



# Assessment Sheet

## 1. Identification

<b>1.1 Name</b>	Efficient mobility in the Baltic Sea Region: Modeling of mobility concepts for cities and their hinterlands with impact assessment for the redistribution of scarce resources
<b>1.2 Short name</b>	BalticMobiLink
<b>1.3 Programme priority</b>	3. Climate-neutral societies
<b>1.4 Programme objective</b>	3.3 Smart green mobility
<b>1.5 Project implementation</b>	36 months

<b>1.6 Project summary</b> (imported from the application)
<p>Transnational regions often show a lack of cross-regional solutions that regional stakeholders (e.g. municipalities) can use reliably in the context of sustainable, efficient transport planning (cities and hinterlands). The interdisciplinary and transnational cooperation of the partners and target groups enables the transnational development and increased efficiency of mobility systems while regarding regional characteristics. The project will carry out surveys on transport behavior in Germany, Poland and Lithuania and identify the deficiencies in transport services presented by road users and the challenges faced by target groups as well as analyse established innovative mobility concepts (autonomous, active, integral) with regard to their efficiency and stakeholder acceptance. The use cases identified with the target groups will be tested in the real-world laboratory. The development of a website, a scientifically based transport decision-making tool that can be used freely by regional and local authorities, the development of guidelines and the use of new digital media for transport users will generate options for planning authorities and local stakeholders for the selection and implementation of sustainable, accepted and efficient mobility solutions and ensure user acceptance. Within the framework of the EUSBSR, the project is located in the area of the objective of connecting the region (EUSBSR policy area "Spatial Planning") and facilitates cooperation in the BSR.</p>

<b>1.7 Financial resources</b> (all amounts in Euro)	<b>Planned project budget</b>
ERDF co-financing	1,544,664.00 €
Own contribution EU partners	386,166.00 €
<b>ERDF budget</b>	<b>1,930,830.00 €</b>
NO co-financing	0.00 €



Own contribution NO partners	0.00 €
<b>NO budget</b>	0.00 €
<b>Total Programme co-financing</b>	1,544,664.00 €
<b>Total own contribution</b>	386,166.00 €
<b>Total budget</b>	1,930,830.00 €

1.8 Project partnership						
No.	Organisation		Partner budget	Programme co-financing	State aid relevance	Took part earlier
1	University of Applied Sciences Wismar	DE	254,530.00 €	203,624.00 €	Yes	Yes
	Higher education and research institution					
2	Maritime University of Szczecin (MUS)	PL	399,700.00 €	319,760.00 €	Yes	No
	Higher education and research institution					
3	Green Policy Institute (GPI), NGO	LT	440,600.00 €	352,480.00 €	Yes	Yes
	NGO					
4	Research-GmbH Wismar	DE	632,000.00 €	505,600.00 €	Yes	Yes
	Higher education and research institution					
5	Rostock Business and Technology Development GmbH (RoBus)	DE	204,000.00 €	163,200.00 €	Yes	Yes
	Business support organisation					

1.9 Associated Organisations		
No.	Organisation	Country

1.10 Project's contribution to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region	
planned	PA Transport

1.11 Horizontal principles	Project's impact
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Sustainable development	positive
Non-discrimination including accessibility	positive
Equality between men and women	neutral

#### 1.12 Output

- Macroscopic traffic model including website and AI tool and guidance

## 2. Admissibility check

### OUTCOME OF ADMISSIBILITY CHECK

The project passed the admissibility check.

## 3. Final conclusion and requirements

### FINAL CONCLUSION

**The proposal does not demonstrate sufficient quality to be approved.**

The application focuses on mobility in municipalities, aiming to develop tools with data and simulation options for better municipal planning. However, the challenge is not clearly identified and the existing needs of the target groups do not seem to be explored. The project has not involved the municipalities and transport companies, crucial for addressing the overall challenge. The partnership mainly consists of higher education and research institutions dominated by one country. The work plan is poorly developed and does not follow the approach of the Programme. The target groups involvement is insufficient, and the uptake of the solution by them during and after the project is not ensured.

### REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL

As the project does not demonstrate sufficient quality, no requirements are listed.



## Quality assessment

Scoring system: 5 (very good), 4 (good), 3 (sufficient), 2 (weak), 1 (insufficient)

### I. Relevance of the proposal

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#### Thematic focus

- Does the challenge tackled by the project match the selected Programme objective and the focus of the call?

**The proposal weakly matches the selected Programme objective and the focus of the given call.**

The challenge described by the project focuses on mobility in municipalities, arguing that in contrast to metropolitan regions with well-developed public transport services, the existing mobility services in municipalities are inadequate and less attractive. While generally, the context -- mobility in cities and hinterlands and improving the public transport services in these areas -- is relevant for the selected Programme objective 3.3, the description remains vague and unspecific. It does not highlight the specific situation and needs of the regions involved. It remains at the level of describing a global problem (high usage of private cars) without addressing concrete municipalities' unique challenges and conditions. There is a lack of examples that would illustrate the particular mobility issues these regions are dealing with. For a more actionable proposal, it would have been essential to define the distinct characteristics and needs of the target areas that align with Programme objective 3.3. This would involve information on local mobility patterns, infrastructure gaps, and potential strategies for interventions that could enhance public transport services and overall mobility in these municipalities.

The application weakly addresses the focus of the call, i.e., the topic of climate change.

Even though the general topic of improved and greener mobility in municipalities is targeting climate change mitigation, the project's weak addressing of climate change adaptation and mitigation stems from its vague descriptions, lack of specific strategies, insufficient emphasis on sustainable solutions, and poor integration with climate goals. These shortcomings prevent the project from demonstrating a significant positive impact on climate change.

The application does not describe its contribution to the thematic challenges specified in the announcement note for Priority 3 (i.e. adopting and implementing better integrated and more systemic approaches to planning processes in sectors key to mitigating climate change; mainstreaming a climate-conscious perspective through participatory and inclusive approaches; implementing effective strategies to combat climate change by improving the generation, distribution, utilisation and storage of energy; promoting circular practices as a means to address climate change, e.g. supporting businesses and communities in taking up circular approaches).

#### Target groups



- Are the selected target groups relevant to tackle the identified challenge, e.g. regarding geographical coverage and types of sectors involved?
- Are the needs of the target groups clearly described?

**The selected target groups are clearly relevant to tackling the identified challenge. The application weakly describes the needs of the target groups.**

The selected target groups include Infrastructure and public service providers (transport companies), SMEs, local and regional public authorities and higher education and research institutions.

The defined field of responsibility and economic sector of the selected target groups seems to be relevant to tackling the identified challenge.

The role of the infrastructure and public service providers and the local and regional public authorities in responding to the challenges of transport and mobility of people is clear. Cooperating with SMEs and understanding the needs of those employees who are commuting is essential for developing new solutions. Higher education and research institutions can support the above target group members in data collection, analysis, simulation etc.; however, they do not seem to be a target group for the project in the definition of the Programme.

The geographical coverage of the target groups does not seem to be appropriate for the proposed challenge. The project did not provide any details regarding the geographical coverage of the target groups.

The described needs of the target groups partly seem to be relevant to the identified challenge. The project provided some information regarding the needs and the roles of the target groups; however, the needs are more the repetition of the challenge the target groups are facing and less informative on the needs connected to the challenge and finding solutions to them. For example, transport companies face the challenge of ensuring adequate transportation in good quality but also the need to modernise and improve their systems when the population is shrinking in some areas. So, there seems to be a mismatch between the growing demand for quality and the number of passengers, causing stress in the financing streams. Local public authorities in medium-sized cities face the problem of lack of housing near the workplaces. They must establish efficient, convenient and targeted public transport for commuters. Local authorities require simulations and guidelines that offer various solutions for efficient, accepted and sustainable mobility as part of strategic planning. Like local authorities, regional authorities face the challenge of public transport provided in the hinterlands. According to the descriptions, regional authorities also require data and simulation tools to overcome the planning challenge.

#### Transnational value

- Does the application clearly explain the need for transnational cooperation to address the identified challenge?



**The application does not clearly explain the need for transnational cooperation to address the identified challenge.**

The project description remains on the level of a global problem without addressing specific regional or transnational contexts. This lack of specificity means that it does not identify or address common challenges shared by multiple countries or propose solutions that could be collaboratively developed and implemented on a transnational scale.

#### **Project objective**

- Is the planned project objective in line with the needs of the target groups?

**The planned project objective is weakly in line with the needs of the target groups.**

It is weakly explained how the project aims to address the needs of the selected target groups. The descriptions of the objective seem in line with the generally addressed challenge. However, the application does not clearly present the link between the project objective and the specific needs of the municipalities (as those concrete contexts and existing needs are also not sufficiently identified). In the description of the needs, the project has mainly referred to the need for better data analysis (quantitative indicators or patterns of region-specific mobility behaviour) and simulation to support the decision-making process. It is unclear how the proposed solutions will directly address the municipalities' specific challenges, given that these contexts and their unique needs are not well defined. The lack of tailored strategies risks creating a disconnect between the general objective and the practical, on-the-ground needs of the target groups, potentially limiting the project's effectiveness.

#### **Contribution to the policies and strategies**

- Does the project plan to contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)?
- Does the project plan to contribute to achieving specific goals or implementing actions of other strategic documents relevant to the Programme area?

**The proposal seems to weakly contribute to policies and strategies relevant to the Programme area.**

The application weakly describes how the project plans to contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan of the EUSBSR. It contributes to the Policy Area Transport. The project does not refer to the actions. However, the project described that it would contribute to the PA through innovative mobility concepts. No further explanation is provided in terms of how the project will implement concrete measures in the transport sector beyond the development of the tool in the form of a webpage.

The project plans to contribute to achieving specific goals or implementing actions of other strategic documents relevant to the Programme area. The project plans to contribute to the following strategic documents:

- PA Energy
- The EU strategy for sustainable and intelligent mobility (COM(2020) 789 final)
- Green Deal



### Additional value

- Is it clearly explained how the project plans to build on the outcomes of other projects?
- Does the application demonstrate additional value to implemented and running projects, in particular to the projects of Interreg Baltic Sea Region?
- Is cooperation with other projects planned?

**The proposal demonstrates low additional value to current or already completed projects relevant to the Baltic Sea region.**

The application does not clearly explain how outcomes of other projects have been taken into consideration. The project refers to three projects implemented in Vilnius, Baden-Württemberg, and the Netherlands and the tools and methodologies they have developed. Still, the application only very generally mentions the possibility of using some of the other project outcomes, but without a clear intention and plan.

The application demonstrates low additional value to implemented and running projects financed by Interreg BSR or other Programmes and initiatives. The project did not mention any Interreg BSR projects on mobility whose results could be used when developing the new tool. For example, SUMP for BSR is currently working on a monitoring tool. MAMBA and MARA projects have worked on improved mobility solutions in remote areas and areas affected by demographic change, and SUMBA and SUMBA+ projects have explored measures that facilitate intermodal and sustainable commuting.

The project does not plan to cooperate with other projects.

## II. Partnership

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### Partnership

- Does the partnership have the necessary competence to implement the planned activities and to achieve the planned objective?
- Are the selected target groups involved as partners?
- Are the roles of all partners in project implementation clearly explained?
- Is the involvement of the partners planned in accordance with the requirements of the Programme?
- Are the involvement and responsibilities of the partners in the project planned in a balanced way?
- Are the roles of the associated organisations clearly explained?
- Do the partners have sufficient human and financial capacity?

**The partnership seems to have insufficient potential to realise the planned activities and to achieve the planned objective.**

The partnership seems to possess insufficient competences for implementing the planned project.



The partnership consists mainly of higher education and research institutions, one NGO and one business support organisation. The project's selected target groups are not involved in the partnership.

The partnership lacks representatives of local and regional authorities and transport companies who have a crucial role in implementing the planned tool in real life and continuing to use it after the project ends. Without their active participation, it is impossible to assess how accurately the needs have been identified, how pressing they are, and how effectively the tool addresses them. Additionally, the current partnership lacks evidence of commitment from the primary target group to integrate the tool into their daily work.

The roles and tasks of all partners in the project implementation are sufficiently explained.

The involvement of the partners is planned in accordance with the requirements of the Programme.

The involvement and responsibilities of the partners in the project are not planned in a balanced way. For example, there seem to be imbalances in the roles of the partners e.g. involvement of the partners from Germany (clearly domineering compared to other partnership countries). The imbalances are not justified.

The project does not involve any associated organisations.

It seems that there are evident risks in relation to the project partners (private partners in particular). Project partner number 3 Green Policy Institute (GPI), NGO does not seem to have sufficient financial capacity to implement the planned activities. The annual turnover (EUR 150,056) and annual balance sheet total (EUR 150,056) are only slightly above the annual budget (EUR 146,866.67) and the partner does not have an operating profit. Considering that the partner has the second largest budget in the project (EUR 440,600) and provides the highest staff input (34% of the entire input of staff by the project partners) as it is the main developer of the tool, the financial capacity does not seem sufficient.

### III. Work plan

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#### Preparing, piloting and evaluating, transferring solutions

- Do the planned solutions address the identified specific challenge?
- Is there a clear approach on how the project plans to develop or adapt solutions?
- Does the project plan pilots to validate the usefulness of the solutions?
- Does the project evaluate and adjust solutions?
- Does the application present a realistic plan how to communicate and transfer the ready solutions?
- Does the project encourage active and continuous use of the solutions after the project end?

**The overall quality of the work plan presented in the application is weak.**

It seems that the planned solution (the Macroscopic traffic model) partly addresses the identified challenge. According to the application, the challenge lies in the absence of reliable cross-regional solutions that regional stakeholders, such as municipalities, can utilise for sustainable and efficient transport planning in cities and hinterlands. Although the project has not proved the novelty of the planned tool and its cross-regional character, it has the potential to offer data analysis and suggest sustainable mobility





options in strategic planning on the local level. However, numerous shortcomings in the work plan diminish the overall quality and raise questions about the tool's overall usefulness.

The project has presented unclear plans for the development of the tool. For instance, while planning data collection and analysis from certain regions is mentioned, the specific areas are not clearly defined. Moreover, without representatives from the target group in the partnership or associated organisations, it is unclear how data collection and processing will be coordinated with the relevant authorities. In some sections, the project mentioned that target groups promised the delivery of data, but without specifying which organisations exactly, and what form of agreement had been made. It appears that the project, with its current partners, will develop a theoretical model whose real-life applicability is not planned or assured beyond the two real-life cases planned in Rostock and Wismar.

The project does not plan to adapt, implement, and institute the Macroscopic traffic model. The plans for testing and integrating the solution into the target groups' everyday work are unclear. Additionally, the partnership lacks local authorities or transport companies, and no formal agreements are mentioned in the project that would ensure the commitment of any local authorities to test and adapt the tool. Only in WP3, the project mentions real-life collaboration in Rostock and Wismar, but this also lacks further explanation. Once again, in the absence of the relevant organisations, the city administration and the public transport provider, these actions remain on the theoretical level.

The project insufficiently plans pilots to validate the usefulness of the solutions. In WP2, no piloting is planned. In this WP visualisation activities are planned using existing software. However, WP2 does not clearly specify which cities will be involved in this task or their roles in the piloting process. In WP3, real laboratories are planned for Rostock and Wismar, but the activities there seem disconnected from testing the tool's usefulness, focusing instead on the attractiveness of the results it produces. Additionally, as mentioned above, it is unclear who will operate the tool during these real laboratory sessions and to what extent the target group can adapt and use it independently. It is unclear whether the model itself will be tested with potential future users; rather, several existing tools seem to be used to model traffic junctions, public transportation, and other relevant infrastructure components, offering alternative transport modes. The tool's real-life application, usefulness and applicability remain untested. The target group will not gain training and knowledge on using the tool independently by the project's end, which also undermines the tool's long-term sustainability and limits its practical impact.

The project plans to evaluate and adjust solutions insufficiently. In WP2, the project did not plan any activities to assess the tool's usefulness. In WP3 the real-life tests and the development of the AI tool and the website is planned but no evaluation as required by the Programme.

The project does not plan to communicate and transfer the ready solutions. The project did not provide any information on how it intends to promote and communicate the results.

The planned timeline seems partly realistic to prepare the solution. As mentioned above, the project does not seem to have planned the pilots, evaluation, and transfer activities that follow the Programme's definitions.



The project does not seem to encourage active and continuous use of the solutions after the project end. The tool will be made available in the form of a website. However, there are no explicit activities in the project on how any other target group beyond the two cities in the real-life laboratories will get informed and convinced about the uptake and usefulness of the tool. The project also plans to develop guidance on using the tool, but promotion or transfer activities to the target groups in the BSR have not been planned.

#### Target groups

- Is the involvement of the target groups well planned in each work package?

**The involvement of the target groups is not planned in the work plan.**

In the preparation, piloting, evaluation, and transfer, the involvement of the target group is not explicitly planned. The project left the descriptions in the work packages on the target group involvement generic and vague. There is no mention of concrete organisations in the description. Furthermore, the partnership lacks target group representatives that would allow at least the assumption that those members would have a real saying in the project activities.

#### Transnational cooperation

- Does the project plan to implement activities and outputs in a transnational setting?

**The project does not plan to implement activities and outputs in a transnational setting**

The preparation, piloting, evaluating and transfer of the solutions are not planned transnationally. No evidence is provided in the project description on the joint, transnational work of the partners. The work packages are divided among the different partners, but there is no information provided on how they will work together.

#### Output and result indicators

- Does the project contribute to the output and result indicators defined by the Programme?
- Are the targets set by the project realistic?

**The project contributes to the following output and result indicators defined by the Programme.**

The project plans a contribution to the following indicators:

*RCO 84 – Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects 0*

*RCO 116 – Jointly developed solutions 4*

*RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders 5*

*RCR 104 - Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations 4*



*PSR 1 - Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders 15*

The set targets do not seem to be realistic. The planned number of solutions does not seem to follow the definition of the Programme. Since no piloting is planned, the traffic model cannot be classified as a solution per the Programme's definition. Also, the number of organisations with increased institutional capacity seems unrealistic, considering that none of those organisations are associated organisations or have a demonstrated commitment to the project.

#### IV. Durability

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##### Durability of the outputs

- Is the use of the developed solutions well planned by partners and other organisations in different countries, also beyond the project end?
- Does the developed durability concept include institutional and financial support to keep the outputs functional after the project end?

**The use of the developed solutions in different countries, also after the project end, does not seem to be planned in the application.**

It seems that the solution will not be used by the target groups beyond the implementation phase in their daily work. The use of the tool by the target group during the project is not planned; therefore, the uptake of it after the project ends by any target group member is unrealistic.

The durability concept is not clearly described. It does not include institutional and financial support to keep the outputs functional after the project ends. There is no information on which of the partners will maintain and keep the tool available and updated. The project only mentioned that the web tool maintaining will not require financial sources. No other explanation or reasoning is provided.

#### V. Budget

SCORE

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##### Budget adequacy

- Is the budget appropriate in relation to the planned activities, outputs, results, and involvement of partners?

**The planned budget seems to be weakly in line with the planned activities, outputs, results and involvement of partners.**

The planned partner budgets do not seem adequate considering their involvement and responsibilities in the project.

Higher education and research organisations are dominant. The three organisations (60% of partnership) consume EUR 1.3 million (67% of the project budget) and provide 58% of the entire annual full-time positions of the project. The dominance of research organisations is not justified and provides an insufficient potential to realise the planned activities and to achieve the planned objective. Further, the budget of the research PP4 is very high. The partner consumes 33% (EUR 632,000) of the project budget.



It appears likely that the partner is the “hidden lead partner” of the project. This bears liability risks. The partner is not directly responsible towards the MA/JS for the management of the project, who will conclude the subsidy contract with PP1.

The planned shares of management and work packages do not seem adequate considering their importance for the planned outputs/solutions and results.

The project allocated EUR 96,542 to the management of the project only, raising concerns about the quality of project management. Further, the budget shares of WP1 (30%) and WP2 (25%) underline the value of preparatory work and research in the project and indicate that the project insufficiently plans piloting activities in WP2. Further, WP3 consumes the largest share of the budget (40%), but no transnational transfer activities involving the target groups are explicitly planned in this work package.

The planned total budget does not seem to be adequate considering the planned outputs and results. The project budget (EUR 1.9 million) is below the average budget of projects in call C3.2 (EUR 2.6 million), which is due to the low number of partners involved in the project. The project is weakly relevant for the Programme. For example, there is no durability concept for the developed solutions and it seems that the solution will insufficiently be piloted and not used by the target groups in the different countries. Therefore, it has to be concluded that the application does not propose a realistic, durable, transnational solution/output for which the requested budget is adequate.

#### Eligibility

- Are the cost category specifications (external services, equipment, Infrastructure and work) precise, clear and justified?
- Are there any indications of ineligible costs in the work plan and/or ineligible project partner structures?
- Have the relevant rules for productive investments/Infrastructure been followed?
- Have the State aid rules been followed?

#### **The relevant eligibility rules seem to be partly followed.**

The cost categories specifications (external services, equipment, Infrastructure and works) are partly precise, clear and justified. For example, project partner no. 5 plans to purchase technical support for the project activities, yet the scope of the services is not described. Partners no. 1 and 3 missed to plan costs for national control.

The planned expenditures in these categories are partly eligible from the financial point of view. For example, partner no. 2 plans EUR 15,000 to cover participation fees in scientific conferences. The type of the conferences and their relevance to the project are not specified. In addition, the project partner plans EUR 60,000 for software used in WP2. The total value of the software does not seem to be adequate and thus only partly eligible.

There are no indications of ineligible costs in the work plan/activities.

There are no indications of ineligible project partner structures (e.g. umbrella partnership, hidden partner organisations).

Productive or infrastructure investments are not planned in the project.



The State aid rules relevant to the application stage have been followed.

The basis for the State aid assessment is the ex-ante assessment of State aid risks associated with the types of project partners and their activities. Furthermore, the MA/JS carried out a partner and plausibility check in accordance with the rules of the Programme Manual.

As part of this procedure, the MA/JS looked at the State aid relevance of project partner no. 3 with a low risk of implementing State aid relevant activities to ensure that these partners indeed comply with the State aid rules.

The MA/JS did not carry out plausibility checks for project partners no. 1, 2, 4, and 5 with medium to high risk for implementing State aid relevant activities as they did not request it in the application.

The MA/JS concluded that the project partners listed as State aid relevant in section 1.8 of the Assessment sheet carry out State aid relevant activities.