

Interreg Baltic Sea Region The First Call for Applications for Project Platforms Priorities 1-3

Announcement Note Timeline: 5 October 2017 – 28 February 2018

1. Introduction

Interreg Baltic Sea Region is launching the first call for applications for project platforms in selected specific objectives in its priorities 1-3.

A project platform is a framework for cooperation of core partners of projects funded by Interreg Baltic Sea Region and other funding programmes in a certain thematic field. It involves cooperation with other stakeholders in that thematic field beyond project partnerships, for example coordinators of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The main aim of project platforms is to increase the impact of Interreg Baltic Sea Region and other EU-funded projects in the area.

A project platform will be implemented as a project within the framework of Interreg Baltic Sea Region. Platform partners will have to provide their own contribution in order to receive Programme co-financing. The Programme is designed under the territorial cooperation goal of the European Union. In practice, the Programme combines financing from the European Union provided by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)¹ as well as the financial contribution of the Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation.

2. Main aims and outcomes

Project platforms reflect Interreg Baltic Sea Region's ambition to contribute to institutional capacity building in selected thematic fields in the region. Project platforms enable capitalisation of projects' results. Therefore, project platforms are expected to:

- Ensure more intensive use, better durability and transferability of projects' outcomes;
- Support communication of projects in their core thematic fields;
- Create a platform for exchange to streamline activities of different projects and to avoid duplication of efforts; and
- Deepen knowledge about projects' outcomes in the selected field.

Project platforms should concentrate on selected activities that bring the largest benefit in the specific thematic field. Project platforms could deliver outputs such as:

¹ ENI financing for Russia is subject to concluding a Financing Agreement between the European Union, the Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Germany.

- Policy papers or studies on the state of play and needs in the specific thematic field of the platform;
- Agreements on joint standards in the specific thematic field;
- Collection of best approaches to reaching end users of the project outcomes and their pilot implementation;
- Joint analysis of further potential financing sources that could be used for the implementation of project outcomes;
- Political statements endorsed as a result of strategic processes with participation of high level officials;
- Models demonstrating practical approaches to the alignment of funding (e.g. in cooperation with ERDF, ESF, EAFRD or EMFF managing authority networks);
- Task-oriented networks established to address particular challenges; and
- Models for sustainable and long-term exchange among platform partners.

3. Topics of project platforms

This call for project platforms is open for applications in selected specific objectives of the Programme, as detailed below. This means that each project platform has to be in line with the thematic focus of one of these objectives and contribute to the selected Programme results. More than one project platform may apply and be selected within each specific objective described below.

Priority 1 Capacity for innovation

- **Specific objective 1.2 Smart specialisation**
The Programme supports capacity building of authorities, innovation intermediaries, research institutions and enterprises to apply smart approach. It aims to support advancing implementation of smart specialisation strategies in the countries and regions of the Baltic Sea region.

Priority 2 Efficient management of natural resources

- **Specific objective 2.1 Clear waters**
The Programme supports enhancing the capacity of public authorities and practitioners to increase efficiency of water management. It helps develop integrated approaches to reducing nutrient loads and decreasing discharges of hazardous substances in the waters, advance related policy processes and support institutionalisation of the know-how.
- **Specific objective 2.4 Blue growth**
The Programme aims to strengthen sustainable and resource-efficient blue growth in the Baltic Sea region. It supports national, regional and local authorities, and business support and development organisations as well as research institutions in advancing blue growth business and related policy processes.

Priority 3 Sustainable transport

- **Specific objective 3.1 Interoperability**

The Programme covers capacity-building measures ensuring higher interoperability between transport modes and systems by sea, rail, road, inland waterways and air. It aims to better connecting the secondary and tertiary transport networks and nodes in the Baltic Sea region to core transport networks.

- **Specific objectives 3.3 Maritime safety**

The Programme supports building capacity of maritime administrations, rescue services, authorities, shipping operators, and ports to work with maritime safety and security. It helps develop policy proposals and institutionalise practical solutions for safer sea navigation.

- **Specific objectives 3.4 Environmentally friendly shipping**

The Programme supports building capacity of maritime actors to increase environmentally friendly shipping. It helps implement actions that reduce emissions into the atmosphere and the sea as well as pilot the use of alternative fuels for ships.

4. Examples of possible platform activities

Platform partnerships are free to choose their own working methods and include in their work plans any activities contributing to the aims and delivering the planned outcomes of the project platform. For example:

- Continuous mapping of the situation, resources and needs in the field addressed by the platform (special attention will be paid to the outcomes of other relevant cross-border and transnational projects as well as activities of the coordinators of the EUSBSR);
- Synthesising project outcomes and their further promotion towards end-users and decision-makers;
- Complementing the Programme's effort in collecting information about projects' achievements and benchmarking their good practice (e.g. concerning innovative approaches applied by the projects; supporting private partner involvement);
- Exchanging approaches in communication/stakeholder involvement among the projects in the platform (e.g. piloting a matchmaking approach to link specific target groups in a structured way);
- Exchanging information and data to produce models and scenarios for future development;
- Establishing task-oriented networks of stakeholders to solve particular challenges defined in the platform field;
- Piloting mechanisms for coordination of funding and initiation of new collaboration; and

- Providing input to Programme events and other communication as well as organising own events targeted at external audiences (e.g. thematic conferences/workshops presenting Programme achievements).

5. EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

As the main aim of project platforms is to increase the impacts of EU-funded projects in the area, it is important to ensure cooperation and coordination of the planned activities with the coordinators of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

The applicants are encouraged to establish cooperation with the relevant coordinators of the policy areas and horizontal actions of the EUSBSR (PACs/HACs) and discuss ways of linking platform activities and outcomes to policy processes in the region in the framework of the Strategy. The PACs/HACs are also encouraged to join project platform applications as partners to get the full benefits of this initiative.

For more information on the Strategy please go to: <http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/>.

6. Partnership of the project platforms

The project platform consortia should be built strategically, involving partners who demonstrate good knowledge of outputs of their regular projects (e.g. lead partners or leaders of work packages) and engaging coordinators of the EUSBSR. The platforms are encouraged to combine expertise, where thematically suitable, from different thematic priorities of the Programme e.g. transport with innovation or environment.

Platforms have to follow the same principles of composition of the partnership as regular projects. They have to involve at least three project partners from three different countries of the Programme area: a lead partner and at least two project partners. Lead partners must be located in the territory of an EU Member State in the Programme area or in Norway. At least one of the partners has to be located in the territory of an EU Member State in the Programme area. An additional requirement is that the partners have to represent at least two different regular projects co-financed by Interreg Baltic Sea Region and at least one project of another EU funding programme. The overall number of partners depends on the character of the platform. The number of partners should allow for efficient daily cooperation.

When establishing a platform partnership it is important to decide which groups of stakeholders are crucial for the platform consortium (and who will join as partners receiving Programme funding) and which should be involved in the activities in other ways e.g. as associated organisations or guests at platform meetings.

- A platform is led by a project platform leader. This lead applicant (lead partner) should be an organisation from a regular project funded by Interreg Baltic Sea Region or an EUSBSR Policy Area or Horizontal Action Coordinator. A platform leader is responsible for the preparation and submission of the platform

application. If the platform is approved, the lead partner takes over the full responsibility for management, communication, implementation, and co-ordination of activities among the involved partners. The lead partner bears legal responsibility for the whole partnership. The lead partner is also the link between the project platform and the MA/JS of the Programme.

- The core partnership should be based on the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme's regular projects. EUSBSR PACs/HACs may join the platforms as partners. Partner organisations from projects from other Interreg Programmes, such as South Baltic, Central Baltic, North Sea Region, Central Europe, Northern Periphery and Arctic as well as the Bonus Programme and other EU funding programmes are invited to join.
- In addition, applicants may reserve a budget for new partners to join the platform later (e.g. from the third call projects of Interreg Baltic Sea Region). Fields for information on reserved partners can be unlocked by the MA/JS upon a lead applicant's written request.
- In justified cases partner organisations located outside of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region area² may join the platforms as partners³. However, prior consultation with the MA/JS is needed.
- Furthermore, the platforms are encouraged to involve other important stakeholders as associated organisations.

Further details on the requirements and the composition of the partnership can be found in the Programme Manual.

7. Budget of project platforms

The total budget for a project platform can be up to EUR 1,000,000. Platforms with smaller budgets are encouraged to apply, too.

Project partners have to provide their own contribution to receive Programme co-financing. The level of these contributions depends on the Programme co-financing rate which varies between countries and funds. Partners from Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden are entitled to receive 75% ERDF co-financing, while partners from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland are entitled to 85% ERDF co-financing. Norwegian partners will receive 50% co-financing from Norwegian national funding. Russian partners will receive 85% Programme co-financing, combining the EU funding from the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the financial contribution of the Russian Federation⁴.

Partner organisations located outside of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region area are entitled to receive 75% ERDF co-financing when joining the platforms as partners.

The Programme rules for eligibility of costs apply. The majority of the platform funding is expected to cover staff costs, travel and accommodation costs as well as costs related to

² The Interreg Baltic Sea Region area covers eleven countries. It comprises eight EU Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, parts of Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden) and three partner countries (Belarus, Norway, parts of Russia). The detailed geographical coverage of the Programme is defined in the Cooperation Programme. Please note that Belarusian organisations are not eligible for funding.

³ For more information please check the Programme Manual, chapter C.1.4 "Project partners outside the Programme area", and in particular section "Application phase".

⁴ Provided the Financing Agreement has been signed.

organisation of events and other communication activities. External expertise may be included, if needed.

8. Duration of project platforms

The project platform duration consists of three phases: a contracting phase, an implementation phase and a closure phase. The contracting phase lasts three months and starts the day after the MC approval. The closure phase lasts three months. The duration of the implementation phase of the project platforms may vary and can last up to 36 months (but end no later than September 2021).

9. Project platform application and selection procedure

The MA/JS will support the development of project platforms by providing feedback to the project platform ideas and organising a platform development event. All applicants are required to consult their project platform idea with the MA/JS. For this, they should complete a platform idea form (available at interreg-baltic.eu) and ask for feedback. This consultation is a prerequisite for obtaining access to the online application system (BAMOS).

A project platform application will have to be completed in BAMOS. Guidance for filling in the application is provided in the application package at the Programme website interreg-baltic.eu. The guidance outlines the Programme expectations regarding quality and amount of information to be provided in the project platform application.

The table below summarises information about documents that applicants need to submit:

Project platform application	
Digital version	
Which documents?	Online application
When?	No later than 28 February 2018 at 16:00 CET (UTC+1)
How?	Submitting via online system: ba.bamos.eu
Paper version	
Which documents?	Signed application (identical to the digital version) Partner declarations for all project partners (including lead applicant) original or copies Optional: Letters of support from associated organisations
When?	No later than 28 February 2018 !!! The date on the post stamp must be the date of the deadline or earlier !!!
How?	Send documents to: Interreg Baltic Sea Region Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat c/o Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein (IB.SH) Grubenstraße 20 18055 Rostock, Germany

The MA/JS is responsible for the verification of the completeness and correctness of the submitted documents as well as for the assessment of applications. The assessment criteria are presented in Annex to the Programme Manual. However, during the assessment, particular attention is paid to the ability of the project platforms to capitalise knowledge and organise communication on behalf of the regular projects as well as to the additionality to the existing coordination and cooperation among the running projects.

The Monitoring Committee of the Programme will select the project platforms for funding at its meeting in June 2018. The Monitoring Committee is expected to select a few project platforms (four to six).

10. Programme language

The official language of the Programme is English. Therefore, all communication between applicants and the MA/JS is held in English. Information in application forms as well as official correspondence must be treated accordingly.

11. Further information and assistance

The official Programme documents are available on the Programme website: www.interreg-baltic.eu and include:

- Interreg Baltic Sea Region Cooperation Programme;
- Programme Manual;
- Application package for project platforms; and
- Guidance for Russian partners.

The MA/JS offers the following assistance to applicants:

- For general advice please contact: platform@interreg-baltic.eu;
- The MA/JS offers consultations at its offices in Rostock and Riga, as well as during a platform development event and via telephone/skype. If interested, please write to: platform@interreg-baltic.eu;
- The MA/JS organises an event to facilitate the project platform development process. Information about the upcoming event is available at the Programme website: <http://www.interreg-baltic.eu/events.html>.