

# **THE BALTIC SEA REGION STRATEGY FOR BEGINNERS**

**2016**

# One sea, 85 million inhabitants, 8000 kilometres of coastline and endless opportunities for our entrepreneurs ...

Work with the Baltic Sea Region Strategy is now in its eighth year. Ways of working with the Strategy are starting to become integrated in our daily work. At the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, we use the Baltic Sea Strategy as a tool to streamline and prioritise our actions in the Baltic Sea Region. Our aim is to strengthen the competitiveness of our small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Only through cooperation with our neighbours can our goals be achieved.

For us, international cooperation always begins with the needs of Sweden's businesses. Whether it is matchmaking between SMEs, clustering of science parks, or strengthening innovation capacity through joint cross-border solutions. In all instances, we try to make the most of our commitments under the Strategy rather than duplicate actions that already exist. For example, we work to strengthen the Baltic Sea Region initiative within the Enterprise Europe Network. This is just one example of how we streamline our actions under the Strategy rather than initiate parallel actions.

With this brochure, we hope to spread information about model examples of how to utilise the Strategy in order to tackle our joint challenges. We also hope that when you are planning your next action to support the competitiveness of SMEs in the Baltic Sea Region, you will have us in mind!



Stockholm, 2016

**Gunilla Nordlöf**

Director-general, Swedish Agency  
for Economic and Regional Growth  
(Tillväxtverket)



**Are you curious about what the EU Strategy  
for the Baltic Sea Region is, and how  
cooperation might benefit you?**

**Then this is the brochure for you!**

# Why do we need a Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region?



**Why is it so important to cooperate with other Baltic Sea States? How does it all fit together, and what in fact are the differences between the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Europe 2020 and the Baltic Sea Region Programme? This brochure answers these questions and many more. You'll learn about the common objectives that the Region is striving to achieve, and get tips for those who want to work with a project. We also introduce a number of people who are working with the Strategy and present a number of model examples of projects.**

## **The basics of the Strategy**

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, EUSBSR, was adopted in 2009. The Strategy is an agreement between the Member States of the EU and the European Commission to strengthen cooperation between the countries bordering the Baltic Sea in order to meet the common challenges facing these countries today. For example, it's about cleaning up our polluted sea, mitigating against the effects of climate change, and combating cross-border crime. Its focus is always on joint problem-solving and all of the many opportunities that cooperation provides.

## **What is the role of the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth?**

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth works with increasing and disseminating knowledge about Baltic Sea Region Strategy's implementation in Sweden. We coordinate a broad Baltic Sea Region Network in Sweden that includes Swedish government agencies, regional authorities and many regions. The network offers great opportunities for cross-sectoral interaction, meeting new cooperation partners, and exchanging information about financing options.

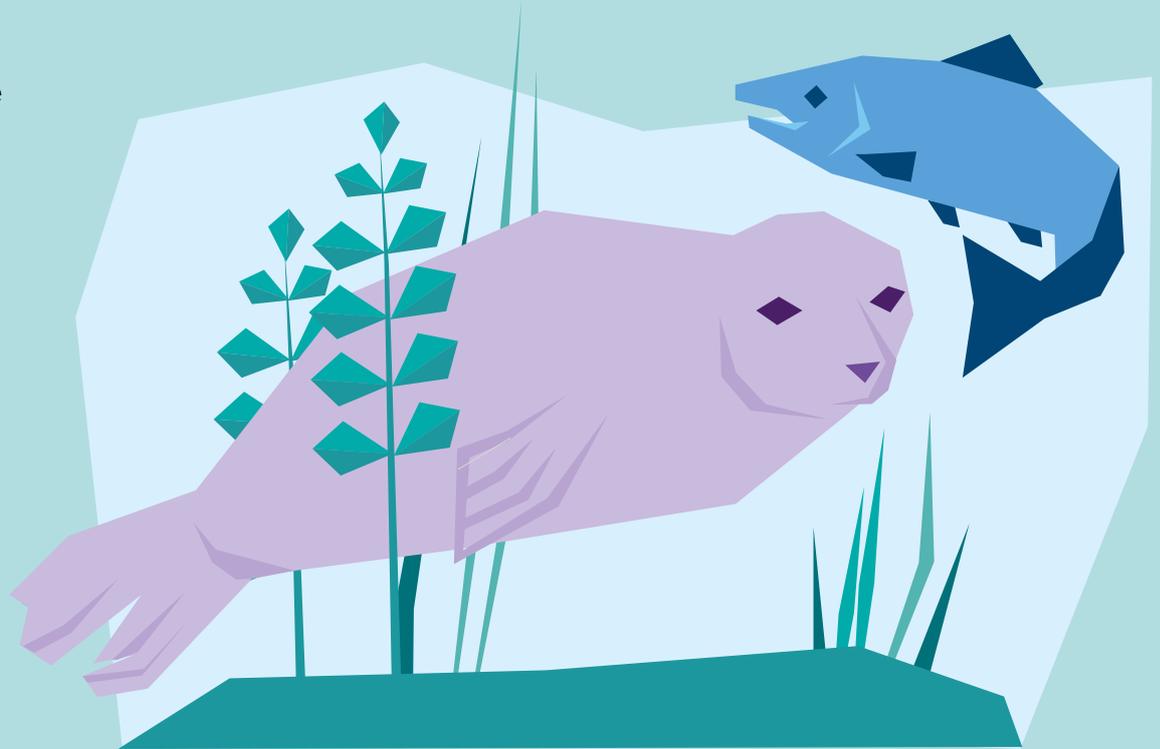
Assigned authorities and government agencies report annually to the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth about their work with the Strategy. The Agency then compiles an annual report to the Swedish Government. In addition to its role of coordinator, the Agency also implements the Strategy in its own activities, for example by strengthening matchmaking between enterprises and clusters in the Baltic Sea Region.

# **The Baltic Sea Region Strategy's objectives and sub-objectives**



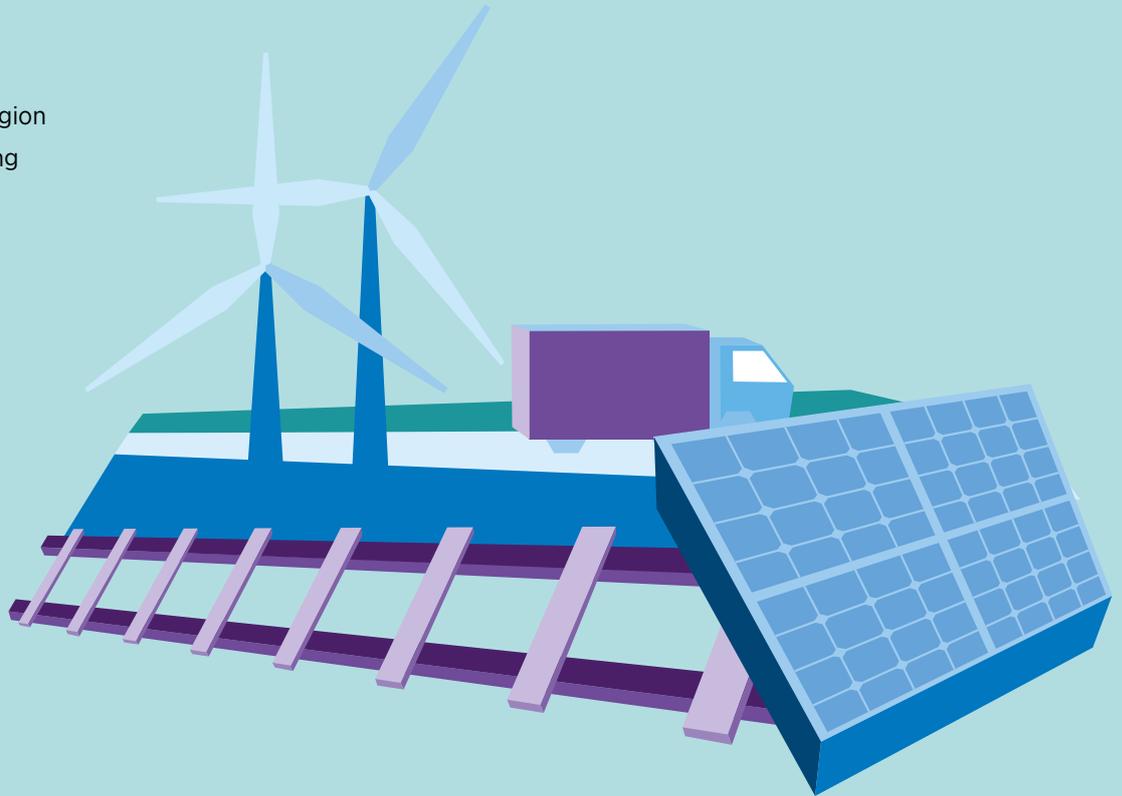
# Save the Sea

- Clear water in the sea
- Rich and healthy wildlife
- Clean and safe shipping
- Better cooperation



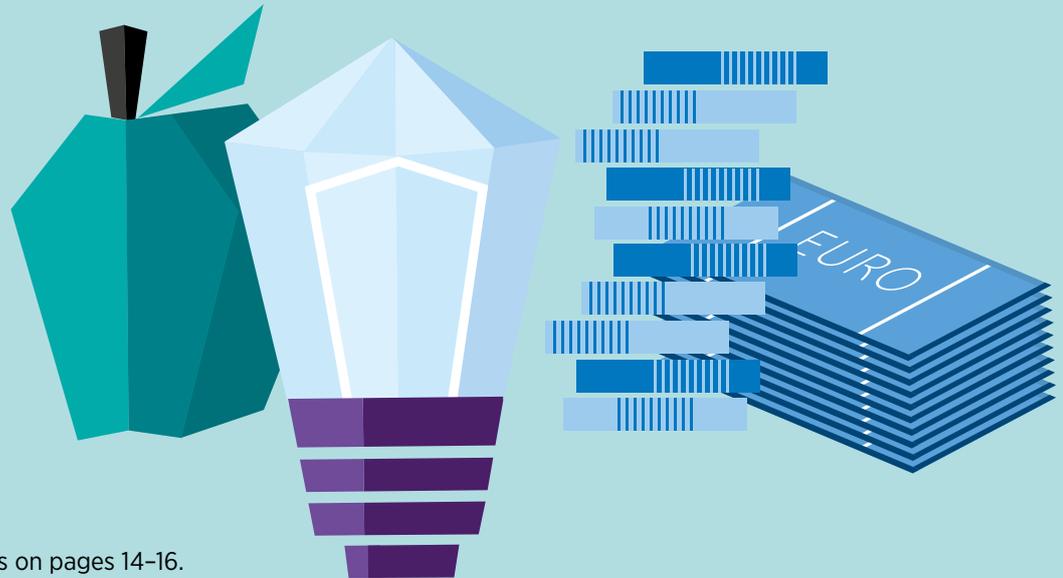
# Connect the Region

- Good transport conditions
- Reliable energy markets
- Connecting people in the region
- Better cooperation in fighting cross-border crime



# Increase Prosperity

- Baltic Sea region as a frontrunner for deepening and fulfilling the single market
- EUSBSR contributing to the implementation of Europe 2020 Strategy
- Improved global competitiveness of the Baltic Sea region
- Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management



Read more about the three objectives on pages 14–16.

# A strategy about more than just the sea!

Besides issues to do with the Baltic Sea itself that are specific to the EU countries bordering it, the Strategy covers many other common challenges and opportunities. The starting point is always the same whether the issue concerns transport solutions, joint education ventures or the environment: that we can solve our common challenges better if we work together.

In the first instance, the Strategy concerns the EU Member States in the Baltic Region: Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden and Denmark.

Some countries outside the EU also participate actively in projects under the Baltic Sea Strategy. Norway is often involved, as is Russia, as an important partner country. Iceland and Belarus also participate at times.

# How can we benefit from the Baltic Sea Region Strategy?

## EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS MIGHT INCLUDE:

- ▶ Working with urban planning and sustainability issues from a wider perspective.
- ▶ Developing tourism and other related industries.
- ▶ Cooperating on transport issue and maritime safety.
- ▶ Working with business development to foster the internationalisation of enterprises.
- ▶ Developing efforts towards smarter and greener public procurement.
- ▶ Cooperating on energy issues and other issues that link the environment and economics.
- ▶ Being inspired about how we can help young people who have left school early.
- ▶ Streamlining work with emergency plans and crisis management.

# 17%

The Baltic Sea Region has 85 million inhabitants.

That's 17% of the EU's population.





**REASONS TO  
COOPERATE!**

# Well-considered cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region has many advantages. Some examples:

## 1. Smarter problem solving

Better opportunities for solving common problems that require efforts from all involved. Examples are environmental problems in the Baltic, poorly functioning transport routes, or the need for energy supplies.

## 2. Better approaches and methods

Access to more approaches and methods for working with skills supply and sustainability issues for example.

## 3. Improved cooperation on environmental issues

Greater opportunities to cooperate on how to prevent floods and other matters related to adapting to climate change.

## 4. Larger market

Access to a larger market for commercial products and services, and greater scope for pursuing.

## 5. Enhanced skills and larger networks

Enhanced skills and more contacts, making businesses stronger in the global market.

## 6. Safety and security

Greater opportunities to cooperate on security issues such as crime prevention and crisis management.

## 7. Increased resources

Cooperation with more partners in new networks means more resources for joint projects.

# What do the Strategy's three objectives mean?

## Save the Sea

Only together can we save the Baltic Sea – one of the world's most polluted seas. The vulnerability of the Baltic to eutrophication, pollution and over-fishing places especially high demands on cooperation in the Region. The objective Save the sea is about achieving a good environmental status and biological diversity in the Baltic.

For example, this can be done by reducing inputs of nutrients, and also reducing the environmental impact of shipping by making the Baltic Sea Region a model region for clean shipping.

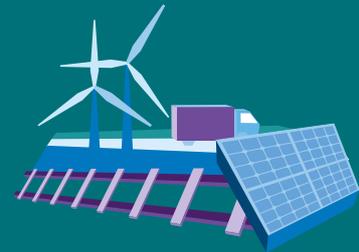


## Connect the Region

Large parts of the Baltic Sea Region are sparsely populated with long distances to other markets. For historical reasons, the Region's transport systems and energy markets have developed independently of each other. They are not yet sufficiently linked to best utilise the Region's potential for competitiveness and quality of life. There is a need for better cooperation in order to improve the Region's transport systems and secure the supply of energy.

*Connect the Region* is also about bringing people closer to each other so that they can benefit from exchanging knowledge and ideas and doing business with each other. This can be through student and research exchanges for instance, or via business contacts. It's also about ensuring access to communications options and the Internet.

*Connect the Region* also fosters cooperation projects aimed at combating cross-border crime such as human trafficking and smuggling stolen goods.



## Increase Prosperity

Trade between the Baltic Sea States is already considerable, but there is room to grow. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region contains measures to promote entrepreneurship, innovation, trade and digitally-driven growth. The countries bordering the Baltic can strengthen their competitiveness and prosperity through better cooperation in research and development and by deepening the internal market in various ways.

One priority area is to improve cooperation and exchanges between the education system and economic partners. The competitiveness of the Region is also predicated on a high level of education.

Our Region's prosperity is also being impacted to a large extent by climate change. The Baltic Sea is warming faster than any other sea in the world. The prediction is that more floods and droughts will occur, and joint adaptation efforts are important, as is strengthened joint disaster preparedness.



# There is an Action Plan!

There is an Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region which clarifies the three objectives. The objectives each have policy areas with identified responsible government agencies and ministries in each country.

The Action Plan, which is available in Swedish and English, also outlines the Strategy's flagship projects, which are intended to serve as inspiration. One way of using the Action Plan is to search in it for words that best correspond to your area of interest.

You can find the Action Plan at [www.balticsea-region.eu](http://www.balticsea-region.eu)

The Baltic Sea region is one of the most competitive regions in the world.

# 40%

Close to 40 % of Sweden's exports go to countries in the Baltic Sea Region.

# 10 billion Euro

By 2020, it is anticipated that almost 10 billion Euro have been turned into more than 1,000 projects within the EU's territorial cooperation programmes.

## Some useful contacts:

### SWEDISH AGENCY FOR ECONOMIC AND REGIONAL GROWTH

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth coordinates a Swedish network of government agencies and regions and also maintains frequent contacts with other countries in the Baltic Sea Region. The Agency can assist you with contacts in Sweden.

### THE SWEDISH INSTITUTE

The Swedish Institute's Baltic Sea Unit has many years of experience of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Besides answering questions and providing advice, the Swedish Institute can also provide funding for projects to work in Baltic Sea partnerships.

# Like to start up a project?

- ▶ Start from your organisation's development needs.
- ▶ Get help from others who have experience of cooperation projects such as those described in this brochure.
- ▶ Attend thematic conferences organised and establish contacts.
- ▶ Contact the coordinator responsible for the relevant policy area in the Baltic Sea Region Strategy for advice and contacts with stakeholders in other countries.
- ▶ Make sure that you involve all the relevant stakeholders right from the start of your project to ensure that you achieve its set goals.
- ▶ Get involved in the networks in the Baltic Sea Region (more about these on the next page).

# Get involved in networks

A number of networks exist in the Baltic Sea Region for municipalities and regions working with relevant thematic areas. Getting involved in these networks can uncover new opportunities for partnerships and provide you with new contacts.

- ▼ The Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) brings together regional authorities from all the countries in the Baltic Sea Region.
- ▼ The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) and its Baltic Sea Commission brings together the peripheral maritime regions of the Baltic Sea Region.
- ▼ The Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is a network for municipalities and cities in the Baltic Sea Region.

There are also a number of networks covering specific fields such as the Baltic Development Forum (BDF) and the WHO Healthy Cities Network in the Baltic Sea Region.

Read more about the networks:

BSSSC  
[www.bsssc.com](http://www.bsssc.com)

CPMR, Baltic Sea Commission  
[www.balticseacommission.eu](http://www.balticseacommission.eu)

UBC  
[www.ubc.net](http://www.ubc.net)

# 100

**Roughly 100 municipalities and cities around the Baltic are members of the Union of the Baltic Cities.**

# Are there funds to apply for?

The Baltic Sea Region Strategy is a guide and assistance in prioritising and coming together for joint actions – but there are no special funds earmarked for the Strategy. However, there are programmes from which you can apply for funding to support joint actions among the Baltic Sea States.

For the 2014–2020 programming period, you can apply for funding for cross-border cooperation in most of the EU programmes, for example the European Regional Development Fund, Social Fund programmes and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development programmes.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is written into these programmes, which means that cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region is being encouraged even more now than in the past.

Various strategies, plans and programmes impact work with development issues at the local and regional levels. However, this does not mean that they are incompatible. On the contrary, they build on each other. For example, working with the Baltic Sea Region Strategy also means striving towards the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.



# The Baltic Sea Region Strategy and Europe 2020 Strategy

Europe 2020 is about smart, sustainable growth for all. It is an overarching strategy for the whole of the EU that meshes well with the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The Baltic Sea Strategy complements Europe 2020 in that it is based on issues specific to the Baltic Sea Region, and thereby it facilitates the Baltic Sea States in achieving the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

## WHY A COMMON STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION IN PARTICULAR?

- ▼ Our main trading partners are here.
- ▼ We have common challenges related to the environment, growth and demographics.
- ▼ Here, we have opportunities to position the Region in the global perspective.

8000  
km

The Baltic Sea has an  
8000 km long coastline.

More information on Interreg  
Baltic Sea Region programme  
can be found at:  
[www.interreg-baltic.eu](http://www.interreg-baltic.eu)

# Baltic Sea Region Strategy and Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme

The Baltic Sea Region Strategy is a document describing issues that are of particular importance to the Region at the strategic level. The Interreg Baltic Sea Region is one of the EU's many programmes that stakeholders can take part in for cross-border cooperation. The Baltic Sea Programme is the only one of these covering the whole of the Baltic Sea Region, and tends to be the programme from which funding is sought for actions under the Baltic Sea Strategy. But the intention is that all the EU programmes in the Region, such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund's programmes will contribute funding to the Baltic Sea Strategy. So it is important be aware of other options and to consider a combination of funding from different EU programmes

# Want to know more?

If you want more detailed information about the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, you can consult the Action Plan. The 13 policy areas in the Action Plan are listed below. Each point corresponds to a section in the Plan that you can easily search for in the online document.

The Action Plan is found at [www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu](http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu)

## POLICY AREAS

- ▼ Bioeconomy – Agriculture, forestry and fisheries
- ▼ Culture – Culture & creative sectors
- ▼ Education – Education, research and employability
- ▼ Energy – BEMIP Action Plan (for competitive, secure and sustainable energy)
- ▼ Hazards – Reducing the use and impact of hazardous substances
- ▼ Health – Improving and promoting people’s health, including its social aspects
- ▼ Innovation – Exploiting the full potential of the region in research, innovation and SME, utilising the Digital Single Market as a source for attracting talents and investments

## The policy areas

Each policy area in the Baltic Sea Region Strategy has a coordinator. You can contact the coordinator for advice and contacts (to stakeholders) in other countries.

Contact details for all of the policy area coordinators and horizontal action coordinators are available from:

[www.balticsea-region.eu](http://www.balticsea-region.eu)

- ▶ Nutri – Reducing nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels
- ▶ Safe – To become a leading region in maritime safety and security
- ▶ Secure – Protection from land-based emergencies, accidents and cross-border crime
- ▶ Ship – Becoming a model region for clean shipping
- ▶ Tourism – Reinforcing cohesiveness of the macro-region through tourism
- ▶ Transport – Improving internal and external transport links

## Horizontal actions

In addition to the 13 policy areas, the Action Plan has four horizontal actions. These are actions intended to bring together our countries in the Region, thereby strengthening cooperation under the Baltic Sea Region Strategy.

For example, these actions deal with cooperation with neighbouring countries, climate issues and capacity building for the stakeholders implementing the Strategy. You can read more about the horizontal actions in the Action Plan.

- ▼ Capacity – Capacity building and involvement
- ▼ Climate
- ▼ Neighbours – Creating added value to the Baltic Sea cooperation by working with neighbouring countries and regions
- ▼ Spatial Planning – Encouraging the use of maritime and land-based spatial planning in all Member States around the Baltic Sea and develop a common approach for cross-border cooperation



*“Some issues are too big for the national level and too small for the European level. For these, the Baltic Region is an excellent way to work”*

**Lena Andersson Pench**

European Commission, Directorate-General  
for Regional and Urban Policy

### **Why do we have a Baltic Sea Region Strategy?**

We have a Baltic Sea Region Strategy because the eight EU Member States bordering the Baltic saw a need for a common strategy. They brought this initiative to Brussels, where the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region was approved by the European Council in 2009 as the first macro-regional strategy in the EU. After six years of activity, the Strategy today serves as a model for other regions in Europe.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region, the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ion-

ian Region, and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region, with a total of 19 Member States and 8 non-Member States, all show great interest in how the countries bordering the Baltic Sea cooperate.

### **What benefit do you see for a regional or local stakeholder in working with the Strategy?**

Some challenges and problems can best be tackled by neighbouring countries working together rather than each of them trying to solve these problems on their own. Some issues are too big for the national level and too small for the

European level. For these, the Baltic Sea level is an excellent way to work. As an enterprise, municipality or region, being part of the Baltic Sea Strategy means having a clear framework behind you with access to a great many cross-border contacts and skills but also a higher budget. For small and medium-sized enterprises, this means great opportunities for new business contacts and a bigger market.

### **How do you think cooperation in the Baltic Region will grow by 2030?**

The Baltic Sea Region Strategy has shown that it can be flexible and adapt to new challenges. In a changing world, being able to be flexible in how you prioritise the issues you intend to work with in the future is important. From the European Commission's perspective, we are open to Member States' own wants and needs.



*“We need to ensure that individuals and institutions not yet involved in these efforts understand what we’re doing and how they can join us”*

**Jens Kurnol**

Senior Advisor on Transnational Cooperation at Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning, Germany

**What benefits have you seen the Strategy produce?**

Macro-regional cooperation offers a great platform for cooperation across borders, sectors, and administrative levels. A good example of this is Maritime Spatial Planning, where VASAB (Vision And Strategies Around the Baltic Sea), acting as Horizontal Action Coordinator, have played an essential role in facilitating cooperation between the Baltic Sea states.

Initiatives like this advance us towards the place-based approach necessary for achieving territorial cohesion within the

EU. They also help us avoid duplication of work within the macro-regions.

**Our countries have been working with the strategy since 2009. Are we on the right track, and are there any regards in which you think we could do better?**

Yes, I think we’re on the right track, for the reasons I gave above. The main failing I see is that I think we too often forget how far advanced we are in cooperating across borders. We need to ensure that individuals and institutions not yet involved in these efforts under-

stand what we’re doing and how they can join us. It would sometimes benefit us to focus more on inclusion than on operational efficiency. This applies especially to “low-level” cooperation and small-scale funding on the cross-border and macro-regional levels.

**You are a member of several monitoring committees for Interreg programmes. How do you perceive the relation between Interreg and the EUSBSR?**

Two decades of practical experience of working on joint solutions to shared problems have given Interreg the solid knowledge of what works and what doesn’t that allows it to serve as a source of ideas and funding for implementations of the strategy. The seed money Interreg now provides will help many ideas develop into potential flagship projects.

# Blue growth from the Baltic's treasure trove

The oceans are assessed as having great potential for innovation and development and as driving forces for Europe's economy. Blue Growth – sustainable growth from the resources of our oceans and seas – is a hot area, where Baltic regional partnerships are important. The Baltic is a treasure trove with enormous potential for new industries and increased growth.

“The sea is an important part of our environment as well as our economy in Schleswig-Holstein” says Steffen Lüsse, project manager for the project Smart Blue Regions. “Together with our partners we look in to the best and most sustainable ways to develop innovations in maritime culture.”

Innovations might include industries like aquaculture, coastal tourism, marine biotechnology and ocean energy. One example is floating wind power platforms that can be anchored far out to sea. Another is utilising algae for everything from food, food supplements and colouring agents to biological material or bioenergy. The maritime sector

has great potential for cross fertilisation between blue and other types of enterprises. Offshore wind power is an example of an industry that is constantly in need of more efficient solutions and new, smart technologies.

Smart specialisation constitutes a significant challenge for many countries in the region. In the absence of prior experience and established knowhow, great variations in regional capacities to implement the strategies have already appeared in the early stages of priority setting. Not only RIS3 is a new policy instrument, also Blue Growth is still a relatively new concept. “We will identify the specialities in our region and com-

pare them with our partner regions to complement each other in developing this sector” says Steffen Lüsse.

The threeyear project Smart Blue Regions is managed by Ministry of Economic Affairs, Employment, Transport and Technology Schleswig-Holstein in Germany. Other project partners are active in Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Finland and Sweden.

Like to know more about Smart Blue Regions?  
Visit [www.smartblueregions.eu](http://www.smartblueregions.eu)



Photo:  
Leif Johansson



*“In many ways, our welfare is tied to the Baltic Sea Region”*

**Erja Tikka**

Finnish ambassador for Baltic Sea Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

### **Why is the EU’s Baltic Sea Strategy important to Finland?**

In many ways, our welfare is tied to the Baltic Sea Region. About 40 per cent of our foreign trade is with other Baltic Sea States, and the majority of our exports and imports pass through the Baltic Sea Region. It’s an important political arena for us, and it also lies close to our hearts, culturally speaking. The nature of the Baltic Sea also has a vitalising effect and creates jobs.

### **What are Finland’s most important objectives in the implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy?**

Firstly, to reduce emissions of nutrients as well as the quantities of hazards in order to save the sea and for maritime safety; secondly to increase cooperation in the transport sector and energy markets in order to link the region together; and thirdly, to increase competitiveness and cooperation in the fields of education, culture, health and civil defence, as well as boost innovation cooperation in order to increase prosperity.

### **What kinds of practical results that impact Finland have been achieved with the Strategy?**

Through projects under the umbrella of the Baltic Sea Strategy, improvements have been made to the treatment of wastewater in Poland, Belarus, the Baltic States and Russia, which have had a direct impact on the condition of the Baltic.

Finnish science parks and innovation centres participate in Baltic Sea Region networks and through these acquire partners with whom they can develop business activities. Finland’s healthcare districts have worked on an electronic healthcare system with cooperation partners in other countries around the Baltic. In order to improve maritime safety, a common system for the exchange of information between maritime monitoring authorities in the region has been created. The possibilities of building a tunnel between Helsinki and Tallinn have been investigated. These are just a few examples of the many projects being carried out under the umbrella of the Baltic Sea Strategy.



*“We need to speak more about the added value of transnational cooperation”*

**Vytautas Grubliauskas**

Mayor of Klaipeda city and President of the Klaipeda Region Municipalities' Association, Lithuania

**From a regional perspective, what benefits have you seen the strategy produce?**

It's sometimes said that the Strategy itself doesn't grant any concrete benefits, because it offers no concrete tools for implementation. I disagree with this opinion. There are plenty of resources available to us; the problem is rather how to use them in clever and sustainable ways.

The Strategy allows us to join forces around the Baltic Sea, to align our different regional strategies and plan our resources for joint development pro-

jects. This is already happening: various projects have been implemented all around the Baltic Sea region, and many more are on the way.

**Our countries have been working with the strategy since 2009. Are we on the right track, and are there any regards in which you think we could be doing better?**

There is no doubt that we're making huge progress. But we still need to keep moving forward, and continue applying our expertise, experience, and connectivity thinking to finding smart ways to build our region's future.

We need to better understand how regional cooperation can help us improve the region's competitiveness and prosperity and effectively implement local and regional strategies. We need to speak more about the added value of transnational cooperation, and its long-term benefits for local and regional development. We also need to see more effort, and greater enthusiasm, from decision makers and other stakeholders at the local and regional levels.

**How do you see the Baltic Sea cooperation develop from the present until the year 2030?**

I believe that the Baltic Sea region can set a shining example of cross-border cooperation for the whole continent – even for the world! I see huge potential in many different fields. Also, various global factors, including the changing geopolitical situation, climate change, and the ongoing industrial revolution, are calling on us to deepen our cooperation.

# Investing in Arctic tourism

The Arctic is one of the world's most attractive regions. To attract more visitors and boost tourism, Norway, Sweden and Finland have partnered in a joint venture to reach the international market.

As part of the Visit Arctic Europe project, 90 tourism industry entrepreneurs in Northern Norway, Swedish Lapland and Finnish Lapland have joined forces in order to strengthen the competitiveness of the Arctic region.

“The challenges posed for the tourism industry in Europe's Arctic region are similar, regardless of its national borders. Tourism businesses here in the north are usually small in size, so-called micro enterprises, with very limited marketing resources. Combining resources facilitates greater visibility and awareness for the joint attractions of the region” says Rauno Posio, project manager at Finnish Lapland Tourist Board. “It is unlikely that, for instance, a family in China differentiates between Finnish Lapland, Swedish

Lapland and northern Norway when planning a trip. They see the North as a whole and that is how it should be marketed to them.”

The aim of the project is more specialised tourism with a focus on specific attractions and target groups. This is why the project has invested in joint marketing of the whole region. The main markets targeted are in Germany, the Benelux countries, the UK, and the USA, but even the growing tourism industry in China.

Another challenge that the project has taken on is working to improve accessibility and transport options within the Arctic region. Today, it's difficult to travel within the Arctic, primarily in the east-west direction.

 Like to know more about  
*Visit Arctic Europe?* Visit  
[www.visitarcticeurope.com](http://www.visitarcticeurope.com)



Photo:  
Graeme  
Richardson



*“Direct, concrete actions that engage small and medium-sized enterprises are very important”*

**Ewa Andersson** Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, active in the financing of green projects and innovation projects in the Baltic Sea Region

### **Why are you working with the Baltic Sea Region?**

For the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, it's crucial to support cross-border and cross-sectoral partnerships focused on fostering innovation and internationalisation. The Baltic Sea States have similar cultures and complementary skills that, when combined, can enhance opportunities for their enterprises to address a global market. Direct, concrete actions that engage small and medium-sized enterprises are very important.

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth's involvement concerns financing and also contributing to enterprises and clusters being able to build long-term relationships. An example of a prioritised cross-border financing tool is BSR Innovation Express, which supports the internationalisation of small and medium-sized enterprises through clusters and innovation environments. In Sweden, this tool has a focus on sustainability and green technology.

### **What is the most rewarding thing about this cooperation?**

Seeing concrete results in the form of enterprises having established new partners for business deals, business networks having been awarded innovation contracts through partnerships, and regions strengthening their work to promote growth. It's important for me in my work to have a good overview of how other countries in the Baltic Sea Region are working with sustainable development and the development of green technology enterprises. As an added bonus, I acquire knowledge and many new colleagues.”

### **What advice would you give to others interested in starting partnerships in the Baltic Sea Region?**

- Build relationships!
- Focus! You can't work on all the issues at once.
- Be clear about what you want!



*“Although we’ve made great progress since the strategy was introduced, I still see plenty of room for improvement”*

**Radomir Matczak**

Head of the Department of Regional and Spatial Development,  
Pomorskie Region, Poland

**What benefits have you seen the strategy produce?**

The strategy’s benefits vary depending on which level you look at. On the national level, it provides an excellent platform for defining real challenges that need to be addressed. On the regional level, it functions as a map, indicating possible areas of cooperation. In this way, it guides our thinking regarding what we could or should do to reap long-term benefits. It also helps us define our priorities and roles in undertakings on the regional and local levels.

**Our countries have been working with the strategy since 2009. Are we on the right track, and are there any regards in which you think we could do better?**

Although we’ve made great progress since the strategy was introduced, I still see plenty of room for improvement, particularly in the following areas:

- **Prioritisation:** A hierarchy of priorities should be implemented in the strategy. We need to have the courage to say that one thing is more important than another.

- **Focus:** To my mind, the strategy has always been too broad in scope. While this has improved since 2009, the issues covered by the strategy in its current form are not all extremely important.
- **Implementation:** Problems remain within the implementation system, especially at the level of political leadership. These issues deserve to be more prioritised aspects of national policy.

**What advice would you give to others who are interested in starting to cooperate within the Baltic Sea Region?**

Realise that the broad scope of the strategy, while making it permissive in terms of the contents of cooperation projects, puts a premium on the potential and strength of participating institutions. This kind of cooperation places particular demands on experience and preparation – and failure is likely to follow from a “business as usual” mindset.

# BLASTIC maps the route of plastic from city to sea

Four-fifths of all the waste in the sea comes from land. The BLASTIC project is now mapping how waste travels from city to sea in order to reduce the amount of plastic waste in the Baltic

Many people believe that waste in seas and oceans comes from shipping. But as much as 80 per cent comes from land-based sources, largely from urban environments. 60 per cent of the marine litter is made up of plastic. Waste littered onto streets and squares is carried by rainwater, wind and rivers to the sea. Substandard litter bins, poor litter collection procedures and inadequate treatment plants exacerbate the situation.

“The *BLASTIC* project will develop a guide for municipalities describing how they can work to reduce plastic litter in the sea, including everything from how

to map potential sources of litter, to how to measure the plastic waste and develop action plans.” says Harri Moora Programme Director of the Environmental Management Programme at the Stockholm Environment Institute Tallinn Centre which is a partner in the project.

“The timing of the project is good as the problem of marine litter has recently been recognised”, states Harri Moora. A previous EU project, MARLIN, Baltic Marine Litter (2011-2013), put marine litter on the agenda of decision-makers and brought it to the attention of the general public by combining measure-

 Like to know more about BLASTIC?  
Visit [www.blastic.eu](http://www.blastic.eu)

ment results with beach clean-up activities. The BLASTIC project is going further by translating regional and national strategies into practical application at the local level.

Four municipalities in Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Sweden are participating by acting as pilot areas, and will contribute with their local knowledge and experience.

“In Estonia, Tallinn City will test the methods and guidelines produced by the project enabling the project partners to make them user-friendly. We hope also other municipalities in the Baltic Sea region will use them”, says Harri Moora.

Harri Moora explains that BLASTIC has enabled the partners to discuss what can be done to tackle marine litter not only on the local level but also with government levels in their partner countries.

“In the end, I hope we can harmonise the way we work with marine litter in the Baltic sea region”, Harri Moora concludes.



# Creative think tank for urban environments

How do you inject the artistic perspective into urban planning? In the Think Tank Transbaltic project, artists and researchers are working together to develop tools for creative and sustainable urban planning.

“Infrastructure for cars and ferries has existed for a long time in the Baltic, but none for art and culture,” says project manager Torun Ekstrand. “We want to change that. The Baltic Sea Strategy provides an ideal platform for creative contacts.”

*Think Tank Transbaltic* is a partnership between cities in all eight Baltic countries, along with Russia and Belarus. This project is building further on *Art Line 2011–2014*, an international partnership project involving a number of art institutions, museums and higher education institutions around the Baltic. That project aimed to create new forums and unexpected art experiences in the public space.

“After three years, networks and a great many personal contacts had been established that we wanted to build on,” says Torun Ekstrand, project manager for the partnership. “With *Think Tank Transbaltic*, we will be bringing together the Baltic’s port cities to find out what we can create out of the public space. In particular, we will be drawing on the knowledge that migrants to and from the Baltic States bring with them. Researchers, artists, architects, urban planners and integration coordinators will be working together with urban dwellers.”

 Like to know more about  
Think Tank Transbaltic? Visit  
[thinktanktransbalticpilot.blogspot.se](http://thinktanktransbalticpilot.blogspot.se)



An artist collects sound from the Baltic while on board the ferry between Gdynia and Karlskrona.

Photo: Artline

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## **Baltic Sea Region Strategy for beginners**

**Are you curious about what the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is and how you might benefit from it?**

This brochure is for those who want a quick reference guide to the Baltic Sea Region Strategy. Why is it so important to cooperate with other countries in the Baltic Sea Region in particular? Why has the EU developed a strategy for the Region? How does it all fit together, and what in fact are the differences between the EU Baltic Sea Strategy, Europe 2020 and the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme?

You'll find answers to these questions and many more in this brochure. You can read about ongoing projects and hear from project managers from different countries around the Baltic Sea sharing their advice, and what to do if you would like to work with a project. You can also read opinions from different Baltic Sea regions and countries on the use and benefits of the Strategy.