

In addition, the project promotes the participation of stakeholders in other BSR events that can be relevant, e.g. from the Submariner Network. For example, the Better Off Blue conference was organized by the Submariner Network on 27-28 September 2017 in Berlin. The project organised at this conference a workshop aiming at presenting and discussing concrete Blue Growth cooperation areas between "blue" regions around the Baltic Sea.

4 Project partnership

The project partnership includes eight partners from six different countries. There are five regional/ local public authorities, two research organisations as well as one not-for- profit association in the project consortium. The project involves no private, for-profit, partners. Local and regional public authorities are also considered to be the main target group of the project outputs and results.

Regional/ Local Public Authorities	Ministry of Economic Affairs, Transport, Employment, Technology and Tourism Schleswig-Holstein (DE)	Regional Council of Southwest Finland (FI)	Region Skane (SE)
	Ida-Viru County Government (EE)	Riga Planning Region (RPR) (LV)	
Research Organisations	Maritime Institute in Gdańsk (PL)	Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology (LV)	
Other	Pomorskie in the European Union' Association (regional network) (PL)		

In WP4 the project is addressing blue growth stakeholders directly. Therefore the project has ensured their cooperation by inviting them to become associated partners. In WP4 twelve associated partners with a mixed background in research and business cover the blue value chain of Machinery & Technology, Life Science & Blue Medicine and Energy. Among them are five business support organisations, five higher education and research institutions, one local public authority and one sectoral agency (health tourism).

This project focuses specifically on regional and national public authorities that are in charge of designing, monitoring and implementing Smart Specialisation Strategies as well as Innovation Policies and Strategies for blue growth. Therefore, regional authorities are the main target group and contribute most to project results and products. Other stakeholders cover the selected blue growth value chains, including research centres and technology providers, business associations, cluster and other private for-profit organisations. They contribute with their specific knowledge to building new networks in the emerging areas of the blue growth value chains in regions, countries and across BSR.

5 Contribution of the project to the EUSBSR

SMART BLUE REGIONS project works under the umbrella of the SUBMARINER network which is a Flagship of the EUSBSR under the Policy Area Innovation. The Lead partner of SMART BLUE REGIONS also acts as flagship leader of the SUBMARINER Network in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Another project partner, the Maritime Institute in Gdańsk (MIG), is co-leader of the SUBMARINER Network flagship project and (co-) coordinates the following strategic action fields of the SUBMARINER Roadmap: Actors, Ecosystem Services, Finance, Regulation and Image. This strong connection between the project and the EUSBSR network leads also to further joint dissemination activities. For example, on 8th November 2017, in the Maritime Culture Centre in Gdańsk, Poland, an international seminar entitled "How Can Maritime Business Benefit from the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region?" was held. It was organized as part of "Let's Communicate!" and "Smart Blue Regions" projects by "Pomorskie in the EU" Association, PA Ship and PA Safe of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). One objective was to encourage international cooperation focused on smart specializations and blue growth, explaining the cooperation opportunities collected in the Smart Blue Regions project.

Moreover, the SMART BLUE REGIONS project partners met with Mr. Niclas Forsling (EUSBSR PA Innovation Coordinator) in April 2017 in a workshop to learn more about the Baltic Sea Managing Authority Network and the network's interest to boost transnational cooperation through national ERDF funds. The project has regular contact with the ERDF MA Network in the Baltic Sea Region, which is aligned with the EUSBSR.

6 Communication and outreach to target groups

Communication at project level is coordinated by the external project management office at the Lead Partner, but regularly carried out by all project partners, covering the activities in which they are involved as organisers. The project partners are well aware that they should reach out to decision-makers about regional and national innovation support policies. Each partner has developed a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to reach out to relevant local/regional, national and private stakeholders.

The main target groups of the project are the local/regional and national authorities in the Baltic Sea Region that design and implement smart specialisation strategies. Wider target groups are, as defined by the Project's stakeholder engagement strategy: Academia, Administration, Business (business actors include: manufacturing and services, primary sectors, financial sector, creative industries, social

sector, large firms, established SMEs), Business Development Agencies, Chambers / Business Associations, Clusters, Competence centers, Interest groups, Research Institutes, Media.

Target Groups
WP2: The Regional authorities and institutions involved in designing and implementing blue RIS3. This refers in first place to the regional authorities participating in the project (i.e. the project partners themselves).
WP3: The regional authorities and institutions involved in designing and implementing blue RIS3. This refers in first place to the regional authorities participating in the project (i.e. the project partners themselves). The regional authorities and institutions involved are likely to use the revised action plans designed to implement the RIS3 (expected for 2018).
WP4: Blue Growth stakeholders like innovation support networks and clusters with a focus on blue growth, business associations and individual entrepreneurs/SMEs working on blue growth innovations as well as relevant academic and research institutions.

Source: Application Form Section 4.

The project uses a diverse set of instruments to communicate and reach out to target groups: Emailing a newsletter with a summary of project activities, Project specific email alerts (available on the project page), Invitation to project thematic workshops, Invitation to EMD 2018 workshop organized by SBR Partners, Face-to-face/web/phone interviews, Media: website, press releases, social media, etc. as well as additional optional activities: Invitation to EU/BSR-level meetings as regional representatives/experts, Individual meetings with organizations or representative bodies, Guest lectures on RIS3 and project outcomes, RIS3 regional summits, regular round-table, discussions / RIS3 regional summits, Consultations regarding the RIS3, Online surveys or open public online consultations[1].

The project foresees (not realised yet) the setting up of a Smart Blue Specialisation Web Portal, an online portal listing good practices and successful RIS3 pilot measures. The Online Portal will be preferably linked to an established platform in order to facilitate its durability beyond the end of the project lifetime. Possible links shall be explored with the S3 platform at the European level but also with the established platform of the SUBMARINER network.

The project connects to the SUBMARINER network to communicate with the target groups and to disseminate information about events, activities and results. The website of the project is also located at the SUBMARINER general website. Therefore, the project establishes synergies in communication and dissemination with other projects such as Baltic Blue Growth, Baltic Blue Biotechnology Alliance, Baltic RIM, InnoAquatech (South Baltic project).

The project tries to connect to other regional, national and European events for wider dissemination. For example, the SMART BLUE REGIONS project participated at the Smart Regions 2.0 Conference that gathered over 850 professionals in Helsinki to participate in a two day conference event on 1st and 2nd June 2017. The conference was organized by European Commission's DG Regio (Directorate-General for Regional and Urban policy) and by the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The Smart Blue Regions project was visibly represented during the conference. The project shared a stand with the Regional Council of Southwest Finland, one of the project's partner.

One important instrument to reach out to other regional authorities in charge of S3 strategies and blue growth priorities is the Network of ERDF Managing Authorities in the Baltic Sea Region (MA) which is

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[1] See also Smart Blue Regions Project (2016): "Stakeholder engagement strategy"

supported by the EUSBSR. The project has been invited several times to network meetings and presented its activities and achievements to the representatives of ERDF MA in the Baltic Sea Region. In fact, the communication of results and findings to the ERDF MA network is one important way to reach out to public policy decision-makers in the BSR (other than the ones involved in the project as partners).

7 Impact on target groups

The project outputs and results are leading to institutional learning experiences among the relevant target groups, i.e. the regional authorities in charge of smart specialisation strategies. At least 4 project partners that are in charge of their regional S3 strategies will either update their S3 strategy taking into account the knowledge gained through the project, or define an action plan to facilitate implementation of the existing S3 strategy in the fields of blue growth.

The project generates new knowledge and actively supports its utilization by the target groups (i.e. knowledge about diverse areas related to blue growth innovation and business opportunities, such as information on relevant actors, funding opportunities, relevant business contacts in other countries, technical and economic characteristics of innovations in the field, state-of-art in the BSR etc.). The project outputs help the target group to better design their S3 strategies and to define better targeted policies for the S3 implementation. Together with the extensive dissemination of information on funding opportunities and transnational contacts, this will have a positive impact on the ability of stakeholders to attract external private and public financial resources, as well as to work together transnationally. It can be expected that this leads to increased frequency and intensity of transnational contacts in the specific field of blue growth innovation and business development.

The expected results of the project lead to a potential impact among targeted stakeholders in the following dimensions of institutional capacity:

Dimensions of Institutional Learning induced by the Project			
Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence	Impact on the availability of knowledge about blue growth opportunities in novel fields	Impact on the availability of mechanisms for knowledge transfer	Impact on the utilization of knowledge about blue growth opportunities in novel fields
Improved governance structures and organisational set-up	Impact on the availability of organizational structures		Impact on the utilization of organizational structures
More efficient use of human and technical resources	Impact on the utilization of human resources		Impact on the utilization of technical resources
Increased capability to work in transnational environment	Impact on the available competences to work transnationally	Impact on the frequency of transnational contacts	Impact on the intensity of transnational contacts

Source: Application Form Section 3.8

The positive impact of the project on capacities is described by one project partner:

> "*Thanks to the project our official Regional Plan is updated and it now includes the new smart specialisation priority "blue growth"*.

- *Discussion and understanding on blue growth has increased inside our organisation and among regional stakeholders.*
- *Understanding on smart specialisation as a concept has increased in our organisation*".

Among the factors that hampered the effectiveness and impact generation, there is the diversity in approaches to S3 design and implementation in the different countries:

"*Expectation in the beginning maybe was, that all BSR regions treat smart specialisation in the similar way. However, it has come apparent that we actually implement RIS3 very differently. This understanding has been beneficial and should be considered as a valuable project result. It is also important that messages and lessons learnt on RIS3 implementation would be delivered to the European level, so that they could feed the conversations on the new programming period. Discussion among regions in our country on RIS3 implementation has increased and we have actively sought new viewpoints. Capacity to understand and implement smart specialisation has increased. Our implementation measures are more focused and considered, because we have needed to analyse and justify them to other partners in the project.*"

The interviewees mention that other factors that hamper a more extensive learning are budget constraints, lack of human resources, and the complexity of the topic.

The project enters now the phase where also other stakeholders of the blue growth value chains are increasingly involved in order to specify identified opportunities for transnational cooperation and to operationalise and prepare at least three joint transnational blue growth innovation cooperation projects (in three core areas of the three value chains defined). These projects might be financed by ESIF or by other initiatives such as ERA Net Blue Biotechnology, HORIZON 2020 or Intelligent Energy Europe). In this area, the capacity for blue growth stakeholders to work in a transnational environment is promoted.

Example of learning and capacity development for other relevant stakeholders:

A Smart Blue Regions workshop on "Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain – future outlook for technologies and cooperation" was organized in April 2018 by Pomorskie Association in EU and Maritime Institute in Gdańsk, together with GSG Towers Ltd. Nearly 90 participants attended the workshop representing all target groups: offshore industry entrepreneurs from shipyards, ship design offices, steel and engine producers etc. as well as regional administration of Smart Blue Regions. The workshop explored possible future cooperation ideas in four topics along the offshore wind energy (OWE) value chain in four parallel interactive sessions: Constructions: Wind Towers (design, optimization), Substation (concept design, design optimization, modular design), Foundation (new designs, new functionalities); Vessels: Seabed Preparation (offshore cabling / foundations, port / inland waterways dredging, deep sea mining), Installation Vessels (land-based vs. offshore assembly, direct delivery of components), Service Vessels (mother vessel accommodations, transfer vessels, service parts transport); Wind Farm Efficiency: Concept Design (turbines / substations / grid layout), Decommissioning of Constructions (modularity, recycling, new use), Multi-use of Constructions (aquaculture, biomass, energy storage, marine hydro kinetics, wave); Autonomous Operations (surveying, Operation & Maintenance). The event was highly rated by the participants due to the opportunity to establish new contacts and a wide range of proposed topics for discussion."

Source: News item on the project website: "Smart Blue Regions project Workshop: Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain – future outlook for technologies and cooperation"

8 Annex

List of Interviews conducted for the Case Study Research

Name	Organisation	Role in Project	Contact data (email or phone)	Date of interview
Carsten Beyer	s.Pro - sustainable projects GmbH	Project Manager	+4 9 30 832 141 744 cb@sustainable-projects.eu	23rd May 2018
Steffen Lüsse	Ministry of Economic Affairs, Transport, Employment, Technology and Tourism Schleswig-	Lead Partner – legal representative	+49 4319 884 637 steffen.luesse@wimi.landsh.de	1st June 2018
Clara Coornaert	s.Pro - sustainable projects GmbH	Communication Officer	+4 9 30 832 141 753 cc@sustainable-projects.eu	29th May 2018
Helinä Yli-Knuutila	Regional Council of Southwest Finland	Target Group representative	phone: +358 400 205 112 email: helina.yli-knuutila@varsinais-suomi.fi	30th May 2018

List of revised documents

- Project Application Form

- Project Progress Reports

- Project Website: https://www.submariner-network.eu/projects/smartblueregions/about-smart-blue-regions

- Smart Blue Regions Project (2016): "Stakeholder engagement strategy"

- Smart Blue Regions Project (2017): WP3 "Incorporating new blue growth policy measures into RIS 3 implementation" GoA 3.1 "Transnational identification of effective BLUE RIS3 implementation measures" Project synthesis report (177 pages).

- De Vet J-M, EDWARDS J, BOCCI M (2016): Blue Growth and Smart Specialisation. How to catch maritime growth through 'Value Nets'. S3 Policy Brief Series. No. 17/2016. JRC Technical Reports.