



Assessment of the Impact of interventions on specific objectives of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 INTERREG V-A Poland - Denmark - Germany - Lithuania - Sweden

Final report

EU-Consult sp. z o.o.





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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is an evaluation study report of the *Assessment of the Impact of interventions on specific objectives of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 INTERREG V-A Poland – Denmark - Germany – Lithuania – Sweden – stage 2*.

The evaluation was conducted based on the following criteria:

- efficiency
- durability
- effectiveness
- usefulness

The study was conducted from October 2022 to February 2023.

The study used triangulation of research methods and techniques using:

- Desk research (documents, strategies, reports)
- CAWI (computer assisted website interview) with Project Lead Partners
- IDI (individual depth interview) with Members of the Monitoring Committee, Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat and Contact Points
- FGI (focus group interview) with Project Partners from 5 countries
- Case study (analysis of the most interesting projects and their results)
- Expert Panel (evaluation of the implementation of the Programme indicators by external experts).

The key findings of the evaluation are:

Table 1. Key findings of the report

Key information	
The Programme	The vast majority of the Programme's output indicators for the specific objectives have already been achieved by the end of 2022, which is a success in terms of meeting the programme's set aims. The highest achievement of output indicators regarding the specific objectives were observed with: the number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions, an increase in the expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions, a number of delivered strategies, measures and tools aimed at improving the standard, efficiency, interoperability and environmental performance of transport services and cross-border services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their innovation capacity. The Programme beneficiaries strongly believe that the partnerships formed for the Programme are of great value and that the joint work, problem solving and cooperation led to meaningful results, even though most of the partnerships were created solely for the needs of the Programme. It is therefore evident that the Programme's implementation positively influenced cross-border cooperation.

Key information

	<p>Partners from Poland, Germany, and Sweden have significantly the highest shares in the funds' allocation, which could be linked to the larger eligible areas in these countries under the Programme, as well as their population, number of entities, location of innovation centres and the presence of scientific and research institutions. The limited number and capacity of organisations in some of the eligible areas, i.e. the range of their activities and specialisations, affected their participation. This reason was highlighted especially in relation to Denmark, which had the lowest share of total eligible costs reported for the programme and the lowest number of beneficiaries. Universities played a very important role in the Programme – being the most common group among Lead partners (in approx. 40 % of regular projects).</p> <p>In regard to the ways of Programme implementation the importance of adjusting the dynamics of the Programme and the seed-money scheme were key factors contributing to achieving the Programme's objectives. The programme's timeline shows that additional steps were taken into account when, for example, a standstill of interest in some priority axes was noticed.</p>
<p>Projects</p>	<p>The Programme has laid a strong foundation for the next steps towards a "blue" and "green" future. The co-financed projects brought especially the soft results in the form of the development of intellectual capital, the development of institutional capacity and the development of open-mindedness but most importantly the ability to cooperate across borders. The more palpable results of the Programme were the new elaborated and tested-in-practice strategies, business models and also the piloting of technological solutions.</p> <p>As part of the partnerships, a number of solutions or solid foundations for solutions that continued in the future were developed.</p> <p>The <i>mental leap</i> and <i>technological leap</i>, can also be considered as the Programme's effects.</p>
<p>Cooperation and durability</p>	<p>In the frame of South Baltic Programme nearly 2,000 links were established between project partners through the 64 regular projects and the more than 400 organisations involved in them. The cities with the highest number of formed partnerships were: Gdańsk, Klaipeda, Rostock and Szczecin - with each of them having established a total of over 100 links through the jointly implemented projects in the Programme. These four cities, all of which have a strong regional leadership role with a cluster of universities, research institutions and innovation centres, were the most active and visible among the Programme participants.</p> <p>Cooperation has been the most rewarding and the most difficult thing about the Programme at the same time. Most of the concluded partnerships declare to continue their cooperation in the future. The durability of partnerships to some extent depends on satisfaction with cooperation and the results achieved.</p> <p>Cooperation in the partnerships was influenced by cultural differences between partners. Although the partners generally</p>

Key information	
	<p>appreciated the possibility of cooperation in the international group, the differences between them were a challenge.</p> <p>Intercultural differences concerned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different work culture and approach to work, • different mentalities, • different approaches to procedures • different amounts of time needed to process decisions • different project expectations. <p>The intercultural differences between the participating countries were felt troublesome by individual project partners, it was also opinion shared by Contact Points.</p> <p>Partners and representatives of Contact Points expect support in this area. They suggested the need to provide support in the form of procedures and specialists who would raise awareness of the similarities and differences between the countries, as well as help resolve conflicts in emergencies, or even be mediators.</p>
Implementation of horizontal principles	<p>All projects were required to ensure compliance with the horizontal principles of the Programme. All applicants were required to explain in the application form how their proposals contributed to equal opportunities and non-discrimination as well as equality between men and women In accordance with the Programme requirements only projects contributing in a positive way or optionally: neutral, were assessed positively.</p> <p>Meanwhile administrative burdens met by projects were frequently assessed negatively. However, but hope is brought by the programme's new edition where e.g. the electronic signing of subsidy contracts is planned to be introduced by the MA.</p>
Evaluation of information and promotion activities	<p>The Programme Communication Strategy has proven useful in the implementation of communication activities – the Strategy was generally recognized as a basis for communication activities, even though low awareness of its content was observed. Its strength is its flexibility, which helped especially during the pandemic period. Social media and website were rated as the most effective tools in the scope of information and communication activities of the Programme. The printed materials, especially brochures and leaflets, were as the least effective ones means of communication.</p> <p>The Programme's communication was effective for people who had prior knowledge of the Programme's existence. However, this communication did not reach to a satisfactory extent the people who did not have such knowledge. The methods of promotion were assessed rather positively, with the exception of the website, which needs improvement.</p>

Key information

<p>Update of result indicators specific to the Programme</p>	<p>Most indicators met or even exceeded their target values.</p> <p>SMEs have expanded international cooperation and found their niche as suppliers of specialized end products and intermediates and innovative IT solutions. The growth of the circular economy is expected to continue. The current economic situation may facilitate public acceptance of new solutions related to, for example, waste management and unconventional energy sources. There has also been a positive change in the tourism sector thanks to the Programme activities. Regarding transport projects, results seem to be positive and promising despite all negative external conditions (pandemic, political and economic situation). Moreover, there is also a growing potential for cooperation capacity, especially among small organizations and the ones without experience in cross-border cooperation. Language skills are improving, and stakeholders are willing to implement best practices from, e.g. Scandinavia. Project-related travel is on the rise.</p> <p>The indicator that did not meet its target value was <i>Performance in the South Baltic area in the provision of transport services of high quality and environmental as well as performance in uptake of green technologies in order to decrease the pollution discharges</i>. This was caused by the factors beyond the Programme's influence, such as high costs in the environmental technology sector. Moreover, constantly changing national legislation was also a hinderance for the green technologies area, as well as the rapid development in terms of technology and innovation. Over the 6 years of the Programme implementation, a lot has changed in terms of the environment, available technologies and the level of priority needs.</p>
<p>Case Studies</p>	<p>The projects implemented contributed to the realization of the specific objectives of the Programme. Cooperation took place within the framework of international partnerships.</p> <p>As part of the partnership, a number of strategies, textbooks, industry agreements were developed, the projects managed to develop and test new technologies and solutions for sustainable development, organize many events for SME, cultural events and tourism events. As part of the projects, students exchanged knowledge and gained new competences. All projects led to establishing contacts of entities around the South Baltic, exchange of knowledge, exchange of experiences and seeding of a common "South Baltic Identity".</p> <p>All activities took place based on ideas for blue -green sustainable development of the South Baltic area.</p>
<p>Conclusions and recommendation</p>	<p>The report created several specific recommendations addressed to the various parties co-creating the Programme. As main recommendations, consideration should be given to increasing expenditures on costly innovation projects. Moreover, the involvement of universities and research institutions should be further supported. The results developed in projects and implemented in practice should be supported by expert (scientific) knowledge as connecting research and development entities with practices increasing project results' quality and durability and</p>

Key information

eliminating risks. To ensure that the Programme's projects also have a practical dimension, emphasis should be placed on introducing more pilots into the projects, as well as optimising partnerships and increasing the participation of actors with practical experience.

It is also crucial to attract smaller enterprises, especially from regions with less access to networking and cross-border exchange opportunities. Therefore, there is a need for a platform containing a database of institutions that want to work within the SB Programme, containing their expectations for future cooperation. A separate path of financial support for small institutions could also be considered.

In regards to reducing administrative burdens, the JS could recommend and accept only electronic documents. It would be beneficial for the environment, decrease the bureaucracy and, more importantly, present the South Baltic Programme as eco-friendly.

A compulsory task in the project of combatting the cultural differences between the Programme Member States participating in the project could be considered. This could prevent communication problems and facilitate cooperation. Moreover, beneficiaries should be encouraged to actively participate and promote their projects at conferences and events outside the eligible area, at supra-regional or even European level.

2. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the conducted evaluation is the assessment of the INTERREG V-A Poland – Denmark - Germany – Lithuania - Sweden (South Baltic) Programme's (here in after: "the Programme") effectiveness and analysis of its results as well as the Programme's impact on the socio-economic life of the inhabitants of the area of Programme support.

The evaluation was conducted based on the following criteria:

- efficiency
- durability
- effectiveness
- usefulness

TASK 1. PROGRAMME IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The analysis of the Programme included in particular:

- whether the specific Programme objectives have been achieved in relation to the priority axes (and to what extent),
- what are the results of the Programme in terms of cooperation in the South Baltic region and what are the areas of the greatest progress,
- assessment of the contribution to cross-border cooperation and differentiated absorption of resources in the various regions covered by the Programme, their impact on the activity of the Beneficiary in the Programme and their influence on the success or failure of the Programme,
- whether similar results could have been achieved at a lower cost and, if so, how.

The analysis of the projects included the following:

- the results of respective projects,
- the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the projects' types, impact on the South Baltic area and location of their implementation,
- what kind of encouragement was used to promote engagement in other cross-border projects,
- identification of bad project practices.

The analysis of cooperation and durability included detailed characteristics of project partnerships:

- analysing if they had existed before or if they were created for the Programme's needs,
- will they operate in the future, and if so, in what areas,
- whether the partners are planning to absorb any financing from the EU or other than EU funds,
- whether the partners are interested in establishing new partnerships,

- what are the obstacles to building partnerships or implementing projects together

TASK 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

Analysis of horizontal principles included:

- Evaluation of how and to what extent the principles of equal opportunities for men and women, non-discrimination, and of sustainable development were respected in the course of the Programme implementation.
- Analysis of the extent to which the implementation of the Programme takes into account the policy of reducing the administrative burden for Applicants and Beneficiaries.

TASK 3. EVALUATION OF INFORMATION AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

Assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the information and promotion sources, tools and activities since the beginning of the programme implementation: The analysis was carried out for the corpus of information and promotion activities (holistic attitude) and the respective information and promotion activities.

Task 4. Update of result indicators specific to the Programme

As part of this Task a separate Expert Panel was conducted for each of the indicators: this allowed a thorough discussion of each indicator and their correct updating.

RESEARCH METHODS AND TOOLS

Research methods contained:

- Desk research - method based on the analysis of found data. It includes a summary of existing studies and documents in a given area and data obtained from the Joint Secretariat. It is suitable because it will allow contrasting the found data with the acquired data, which often leads to interesting conclusions.
- CAWI – an interview conducted through an online channel. The survey was performed with Lead Partners. Using the CAWI method, we are able to reach a much larger number of respondents. Thanks to the fact the tool being online, the time of performing the study was reduced. The return rate of the survey was 30%.
- Partnership Network Analysis - the analysis of the partnership networks took into account the intensity of contacts, their financial and geographical dimension, and their durability. To carry out the analysis, the contractor used monitoring data and data collected in CAWI/CATI from all Polish, Swedish, Danish, German and Lithuanian Lead Partners.
- IDI - a qualitative method of collecting information during an individual interview with the respondent. In this method, the focus is on freedom of expression. The interviewer directs the conversation so that all topics are covered. During the research, 30 interviews were conducted with members of the Monitoring Committee, Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat and Contact Points.
- FGI - a structured debate of several/a dozen individuals on a specific topic. It is conducted according to a scenario given by a specific conversation objective and guidelines for the moderator to conduct the discussion. During the study, 5 group interviews were conducted with project partners from each country.

- Case Study – a description of a phenomenon that often serves as a model for a project to compare it to. The method analyses and evaluates phenomena that occur in reality. There were 14 case studies developed for projects implemented within the Programme.
- Expert Panel - specialists in a given branch meet to discuss a given topic. The Expert Panel was conducted online, and it gathered 9 experts representing various specialties

The data in the report comes from the following evoked sources:

Table 2. Source of data in the report

Research technique	Respondents	Number	Additional information
CAWI (computer assisted website interview)	Lead Partners	18	An invitation to participate in the survey was sent to all Lead Partners of regular projects. It was renewed four times. One telephone reminder about the survey was made. The responses collected represent 35% of all Lead Partners (share of LPs from each country: Poland 38,9%, Sweden 33,3%, Germany and Lithuania 11,1%, Denmark 5,6%.
IDI (individual in-depth interview)	Members of the Monitoring Committee, Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat and Contact Points	34	Monitoring Committee – 16 interviews Managing Authority – 2 interviews Joint Secretariat - 6 interviews Contact Points – 10 interviews
FGI (Focus Group Interview)	Project Partners	36	5 FGI was conducted. Poland – 12 participants Denmark – 4 participants Lithuania – 7 participants Germany – 7 participants Sweden – 6 participants

Methodological note:

Of the aforementioned research techniques, only CAWI is a quantitative technique. Therefore, the quantitative analysis was conducted on the basis of Lead Partners' responses.

From the other research techniques, qualitative data were obtained - on the basis of these we present an analysis of the collected responses, typology of responses, also descriptions of extreme cases and opinions.

3. TASK 1. PROGRAMME IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.1. THE PROGRAMME

Throughout the implementation of the Programme, there have been 6 calls for proposals for regular projects and 4 calls for proposals for seed money projects, as well as one mini-call. The latest call for proposals (4th seed money call) was closed on 21 November 2022.

Table 3. Calls for proposals - summary

Regular projects	Seed Money	Mini Call
6	4	1

Source: Annual Implementation Reports (years 2015-2021)

The 6th call for proposals for regular projects was held 1st October -18th of December 2018. Its results were announced in May 2019. In 2020 a Mini Call directed for ongoing projects (possible extensions of projects under implementation) was announced. With the Mini Call, the Programme aimed at providing support for projects to extend their scope and to mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19. Additionally, throughout the programme, there have been 4 calls for seed money, which aimed at allowing for potential South Baltic partnerships to develop projects of higher quality and submit them within regular calls. The seed money calls ran in 2016, 2017, 2021 and 2022.

The total number of applications received throughout all calls for proposals is shown below.

Table 4. Number and value of applications received

	Regular projects	Seed Money
Number of applications	121	147
Total value of applications	Over 141 MEUR	4.74 MEUR

Source: Annual Implementation Reports (years 2015-2021)

Regarding the approved applications, out of the 121 applications submitted for regular projects, 64 were approved by the Monitoring Committee. Regarding the seed money applications, 69 were approved under the first three calls for proposals (the selection of the 4th Seed money call projects is expected on 27 February 2023). Additionally, 9 projects extensions were approved for funding in the Mini Call.

Table 5. Number of approved projects

Regular projects	Seed Money	Mini Call
64	69*	9

*excluding the 4th call for proposal

Source: Annual Implementation Reports (years 2015-2021)

Regarding the calls for proposals for regular projects, the highest number of applications was received in the first call (27) where the total value of applications was 35.3 MEUR. The second highest number of applications was received in the third call, with a number of 24 and a total value of 32.1 MEUR. In the last three calls for proposals, applications could not be submitted in some specific objectives – due to depletion of allocation in those specific objectives. In the 4th call for proposals, applications could be submitted except for specific objectives 1.1, 1.2 (due to no

funding available) and 2.1 (which was available in the 5th call). The 5th call for proposals was for projects within specific objectives 2.1, 2.2, 3.1 and 4.1. The 6th call for proposals was open only for specific objectives 2.2, 3.1, 4.1 and 5.1. Detailed information on the number of applications in each call for regular projects and their total value are presented below.

Table 6. Calls for proposals - applications for regular projects

Calls for proposals	No1	No2	No3	No4	No5	No6
Year of announcement	2015	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018
Number of applications	27	23	24	20	13	16
Total value of applications [MEUR]	35.3	25.5	32.1	19.2	18.4	14.8

Source: Annual Implementation Reports (years 2015-2021)

In terms of approved projects, the approval rate varied between calls for proposals. In the first call for proposals, only 37.04% were approved, with the total value of the 10 selected projects of 11.4 MEUR. The highest approval rate was reached in the 5th call for proposals, where out of 13 applications, 10 were selected for funding under the Programme. Detailed information on the number of approved applications, their total value, and the approval rate per call for proposals can be found in Table 7.

Table 7. Call for proposals - approved applications

	No1	No2	No3	No4	No5	No6
Number of approved projects	10	12	12	11	10	9
Total value of projects [MEUR]	11,4	13,6	17,27	10,55	15,07	8,74
Approval rate	37.04%	52.17%	50.00%	55.00%	76.92%	56.25%

Source: Annual Implementation Reports (years 2015-2021)

In terms of the breakdown of approved projects, priority axis 2 (natural and cultural heritage/green technologies) was the most popular axis, with 29 out of a total of 64 regular projects and 25 out of 69 seed money applications co-financed. Excluding the priority axis VI (Technical Assistance), which was not a subject to open calls, the axis with the least amount of projects was priority axis IV, with only 12 projects in total (8 regular and 4 seed money). The total eligible expenditure of the projects reported by December 31, 2022 in this priority axis, which equalled to 8,281,203.33 EUR, was not the lowest in the whole programme, but the projects in priority axis V (cooperation capacity) had the lowest share in the breakdown of total eligible expenditure. Priority axis II had the biggest share in all three aspects – number of regular projects, seed money projects and total eligible expenditure (reported by 31.12.2022). A significant share of seed money projects (almost 30%) was found in Priority I. Detailed information on the breakdown of approved applications and total eligible expenditure reported for each priority axis can be found in Table 8.

Table 8. Distribution of projects according to priority axes (signed contracts)

	Regular	Seed Money	Total	Total eligible expenditure in contracted projects (as of 31-12-2022) (EUR)	Total eligible expenditure reported (as of 31-12-2022) (EUR)
Priority I (Business innovation capacity and internationalisation)	7	19	26	12,387,656.43	11,325,285.31
Priority II (Natural and cultural heritage/Green technologies)	29	25	54	50,104,65,89	43,473,048.85
Priority III (Transport)	9	11	20	17,470,813.04	14,346,469.85
Priority IV (Blue and green skills)	8	4	12	11,336,744.65	9,951,476.64
Priority V (Cooperation capacity)	11	9	20	5,657,754.37	4,947,420.50
SUBTOTAL (Priorities I-V)	64	69	133	96,957,445.39	84,043,701.15
Priority VI (Technical Assistance)	n/a	n/a	2	6,638,303.00	5,191,534.14
TOTAL			135	103,595,748.38	89,235,235.29

Source: Annual Implementation Reports (years 2015-2021), SL2014¹

3.1.1. THE EXTENT OF ACHIEVEMENT OF SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

PRIORITY I (BUSINESS INNOVATION CAPACITY AND INTERNATIONALISATION)

Under the priority axis 1, it was planned to address the challenge of the low innovation and internationalisation capacity of SMEs from the South Baltic area. It was found that in some Programme regions, there is insufficient organisational support by intermediary structures and low availability of international business advisory services and matchmaking actions for the expansion of the SMEs to international markets within and beyond the South Baltic area.

In order to achieve the aim of priority axis 1, which was *Strengthening international activeness and innovation capacity of the South Baltic blue & green economy*, two specific objectives were stated in the Programme:

Specific objective 1.1:

Increase the presence of blue and green sector SMEs from the South Baltic area in international markets through joint cross-border actions

Specific objective 1.2

¹ as retrieved from SL2014 on 16-01-2023 by the MA

Improve the transfer of innovation for the benefit of blue and green sector SMEs through joint cross-border actions

The main target groups of this priority axis were:

- SMEs representing blue and green sectors of the economy and interested in expanding their business operations to international markets (including other South Baltic regions, other European countries and third markets, e.g. the Far East),
- SMEs representing blue and green sectors and developing/transferring innovative products and services within the South Baltic area.

The initial allocation of budget (co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund - ERDF) for this priority axis was 9,715,471.00 EUR (12% of total budget), with 4,207,346.00 EUR ERDF allocated to Specific objective 1.1 (Internationally active blue and green SMEs) – 5% of the budget and 5,508,125.00 EUR ERDF allocated to Specific objective 1.2 (Innovative blue and green SMEs) – 7% of the budget.

In total, there were 26 projects approved in Priority Axis 1, out of which 7 were regular projects and 19 - seed-money. The amount of ERDF funding for this priority reported by beneficiaries up to 31.12.2022 was 9,301,312.47 EUR.

The expected programme results and the programme output indicators are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Priority Axis 1: expected programme results and programme output indicators

	Specific objective 1.1: Increase the presence of blue and green sector SMEs from the South Baltic area in international markets through joint cross-border actions	Specific objective 1.2 Improve the transfer of innovation for the benefit of blue and green sector SMEs through joint cross-border actions
Expected programme result	Increased presence of blue and green sector SMEs from the South Baltic area in international markets	Improve the transfer of innovation for the benefit of blue and green sector SMEs through joint cross-border actions
Programme result indicator	Performance in the South Baltic area with regard to the presence of blue and green sector SMEs in international markets	Performance in the South Baltic area in the transfer of innovation for the benefit of blue and green sector SMEs
Programme output indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of cross-border support services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their internationalisation • Number of cross-border support services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their competitiveness • Number of enterprises receiving support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of established or enhanced cross-border clusters, networks and triple-helix models • Number of cross-border services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their innovation capacity • Number of cross-border services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their competitiveness • Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions

Source: Programme Manual and Annual Implementation Report (2021)

The final results for the programme output indicators for Specific objective 1.1 are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. SO 1.1: programme output indicators

	Value: (reported until 31.12.2022)	2022 Target (2023)	Value	2022/2023 achievement rate
Number of cross-border support services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their internationalisation	45	10		450%
Number of cross-border support services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their competitiveness	45	10		450%
Number of enterprises receiving support	187	350		53.43%

Source: Data received from the Joint Secretariat

Until the end of 2022, forty-five cross-border support services/programmes were delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their internationalisation implemented under the Programme (with a target value of 10) – this result significantly exceeded the target value (450% of achievement rate). The second indicator - number of cross-border support services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their competitiveness, also exceeded its target value (10) and equalled 45 in 2022. The third indicator was achieved at 53.43% in 2022, with a number of 187 enterprises receiving support (out of the targeted 350). In 2019, two indicators were removed from the Programme CO02 and CO04 that were in the beginning unnecessary selected to the programme because Programme do not provide grants to enterprises, and that this indicator applies only to enterprises receiving non-financial support, and at that time (in 2019) the target value was not updated.

Regarding Specific objective 1.2, the final results for the programme output indicators are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. SO 1.2: programme output indicators

	Value: (reported until 31.12.2022)	2022 Target (2023)	Value	2022/2023 achievement rate
Number of established or enhanced cross-border clusters, networks and triple-helix models	6	5		120%
Number of cross-border services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their innovation capacity	62	10		620%
Number of cross-border support services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their competitiveness	62	10		620%
Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	293	10		2930%

Source: *Data received from the Joint Secretariat*

All of the programme output indicators of Specific objective 1.2 (Innovative blue and green SMEs) have been far exceeded already in 2022. The most significant results are observed for the number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions – the achievement rate equalled 2930% in 2022. It was highlighted during the study, especially during the individual interviews, that the research institutions and universities turned out to be extremely important partners in many projects and partnership-building. The number of cross-border services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their innovation capacity and competitiveness also significantly exceeded the target value – in 2022, the achieved values of these indicators were both 62, with a target value of 10. The programme also led to the creation of 6 cross-border clusters, networks and triple-helix models (in 2022), which is also a very satisfactory result (with the target value of 5).

The scope of Priority 1 resulted in a high level of interest in participating in the programme and satisfactory results, as most of the target values of the programme's output indicators set for two of the specific objectives were achieved. The objectives of the increased presence of blue and green sector SMEs from the South Baltic area in international markets and improvement of the transfer of innovation for the benefit of blue and green sector SMEs through joint cross-border actions were largely met, especially with regard to the innovation aspect of the priority. This statement was also frequently repeated in the individual interviews, in which the interviewees pointed out that the knowledge transfer and mutual benefit, especially with regard to the development of new, solution-oriented models and systems, was one of the very essential advantages of the programme. At the same time, however, the participants and their consortia proved to be very effective in providing cross-border support services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs, which was also an important objective of the programme.

The ability to bring beneficiaries together and encourage them to work together was cited as one of the most important effects of this priority. The programme has resulted in many green and blue sector companies starting to collaborate and gaining the ability to go to the international market together to promote themselves and create innovative offers (for details on the projects implemented in each priority axis, see Chapter 3.1. The results of finalized projects and on the good practices developed under the programme. Interestingly, due to the largest number of projects in the first calls for proposals, this priority became the first to exhaust its budget. One of the very important and valuable outcomes of the Programme in this axis, which was particularly highlighted in the individual interviews, is the connection of entities working in similar fields and the formation of industry networks.

PRIORITY II (NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE/GREEN TECHNOLOGIES)

Priority axis 2 was set as a response to the challenges in the area in regard to the unbalanced seasonal patterns and tourism intensity in the South Baltic area as well as to the high potential of green areas in the South Baltic territory for providing opportunities for active holiday and leisure activities and the high quality of natural and cultural heritage sites, with unexplored opportunities for cross-border services and products in blue and green tourism. With regard to the environmental aspect, it was noted that there is a significant challenge in the area in relation to environmental pressures resulting from the concentration of population and economic activities in urban centres and coastal areas, such as a higher risk of eutrophication and loss of biodiversity,

harmful air quality problems resulting from factors such as the use of fuels of insufficient quality, the burning of waste in unsuitable boilers and the use of old, high-emission heat sources. Nevertheless, the region was found to have a high potential for developing green technology sectors based on extensive natural resources, including renewable energy.

In order to achieve the objective of the second priority axis, which was established as *Exploiting the environmental and cultural potential of the South Baltic area for blue and green growth*, two specific objectives were stated in the Programme:

Specific objective 2.1:

Increased development of the South Baltic area’s natural and cultural heritage assets into sustainable tourist destinations

Specific objective 2.2

Increased use of green technologies in order to decrease the pollution discharges in the South Baltic area

The main target groups of this priority axis were:

- Visitors (tourists and inhabitants) to natural and cultural heritage areas/sites in the South Baltic area
- Managers of regional/local tourist agencies
- Managers of natural and cultural heritage sites
- Public institutions and equivalent public entities in the South Baltic area

The initial allocation of budget for this priority axis was estimated at 40,249,627.00 EUR ERDF (49% of total budget ERDF allocation– the highest among different Programme’s priority axes), with 21,587,198.68 EUR ERDF allocated to Specific objective 2.1 (Natural heritage)– 26% of the budget and 18,662,428.32 EUR ERDF allocated to Specific objective 2.1 (Green technologies) – 23% of the budget. This was the predominant priority axis, which is clearly evident from the allocation of funds.

In total, there were 54 projects in total approved for this Priority Axis, out of which 29 were regular projects and 25 - seed money. Therefore, the amount of ERDF funding for this priority reported by beneficiaries by 31.12.2022 was 35,365,391.52 EUR.

The expected programme results and the programme result and output indicators are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Priority Axis 2: expected programme results and programme result and output indicators

	Specific objective 2.1: Increased development of the South Baltic area’s natural and cultural heritage assets into sustainable tourist destinations	Specific objective 2.2 Increased use of green technologies in order to decrease the pollution discharges in the South Baltic area
Expected programme result	Increased popularity of natural and cultural heritage areas/sites as sustainable tourism destinations	Increased use of green technologies by South Baltic area stakeholders benefiting from cross-border cooperation

	Specific objective 2.1: Increased development of the South Baltic area's natural and cultural heritage assets into sustainable tourist destinations	Specific objective 2.2 Increased use of green technologies in order to decrease the pollution discharges in the South Baltic area
Programme result indicator	Performance in the South Baltic area in the use of natural and cultural heritage assets as sustainable tourist destinations	Performance in the South Baltic area in the uptake of green technologies in order to decrease the pollution discharges
Programme output indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of pilot investments co-financed by the Programme in blue and green tourism infrastructure and services • Number of delivered blue and green tourism services, products and tools • Increase in the expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions • Number of delivered blue and green services, products and tools exploiting the environmental, natural and cultural potential of the South Baltic area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of pilot investments co-financed by the Programme in the uptake of green technologies • Number of delivered green technology services, products, standards and tools • Number of delivered blue and green services, products and tools exploiting the environmental, natural and cultural potential of the South Baltic area

Source: Programme Manual and Annual Implementation Report (2021)

The final results for the programme output indicators for Specific objective 2.1 are shown below.

Table 13. SO 2.1: programme output indicators

	Value: 2022 (reported until 31.12.2022)	Target (2023)	Value 2022/2023 achievement rate
Size of pilot investments co-financed by the Programme in blue and green tourism infrastructure and services	686,781.69	325,000	211.32%
Number of delivered blue and green tourism services, products and tools	265	75	353.33%
Increase in the expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	108 575	6 300	1,723.41%
Number of delivered blue and green services, products and tools exploiting the environmental, natural and cultural potential of the South Baltic area	265	75	353.33%

Source: Data received from the Joint Secretariat

The increase in the number of visits to supported cultural and natural heritage sites and attractions far exceeding the target (108,575 against 6,300 targeted visits) shows significant potential for supporting this type of activity, as the interest of tourists was much higher than initially expected. Furthermore, by the end of 2022, the programme provided a total of 265 services, products and tools for blue and green tourism, which is 353.33% of the target, which also demonstrates a high level of interest as well as satisfactory productivity of priority axis 2. The same value was estimated for the number of delivered blue and green services, products and tools exploiting the environmental, natural and cultural potential of the South Baltic area – 265 with a

target value of 75. The programme's third output indicator for this specific objective, size of pilot investments co-financed by the Programme in blue and green tourism infrastructure and services, was also above the targeted value, with a value of 686,781.69 against 325,000 of the target values.

In regard to Specific objective 2.2, the results for the programme output indicators are shown below.

Table 14. SO 2.2: programme output indicators

	Value: (reported 31.12.2022)	2022 until (2023)	Target (2023)	Value	2022/2023 achievement rate
Size of pilot investments co-financed by the Programme in the uptake of green technologies	2,007,805.43		1,000,000		200.78%
Number of delivered green technology services, products, standards and tools	38.2		25		152.80%
Number of delivered blue and green services, products and tools exploiting the environmental, natural and cultural potential of the South Baltic area	38.2		25		152.80%

Source: Data received from the Joint Secretariat

All of the programme output indicators of Specific objective 2.2 were already reached in 2022. The pilot investments in the uptake of green technologies have already exceeded the target value in 2022 (200.78 % of achievement rate), which shows that thanks to the programme, the institutions improved their capacities of using green technologies, e.g. in areas such as waste management solutions and the adaption of new heating solutions. The number of delivered green technology services, products, standards and tools, as well as the number of delivered blue and green services, products and tools exploiting the environmental, natural and cultural potential of the South Baltic area, were also higher than initially targeted (38.2, with the main target being 25).

Priority II (Natural and cultural heritage/Green technologies) was the most dominant among all priority axes – both in terms of the allocated budget and the number of projects. As a result, the vast majority of the programme's output indicators were achieved. However, there is a difference between the two specific objectives in terms of the perception of the degree of innovation and the quality of the results, which was frequently pointed out in the individual interviews.

Within this priority axis, the results and relevance of the implemented activities were assessed separately with regard to a specific objective. It was highlighted that the topic of natural heritage was very popular among the applicants. However, it was also noted in the individual interviews, that this could be related to the "ease" of developing a project proposal and submitting an application on this theme, as the assumptions for this specific objective fit very well with the ongoing activities in the region in this regard. According to the interviews, the proposed project scopes within the natural and cultural heritage specific objective (SO 2.1) did not have a particularly high degree of innovation and it was noted that the Programme could sometimes have been used to co-finance activities and concepts already developed in the region on this topic. Therefore, the opinion was often expressed during the research, notably during the individual interviews, that the proposed solutions did not appear as one of the strongest outcomes from the Programme.

The benefits of achieving the goal related to green technologies (SO 2.2) were assessed differently - in this case, the high innovativeness of solutions and the possibility of testing new schemes and models were appreciated. The Programme helped to connect partners and establish cooperation leading to new solutions in this field. However, it was said that not all the effects of these activities are highly durable because the amount of funds allocated often only allowed for conceptual and research-based work. But the quality of products in this area was still assessed as very high.

PRIORITY III (TRANSPORT)

Priority axis 3 aimed at *improving cross-border connectivity for a functional blue and green transport area*. This priority axis was formed in response to the challenges diagnosed in the region, such as the predominant car-based mobility pattern with a high dependence on cars and trucks in interregional transport due to insufficient intermodal services in freight and passenger transport, the unsatisfactory direct connectivity of the programme regions due to drawbacks in maritime, railway and air passenger services and north-south freight traffic and quickly growing east-west freight flows across the South Baltic area in need of greening measures and service efficiency solutions. The expected Programme result would be improved and more environmentally sustainable passenger and intermodal freight services in the South Baltic region. In order to achieve the objective of this priority axis, a specific target has been defined:

Specific objective 3.1:

Improve the quality and environmental sustainability of transport services in the South Baltic area

The main target groups of this priority axis were transport infrastructure managers and users and public transport users (passengers). The exemplary types of partners that were foreseen to participate under priority axis 3 were: local and regional authorities and their associations, public transport companies, transport infrastructure administration, formal associations, clusters and networks of SMEs working with transport greening solutions, chambers of commerce, business development agencies and other business support and finance organisations as well as higher education and R&D institutions.

The initial allocation for priority axis 3 was 14,454,190.00 (17% of the total budget ERDF allocation), which was the second-highest ERDF amount among all priority axes.

In total, there were 20 projects approved for Priority Axis 3, out of which 9 were regular projects and 11 - seed money. The amount of ERDF for this priority reported by beneficiaries until 31.12.2022 was 11,678,170.43 EUR.

The expected programme results and the programme result and output indicators are shown in Table 15.

Table 15. Priority Axis 3: expected programme results and programme output indicators

Specific objective 3	
Improve the quality and environmental sustainability of transport services in the South Baltic area	
Expected programme result	Improved and more environmentally sustainable passenger and intermodal cargo services in the South Baltic area

Programme result indicator	Performance in the South Baltic area in the provision of transport services of high quality and environmental sustainability
Programme output indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of pilot investments in transport services co-financed by the Programme • Number of delivered strategies, measures and tools aimed at improving the standard, efficiency, interoperability and/or environmental performance of transport services

Source: Programme Manual and Annual Implementation Report (2021)

The results for the programme output indicators for Specific objective 3 are shown in Table 16.

Table 16. SO 3: programme output indicators

	Value: (reported until 31.12.2022)	2022 Target (2023)	Value 2022/2023 achievement rate
Size of pilot investments in transport services co-financed by the Programme	2,259,312.99	1,500,000	150.62%
Number of delivered strategies, measures and tools aimed at improving the standard, efficiency, interoperability and/or environmental performance of transport services	243.5	20	1,217.50%

Source: Data received from the Joint Secretariat

The number of implemented strategies, measures and instruments to improve the standard, efficiency, interoperability and/or environmental performance of transport services has far exceeded the target - the value for 2022 was already 243.5 (with a target of 20), which means a significant improvement in the standard, efficiency, interoperability and/or environmental performance of transport services in the South Baltic area. The second programme output indicator for this specific objective achieved the value of around 150.62% of the target, which is also very satisfactory. The specific objective was largely dominated by work on specific products or services and the research-based and conceptual work was also highly represented. On the other hand, pilot investments in transport took place on a much smaller scale, but this was due to the nature of the Programme and the amount of funding available to the beneficiaries, therefore the ratio between the pilot investments and the conceptual work developed under this priority is grounded in the assumptions of the Programme. Priority axis 3 was often described as a very demanding one. The industry is very cost-intensive, so the Interreg programme may not have had enough resources to enable the investments to be carried out under the Programme funding. At the same time, it was noted that many innovative new solutions were created as a result of the programme: including many good practices and new concepts for integrating road and water transport, as well as tangible results.

PRIORITY IV (BLUE AND GREEN SKILLS)

Priority axis 4 was created in response to the local challenges of the mismatch of education and the needs of employers in knowledge-intensive services and research-intensive industries of the South Baltic area, as well as the difficulties in attracting qualified labour and high unemployment in many Programme regions driven by dynamic population trends (e.g. negative net migration balance in some regions, demographic change and disparities in the population density between

urban and rural areas, rural decline challenges, increasing long-term unemployment etc.). Therefore, Priority IV aimed to strengthen human resource capacities for the blue and green economies in the region. The expected outcome is a better-prepared workforce for workplaces in blue and green sector companies in the South Baltic area.

There was one specific objective listed for this axis:

Specific objective 4.1:

Increase the share of the skilled labour force working in blue and green economy sectors of the South Baltic area through joint cross-border actions

The main target groups of Priority Axis 4 were vocational school graduates, university and college graduates entering the South Baltic labour market, labour force for workplaces in blue and green economy sectors and employers in blue and green economy sectors

The allocation for this priority axis was 9,209,732.00 EUR ERDF (11% of the total budget). In total, there were 12 projects approved for this Priority Axis, out of which 8 were regular projects and 4 - seed money. Total eligible expenditure (in 2022) in this axis was on the level of 8,281,203.33 EUR (ERDF), equalling about 90% of the initially allocated budget. This was one of the minor axes in regard to the number of regular projects (12,50% of all the regular projects), seed money projects (5,80% of all the seed money projects) and the amount of ERDF funding reported by beneficiaries (until the end of 2022) – 11,33% of all total reported ERDF funding in the programme.

The expected programme results and the programme result and output indicators are shown in Table 17.

Table 17. Priority Axis 4: expected programme results and programme result and output indicators

Specific objective 4	
Increase the share of the skilled labour force working in blue and green economy sectors of the South Baltic area through joint cross-border actions	
Expected programme result	Better prepared labour force for workplaces in blue and green sector companies in the South Baltic area
Programme result indicator	Performance in the South Baltic area to ensure skilled labour for the blue and green economy
Programme output indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of delivered cross-border employment schemes (i.e. services, model solutions, tools and programmes) and joint training supporting employment in the blue and green economy of the South Baltic area • Number of stakeholders involved in the implementation of cross-border employment schemes and joint training • Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training • Number of participants in joint education and training schemes to support youth employment, educational opportunities and higher and vocational education across borders

Source: *Programme Manual and Annual Implementation Report (2021)*

The results for the programme output indicators for Specific objective 4 are shown in Table 18.

Table 18. SO 4.1: programme output indicators

	Value: (reported until 31.12.2022)	Target (2023)	Value 2022/2023 achievement rate
Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training	537	200	268.50%
Number of participants in joint education and training schemes to support youth employment, educational opportunities and higher and vocational education across borders	499	300	166.33%
Number of delivered cross-border schemes (i.e. services, model solutions, tools and programmes) and joint training supporting employment in the blue and green economy of the South Baltic area	13	12	108.33%
Number of stakeholders involved in the implementation of cross-border employment schemes and joint training	235	100	235%

Source: Data received from the Joint Secretariat

As of 31-12-2022, all output indicators of the programme have been achieved. The number of participants in joint education and training measures to support youth employment, educational opportunities and higher education and vocational training across borders was at 166.33% of the target. The number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training measures far exceeded the target with 537 in 2022, while the target was 200. The satisfactory number of stakeholders involved in the implementation of cross-border employment schemes and joint training had been set at 100. However, more than 200 stakeholders participated in the cross-border employment schemes and joint training under the programme, which confirms the interest in this topic. The number of delivered cross-border schemes (i.e. services, model solutions, tools and programmes) and joint training supporting employment in the blue and green economy of the South Baltic area was 13, which also exceeded the target value (12).

In implementing projects under this priority, it was found that the fact that the labour market is very much nationally embedded, caused difficulties in designing solutions that could be implemented in a bigger scale and would be fitted and to each country's very different labour market and its constraints, regulations and institutions. The projects, therefore, required much creativity and innovation. On the other hand, the research, especially in IDI, found that the activities carried out under this priority were still very necessary and profitable for the people from the target groups who participated in the activities. The scope of the projects was found to be very valuable and participants from the region saw great benefit in increasing their expertise through cross-border cooperation and exchange of knowledge and skills with partners who share similar challenges and experiences. However, it was noted that the formal constraints of the labour markets in each country made it difficult to develop projects that would achieve long-term results embedded in the administrative system.

PRIORITY V (COOPERATION CAPACITY)

Priority axis 5 aimed to address the challenges posed by the limited number of organisations involved in joint activities and the benefits of cross-border cooperation for local development policy, as well as the need to increase the capacity and know-how of local organisations in the South Baltic area to make them more active in cross-border cooperation networks. Furthermore, it was noted that the distinct maritime context of development in the South Baltic area, determined by the location of the sea basin and the long tradition of trade exchange across the sea, had not led to a recognition of the common identity of the Southern Baltic Sea Region in local and regional communities, which was the basis for Priority Axis 5. This priority was about increasing the capacity of local actors in the South Baltic area to cooperate on blue and green growth. It targeted small local and regional organisations such as municipalities, NGOs or public service providers such as schools, cultural institutions, hospitals, police forces, fire and rescue services.

The expected outcome is better involvement of local community organisations in cross-border cooperation networks. A specific objective has been set for this priority:

Specific objective 5.1:

Improve the cooperation capacity of local South Baltic area actors through participation in cross-border networks

The initial allocation for this priority axis was 4,371,037.00 EUR ERDF– only 5% of the total budget, which was the smallest share among the priority axes (without TA priority axis). This could have been related to a relatively low cost-intensiveness compared to other themes of the Programme, e.g. transport or green technologies. In total, there were 21 projects approved for this Priority Axis, out of which 11 were regular projects and 10 seed money (9 contracts signed, due to resignation of one of the projects). Total amount of ERDF funding reported by beneficiaries until the end of 2022) in this axis was 4,006,490.02 EUR. The expected programme results and the programme result and output indicators are shown in Table 19.

Table 19. Priority Axis 5: expected programme results and programme output indicators

Specific objective 4	
Improve the cooperation capacity of local South Baltic area actors through participation in cross-border networks	
Expected programme result	Improved involvement of local community organisations in cross-border cooperation networks
Programme result indicator	Performance in the South Baltic area to engage local actors in cross-border activities
Programme output indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of local actors involved in cross-border activities • Number of joint capacity-building activities/events involving local actors

Source: *Programme Manual and Annual Implementation Report (2021)*

The results for the programme output indicators for Specific objective 5.1 are shown in Table 20.

Table 20. SO 5: programme output indicators

	Value: 2022 (reported until 31.12.2022)	Target (2023)	Value 2022/2023	achievement rate
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Number of local actors involved in cross-border activities	386	150	257.33%
Number of joint capacity-building activities/events involving local actors	110	50	220%

Source: Data received from the Joint Secretariat

As of end of 2022, both indicators were already achieved (over 200% of target value reached). The number of local actors involved in cross-border activities was 386, with a target of 110. This demonstrates a high level of commitment from local organisations and underlines the importance of the measures taken to address the problem of the limited number of organisations involved in joint activities, which had been diagnosed in the run-up to programme implementation. The number of joint capacity-building activities/events involving local actors has also far exceeded the target - until end of 2022, the achieved value was already 110, corresponding to an achievement rate of 220%. The research found that this priority axis is considered very important for the engagement of small organisations, which would not be able to connect with a larger number of potential partners without the assistance of the Programme. Even though sometimes it was difficult to decide whether they were long-lasting, the aim of this axis from the beginning was to enable the development of cooperation, which by its very nature implies smaller projects that, with further work and adequate funding, can lead to more tangible results. At the same time, during the open calls, it was noted that many of the beneficiaries came back for another round with new project ideas, underlining that this axis helped to build capacity and gain more confidence and recognition in dealing with the external funding structure and cooperation capacity of local South Baltic area actors.

3.1.2. RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME ON JOINT PROBLEM SOLVING

Throughout the impact assessment, it has been repeatedly stated that the main benefit and success of the Programme is that it promotes partnership building and provides a platform and incentive to jointly build a project, work together and address the challenges of the region together. It provides a space for mutual exchange and learning. It enables organisations to participate in projects that require cross-border cooperation and supports them financially.

Certainly, these are both soft benefits, i.e. the way cooperation networks are created between individual regions or institutions participating in projects. And these cooperation networks are certainly permanent because I see them persisting over the years. Certainly, it is also good that beneficiaries can get to know each other in such cooperation activities, exchange experiences and support each other in solving various problems. But of course, there are other benefits, e.g. providing these regions with EU funds. So it is the support these small actors, such as small companies, institutions, non-governmental organisations, foundations and associations, really need. And on top of that, these project results can then be used in the whole region.

Source: IDI

Therefore, the importance of the partnerships' strength and ability to work together and find new solutions to the current challenges is considered the most important outcome of the Programme. It was also highlighted that the regions in the South Baltic face similar challenges, closely linked to the most important common resource - the Baltic Sea. Therefore, cross-border cooperation is

crucial to overcome these challenges. Proximity and common conditions can be used as a cumulative force to address these problems and think about solutions in larger, more diverse and experienced groups.

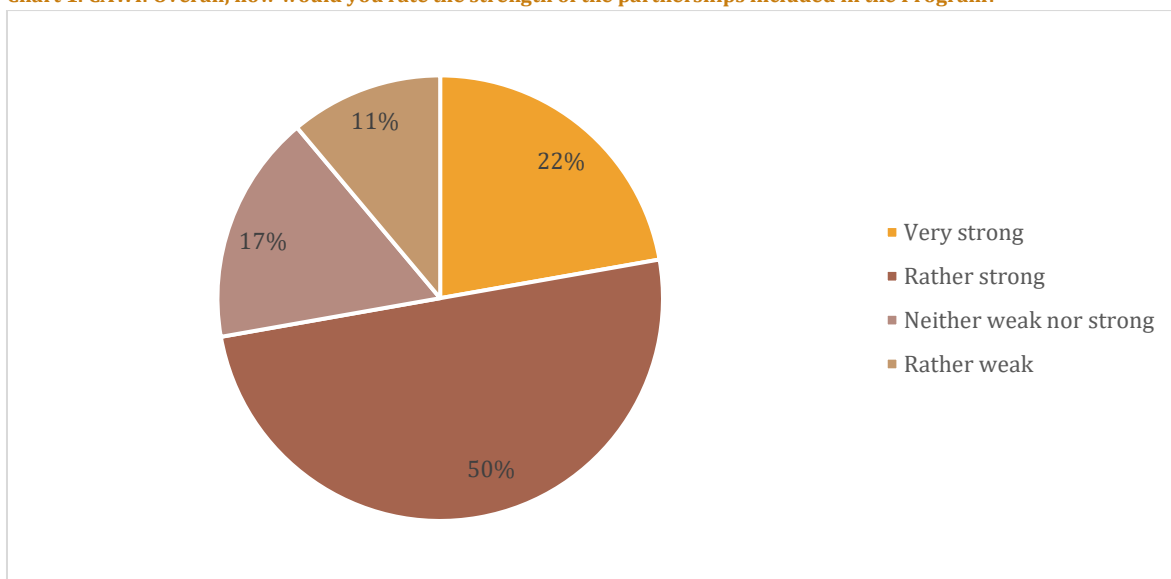
Cross-border cooperation serves to solve common problems and overcome common challenges, e.g. as in Denmark and Sweden and Germany, in Poland and Lithuania, on the coast. The common resource is the Baltic Sea, which physically has no boundaries. Administratively - of course, but physically no one can stop the water or the wind between Denmark and Poland or Sweden. So we have to think together about solutions to the challenges we share.

Source: IDI

This statement was confirmed by the survey in the CAWI method - increasing the capacity of local institutions to undertake cross-border cooperation was the highest-ranked answer (by the Lead partners) to the question about the most outstanding achievement of project implementation. More than half (56%) of CAWI respondents also indicated that increasing the capacity of local institutions for cross-border cooperation was among the most considerable benefits of implementing their projects. In addition, the opportunity for cross-border cooperation, especially the transfer of knowledge and gaining experience of working with partners, was mentioned as a factor that significantly favoured the application for funding.

Although 83% of respondents stated that the partnerships implementing their projects were established only for the Programme, which could pose some risks in terms of project management and possible conflicts, a large majority (72%) rated their partnerships as very or rather strong.

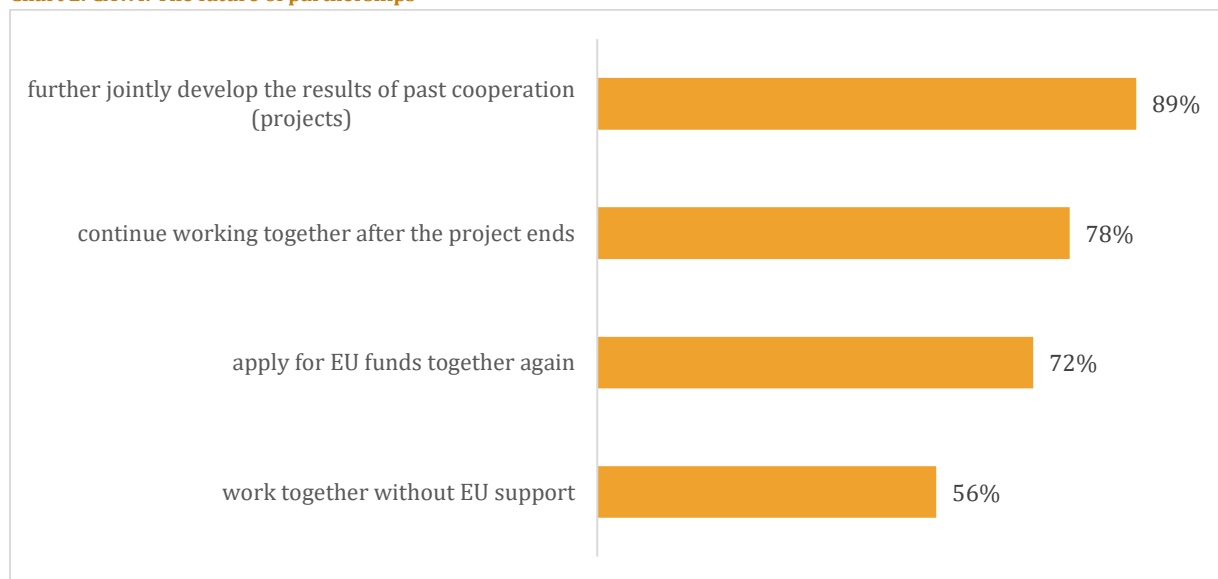
Chart 1. CAWI: Overall, how would you rate the strength of the partnerships included in the Program?



Source: own research, CAWI

When asked about the future of the current partnerships, about 90% of the respondents said they would like to continue their cooperation and further jointly develop the results of past collaboration. There was also a strong determination to continue the collaboration after the end of the projects - over 50% of respondents said they would like to continue the collaboration when asked if this would be an option even without EU support.

Chart 2. CAWI: The future of partnerships



Source: own research, CAWI

The beneficiaries strongly believe that the partnerships formed for the Programme have significant value and that joint work, problem-solving and collaboration lead to meaningful outcomes. Furthermore, as most partnerships were created for the Programme's needs, it is clearly visible that the Programme's implementation positively impacted cross-border cooperation.

The main factors that the project partners have identified as promoting this cross-border cooperation are mutual and common goals, solid and valuable networks, the possibility to broaden knowledge and horizons, and the learning, motivation and energy brought to the organisation through the Programme.

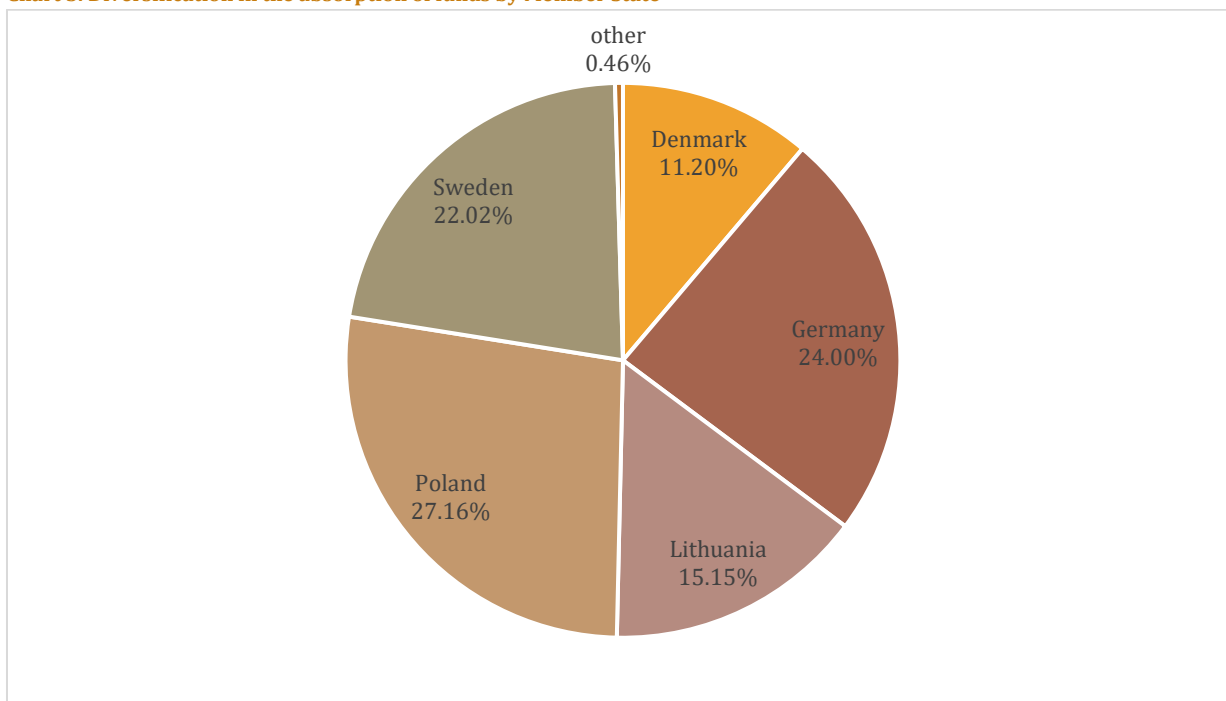
During the focus group interviews conducted with the project partners, statements were made about the outlines of the Programme implying and inspiring problem-oriented development projects that lead to detailed, relevant solutions, which significantly increases the value of the programme and its projects. The project partners emphasised that the holistic approach and the requirement for international cooperation that runs throughout the Programme has motivated them to make great efforts to build partnerships based on knowledge transfer and joint problem solving.

The fulfilment of most of the programme's output indicators confirms that the implementation of the actions carried out under the programme has been a response to the identified challenges and has played an important role in promoting development towards the set objectives. The examples of good practices as well as solutions/services/products highlighted during the research are further explained in the following sections: 3.2.1 The results of finalised projects and Annex 1. Case study. Some of the main challenges that the programme has helped to overcome are: low availability of matchmaking actions for the expansion of the SMEs to international markets within the South Baltic area, unexplored opportunities for cross-border services and products in blue and green tourism, high risk of eutrophication and loss of biodiversity, insufficient intermodal services in freight and passenger transport and the limited number of organisations involved in joint activities.

3.1.3. THE DIVERSIFICATION OF THE ABSORPTION OF FUNDS

The analysis of the distribution of funds shows that there are differences between the eligible regions and that some of the participating Partners can be considered more efficient in this respect. Based on the data from the subsidy contracts, partners from Poland accounted for the largest share of eligible expenditure in terms of projects budgets - beneficiaries from Poland participated in the eligible costs calculated for the Programme with a share of 27.16%. Germany and Sweden also achieved values above 20% (24.00% and 22.02% respectively). The regions from these three countries were the most represented in the approved allocation of funds. The lowest share of funds was recorded by regions in Denmark, which accounted for 11.20% of the total value of the programme's eligible costs in the projects' budgets. Lithuania accounted for 15.15% of the total eligible costs. In addition, a small part of the funding was also granted to partners from outside of the programme eligible area to collaborate in projects under the Programme (0.46% of total eligible costs) - these were two entities from Belgium and one from Estonia.

Chart 3. Diversification in the absorption of funds by Member State



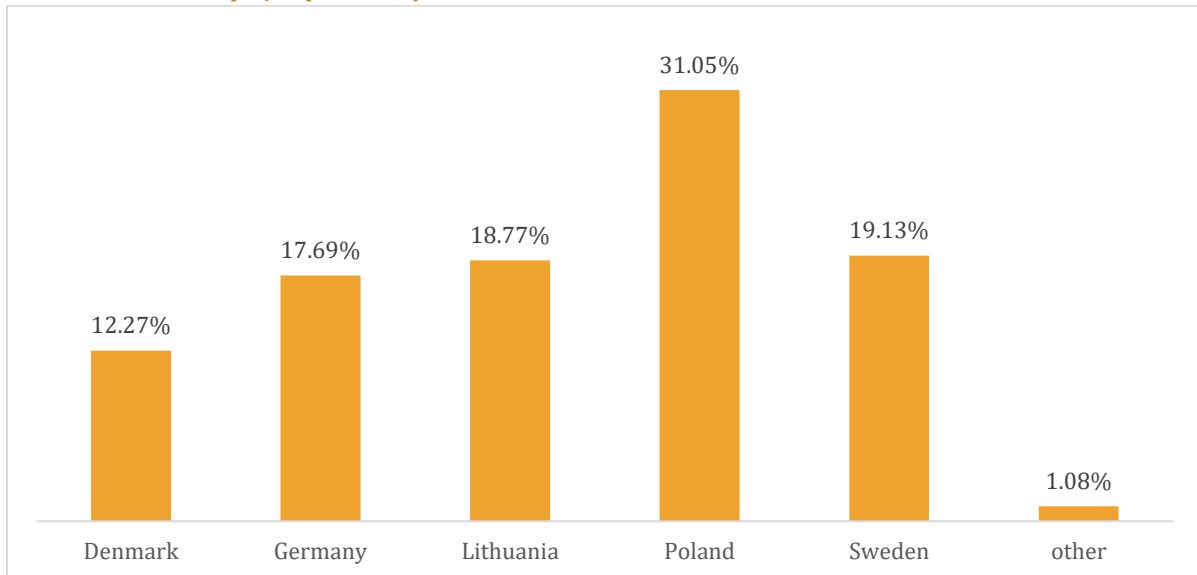
Source: *Subsidy contracts*

This could be primarily due to the sheer size of the regions that can benefit from the Programme - Poland, Germany and Sweden have the largest eligible area covered by the Programme area, which also implies the size of the population in these areas, as well as the existing institutions and organisations, and thus a wider range of services and expertise. The opportunities for organisations from these regions to participate in the programme were therefore greater than in the smaller regions with a limited number of potential participants and capacity of organisations.

In terms of the number of all project partners (including Lead Partners), Polish organisations accounted for about 31% of all beneficiaries. The second highest number of project partners was noted in Sweden – about 19% of the programme participants came from the eligible areas of Skåne, Blekinge, Kalmar, and Kronoberg. Eligible regions in Denmark again accounted for the

smallest share - only 12.27% of all beneficiaries came from the areas in this country. Lithuania, which according to the subsidy contracts, had the second lowest share of the budget (among 5 participating Member States), had a significant number of project partners (about 19% of the share, slightly more than Germany, whose project partners received much higher budget than Lithuanian ones) - this could indicate that funding for local actors and stakeholders was relatively lower than in the case of project partners from other countries. The details of the share of project partners implementing projects under the Programme by country are shown in the graph below.

Chart 4. Breakdown of project partners, by Member State



Source: *Subsidy contracts*

It has been pointed out several times that in order to improve the quality of the programme, it is crucial to make efforts to attract these smaller entities, especially from the regions with less access to networking and cross-border exchange opportunities, as one of the highest values of the programme is to open this platform for the organisations to network, exchange, innovate together, but also to think together about solutions to the challenges they share in the South Baltic region.

Including SMEs and organisations with different capacities is essential for equal project opportunities.

Source: *FGI*

Another important indication of the absorption of the funds and diversification of the number of beneficiaries, highlighted several times during the research, is the strong dominance of urban areas over rural ones. The assumptions of the Programme, which focus on innovation, often require partners with a high level of expertise and experience in the field. Therefore, the threshold for smaller, less experienced organisations may sometimes be too high. The diversification of fund absorption was closely related to the accumulation of human capital and the location of innovation centres, as well as previous experience of participation in different programmes, as well as to the size of the trained staff that could manage the project administratively. This could be the reason why rural areas, which also had a lower density of potential programme partners, were less involved.

The reason why the larger cities participate so in the programme could be the administrative potential of the institutions located there. They have experience in receiving funding under various programmes, they have staff, trained personnel with targeted knowledge on how to implement projects, and it is easier for them to decide to participate in a project.

Source: IDI

This reason was also highlighted in relation to Denmark, whose project partners share of total eligible costs (based on the projects' initial budgets) was the lowest among 5 participating Member States and the lowest number of beneficiaries. The eligible area of Denmark consists primarily of urban-rural or rural areas. As much of the human capital could be attracted to Copenhagen, finding partners for projects was considered to be challenging.

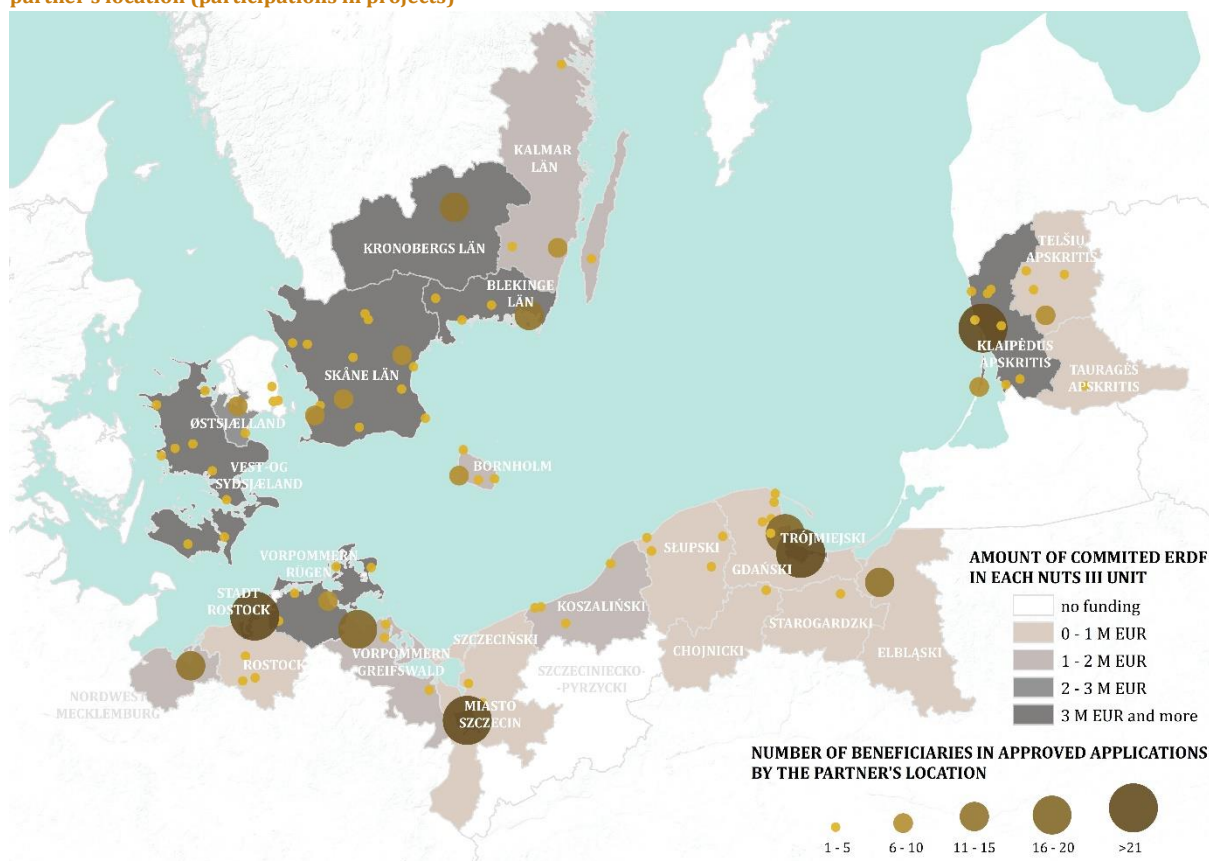
All municipalities in Zealand and Bornholm that fall within the programme's scope are urban-rural, rural municipalities. So all the human capital, at least in this part of Eastern Denmark, is accumulated in Copenhagen. And since Copenhagen is not within the boundaries of the programme, it is also more challenging to find partners.

Source: IDI

When analysing the diversification of funds allocation by region, the eligible areas with the highest number of partners with granted co-financing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, based on the initial project budgets) were the sub-regions (according to the partners' origin): Trójmiejski – Poland (14,366,290.51 EUR ERDF), Klaipėdos apskritis – Lithuania (10,406,891.27 EUR ERDF), Stadt Rostock – Germany (8,372,982.11 EUR ERDF), Skåne – Sweden (7,062,272.96 EUR ERDF) and Vorpommern-Rügen – Germany (6,811,180.77 EUR ERDF). 3 out of 4 eligible areas in Sweden have benefited from the programme to a relatively high degree (ERDF funding of over 3M EUR). The distribution of funding between the partners from the eligible areas in Denmark was relatively even, while in Germany and Poland most of the funds received were distributed among the partners from a few specific subregions: Stadt Rostock and Vorpommern-Rügen in Germany, and Trójmiejski and Miasto Szczecin in Poland. As far as Lithuania is concerned, partners from Klaipėdos apskritis received the most ERDF funding (over 10M EUR), while the partners from other two regions received a total of around 1M EUR.

As can be seen from the number of total number of project partners in the approved applications, most of the project partners participating in the Programme were located in Gdańsk, Poland (55 – number of participations of project partners from the city), Klaipėda, Lithuania (52), Stadt Rostock, Germany (35), Szczecin, Poland (29), Gdynia, Poland (16), Greifswald, Germany (16), Vaxjö, Sweden (15), Karlskrona, Sweden (12), Elbląg, Poland (11) and Wismar, Germany (11). The distribution of committed ERDF funds in each NUTS III unit and the number of beneficiaries in approved applications by partner location is shown in Chart 5.

Chart 5. Amount of committed ERDF by NUTS III unit and the number of beneficiaries in approved applications by the partner's location (participations in projects)



Source: *Subsidy contracts*

On another note, it is also important to mention that many beneficiaries have participated in more than one project under the Programme. For example, nearly 40% of beneficiaries from eligible regions in Germany have participated in more than one project, which is the highest figure among 5 participating Member States. On the other hand, the lowest figure was for Denmark, but it was still at around 23%, which means that it is a common practice to be involved in several partnerships in the region to participate in the programme.

Table 21. Percentage of beneficiaries participating in more than one project by Member State

Denmark	Germany	Lithuania	Poland	Sweden
23.53%	38.78%	30.77%	27.91%	33.96%

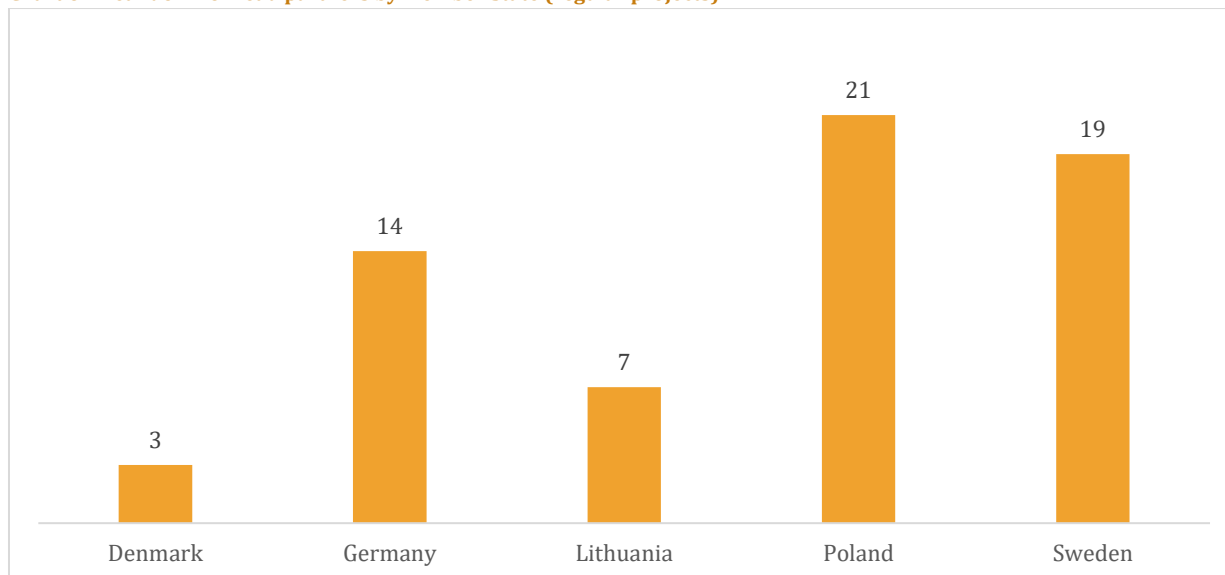
Source: *Subsidy contracts*

One such finding was also highlighted in the individual interviews - it was noted several times that participating organisations often come back to apply in the next round of calls for proposals – although not always with the same group of other partners. However, it is clear that the Programme enables partnership building and improves capacity and skills to apply in calls for proposals.

There is a significant gap in the statistics of the participating Member States regarding the distribution of Lead partners. Eligible areas in Poland had the largest number of Lead Partners (of

regular projects) with 21 out of 64. The second highest number was Sweden (19), followed by Germany (14). Again, the low participation of organisations from Denmark is evident - out of 64 regular projects, only 3 were led by Danish organisations. In Lithuania, 7 lead partners were recorded.

Chart 6. Breakdown of Lead partners by Member State (regular projects)



Source: *Subsidy contracts*

When evaluating the Programme's impact, it was often noted that universities were highly visible. Thirty academies have participated in the Programme partnerships and were Lead partners – of 26 regular projects (about 40 % of all regular). A list of all academies included in the subsidy contracts can be found below.

Table 22. Partners in the projects - academies

Denmark	Lithuania	Germany	Poland	Sweden
1. Aalborg University	8. Klaipeda State University Of Applied Sciences	11. Business Academy North GmbH	17. Maritime University of Szczecin	24. Blekinge Institute of Technology
2. Aarhus University	9. Klaipeda University	12. Hochschule Wismar - University of Applied Sciences	18. Gdansk University of Physical Education and Sport	25. Kristianstad University
3. Roskilde Business College	10. Lithuania Business University Of Applied Sciences	13. Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences	19. Gdansk University of Technology	26. Linnaeus University
4. Technical University of Denmark		14. Rostock University	20. University of Gdansk	27. Lund University
5. University College Absalon		15. Stralsund University of Applied Sciences	21. Gdynia Maritime University	28. People's Universities in Kristanstad

Denmark	Lithuania	Germany	Poland	Sweden
6. University of Copenhagen		16. University of Greifswald	22. University of Szczecin	29. Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
7. Zealand Institute of Business and Technology			23. West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin	30. World Maritime University

Source: *Subsidy contracts*

They covered about 30% of granted allocation from the Programme, with the largest amounts of approved co-financing were: Klaipeda University, University of Gdansk, Linnaeus University, Gdansk University of Technology, Maritime University of Szczecin, Blekinge Institute of Technology, University of Rostock, Roskilde Business College and University of Greifswald.

One of the advantages of strong an engagement of universities is that they usually have good network as well as capacity to lead a project. They can also guide smaller organisations, when they bring them in for projects. On the other hand, university-led projects are often very research-based, so the results may sometimes be more theoretical in nature.

3.1.4. THE WAY OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The Programme's assumptions allowed for shifts and adaptation of its dynamics to emerging needs and identified challenges, which was highlighted during the study as an advantage of the Programme and an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of its implementation. The possibility to adjust the dates of calls for proposals, the budget transfers between specific objectives and priority axes and different schemes of financial support (regular projects, seed-money projects) were aimed at achieving the intended goals. The importance of adjusting the Programme dynamics was highlighted as one of the most important factors in achieving its objectives and motivating the development of high quality applications. Adequate promotion and targeting appropriate beneficiary groups were very important elements in the Programme implementation, which was reflected in the achievement of the initially adopted objectives.

The frequency, the availability of funds was the optimal proposal that could be made, that is, with the organisation that we have, with such a secretariat, with such a composition, such a number of people and such a possibility for the [Monitoring] committee to meet, these two calls per year that were originally planned, that is the optimal possibility. In addition, there were seed-money projects, and, finally, whatever funds were available were effectively channelled on to beneficiaries.

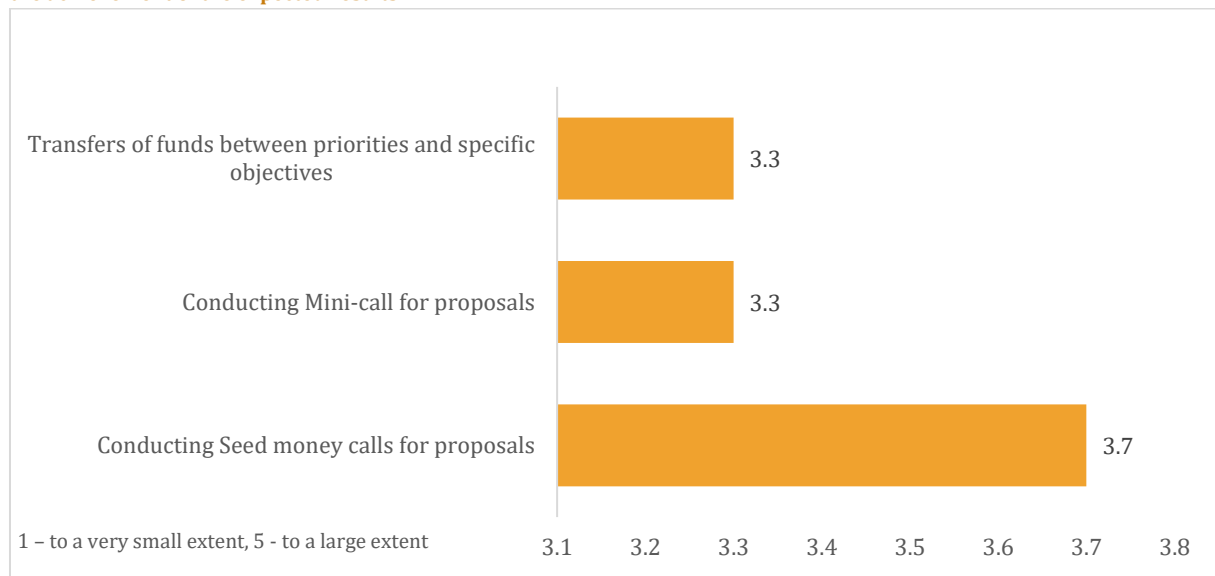
Source: IDI

The Programme's timeline shows that additional steps were taken when a standstill of interest in a some priority axes was noticed. Due to low interest in the first two regular calls for proposals in PA3 'Sustainable transport' (only one project was selected for funding) and PA4 'Labour and skills development' (two projects selected), the Programme introduced corrective measures, such as targeted seed money call, special information and promotional workshops during thematic events, individual partner search and consultations. These measures led to the expected results

in the form of additional seven high-quality projects in the transport priority (PA3) and 4 in the skills development priority (PA4) selected for funding in 2017 and 2018.

Similar results, and a confirmation of the importance of adjusting the actions to the current needs, were visible in the CAWI research. When asked about the extent to which the adopted way of the implementation of the Programme affected the achievement of the expected results, the respondents rated all three answers as above average and highlighted the conduction of the open calls for seed money funding as an important factor.

Chart 7. CAWI: To what extent did the following aspects adopted in the implementation of the South Baltic Programme affect the achievement of the expected results?



Source: own research, CAWI

The seed-money scheme allowed potential South Baltic partnerships to develop projects of higher quality and submit them within regular calls. At the same time, the scheme incentivised potential beneficiaries to convince their local decision-makers to start developing the project, as the costs of those activities would be covered. The legitimacy of complementing the Programme with this kind of support is underpinned by the previous example, which shows that such seed-money support not only increases interest in the Programme but also enhances the quality of future projects, which ultimately helps to achieve the intended goals.

A very positive reception of the Programme bodies was felt among the beneficiaries. The significant role of the Joint Secretariat was highlighted, as well as its good accessibility and proactive and encouraging approach. Furthermore, beneficiaries underlined the importance of the contact points - it was claimed that their presence was very helpful at all stages of project implementation - from pre-application to project implementation and closure. Therefore, neither the aspects adopted in the implementation of the Programme nor the actions of the Programme bodies were seen as unnecessary or insignificant for the implementation of the Programme and the achievement of its objectives. Comparing this with the dynamics of the application and the necessary expenditure for their implementation, it could be problematic to achieve similar results with lower costs. A lower level of adaptation and flexibility could jeopardise the effectiveness of the open calls and the quality of the projects submitted within the Programme and, thus, the achievement of its objectives.

EXPERT PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many challenges associated with the future of the Programme. Among those mentioned by experts were environmental challenges or finding solutions related to green mobility. In the future, they deem necessary for at least one partner in the project partnership to have previous experience in the earlier editions of the Programme, which will facilitate the application process and generally be an asset. Current Project Partners of the 2014-2020 Programme should invite new stakeholders and organisations to cooperation, including micro-companies, innovative start-ups etc. Benchmarking and success fees (in the form of additionally awarded points, which would result in the amount of allocated funding) might potentially help improve project results. Projects should work on high-quality outputs, using qualified external experts.

Analyses that are made as part of the projects are not available on publicly accessible sites, they have to be searched for, and some costs were also not accounted for and had to be borne by the partners. The high level of detail and time-consuming process of verification of expenditure in the first level control was seen as a factor often stopping organisations from entering the Interreg projects, and it was suggested that the reporting rules should be simplified.

As for recommendations - it was suggested that the South Baltic area should be promoted as a whole for tourists and the area should introduce common tourist services. According to experts, the Programme in the next perspective should also focus more on clearing the Baltic Sea of garbage and munitions left over from World War II, and should also put more emphasis on the circular economy and to focus more on such areas as e.g. green mobility, wind energy, wave power, biodiversity, hydrogen propulsion and smart city solutions. Furthermore, new Partners from areas outside the area should be welcomed as a fresh addition to projects as the capacity of the current geographic partnership is limited.

3.1.5. CONCLUSIONS

- The highest achievements of output indicators in particular specific objectives were observed with: the number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions, an increase in the expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions, a number of delivered strategies, measures and tools aimed at improving the standard, efficiency, interoperability and environmental performance of transport services and cross-border services/programmes delivered to blue and green sector SMEs to foster their innovation capacity.
- Priority I (Business innovation capacity and internationalisation): the ability to bring beneficiaries together and encourage them to work together was cited as one of the most important effects. The programme has resulted in many green and blue sector companies starting to collaborate and gaining the ability to go to international markets together to promote themselves and create innovative offer.
- Priority II (Natural and cultural heritage/Green technologies) was the most dominant among all priority axes – both in terms of the allocated budget and the number of projects being realised under it. The vast majority of the programme's output indicators were achieved, but there is a discrepancy between the two specific objectives. The effects of projects under the specific objective (SO 2.1), related to natural and cultural heritage, were considered less innovative than in case of the other one (SO 2.2 green technologies).

- Priority III (Transport): This axis was often described as very demanding. The industry is very cost-intensive, so an Interreg programme may not have sufficient funds to enable the financing of larger physical implementations. At the same time, it was noted that many innovative new solutions were created as a result of the programme: including many good practices, solutions and new concepts for integrating road and water transport.
- Priority IV (Blue and green skills): it was found that the fact that the labour market is very much nationally-embedded caused difficulties in designing the solutions that could be implemented in a bigger scale and would be fitted to each country's very different labour market and its constraints, regulations and institutions. The projects, therefore, required much creativity and innovation.
- Priority V (Cooperation capacity): The research revealed that this priority axis is considered very important for the engagement of small organisations, which without the Programme would not be able to connect with a larger number of potential partners. On the other hand, the results were often considered minor, and it was difficult to decide whether they were long-lasting.
- The beneficiaries strongly believe that the partnerships formed for the Programme have significant value and that joint work, problem-solving and collaboration led to meaningful outcomes. Furthermore, as most partnerships were created for the Programme's needs, it is visible that the its implementation positively impacted cross-border cooperation.
- Partners from Poland, Germany, and Sweden have significantly the highest shares in the approved funding, which could be linked to the larger eligible areas in these Member States, as well as their population, number of entities, location of innovation centres and the presence of scientific and research institutions. The limited number and capacity of organisations in some of the eligible areas, i.e. the range of their activities and specialisations, did not allow the smaller regions to participate in the Programme to the same extent as the larger ones.
- The distribution of funding was closely related to the accumulation of human capital in the regions, which may have been the reason why rural areas, which had a lower density of potential partners, were less involved in projects. This reason was also highlighted in relation to Denmark, which had the lowest share in total eligible costs co-financed and the lowest number of beneficiaries.
- Universities played a very important role in the Programme. Thirty universities participated in the Programme partnerships and were Lead partners in 26 projects – nearly 40 % of all regular projects.
- The importance of adjusting the dynamics of the Programme implementation was highlighted as one of the most important factors contributing to achievement of its objectives. The Programme's timeline shows that additional steps were taken when it was needed; for example, a standstill of interest in a particular axis was noticed.
- The seed-money scheme proved to be an effective tool allowing the potential partnerships to develop projects of higher quality and submit them within regular calls for proposals.

3.2. PROJECTS

As of 31-12-2022 54 projects out of 64 regular projects were completed.

Table 23. Finalized regular projects (as of 31-12-2022)

Specific objective	Projects
Increase the presence of blue and green sector SMEs from the SOUTH BALTIC on international markets through joint cross-border actions	CleanTech, ELMAR, InterMare
Improve the transfer of innovation for the benefit of blue and green sector SMEs through joint cross-border actions	SOUTH BALTIC Food Inno, CIRTOINNO, CTCC, InnoAquaTech
Increased development of the SOUTH BALTIC natural and cultural heritage assets into sustainable tourist destinations	Attractive Hardwoods, Baltic Heritage Routes, Baltic Museums Love IT!, Baltic Pass, Baltic Stories, Biking South Baltic, BSTC, CATCH, DUNC, JOHANN, South Coast Baltic, Fish Markets
Increased use of green technologies in order to decrease the pollution discharges in the SOUTH BALTIC	BioBiGG, RBR, COASTAL BIOGAS, LESS IS MORE, Live Lagoons, MORPHEUS, SOUTH BALTIC OIL, STEP, UBIS, WISA, WASTEMAN
Improve the quality and environmental sustainability of transport services in the SOUTH BALTIC	CoBiUM, INTERCONNECT, INCONE60, LCL, SOUTH BALTIC Transport Loops, SECMAR, CAR, Connect2SmallPorts
Increase the share of skilled labor force working in blue and green economy sectors of the SOUTH BALTIC through joint cross-border actions	BBVET, BFA, FOCUS, SOUTH BALTIC Bridge, SOUTH BALTIC Nature Guides Network, SEAPLANSPLACE
Improve the cooperation capacity of local SOUTH BALTIC actors through participation in cross-border networks	CaSYPoT, CROSSROADS, FilmNet, Let's do it, CICPA, SOUTH BALTIC FICA, YCGN, SB PIN, TransOpera, Umbrella

Source: Final Reports of the projects provided by the Joint Secretariat

The results of all finalized projects (as of 31-12-2022) will be discussed below.

3.2.1. THE RESULTS OF THE FINALIZED PROJECTS

According to the respondents who took part in IDI interviews, the Programme's results can be divided into two groups: soft and hard results. Soft ones are those relating to, for example, changing attitudes, improving skills, etc. Hard results are visible, tangible, more easily experienced and measurable.

In their opinion, there was more soft results of the Programme, although they should not be considered the worse ones. In the words of a representative of the Managing Authority, the Programme has served to *"create the conditions for cooperation from which 'harder' results can come."* Other respondents called the Programme *"a programme that creates a solid foundation for further activities"* or *"an incubator."*

The soft results of the implemented projects were, in the first place, the concluded and implemented collaborations. The word "cooperation" was the most frequently used word during the evaluation study. It can be concluded that the cross-border collaborations undertaken as part of the projects had a value in themselves - entering into and maintaining them was often a challenge. Respondents also frequently mentioned that participation in the Programme forced the partners to find their way through the administrative procedures of such an extensive Programme, not infrequently for the first time.

One of the interviewees pointed out that thanks to cross-border cooperation, the South Baltic region area, especially in Poland, Germany and Lithuania, saw a *mental leap* having in mind openness to cooperation, considerable strengthening of human capital and exchange of experience. Furthermore, several times in the interviews, there was a theme that politicians from the local government level (mayors or aldermen) understood that also soft results are essential for the development of smaller cities and that the concentration of their efforts does not have to be dedicated only to large infrastructural investments. The soft results of the Programme and the aforementioned *mental leap* are well captured by a quote from one of Contact Point's representatives.

Most of all, networking and raising competencies for international cooperation. This is very important because we still see severe deficiencies here, especially in today's local governments and smaller public entities, which for various reasons, often staffing, do not take such initiatives.

Source: IDI

Thanks to the soft results that have been developed, the aforementioned regions from Poland, Germany and Lithuania were given a chance to catch up with the gap separating them from the regions in Sweden or Denmark.

In addition to this, as declared by Lead Partners in the CAWI survey, the value of the cooperation was primarily the exchange of experience, knowledge transfer and contact with the international community.

The Programme has also generated many "hard" results. As for these, the most resonant information was about those projects that brought new technological solutions for environmental protection, new solutions for transportation, and information about a number of activities that foster sustainable tourism development. Respondents also frequently mentioned the creation of industry networks or needed databases that will pay off in the future. To a large extent, the hard results of the projects are pilots of new technologies and new solutions, developed strategies or

business or training models, which still need some time to actually "emerge." This is well reflected in the quote:

Not maybe the direct result of the projects, which is also very important, but that it serves as this testing ground, opening the gate for such organizations.

Source: IDI

The table summarizes the most important results of each project based on the specific objectives of the Programme.

Table 24. Projects results

Specific Objective	Projects and results
Increase the presence of blue and green sector SMEs from the SOUTH BALTIC on international markets through joint cross-border actions	CleanTech, ELMAR, InterMare set of services for Cleantech companies: study trips, Cleantech SME database, Cleantech market research tool, Cleantech Talk and Cleantech Contact Points; Sales market analysis & series joint study tours show potentials of the international marine e-mobility market; INTERMARE South Baltic 2020 fair for blue economy companies; Instruments created and used to promote blue economy and strategy
Improve the transfer of innovation for the benefit of blue and green sector SMEs through joint cross-border actions	SOUTH BALTIC Food Inno, CIRTOINNO, CTCC, InnoAquaTech development of pilot solutions for the production of food products in small and medium-sized enterprises (SME); The iSAT tool and the model of cross-border training programme; Creative Broker Platform online tool offering creative broker for innovation manufacturing processes; technologies that increase the production of protein from the cultivation of aquatic organisms
Increased development of the SOUTH BALTIC natural and cultural heritage assets into sustainable tourist destinations	Attractive Hardwoods, Baltic Heritage Routes, Baltic Museums Love IT!, Baltic Pass, Baltic Stories, Biking South Baltic, BSTC, CATCH, DUNC, JOHANN, South Coast Baltic, Fish Markets joint strategic plan for boosting the cross-border ecotourism and new products and services customized for ecotourism needs; written description of 8 heritage routes and 8 tours packages and business offers of sustainable tourism; IT-enabled tools for natural and cultural heritage attractions in the South Baltic Region; Pilotage of Tourist Products; „Baltic Maritime Heritage Tours”; sustainable tools for event organizers for culturally embedded and sustainable tourism development; cross-border and sustainable strategy of the Baltic Sea Cycle Route development and promotion website of the EuroVelo route No.10; the BSTC service profile and the form of organization, 12 tourism service products/packages that focus on active tourism;

Specific Objective	Projects and results
	<p>catalogue of Best Practice criteria for sustainable angling tourism services and catalogue of improved activities for touristic providers; a sustainable model of tourism development around UNESCO sites with tools, products and service; Training programme for cruise ports and 8 implemented small ship cruises; Tools, networks & structures that address new target markets & target groups and increase the number of guest boaters; platform for announcing local fish markets and a strategy for the development of local fish markets (branding strategy and The MyFish App)</p>
<p>Increased use of green technologies in order to decrease the pollution discharges in the SOUTH BALTIC</p>	<p>BioBiGG, RBR, COASTAL BIOGAS, LESS IS MORE, Live Lagoons, MORPHEUS, SOUTH BALTIC OIL, STEP, UBIS</p> <p>solutions for the secondary use of biological resources from the agro-industrial sector; methods of cleaning the waters of the Baltic Sea from micropollutants; solutions for promoting the technology related to anaerobic digestion of cast seaweed in combination with digestate utilization as means to mitigate eutrophication and reduce nutrients discharges into the Baltic Sea; technological solutions for removing pharmaceuticals and other CECs; Physical installations capable of small scale removal of nutrients from semi-enclosed coastal areas in the South Baltic; a technique for removing pharmaceuticals and micropollutants entering the Baltic Sea along with the outflow from the sewage treatment plant; the innovative green oil spill response technology with biogenic binders; pilot plants allowing optimal sludge handling and whitebook on how to utilize energy better; toolbox for industrial symbiosis analysis and set-up;</p>
<p>Improve the quality and environmental sustainability of transport services in the SOUTH BALTIC</p>	<p>CoBiUM, INTERCONNECT, INCONE60, LCL, SOUTH BALTIC Transport Loops, SECMAR</p> <p>guidelines and pilots for the promotion of cargo bikes; the system of charging fees for public transport and uniform passenger information; one joint holistic concept for smarter and more environmentally friendly transport services; new regular shipping connections or strengthening of existing connections; a tool and specialization strategy for the SOUTH BALTIC-area in secure maritime transport; the IT tool to calculate the transport costs along with external costs.</p>
<p>Increase the share of skilled labour force working in blue and green economy sectors of</p>	<p>BBVET, BFA, FOCUS, SOUTH BALTIC Bridge, SOUTH BALTIC Nature Guides Network, SEAPLANSPACE</p>

Specific Objective	Projects and results
the SOUTH BALTIC through joint cross-border actions	students got new skills; training programmes for water sports instructors for the disabled; course on marine biotechnology; cross-border employment scheme; training programme Nature Guide, raising skills program and 240 participants graduated the trainings;
Improve the cooperation capacity of local SOUTH BALTIC actors through participation in cross-border networks	CaSYPoT, CROSSROADS, FilmNet, Let's do it, CICPA, SOUTH BALTIC FICA, YCGN, SB PIN, TransOpera, Umbrella Research study and conference; Interactive map of the city of Slupsk; Regional pilot of time travel; Development of a handbook on the time travel method; Study visit to Rostock; Film workshops for children and youth; Foreign visits; Meetings with program partners in the municipality; Ferry trip to Scandinavia; Swedish FIKA event; Publication "Food Culture Stories a handbook for intercultural dialogue"; Scientific conference Youth civic participation in theory and practice; Publication "Faces of Youth Civic Participation"; Organizing a training course; Introducing project management manual: the manual for beneficiaries of the Umbrella project

Source: Projects Final Reports provided by the Joint Secretariat

79% of respondents in the CAWI survey reported that project objectives were achieved most effectively. Interestingly, focus research among Project Partners showed that not everyone was equally familiar with the Specific Objectives of the Programme. Very good familiarity was demonstrated by Project Partners in FGI interviews from Poland, Lithuania and Sweden. In contrast, respondents from Denmark and Germany had problems with it, saying it was more a matter of Lead Partners in the project.

Respondents in the CAWI were also asked to indicate the difficulties they encountered that hindered them from achieving their goals. The table shows quotes that mention these difficulties per Programme's specific objectives.

Table 25. Difficulties with achieving set objectives by Lead Partners

Specific Objective	Difficulties
SO 1.1. The increase of the presence of SMEs from the blue and green sectors of the South Baltic area on international markets through joint cross-border activities	<i>At least one new SME was developed through the project activities, but it was not a goal to create opportunities for SMEs.</i> <i>SMEs were not as active as we expected.</i> <i>Cultural and language barrier. SMEs are still not ready to work in the international market.</i> <i>Too ambitious goal in relation to funding</i>
SO 1.2. The improvement of innovation transfer in favor of blue and green sectors SMEs through joint cross-border activities	<i>Not a lot of SMEs accepted new knowledge and innovation transfer</i>

Specific Objective	Difficulties
	<i>Sometimes institutions protect their know-how and do not want to share with other entities from Europe</i>
SO 2.1. The increase of the development of resources in the scope of the natural and cultural heritage of the South Baltic area into permanent tourist destinations	<i>We did not work with tourism based on natural or cultural heritage</i>
SO 2.2. The increased use of green technologies to reduce discharges in the South Baltic area	<i>No information</i>
SO 3. The improvement of the quality and environmental sustainability of transport services in the South Baltic area	<i>Low awareness of the problem causes difficulties in convincing partners and stakeholders to improve the quality of transport services and decrease the footprint.</i>
SO 4. The increase of the share of qualified labor in the blue and green economy sectors of the South Baltic area through joint cross-border activities	<i>We know that the qualifications of the people increased, but we didn't get information exactly in per cent</i> <i>Too ambitious goal in relation to funding</i>
SO 5. The increase of the ability of local entities from the South Baltic region to cooperate through participation in cross-border networks	<i>Difficulties in finding local partners on both sides of the borders</i> <i>The same as in the first question - cultural and language barrier.</i>

Source: own research, CAWI

The Programme results can also be divided into those resulting in a *technological leap* and those related to a *mental leap* and levelling of opportunities up for all South Baltic regions. Furthermore, tourism and cultural activities were aimed at attracting more tourists and also at "extending the season", that is, providing attractive activities outside the summer months. Respondents also mentioned that thanks to the Programme, the stakeholders within the South Baltic area began to understand that by seeing itself as one common entity, they had a chance to achieve more than if the five regions still had a closed attitude.

3.2.2. FACTORS THAT CAUSE ENGAGEMENT IN PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS

Factors that encouraged participation in the Programme were:

- opportunities for international cooperation,
- transfer of knowledge,
- experience with partners,
- business development,
- access to funding,
- possibility of obtaining funding on a topic of regional and cross-border importance,

- willingness to act on an emergency challenge,
- previous experience in the Programme.

The factors that drove commitment to the a project were primarily the good quality of the partnership and deep belief in project results being worked on. Partnerships that applied for funding from the Programme often already existed before (50% of Lead Partners in the CAWI declared that they had already applied for project funding within their partnerships). It can be concluded that in the wave of earlier cooperation they had managed to develop mutual trust in their partners and that individual project partners believed in the legitimacy, validity and value of the results they were working on.

The vision of the project's long-term effects and capitalising on the future projects' results was also a factor encouraging the involvement in the partnership.

Good practices in collaborations that influenced commitment to the project were: meeting potential partners even before the partnership was established, frequent meetings within the partnership (the short ones can be held online, but in-person meetings should not be forgotten), leaving enough time for discussion during meetings, ensuring that each partner has a thorough understanding of the project goals from the beginning. It is also worth communicating directly at the outset the administrative barriers that may exist on the part of each partner (e.g., the time for processing administrative decisions, legal restrictions, rules for accounting of expenditure, etc.). Respondents also indicated that while taking care of personal contacts with project partners, one should not forget to take care of relations with the institution itself. This avoids a crisis in the project in case a particular employee changes jobs. Respondents also pointed out that good partnerships also depend on understanding cultural differences and the rules of work organization in each country. For more information, see section 4.3 of this report.

Respondents in group interviews indicated how important the awareness of cultural differences between partners is in a successful partnership.

All respondents - representatives of the Managing Authority, Monitoring Committee, Contact Points, Lead and Project Partners - pointed to advanced English language skills as a key factor influencing partnership involvement.

Lead Partners surveyed also identified factors that undermine partnership work. These factors were:

- language and cultural barriers,
- different styles of decision making (the speed, the administrative restrictions in different counties),
- weak interest in project results of SMEs,
- no advance payments,
- low level of activities of the industrial partners,
- industrial partners' wish to have fast incentives,
- issues with controls.

3.2.3. CONCLUSIONS

- The biggest and strongest effect of the Programme is the strengthened cross-border cooperation. Thanks to intensive international contacts, partners got to know each other, "got used to each other" and exchanged knowledge and experience - they began to create a common South Baltic area rather than an area composed of five separate regions.
- Thanks to the cooperation undertaken and the solutions worked out, the regions of Lithuania, Poland and Germany were able to learn from the more experienced regions of Denmark and Sweden and implement the jointly developed results. As an effect, it can be believed that the South Baltic regions have become more cohesive.
- At the level of effects, the Programme has most often served to prepare concepts, strategies, business models, technological innovations and their pilots. Therefore, these results can be considered a solid foundation for future procedures that will serve the South Baltic region in the form of implemented solutions i.a. for environmental protection, sustainable tourism and transport solutions.
- Interesting and long-lasting projects results, and easy for the wider public to see, have been achieved in the sphere of sustainable tourism.
- Another types of Programme effects are training and educational programs, which are also intended to pay off in the future.
- In order to improve the quality of the Programme, it has been pointed out that it is crucial to make efforts to attract more smaller enterprises, small entities and NGO's, especially from the regions that have less access to networking and cross-border exchange opportunities, as one of the highest values of the Programme is opening the platform for the organizations to network, exchange, innovate together. The Programme is assumed to be a local one. The need to attract more small enterprises comes from the fact that often such organizations do not know that there is such a Programme to which they can apply. In order to expand the success of the Programme, it is necessary to better communicate its existence and its goals.

3.3. COOPERATION AND DURABILITY

Project cooperation has been the most important but also the most difficult challenge in the Programme.

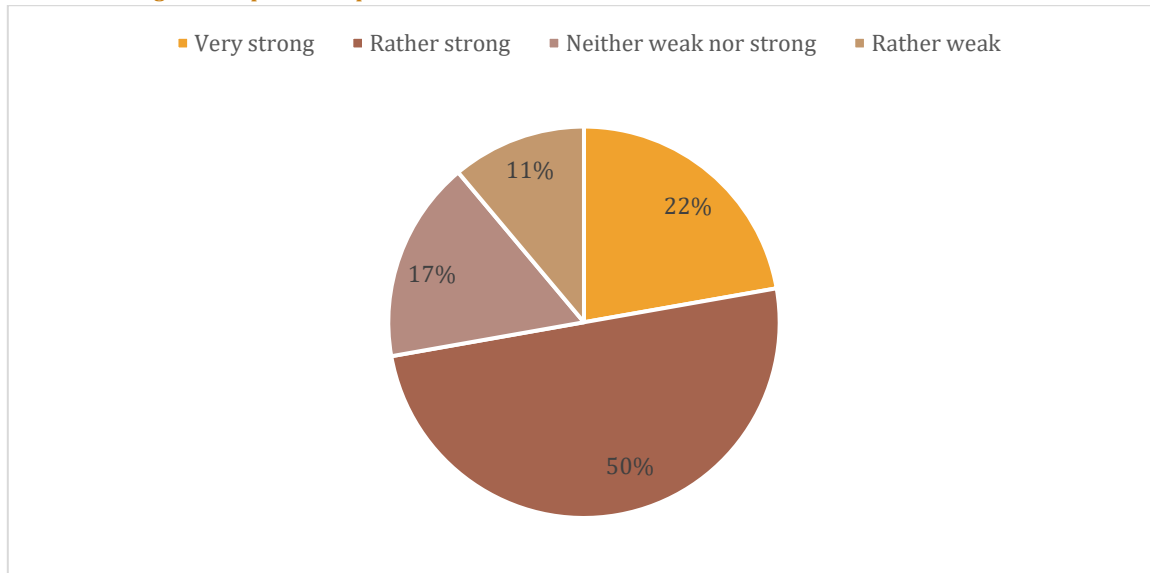
Members of the Managing Authority, representatives of the Monitoring Committee and Contact Points are aware of this, often assessing the Programme as *rather complicated, extensive, difficult* and often arguing justifying their assessment with the difficulties involved that are due to in cross-border cooperation between partners.

The following sections of the report present the survey's results on cross-border cooperation within the Programme and the durability of project results.

3.3.1. PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS

Overall, respondents (Lead partners) reported their satisfaction with the cooperation and the strength of their partnership – as many as 72% of respondents considered their partnership very strong or strong. At the same time, as many as 11% of respondents rated the strength of their partnership as weak.

Chart 8. The strength of the partnerships



Source: own research, CAWI

All respondents who were asked for opinions strongly appreciated the components of cooperation in an international environment, mentioning knowledge transfer, technology transfer, exchange of experience, and training of social- and language skills.

At the same time, the topic of the difficulties of cross-border cooperation was mentioned very often in the survey.

Factors that favored cooperation were (according to Lead Partners in the CAWI survey):

- common goals,
- strong useful networks,
- the opportunity to expand knowledge and horizons,
- trust between the partners (based on previous projects),
- personal meetings.

A quote that captures well the rationale for undertaking international cooperation is:

Participation brings learning, motivation and energy to the organization.

Source: IDI

Respondents also pointed out that establishing cooperation– finding partners – was not simple. This process usually began with acquaintances from previous Programme’s or resulted from personal contacts already made.

Lead Partners as well as representatives of the Programme authorities pointed out a major drawback of the Programme: the lack of matchmaking platforms for potential partners who did not know each other before. On the platform, potential partners could create profiles to characterize their expectations for future cooperation. Interestingly, this view was also shared by one representative of Contact Points.

From the analysis of the Final reports, there also emerges a recommendation that within the framework of the Programme that the partners from previously implemented partnerships should be able to assess the quality of cooperation with particular entities, thereby providing recommendations for others for the future. It seems that this could also be the function of the mentioned *matchmaking platform*. According to the Evaluation Team, such platform and ease of access to information about potential partners could encourage new entities to participate in the Programme.

In many interviews, it was reported that the regions that have benefited most from participation in the Programme are Pomorskie in Poland, the Lithuanian Klaipeda region and the Baltic regions in Germany.

At the same time, Lead Partners were asked to describe the various characteristics of partners from other Member States in cooperation. Quotes from the CAWI survey are presented in the table below:

Table 26. How are partners described?

Country	How are partners described?
Germany	<i>cooperative, motivated, open, reliable, professional, specific</i>
Denmark	<i>open, calm, flexible, ready for new strategies</i>
Lithuania	<i>tremendous effect on the development of the Klaipeda region, lagging behind in certain areas (e.g. sustainability)</i>
Sweden	<i>open, the most cooperative and highly motivated</i>
Poland	<i>learning from the other partners, lagging behind in certain areas (e.g. sustainability), quite active in cooperation, the level of technological development is low</i>

Source: own research, CAWI

There was an overlap among Lead Partners and project partners in their assessments of cooperation with the other partners from each country. For example, project partners from Denmark explicitly said that working with partners from the same cultural background was easier. On the other hand, project partners from Germany complained about the differences between countries in First Level Control in terms of problem-solving and interpretation of regulations and time to approve reports, primarily pointing out that these issues should improve in Poland and Lithuania.

The greater proportion of Lead Partners declared their willingness or specific intentions to continue working together. For example, 89% of Lead Partners planned to develop their existing cooperation, and as many as 78% wanted to work together in partnership even after the project implemented under the Programme ends. Also, more than 70% planned to apply for further EU funds, and more than half (56%) were determined to work within the partnership without the support of EU funds.

INTERCULTURAL CHALLENGES

Although in none of the surveys there were any direct questions about cultural diversities between partners from different countries, but the topic came up in every contact with the surveyed Programme parties – Lead and Project Partners, Managing Authority and Monitoring Committee.

The mentioned cultural differences, mentioned that causing problems in cooperation can be encapsulated in the following points:

- different calendar of public and religious holidays (difficulty in finding convenient dates),
- different work culture and approach to work (e.g. "sacred coffee breaks" in Sweden vs picking up mail even during vacations),
- different mentalities (different levels of reliability, scrupulousness, different attitudes toward relationship building),
- different approaches to procedures and different amounts of time needed to process decisions,
- different project expectations (e.g. Denmark and Sweden want expecting more ambitious solutions, in Poland or Lithuania have more responding more to more down-to-earth needs (based on focus group interview)).

Triangulation of data from different research techniques shows that intercultural differences between the participating countries were visible and often felt troublesome by individual project partners. The opinion that these differences were a challenge for project partnerships was also shared by Contact Points representatives. In Final Reports, the partners indicated several times the need for support in this area. They suggested the need to provide support in the form of procedures and specialists who would raise awareness of the similarities and differences between the countries, as well as help resolve conflicts in emergencies, or even be mediators. One partner explicitly indicated the need for measures to strengthen trust and confidence in the partners' competences of partners from other countries.

One can also treat these indicated problems perversely, as noted by the representative of the Managing Authority saying:

These differences in culture cause us to learn from each other and how to deal with these uncomfortable situations and break through various prejudices and one's comfort zone.

Source: IDI

In the opinion of the evaluation team, it seems that the representative of the Managing Authority may have a different than Lead or Project Partners perspective on this issue, as they were looking at project cooperation "from a further perspective." For Lead and Project Partners, the issue of cultural differences was undoubtedly a challenge (as confirmed by Contact Points representatives), and it is worth considering how to prepare future beneficiaries better to work in a cross-cultural team, so that it is easier for them, and not a stressful barrier. It is worth noting once again that all parties involved in the Programme realize the various benefits of international cooperation. Learning about intercultural differences can also be considered a beneficial effect of the Programme. However, it is worth taking care of this subject and giving future beneficiaries the

knowledge and tools to make cooperation with partners from different countries as stress-free as possible.

3.3.2. DURABILITY OF PROJECTS

Belief in the durability of the results of projects and the Programme varied among respondents. It should be remembered that the Programme projects have often worked to create pilots, and innovations - foundations, as one respondent called them - that still need time to be implemented on a larger scale and produce lasting results (this was pointed out during a focus group with Project Partners from Denmark).

Respondents mostly have strong belief in the durability of “hard” results. Those activities from which something tangible was already created – e.g. a technology already implemented, a hiking trail, a textbook - give the impression to respondents that these are the most lasting results.

Belief in the durability of “soft” results, on the other hand, varies between projects. Some consider the mental leap mentioned in the earlier chapter and educational activities to be lasting changes, others that sustainability is not at all certain here.

The survey showed that the durability of the Partnership's cooperation is all the higher, the better, more attractive results have been achieved in the project. It can be assumed that good results are an outcome from solid, trusting cooperation, where the partners were firmly committed to the project and believed in the fruits of what was worked on. When the prospect of capitalizing on the results is additionally on the horizon, it is not profitable for the partners to break off cooperation; on the contrary, it is worth continuing, strengthening and developing it.

Respondents found it simpler to talk about the durability of project outputs regarding the technologies and jointly developed solutions, primarily those for environmental protection. As one respondent put it:

Above all, concrete transfers of products from region to region and joint methods of solving various problems - for example, the issues of climate change or the need to protect the sea basin - these effects, they will remain, so to speak, in the region forever.

Source: IDI

Quite a few respondents also recognized the high durability of results in the case of tourism products and solutions - hiking trails, apps, and conveniences within the idea of sustainable tourism.

Most of those interviewed considered as lasting results the effects produced by projects implemented within Specific Objective 4.1: *Increase the share of the skilled labour force working in blue and green economy sectors of the SOUTH BALTIC through joint cross-border actions* - educational activities, language and soft skills training, measures to improve the labour market situation.

However, different expectations for the durability of project results among beneficiaries in different countries emerged from the focus groups with Project Partners. Those from the Member States more experienced in projects (Sweden and Denmark) communicated directly that they expected project outcomes to be more durable and robust. They felt the results were too small for the allocated resources (especially in tourism projects).

When financing stopped, the cooperation stopped.

Source: IDI

At the same time, Project Partners from Germany, Lithuania and Poland showed satisfaction with the durability of the effects the projects.

In the opinion of the Evaluation Team, the different evaluation of the sustainability of the results may be due precisely to the experience of individual Partners in the projects. The more experienced ones set themselves more ambitious, far-reaching goals, and would like to achieve the most solid results. Meanwhile, partners from Germany, Lithuania and Poland are satisfied with taking "small steps."

The respondents had different opinions on whether the soft results of the projects could be considered permanent. Some respondents felt that the awareness that there were potential partners for fruitful cooperation on the "other side of the sea" would not be a fleeting effect of the Programme. One respondent mentioned that the seed of a common "South Baltic identity" was created through the Programme's activities.

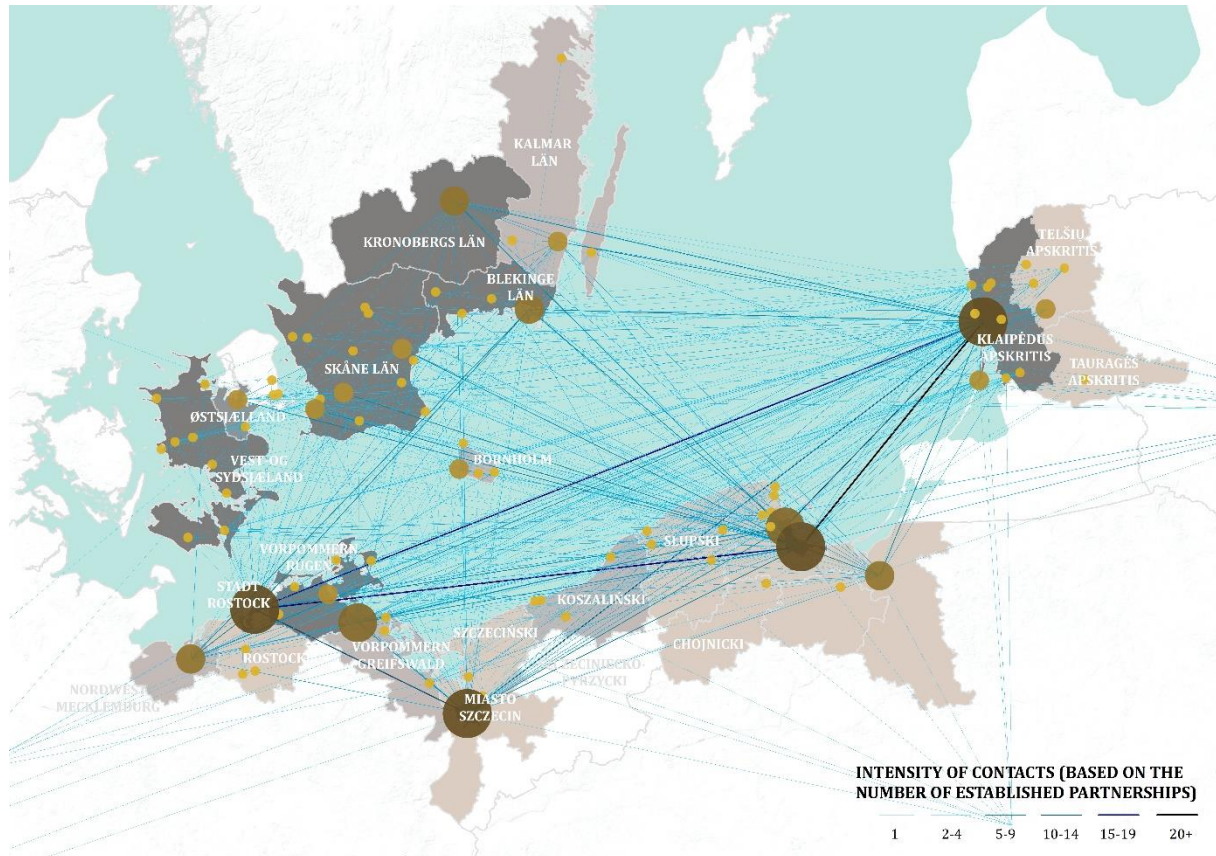
The awareness of having „neighbours across the sea” and the understanding of common goals within the region is related to the *mental leap* mentioned in section 4.2.1, which has influenced the human capital, intellectual capital, and capacity of institutions in the region to change permanently. As a result, many institutions at various levels have opened up to cross-border cooperation, realized its attractive benefits, and will no longer want to „close those doors”. This open-mindedness also applies to regional politicians, who have realized that a good quality project result is not only the opening of a new road, swimming pool or park but also the conclusion of an agreement, the development of a strategy or the preparation of a business model for a new technology.

The respondents also considered the experience gained in the Programme a long-lasting result. Thanks to it, the partners gained self-confidence, the ability to manage EU-funded projects and the ability to cooperate in a cross-border environment, which will make it possible to establish further cooperation at successively higher levels.

3.3.3. NETWORK ANALYSIS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN PARTNERS

The network analysis of the relationships between the partners was carried out on the basis of the intensity of contacts, calculated as the number of partnerships established under the programme. The Programme has clearly supported an important number of partnerships in the South Baltic Area. Some 2,000 links have been established between project partners through the 64 regular projects with more than 400 organisations involved in them. Although there were visible leaders and dominant locations where partnerships were established, cross-border cooperation was developing in all assisted areas.

Chart 9. Network analysis of relations between partners of regular projects



Source: *Subsidy contracts*

The cities with the highest number of partnerships were: Gdańsk, Klaipeda, Rostock and Szczecin - with each of them having established a total of over 100 partnerships through the jointly implemented projects in the Programme. This figure confirms the strong clustering of organisations participating in the Programme in these four cities - all of which have a strong regional leadership role with a strong presence of universities, research institutions and innovation centres. Gdańsk, Klaipeda, Rostock and Szczecin can be described as the most active and visible regions among the programme participants.

As far as links between organisations from specific cities are concerned, the main axes of cooperation can be identified as:

- Gdańsk – Klaipeda: 23 established partnerships
- Klaipeda – Rostock: 16 established partnerships
- Gdańsk – Rostock: 15 established partnerships
- Rostock – Szczecin: 10 established partnerships

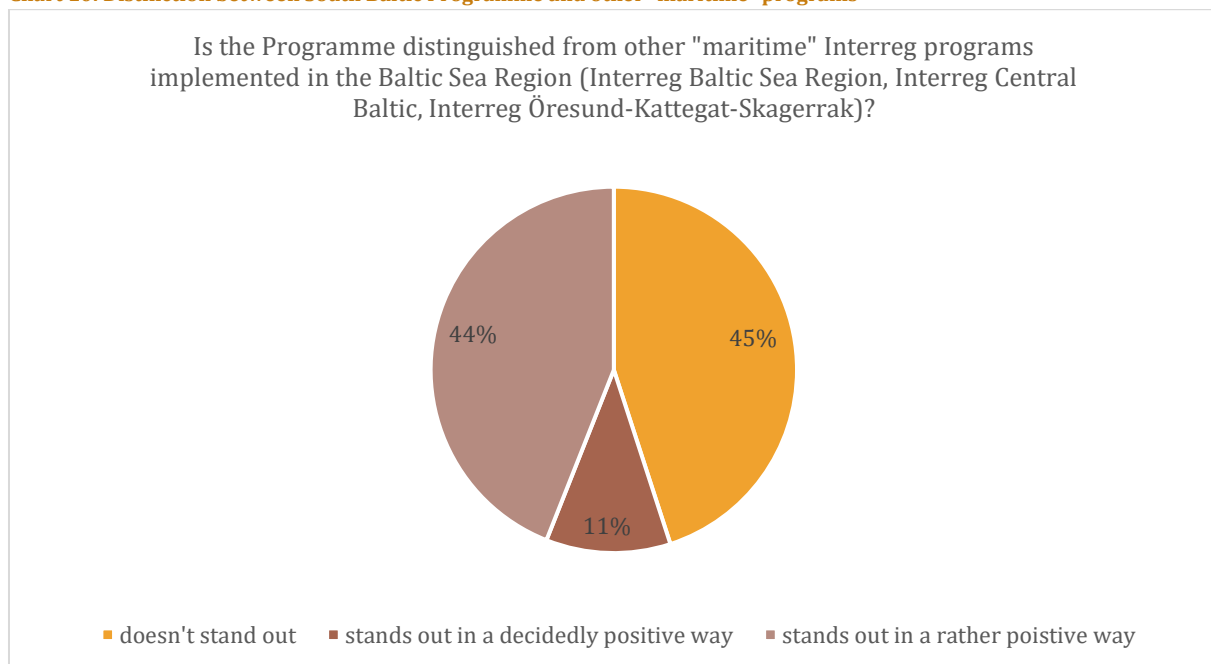
It is important to stress that these axes of cooperation are visibly formed between one of the largest university centres (from the Member States of the participating countries). The Klaipeda University, the University of Gdansk, the Gdansk University of Technology, the Maritime University of Szczecin and the University of Rostock were previously identified as some of the strongest entities participating in the Programme and the network analysis confirmed that

cooperation between these leading institutions has clearly become stronger as a result of the South Baltic Programme.

In addition, these four cities are all of great importance for the maritime industry. Rostock is the largest coastal city and the most important port in eastern Germany, an important fishing port (the most important in Lithuania) LNG and the Western Shipyard are located in Klaipeda, Gdansk is a maritime economic hub with the largest commercial port and global range and Szczecin is of international importance with its seaport, terminals, repair, yacht and shipyards. These four cities are clearly the leaders of this area, especially in terms of the blue economy, which plays an important role in the Programme area.

3.3.4. COMPARISON WITH OTHER "MARITIME" INTERREG PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Chart 10. Distinction between South Baltic Programme and other "maritime" programs



Source: own research, CAWI

Lead Partners were asked how the Programme stands out from other "maritime" Interreg programmes.. Respondents from individual interviews often said that the Programme is close to the beneficiaries and allows small organizations to participate. The Programme is valued for its regional character and concentration on rural areas. It also centered more around universities than other programmes. This is due to the triple helix model used in projects.

The Programme is also described as a means to test different steps and opportunities. Respondents also felt this Programme has a limited scale impact. Finally, participants of the interview felt that all "maritime" programmes complemented each other.

And you can go on a lower level, and you can actually, you can say that South Baltic, perhaps, is closer to the citizens because it's a smaller project, and you can more easily take the smaller elements of partners within so that's a good thing to say about South Baltic.

Source: IDI

I think it's a pretty significant difference between this programme that I am running and the South Baltic Programme. In that sense that in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, first of all, we communicate in our language so we can speak Swedish, Danish and Norwegian to each other, which of course it's trickier when you have Danish, German, Polish, Lithuanian and Swedish in a programme, so everybody has to speak English. So that is one difference, and I also think there are other differences between the countries. I think that our countries are similar in many aspects, whereas the differences between Sweden, Denmark and some of the former eastern countries are greater.

Source: IDI

In other words, during this Programme, we see that rather national or regional level beneficiaries participate more inside this local level. Also, an asset of the South Baltic Programme is this local approach. What differentiates this program from the Central Baltic Programme is the different geographic specificity of the area covered by the Programme. So to summarize.

Source: IDI

Other compared Interreg programmes are larger in terms of their area of operation and financial resources, but the South Baltic Programme is unique in allowing more local organizations to participate, making it seem more accessible. The most common answer to how the South Baltic Programme differs from other “maritime” Interreg programs was that it should not be compared to others, because it has completely different characteristics.

3.3.5. CONCLUSIONS

- Lead partners reported satisfaction with their partner's cooperation and strength. They appreciated the components of cooperation in an international environment and its benefits. Knowledge and technology transfer, exchange of experience, social and language skills training were the examples thereof.
- Finding a partner to cooperate in the Programme was rather difficult. There are opinions that it would be almost impossible without prior acquaintances. The need for partners for the emergence of matchmaking platforms that would make it easier to find a suitable partner was revealed.
- The best-rated cooperation partners came from Sweden, Denmark and Germany.
- Partners from different Member States participating in the Programme had to deal with cultural differences, which caused problems in their cooperation. For example, different work culture and approach to work was one of the issues.
- Durability of projects was hard to assess, but most of the Partners had a positive opinion about it. However, the durability of projects is perceived differently. The most sustainable results were considered those that will serve to protect the environment in the South Baltic region in the future and those that will develop sustainable tourism. However, "soft" results such as the development of intellectual capital, the development of institutional capacity and the development of open-mindedness were also rated as lasting.
- Cooperation, when countries acting together are divided by the sea, is difficult, but the commitment and belief in the goal of the Programme, as well as positive results from

projects, helped maintain relations between partners. Most partners declared the intention to continue working together after the end of the project.

- The cities with the highest number of formed partnerships were: Gdańsk, Klaipeda, Rostock and Szczecin - with each of them having established a total of over 100 partnerships through the jointly implemented projects in the Programme. These four cities, all of which have a strong regional leadership role with a presence of universities, research institutions and innovation centres, can be described as the most active and visible among the Programme participants.
- As far as links between organizations from specific cities are concerned, the main axes of cooperation were: Gdańsk – Klaipeda, Klaipeda – Rostock, Gdańsk – Rostock: and Rostock – Szczecin.
- The Programme stands out from other „maritime” Interreg programmes. It focuses more on local actors, allowing small organizations from rural areas to participate. The uniqueness of this Programme is that it operates more on the local level. It also smaller terms of the ERDF allocation. Unfortunately, the Pprogramme is not so promoted to a sufficient degree.

4. TASK 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

Horizontal principles were taken into account by the Programme at the programming stage and applied at various stages of its implementation and reflected in the Programme documents. Those principles were included i.a. in the application form, the Programme Manual and project selection procedure or project report verification process. All projects were required to ensure compliance with the horizontal principles. All applicants were required to explain in the application form how their proposal contributed to equal opportunities and non-discrimination as well as equality between men and women in a positive way (optionally: neutral). Horizontal principles focused on ensuring equal opportunities and preventing non-discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Attention was also put to sustainable development and the policy of reducing administrative burdens.

Implementation of horizontal principles took place at all stages of the Programme: from the programming stage (preparation) through the implementation, monitoring and reporting stages.

Priority axes 4 and 5 was assumed to have potentially the greatest impact on the principle of equality between men and women and non-discrimination. In contrast, the greatest impact on the principle of sustainable development was assumed for priority axes 2 and 3.

Table 27. Assumed impact of individual PAs of the Programme on horizontal principles is shown in the matrix of influence below

	Sustainable development	Equal opportunities and non-discrimination	Equality between men and women
PA 1	3	3	2
PA 2	4	2	2
PA 3	4	2	1
PA 4	2	4	4
PA 5	3	4	4

1-neutral	2-may have an indirect impact	3-may have a significant impact on policy implementation	4-horizontal policy may be main topic of the operations
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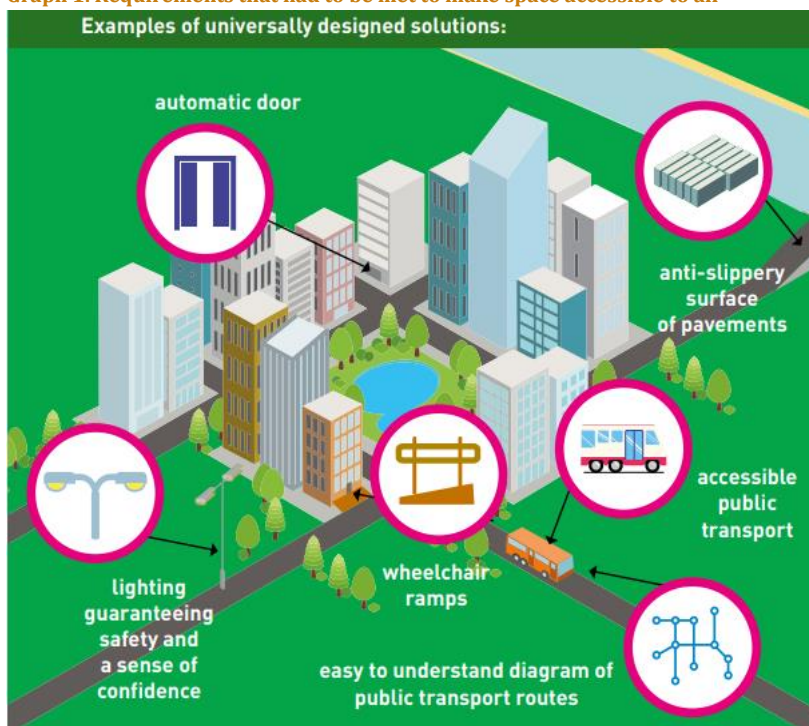
Source: *Ex-ante evaluation report of the draft of South Baltic CBC Programme 2014-2020, Warsaw, November 2014, p. 57.*

4.1. THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The support to promote equal opportunities, non-discrimination and equality between men and women was not the main goal of the South Baltic Programme. However, it was one of the Programme's requirements to ensure compliance with the EU horizontal policies and support the other targeted EU instruments (especially the ESF Programmes) in this aspect. Furthermore, implementing the principle of equal opportunities, and non-discrimination was also ensured at the Programme level by preparing the Programme's website in accordance with the WCAG 2.0 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines).

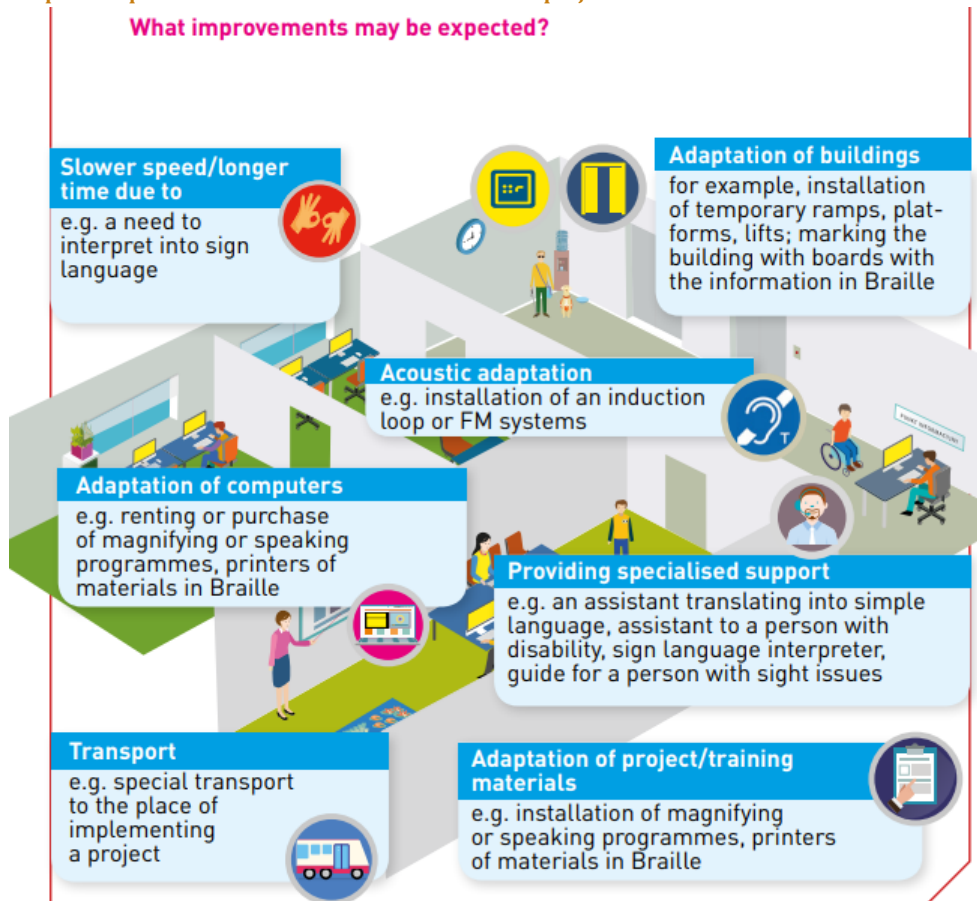
All projects were required to address and meet the specific accessibility needs and ensure anti-discrimination in the treatment of target groups and beneficiaries. It was expected that project activities, products and results be accessible to all citizens. A document: "European funds without barriers" was referred to as describing in detail what activities should be undertaken to ensure accessibility for all.

Graph 1. Requirements that had to be met to make space accessible to all



Source: "European funds without barriers. Improvements for people with disabilities", p. 6

Graph 2. Requirements that had to be met to make the projects accessible to all



Source: "European funds without barriers. Improvements for people with disabilities", p. 4

In the scope of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, the most positive impact of submitted (regular) projects occurred was noted in the projects from the 1st call. In terms of the principle of equality between men and women, the share of applications claiming the positive impact was considerably lower than in the case of other horizontal principles. The highest number was observed in the 4th call for proposals.

Principles of promoting equality between men and women and equal opportunities, and non-discrimination are considered rather obvious to implement today. No one questions the necessity of their inclusion, but some treated them as a "box to check" and maintained a neutral attitude towards them.

During CAWI, the Lead Partners were asked to describe how they implemented horizontal principles in their projects briefly. The answers concluded following statements, i.a.:

- The principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination were considered in meetings arrangements and staff employment. The project activities were planned and realized while considering various groups of potential users.
- Gender equality was provided by the employment of both men and women and a good balance of their involvement in the projects. Project activities undertaken were aimed at stakeholders regardless of a gender group.

In IDIs, the MA, JS, CPs and the MC representatives mainly claimed that the principles of equality between men and women and equal opportunities, and non-discrimination were implemented, but without an extraordinary focus on it. They also said that attention was paid to ensuring that all events and activities were organized in accordance with these principles.

The only thing they (project and lead partners) can do is pay attention to the project's management or try to reach equality between men and women, or if they involve some researchers to try to involve them, give them the same possibility. I think here there are no problems as far as I know. It's difficult to assess this as we didn't have a priority to focus on these social issues.

Source: IDI

They (lead and project partners) consider it not as something sensible, but as something they are already used to, and they know it has to be done. They know that these are European funds. They know that there are certain requirements from the point of view of the European Union, and you simply have to act in a certain way, required in accordance with the rules that regulate the use of European money, it's just that in our case it's very good, or in our case the Scandinavian countries attach great importance to the principle of just meeting these horizontal principles, especially non-discrimination when it comes to gender, views, religion and so on horizontal manner.

Source: IDI

Most of this issue was discussed during focus interviews:

Danish project partners felt those values are part of their culture, national set-up, policies and legislation. Therefore, they have also been naturally followed in their projects.

German project partners claimed those principles were never real issues apart from organized events. However, they are fundamental values often taken for granted.

Lithuanian project partners stated that they tried to follow equal gender opportunities attempting to have proper female representation during events.

Polish project partners gave concrete examples of including the Programme principles (e.g. building places for the disabled in marinas).

Swedish partners always made sure of as possible female/male representation at conferences, workshops, etc. Furthermore, the projects and their results considered the participation of youth, the elderly and the disabled.

The project that best reflects the principles of equality between women and men and equal opportunities, and non-discrimination is Baltic for All (BFA). The results of this project included a number of established courses for sailing, windsurfing, and kitesurfing instructors for the disabled persons, that prepared them for working in the South Baltic blue sector. In addition, the project raised much interest from various sailing clubs and organizations. Especially: disabled persons' associations, water sports clubs & schools, teaching subjects for water sports instructors, disabled people, and youth.

4.2. THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE

The main focus of the horizontal principles was on sustainable development. It has shown that the implementation of projects under the Programme will have a positive impact on the environment.

In particular, the principle of sustainable development was strongly embedded in Priority Axis 2 – Exploiting the environmental and cultural potential of the South Baltic area for blue and green growth and Priority Axis 3 – Improving cross-border connectivity for a functional area in the field of blue and green transportation. Furthermore, it is indicated that in the case of PAs 1, 4 and 5, many projects have a small direct impact on the environment. However, their implementation affects raising environmental awareness among beneficiaries and recipients of activities undertaken under projects (of enterprises, public administration and society).

Sustainable development was by far the most considered principle during project implementation. This principle is indirectly applied to all priority axes but also Programme objectives. Lead partners claimed that during project implementation, all the activities were tested to see if they complied with sustainability and that they always checked out the social, environmental and economic aspects.

Respondents from individual interviews have usually expressed themselves positively about this principle. Application of this rule seemed to them as something necessary. In addition, they sought to take the initiative and improve their projects with new ways to contribute to the environment.

This (sustainable development) is really important in our program, I think most of the funding is either directly or indirectly spend on this, and here you have a lot of direct results in green technologies but also in sustainable tourism. As I mentioned, we shouldn't only focus on only increasing the number of visitors, but how to make tourism sustainable environmentally and here we did a lot, the transport projects also focused on not simply creating transport connections for example, but on the environmental effects, decreasing the pollution.

Source: IDI

Project partners had similar feelings toward this principle to the previous principle of equality between women and men and non-discrimination. It's a fundamental value often taken for granted, though they definitely spent more time and were more involved in this principle. Its development was adhered to as strongly as possible. Effort was put into promotion of principle of sustainable development, promotional videos were shot, international events were organized. Project partners are claiming that you could see the involvement of the public.

Respondents found it much easier to identify projects where this principle was most strongly evident. Among the projects mentioned were: Fish Markets, WASTEMAN, Live Lagoons, and MORPHEUS.

- Fish Markets - a series of events, activities and offers were developed and established in small fishery harbours on the South Baltic coast, all related to fish, fishermen, fishery heritage, history and traditions: e.g. fish markets, fish sales days, fish cuisine and others.
- WASTEMAN – the main objective of the project was to implement Integrated Sustainable Waste Management systems that will decrease the pollution from the waste management sector while ensuring the effective recycling of municipal waste resources. The second output was a comprehensive package of innovative User Applications for integrated, sustainable recycling of municipal waste fractions. The User Applications represented user-oriented innovative solutions, integrating the value chain of collection, treatment and utilization of waste resources.

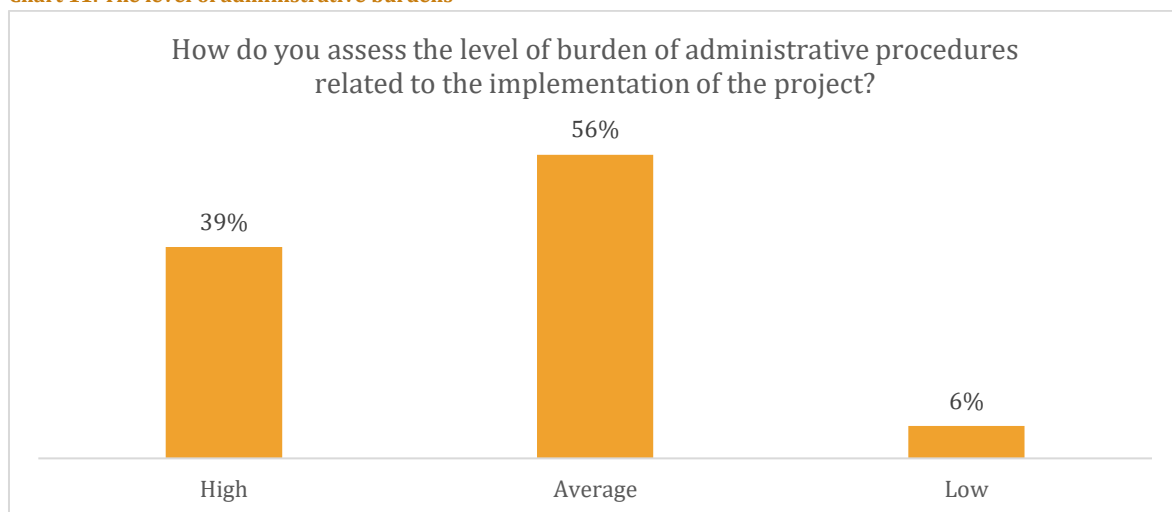
- Live Lagoons – the idea was to involve the coastal municipalities in the South Baltic lagoons in the application of so-called 'active' or 'living' barrier units to improve water quality and create bathing conditions inside the South Baltic lagoons, where at normal conditions, algal blooms and sediment resuspension prevent recreational bathing.
- MORPHEUS – the main idea of the project was to provide knowledge of advanced treatment technologies and the estimated environmental burden caused by the consumption of pharmaceuticals in four coastal areas to Wastewater Treatment Plant operators and regional decision-makers.

4.3. POLICY OF REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS

In the 2014-2020 perspective, electronic signature has been introduced, which has significantly improved the efficiency of filling documents compared to the previous perspective, but much paperwork still needs to be printed and mailed with original hand-written signature.

Lead Partners when asked to assess the burden of administrative procedures related to the implementation of the project, mainly indicated that it was rather average, although on occasion - quite high, but most of them said it was rather average.

Chart 11. The level of administrative burdens



Source: own research, CAWI

Respondents from individual interviews complained a lot about administrative burdens. Almost everyone was dissatisfied with the amount of paperwork.

The difficulty for me is hindered by the system in which we operate, the system as such. This bureaucracy, that it takes a very long time to approve documents and these documents circulate for a long time, and for me this is a big obstacle. Also I would automate it as much as I can [...] In pandemic there was an electronic signature introduced. But still, I see a lot of printing. All these project contracts are still printed and standing in binders. We could introduce more digitization that's for sure. It's just a huge machine to change.

Source: IDI

Weaknesses are always harder to talk about. I think that all the time we still fund a little too much administration for the beneficiaries. And in addition to the fact that the projects themselves are

difficult and require a bit of courage on the part of the institutions, it's also an administrative burden that can't be reduced very much. Despite the fact that the simplified costs are proposed in the new program so much more extensive than they were, I think that here, however, these EU programs should still work on this administrative burden.

Source: IDI

Project partners also felt like the administrative work still requires much time and heavy work and said that sometimes it takes more time than actual project activities. On the other hand, they also claimed that currently, the Programme demands less bureaucratic procedures than before (in 2007-2013 perspective). They were hopeful that a new, flexible budget will minimalise administrative burdens. Also the Managing Authority declared that in the upcoming 2021-2027 perspective of the Programme, two-way electronic signing of subsidy contracts would be introduced.

4.4. CONCLUSIONS

- The obligation to follow the principles of equality between women and men and equal opportunities, and non-discrimination were treated as rather obvious. Therefore, not even that much additional attention was to be paid to it. As already mentioned the implementation of these principles was more about not excluding anyone.
- The principle of sustainable development was significantly more important to respondents. They could point out specific actions taken to realize this principle and concrete projects in which this principle was the most evident. The fact that this principle was followed more was helped by the fact that the entire Programme focused on blue and green growth.
- The administrative burden is something that needs improvement. Even though the electronic signature was implemented and diminished the level of bureaucracy, respondents still complained about the paperwork. According to the research team, the number of documents to be filled out is indeed very large, and the content of these files is complicated. There was often feedback that partners had to call contact points to ask how to fill something out. Hope is brought by the upcoming 2021-2027 perspective of the Programme, in which new technological solutions are planned, which means easier application submission.

5. TASK 3. EVALUATION OF INFORMATION AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

5.1. STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS ON COMMUNICATION

The utility of Programme Communication Strategy in the implementation of communication activities was undertaken in IDI research. The respondents were asked to answer the following question: *Did the Programme Communication Strategy prove useful in the implementation of communication activities?*

The overall assessment of the Programme Communication Strategy's usefulness is positive. According to some respondents, the document does not need to be changed. It formed the basis for the implementation of activities, and it fulfilled its role fine.

„In my opinion it is very human. (...) This is the kind of the Bible (...), that you refer to throughout the whole perspective and year after year you realise the premise”.

Source: IDI.

It was okay. The strategy was a lot of space, it was flexible enough.

Source: IDI.

„I asses very positively the Communication Strategy. I have no objections. I don't know what else could be improve.”

Source: IDI

“I voted 'yes' for it.”

Source: IDI

One of 24 respondents felt that the South Baltic Programme is one of the best in among the cross-border programmes and ETC programmes when we speak about the communication strategy.

According to another respondent, the vital fact is that the Programme Communication Strategy was constantly improved from one financial perspective to the next one.

“Quite well, not top. I would say we it could be better but also it's difficult to say. It could be much better, because I myself don't have that vision of "it should be like this" cause I'm worried that it's not easy. But I would say it has been continuously improving. And the thing is, about communication it's so much about not just what the JS is doing but Programme secretariat, or the contact points. It's about how we, together, kind of cover the different steps and also fill the gaps so that we reach as many as possible. .”

Source: IDI.

However, two respondents admitted that they did not know the Communication Strategy well.

“(...) maybe I had a look, once. I was searching for something but honestly did not follow it.”

Source: IDI.

“I have no idea what's what it says. But in general, I would say the program has done well.”

Source: IDI.

The IDI interviews did not identify any specific elements of the strategy that were neither very useful nor unnecessary. Interviewees had little knowledge of the document. One could get the impression that the most important thing for respondents was to have direct conversations and establish communication activities on an ongoing basis.

“Communication was very good, we had a lot of communication between JS and the project partners. We had very fast and clear answers, I think it was a very good cooperation.”

Source: IDI.

According to other respondent, the Programme Communication Strategy was helpful for the Joint Secretariat and the Managing Authority, but they have not discussed it e.g. at the Monitoring Committee.

“I think it’s been helpful for the Secretariat and the managing authority, but we have not discussed it in the Monitoring Committee. It’s more like we have been discussing the annual event, we have been discussing specific events and so on. Maybe that’s also depending on the interest from the members in the monitor committee. Sometimes one member, we should really interested in communication, and then the whole committee discuss this kind of questions and so I don’t remember that it has been that kind of interest in the Monitoring Committee for the communication plan. I don’t remember that it has been that kind of interest in the Monitoring Committee for the communication plan. (...) I don’t remember that there have been a lot of discussions about communication plan in the Monitoring Committee.”

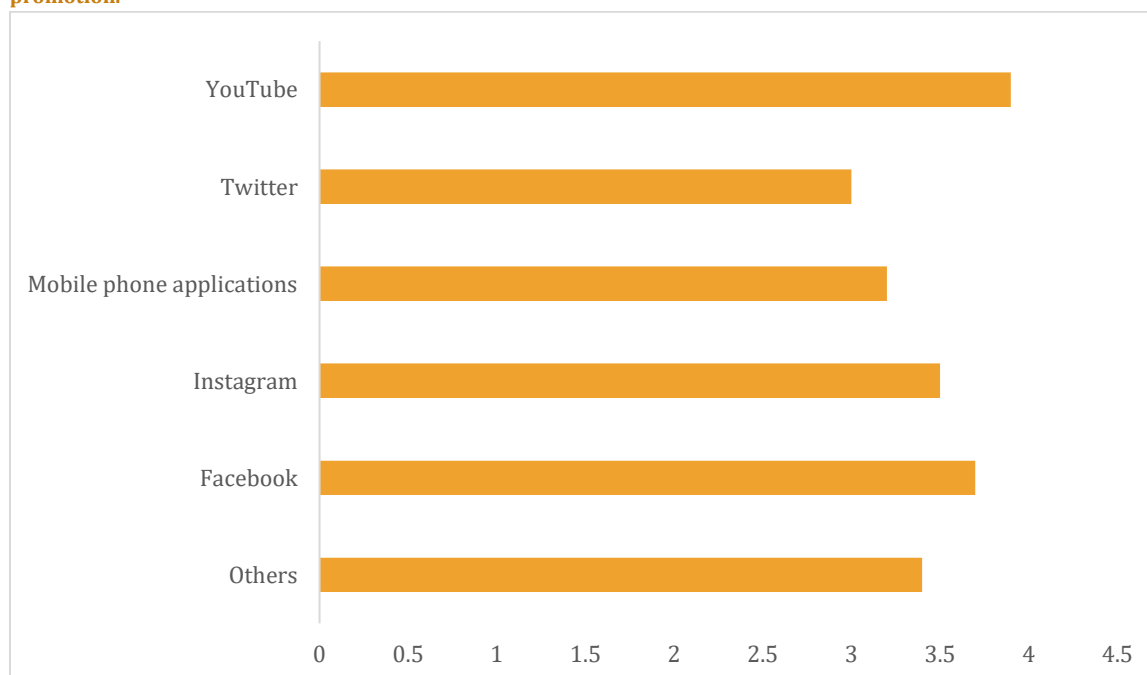
Source: IDI.

The pandemic period was a unique time where the implementation of events had to be discussed in the context of the new circumstances. The strategy has proved to be flexible in this situation, allowing for more efficient implementation, especially during the pandemic period.

The issue of the efficiency and effectiveness of the communication tools and activities presented in the *Communication Strategy* was addressed in the CAWI, IDI and FGI surveys.

One of the questions in CAWI survey concerned the assessment of the suitability of the most popular electronic communication solution used in the framework of social media.

Chart 12. Assessment of the effectiveness of various communication tools used by beneficiaries of the Programme in its promotion.



Source: own research, CAWI.

Respondents had to rate their usefulness on a scale of from 1 to 5, where 1 meant the lowest rating and 5 represented the highest rating.

Responses of Lead Partners for these questions are presented in the chart above.

All tools were rated as efficient (scores > 3,0).

YouTube emerged as the most useful, with an average score of 3.9, followed by Facebook (3.7) and Instagram (3.5). Another score of 3.4 was given to a tool OTHERS than the one proposed by the researchers and identified by respondents as LinkedIn. Also above average was the rating for mobile phone applications (3.2) and Twitter (3.0).

In IDI survey respondents were asked to indicate the most and the least effective communication tools. Table below presents the tools that emerged during the interviews and the aggregated number of their indications.

Table 28. The marketing tools identified in the IDI survey.

TOOL	The number of indications as the most effective tool	The number of indications as the least effective tool	Total numbers of indications
social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube)	7	1	8
website	5	1	6
infographic	3	0	3
networking, physical meetings	3	0	3
training/workshop	3	0	3
video	2	0	2
seminar	2	0	2
webinar	2	0	2
radio spot	1	0	1
interview with Lead and Project Partners in the national magazines	1	0	1
local TV report	1	0	1
conference	1	0	1
PowerPoint presentation	1	0	1
Regional Contact Point	1	0	1
competition	1	1	2
printed material	1	6	7
edia contact	0	1	1

Source: own research, CAWI

The most frequently indicated tool was social media, specifically Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube. 1 of 8 respondents considered them as the least effective although underlined their significance.

“I still know that social media is really, really important for the future but I’m not sure that this will work, in this way, (...) The reach of the population we can achieve in social media is very limited. So you can’t reach all the target groups only by social media.”

Source: IDI

The other person who indicated social media as very useful also pointed out the limited possibility of reaching a wider audience.

„Social media – that’s the only place we are limited (...) it’s the issue of watching the profile. (...) We have our profile. In two years we have gained two hundred observers. This is not a lot. (...) We are mainly observed by entities, official accounts of cities, municipalities, local governments. Individual less frequently.”

Source: IDI

The shortcoming of social media profiles is so they send the messages only to followers. Respondents pointed out that without paid advertising, it is impossible to reach potential Programme newcomers. The similar restrictions exist on every kind of social media. For this reason, it would be appropriate to treat social media as a channel of communication with people already at least aware of the Programme's existence rather than as a channel to reach new participants.

Despite these comments, none of the respondents indicated the need to close social media profiles.

“The social media is the most important tool and I think the Joint Secretariat have done very good on the social media things we could share and like.”

Source: IDI

“No doubt, social media.”

Source: IDI

The second most popular tool among respondents of IDI was the website. A separate subsection of the document is dedicated to the issue.

Contrary to the digital solution, the traditional marketing tools as the printed materials was assessed as the least effective. Specifically leaflets, brochures, posters and billboards were considered as not useful. Their negative assessment was based on high production costs.

“Printing brochures and flyers generates costs, time and energy. It requires a lot of administrative efforts. The information contained in them becomes outdated from recruitment to recruitment.

Then a lot of waste paper remains.”

Source: IDI

“Whereas billboards, posters, something like that, it’s not reasonable, it’s disappear.”

Source: IDI

“The posters are obligatory thing and are made without very much thinking.”

Source: IDI

Among all the opinions regarding the printed materials there was one very positive considering posters. Respondent treated it as a brilliant idea for eyecatchers or wake-up call. According to them it is simple and cheap solution and give positive result.

"I like is project posters, because they're often short message. (...) It's one of the thing that work."

Source: IDI

Some respondents also warned against too many e-mails from the Contact Points to potential stakeholders. If they are sent to them without their consent, it can be treated as a spam and have a discouraging effect.

"We try not to send too many general information. We have email lists and stuff, people, but we try not to overload with too much general information but more like to direct information instead. Then, maybe, we sort out the ones that we believe is interested in the certain topic."

Source: IDI

"I have also encountered in my work (...) at the contact point that someone is spammed with emails, that it feels like the work of a door-to-door salesman. So you can't force anyone. If someone wants to, go ahead. I will help you, but if someone doesn't want to (...) we don't push you by force."

Source: IDI

Also the tools, such as data using maps and cumulated data information, were identified as valuable.

"I liked the way they presented data using maps, cumulated data information (...) I think they were very good."

Source: IDI

One of the respondents expressed the need to build public database of all Lead Partners and other project actors of projects implemented under the Programme. This would make finding partners for further projects easier in the next edition of the Programme.

It was noticed by research team that on the Programme website there is a projects database with all the partners. It has a search and filter tools so anyone can find project partners according to a country, the priority or a type of project. However, respondents consistently said that such a database does not exist, so this raises the need to promote that existing database, so that there are no problems in finding it.

"I think the only thing that could maybe be done (...) that could be built some sort of (...) database of all project actors."

Source: IDI

Summary:

- Programme Communication Strategy has proven useful in the implementation of communication activities.
- The document is generally recognized as a basis for communication activities, but low awareness of its content was observed.
- The Communication Strategy's strength was its flexibility, which helped especially during the pandemic period.

- Social media and website are rated as the most effective tools in the scope of information and communication activities of the Programme.
- The printed materials, specially brochures and leaflets are treated as the least effective tools.
- The public database of financed projects can support to find the partners and other supporting organisations to next project.
- Too frequent emailing is considered as a spam.
- Infographic, networking and workshop were assessed as valuable tools.

All efficient and effective tools indicated in IDI survey:

- Profiles and groups of Facebook
- YouTube channel
- Instagram profiles
- LinkedIn profiles
- Webinars
- Seminars
- Public videos
- Database of projects
- Database of research
- Data using shown on maps
- Cumulated data information
- Networking events
- Multimedia presentations at networking meetings
- The breakout rooms for people to chat during the conferences
- Participation in the annual event, The Baltic Sea Forum
- Presentation of best practices of the Interreg projects
- Presentation of Lead Partners from different Interreg projects

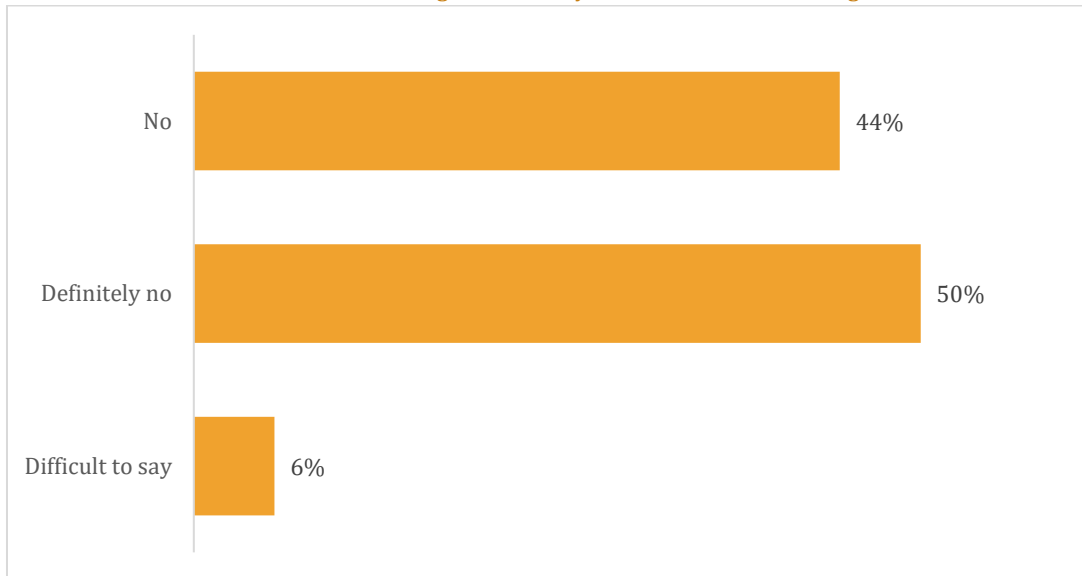
5.2. THE PROGRAMME WEBSITE

The issue of the attractiveness of the South Baltic Programme website www.southbaltic.eu was addressed in the CAWI survey. Some opinions on it also emerged in the IDI interviews. Additional assessment was prepared by the evaluator based on the Strategy communications.

One of the questions in CAWI survey was *Did you find it difficult to find the necessary information about the Programme and related to the implementation of the project?*

None of the beneficiaries stated that they had any difficulties finding the necessary information about the Programme and related to the project implementation. Half of them pointed out that they had “definitely no” troubles and the next 44% respondents indicated “No”.

Chart 13. Assessment of difficulties in finding the necessary information about the Programme on the website

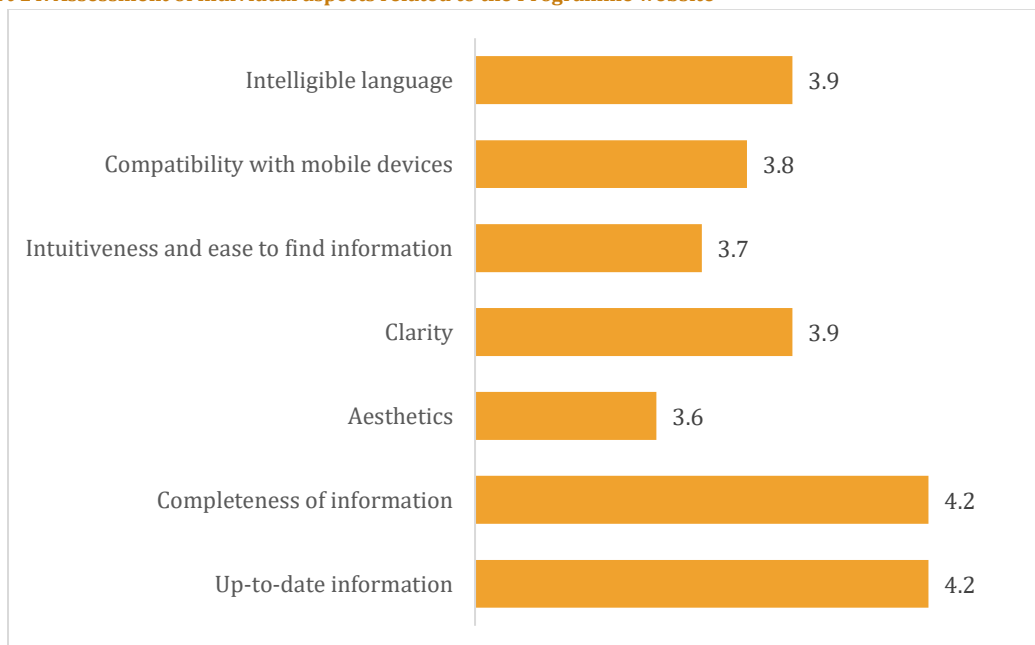


Source: own research, CAWI

In the another question Lead Partners were asked to assess individual aspects related to the Programme website. The proposals to evaluate were the following 7 features. Respondents had to rate their usefulness on a scale of 1 to 5.

Responses to these questions are presented in the chart below.

Chart 14. Assessment of individual aspects related to the Programme website



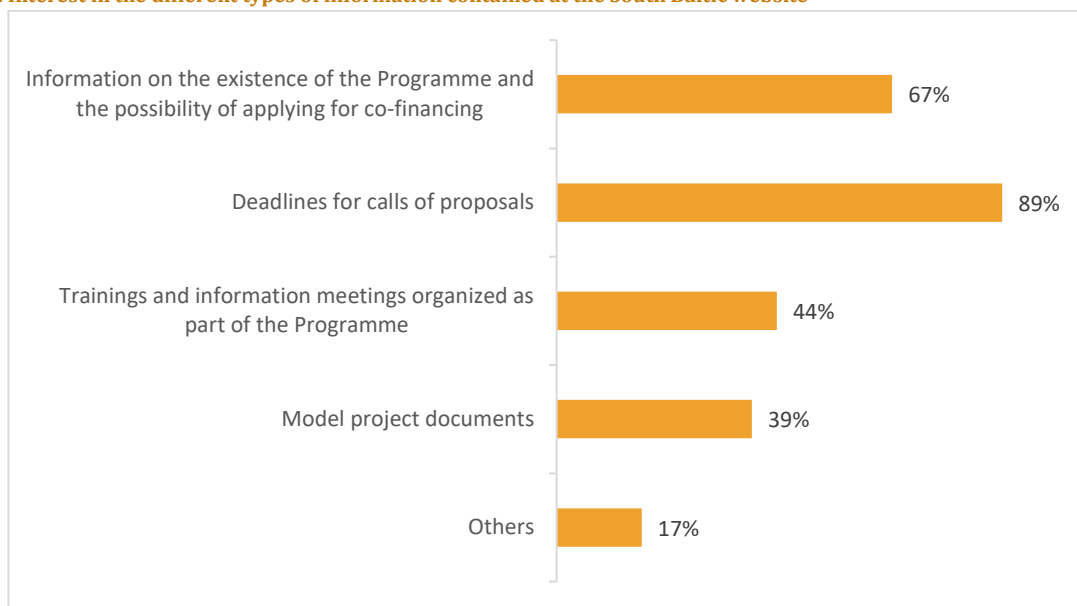
Source: own research, CAWI

The best rated, with an average score of 4.2, were the completeness of the information and the up-to-date information. The intelligible language and clarity were in the second position, with a result of 3.9 points. The compatibility with mobile devices (3.8) and the intuitiveness and ease of finding information (3.7) were also rated quite highly. The lowest score but not the worst regarded the aesthetics of the website.

The separate question concerned the type of information searched on the website. In the question *What information were you looking for on the Program website?* The sum of the answers did not have to be 100%, as each respondent could indicate more than one answer.

Chart below presents the result of the research in graphic form.

Chart 15. Interest in the different types of information contained at the South Baltic website



Source: own research, CAWI

In IDI survey, 24 respondents were also asked among others about the communication tools. The Programme website was indicated 5 times as the most effective and once as the least effective in the process of communication. However, all of respondents pointed out the necessity to improve it.

The main objective raised by the respondent who negatively assessed the website was difficulties in use of it.

“I don't think the web page for the Programme has been that easy to use.”

Source: IDI

On the other hand positively assessing respondents pointed out the necessity to make it more attractive, with the high quality graphics, photos and videos. They also considered needs to make the texts shorter and clearer, especially in the part dedicated for the potential beneficiaries.

“I think it is improvement area. (...) there needs to more videos, more photos, such pictorial things, not projects descriptions, sheets of text.”

Source: IDI

“Video clips great to use”.

Source: IDI

“I would say the website could be more user friendly. Cause when you enter it, it's not eye catching. You are not like "oh this is interesting" but it's more like – have you seen it?”

Source: IDI

“The website is maybe not the best. But I don't think they think it, they built that thing themselves.”

Source: IDI

They indicated also a need to have website as well as social media profiles in the beneficiaries of the Programme. It is also crucial to present the tasks and objectives of the Programme so that applicants know how to apply for funding.

The general overview of the website and analyses of publicly available statistics regarding the website www.southbaltic.eu revealed a few facts.

In the period between 21st March 2014 to 18th Oct 2022, on the website there were published 331 pieces of information from all categories. It means that on average three pieces of information were published per month.

The website does not include a public press review section where articles about projects or the Programme published by local, regional, national or European media outlets could be archived, which is clearly indicated in the Communication Strategy document.

There is also a problem with fast and intuitive finding of materials dedicated to target groups as newcomers and beneficiaries.

The website is also characterized by very limited exposition of multimedia materials.

The website provides a smooth operability on both conventional and alternative devices with web access such as mobiles and tablets which should be regarded as an advantage.

The another positive is accessibility for visually impaired users. In practice, the implemented solution of the website has limited useability due to comparatively small increase in fonts size.

The links to the social media are placed on the website. Unfortunately, there are displayed on the very bottom of the site which makes them difficult to access.

Summary:

- The Lead Partners have no trouble finding the information they need on the Programme website.
- The Lead Partners rated the completeness of the information and the up-to-date information the highest.
- The website's aesthetics was rated the lowest of all the presented features, i.e. 3.6 score on a scale from 1 to 5.
- Almost 90% of the surveyed respondents of CAWI most often searched for information about deadlines of calls of proposals.

- Slightly less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the surveyed CAWI respondents searched for information about the Programme and the possibility of applying for co-financing.
- 5 of 24 respondents of IDI pointed out the website had a crucial role in the process of communication but they underlined the need to change it.
- The website itself should be updated more often.
- The website is updated average three times per month. In spite of the Strategy Communication's recommendation the website does not include:
 - a public press review section where articles about projects or the Programme published by local, regional, national or European media outlets could be archived;
- There is a lack of the sections dedicated to newcomers and beneficiaries.
- There is very limited exposition of multimedia materials.
- The comparatively small possibility to increase the fonts size what is crucial for impaired users.
- The social media links placed on the very bottom of the site may be difficult to access.
- The website provides a smooth operability on both conventional and alternative devices.

5.3. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY MEASURES

The completed research addressed the question of which information and promotional activities were most visible among target groups and which had the greatest impact.

However, the opinions on this subject vary widely. The different ratings were given for separated particular tools and methods, such as the website, leaflets or social media activities.

The general opinions resulting from the individual surveys are described below, clearly highlighting those areas where there were significant differences in assessments.

In the CAWI, respondents were asked to indicate what types of information and promotion methods were the most effective. The assessment scale was from 1 to 5, where 1 stood for the lowest rank in effectiveness and 5 for the highest. They could also answer: "I didn't use that promotion method".

The question was asked so that the answers identified not only the most effective methods, but also the most popular ones, which did not necessarily mean the most effective.

The common values for the separated methods are presented in the summary table below.

Table 29. Assessment of the most effective methods of promotion and information

Methods of promotion and information	Average value	Used	Unused
Information posters	3,31	72%	5
Promoting projects on the websites of entities/institutions	4,2	94%	1
The use of billboards	2,9	56%	8
Placing logos on documents	3,5	100%	0

Methods of promotion and information	Average value	Used	Unused
Publications (leaflets, posters, brochures, folders, inserts for newspapers or magazines)	3,7	94%	1
Press information	4,3	100%	0
Radio broadcasts	3,5	61%	7
TV commercials	3,6	56%	8
Advertisements and articles on the Internet	4,6	89%	2
[Information meetings (including conferences, workshops, lectures)]	4,4	100%	0
[Others]	2,8	50%	9

Source: own research, CAWI

All surveyed Lead Partners benefited from the inclusion of the logos on documents, the press releases and the networking meetings as the conferences, workshops or lectures. However, this does not mean that these methods received maximum marks. These tools received the following average scores, respectively: 3.5, 4.3 and 4.4.

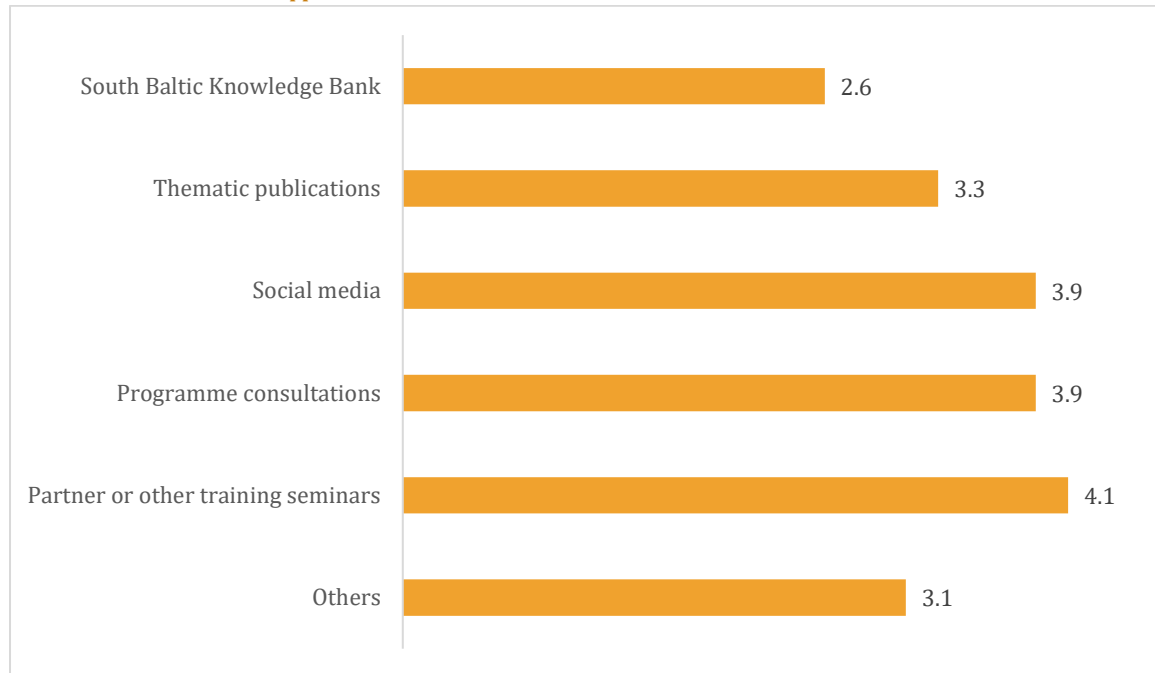
As the most effective (with a score of 4.6), was recognized by the advertisements and articles on the Internet, but it was used by 89% of respondents.

More than 50% of respondents decided to use the billboards; however, their effectiveness was rated almost the lowest, at 2.9.

Half of the surveyed Lead Partners indicated that they used also other methods (“OTHERS”), although their usefulness was rated the lowest, at 2.8. Among these methods was the reportage on Danish regional television about the pilot installation, social media, and newsletter and TV-monitors where placed in local buses with a movie about the project shown on TV-monitors in local buses.

In other question, respondents were asked to rate the tools to support communication efforts of the Programme, using the score scale of 1 to 5.

Chart 16. Evaluation of tools to support communication efforts



Source: own research, CAWI.

The most supportive was the partner or other training seminars (4.1). With a result of 3.9 *ex aequo* were the Programme consultations and the social media. The Smart Alliance tool was rated the lowest.

In the IDI respondents were asked about the most and the least helpful promotional activities. They mentioned about the different or sometimes the same methods but they had a various opinions.

The opinion on the most effective activities

The direct activities aimed at a specific group of recipients were assessed as the most useful. The meetings addressed directly to beneficiaries, such as workshops or seminars that allowed them to get the knowledge about project implementation or application of the Programme's rules were considered valuable

According to the experts selected for the study in the form of people from Contact Points, Monitoring Committee or implementing institutions, much more effective for visualization and branding of Interreg South Baltic are annual events.

The respondents noted the need for physical networking during the different conferences, events, forums, training, etc., where there is an opportunity to discuss "face-to-face". The Baltic Sea Strategy Forum and the European Week of City Regions in Brussels were identified as very helpful for the promotion of the Programme.

"It's really of course the physical meetings on the local level."

Source: IDI

The key activity should be also strong cooperation with the mass media, mainly the trade press or local television. The result of such good relation should be interviews with the project managers or the municipality's mayors.

One of the 24 respondents underlined the high level of usefulness of webinars, that which have been working pretty well during the pandemic.

"Most resource demanding but also the best one are the webinars."

Source: IDI

One respondent saw the various types of competitions as a useful method of communicating ideas related to the Programme.

"We did numerous competitions, to different groups we did a photo competition, a film competition with quite attractive prizes."

Source: IDI

Regarding promotion and communication, standard methods were mainly used, including project websites, educational movies, press and web releases, project newsletters, required banners, roll-ups, posters, promotional materials, popular and scientific publications with Programme's logotypes etc.

One of the projects with an EUSBSR flagship status also prepared extra its thematic exhibition.

Communication at the Programme level, as well as at the project level, were assessed to have been effective. In contrast, the dialogue with external actors such as NGOs and municipalities, was almost invisible. In the opinion of the Evaluation Team, this should be an element of improvement in the next edition.

The key to increasing brand awareness is increasing engagement in communicating the differences between the Programme and other EU-funded programmes.

It is also necessary to increase the use of communication tools other than just the website. It is unacceptable for potential stakeholders to learn about the Programme from external channels, such as a thematic group on Facebook.

It was regretted that many of those complex, time-consuming platforms, databases, profiles on social media and websites designed and developed by South Baltic projects are often abandoned after the end of financing. It could be helpful if the Programme could forward them somehow to similar, upcoming projects. Some new, long-term solutions related to projects' websites are needed.

The activities in the local media and articles in the national press are considered very effective methods of raising awareness of the Programme.

Experts thought that outcomes of projects might also be presented on one page /central server managed by the Programme, or the JS. Using existing platforms and channels such as YouTube to provide information could also be another way to reduce extra time and costs related to new webpage creation.

Partners should also be given more clear perspective about how the projects and their products should be promoted. Cross-project communication could also be much more improved as now many organisations do need to learn synergies with sometimes very similar and related projects, which, in the end, limits cooperation possibilities. Knowing past projects would also be helpful. Therefore, the idea of one complex, centralized database has also been repeated.

Participation in the workshops was rated as highly effective, as was their promotion in the Programme newsletter.

The projects should be promoted more, also during special thematic days.

Despite the difficulties, the Covid-19 pandemic period was challenging to communicate, but some managers managed to create unique videos, online meetings and recordings.

The IDI surveys indicated a high assessment opinion of the activities implemented by the Joint Secretariat as well as the Contact Points.

“Particularly Joint Secretariat is doing a wonderful job at communicating and trying to distribute the program and the program agenda to both contact points and the regions as well.”

Source: IDI

The need to promote the Programme in electronic media through Facebook and LinkedIn profiles and groups was indicated. In addition to these elementary communication channels, respondents also pointed to publicly available videos and case studies produced for various projects, etc. Overall, the use of social media was rated as more valuable than in the pandemic years.

However, these activities were assessed as less effective than face-to-face communication. Respondents acknowledged that among other physical meetings as various types of networking meetings, The Baltic Sea Forum, which is held annually, was crucial. This is the best forum to show the best practices from different Interreg projects. Well prepared presentation can be an excellent opportunity to provide knowledge about Programme to potential partners.

The cooperation of project teams as an added value of the Programme was considered essential for promotional activities.

The IDI survey points to the example of Bornholm, which maintains many media relations with both newspapers and local television.

The only shortcoming was that the involvement of beneficiaries in the promotion of the Programme was less than expected. According to those surveyed, sometimes beneficiaries limited their promotion activities only to displaying an information board with the Interreg South Baltic logo. But their role in enhancing the promotion of the Programme is crucial, as they can showcase the Programme’s achievements through their projects.

During the survey, there were also 2 voices giving an overall poor assessment of the Programme's promotion and communication activities. According to them the scope of these activities was not very effective compared with other EU-funded programmes . The Programme is poorly visible in the public and the media and the information boards are kept out of sight.

“I also think that other programmes have been more active than the South-Baltic program. It hasn't been bad, but as compared to other programs, they could have done more.” (..)”

Source: IDI

"I am not satisfied with the communication and promotion of the programme. Compared to other EU-funded programmes, our programme is poorly visible in the South Baltic area, not to mention the rest of Poland or Brussels. We need to promote ourselves much more strongly through our results. But this is not the case. Unfortunately this is also determined by our project products."

Source: IDI

Promoting the Programme is more accessible from the project level than from the Programme itself. This is good for increasing brand awareness of the South Baltic Programme, because the projects promotion activities are more visible for other stakeholders and ordinary people.

The need for clearer communication objectives with the regional authorities, the European Commission and businesses were pointed out.

"I think for some purposes it COULD BE BETTER (...) if there would be more clear objectives for the communication to the region and to the Commission and to business."

Source: IDI

There is a sense of a lack of effective communication of the fact that South Baltic is one of the biggest and best-developing regions in the EU thanks also to the Programme:

"I think it's communication within this region was really good but the communication outside to show that we as a South Baltic are one of the greatest, fastest and best region was NOT so good, like it could be."

Source: IDI

The opinion on the least effective methods

As the least effective tool was indicated, the generally targeted activities as the external events, which involving a wide range of different institutions, are not always interested in the Programme. These could include agrarian, medical or entertainment fairs. They are also attended by potential beneficiaries, but their attention is caught up in other issues. In such situations, the impact is not so much effective than during conferences or exhibitions thematically connected with South Baltic Programme.

A constant challenge for communication is to attract new stakeholders, people, and institutions. Unfortunately, social media cannot encourage them to participate in projects because these channels do not reach them.

Respondents also pointed to the poor results of cooperation with the media. In result they were not delivering the intended objectives.

"I think the media contact is still the weakest point."

Source: IDI

The respondents also had a similar opinion about the brochures and leaflets. These are considered to be an outdated communication tools, especially in an the age of digitalization of information, which accelerated even more during the pandemic. The production of leaflets generates costs and

takes time and energy to go through lengthy administrative procedures. Finally, they are inconvenient to carry and impossible to update. The undistributed printed promotional materials constitute a waste paper. In addition, there is concern that no one reads them.

"I would say material in printed material is it's outdated."

Source: IDI

The Programme was launched in 2014 when not as much importance was placed on being environmental friendly. Since then, the Programme started avoiding producing printed materials and acts to be as environmental friendly as possible.

As opposed to an obligatory information billboards and posters seem completely useless. According to one respondent, they are lost among other information posted in public places.

A similar situation is with the competitions. One person expressed the opinion that they are not able to attract people.

"Competitions. Nobody wants to, (...) there are no takers, they don't want to win prizes."

Source: IDI

Respondents from FGI interviews stated that both EU projects and the Programme are not promoted very well. Many people in governmental organizations and municipalities are unaware of the South Baltic Programme. The need for improvement is emerging in the area.

The Programme should be more visible as, for now, it is mainly communicated via its website. Updates are also hardly visible.

In some cases, creating projects' websites was simply costly and unnecessary. Many of those complex, time-consuming platforms, databases, and websites designed and developed by South Baltic projects are often abandoned after the end of financing. Some respondents of FGI survey still maintain those websites but do not know how to keep them in the future. It could be helpful if the Programme could forward them somehow to similar, upcoming projects.

Partners should also be given more clear perspective on how the South Baltic Programme, projects and its products should be promoted.

Cross-project communication could also be much more improved as now many organizations do need to learn synergies with sometimes very similar and related projects, which, in the end, limits cooperation possibilities. The reducing development opportunities for further projects is a result of the lack of the list of projects and the project's documents as researches. German focus survey group indicated the example regarding the double surveys which were made for the same issue by two others Partners. The lack of knowledge about the existence of such studies caused the unnecessary costs.

Therefore, the idea of one complex, centralized database has also been over repeated.

According to FGI respondents, such events as courses or workshops organized by Joint Secretariat are very useful. Also participation in special thematic days seems to be a needed activity.

Promotion in the Programme's newsletter was highly rated.

Attracting local media and publishing articles in the national press are also efficient dissemination methods.

The beneficiaries gave the practical examples of specific actions benefiting the Programme's objectives. It is a crucial element of communication towards newcomers.

In general, the communication process used standard methods including project websites, educational videos, unique videos, online meetings and recordings, press and web releases, project newsletters, required banners, roll-ups, posters, promotional materials, popular and scientific publications with Program logos, etc.

In general, South Baltic Programme should be more promoted and made more visible.

Summary:

- According to beneficiaries, the following forms of communication were rated as the most effective: YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.
- Electronic media are mandatory channels for current communication. However, it is important that they are frequently updated and can be an attractive tool even after the project has ended.
- Electronic communication needs to be supported by physical, "face-to-face" meetings. Among them, the most crucial is The Baltic Sea Forum.
- Increase promotional activities during the special thematic days, conferences and other networking meetings connected thematically with the Programme.
- The communication between the Joint Secretariat and the Local Contact Points was highly appreciated.
- The need to increase the promotion of the Programme from the project level.
- Lack of communication with NGOs and local governments.
- Communication must highlight differences between the South Baltic Programme and other EU programmes.
- Lack of communication about the South Baltic region as developing through thanks to the Programme.
- Encouraged to promoting cooperation between project teams as an added value of the Programme.
- Maintaining a good relationship with local TV and the press is a priority for mass communication.
- Need to build a database of Lead Partners participants of in all projects.
- High assessment of for workshops.
- Increase promotional activities during special thematic days and conferences.
- COVID-19 pandemic period is not considered a time lost due to continued promotional activities.

5.4.SOCIAL MEDIA

The Communication Strategy document indicates the necessity of capitalize on the well-established social networks, particularly Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. All these communication channels are used in South Baltic Programme.

Taking into account, the direct beneficiaries of projects are mainly official organizations, LinkedIn profile of South Baltic Programme was launched as the extra channel. Currently, it seems to be the most used. In the period from January to October 2022, the posts were published here average around 10 times per month. Unfortunately, the number of followers is still not too high, it means 419.

The more, it means 911 followers is on Twitter profile. In the period more than 7 years, from May 2012 to December 2019 there were published 384 tweets. Unfortunately, the last post was placed on 18th Dec 2019.

The Twitter account has been suspended since 2019, but soon it should be deactivated.

The worst result is presented on YouTube channel that is observed by only 7 subscribes. 42 uploaded there video files were viewed a total of 2099 times. Movie views range from 2 to 296.

The biggest group of followers is connected with profile Interreg South Baltic Programme on Facebook. The launched profile in 2012 has 2286 followers and among them 2028 declared that like it. In the period from January to October 2022 there were published average several posts per month.

FACEBOOK

Profile: Interreg South Baltic

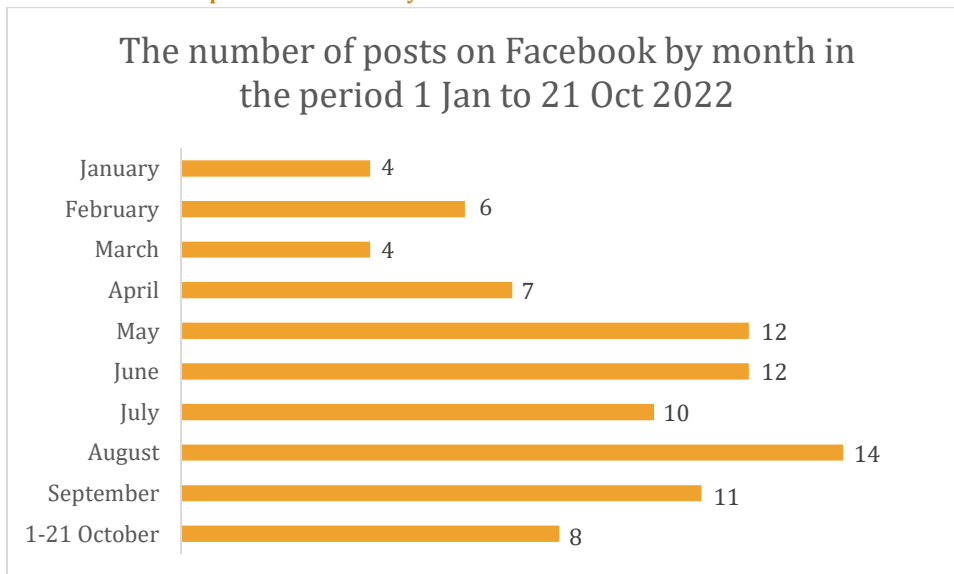
Analysed period: 01.01.2022 – 21.10.2022

Unique Users: 2009



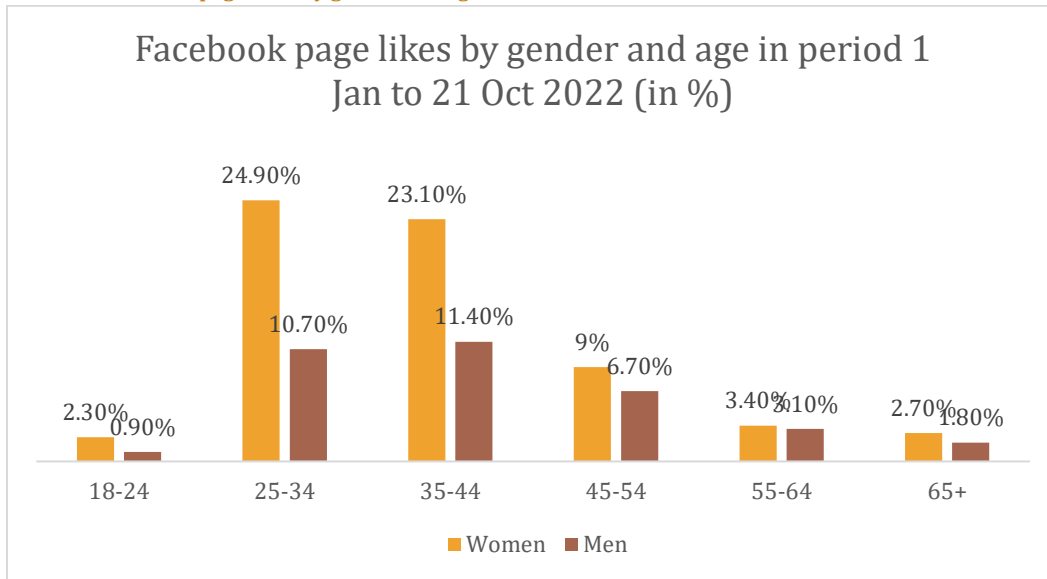
Source: www.facebook.com/SouthBaltic, accessed 28.10.2022.

Chart 17. Number of posts on Facebook by month



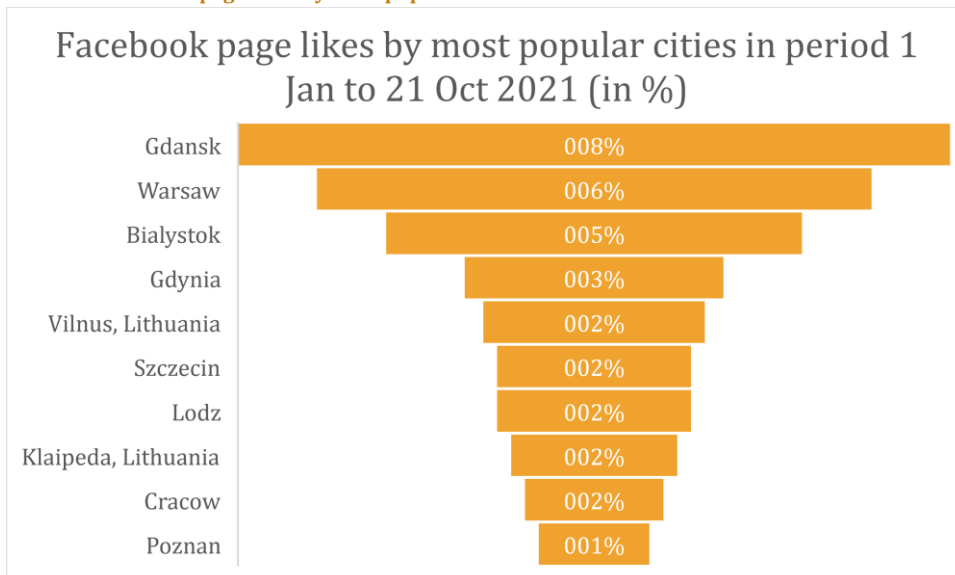
Source: Facebook statistics provided by the Joint Secretariat.

Chart 18. Facebook page likes by gender and age



Source: Facebook statistics provided by the Joint Secretariat.

Chart 19. Facebook page likes by most popular cities



Source: Facebook statistics provided by the Joint Secretariat.

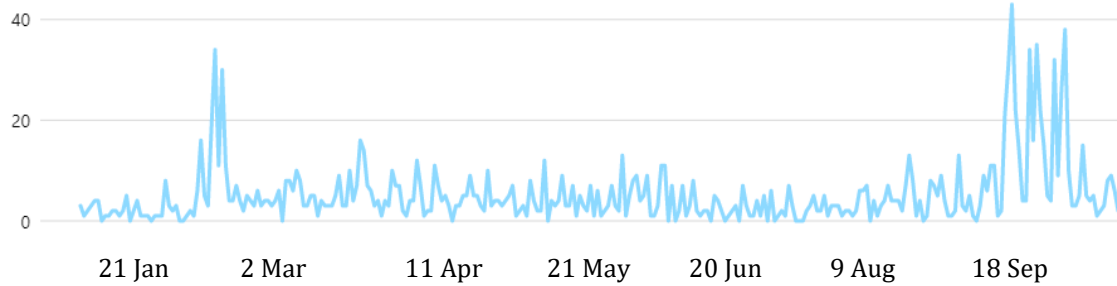
Graph 3. Reach of the Facebook page in period 1 Jan to 21 Oct 2022



21 Jan 2 Mar 11 Apr 21 May 20 Jun 9 Aug 18 Sep

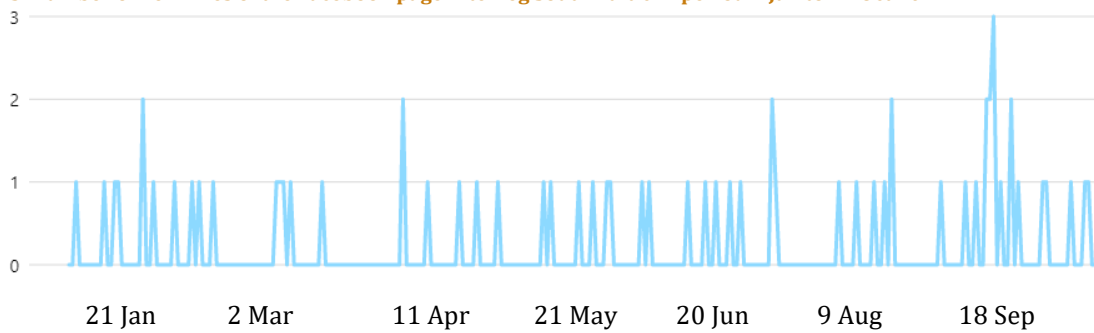
Source: Facebook statistics provided by the Joint Secretariat.

Graph 4. Number of visit to the Facebook page in period 1 Jan to 21 Oct 2022



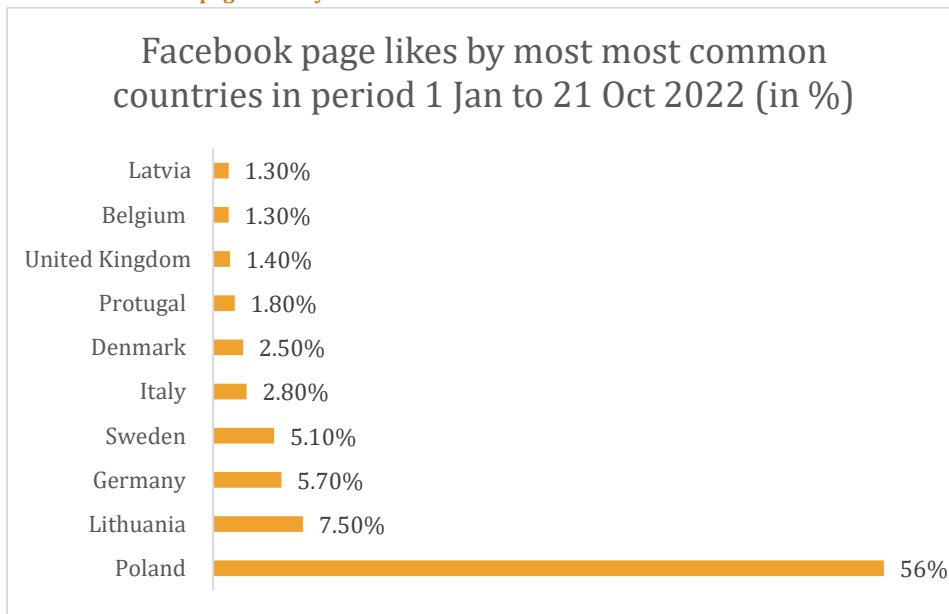
Source: Facebook statistics provided by the Joint Secretariat.

Graph 5. Number of new likes of the Facebook page Interreg South Baltic in period 1 Jan to 21 Oct 2022



Source: Facebook statistics provided by the Joint Secretariat.

Chart 20. Facebook page likes by most common countries




Source: Facebook statistics provided by the Joint Secretariat.


In the period from 01.01.2022 - 21.10.2022, the total reach of the 88 posts shared at that time reached 25,186 unique users collecting 986 likes, 298 clicks, 32 comments and 96 redirects further.

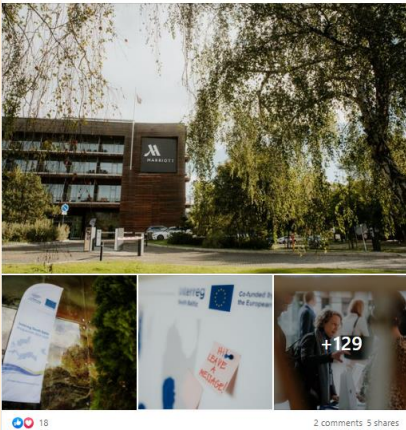
Averaging these values, we can say that one of the 88 posts surveyed from that period reached slightly more than 286 unique users, 11.2 likes, 3.39 clicks, 0.36 comments and 1.09 shares.

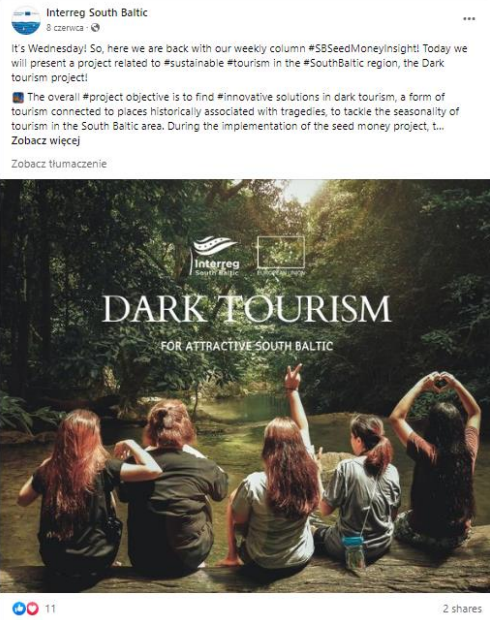
The posts from the following days received the highest reach:

Table 30. Post content

Post content	Post creation time	Post reach	Likes	Clicks	Comments	Shares
<p>We are happy to announce that the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027 has been approved by European Commission'</p> <p>A big THANK YOU goes to everyone involved in the preparation of the Programme</p> <p>#Interreg #SouthBaltic #SailingTogether</p>  <p>Source: www.facebook.com/SouthBaltic, accessed 28.10.2022.</p>	2022-10-06 T00:17:02	1279	92		6	9
<p>#WeAreHiring #JointSecretariat of #Interreg #SouthBaltic Programme is looking for #ProjectOfficer <</p>	2022-10-05 T00:03:57	878	22	52	0	4


Post content	Post creation time	Post reach	Likes	Clicks	Comments	Shares
 <p>Interreg South Baltic 5 października · 🌐</p> <p>#WeAreHiring</p> <p>!! #JointSecretariat of #interreg #SouthBaltic Programme is looking for #ProjectOfficer !!</p> <p>The deadline for applications is 24 October 2022, 24:00 CET... Zobacz więcej</p> <p>Zobacz tłumaczenie</p> <p>👍❤️ 13 4 shares</p> <p>Source: www.facebook.com/SouthBaltic, accessed 28.10.2022.</p>						
<p>Here we go!' Photos from the #AnnualEvent2022 have landed!</p> <p>Tag yourself on photos for #networking #durability'</p> <p>Special thank you goes to the photo crew obiektywni.pro - fotografia i film dla biznesu</p>	2022-09-28 T04:23:11	828	28		4	6

Post content	Post creation time	Post reach	Likes	Clicks	Comments	Shares
<p>Album Annual Event 2022</p> <p>Interreg South Baltic z Maciejem Kautzem i 2 innymi użytkownikami w: Sopot Marriott Resort & Spa. 28 września · Sopot, województwo pomorskie ·</p> <p>Here we go! Photos from the #AnnualEvent2022 have landed! Tag yourself on photos for #networking #durability! Special thank you goes to the photo crew obiektywni.pro - fotografa i film dla biznesu. Zobacz tłumaczenie</p>  <p>Source: www.facebook.com/SouthBaltic, accessed 28.10.2022.</p>						
<p>Its Wednesday! So, here we are back with our weekly column #SOUTH BALTICSeedMoneyInsight! Today we will present a project related to #sustainable #tourism in the #SouthBaltic region, the Dark tourism project!</p> <p><The overall #project objective is to find #innovative solutions in dark tourism, a form of tourism connected to places historically associated with tragedies, to tackle the seasonality of tourism in the South Baltic area. During the implementation of the seed money project, the project plans to create an interactive map with dark tourism sites, objects, museums, and other places across the region. =RvU Even more innovative in this approach to dark tourism is the idea to renovate the sites using new technologies, such as virtual realities, that could allow more people, including people with disabilities, would be able to visit and enjoy those sites.</p>	2022-06-08 T02:08:07	834	22	10	0	2


Post content	Post creation time	Post reach	Likes	Clicks	Comments	Shares
<p>The project is led by Zemaitija National Park Directorate (Žemaitijos nacionalinis parkas direkcija) from Lithuania together with Marinmuseum / Swedish Naval Museum from Sweden but aims at enlarging the network to the other South Baltic countries in the future.</p> <p>More info about the project: https://www.dark-tourism.com/index.php/lithuania https://www.marinmuseum.se/en/about-the-museum/project-dark-tourism #AttractiveSouthBaltic #network #Interreg #EUinmyregion</p>  <p>Source: www.facebook.com/SouthBaltic, accessed 28.10.2022.</p>						

Post content	Post creation time	Post reach	Likes	Clicks	Comments	Shares
<p>WE MADE IT! > Recently, two projects financed by two different programmes have established new #cooperation! Active for All from Interreg #SouthBaltic and Active Seniors(Aktywni seniorzy/Aktive Senioren) from Interreg PL-SN 2014-2020. Active for All is a #project from the 3rd #SeedMoney Call aimed at engaging people with disabilities and seniors in the area of the Baltic Sea through active #sport & #tourism <RÖß together with local government support. The project is led by the Commune of Kolobrzeg in partnership with the Administration of ĩlut District Municipality in Lithuania and the City of Barth, in Germany and it is based on the previous experience of the Baltic For All a project. The convergence between these two projects makes concrete the #capitalisation of our joint efforts in fostering tranSouth Balticoundary cooperation in the #EuropeanUnion.</p> <p>The first meeting took place at the Water Sports Center in Dzwirzyno, which gathered senior representatives of the Kołobrzeg Commune and representatives of the Karkonosze Regional Development Agency (KARR S.A. Jelenia Góra). KARR representatives came from Jelenia Góra to talk about the Active Seniors EU project, which is being implemented on the Polish-German border. They described exactly how such initiatives work and what can be expected from them. Seniors from the community club "Young in Spirit(MBodzi Duchem) listened with curiosity to the presentations and asked questions. The topic aroused interest. The intention of the commune in organising the meeting was to establish cooperation with KARR and transfer an identical project to the Commune of KoBobrzeg.</p> <p>More information on the two projects: - Baltic for All https://baltic4all.eu/; https://southbaltic.eu/-/bfa - Aktywni Seniorzy/Aktive Senioren https://karr.pl/aktualnosci-aktywni-seniorzy/ / https://projekty.plsn.eu/de/projekty/projekt/44</p> <p>Europe in my region EU REGIO Poland Centrum Projektów Europejskich</p> <p>#networking #bettertogether #CrossProgrammeCooperation #BalticForAll #BFA #Interreg</p>	2022-06-03 T06:04:32	757	26	4	0	4



Post content	Post creation time	Post reach	Likes	Clicks	Comments	Shares
<p>Interreg South Baltic 3 czerwca · 🌐</p> <p>WE MADE IT! 🎉 Recently, two projects financed by two different programmes have established new #cooperation! "Active for All" from Interreg #SouthBaltic and "Active Seniors" (Aktywni seniorzy/Aktive Senioren) from Interreg PL-SN 2014-2020. "Active for All" is a #project from the 3rd #SeedMoney Call aimed at engaging people with disabilities and seniors in the area of the Baltic Sea through active #sport 🏃 and #tourism 🗺 together with local government support. The project is... Zobacz więcej</p> <p>Zobacz tłumaczenie</p>  <p>19 likes · 4 shares</p> <p>Source: www.facebook.com/SouthBaltic, accessed 28.10.2022.</p>						
<p>Wanna be a volunteerS' Know someone who would like to become one Spread the word It is a fantastic opportunity to get work experience under the supervision of a mentor #SouthBalticProgramme and Interreg Volunteer Youth - IVY are #recruitingW't Apply now https://www.interregyouth.com/placement-offers</p> <p>Did you know that PROJECTS CAN HIRE a volunteer, too More information about it here =ŔGÜhttps://southbaltic.eu/-/opportunity-for-projects-to-enhance-and-promote-cooperation-in-your-region</p>	2022-02-08 T03:26:30	1301	43	27	1	8



Post content	Post creation time	Post reach	Likes	Clicks	Comments	Shares
<p>#InterregVolunteerYouth #AEBR #Interreg #SouthBaltic Association of European Border Regions - AEBR / AGEG / ARFE</p>  <p>Source: www.facebook.com/SouthBaltic, accessed 28.10.2022.</p>						

Source: own work based on Programme's social media

5.5. TRAININGS/WORKSHOPS EVALUATION

The issue of the attractiveness of workshops was addressed in the CAWI and FGI surveys.

The question regarding the satisfaction from workshops or training presented 7 features of well-prepared training courses. The responses of 18 Lead Partners are shown in the chart below.

Chart 21. Average satisfaction of score for chosen elements of the workshops conducted under the Programme



Source: prepared by the author based on the CAWI research.

Using the score scale from 1 to 5, the best average result (4.23) was given *ex aequo* for the manner of training registration for trainings and the subject of training. Overall, all other features were also positively assessed. None of them received a final rating of less than 4.

Not all FGI participants attended the workshop due to the fact that they already had sufficient experience with the Programme. However, their knowledge of it sometimes comes from storytelling, and these are very positive.

But they participated in Programme's Annual Events and treated them as informative, enthusiastic, and joyful. Trainings and networking meetings in Gdansk was also highly praised.

Overall the workshops and trainings for Project Partners were deemed helpful. These kinds of events are perfect tools at the beginning of a new financial perspective as they give helpful news and updates. But even then, they cannot replace the direct contact the Programme newcomers with people from Contact Points.

"Those events are highly praised and properly promoted in Programme's newsletter."

Source: FGI.

Conclusions:

- Workshops are one of the best-rated tools.
- The subject of training and the manner of registration for training was highly praised.
- They are particularly important for the Programme newcomers.

- Trainings and networking meetings in Gdansk was praised as highly helpful and useful.

5.6. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to prepare recommendations for the communication of the South Baltic Programme, the results of CAWI, IDI, FGI and desk research were triangulated.

The results of research were sometimes in the opposition. The main differences regarded website. The representatives of Lead Partners pointed out high satisfaction with using it. Contrary, the experts invited to IDI survey as people from Monitoring Committee, Local Contact Points and implementation institutions indicated the needs to change it.

This divergence may be the result of a different temporal distance to the issue. CAWI questionnaire was sent to 61 Lead Partners. 54 of them had already closed their project and the rest were finalizing them. Taking into account, that website is needed mainly on the application stage they used it a few years ago. In addition, the projects were approved what gave the impression of easy way to achieve it. Therefore, their opinion about the website could be positive. There is a suspicion that they did not remember the website functionality.

The workers of all institutions connected with South Baltic Programme which were invited to IDI survey pay more attention on their website. They work with it constantly. Their opinions can be result of recent discussions about it. Therefore, the group of Lead Partners should be asked about the opinion about the website soon after signing the contract.

- **In general, the survey results indicate the need for increased promotional and communication activities to increase the awareness of South Baltic Programme brand.**

The respondents believe that up to now, many of these activities have been address to a hermetic environment. It is necessary to go beyond narrow groups of real and potential stakeholders to disseminate knowledge about the South Baltic Programme.

- **The best way to achieve the goal, seems to be the strong cooperation with mass media, specially thematical press and local channel televisions. The implementation of such media activities will support the realisation one of the recommendation of the Communication Strategy document's , i.e. creation of a section of website with the media releases.**

The website was mentioned in surveys quite often. The analyses of its content indicates:

- **the needs of updating it by high quality photos, movies and infographics.**

The digital communication tools as social media profiles seems to be necessary in nowadays marketing. Therefore

- **the recommendation is to return to publishing on Twitter and updating it as often as LinkedIn profile.**

Twitter is a platform associated mainly with officials business and public organizations as well as with a serious professions i.e. journalists, politicians or scientists. All of them can be support partner for South Baltic Programme.

- **It seems to be also rational to treat YouTube mainly as a server for movie content then extra communication channel.**

Taking into account the huge offer on the YouTube platform the further development of the channel doesn't make sense.

- **Very important element of managing of all these social media profiles is to make the cross promotion. It means every of profile should present links to others. In this way the phrase "south baltic" will be better positioned in search Google as well as it gives the effect of viral activities.**

The other strong recommendation is to

- **stop using extensively printed materials due to the high cost production and an outdated form of presentation.**

The gamification is more and more used concept in the modern marketing. This kind of concept in communication process could be good solution. One Lead Partner indicated the competitions as the tool which brought very positive result. Moreover, this is also recommendation of Communication Strategy document.

- **The gamification should be implemented both for promotion of social media content or during the workshops.**
- **The promotion of Programme should still take place at the fairs, exhibitions or conferences, but only during thematically related to South Baltic Programme. In other cases, the participants are focused on the issue far removed from Baltic found idea.**

The COVID-19 pandemic was a period without face-to-face talks. It seems the people miss to such kind of meetings.

- **It would be a good idea to go back to stationary trainings, workshops, seminars and conferences.**
- **Another recommendation is to make Lead Partners more active in promoting South Baltic Programme. For the same aim, the important is also to improve the relationships with NGO's and municipal authorities.**

The survey was designed to diagnose useful and ineffective methods and various types of promotional and informational activities, which would allow refinement of strategic PR recommendations for the next perspective.

The marketing and communication activities recommended for continuation, those identified as ineffective and those recommended for modification are tabulated below.

Table 31. Effective and ineffective methods of communication and promotion

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE	RECOMMENDED to CHANGES and IMPLEMENTATION
<p>MULTIMEDIA PRESENTATION and NETWORK MEETINGS during the dedicated for EU Programmes or Baltic Regions the conferences, forums, lectures etc.</p> <p>WORKSHIPS, TRANINGS and SEMINARS</p> <p>MATERIAL PROMOTION in DIGITAL VERSION</p> <p>VIDEOCLIPS</p> <p>INOGRAPHICS</p> <p>NEWSLETTER</p> <p>SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES – only for limited group of people</p> <p>ADVERTISEMENSTS and ARTICLES on the INTERNET</p> <p>TV or PRESS INTERVIEW with CONTACT OFFICER, MAYOR of the MUNICIPALITY, BENEFICIARY.</p> <p>WEBINAR</p> <p>BASE of PROJECTS</p> <p>BASE of BEST PRACTICES</p> <p>BASE of CONTACT DETAILS to BENEFICIARIES</p>	<p>LEAFLETS, BROCHURES</p> <p>BILLBOARD</p> <p>E-MAILS</p>	<p>Graphic design and content of WEBSITE.</p> <p>POSTERS - only as an clear and attractive message.</p> <p>CONTACT WITH MASS MEDIA - strengthen relations with journalists and publishers of local television and the trade press.</p> <p>COMPETITIONS – only for these target group that could be interested in.</p> <p>EXHIBITIONS, FAIRS and SHOWS linked thematically to the South Baltic Programme.</p> <p>Common DATABASE PLATFORM with all materials about the projects and Lead Partners.</p> <p>Development of Twitter profile.</p> <p>Using YouTube mainly as a server for multimedia content rather than a communication channel.</p> <p>Lead Partners more active in promoting the South Baltic Programme.</p> <p>Improve the relationships with NGO's and municipal authorities.</p>

6. TASK 4. UPDATE OF RESULT INDICATORS SPECIFIC TO THE PROGRAMME

In the assessment of the value of Programme specific indicators, the same methodology that was used in determining the Programme's specific results indicators in 2014 was used. An online survey was sent to all institutions that had participated then in the determination of the target values. The survey was filled out by 23 experts representing various institutions, and the actual value estimated for 2023 was calculated on this basis. The vast majority of result indicators exceeded their target values or fell short of them by a small margin, except for one which value was estimated lower by experts than its base value – implementing green technologies to reduce pollution discharges.

Table 32. Update of Programme indicators (performance level (in %) in relation to the maximum performance)

Indicators	Base value 2014 (%)	Value for 2018 (%)	Value assumed for 2023 (%)	Actual value (2023-estimated by experts) (%)
Performance in the South Baltic area with regard to the presence of blue and green sector SMEs in international markets	62	64	65	65
Performance in the South Baltic area in the transfer of innovation for the benefit of blue and green sector SMEs	60	63	63	72
Performance in the South Baltic area in the use of natural and cultural heritage assets as sustainable tourist destinations	63	65	68	74
Performance in the South Baltic area in the uptake of green technologies in order to decrease the pollution discharges	70	73	75	69
Performance in the South Baltic area in the provision of transport services of high quality and environmental	72	75	76	75
Performance in the South Baltic area to ensure skilled labour for the blue and green economy	68	71	71	72
Performance in the South Baltic area to engage local actors in cross-border activities	68	69	70	76

Source: results from an online survey, n=23, data provided by Joint Secretariat

An expert panel was also organized to update the indicators, with participation of 9 experts selected based on their specialization, so that at least one indicator from a particular area was represented by at least one person. Experts, thanks to their broad knowledge and multidisciplinary experience, were able to provide opinions on more than one of the assigned indicators, and carry out complex discussions and draw valuable conclusions. Before the meeting, all experts received the detailed information on the South Baltic Programme, completed projects

and the reached Programme indicators. Experts generally agreed that external factors, i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprovoked Russia's aggression against the Ukraine, were the most serious barriers to achieving the Programme's goals.

Regarding the first priority of the Programme, i.e. strengthening the international activity and innovation potential of the blue and green economy in the South Baltic, SMEs have been successfully extending their international collaboration and found their niche as providers of specialized end and half-finished products and innovative IT solutions. One of the barriers to achieving a higher value of indicators is the fact that, according to experts, residents of the area are waiting for procedures, while they should strive to come up with initiatives to finance innovative solutions. The Swedish entrepreneurs, for example, have bottom-up initiatives, they look for solutions on their own. Another thing to improve is clusters - their activity is unsatisfactory, this environment is not motivated to cooperate. Projects of the Programme however represent positive factors of change in terms of knowledge transfer, social consensus, contacts with new SMEs and trainings. Local entrepreneurs should work together to reach out to international markets instead of competing against each other. They then have a better chance of achieving their goal. The experts concluded that the indicator values seem realistic for the whole South Baltic Region. However, they might be a little lower for Poland itself. In summary, the indicator on the presence of SMEs in the international arena was achieved as intended, while the indicator on SME innovation was exceeded by almost 10 percentage points.

As for the performance in the South Baltic in regard of use of natural and cultural heritage resources as sustainable tourist destinations, indicator was exceeded by 6 percentage points. Small businesses have become involved in tourism, and it has been possible to go into local tourism. Experts also stressed that in the future it would be worthwhile to focus on connecting partners from different Member States more effectively. The cultural differences that prevail between them are important in this regard, and exchanging experiences in this area would be a necessity in order to raise the value of the indicator in the future. According to experts, it would be useful to introduce a procedure to check whether projects are being continued under the Programme, including, if possible, additional points during the assessment for the projects being the continuation or capitalizing on the results of previous ones. Experts also pointed out that partners are less committed, if the effects of projects are not tangible. Also, in their opinion, local municipalities should be more actively involved in SB tourism projects and sharing of experiences within the Programme. National differences are again visible. In the experts' opinion more projects related to green tourism (bikes, scooters, hydrogen-powered buses etc.) are needed. The Programme should focus on e.g. short-distance tourism and the idea of longer stays allowing remote work. Furthermore, tourism is often related to transport and the environment, so those factors and priorities should be discussed together.

Performance in the South Baltic area in the uptake of green technologies to reduce pollution discharges: the lack of progress was visible the environmental indicator. According to experts' opinion, this was due to high and rising costs in the environmental technology sector, and therefore the high cost of implementing projects in this area. New technologies are still being developed yet more financial support mechanisms should be available. A conclusion for the future in the case of South Baltic, more green solutions should be introduced - this is directly connected with the need for more pro-eco youth education and increased social awareness (dissemination of a circular economy idea, promotional materials etc.). South Baltic Programme should prioritize the environmental issue in the future- new small-scale investments and educational actions

should be obligatory, even in projects from other areas. Ideas for new projects, such as regenerative tourism or greywater management, have been discussed. Experts are aware that the SB project's budget's limited scale does not allow significant investments to be introduced, but every small step does matter. Moreover, constantly changing national legislation might also burden the green technologies area. In addition, we live in a rapidly developing world in terms of technology and innovation. In 2014, when the base indicators were set, there were completely different needs in terms of green technology issues (similar as in 2018). Over the 6 years of the Programme, a lot has changed in terms of the environment, in terms of available technologies and the level of priority needs. One of the factors for which the current value of the indicator is lower than the target and the base value is also the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which slowed down for more than a year progress in projects and closed some opportunities for a while.

The following methodology was used to calculate the indicator by rating the statements from 1 to 5 (where 1 meant the lowest value and 5 meant the highest):

Table 33. Methodology used to evaluate indicator 2.2 (implementing green technologies to reduce pollution discharges)

Evaluated statement	Average score
The policy goal of increasing the use of green technologies to reduce pollution discharges in the region is an integral part of the region's development strategy	3,71
Green technologies applied to water management are effective in reducing pollution discharges in the region	3,57
Green technologies are widely used to ensure sustainable waste management	3,14
Green energy technologies are effective in reducing emissions in the region	3,42
Relevant actors in the region are leveraging cross-border linkages and networks to increase the use of green technologies	3,42

Source: results from an online survey, n=23

Performance in the South Baltic area in the provision of transport services of high quality and environmental sustainability: this indicator almost reached its target value and the external factors already mentioned, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia's aggression against the Ukraine strongly affected the level of achievement. In transportation solutions, it is necessary to draw from the past, to use solutions that have already proven themselves in the past. In this regard, the Programme has provided the tools to complete projects. Experts pointed out that in the next perspective, there should be a focus on micro-enterprises, and a greater focus should be directed to municipalities. The priority could be divided into the transport of goods/logistics and public transportation (related to tourism and the environment). The projects in this priority were financially constrained, which did not allow the indicator to reach a higher value. Furthermore, current EC priorities, e.g. urban mobility and digitalization, could also be considered while preparing new projects on emissions, noise, congestion etc.

As for the performance in the South Baltic in regard of ensuring a skilled workforce for the blue and green economy – this indicator has met its value and even slightly exceeded it. However in this case, there may be a problem with the durability of projects. They have a limited timeframe,

so the developed solutions might not be fully used in practice on a wider scale after the projects. New solutions are currently being developed to reach the economically inactive. One of the barriers in this area is the transportation barrier - the development of transport infrastructure is important, job seekers very often have no way to commute. Experts also point out the need for remote forms of communication, for example, remote mediation is now being tested. It is imperative that the labor market is carefully studied, so that training is carried out in such directions that will be needed and will suit employers. This requires strong cooperation with schools and universities. We are currently living in an aging society, so it is necessary to fill the gap caused by demographic changes.

Performance in the South Baltic area to engage local actors in cross-border activities: the indicator value exceeded the target by 8 percentage points. There is a lot of potential, people are more and more familiar with and willing to learn new languages. When creating a business, it is often immediately thought of in international terms. However, experts have observed a certain fear of becoming a large entity due to uncertainty, not knowing how to run them. The result is low scalability of businesses. They also noted that authorities from municipalities see international cooperation only in terms of the additional electoral points it may bring them in the future, rather than as something they can draw on and benefit from. Project-related business trips are growing, but their effectiveness should be somehow measured.

General Conclusions

- Most indicators met or even exceeded their target values.
- The only indicator that did not meet its target value was performance in uptake of implementing green technologies. This was caused by high costs in the environmental technology sector. Moreover, constantly changing national legislation might also burden the green technologies area. In addition, we live in a rapidly developing world in terms of technology and innovation. Over the 6 years of the Programme, a lot has changed in terms of the environment, available technologies and the level of priority needs.
- SMEs have expanded international cooperation and found their niche as suppliers of specialized end products and intermediates and innovative IT solutions. The growth of the circular economy is expected to continue. The current economic situation may facilitate public acceptance of new solutions related to, for example, waste management and unconventional energy sources.
- There has been positive change in the tourism sector, thanks to South Baltic Programme activities. New organizations and small associations are being developed on local and regional levels.
- Regarding transport projects, results seem to be positive and promising despite all negative external conditions (pandemic, political and economic situation).
- There's a growing potential for cooperation capacity. Language skills are improving, and stakeholders are willing to implement best practices from, e.g. Scandinavia. Project-related travel is on the rise.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Number	Conclusion	Recommendation	Address of the recommendation
1	<p>Within this priority axis, the results and relevance of the implemented activities were assessed separately with regard to a specific objective. It was highlighted that the topic of natural heritage was very popular among the applicants. However, it was also noted in the individual interviews, that this could be related to the "ease" of developing a project proposal. According to the interviews, the proposed project scopes within the natural and cultural heritage specific objective (SO 2.1) did not have a particularly high degree of innovation. The benefits of achieving the goal related to green technologies (SO 2.2) were assessed differently - in this case, the high innovativeness of solutions and the possibility of testing new schemes and models were appreciated. However, it was said that not all the effects of these activities are highly durable because the amount of funds allocated often only allowed for conceptual and research-based work.</p>	<p>Consideration should be given to increasing expenditures on costly innovation projects, but their benefits to the region are much greater. Conversely, there will be a far greater benefit from a smaller number of projects with a sufficient budget to implement innovation.</p>	<p>MC, Contact Points</p>
2	<p>During the study and individual interviews, it was noted that the research institutions and universities turned out to be extremely important partners in many projects and partnership-building. Thirty universities have participated in the Programme's partnerships and led (as lead partners) 26 projects. Therefore about 40% of all projects are carried out under the Programme. One of the advantages of such</p>	<p>The involvement of universities and research institutions should be further supported under the new Programme. The results developed in the projects and implemented in practice should be supported by expert (scientific) knowledge. Connecting research and development entities</p>	<p>MC, MA, JS, CP's</p>

Number	Conclusion	Recommendation	Address of the recommendation
	<p>an engagement of universities is that they usually have a good network and resources to lead a project. It has also been noted that they can guide smaller organisations when they bring them in for projects. On the other hand, university-led projects are often very research-based, so the results may sometimes be more theoretical in nature. Therefore, it was noted that the results might be less tangible in implementing the projects..</p>	<p>with practices increases project results' quality and durability and eliminates costly risks.</p>	
3	<p>The soft nature of the Programme's scope and budget does not allow tangible investments. At the same time, it was noted that many innovative solutions were created as a result of the Programme, including several good practices and new concepts for integrating road and water transport.</p>	<p>As aptly stated, the Programme budget allows the implementation of projects with mainly soft outcomes. However, it should be emphasised that these are just as important as investments made in the other programmes. The SB Programme has a very different character from the other European programmes, which should be highlighted more often as its asset. This allows to involve of more local organisations and makes it more accessible.</p> <p>To ensure that the Programme's projects also have a practical dimension, emphasis should be placed on introducing more pilots into the projects, as well as optimising partnerships and increasing the participation of actors with practical experience.</p>	JS, Contact Points
4	<p>The strength of the partnerships and their ability to work together and find new solutions to the current challenges is considered as the most important outcome of the Programme. Therefore, all activities that support partner building, i.e. networking opportunities and getting to know new</p>	<p>It is crucial for attracting smaller enterprises, especially from regions with less access to networking and cross-border exchange opportunities. Therefore, there is a need for a platform containing a database of institutions that want to work within the SB Programme, containing their expectations for future cooperation. In</p>	JS, Contact Points

Number	Conclusion	Recommendation	Address of the recommendation
	organisations, are extremely helpful, especially in the pre-application stage.	addition, informative workshops conducted by JS, networking meetings, and direct consultations organised by JS also play a vital role. These activities allow the exchange of experience and knowledge, finding partnerships and establishing common goals.	
5	Too many paper documents must be produced during the application process and implementation of the projects. Due to ecological reasons, paper documents should be eliminated.	The JS should recommend and accept only electronic documents to reduce administrative burdens. It will be beneficial for the environment, decrease the bureaucracy and, more importantly, to present the South Baltic Programme as eco-friendly.	JS, MA
6	There is a noticeable lack of SMEs and small institutions in SB projects. They were also not as active as it was expected. In addition, small entities without public budget support do not choose to participate in partnerships due to the 85% refinancing level and fear that their accounting liquidity may be negatively affected.	Small institutions' participation in projects can be increased by encouraging partnerships with SMEs and small NGOs. Consortia, with newcomers, could especially be encouraged or targeted in the dedicated calls, e.g. for small-scale projects..	MA
7	The reimbursement principle is often not acceptable for small institutions. The reimbursement usually comes about 9-10 months (or even later) after the reporting period starts. Small companies might find it challenging to provide sources for 10 months ahead without public support. Therefore, they usually decide not to work with the Interreg Programme.	If the future programming period is more focused on small institutions, NGOs and SMEs, the pre-financing for companies without public support could be considered, and/or measures to speed up the verification of expenditure and reimbursement procedures.	Members States
8	Horizontal principles were maintained. All partners take them for granted and do not take special	No additional action is required.	-

Number	Conclusion	Recommendation	Address of the recommendation
	measures. The principles of equality between women and men and non-discrimination were taken for granted; therefore, little attention was paid to it.		
9	The Danish and German beneficiaries point out that project budgets are too small, which prevents the implementation of more ambitious measures.	A division into small and large projects in the Programme could be considered. Calls for projects could be divided into two stages – small projects and core/regular projects.	MA, JS
10	All respondents – representatives of the Managing Authority, Monitoring Committee, Contact Points, Leading and Project Partners – pointed to advanced English language skills as a key factor influencing partnership involvement. Respondents also expressed that good partnerships also depend on understanding cultural differences and the rules of work organization in each country. Cultural differences were sometimes a challenge for the partners.	During the workshops for lead partners, the JS could show the vital role of mutual understanding in a multicultural partnership and respect for cultural differences. It could improve cooperation and avoid communication problems.	JS, LPs
11	Most Partnership institutions have already participated in the other SB Programme projects. Many worked with the Programme for years, making access difficult for newcomers.	Including at least one entity in the partnership that has not previously been in INTERREG is recommended.	MA, JS
12	Low visibility of the projects outside the eligible area. There are many exciting projects in the South Baltic Programme. However, no one outside the Programme usually is aware of them and their results. This might be detrimental to the image of the programme.	Beneficiaries should be encouraged to actively participate and promote their projects at conferences and events outside the eligible area. Active participation in the European event might be an obligatory task in the project.	JS

Number	Conclusion	Recommendation	Address of the recommendation
13	<p>The significant role of the Joint Secretariat was highlighted, as well as its good accessibility and proactive and encouraging approach. Furthermore, beneficiaries underlined the importance of the contact points - it was stated that the presence of the contact points was very helpful at all stages of project implementation - from pre-application to project implementation and closure.</p>	<p>No additional action is required.</p>	<p>-</p>
14	<p>Frequent disputes between the beneficiary and control institutions and the fear of interpreting regulations to the beneficiary's disadvantage block the implementation of ambitious projects burdened with a high risk of ineligibility of incurred expenditure.</p> <p>This results in the preparation of weak applications with no ambitious objectives.</p>	<p>JS should be given broader competencies under the applicable legal provisions.</p>	<p>EU, MA, MC,</p>
15	<p>A significant part of the partnership is not active in the project implementation. The lead partners indicate the problems with executing of realisation of tasks. They are unaware of any instruments to lean on partners to cooperate.</p>	<p>During training and workshops dedicated to the lead partners, it is recommended to inform about the possibilities and methods of disciplining partners in implementing their tasks in the project.</p>	<p>JS</p>

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9. ANNEX 1 – CASE STUDIES

9.1.1. INTERMARE - INTERNATIONALIZATION OF SOUTH BALTIC MARITIME ECONOMY

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: Gdansk International Fair Co.

Website: www.intermare-southbaltic.eu

Address: Żaglowa 11, 80-560, Gdańsk

Country: Poland

Status: joint-stock company - medium-sized enterprise

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: TNOiK - Scientific Society for Organization and Management
Address: Grunwaldzka 8, 80-236 Gdańsk
Country: Poland
Status: third sector
- Name: Rostock Business and Technology Development
Address: Schweriner Str. 10/11, 18609 Rostock
Country: Germany
Status: public
- Name: University of Applied Sciences: Technology, Business and Design
Address: Philipp-Müller-Str. 14, 23966 Wismar
Country: Germany
Status: public
- Name: Public Institution Strategic Self-Management Institute
Address: Baltijos pr. 123-61, LT-93224 Klaipeda
Country: Lithuania
Status: public
- Name: Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts
Address: Danės str. 17, LT-92117 Klaipėda
Country: Lithuania
Status: chambers of commerce

The project began on 01.07.2017, date of project completion 2021-06-30.

Total budget 1,927,125.00 EUR, ERDF contribution 1,638,056.25 EUR.

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The overall objective of the project was the creation of a network of companies and also stakeholders (clusters, employers organizations, regional and local authorities, etc.) for greater recognition of SMEs from the SOUTH BALTIC region on international markets as well as better cooperation in the supply chains in the region. The INTERMARE planned to create and implement a number of measures to integrate the actors of the South Baltic region. This allowed better cooperation and the creation of joint projects and initiatives, and because of that, maritime SMEs from the region will be able to compete in markets.

The project is fully compliant with specific objective 1.1 of the programme in terms of joint development and pilot implementation of innovative business models for the internationalisation of blue and green sector SMEs and organisation of activities (e.g. fairs, exhibitions, marketing and joint branding campaigns etc.) promoting products and services of blue and green sector SMEs from the South Baltic area in international markets.

THE PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Project activities comprised:

- Delivery of joint Marketing strategy for the maritime economy in the South Baltic region,
- Development of instruments to support and facilitate the international cooperation and promotion of blue economy enterprises in the South Baltic region,
- Development of instruments for the promotion of a blue economy through actions and events,
- Organization of INTERMARE 2020 fair for blue economy companies.

The project has delivered the following:

- 1 delivered a joint Marketing strategy for the maritime economy in the South Baltic region,
- Intermare South Baltic network and database have been established on one internet platform. The Target group quantification was 200 companies. Reached 2239.
- 21 actions and events: 6 INTERMARE South Baltic exhibition stands, 6 information meeting conferences in LT, DE and PL; 3 cross-border meeting conferences; 4 additional industry conferences. 2 study visits.
- 1 event - InterMarE South Baltic Maritime Exhibition - The number of registered companies - 149; number of visitors - 800; number of downloaded business cards - 1200; number of views of the fair website - 3944, number of business meetings – 170



Source 1 <https://intermare-southbaltic.eu/project/photo-gallery/nggallery/photo-gallery/BME-2018>

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

Good practice resulting from the project is the delivery of a joint brand for companies operating in the blue economy, supporting their recognition in international markets. To increase visibility of the companies, the LP implemented networking mechanisms on the website, where given companies have the opportunity to register their offers.

9.1.2. CLEANTECH INTERNATIONAL - ESTABLISHING AN INTERNATIONAL CLEANTECH COOPERATION STRUCTURE IN THE SOUTH BALTIC REGION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: Rostock Business and Technology Development GmbH

Website: <https://www.southbaltic-cleantech.eu/>

Address: Schweriner Str. 10/11, 18069 Rostock

Region/Subregion: Kreisfreie Stadt Rostock

Country: Germany

Status: budget economy institutions

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: enviMV, registered association - Environmental Technologies for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Address: Petridamm 26, 18146 Rostock
Region/Subregion: Kreisfreie Stadt Rostock
Country: Germany
Status: Third sector
- Name: Fair and City Hall Association Rostock
Address: Südring 90, 18059 Rostock
Region/Subregion: Kreisfreie Stadt Rostock
Country: Germany
Status: Third sector
- Name: Public Institution Strategic Self-Management Institute
Address: Baltijos pr.123-61, 93224 Klaipeda
Region/Subregion: Klaipedos apskritis
Country: Lithuania
Status: Public, Research institutes and institutes operating within the Łukasiewicz Research Network
- Name: Northern Chamber of Commerce in Szczecin
Address: Al. Wojska Polskiego 86, 70-482 Szczecin
Region/Subregion: Miasto Szczecin
Country: Poland
Status: Third sector (associations not entered in the National Court Register)
- Name: University of Szczecin
Address: Al. Papieza Jana Pawla II 22a, 70-453 Szczecin

Region/Subregion: Miasto Szczecin
Country: Poland
Status: Public university

- Name: Energy Agency for Southeast Sweden Ltd. (ESS)
Address: Smedjegatan 37, 35246 Vaxjö
Region/Subregion: Blekinge län
Country: Sweden
Status: budget economy institutions

Project total eligible budget: 1 400 984,66 EUR, ERDF: 1 165 136,97 EUR

Project start date: 01 Jul 2016, Project end date: 30 Jun 2019.

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The project was a response to the introduction of CleanTech solutions in many regions of Europe to benefit companies from the sector at a time when in the South Baltic region, this solution is still in its infancy and urgently needs promotion. The project aims to establish a South Baltic-wide Cleantech cooperation structure (focus on 4 sectors in the beginning) for SME involvement based on 10 efficient, newly developed support tools.

The project's main objective was to create a cross-border network of CleanTech entities by incorporating a large number of SMEs on the basis of a formal agreement, as well as creating tangible and effective structures to support SMEs. In this way, the project enabled a very concrete international cooperation between SMEs in the South Baltic region and between SMEs in the South Baltic region with cooperation partners and clients from all over the world.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

Project activities comprised:

- Development of support tools to establish a South Baltic-wide Cleantech cooperation structure
- Involvement of 100 SME from the green industry minimum in cross-border relations
- Durably involvement 40 minimum SME into the lastingly operated cross-border network, based on a formal agreement
- Development 10 tangible and efficient SME support structures.

The project has delivered:

- 5 Number of cross-border support services (study trips, Cleantech SME database, Cleantech market research tool, Cleantech Talk and Cleantech Contact Points)
- 100 SME from the Cleantech sector involved in the cross-border support/services programme
- 2 Cleantech conference + exhibition for green sector SME fostering their internationalisation
- 5 cross-border cooperation networks based on formal agreements.



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Source 2 http://galeriaus.usz.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/DSC_0052.jpg

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

The tools developed by the project were experienced as very useful and will remain in operation as developed and optimized. Furthermore, they are easily adaptable by future South Baltic projects as a part of their communication. The partners see a need for a follow-up project Cleantech II that addresses more the business cooperation and development for each business cluster of SMEs, like PV, bioenergy, circular waste management etc. Each cluster also needs to pay attention to how to market its products and services.

9.1.3. INNOAQUATECH

CROSS-BORDER DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFER OF INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE TECHNOLOGIES IN THE SOUTH BALTIC AREA

<https://www.submariner-network.eu/innoaquatech>

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: BioCon Valley GmbH

www.bioconvalley.org

Address: Walther-Rathenau-Str. 49a, 17489 Greifswald

Region/Subregion: Landkreis Vorpommern-Greifswald

Country: Germany

Status: research and development units

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: University of Rostock, Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Aquaculture and Sea-Ranching
Address: Justus-von-Liebig-Weg 6, 18059 Rostock
Region/Subregion: Kreisfreie Stadt Rostock
Country: Germany
Status: public university
- Name: Danish Technological Institute
Address: Maribovej 9, 4960 Holeby
Region/Subregion: Vest-og Sydsjælland
Country: Danmark
Status: research institutes and institutes operating within the Łukasiewicz Research Network
- Name: Maritime Institute in Gdańsk
Address: Długi Targ 41/42, 80-830 Gdańsk
Region/Subregion: Gdański
Country: Poland
Status: research institutes and institutes operating within the Łukasiewicz Research Network
- Name: University of Gdańsk
Address: Bażyńskiego 1a, 80-952 Gdańsk
Region/Subregion: Gdański
Country: Poland
Status: public university
- Name: National Marine Fisheries Research Institute
Address: Kollataja 1, 81-332 Gdynia
Region/Subregion: Trójmiejski
Country: Poland
Status: research institutes and institutes operating within the Łukasiewicz Research Network
- Name: Klaipeda Science and Technology Park / KSTP
Address: Vilhelmo Berbomo str. 10, 92221 Klaipeda
Region/Subregion: Klaipedos apskritis
Country: Lithuania
Status: research institutes and institutes operating within the Łukasiewicz Research Network

Project total eligible budget: 1 677 126,25 EUR, ERDF: 1 400 068,44 EUR

Project start date: 01 Jul 2016, Project end date: 30 Jul 2019.

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

In the South Baltic area, aquaculture is not yet widely established. There is also a clear territorial disparity in introducing innovative and environmentally friendly production technologies that could help to create added-value and increase the sector's international competitiveness.

InnoAquaTech seeks to contribute to the cross-border development and transfer of such innovative and sustainable aquaculture technologies across the South Baltic area and offer SMEs all over the region access to state-of-the-art technology, know-how, expertise and financing models.

The main project goal was to increase the innovation capacity of the project's target group, which consists of companies along the aquaculture value chain (e.g. aquaculture producers, technology providers, processing factories, fishermen and farmers, energy producers) as well as related support organisations (e.g. technology transfer centres, local/regional development agencies).

The project aimed at improving the cross-border development and transfer of innovative and sustainable aquaculture technologies, particularly RAS technologies, and ensuring SMEs all over the region have access to state-of-the-art technology, know-how, expertise and financing models. By developing business models for the smart combination of RAS systems with renewable energy production, plant production, microalgae cultivation and greenhouse technology (aquaponics), the project has paved the way for implementing innovative, environmentally friendly and cost-efficient cross-border value chains in the aquaculture sector.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The project assumed:

- To contribute to the cross-border development and transfer of such innovative and sustainable aquaculture technologies across the South Baltic area
- To offer SMEs all over the region access to state-of-the-art technology, know-how, expertise and financing models
- To identify best practices of integrated aquaculture systems and evaluate their agro-economic and environmental impact
- To develop and implement an SME service package (consisting of e.g. matchmaking events, training, study visits and an innovation check tool)

The project has delivered the following:

- 5 InnoAquaTech SME services consisted of matchmaking events, study visits, summer schools and trainings, financing guidelines, and an information platform. Two international summer schools and three study visits were conducted. In addition, a local matchmaking event in Germany for SMEs, farmers and stakeholders to promote advanced aquaculture techniques were taken.
- 1 South Baltic aquaculture cooperation
- 4 InnoAquaTech regional pilots
- 10 SMEs directly and actively involved in the regional pilot activities. The output is the IAT_SME-cooperation report.



Source 3 https://www.submariner-network.eu/images/InnoAquaTech_brochure_Final.pdf

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

Many stakeholders from different countries and regions were involved, and several cross border-activities could be established. Four advanced aquaculture pilot facilities were constructed and successfully put into action. Taken together, the smooth interlocking of various activities with significant regional impact was the real success of the project.

The project results will be further promoted by the South Baltic Aquaculture Cooperation, which continues to foster advanced aquaculture under the umbrella of the Submariner Network as well as through current funded projects, including Blue Platform and the SUBMARINER Network as well AquaVIP, as well as the next-generation projects that will be financed in the future by PPs.

9.1.4. CIRTOINNO

CIRCULAR ECONOMY TOOLS TO SUPPORT INNOVATION
IN GREEN AND BLUE TOURISM SMES

<https://cirtoinno.eu/>

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: Pomerania Development Agency

Website: www.arp.gda.pl

Address: Al. Grunwaldzka 472d, 80-309 Gdańsk

Country: Poland

Status: Public

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: Klaipeda Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts

Address: Danes street 17, 92117 Klaipeda

Country: Lithuania

Status: Third sector

- Name: Public Institution Strategic Self-Management Institute

Address: Baltijos pr. 123-61, 93224 Klaipeda

Country: Lithuania

Status: Public

- Name: Energy Agency for Southeast Sweden

Address: Smedjegatan 37, 35246 Växjö

Country: Sweden

Status:

- Name: Institute of Fluid-Flow Machinery, Polish Academy of Sciences

Address: Fiszera 14, 80-231 Gdańsk

Country: Poland

Status: Public

- Name: Centre for Regional and Tourism Research

Address: Stenbrudsvej 55, 3730 Nexø

Country: Denmark

Status: Public

- Name: Linnaeus University

Address: Universitetsplatsen 1, 35195 Växjö

Country: Sweden

Status: Public

The project began on 01.11.2016, end date was 31.10.2019.

Total budget 1,285,975.18 EUR, ERDF contribution 1,025,003.86 EUR.

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The project's general objective is to integrate selected elements of the circular economy (CE) into tourist services, products and business models of South Baltic SMEs. It will also increase awareness and understanding of environmental and social issues of their customers, which should be drivers of implementing green products and services in the tourism sector. Resource efficiency, better waste management, eco-friendly mentality, and product/service life-cycle management in a sustainable manner can increase SMEs' competitiveness, bring them real savings and, more importantly, improve their innovativeness and create new business opportunities.

The project fully complies with specific objective 1.2 of the programme in terms of provision and testing of cross-border training and capacity-building services for blue and green sector SMEs to improve their innovation capacity (e.g. in innovation management etc).

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The main activities of the project included:

- Delivery of Circular Economy Handbook for tourism SMEs,
- Delivery of a Self-assessment tool (SAT) for SMEs to review their current practices and identify potential areas of improvement in terms of CE,
- Preparation of cross-border training agenda,
- Preparation of cross-border advisory agenda.

The project delivered the following:

- 1 online self-assessment tool for blue and green tourism SMEs - The iSAT tool is intended to serve as an initial check, which helps SMEs to review their current business practices, compare them with the provisions of the CE and identify areas where new or improved solutions may be developed and introduced. It contacts SMEs with advisors to - during common work - indicate the changes necessary to be made by individual SME in order to meet CE principles. The tool has an additional learning value – it supports the awareness of tourism companies about CE and the possibility to apply its principles to different fields of business activity.
- 1 model of a cross-border training programme based on elements of CE for blue and green tourism SMEs - a team of project partner representatives and external trainers, coordinated by Linnaeus University, exchanged their knowledge and views through a series of meetings aimed at the creation of concepts and materials for training.
- 1 model of capacity building advisory services for blue and green tourism SMEs - The advisors from the CIRTOINNO partner institutions initially exchanged their experiences with advisory services in general and shared their impressions from the WP5 testing workshops.

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

The added value of the project is the SAT tool. It is a self-assessment educational tool which helps entrepreneurs identify their business position for circularity. By filling out the questionnaire regarding SMEs' practices, approach to ecology, resource management, and the way of choosing suppliers, entrepreneurs with different business experiences and competencies are enabled to identify where their company is located on the circular ladder: from the linear stage to CE 2.0. The tool identifies what the CE process for each company looks like. Obtained recommendations allow for identifying areas where improvement and implementation of new solutions are possible.

9.1.5. BIKING SOUTH BALTIC! PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BALTIC SEA CYCLE ROUTE (ROUTE NO 10) IN DENMARK, GERMANY, LITHUANIA, POLAND AND SWEDEN

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Lead Partner of the project:**Pomorskie Tourist Board**

Website: www.prot.gda.pl/biking-south-baltic

Address: Wały Jagiellońskie 2a, 80-887 Gdańsk

Country: Poland

Status: Third - Association

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: Pomorskie Voivodeship

Address: Okopowa 21/27, 80-810 Gdańsk

Country: Poland

Status: Public

- Name: Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship

Address: Korsarzy 34, 70-540 Szczecin

Country: Poland

Status: Public

- Name: European Cyclists' Federation

Address: Rue Franklin 28, 1000 Brussels

Country: Belgium

Status: Third – outside programme area

- Name: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourism Board

Address: Konrad-Zuse-Straße 2, 18057 Rostock

Country: Germany

Status: Third

- Name: Centre for Regional and Tourism Research

Address: Stenbrudsvej 55, 3730 Nexø

Country: Denmark

Status: public

- Name: Danish Cycling Tourism

Address: Romersgade 5, 1362 Copenhagen

Country: Denmark

Status: associations not entered in the National Court Register

Total budget 988,036.69 EUR, ERDF contribution 807,982.52 EUR.

The project began on 01.01.2017, end date was 31.12.2019.

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The project focused on promoting, developing and commercialising the bicycle tourism product in the South Baltic countries based on the EuroVelo 10 route, using the natural and cultural

tourism resources of the regions covered by the programme. The project was a response to the problem of insufficient level of cooperation between regions and other stakeholders on the development, promotion and construction of the EuroVelo 10 route.

The project was fully compliant with specific objective 2.1 of the programme, besides exchanging know-how and preparing cross-border studies and strategies. It is also oriented towards capacity building among local and regional stakeholders.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The main activities of the project included:

- quantitative and qualitative research of cycle tourists on the EV10 route,
- establishment of a coherent and uniform information base on cycling tourism in the regions covered by the project along the EV10 route,
- development of a uniform information system regarding the route,
- development of a long-term strategy for the further development of the EV10 covering the South Baltic area,
- training for information providers and establishing lasting cooperation between the tourist information centres situated along the EV10 route in order to provide proper information about the route,
- establishment of a network of business partners creating an offer for bicycle tourists along the route (travel agencies, ferry carriers, accommodation facilities, etc.),
- Preparing promotional tools and implementing an information and promotion campaign about the route using marketing tools dedicated to key target groups and opinion leaders.

The project results are:

- 1 formal agreed, the knowledge-based, long-term, a cross-border and sustainable strategy of the Baltic Sea Cycle Route development in the South Baltic Area,
- 1 common, uniform and cross-border brand of South Baltic cycle road through common IT tools was made, services and tourism products a training plan has been developed for representatives of IT points from four regions: Denmark, Germany - Mecklenburg Vorpommern and West Pomerania and Pomorskie.
- Two model parking spaces for cyclists were built in Mrzeżyno and Poddąbie. These places are powered by ecological and renewable energy sources, equipped with repair kits, and chargers for mobile phones and electric bicycles. In addition, bicycle parking equipped with boxes and bicycle stands was also made. It cost 91049,89 EUR.

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

The project's added value is its concentration on existing cyclist routes to increase their recognition, visibility and frequency of use by tourists. Data collected during the surveys and counting of cyclists may be used further by each partner at the design stage of construction of the cyclist paths in respective regions. Establishing a common standard of uniform signage. Developing a common methodology for counting and designing cycling paths' standards may be considered a replicable solution for other projects. As no investment follow-up is foreseen in the project, implementation of the strategies and action plans is highly dependent on the availability

of financial resources in respective regions. These strategies and action plans, however, may be used to influence regional and local authorities to determine the resources needed for the execution of the construction works and other (softer) activities.

9.1.6. SOUTH COAST BALTIC ESTABLISHING DURABLE CROSS-BORDER BOATING DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE MARRIAGE COOPERATION NETWORK

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: The Association of Sea Cities and Municipalities

www.zmigm.org.pl

Address: Wały Jagiellońskie 1, 80-853 Gdańsk

Region/Subregion: Trójmiejski

Country: Poland

Status: Third sector association

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: Tourism Association Vorpommern
Address: Fischstrasse 11, 17489 Greifswald
Region/Subregion: Landkreis Vorpommern-Greifswald
Country: Germany
Status: Third sector association
- Name: Municipality Ostseebad Heringsdorf
Address: Kurparkstraße 4, 17419 Ahlbeck
Region/Subregion: Landkreis Vorpommern-Greifswald
Country: Germany
Status: self-governing communities
- Name: Marina Network Association
Address: Hafenstr. 9, 17440 Kröslin
Region/Subregion: Landkreis Vorpommern-Greifswald
Country: Germany
Status: Third sector association
- Name: Yacht Harbours & Marinas Association - Local Tourist Organisation
Westpomeranian Sailing Route
Address: al. Papieża Jana Pawła II 44/2, 70-415 Szczecin
Region/Subregion: Miasto Szczecin
Country: Poland
Status: Third sector association
- Name: Żegluga Szczecińska
Address: Jana z Kolna 7, 71-603 Szczecin
Region/Subregion: Miasto Szczecin
Country: Poland
Status: Public - state-owned enterprises

- Name: Maritime University of Szczecin
Address: Waly Chrobrego 1-2, 70-500 Szczecin
Region/Subregion: Miasto Szczecin
Country: Poland
Status: Public university
- Name: Municipality of Darłowo
Address: Plac Tadeusza Kosciuszki 9, 76-150 Darłowo
Region/Subregion: Koszaliński
Country: Poland
Status: Public - commune self-government organizational units
- Name: Economic Development Corporation Vorpommern
Address: Brandteichstr. 20, 17489 Greifswald
Region/Subregion: Landkreis Vorpommern-Greifswald
Country: Germany
Status: Third sector association
- Name: Żuławy Loop limited liability company
Address: Czerwonego Krzyża 2, 82-300 Elbląg
Region/Subregion: Elbląski
Country: Poland
Status: Business - limited liability companies - large enterprise
- Name: Gdańsk University of Technology
Address: Narutowicza 11/12, 80-233 Gdańsk
Region/Subregion: Trójmiejski
Country: Poland
Status: Public university
- Name: Administration of Klaipeda District Municipality
Address: Klaipedos g. 2, 96130 Gargždai
Region/Subregion: Klaipedos apskritis
Country: Lithuania
Status: self-governing communities
- Name: Sventoji Tourism Association
Address: Zuvedru 9d-1, 00131 Palanga
Region/Subregion: Klaipedos apskritis
Country: Lithuania
Status: Third sector association
- Name: Bornholm Regional Municipality
Address: Skovlokken 4, Tejn 4, 3770 Allinge
Region/Subregion: Bornholm
Country: Denmark
Status: self-governing communities

Project total eligible budget 2 516 732,99 EUR, ERDF 2 127 223,04 EUR

Project start date 01 Oct 2016. Project end date 31 Dec 2020.

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The overall idea of the project is to make the cross-border boating region durably attractive by establishing comprehensive cross-border destination management, which would combine joint marketing with improvements of boating services & infrastructure. This process is expected to give a 20% rise in the number of guest boaters visiting the SE coast by 2019, thereby levelling up the sailing figures in the whole South Baltic area.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The project assumed:

- To create joint marketing for the South Baltic region as a cross-border boating region,
- To develop and promote South Baltic Region's great potential

The project results are:

- 20% more guest boaters visiting the SOUTH COAST BALTIC by 2019 and stabilising the numbers at a high level in the long term by building a high-quality boating destination,
- 9 Tools, networks & structures that create the necessary strategic & institutional framework for jointly building & managing the destination SOUTH COAST BALTIC in a comprehensive & durable way - The 4 elaborated strategies are appreciated & accepted as future guidance documents.
- 19 marketing tools that address new target markets & target groups (SCB Boating Rallies & SCB fair booths) proved to be very popular among the target groups.)
- Implemented investments that help & motivate boaters to move along the SCB (The SCB Info Lounges & Easy Boating Pilot Marinas). It cost 39 898 EUR.
- 30 Guidelines, dissemination events & education courses - the achievement rate is 93,75 % due to corona pandemic.

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

The biggest project's success is that there is an enduring commitment to continuing the joint promotion of the South Coast Baltic by more than 60 boating actors, incl. the intention to establish a durable cooperation structure for it. What is more, the costs for the outputs investments that help & motivate boaters to move along South Baltic were than initially planned as the Partners found ways to implement the assets and create the desired effects at much lower costs.

9.1.7. MORPHEUS - MODEL AREAS FOR REMOVAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL SUBSTANCES IN THE SOUTH BALTIC

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: Kristianstad University

www.hkr.se

Address: Elmetorpsvägen 15, 29188 Kristianstad

Region/Subregion: Skane län

Country: Sweden
Status: Public university

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: EUCC - The Coastal Union Germany
Address: Seestr. 15, 18119 Rostock
Region/Subregion: Kreisfreie Stadt Rostock
Country: Germany
Status: Third sector association
- Name: University of Rostock
Address: Universitätsplatz 1, 18055 Rostock
Region/Subregion: Kreisfreie Stadt Rostock
Country: Germany
Status: Public university
- Name: Gdansk Water Foundation
Address: Rycerska 9, 80-882 Gdańsk
Region/Subregion: Trójmiejski
Country: Poland
Status: Third sector foundation
- Name: Gdansk University of Technology
Address: Narutowicza 11/12, 80-233 Gdańsk
Region/Subregion: Trójmiejski
Country: Poland
Status: Public university
- Name: Environmental Protection Agency
Address: A.Juozapavičiaus g. 9, 09311 Vilnius
Region/Subregion: Other
Country: Lithuania
Status: Public - state organizational units
- Name: Klaipeda University
Address: H.Manto 84, 92294 Klaipeda
Region/Subregion: Klaipedos apskritis
Country: Lithuania
Status: Public university

Project total eligible budget: 1 597 591,85 EUR; ERDF 1 310 706,12 EUR;

Project start date 01 Jan 2017, Project end date 31 Dec 2019

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The project's overall idea is to address the challenge of pharmaceutical pollution in the Baltic Sea area. Chemical pollution of surface water presents a threat to the aquatic environment with the effects of losses of habitats and biodiversity, as well as a threat to human health. Therefore, according to the directive 2008/105/EC, as a matter of priority, pollution causes should be identified, and emissions should be dealt with at source in the most economically and environmentally effective manner.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The project's activities aimed to:

- create a background image regarding regional consumption of pharmaceuticals, chemical burden caused by pharmaceuticals released from selected waste water treatment plants in each region, and existing treatment systems in the four selected regions surrounding the southern part of the Baltic Sea.
- prepare a scheme for the training course for waste water treatment plants (WWTPs) operators and professional staff at chemical laboratories and training material for participants of such courses - all connected study visits at WWTPs using advanced technologies that remove or reduce the concentration of pharmaceutical substances in treated sewage.

The project results are:

- 1 guidance document on the need of the removal of pharmaceuticals from wastewater in the coastal regions of the SOUTH BALTICS to relevant regional stakeholders,
- 4 roadmaps for uptake of advanced treatment for four model site WWTPs located in the SOUTH BALTIC coastal areas. Each roadmap provides specific decision-making criteria for the implementation of advanced treatment technologies (divided into a preparation and testing phase), including technical, ecological and socio-economical aspects, with special attention given to the environmental burden,
- 1 training course on chemical analysis and advanced treatment technologies for the target group. One pilot training in PL and one regional training course in each DE, LT and PL have been conducted, reaching 87 external participants from 48 organisations at the local training.

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

Communicating roadmaps to policy decision-makers and other WWTP was a good practice, and monitoring related stakeholders within and beyond the MORPHEUS project regions (e.g. via academic networks and national/international conferences, PA Hazards, Baltic Sea Pharma Platform, etc.). The roadmaps may also serve as guidance and best practices to other WWTPs.

MORPHEUS contributed by providing consumption and occurrence data of pharmaceuticals in the model regions, thus closing important knowledge gaps related to PIE's chemical burden and environmental impact in the South Baltic Region. By delivering concrete guidance for local/regional stakeholders to meet the challenges and by suggesting concrete roadmaps for selected WWTPs, MORPHEUS provided strategies and tools for the development of innovative and cost-effective management options.

9.1.8. LIVELAGOONS. USE OF ACTIVE BARRIERS FOR THE NUTRIENT REMOVAL AND LOCAL WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN BALTIC LAGOONS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: Klaipėda University

Website: www.balticlagoons.net/livelagoons

Address: H. Manto 84, LT-92294 Klaipėda

Country: Lithuania

Status: public

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: EUCC - The Coastal Union Germany

Address: Seestr. 15 , 18119, Rostock

Country: Germany

Status: public

- Name: Institute of Hydro-Engineering, Polish Academy of Sciences

Address: Kościarska 7, 80-328 Gdańsk

Country: Poland

Status: public

- Name: Puck Town Municipality

Address: 1 Maja 13, 84-100 Puck

Country: Poland

Status: public

- Name: Curonian Spit National Park Administration

Address: Naglių 8, LT-93123 Neringa

Country: Lithuania

Status: public

The project began on 01.07.2017, end date was 31.12.2021.

Total budget 1,154,670.00 EUR, ERDF contribution 981,469.50 EUR.

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The overall objective of the project is the development and application of so-called 'active' or 'living' barrier units to improve water quality and create bathing conditions inside the South Baltic lagoons, where at normal conditions, algal blooms and sediment re-suspension prevent recreational bathing.

The project fully complies with specific objective 2.2 of the programme in terms of developing and testing innovative cross-border solutions aimed at decreasing the outflows of nutrients from small and diffuse sources in catchment areas.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

Project activities comprised:

- Development of pilot installations of floating complexes (wetlands) of organisms absorbing nutrients,
- Awareness rising of local stakeholders interested in water quality and tourism,
- Organization of workshops and conferences on the topic of water quality,
- Delivery of publications,
- Cooperation with SMEs interested in topics of water treatment,
- Testing of socio-economic and technological impacts of the solution.

The project results are:

- 10 living barrier installations ('net' and island types) will be installed across Curonian lagoon and Klaipeda city (Lithuania), Szczecin lagoon (Polish part, Poland), the German part of Szczecin lagoon and Rostock city (Germany).
- 1 technical guideline for the Living Barrier design, installation and maintenance adapted for the SOUTH BALTIC area based on practical (legal, social and technical) experience gained during the project implementation



Source 4 <https://southbaltic.eu/-/livelagoons-the-use-of-active-barriers-for-the-nutrient-removal-and-local-water-quality-improvement-in-baltic-lagoon-1>

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

The idea of floating wetlands is very promising. Appropriate selection of species may increase the efficiency of water treatment. However, the replicability of the solution may be limited only to environmental projects.

9.1.9. INCONE60. INLAND BLUE TRANSPORT CONNECTOR E60

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: Gdynia Maritime University, Maritime Institute
<https://im.umg.edu.pl>
Address: Morska 81-87, 81-225 Gdynia
Region/ Subregion: Pomorskie / Trójmiejski
Country: Poland
Status: public university

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: EUCC Baltic Office
Address: Kareiviniu gatve 4-7, LT-92251 Klaipeda
Region/Subregion: Lithuania / Klaipedos apskritis
Country: Lithuania
Status: NGO foundation
- Name: Public Institution Coastal Research and Planning Institute
Address: Vilhelmo Berbomo 10, LT-92221 Klaipeda
Region/Subregion: Lithuania / Klaipedos apskritis
Country: Lithuania
Status: Research and development units
- Name: Port of Władysławowo "Szkuner" Sp. z o.o.
Address: Portowa 22, 84-120 Władysławowo
Region/Subregion: Pomorskie/Gdański
Country: Poland
Status: public enterprise
- Name: Port of Oostende
Address: Slijkensesteenweg 2, 8400, Oostende
Region/Subregion: Other
Country: Belgium
Status: budget economy institutions
- Name: Vordingborg Port
Address: Vesthavnen 5, 4760 Vordingborg
Region/Subregion: Zealand
Country: Denmark
Status: body governed by public law

Project start date 01 Jun 2018, Project end date 31 May 2022

Project total eligible budget 1 517 782,29 EUR, ERDF 1 262 084,95 EUR

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The INCONE60 project aims to develop the concept of launching regular navigation along the international waterway E60 and connecting it with other inland waterways. Furthermore, the project seeks to shift cargo from land to sea transport, decrease the negative impact on the natural environment, and increase awareness about the benefit of choosing short-sea shipping. With the development of cargo and passenger traffic in the South Baltic area, small and medium ports would gain new clients, secure their economic development, and integrate into more extensive transportation schemes.

The project is oriented towards improving access of local and regional areas to European and international waterways. INCONE60 activities focus on innovative transport solutions to achieve innovative and eco-friendly transport services for citizens and business stakeholders. Actions are taken to improve internal and external transport links and increase transport efficiency. Moreover, activities within the project promote ecological means of transport and innovative means of propulsion, thus contributing to the decarbonisation of transport operations and mitigation of the environmental impact of transport systems.

The project formulates a set of transport solutions to support the active development of peripheral coastal regions of the South Baltic area by focusing on local ports as growth pools. It helps boost the competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region and increase its accessibility and attractiveness. One of these includes an open model of cargo flow in the South Baltic Region, which primarily addresses the business sector – cargo handlers, logistic forwarders and other transport entities operating in this area.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The project results are:

- 5 books about small ports and their potential and future published
- "Port Development Concept" in Władysławowo, which can be found on the website of the port administrator - "Szkuner" Sp. z o. o.
- Open access IT tool – INCONE60 Cargo Flow Model, available at <https://simulator.incone60.eu/>
- INCOnet - INCONE60 Business Network links small ports in the South Baltic Sea and the North Sea regions with the business sector – vessel owners, cargo owners, port authorities, forwarders, shipping agents and other interested parties.
- Two pilot trips between 3 countries and 5 small seaports. The first pilot trip took place on the Vordingborg - Stepnica - Kołobrzeg route. This trip aimed to support synchronomodality in the South Baltic and the North Sea Regions and create a network of contacts that may result in new shipping connections between local and regional ports. The final pilot trip took place on route Vordingborg - Władysławowo - Klaipeda. It showed the possibilities of cargo transportation between local seaports in the North Sea and Baltic Sea regions.
- INCONE60 led to the signing of the Letter of Intent and Partnership Agreement between communes and ports Vordingborg and Elbląg. Furthermore, it started the official business cooperation between those two regions.

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

The scope of impact of the project translated into a significant and slightly neglected issue of different functions of small and medium ports that compete with large regional ports.

The project is an excellent example of the so-called "Complementary project", i.e., whose assumptions and activities are planned perspective. Results of the INCONE60 project, containing the above-mentioned open cargo flow model, have enabled the partnership to expand their actions and the project with an implementation element under another initiative co-financed from the Horizon 2020 Programme, managed by the European Commission entitled ePICenter.

During the annual National Forum of Intelligent Development, which took place in Toruń in 2021, the INCONE60 project received a prestige award in the category of innovative technologies and future research.

9.1.10. INTERCONNECT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: Region Blekinge
www.regionblekinge.se
Address: Valhallavagen 1, 37141 Karlskrona
Region/Subregion: Blekinge lan
Country: Sweden
Status: authorities, government administration

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: InnoBaltica Ltd
Address: Równa 19/21, 80-067 Gdańsk
Region/Subregion: Trojmiejski
Country: Poland
Status: Limited liability companies - small enterprise
- Name: Assoc. for Promotion of Hanseatic Institute for Entrepreneurship and Regional Development at the University of Rostock
Address: Ulmenstrasse 69 - Haus 3, 18051 Rostock
Region/Subregion: Kreisfreie Stadt Rostock
Country: Germany
Status: public university
- Name: Hanseatic City of Rostock
Address: Neuer Markt 3, 18055 Rostock
Region/Subregion: Kreisfreie Stadt Rostock
Country: Germany
Status: public local government communities
- Name: Guldborgsund Municipality
Address: Parkvej 37, 4800 Nykobing F
Region/Subregion: Vest-og Sydsj
Country: Denmark
Status: public local government communities

- Name: Klaipeda Public Transport Authority
Address: S. Daukanto 15, 92335 Klaipėda
Region/Subregion: Klaipėdos apskritis
Country: Lithuania
Status: public enterprise
- Name: Blekinge Institute of Technology
Address: Valhallavagen 1, 37179 Karlskrona
Region/Subregion: Blekinge lan
Country: Sweden
Status: public university
- Name: Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic
Address: Stary Rynek 25, 82-300 Elbląg
Region/Subregion: Elbląski
Country: Poland
Status: third sector associations
- Name: Viimsi Municipality, Estonia
Address: Nelgi tee 1, 74001 Viimsi Vald
Region/Subregion: other
Country: Estonia
Status: public local government communities

Project start date 01 Jun 2017, Project end date 30 Nov 2020

Project total eligible budget 3 462 692,66 EUR, ERDF 2 816 374,88 EUR

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The INTERCONNECT project is a flagship project of the EU Strategy European Union for the Baltic Sea Region, which took up the challenge of limiting the trend of regional and cross-border mobility based mainly on road transport. Instead, he proposed tools that, when appropriately adapted to users' needs, raised the level of public transport services.

The project dealt with communication solutions at the level of the Baltic macroregion, such as customer expectations, integrated options ticketing for multimodal journeys and access to reliable and practical passenger information.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The project results are:

- analytical tasks (organization of workshops, target group research, preparation of reports with the results of surveyed user's public transport)
- targeted tasks for the preparation of initial products based on analyses (e.g. IT database for the ticketing system, travel planner, for passenger information)
- two pilot activities aimed at testing the usefulness of the products mentioned above.



Source 5 <https://southbaltic.eu/-/interconnect>

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

From the beginning, the entire initiative was strongly rooted in the challenges that the Pomeranian Voivodeship set itself as part of the Development Strategy until 2020. As part of the Regional Strategic Program "Mobilne Pomorze" until 2020, activities related to the construction of a developed and effective collective public transport system were described, both at the internal level of the voivodeship and in terms of the region's accessibility to external users.

The project "budded" for new tasks and projects, and the solutions from this project are used further.

9.1.11. BBVET. BOOSTING BUSINESS INTEGRATION THROUGH JOINT VET EDUCATION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: NetPort Science Park Ltd

www.netport.se

Address: Biblioteksgatan 4, 37435 Karlshamn

Region/Subregion: Blekinge län

Country: Sweden

Status: Public self-government organizational units

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: University of Rostock- Chair of Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship Education
Address: Ulmenstraße 69, 18057 Rostock
Region/Subregion: Kreisfreie Stadt Rostock

Country: Germany

Status: Public university

- Name: Public institution Rietavas Tourism and Business Information Centre / RTVIC
Address: Parko 5, 90311 Rietavas
Region/Subregion: Telsiu apskritis
Country: Lithuania
Status: Public budget economy institutions
- Name: Plunge Technology and Business School
Address: Mendeno g. 7, 90143 Plunge
Region/Subregion: Telsiu apskritis
Country: Lithuania
Status: Public institutions of the education system
- Name: University of Szczecin
Address: Aleja Papieża Jana Pawła II 22a, 70-453 Szczecin
Region/Subregion: Szczeciński
Country: Poland
Status: Public university
- Name: Centre for Vocational Education Lolland Falster (CELFF)
Address: Kringelborg Allé 7, 4800 Nykøbing F
Region/Subregion: Østsjælland
Country: Denmark
Status: Public complexes of schools and educational system institutions

Project total eligible budget 2 083 000,00 EUR; ERDF 1 660 000,00 EUR
Project start date 01 May 2016; Project end date 31 May 2019.

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

VET students are less likely to go abroad for a part of their education than university students. BBVET is creating the basis for a program to change this - an international Vocational Education and Training (VET) program for Mechatronics and EdTech in the South Baltic area.

The project goal was to create an international VET program that requires much fundamental work. Students' performance (credits) needs to be recognized in their home countries. The learning content needs to be divided among institutions, and the validation needs to be unified. Students need to apply for grants, and institutions need to enter partnerships.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The project results are:

- 44 teachers were appointed and trained to support youth employment, educational opportunities and higher and vocational education across borders,
- 93 involved in Developing and piloting the first entirely ECVET-based international VET programmes in the blue and green sectors promoting cross-border mobility,
- 2 Joint training programme supporting employment in the blue and green economy of the South Baltic area,

- 133 of stakeholders (partners, associated partners, students, teachers, coaches, schools, companies, regional actors) involved in setting up 3 Mobility Agencies (SE, LT, DK) and creating recommendations for 2 countries (DE, PL)

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

It was good practice to continue the partnership from previous projects. The new team partners have positively impacted the core group and made teamwork even better. BBVET was an unusual program in that where programs typically require three to four meetings during the implementation phase, the BBVET consortium held more than 20 meetings. They met regularly to motivate each other and discuss the complex international landscape of vocational education and training (VET).

9.1.12. SEAPLANSPACE. MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING INSTRUMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE MARINE GOVERNANCE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: University of Gdansk

www.ug.edu.pl

Address: Bażyńskiego 8 80-309 Gdańsk

Region/Subregion: Pomorskie

Country: Poland

Status: Public university

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: EUCC BALTIC OFFICE
Address: Kareiviniu 4-7 92251 Klaipeda
Region/Subregion: Lithuania
Country: Lithuania
Status: Third sector association
- Name: EUCC Germany
Address: Friedrich-Barnewitz-Str. 3 18119 Rostock
Region/Subregion: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Country: Germany
Status: Third sector association
- Name: World Maritime University
Address: Fiskehamngatan 1 20124 Malmö
Region/Subregion: Sydsverige
Country: Sweden
Status: Public university
- Name: Aalborg University
Address: Frederik Bajers Vej 7 DK9100 Aalborg
Region/Subregion:
Country: Denmark
Status: Public university

- Name: County Administration Board of Kalmar
Address: Regeringsgatan 1 391 86 Kalmar län
Region/Subregion: Småland och öarna
Country: Sweden
Status: Public government administration
- Name: Gdynia Maritime University, Maritime Institute
Address: Morska 81-87, 81-225 Gdynia
Region/Subregion: Pomorskie
Country: Poland
Status: Public university
- Name: Centre for Regional and Tourism Research
Address: Stenbrudsvej 55 DK-3730 Nexø
Region/Subregion: Hovedstaden
Country: Denmark
Status: Public government administration

Project total eligible budget: 1 684 656,95 EUR, ERDF: 1 360 932,56 EUR
Project start date: 02 Jan 2018, Project end date: 31 Dec 2021

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The project aim is to increase the quality of the labour force engaged in MSP dialogue and the number of people who understand the impact and influence of marine governance in their daily work related to blue growth. This will be done by cross-border training and networking according to the jointly prepared SOUTH BALTICA training curricula with a focus on national specificities.

The project assumed a) strengthen transnational activities and the skilled labour force in the SOUTH BALTICA blue and green economies, b) increase human resource capacities, c) develop the cross-border cooperation capacity of local/regional authorities, universities, businesses and other stakeholders, d) improve cross-border connectivity for a functional blue and green skilled labour force.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The project results are:

- 3 training courses programs are available at the SEAPLANSPACE portal (2 training courses programs for workshops purposes and 1 program dedicated to the international summer school,
- 20 organisations marine governance network from academia and the public sector expertise in maritime spatial planning,
- 280 labour market participants furnished with new skills related to MSP
- 77 labour market entrants (e.g. students) equipped with new skills related to MSP.

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

In thematic terms, the SEAPLANSPACE project has proved to be highly successful in filling the training gap for MSP in the South Baltic area. The training turned out to be a success. SEAPLANSPACE training courses enjoyed great interest, as evidenced by the number of trained people.

The SEAPLANSPACE Webinar is particularly valuable, 20 forty-five-minute films on MSP with subtitles in English and Polish.

9.1.13. CASYPOT. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR STRATEGIC YOUTH POLICY AND TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: Regional Council in Kalmar County

Website: www.casypot.eu

Address: Nygatan 34, 39127 Kalmar

Country: Sweden

Status: public

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: Municipality of Emmaboda
Address: Järnvägsgatan 28, 36121 Emmaboda
Country: Sweden
Status: public
- Name: Linnaeus University
Address: Universitetsplatsen 1, 35195 Växjö
Country: Sweden
Status: public
- Name: Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic / ERB
Address: ul. Stary Rynek 25, 82-300 Elbląg
Country: Poland
Status: public
- Name: Klaipeda University
Address: Herkaus Manto 84, 92294 Klaipeda
Country: Lithuania
Status: public
- Name: City of Slupsk
Address: Plac Zwycięstwa 3, 76-200 Slupsk
Country: Poland
Status: public

The project began on 01.06.2016, end date was 30.06.2019.

Total budget 457,331.00 EUR, ERDF contribution 357,732.35 EUR.

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The project's overall objective was to increase cross-border cooperation resulting in building capacity of local actors working with youth in the Euroregion Baltic (ERB). The partner municipalities will jointly carry out a survey among teenagers to identify their needs and problems, providing comparable data. It is a form of sharing good practice, as the survey has been formerly developed and implemented in Swedish municipalities, now it will just be adjusted to the other countries' local contexts. The obtained results will be analysed by universities and compared between the countries. Also additional tools to get knowledge about the situation for youngsters in the participating municipalities and regions will be created and tested. Further it will lead to creating joint knowledge-based youth strategy in ERB as well as local youth strategies. It will allow to address several youth problems in the region, e.g. early school leaving. As a result, a cross-border strategy for youth will be delivered. The project was proposed by Euroregion Baltic stakeholders, in order to improve the opportunities for young people in the area, and it was developed during a seed money project SYPERB – Strategic Youth Policies in Euroregion Baltic in years 2012-2015, which was carried out with financial support from the Swedish Institute. The project led to submitting a successful application of CaSYPoT to the South Baltic Programme.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

Project activities comprised:

- Execution of surveys and questionnaires by PPs in respective educational institutions on behaviour of the youth,
- Comparative study of the attitudes and behaviour of the youth in ERB,
- Development of a cross-regional youth strategy addressing the identified problems.

Project results are:

- CaSYPoT report on the living conditions and plans for the future of young people from the four surveyed countries
- 8 local authorities and universities engaged in cross-border study
- 5 improved and tested capacity building tools for youth dialogue and guidelines for transnational cooperation

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

The good practice resulting from the project is inclusion Russian partners in the partnership. Although they are not eligible for funding from the ERDF, their presence strengthens cross-regional cooperation. Development of a strategy covering both EU Member States regions, as well as non-EU regions, creates good foundations for future cooperation.

9.1.14. UMBRELLA. BOOSTING CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION CAPACITIES OF LOCAL ACTORS IN SOUTH BALTIC SEA

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lead Partner of the project:

Name: Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic

eurobalt.org.pl

Address: Stary Rynek 25, 82-300 Elbląg

Region/Subregion: Warmińsko-Mazurskie

Country: Poland

Status: third sector association

Other organisations in the partnership (project partners):

- Name: "Pomorskie in the European Union" Association
Address: ul. Okopowa 21/27, 80-810 Gdańsk
Region/Subregion: Pomorskie
Country: Poland
Status: third sector association
- Name: Baltic Institute for Regional and European Concern BISER
Address: Tetmajera 60, 81-406 Gdynia
Region/Subregion: Pomorskie
Country: Poland
Status: third sector association
- Name: Klaipeda University
Address: Herkaus Manto 84 LT-92294 Klaipeda
Region/Subregion: Lithuania
Country: Lithuania
Status: public university
- Name: Region Kalmar County
Address: Strömgatan 13, 391 26 Kalmar
Region/Subregion: Kalmar län
Country: Sweden
Status: local government communities
- Name: Guldborgsund Municipality
Address: Parkvej 37, 4800 Nykøbing F
Region/Subregion: Sjælland
Country: Denmark
Status: public local government communities

Project start date 01 Jan 2018, Project end date 31.12.2020.

Project total eligible budget 986 566,00 EUR, ERDF 786 652,00 EUR

THE KEY PROBLEM AND PROJECT GOALS

The project was aimed at increasing the knowledge of diverse South Baltic stakeholders in the field of:

- international cooperation in the area of blue and green growth,
- establishing international partnerships,
- applying for funds from the Southern program Baltic;

- new trends in international cooperation.

THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The project results are:

- the knowledge of over 600 stakeholders from Poland, Lithuania, Sweden and Denmark has been raised by:
 - over 10 cross -border studio visits in PL, SE, DK, LT i DE;
 - 3 cross -border conferences
 - project consortia support service "Rent-an-expert"
- Train-the-trainers training for international cooperation in Gdansk in 2019 and 4 trainings in PL, SE, DK and LT for stakeholders of the South Baltic,
- creation of the document "South Baltic Success stories - benefits of cross border cooperation",
- the creation of training material Umbrella "Introducing Project Management",
- four meetings in focus group format with South Baltic stakeholders: Blue growth, Green Growth, Capacity Building, Transport&Energy showing new topics of international cooperation important for the future Programme South Baltic 2021-27;
- moodle platform gathering all knowledge, good practices and training materials produced during the project <https://umbrellaproject.eu/moodle/>;
- final and summarizing conference promoting new trends in international cooperation in South Baltic Area in 2020.

GOOD PRACTICES RESULTING FROM THE PROJECT

The Umbrella project was meant to be exactly that- an umbrella to gather other projects and a way to connect people through cross-border projects. It was aimed at newcomers who had not yet been involved in projects in the South Baltic Programme. These included small local and regional organizations with an interest in developing a South Baltic identity. Stakeholders were invited to participate in national training courses in project management and offered tailor-made solutions to help build capacity. Different initiatives and micro-activities such as "meet-your-neighbour" have helped break down barriers and spread the concepts and values of cross-border cooperation.

Umbrella has been a cross-border project to inspire more cross-border cooperation. The overall purpose of this project was to enlighten people that cooperation is important for geographic, economic, and social cohesion, and that approaching the field of EU grants and projects can be an advantage in local development policies.

10. ANNEX 2 - EXPERTS EVALUATING INDICATORS

10.1. EXPERTS WHO TOOK PART IN THE PANEL

1. Daniel Lisak - representative of LOT Krynica Zdrój
Specialization: tourism

2. Małgorzata Szopińska - Department of Technology in Environmental Engineering, Gdansk University of Technology
Specialization: green technologies (innovations for environmental protection)
3. Cezary Molski - was in charge of the Department of Regional Cooperation at the Polish Tourist Organization, where he supported the first supra-regional campaign promoting the entire Baltic coast under the title "Time for the Baltic". The campaign was implemented by 2 regional tourism organizations in cooperation with local partners; panelist at the 8th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum (2015); chaired a panel at the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Forum (2019)
Specialization: tourism
4. Iwona Krzyżanowska - Department of Labor Market Policy, Provincial Labor Office in Olsztyn,
Specialization: human resources and employment
5. Marcin Kalinowski - Head of the Department of Economics and Law, Maritime Institute in Gdańsk
Specialization: transportation, involvement of local entities in cross-border activities
6. Piotr Konczewski – Local Tourism Organization of Kociewie
Specialization: tourism
7. Aldona Kucner - experienced business advisor and trainer, specializes in marketing, entrepreneurship, innovation, has extensive experience related to areas of innovation and regional development
Specialization: enterprises, involvement of local entities in cross-border activities
8. Maciej Gabory - transport specialist, author of studies: Plan for Sustainable Development of Public Collective Transport for the West Pomeranian Voivodeship; Analysis of the Existing State of Railway Freight Transport in the Central European Transport Corridor, Action Plan for Improving the Performance of Szczecin-Świnoujście Multimodal Nodes and Transport Links
Specialization - transport
9. Maciej Michnej - PhD engineer at the Cracow University of Technology, specialist in transport and mobility

10.2. EXPERTS WHO EVALUATED THE INDICATORS

1. Mattias Andersson - Region Blekinge, Head of Regional Development
2. Antje Schreyer - The Regional Council in Kalmar County, EU Coordinator
3. Witold Kielich - Marshal Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, Regional Policy Department
4. Katarzyna Burdzińska - Voivodeship Labour Office in Szczecin
5. Niels Chresten Andersen - Regional Municipality of Bornholm

6. Monika Cholewczyńska - Dmitruk –Head of the ETC Unit, Marshal Office of the Pomorskie Voivodeship, Department of Regional and Spatial Development
7. Jacek Zaucha - Maritime Institute in Gdansk, Faculty of Economics , University of Gdańsk
8. Tadeusz Palmowski - University of Gdańsk, Institute of Social and Economic Geography and Spatial Management
9. Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło - University of Gdańsk, Pomeranian Regional Tourist Organisation, BISER
10. Marcin Kalinowski - Head of the Department of Economics and Law, Maritime Institute in Gdańsk
11. Johanna Rönn - Region Blekinge, International Coordinator
12. Wiesław Drożdżyński - Voivodeship Labour Office in Olsztyn
13. Monika Ewa Tomczyk – University of Szczecin, Faculty of Economy Finances and Management
14. Anatoli Beifert Wismar – Wismar University (article: Optimal Logistic Networks as a prerequisite for sustainable SMEs’)
15. Aleksandra Wilczyńska - Gdynia Maritime University (article: Innovative Solutions in the Ports of the Baltic Sea for Development of Small Cruise Ship Tourism Heritage Products)
16. Adam Cenian - Head of the Department of Physical Aspects of Ecoenergy Professor at Institute of Fluid Flow Machinery, Polish Academy of Sciences
17. Małgorzata Szopińska - Department of Technology in Environmental Engineering, Gdańsk University of Technology
18. Jes Vollertsen – Aalborg University (article: AAU DEVELOPS SOLUTIONS TO PLASTIC POLLUTION IN THE SEA)
19. Jan Hupka - Profesor at Department of Process Engineering and Chemical Technology, Gdańsk University of Technology
20. Sylwia Bryła, Marshal Office of the Pomorskie Region, Department of Regional and Spatial Development