



Things to know about Transnational Cooperation in the Baltic Sea region

Interreg Baltic Sea Region is one of 15 EU funding Programmes for European transnational cooperation. Interreg transnational cooperation programmes have been operational for more than 20 years, implementing actions in the framework of the EU Cohesion Policy.

These programmes are uniquely distinct by bringing together regions and cities that are located in different countries to tackle the most pressing needs of their populations together.

We would like to provide you with a taste of what Interreg projects are doing for regions, cities, and citizens around the Baltic Sea. Let us show you how transnational cooperation joins people from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden, for a common cause. **Get inspired.**

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Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat | 2018**

This document complements “10 things to know about Transnational Cooperation”, which was compiled by an informal working group of heads of Managing Authorities and Joint Secretariats of transnational programmes and Interreg Europe with the support of INTERact.

Transnational cooperation helps to reduce disparities and increases cohesion in the Baltic Sea region

By facilitating knowledge exchange, transnational cooperation empowers disadvantaged regions. It builds capacities and enables each territory to learn from the others, tapping into methods and solutions that are then developed or applied elsewhere in the region.



We connect enterprises with high level research facilities

The Baltic Sea region features a wide range of research and innovation infrastructures. Yet these infrastructures are not equally distributed, interconnected or optimally utilised. The Interreg project Science Link therefore created a network of large-scale neutron and photon labs which offered consultancy and beam time to enterprises, in particular to small and medium sized enterprises.

Through this network, more than 40 enterprises from the Baltic Sea region received access to large-scale, high-tech research facilities. Science Link, a finalist of the Regio Stars Awards 2017, helped enterprises develop their products in areas such as energy, food, biotechnology and chemicals. This way, transnational cooperation contributed to cohesion and equal chances for running business in the Baltic Sea region.

We give disadvantaged people in rural areas a say in their future

A downward spiral of emigration, economic downturn and loss of services in rural areas of the Baltic Sea region puts disadvantaged groups at risk of poverty and exclusion. Some social service providers have been helplessly watching this development, while others have already developed a new approach to social services: empowerment. Social service providers activate recipients of social services to voice their needs in service design and to become part of the solution themselves.

In the Interreg project SEMPRE social service providers learn methods and examples of empowerment. By now, social workers activated single parents in central Lithuania, intellectually challenged young people in Estonia and migrants in northern Germany. Transnational cooperation thus enables social workers in disadvantaged areas to combat social exclusion with methods such as empowerment that have been successfully applied elsewhere.

We enable regions and cities in the Baltic Sea region to jointly tackle challenges that go beyond borders

Water pollution, maritime spatial planning, and integration of transport systems are issues that a country cannot solve separately from its neighbours. Only by working together can regions and cities successfully tackle such challenges.



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We must make the Baltic Sea waters healthier by joint efforts of regions and cities

The bottom of the Baltic Sea is one of the largest dead zones in the world, an area without oxygen and thus without life. Anoxia is caused by excess nutrient loading from human activities. To reduce the loads, the Interreg projects PURE and PRESTO advised operators of selected waste water treatment plants on better nutrient removal and invested in water treatment equipment. Training material developed from these examples was used in renovations of plants in other cities. Now the Interreg project IWAMA is connecting water sector experts for lifelong learning with the Baltic Smart Water Hub – an online platform showcasing good practices and technical solutions in water management.

By identifying, sharing and applying good practice, cities prevent tons of nutrients from entering the Baltic Sea to make it healthier.

We boost renewable energy by connecting offshore electricity grids

The Baltic Sea region uses less than 15% of its capacity for offshore wind energy production. Missing connections among electricity grids, gaps in research and technology and insufficient cooperation leave the potential untapped. The Interreg project Baltic InteGrid brings all Baltic Sea countries on board to connect energy operators, industry, policy makers, authorities and academia to outline spatial plans for a coordinated Baltic Sea meshed offshore grid. Such a meshed offshore grid links electricity grids via hubs among each other and with the countries.

In this way, the Interreg project will significantly reduce one of the most important bottlenecks for the development of renewable energy sources in the Baltic Sea region, ensuring environmental benefits and sustainability of power supply.

We help public authorities in the Baltic Sea region to offer better services for citizens and companies

Transnational projects typically lead to time-saving, innovative or improved solutions and methodologies that save resources and increase efficiency. This improves cost-efficiency, accelerates the uptake of current best-practice approaches, and facilitates wise use of public resources.



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We improve rescue services to save lives together

Highly frequented shipping routes that are used to transport oil and other hazardous substances connect ten countries around the Baltic Sea. Each country is equipped to respond to certain accidents. With Interreg support, emergency authorities from different countries align their operational procedures to increase their effectiveness. Rescue services jointly conducted exercises in saving human lives, be it in passenger ship accidents (DiveSMART Baltic project) or in accidents with harmful chemicals in ports (HAZARD project) or at sea (ChemSAR project).

By strengthening their collaboration, transnational cooperation helps public rescue officials responsible for maritime accidents to be more effective in the event of an accident – for the sake of EU citizens' and companies' safety.

We help authorities handle munitions in the Baltic Sea to protect people and wildlife

Some 50,000 tons of chemical munitions and 200,000 tons of conventional munitions were dumped into the Baltic Sea after World Wars I and II. The construction of pipelines, cables and wind farms at sea as well as natural corrosion of dumped containers increase the risk of explosions near populated areas and of contamination of the environment. The Interreg project CHEMSEA mapped the munitions' positions and assessed their environmental and biological risks. Now the Interreg project DAIMON is developing management options to support maritime, defence and environmental authorities in the Baltic Sea region and Skagerrak in e.g. monitoring, neutralising, transporting or destroying munitions.

In this way, Interreg helps authorities react together to a common threat to keep people and wildlife in and around the Baltic Sea safe.