

Mainstreaming climate actions into the EUSBSR Policy Areas

Analysis and support measures by Let's Communicate! -project

Background

The EUSBSR Action Plan(AP) states that

"Alignment with the European Green Deal and the objective of making the EU climate-neutral by 2050 requires that action to address climate change and promote sustainable development are integrated into the Strategy as a whole. Therefore, all Policy Areas shall give due regard to EU climate policy objectives. Strengthening the efforts on climate-proofing, resilience building, prevention and preparedness is crucial, and the work on climate adaptation should continue to influence public and private investments. This approach is consistent with the strong political commitment to climate action confirmed by the European Council."

and further adds

"Due to their cross-cutting nature and increased importance, the former Horizontal Actions climate change and cooperation with neighbouring non-EU countries are mainstreamed as essential elements into all 14 PAs. Integrating them into the PAs ensures that they are properly taken into account. It also allows the PAs to tailor-make the implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as cooperation with neighbouring non-EU countries in ways that are the most efficient for each PA."

The AP thus emphasizes that

- 1) to answer to the commitment to climate action made by the European Council the EUSBSR must be aligned with EU climate policy objectives,
- 2) all Policy Areas shall give due regard to EU climate policy objectives,
- 3) mainstreaming allows the PAs to tailor-make the implementation and
- 4) alignment with EU climate policy objectives should be done in ways that are the most efficient for each PA.

The guiding principle of mainstreaming is alignment with EU climate policy objectives by tailor-made solutions for each PA.

In the AP it is stated approximately that the PA will ensure that addressing climate change is appropriately integrated into their work. Thus, it is the responsibility of the PA to address climate. However, they may lack the capacity to do this. Furthermore, their Actions are already stated in the approved AP. Therefore, the project focused on analysing and developing a support method that would assist all PAs as much as possible.

External expertise was used to ensure science based (particularly in relation to climate actions) support to PACs in their work and to gain a neutral and objective look to the Strategy.

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Analysing the PAs

Let's Communicate! -project began by collected data from past climate activities within the EUSBSR to review what activities had been tried before, compared the Actions of the PAs between each other, consulted DG Regio and the NCG. The data and results of the consultations were formulated into a work plan.

Finnish Consulting Group (FCG) was contracted to conduct a round of interviews with the PACs to ascertain more precisely the nature of their climate activities and support needed. The results of the analysis of each PA can be found in attachment 1 EUSBSR climate financing analysis-Summary Report.

While the report indicated a number of potential support measures and approaches, it was decided that the most added value in the timeframe, that the project was running, could be gained from analysing the upcoming Interreg and cross-border programmes financing in relation climate activities and correspondence with PAs Actions.

Let's Communicate! contracted Finnish Consulting Group (FCG) to conduct the Climate Financing Analysis in the EUSBSR. The assignment focused on climate issues and related co-operation of Policy Areas with European Territorial Cooperation programmes, i.e. Interreg and Cross-Border but in the end the analysis was extended to cover all of the PAs Actions.

The aim was to provide the Policy Areas with an easy way to identify which of the 20 programmes could be useful for them without having to collect and analyse the programmes by themselves. In simple terms, the idea was to collect, analyse and package the information into a usable form instead of just sending hundreds of pages of programme documents and priorities.

Comparing financing sources with PA Actions

As none of the European Territorial Cooperation programmes were finalized and approved at the time Let's Communicate! -project collected the draft programmes directly from the programmes and used these drafts as basis for the work. FCG devised a tool for first automatically analysing the programmes by using keyword searches. The keywords were picked from the PAs Actions and from climate policy documents. These narrowed down results were collected into an excel file based on which 2 experts at FCG continued from by fact checking the automatically accrued results and manually comparing PA Actions to the programme priorities.

Let's Communicate! -project received the final version from FCG and continued to manually work on it to include also comparisons of Actions not clearly related to climate activities as FCG had originally defined them. The resulting cross-referencing table, programme priorities and links can be found in attachment 2 EUSBSR Cross-referencing PAs and Programmes.

The results in the table, while prepared with using both automatic text analysis and the efforts of 5 experts with differing backgrounds, should be taken as a starting point for PAs own analysis. The excel file contains instructions on how to utilize it further.

Outcomes of the process

There were a number of outcomes of the process conducted by Let's Communicate! -project.

- 1) The Policy Areas have been consulted with the assistance of an external climate expert, how their PA could contribute to EU climate policy objectives. As a result the PAs had the chance to review their own approaches and spar with a climate expert on their future work plans.
- 2) The Policy Areas have been assessed on what form of support they will need. This assessment resulted in various approaches the PAs and the future Baltic Sea Strategy Point may build on.
- 3) The Policy Areas have been supported in aligning their work with the EU climate policy objectives. This major issue was tackled with the cross-referencing of financing sources and PA Actions to support the PAs in pooling resources together towards their climate related activities.
- 4) The results have been documented and available to the PACs and Baltic Sea Strategy Point for future use.