Interreg Baltic Sea Region

Mid-term evaluation of Programme impact

FINAL REPORT

Approved by the Monitoring Committee
20 December 2018

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Audit Authority		IBSR	Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme
AF	Application Form		IB.SH	Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein
AIR	Annual Implementation Report		JS	Joint Secretariat
AWP	Annual Work Programme		LAU	Local Administrative Units
BSO	Business Support Organisation		LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
BSR	Baltic Sea Region		MA	Managing Authority
CA	Certifying Authority		MC	Monitoring Committee
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation		NC	National Coordinator
EC	European Commission		ND	National Delegation
EEA	European Economic Area		NUTS	Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales Statistiques (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics)
EIB	European Investment Bank			
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund		NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ESG	Evaluation Steering Group		PA	Priority Axis
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds		PAC	Policy Area Coordinator
ESPON	European Spatial Planning Observatory Network		SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
			R&I	Research and Innovation
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation		RIS	River Information System
EU	European Union		S3	Smart Specialisation Strategy
EUSBSR	European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region		SO	Specific Objective
			ToR	Terms of Reference
HAC	Horizontal Action Coordinator		WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant
HEI	Higher Education and Research Institutes			

1   General context and methodology

The **Interreg Baltic Sea Region Mid-term Evaluation of Programme impact** demonstrates the impact of the Programme as well as its progress and contribution to achieving its objectives. The evaluation also provides input regarding improvements to the Programme for the rest of the programme period (2014-2020). These could also provide valuable input when planning the intervention logic of future programmes. In addition, the evaluation serves as evidence for the Programme in its annual reporting as well as for the European Commission when planning future policies for European Territorial Cooperation.

The **Terms of Reference** established sub-tasks and corresponding evaluation questions to be answered by the final evaluation report: Sub-task 1: Impact of projects in reaching the Programme's Specific Objective (SO) under priorities 1-3, Sub-task 2: Involvement of different types of partners, Sub-task 3: Contribution to European Union Strategy for the BSR (EUSBSR), Sub-task 4: Impact of Programme support to EUSBSR coordination, Sub-task 5: Communication Strategy, Sub-task 6: Performance of the Managing Authority (MA)/ Joint Secretariat (JS).

Correspondingly, the evaluation is **structured** as follows:

- Chapter 2: Impact of projects in reaching the programme's SOs
- Chapter 3: Involvement of different types of partners
- Chapter 4: Contribution to EUSBSR
- Chapter 5: Impact of Programme support to EUSBSR coordination
- Chapter 6: Communication Strategy
- Chapter 7: Performance of the MA/JS

The evaluation followed the theory of change established in the Cooperation Programme. The **methodological approach** involved a mix of data gathering and analytical methods, including documentary review, analysis of project monitoring data, case studies of eight projects and project websites, interviews with programme bodies, as well as surveys of project partners, EUSBSR stakeholders and BSR thematic experts. An overview of the methods is presented, below with details in the annex to this report:

- Documentary Review: A review of programme documents, monitoring data and information on projects and the EUSBSR context was the starting point for all evaluation sub-tasks.
- Interviews with Programme bodies: the interviews were face-to-face or by phone with seven MA/JS members and eleven MC members.
- Survey of project partners: The survey of project partners ran from the 23 May 2018 and collected responses until the 18 June 2018. A total of 146 complete and usable responses were collected and analysed.
- Survey of EUSBSR Horizontal Area Coordinators (HACs), Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), and National Coordinators (NCs): The survey of EUSBSR HACs and PACs and NCs used the same set of questions and ran from the 23 May 2018 and collected responses until the 15 June 2018. A total of 27 complete and usable responses were collected and analysed.

- Survey of thematic experts in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) which was carried out for the report Monitoring of Institutional Capacities in the BSR, but results were also used in this evaluation: The surveys of thematic experts in the BSR to update the Region's institutional capacity baselines was launched in May and June 2018. A total of 115 experts were invited to take part, resulting in 58 complete and valid responses from 54 respondents.
- Focus Group with EUSBSR stakeholders: A focus group with 9 EUSBSR PACs and HACs took place on the 4 June 2018 in Tallinn (Estonia).
- Case Studies on eight projects: There was in-depth review of eight projects with different SOs. The case studies were chosen to verify findings from the documentary review and to validate hypotheses from analysing monitoring data. In particular, case studies could verify and assess links between projects, learning experiences and institutional capacity building induced by the Programme.

2 Impact of projects towards Programme SOs

This chapter presents the evaluation of project impact in reaching the Programme's Objectives.

2.1 Summary of conclusions

The evaluation was guided by the following evaluation questions:

> Have the Programme interventions affected the relevant target groups? Have the project outputs and results led to institutional learning experiences among the relevant target groups? What are the specific impacts of the Programme in terms of increasing the capacity of a certain target group? In which dimensions of institutional capacity has there been a change due to the Programme?

- Analysis shows that the projects involve diverse organisations, both as project partners and as associated partners. The diversity of partner types corresponds to the different target groups envisaged by the Cooperation Programme for different SOs. One characteristic of Interreg BSR projects (and Interreg projects in general) is that the projects usually do not target only one or two target groups, but involve from a systemic perspective many different target groups and types of organisations. This responds, for example, to the triple/quadruple helix approach in the innovation policy field or the value chain/net approach when developing new services or products.

- Projects aim at improving institutional capacities in specific thematic fields. Analysis of the Application Forms (AFs), highlights that all approved projects foresee an impact on the generation of knowledge and competence in specific thematic fields. The capacity dimension 'Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence' is a general aim for all the projects. What is surprising is that most projects and all SO aim at various dimensions of institutional capacities. Projects do not focus on only one dimension and the combination of capacities supported and developed by IBSR projects even add value compared to other regional or national projects.

- Survey data shows that projects are progressing adequately towards results and expected achievements. In addition, most projects (85%) see a high probability of achieving the outputs and results as expressed in the AFs. Only 13% of projects see a medium probability of achieving all their results and outputs.

- An overwhelming 97% of project partners estimate that they benefit as an organisation from the Interreg BSR project. The survey responses show that there are several benefits for project partners. Most responses relate to the generation and adoption of new knowledge: 'Learning from other regions/countries', 'New contacts and access to networks', 'Learning in a specific thematic field' and 'Learning with practical examples and applications'.

- 74% of project partners, including associated partners that answered the survey estimate that participation in the project has a strong or very strong effect on their organisation. 21% indicate that there is a medium-sized effect on their organisation. An effect is a prerequisite for capacity development in the target organisation.

- Most effects can be observed in the capacity 'Increased capability to work in a transnational environment' as well as 'More knowledge available'. In addition, capacities are developed in 'Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence', and with slightly less importance in 'Improved governance structures and organisational set-up'. The least prominent area is 'Better ability to attract new private financial resources'. Overall, it is worth highlighting that project outputs and results mean capacities are developed in all relevant areas and dimensions. The areas with a stronger impact correspond directly to areas and dimensions initially targeted by the projects. The analysis shows that there is a general pattern of perceived impact on capacities for more or less all types of organisations. However, these can differ for different types of organisation.

- The case study analysis helped to detect many examples of institutional learning and capacity-building due to participation or benefitting from IBSR projects. All analysed projects showed examples of learning, even if the projects are not yet finalised and the impact on learning should be larger once the projects are finalised and have all their results. Details of these examples are presented in Chapter 2 and the annexed case study reports.

- For the overall Programme objectives to develop and contribute to increased institutional capacities in the BSR, an additional study analysed the up-dated situation of institutional capacities compared to a 2014 baseline. The additional study carried out a survey and additional interviews with thematic experts in the BSR. There is a positive trend – with the exception of only one SO – for developing overall institutional capacities. The respondents under all but one thematic focus (based on Interreg BSR 2014-2020 SOs) show increases and appear to be on a feasible path toward reaching their target values.

- It is still too early to try to quantify the contribution of IBSR projects to the change in institutional capacities. Other factors contribute, including regional and national policies and capacity-building schemes, other mainstream ESIF programmes, other Interreg and European Programmes, as well as other macroeconomic and social factors. Projects are not finalised, so more evidence is needed to carry out a more detailed impact and contribution analysis, but this can be recommended for the final evaluation of the Programme.

> How do the relevant target groups experience institutional learning? Through which processes have Interreg Baltic Sea Region projects contributed to the institutional capacity building of the relevant target groups in selected thematic areas?

- The case study analysis revealed detailed information on the processes through which IBSR projects contribute to institutional capacity building for the relevant target groups in selected thematic areas. Examples are very diverse and cannot be easily classified. To understand the examples, it is important to see the context of the different projects and policy fields (see the case study reports, for details) Learning takes place, for example, through:
  - Pilot applications and experiments with SMEs and companies that bring insights into the profiles of the experiments, such as any alignment (or not) to regional policies, interregional research-to-Industrial Research Centre (IReC)-to-business cooperation, and potential for regional & interregional clustering (Baltic Tram project)

- Regional Stakeholder Events such as the 'Workshop: Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain – future outlook for technologies and cooperation'. This highlighted business opportunities in blue growth value chains for nearly 90 participants at a Workshop on Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain. (Smart Blue Regions project)

- Target groups participate in a furniture fair and are provided with research results and information on how to improve designs for elderly customers. (Balt-Se@nior project)

- The first common evaluation system for efficient energy performance and sludge treatment based on the wide range of data collected in the BSR. The partnership with wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) operators, universities, associations and environmental centres will collect key figure and conduct in-depth audits to derive general audit concepts for improving both energy efficiency and sludge handling. (IWAMA project)

- LowTEMP brings together actors in charge of urban development, energy supply and district heating systems from various municipalities and regions in the BSR, to collect data and information on existing heating supply systems. Creation of a knowledge platform that will support them in planning, managing and developing their energy supply systems. (LowTEMP project)

- Establishing pilot mussel farms: review of mussel production equipment, optimising and monitoring mussel production, developing systems for submerged mussel farms and monitoring the effects of mussel farming on water. → Project results cover environmental monitoring and benchmarking on Mussel/fish (and algae) farming, use of best practice for mussel production, including cultivation methods, available technology, best equipment and knowledge. (Baltic Blue Growth project)

- Pilot/demonstration activities for more efficient and reliable Inland waterway transport (IWT). → This produced knowledge on bottlenecks and potential, summarised in an 'IWT in BSR Competitiveness Improvement Plan' and learning about concrete practical solutions to promote inland waterway transport

- Development of web tools such as the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) standard and regulation toolbox, the LNG bunkering map and the LNG shipping index → This led to increased knowledge and capacities of stakeholders along the whole value chain; and new ways for knowledge and competence transfer in the industry. (Go LNG project)

If no impact is observed in a target group, what is the lack of impact due to?

- Based on the analysis, there is no specific target group that reports a lack of benefit or impact on capacities. The case study analysis mentions only minor obstacles to involving relevant target groups and stakeholders, such as the lack of capacity to involve partners or language barriers to getting to target groups in different countries.

Which other factors have influenced the change in institutional capacities of the target groups? How and why?

- Other factors that influence a) project implementation, b) benefit generation and uptake by target groups and c) the change in target group institutional capacities. Factors that influence project implementation include financial capacities, project set up and contracting, administrative burden, project management and communication capacities, problems within the partnership and the commitment of partners.

- The analysis shows changing institutional capacities of target groups in general depends on the macro-economic climate and other economic factors (e.g. the oil price), cultural factors such as entrepreneurial spirit and propensity for risk, but also on language capacity. In this transnational and international environment, new knowledge is widely published in English and not all target group representatives can work with this language.

2.2 Context

As defined in the Cooperation Programme[1], the overall objective of Interreg BSR is:

> To strengthen the integrated territorial development and cooperation for a more innovative, better accessible and sustainable BSR

The programme promotes transnational cooperation and integration in the BSR. Its added value compared to other funding programmes relates to the transnational benefits of supported actions and investments.

The Programme establishes in its Cooperation Programme that '*taking into account the wide geographic coverage and range of topics covered in the programme the financial resources are limited, especially compared to national and regional cohesion programmes. Therefore, the programme cannot finance large-scale implementation on its own. Instead the programme develops a leverage effect on regional development by investing in the **institutional capacities** of the programme's target groups*'.

This rationale and understanding of the Programme Objective is important when it comes to evaluating achievements and progress of the Programme. The evaluation questions serve to verify the theory of change of the Programme constructed in the initial programme development phase.

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[1] Interreg BSR (2014): Cooperation Programme 2014-2020.

Figure 2-1: Theory of change of Interreg BSR - to be analysed
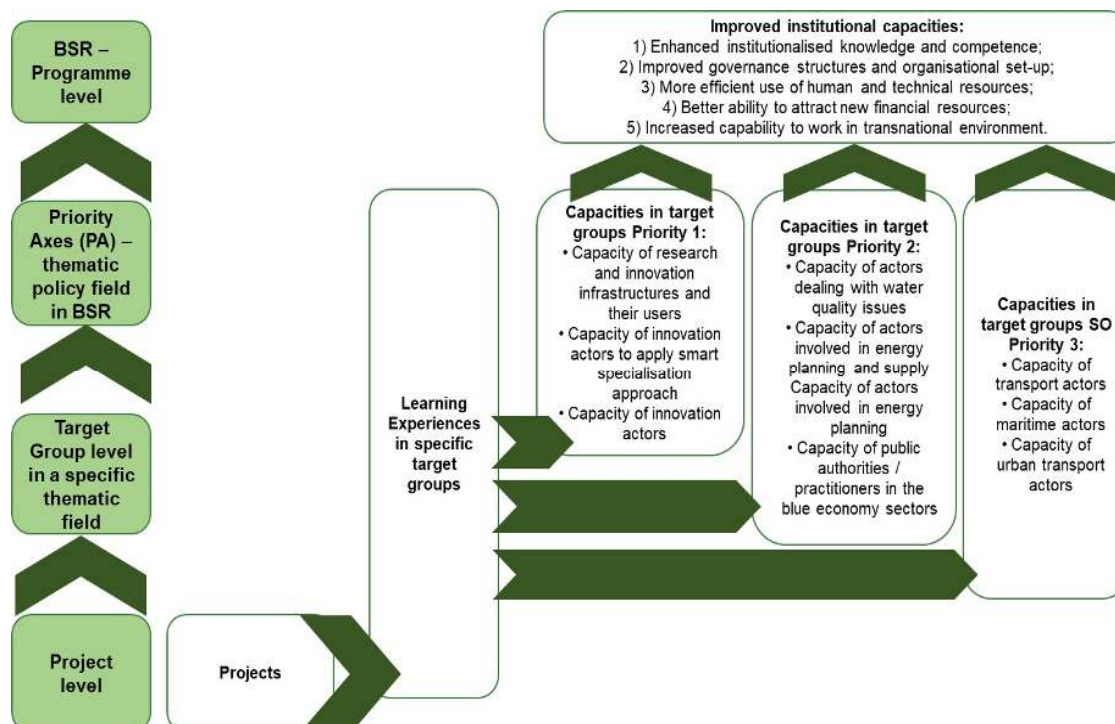
Source: Own elaboration

The analysis in this chapter establishes evidence for links between the different elements of the theory of change and looks for external factors that might have a (stronger than expected) influence on the production of results, i.e. the development and creation of capacities. The analysis below looks to validate (or reject) the following hypotheses:

H1. The projects involve relevant partners and reach types of partners that correspond to the target groups.

H2. Projects are designed to improve institutional capacities of target group organisations in a specific thematic field.

H3. Projects show adequate progress towards results and expected achievements, and, therefore, influence institutional capacities.

H4. Projects should achieve their expected results and, therefore, influence institutional capacities.

H5. Directly involved project partners (including associated partners) see benefits from participating in the project.

H6. Directly involved project partners (including associated partners) feel that capacities in their organisation improve in certain areas due to project outputs.

H7. Thematic experts observe a positive trend in general institutional capacities in the BSR in specific thematic fields, where projects contribute, among other factors, to developing capacities.

H8. Other factors also have an influence on project achievements and might limit the contribution of projects to developing capacities in the BSR.

2.3 Evaluation findings

The evaluation was guided by the evaluation questions defined in the Terms of Reference.

> Have the Programme interventions affected the relevant target groups? Have the project outputs and results led to institutional learning experiences among the relevant target groups? What are the specific impacts of the Programme in terms of increasing the capacity of a certain target group? In which dimensions of institutional capacity has there been a change due to the Programme?

Projects affect relevant target groups

The analysis of the involvement of partners in projects[2] shows that the projects involve usually quite diverse partner organisations, both as project partners and as associated partners. In particular, associated partners multiply the outreach of projects and their potential effect on target groups.

The diversity of types of partners corresponds to the different target groups envisaged by the Cooperation Programme for the different SOs. One characteristic of Interreg BSR projects (and of Interreg projects in general) is that the projects usually do not target only one or two target groups, but involve from a systemic perspective many different target groups and types of organisations. This responds, for example, to the triple/quadruple helix approach in innovation policy or the value chain/net approach when developing new services or products. This systemic feature is clearly visible in all analysed IBSR projects. However, it makes the analysis of target groups more difficult, given the complexity of outreach to various and sometimes very diverse target groups of projects (see chapter 3 for more detail on partner involvement).

Two examples of these systemic or value-chain approaches to involve target groups in a project (as project partner or associated partner) are Go LNG and Baltic Blue Growth. Go LNG focuses on target groups related to Liquid Natural Gas and its deployment. This not only involves transport, energy and technology industries, service providers, energy and fuel providers, ports, technology developers and stevedoring companies, but also regional and municipal policy makers, as well as transport regulatory authorities. The same can be said about the Baltic Blue Growth project. Working on a whole new bioeconomy business sector (mussel farming) the project involves potential mussel farmers and investors, fish farmers, consumers of mussel products, researchers working on mussel farming and related environmental and ecosystem impacts in research institutions, universities and environmental agencies, technology providers, as well as regional, national and international authorities responsible for maritime spatial planning.

Other projects concentrate on different target groups linked to a specific value chain to produce a new service or product in a specific field, as in the BaltSe@nior project. Here, furniture enterprises (mostly SMEs) looking to produce home furniture in the BSR while improving seniors' quality of life, comfort and safety are the main target group. However, to produce knowledge, it is important in the project

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[2] See also Chapter 3 for the analysis on the involvement of different types of partners with more detail.

implementation phase to involve researchers on health and well-being of the elderly, engineers, design experts, etc. To influence the SMEs in the medium and long term, the project also works with design and engineering students as future employees or service providers to the companies. Finally, the end user of the project results will be the elderly who benefit from better designed and more ergonomic living space and furniture.

In general, the projects and their potential results and benefits affect target groups as defined in the Cooperation Programme. This confirms also Hypothesis H1, as defined on page 10.

Projects aim at improving institutional capacities in specific thematic fields

According to analysis of the Application Forms (AFs), all approved projects foresee an impact on the generation of knowledge and competence in specific thematic fields. The capacity dimension 'Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence' is a general aim for all the projects. This includes content-related knowledge, but also knowledge on processes, organisation issues and methodological knowledge. 82% of the projects aim at 'Increased capability to work in transnational environment'. Given the transnational character that all Interreg BSR project should have, this if no surprise. 77% of projects aim at a 'More efficient use of human and technical resources', whereas 55% aim to support 'Improved governance structures and organisational set-up'. Finally, 43% aim at a 'Better ability to attract new financial resources'.

Figure 2-2 Dimensions of institutional capacities targeted by IBSR projects
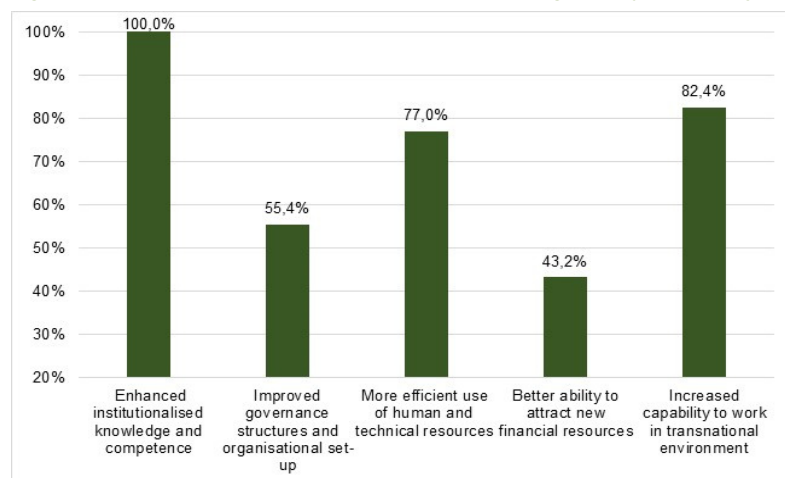
Source: Analysis of data in Application Forms (AFs) on targeted institutional capacities. One project might contribute to various capacity fields.

Capacity-development schemes differ with the different SOs.

Within the diversity, there is one similarity. 100% of projects aim at 'Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence'. 'Increased capability to work in transnational environment' is an aim for all projects from SO 1.1., SO 1.2, SO 2.4 and SO 3.1. Compared to this, SO 1.1, SO 2.4 and SO 3.4, but also many projects from the other SOs have a clear focus on a 'More efficient use of human and technical resources'.

'Improved governance structures and organisational set-up' is an aim mostly for projects from SO 1.2, SO 2.4, SO 3.1 and SO 1.1, but less interesting for projects from SO 2.1.

'Better ability to attract new financial resources' is an important aim for many projects from SO 3.1, however, it is of low interest for SO1.2 and SO 2.1.

What is surprising is that most projects and all SOs aim at dimensions of institutional capacities. Projects do not focus on only one dimension. The combination of capacities supported and developed by IBSR projects offers added value compared to other regional or national projects.

Figure 2-3 Dimensions of institutional capacities targeted by IBSR projects per SO
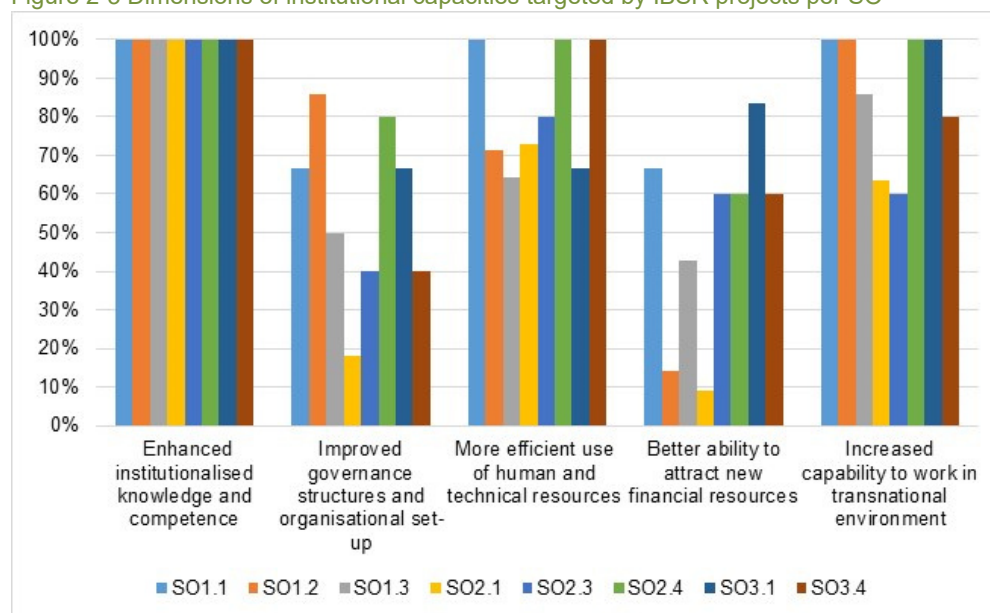
Source: Analysis of data in AFs on targeted institutional capacities. One project might contribute to various capacity fields.

Overall, the data on projects confirms that the programme intervention aims at diverse dimensions of institutional capacities. Different patterns can be observed for the SOs. This also validates Hypothesis H2, as defined on page 10.

Projects show adequate progress towards results and expected achievements

To verify if projects – regardless of expectations expressed in the Application – are progressing to expected outputs and results. The survey of project partners included a question about the level of progress towards project results. This question relies on the self-assessment by project managers and project partners. However, it can be used as an indicator for overall progress of the Programme.

The figure shows the frequency in the level of progress stated by the projects. The difference between Call 1 and Call 2 projects is clearly visible.

Most Call 1 projects say that they have progressed 65-70%, ranging from 40% to 100%. The bulk of Call 2 projects indicates progress at 15-20%, with answers referring to progress between 5% and 95%. This indicates satisfactory implementation of the projects and the programme in general. It also highlights the variety of project implementation. Some projects have many important activities concentrated towards the end of the project life, while others are already quite advanced in the first year.

Figure 2-4 Level of progress of projects towards results and output indicators (Q18, n=54)
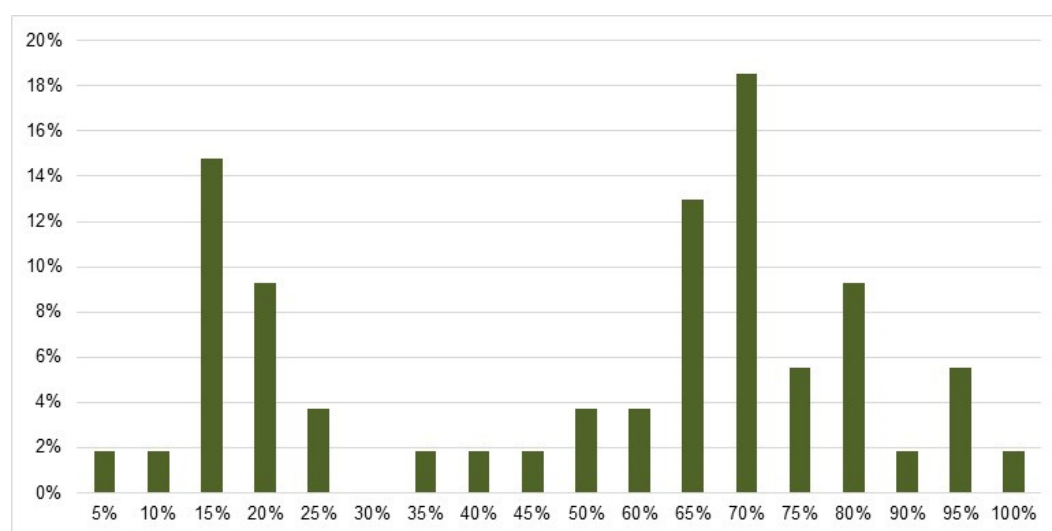
Survey Question Q18: 'How would you estimate your level of progress towards overall project results?' (in %)
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

The case study review of eight projects confirms that projects in general have already carried out first activities and produced a set of outcomes. As can be expected, this is more true for Call 1 projects than for Call 2 projects which are less advanced. Examples of project outcomes are:

Table 2-1 Examples of project outcomes and early results

Project	Examples of Project outcomes
IWAMA	• 6 international workshops and their webinars on the project website, 80 participants on average attending each workshop and at least 25 watching the webinars so far; Commitment to the Baltic Sea Challenge network to act for the better state of the sea beyond the present legal requirements; Joining knowledge based communities for lifelong learning and connecting them to the Baltic Smart Water Hub. • Develop and test audit concept for smart energy management at 9 wastewater treatment plants.
BaltSe@nior	• Virtual Library. The project is developing a Virtual Library to make all results of the project available. This not only concerns the 3D model of the Age Simulator, but also documents, articles, events, newsletters, etc. Furniture enterprises can register and access all project results. To make the Virtual Library as user friendly as possible and adjust it to end users' needs, the project has

Project	Examples of Project outcomes
	gathered views from 60 respondents (designers, students, researchers, furniture and interior manufacturers) from seven BSR countries. • Testing new working methods for furniture enterprises to reach the seniors market. The project has tested these methods in workshops, involving researchers, companies and students.
GO LNG	• Various web tools such as the LNG standard and regulation toolbox, the LNG bunkering map and the LNG shipping index. • A study on 'Integrated LNG Value Chain'. • Develop three business plans. • Create the BSR LNG Competence Centre. • Establish the BSR LNG Business Cluster. • LNG and project promotion events
Smart Blue Regions	• Multi-level implementation scheme (including organisational structure and responsibilities) for blue S3 (Smart Specialisation Strategies) in each participating region. • Improvement and development of Blue growth implementation plans. • Transnational dialogue on functional S3 implementation. • Regional Stakeholder Events such as the 'Workshop: Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain – future outlook for technologies and cooperation' • Transnational partner meeting with participation of blue growth stakeholders, study visits etc. • Participation in conferences • Smart Blue Specialisation Web Portal.
EMMA	• River information service combines inland navigation better with logistics chains and contributes to its competitiveness. Information on lock management for instance helps to optimise transport operations lowering fuel consumption. Instead of huge infrastructure investments EMMA supports IWT development through the use of IT. • The first annual EMMA conference took place in Warsaw and focused on inland shipping on the Oder and Elbe rivers. • EMMA organised a panel discussion during the UN Ecosoc conference in New York. Together with international experts discussed the potential of inland shipping to better consider BSR requirements in UN transport policy.

To conclude, the data confirms that projects are progressing well, depending on their start date, towards achieving outputs and results. This confirms Hypothesis H3, as defined on page 10.

Projects should achieve their expected results

 In the same line, project partners were asked in the survey about the general likelihood to achieve the expected outputs and results (as described in the AF). Again, this question relies on the self-assessment by project managers and project partners but can be used as an indicator for the overall progress of the Programme.

Most projects (85%) indicated that they see a high probability of their projects achieving the expected outputs and results as expressed in the AFs. Only 13% of projects see a medium probability of achieving all their results and outputs. Very positively, no project estimated a 'low' likelihood of achieving its results.

Figure 2-5 Likelihood of complete achievement of results and output indicators (Q19, n=54)
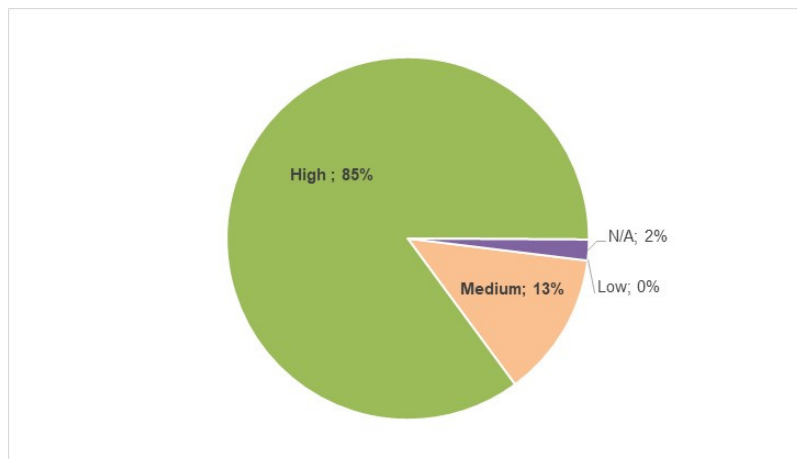
Survey Question Q19: 'At this stage, what is your estimation of the likelihood to achieve the expected outputs and results (as described in the AF)' (Answer options: High, Medium, Low, Do not know)
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

Case study analysis also confirms the high probability that the projects will achieve their expected outputs and results as expressed in the AFs. The projects in general are in the implementation phase and even with some smaller delays or minor obstacles for project implementation, no larger hurdle could be detected that would prevent projects from achieving their results. Of course, the analysis can only rely on the progress reports and interviews with project partners, but there are no obvious external problems that might still emerge.

In this sense, the analysis confirms that projects are likely or highly likely to achieve their outputs and results. This confirms Hypothesis H4, as defined on page 10.

Project partners receive a benefit from participating in the project

As a next step in the validation chain, the hypothesis was tested whether and how project partners, including end users of project outputs, perceive that they benefit from projects. This was done through several questions in the survey.

Project partners, including associated partners, were asked to estimate if they benefit or not from their participation in an Interreg BSR project. An overwhelming 97% confirmed that they do.

Another question asked about the type of benefits without taking into account long-term impacts. The survey responses show several benefits for project partners, mostly related to the generation and adoption of new knowledge: 'Learning from other regions/countries', 'New contacts and access to networks', 'Learning in a specific thematic field' and 'Learning with practical examples and applications'.

Figure 2-6 Estimated benefits from participating in the project (Q50, n=68)
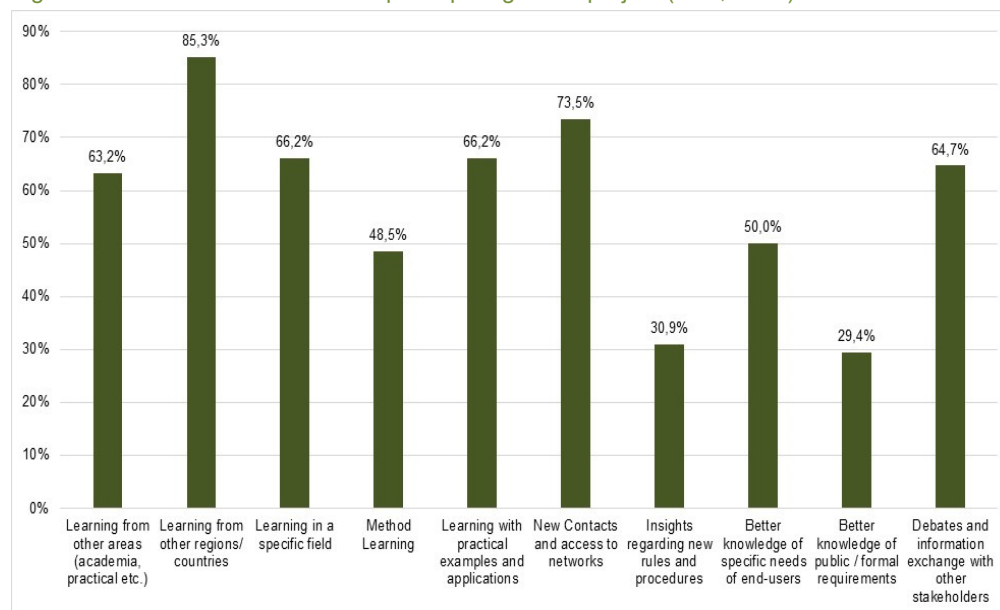
Survey Question Q50: 'If yes, which are these benefits?' (Given response categories and Other), follow-up to Q49: 'Do you estimate that there are already any benefits for your organisation because of the participation in the project?)' (Options: Yes, No)

Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

The exchange and transfer of knowledge is also important with high values for 'Debates and information exchange with other stakeholders' and 'Learning from other areas (academia, practical, policy)'. Still relevant but for fewer organisations are more specific benefits such as 'Learning on methods', 'Insights regarding new rules and procedures' or 'Better knowledge of public and formal requirements'.

Finally, the analysis focused on the benefits perceived by different types of organisations. This shows that the effects and benefits are broadly similar. The figure below shows that Business Support Organisations benefit from learning, new contacts and a better knowledge of end user needs. Enterprises also broadly benefit by learning in diverse fields, new contacts and new knowledge. Higher Education and Research Institutes (HEIs) benefit more by learning from other regions/countries, new contacts and access to networks as well as better knowledge of end user needs. Infrastructure and public service providers see most benefits in learning from other regions in their specific field, in better knowledge of formal and public requirements and in debates with other stakeholders.

Local public authorities perceive relatively high benefits from learning about new methods, practical examples, from other regions and from access to new contacts. National public authorities see a slightly higher benefit from better knowledge of specific needs of end users and insights regarding new rules and procedures. Regional public authorities widely benefit from learning, but also from insights into new rules and procedures, new contacts and in debates with other stakeholders. Other organisations (foundations, associations) mostly benefit from learning from other regions/countries, debates and exchange with other stakeholders, new contacts and access to networks.

Figure 2-7 Frequency of perceived benefits per type of organisation (Q50, multiple ratings possible, based on number of ratings n=350)
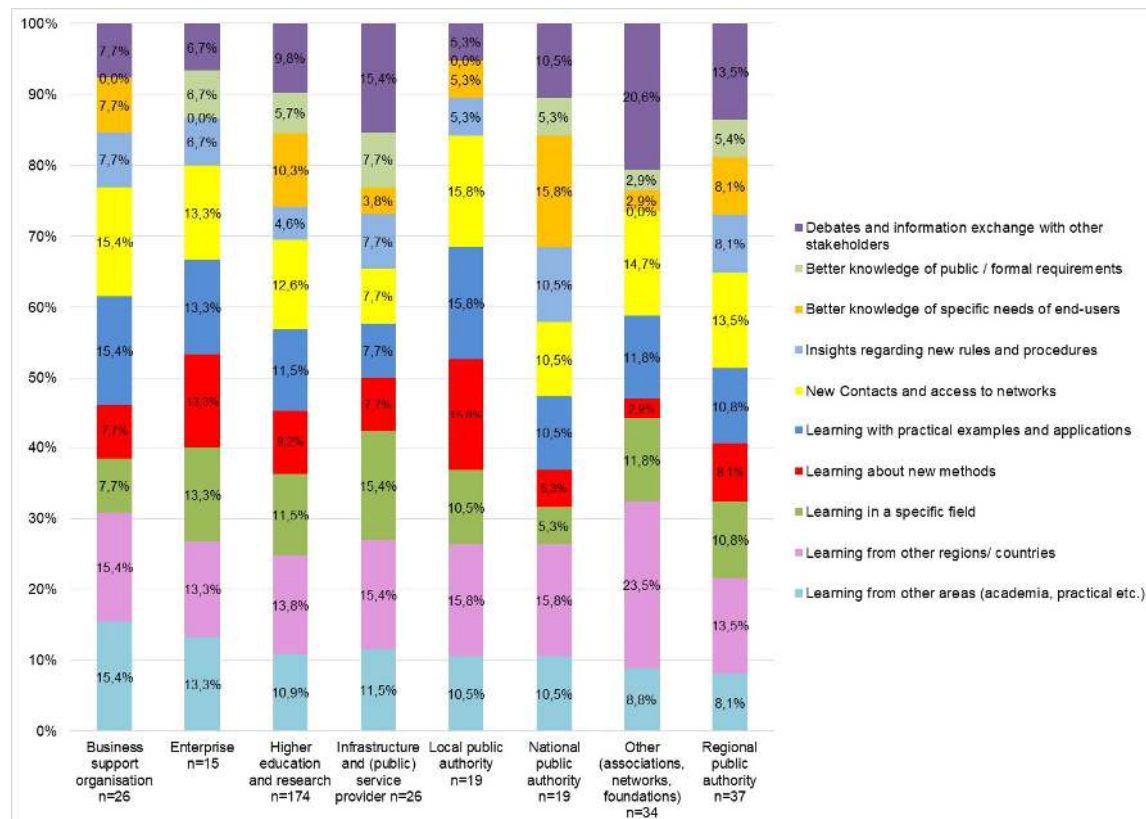
Survey Question Q50: 'If yes, which are these benefits?' (Given response categories and Other), follow-up to Q49: 'Do you estimate that there are already any benefits for your organisation because of the participation in the project?)' (Options: Yes, No)

Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

During the interviews for case study analysis, project partners and target group representatives confirmed that they benefit from participating in the project. They named different examples and linked them to concrete effects of learning, new and extended networks, research with better understanding of specific topics and methods, insights about how things are handled in other countries and regions and how they can best be developed further in a transnational context.

A **concrete impact on organisations** was named, for example, by partners from the **Smart Blue Regions project**:

Original statements

- *'Thanks to the project our official Regional Plan is updated and it now includes the new smart specialisation priority 'blue growth'.*
- *'Discussion and understanding of blue growth has increased inside our organisation and among regional stakeholders.'*
- *'Understanding of smart specialisation as a concept has increased in our organisation'.*

Overall, the analysis confirms that project partners perceive that they receive a concrete benefit due to their participation in a project. This validates Hypothesis H5, as defined on page 10.

Project partners develop their capacities due to project outputs and results

The key element in the validation chain is if and how target groups develop new capacities due to IBSR projects. The survey asked questions to project partners, including associated partners, as it is methodologically challenging to ask target group representatives not linked at all to one IBSR project if this project has or will have an impact on their capacities.

74% of project partners, including associated partners that answered the survey estimate that participation in the project has a strong or very strong effect on their organisation. 21% indicate that there is a medium-sized effect. The project must have an effect for capacity development in the target organisation.

Figure 2-8 Project partners valuing the effect of the project participation on their organisation (Q48, n=70)
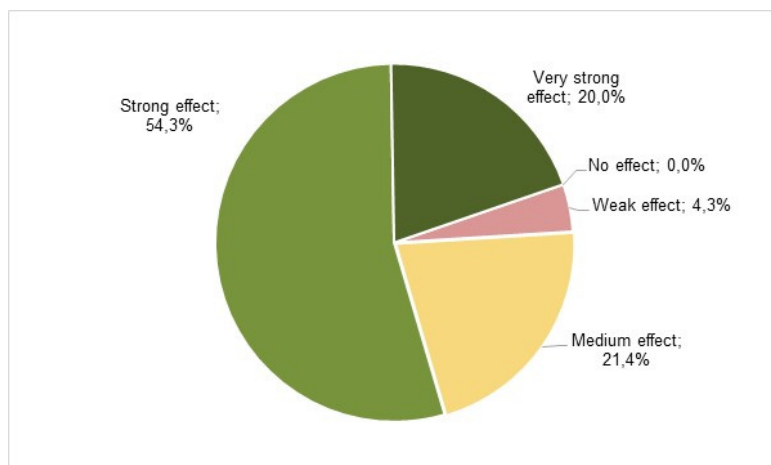
Survey Question Q48: 'Overall, how would you evaluate the effect of your participation in the project on you/your organisation? Please rate on a scale from 1 = no effect, to 5 = strong effect.'

Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

Project partners were then asked to assess the areas (characteristics and dimension) of institutional capacities where IBSR project outputs and results led to improved capacities in their organisation. Most effects can be observed in all three areas of the capacity dimension 'Increased capability to work in a transnational environment' as well as 'More knowledge available'. In addition, capacities are developed in the other areas of 'Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence', and with slightly less importance in 'Improved governance structures and organisational set-up'.

There are other dimensions among the capacities developed in target group organisations. The least prominent is the 'Better ability to attract new private financial resources'. Notably, based on project outputs and results, capacities are developed in all relevant areas and dimensions. The areas with stronger impact correspond directly to the areas and dimensions targeted by the projects initially (as analysed previously in validation step 2).

Figure 2-9 Project partners reporting improvements in capacities through projects (Q53, n=69)
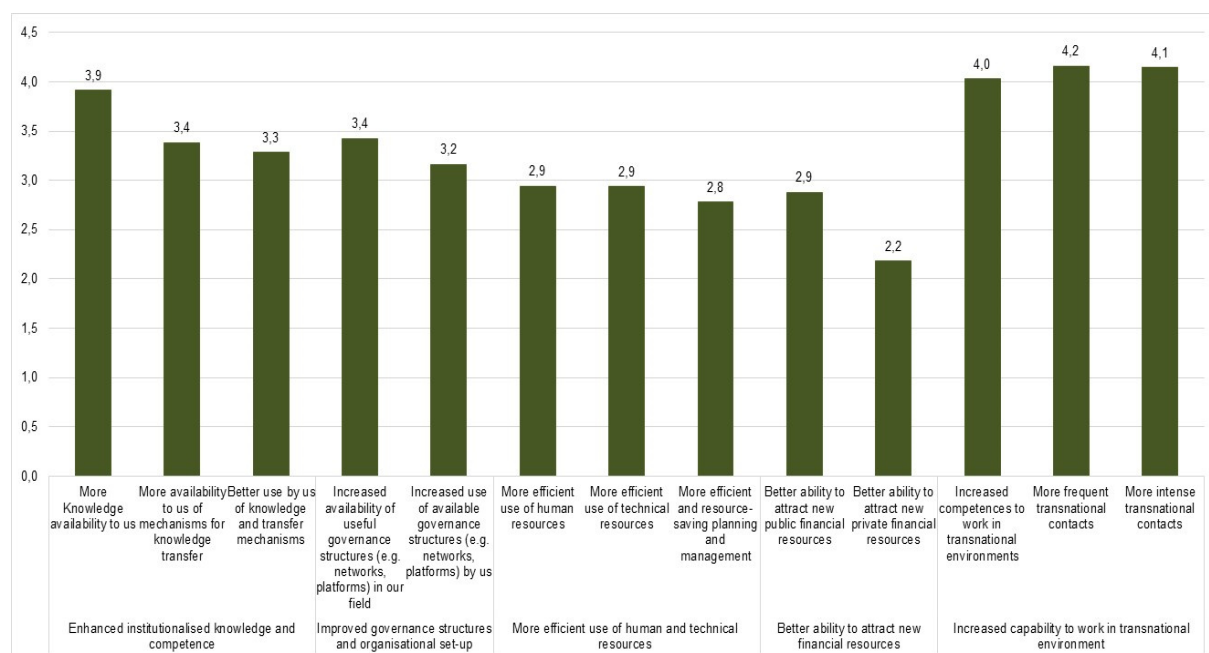
Survey Question Q53: 'Have the project outputs and results led to improvements in your organisation with regard to improved capacities in the following areas? Please rate from 1 = no improvement, to 5 = substantial improvement.'

Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

The figure on the next page presents the different results for different types of organisation. The analysis shows a general pattern of perceived impact on capacities that is repeated for more or less all types of organisation. Some deviations worth mentioning are:

- Regional Public Authorities report improvements in all areas, in particular, in 'Increased capability to work in a transnational environment'.

- A similar pattern can be observed for HEI organisations with an additional impact in 'Better ability to attract new public financial resources'.

- Local Public Authorities report improvements mainly in 'Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence' and 'Increased capability to work in a transnational environment'.

- National Public Authorities generally have a lower level of impact, with higher impacts in 'Increased competences to work in transnational environments', 'Increased availability of useful governance structures (e.g. networks, platforms)' and 'Increased use of available governance structures (e.g. networks, platforms)'.

- A similar pattern can be observed for Business Support Organisations.

- Enterprises show a different pattern with relatively high impacts on 'More availability of mechanisms for knowledge transfer', 'Better use of knowledge and transfer mechanisms', 'More efficient use of human resources' and 'More efficient and resource-saving planning and management'.

Figure 2-10 Patterns of assessments by project partners on capacities improved through IBSR projects – per type of partner (Q53, n=69)
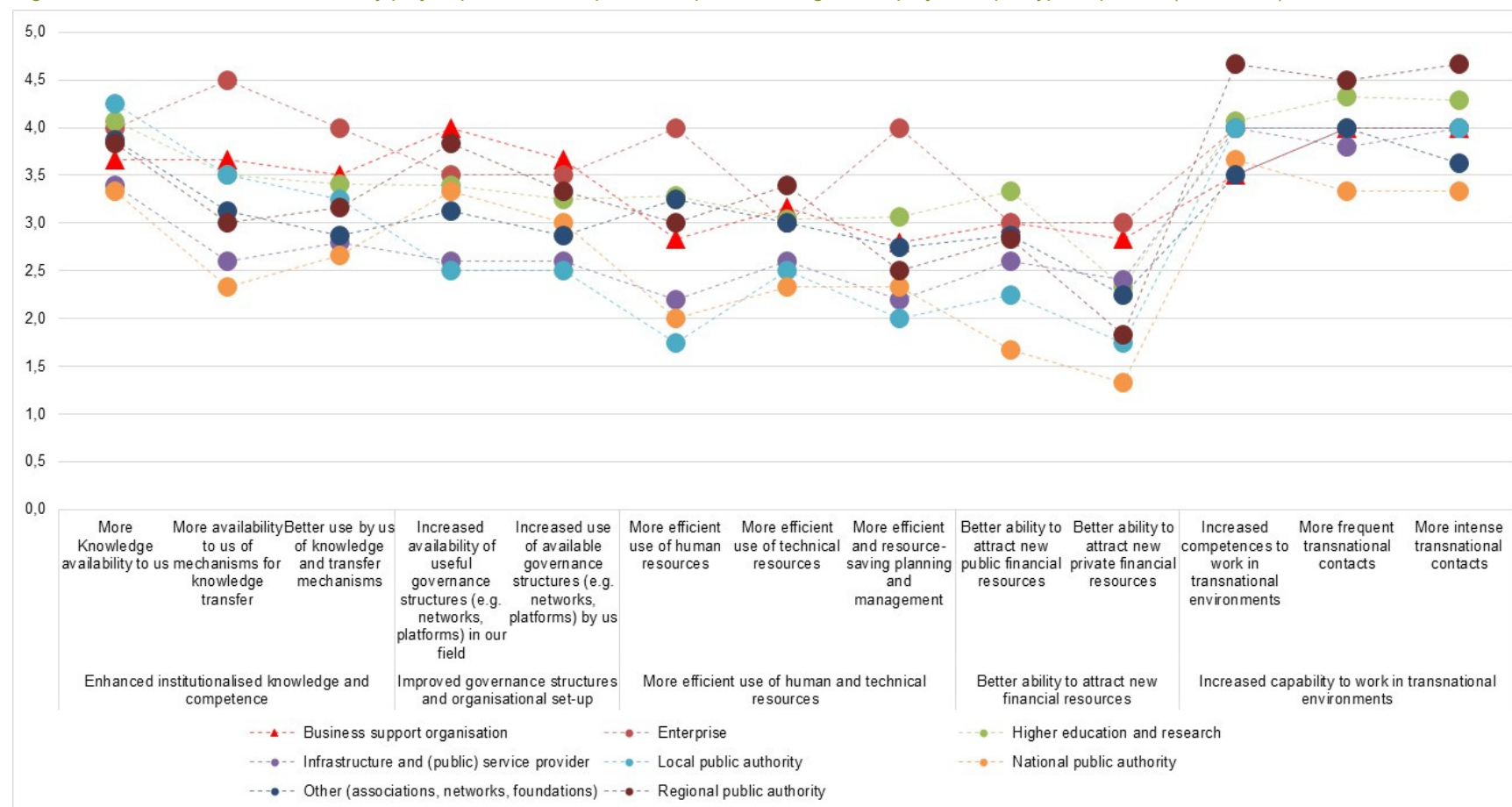
Survey Question Q53: 'Have the project outputs and results led to improvements in your organisation with regard to improved capacities in the following areas? Please rate from 1 = no improvement, to 5 = substantial improvement.'
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

- Infrastructure and Public Service Providers report improvements, although at a lower level than the other organisations, and in particular, in the dimension of 'Increased capability to work in a transnational environment'.

Among examples of **the project increasing capacity** that target group representatives mentioned in the survey are:

> Original statements

- *'Increase of methodology capacity in occupational learning environment'*

- *'The most important are results of testing pilots in XY Municipality and YZ Research Station and basing on these results building new installation improved in comparison to the existing as example for habitants how to better reduce sewage inflow on the surrounding environment.'*

- *'Knowledge about on shore power supply for ships'*

- *'The participation in project partnership and, more importantly, in project events leads to a broader network of transnational contacts, which positively reflects on the capacity of the institution to provide its services.'*

- *'The professional network of contacts has increased tenfold, which brings many new opportunities for international cooperation.'*

- *'Increase of knowledge increase of methodological competences towards integrated consideration of forest ecosystem resources'*

- *'Increased knowledge of aquaculture licensing procedures over European Partner countries'*

- *'Just compare the capacity to cope with threats caused by sea dumped weapons 2008 and 2018, e.g. www.underwatermunitions.de '*

- *'Improved ability to be part of the science - policy interface'*

The case study analysis helped to detect many examples of institutional learning and capacity-building due to participation or benefitting from IBSR projects. All eight projects showed examples of learning, even if the projects are not yet finalised and the impact on learning can be expected to be larger once projects are finalised and report all their results. Details of these examples are presented under the next evaluation question and in the attached case study reports.

In general, the analysis confirms that project partners perceive that their organisational capacities improved due to project results and outputs. This validates Hypothesis H6, as defined on page 10.

Thematic experts observe a positive trend in general institutional capacities in the BSR

For the overall Programme objectives to develop and contribute to increased institutional capacities in the BSR, an additional study analysed the up-dated institutional capacities compared to a 2014 baseline and a 2023 target (set in 2014). The additional study carried out a survey and additional interviews with thematic experts in the BSR.

The trend for thematic fields in line with Programme SOs can be observed in the table below. In general, there is a positive trend – with the exception of only one SO – for developing overall institutional capacities in the BSR. Respondents under all but one thematic focus (based on Interreg BSR 2014-2020 SOs) show increases and appear to be on a feasible path to reaching the target value. SOs 1.2 (Smart Specialisation) and 3.5 (Environmentally friendly urban mobility) show the largest increase in institutional capacities. An important increase can also be observed for SOs 2.2 (Renewable Energy) and 2.3 (Energy efficiency). A more moderate yet notable increase can be observed for SOs 1.1 (Research and innovation infrastructure), 1.3 (Non-technological innovation), 2.1 (Clear waters), 2.4 (Resource-efficient blue growth), 3.1 (Interoperability of transport models), 3.3 (Maritime safety) and 3.4 (Environmentally friendly shipping). The only SO whose value for institutional capacities remain constant is SO 3.2 (Accessibility of remote areas and areas affected by demographic change).

Table 2-2 Up-dated Trend Measurement of Programme Result Indicators

Capacities per SO	Baseline Value (2014)	Update of Milestone (2018)	Target Value 2023 (established in 2014)	Comments
1.1 Research and innovation infrastructure	2.7	3.0	3.6	Slight increase, positive trend towards target
1.2 Smart specialisation	2.9	3.4	3.8	Sizeable increase, positive trend, target is in reach
1.3 Non-technological innovation	2.9	3.2	3.7	Slight increase, positive trend towards target
2.1 Clear waters	2.7	2.9	3.6	Slight increase, positive trend towards target
2.2 Renewable energy	2.4	2.8	3.5	Increase, positive trend towards target
2.3 Energy efficiency	2.6	3.0	3.5	Increase, positive trend towards target
2.4 Resource-efficient blue growth	2.8	2.9	3.6	Slight increase, positive trend towards target
3.1 Interoperability of transport models	2.3	2.5	2.9	Increase, positive trend towards target
3.2 Accessibility of remote areas and areas affected by demographic change	2.8	2.8	3.8	Constant. Target is far from in reach.
3.3 Maritime safety	2.5	2.8	3.4	Increase, positive trend towards target
3.4 Environmentally friendly shipping	2.9	3.2	3.8	Increase, positive trend towards target

Capacities per SO	Baseline Value (2014)	Update of Milestone (2018)	Target Value 2023 (established in 2014)	Comments
3.5 Environmentally friendly urban mobility	2.7	3.3	3.5	Sizeable increase, positive trend, target is in reach

Source: Spatial Foresight. 2018. 'Monitoring of the state of institutional capacity in the region'. Final Report. Based on survey of 58 thematic experts in the BSR.

Further analysis shows how the institutional capacities in the different SO/policy fields have evolved on average since the baseline study, according to assessment by thematic experts. On average, there was an increase of 11%. However, in some policy fields no increase/change was noted (SO 3.2), or a low increase was observed (SO 2.4), whereas some policy fields have an even larger increase in institutional capacity (SO 3.5, 1.2, 2.2, 2.3).

Figure 2-11 Evolution of institutional capacities (average) per SO/policy field (2015-2018 in %)
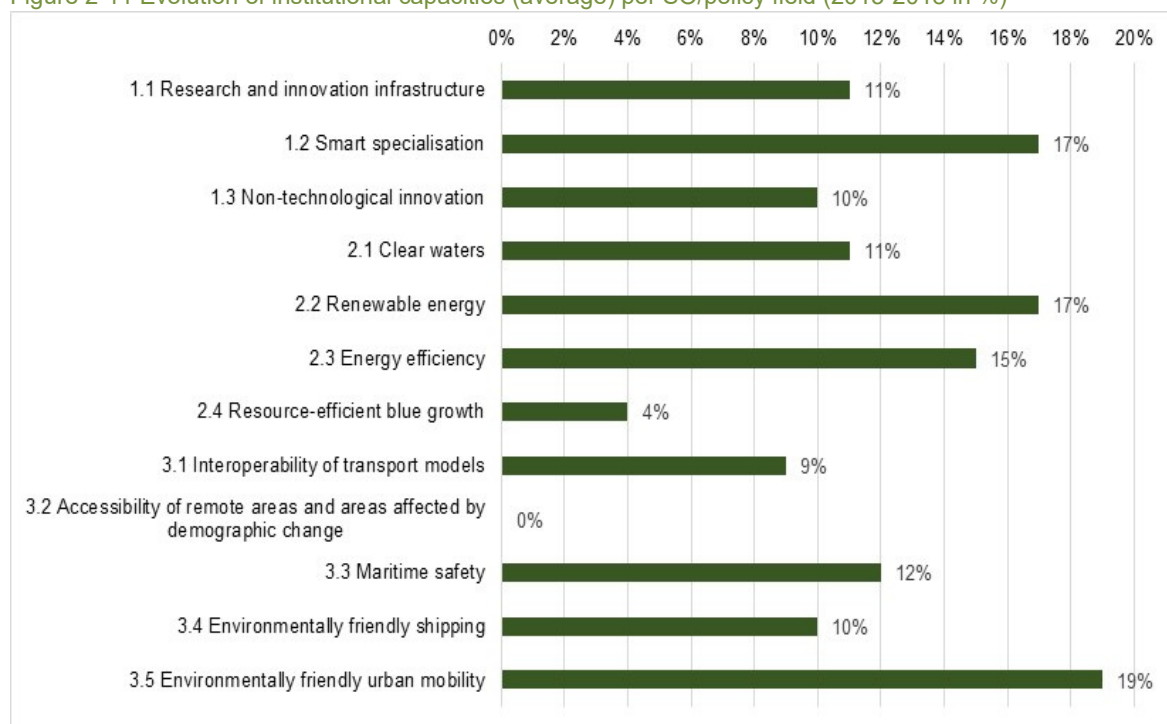
Source: Spatial Foresight. 2018. 'Monitoring of the state of institutional capacity in the region'. Final Report. Based on survey of 58 thematic experts in the BSR.

The detailed analysis per dimension of institutional capacities shows more increase in 'Better ability to attract resources', followed by 'Increased capability to work in a transnational environment'. As can be observed in the figure, assessments by thematic exerts are not very coherent but have a wide range, from negative assessments, meaning that the institutional capacities have decreased, to very positive assessments.

In particular, in the dimension 'Better ability to attract resources', one outlier influences the average considerably. However, even without the outlier the average would still be a 16% increase in capacities.

Figure 2-12 Evolution of institutional capacities (average) per dimension (2015-2018 in %)
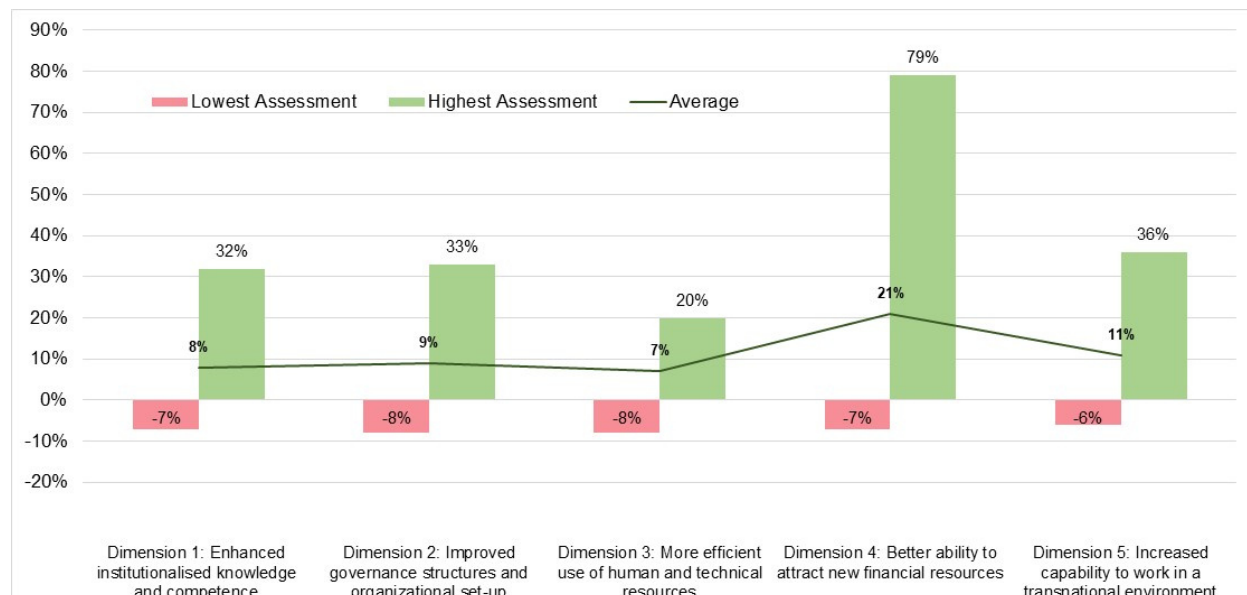
Source: Spatial Foresight. 2018. 'Monitoring of the state of institutional capacity in the region'. Final Report. Based on survey of 58 thematic experts in the BSR.

This information confirms that thematic experts observe a positive trend in general institutional capacities in the BSR in specific thematic fields, where projects contribute, among other factors, to developing capacities. This sustains Hypothesis H7, as defined on page 10.

However, a comparison with the institutional capacities reported by project partners and target group representatives that benefit from IBSR projects (Figures 1.11 and 1.12) shows differences to the patterns of influence perceived by institutional experts. This hints at the influence of other, external factors that affect institutional capacities in the BSR, which could be expected. It is difficult, though, to estimate the importance of the IBSR on the evolution of institutional capacities. Other factors, such as regional and national policies and capacity-building schemes, other mainstream ESIF programmes, other Interreg and European Programmes, as well as other macroeconomic and social factors in general also contribute to the evolution of institutional capacities. It is still too early (projects are not even finalised) to carry out a more detailed impact and contribution analysis, but this can be recommended for the final evaluation of the Programme.

How do the relevant target groups experience institutional learning? Through which processes have Interreg Baltic Sea Region projects contributed to the institutional capacity building of the relevant target groups in selected thematic areas?

The case study analysis revealed detailed information on the processes through which IBSR projects contribute to institutional capacity building for target groups in selected thematic areas. These are presented on the following pages:

SO	Project	Processes involving target groups	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
1.1	Baltic Tram	• Develop and establish a structure for cooperation between national and regional analytical Research Institutions (SI), universities and clusters regarding commercial users; document by pilot activity reports, user survey after pilot activities and guidelines developed.	• Establishment of Industrial Research Centres (IReCs) as interface between the three groups of stakeholders in the national or regional network and as an interface for exchanging measurements. • Resolution from CBSS on joint offer of services to SMEs and companies. • Joint understanding and conditions for offering services to be continued under the Science Link platform.	• Increased knowledge on RI side offerings and their validation in spatial, temporal, and industrial dimensions by analysis of existing RIs • More efficient work of the RI, based on better informed political recommendations in future usage, investments. • An increased culture of co-operation between ARIs, scientific communities, industries and other stakeholders.
		• Pilot applications and experiments with SMEs and companies	• Dissemination base for the results of Baltic TRAM. • Insights into the profiles of experiments, e.g. their alignment (or not) to regional policies, interregional research-to-IReC-to-business cooperation, and potential for regional & interregional clustering. • Business cases and database on test applications will become a 'capitalisation' tool for the whole project and possibly future initiatives.	• Increased knowledge on user needs and validation based on pilot projects of WP5 in industry by analysis of user experiences via the IReCs.

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the institutional capacities of target groups
1.2	Smart Blue Regions	• 1) Establish a multi-level implementation scheme (including organisational structure and responsibilities) for blue S3 in each participating region. • 2) Partners will also elaborate and test blue growth specific indicators to	• 1) Estonia is involved in developing a 'Regional Blue Economy Action Plan' with the support of this project. • 2) Riga region develops its own Blue Growth Strategy. • 3) 6 Regions (Schleswig-Holstein, Skane) will use the project multi-level implementation	• Increased operational capacity of regions to implement blue growth S3; • Optimised thematic capacity for implementing innovative measure in blue growth fields Machinery & Technology,

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the institutional capacities of target groups
		monitor blue RIS3 implementation. • 3) Improvement and development of Blue growth implementation plans. • 4) Transnational dialogue on functional S3 implementation. • 5) Periodic dissemination to the ERDF MA network in the BSR.	scheme and the Monitoring and Evaluation indicator system to improve their S3 strategies in the mid-term review. • 4) A Pilot Call on Blue Growth is prepared by the EUSBSR PA Innovation on joint projects. • 5) An S3 network for blue growth is created that facilitates planning and implementation of better and more effective policy measures.	Life Science & Blue Medicine and Energy; • Improved understanding of macro-regional synergies and transnational cooperation for blue growth
		• 1) Regional Stakeholder Events such as the 'Workshop: Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain – future outlook for technologies and cooperation' • 2) Multiple engagement of regional innovation actors with targeted information material on blue S3 • 3) Transnational partner meeting with participation of blue growth stakeholders, study visits etc. • 4) Participation in conferences • 5) Smart Blue Specialisation Web Portal. • 6) Synergies with the BSR SUBMARINER network.	• 1) Learning about business opportunities in blue growth value chains, for nearly 90 participants at a Workshop on Offshore Wind Energy Supply Chain. • Still to come: Development of key technology development topics with stakeholders in each region. Development of two transnational project ideas in each of the three blue growth fields.	• Improved understanding of macro-regional synergies and transnational cooperation for blue growth

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
1.3	Balt-Se@nior	• Target groups participate in furniture fair and are provided with research results and information material on how to improve their design for elderly customers. Through the age stimulator they get more information about seniors' needs.	• Learning and exchange at international fairs. One example of learning: BaltSe@nior successfully entered Milan Design Week 2018, the world's biggest design event to exchange concepts with designers from Europe and beyond. Another example: The XXVIII International conference Research for Furniture Industry, Poznan, Poland, held in September 2017, bringing together scientists and engineers to exchange information on furniture design and present results on research and innovation in the furniture sector.	• Improved knowledge and capacities and competences of furniture companies, through computer applications developed by the project, databases etc. All data and results will be saved in a Virtual Library, which companies can access upon registration, even after finalisation of the project.
		• Target groups will participate in Workshops and an Innovation Camp,	• International design workshops where an international group of participants designed and	• Students and future employees can learn different working methods

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
		where they will interact with other enterprises, Engineer students, project partners from all countries of the project to learn about different working and design methods for furniture.	produced furniture for children and seniors. During four days, 41 students from five countries produced more than 50 pieces of furniture. ICT and wood technology experts worked together to prepare the prototype of a smart chair for the elderly	by working with all participating countries. Entering the market for furniture for the elderly and adapting to new needs

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
2.1	IWAMA	• Six international workshops and their webinars on the project website. • 80 participants on average attending each workshop and at least 25 watching the webinars so far. • Commitment to the Baltic Sea Challenge network to act for a better state of the sea beyond current legal requirements. • Joining knowledge based communities for lifelong learning and connecting them to the Baltic Smart Water Hub.	• More than 200 WWTPs in the region have been invited to participate in the evaluation, 100 provided their data, 65 compatible for benchmarking. Everyone will receive access to the outcome data and the self-assessment tool. • Three international and five national dissemination events, newsletters. • 21 completed commitments of project partners and stakeholders registered in the Baltic Sea Challenge Bank of Actions. • Information spread to more than 300 stakeholders in the BSR.	• Increased knowledge on efficient elimination of nutrients from wastewater as well as commitment to use it; • Benchmarking and self-audit tool for energy efficiency developed.
		• Develop and test audit concept for smart energy management at 9 WWTPs. • The first of its kind common evaluation system for efficient energy performance and sludge treatment based on the wide range of data collected in the BSR.	• The partnership includes WWT operators, universities, associations and environmental centres which will collect key figures and conduct in-depth audits enabling general audit concepts for improving both energy efficiency and sludge handling.	• Where feasible, new and resource efficient technologies for eliminating nutrients from the wastewaters will be considered.
		• Pilot investments in eight WWTPs	• Several partner WWTPs will pilot innovative energy efficiency solutions (upgrading existing treatment processes at different levels: simple and advanced control systems, decision making tool for optimised process operation and mass flow management at a regional level.	• New technologies for eliminating nutrients from wastewater will be tested and produce practical knowledge.

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
2.3	Low Temp	• Target group representatives contribute with input and testing the knowledge	• LowTEMP brings together actors in charge of urban development, energy supply and district heating systems from various	• Increased know-how and knowledge on low

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
		platform which will be developed. • Municipalities and authorities provide local data, as will energy agencies.	municipalities and regions in the BSR, to collect information on existing heating supply systems. Creation of a knowledge platform that will support them in planning, managing and developing their energy supply systems.	temperature district heating.
		• Target groups test the project results and contribute to the knowledge sharing.	• Pilot energy strategies and related training material will be produced. Within LowTEMP, a training programme on planning, installing and managing District Heating systems will be developed. The final version of the training programme will be transferred via 'Train the trainer' approach to other BSR municipalities and those being responsible for the energy supply infrastructure.	• Increase capacities of target groups to implement and work with low temperature district heating systems and contribute to higher efficiency in energy use and provision

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
2.4	Baltic Blue Growth	• 1) Establish pilot mussel farms: review available mussel production equipment, optimising and monitoring mussel production, developing systems for submerged mussel farms, monitoring the effects of mussel farming on water quality. • 2) Develop technology for postharvest processing: assessing the value of mussel and larvae meal as animal feed. • 3) Develop business models. • 4) Promote business opportunities	• Research results, environmental monitoring and benchmarking on mussel/fish (and algae) farming, use of best practice for mussel production, including cultivation methods, technology, best equipment and knowledge of different practices suitable for Baltic Sea environmental conditions through collecting data and experiences from pilot farms. • Use of research on post-harvest processing to develop viable business solutions and mussel products (animal feed, etc.).	• Increased capacity of mussel farmers to run successful, commercially viable businesses focusing on enhanced competence and knowledge about environmental impact, technical conditions, economic data, fodder industry, legislation and maritime and spatial planning.
		• 1) Studies of policies • 2) Development of an Operational Decision Support System (ODSS) (a geoportal for environmental data related to mussel farming). The web based ODSS will provide an opportunity to discuss potential management decisions with key stakeholders and to have the necessary feedback facilitating dialogue between mussel farmers and other stakeholders about socio-economic and environmental	• Developing capacities and methodologies on finding optimal sites, coordinating interests with other sea users and allocating areas for mussel farming within maritime spatial plans. • Contribute to an efficient legal framework regarding Maritime Spatial Planning regarding responsibilities between different authorities, administrative routines regarding permits, supervision, etc. which needs to be clarified.	• Enhance knowledge and competence regarding environmental considerations related to Baltic Sea mussel farming in maritime spatial planning.

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SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
		benefits and consequences of Baltic Sea mussel farming. • 3) Meetings and Proposals to harmonize maritime spatial planning • 4) Guidance for licensing processes.		

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
3.1	EMMA	• Pilot/demonstration activities for more efficient and reliable IW transport: • Poland – Gdańsk (the river Vistula): Feasibility study regarding the inland supply chain, Transport chains from the Port of Gdańsk to the hinterland • Lithuania – Klaipėda (the river Neman): Heavy goods transportation connection from the Port of Klaipėda to the hinterland • Germany (North German river basin): Digital map with status information on inland waterways • Sweden - Stockholm (Lake Mälaren): 'Dynamic Zone Management System' and transport shift from road to inland waterways • Finland – North Karelia (Saimaa Canal & Lake Area): Information systems for transport optimisation of timber products via inland waterways	• Knowledge on bottlenecks and potential, summarised in an 'IWT in BSR Competitiveness Improvement Plan (CIP)' • Learning about concrete practical solutions to promote IWT by the pilot/demonstration actions.	• Increased capacity of business support organisations and sector associations to support IWT in future transport policies. Increased knowledge and governance overview to make decisions on IWT integration across BSR waterways.
		• Shipping companies, sectoral associations, industry partners and lobby associations are involved in the project and will receive information on new products and services. They will be involved in pilot cases to verify new services. Project partners discuss technical solutions and regulations with the target group. They are informed on conferences.	• Short Sea Shipping Promotion Centres and other IWT support structures. • Best practices of service portfolios that Shipping Promotion Centre offer their members • Handbook on Barge performance under ice conditions (can be used by shipping lines to adapt to SE water conditions) • Best Practice report on 'Inland navigation in the BSR' (the report illustrates successful implementation of inland navigation in transport chains) • Ship Tonnage database	• Logistic service providers and shippers (industry) in the BSR will get better advisory services with enhanced knowledge (about IWT and setting up intermodal transport chains). • The increased knowledge and capacity eases multimodal transport chain planning, interoperability and thus increases intermodality as well as more

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
				organised use of existing transport infrastructure
		• Two regular IWT roundtable meetings –an exchange meeting between politicians and the business sector/lobby groups in five countries. One IWT BSR wide roundtable and four BSR wide roundtables consisting of representatives of national roundtables and EU. A 10 point action plan will be decided. Three national parliamentary breakfasts per country. Five international IWT presentations at BSR level. Two promotion tours.	• Learning about the institutional landscape in the BSR in support of IWT. • With the meetings, politicians from the transport sector will be regularly informed about the importance of IWT, the concerns and needs of the business sector.	• Increased capacity of public authorities to make decisions on IWT in future transport policies and reduce administrative burden. This will facilitate effective policies, strategies, actions and financial instruments promoting a stronger IWT development.

SO	Project	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups
3.4	Go LNG	• Develop the Blue Corridor strategy. • Summary of the policy and regulation guidelines / a toolbox.	• Strategic vision for using LNG in BSR available for the regional stakeholders. • Policy and regulation guidelines summarised to serve as a useful tool.	• Increased knowledge on the opportunities of LNG; • Benchmark the various national regulations in the area of LNG.
		• Develop web tools such as the LNG standard and regulation toolbox, LNG bunkering map and LNG shipping index. • A study on 'Integrated LNG Value Chain'. • Develop three business plans. • Create the BSR LNG Competence Centre. • Establish the BSR LNG Business Cluster. • LNG and project promotion events.	• Useful web tools at the disposal of the target group. • A study showing the business potential of 'Integrated LNG Value Chain'. • Three Business plans / LNG business models developed. • Mechanism for knowledge transfer –BSR LNG Competence Centre created. • LNG expert network and technology pool. • A cooperation platform to enable new LNG business models (at least four business projects so far).	• Increased knowledge and capacities of the various stakeholders within the whole LNG value chain; • New ways for knowledge and competence transfer in the LNG industry; • New LNG business projects.

The case study research showed that these are only some examples and that each project produces several learning processes and experiences. Of course, the intensity and dimension of learning can vary from one project to another.

One factor that influences the final impact of a project is the number of target group representatives reached by each project. Here, some projects have very specific strategies to increase outreach and

enhance potential learning related to their results. Good practices that increase the outreach and therefore, the potential learning effect are: a) involving numerous associated partners to expand the outreach to many stakeholders, b) working with regional project committees or regional working groups – each project partner creates a regional working group and acts as a multiplier of the project results towards more regional/local stakeholders, c) intentionally involving national or international umbrella organisations (e.g. federations, national associations, Baltic organisations, networks) who can more easily spread the word on project results to their members and to similar umbrella organisations, d) intentionally involving intermediaries that usually work with final target groups, e.g. business associations, chambers of commerce, NGOs, and that can also more easily reach more target group members and reach out to homologous associations in other countries.

Other projects rely on traditional tools for dissemination (websites, newsletters, surveys, conferences, studies/reports/publications). For this latter group, the expected impact on target groups may be low, compared to target group members in the whole BSR.

In general, it is difficult to categorise the learning experiences of projects with target groups as they are very diverse and unique in their specific policy fields. However, for better monitoring and analysis, the MA/JS may consider a classification of learning experiences for the new programming period. To quantify the real impact on target groups, quantification of target group outreach by projects (in AFs and progress reports) is also highly recommended.

If no impact is observed in a target group, what is the lack of impact due to?

No specific target group reports a lack of benefit or impact on capacities, confirming that Programme interventions are not limited to only some target groups. However, analysing responses to the survey by type of organisation indicates different levels of impact of the programme. The survey indicates that HEI institutions benefit more from the projects and their results (over 40% of survey respondents). On the contrary, only few SMEs, education and training centres, enterprises and sectoral agencies responded to the survey. These figures confirm the participation data (presented in the next section 3). This leads to potential limits to impact generation on these target groups. However, any lack of impact can only be analysed when most projects are finalised. The feature causing a lack of impact would be the low number of target group representatives involved in projects or with knowledge of project results and outcomes. As mentioned earlier, a limited impact can also be caused by a lack of strategies to engage and reach out to target groups or insufficient communication of project strategy.

Interviews with project officers at the MA/JS and MC members do not indicate that one or several target groups experience a lack of impact. From their perspective, each programme priority addresses stakeholders that correspond to the expected target groups.

The case study analysis mentions only minor obstacles to involving target groups and stakeholders. The most important are,

- lack of capacity to involve partners that can cover an important target group or work as a multiplier, e.g. intermediary organisations or associations;

- initial involvement of target group representatives that decided later not to take part in the project (during selection or negotiation or contracting) for any reason;

- language barrier to communicate with target groups in different countries (and lack of planning for translations of products and results). This obstacle was mentioned, in particular, with translating very technical language that cannot easily be done in-house or requires an expert understanding of several languages;

- lack of private sector interest (in particular, large companies or industry partners) to become involved as a project partner or associated partner;

As mentioned earlier, the strategy and success of reaching out to target group representatives can vary a lot from one project to another. In this case, there is no structural problem with reaching specific target groups but rather a need to improve capacities and strategies to increase the level of outreach and to find adequate tools for the different target groups.

> Which other factors have influenced the change in institutional capacities of the target groups? How and why?

Other factors also influence project achievements

Other factors influence a) implementation of projects, b) generation and uptake of benefits from projects by target groups and c) the overall change in institutional capacity of target groups.

About a) Factors that hamper project implementation:

The survey of project managers asked about any obstacles or factors that hamper implementation. 63% of project managers confirmed that they encounter obstacles to implementation in their day-to-day work. This does not necessarily mean there are no project results, but it might indicate a more complicated, incomplete or inefficient production of project outputs and results. Among the concrete indications for obstacles are:

Table 2-3 Factors that hamper project implementation

Obstacles and factors	Examples (quotes by project partners)
Financial, Budget and Payments	*'Financial vulnerabilities in partner organisation due to long processing times for payments'* *'One of partners (NGO) is struggling with financial issues - with limited funds they are hardly able to spend money according to program rules'* *'Some partners have too small travel budget and participation in all necessary meetings is sometimes difficult.'* *'Funding of Russian collaboration'* *'One problem is the low involvement of First Level Controllers'* *'Pre-financing by us makes a lot of things/tasks going slower and more complicated.'*

Obstacles and factors	Examples (quotes by project partners)
Project set up and contracting	*'There was a delay in the contract between Interreg BSR and Russian federation about the co-funding. Now this is solved.'* *'Prolonged contracting period'* *'Delayed signing of the Agreement with the Russian Federation, Russian partners, who were supposed to receive advance payment, have faced some uncertainties in the first months of project implementation'* *'In the contracting and clarification process several main outputs had to be revised on rather short term and made more tangible. These newly-to-be-developed 'products' caused and still cause some trouble among all partners, because the original (less tangible) main outputs were agreed upon in the project development phase, but the 'new outputs/products' are still less appreciated and sometimes considered artificial. This is mainly because there was not enough time in the contracting and clarification process to have a thorough discussion and agreement among all partners which 'is really needed' in the revision of the main outputs.'*
Administration and Bureaucracy	*'Different treatment of Programme rules by First Level Controller's from different countries'* *'Delays in hiring process of project staff'* *'Non-overlapping holiday periods in countries'* *'The administrative part to prepare all the documents after the acceptance of the project took too long'* *'Extensive bureaucracy e.g. the need for three offers for each even the smallest purchase, which is extremely time and work consuming.'*
Project Management and Communication	*'Lack of time because of need of long processes'* *'Lack of effective internal project communication'* *'Unexpected absence of key staff (change of job, sick leave)'* *'Staff changes'*
Problems within the Partnership and commitment of partners	*'The quality of research and deliverables can vary significantly from partner to partner, possibly due to (a combination of) capacity challenges, language issues, lack of familiarity with academic research standards).'* *'Unexpected changes in the project consortium'* *'Two PPs have had staff exchanges having an impact on the speed of activities.'* *'Results from the partners come very slowly'* *'Difficulties to get all partners fulfil their responsibilities'* *'Problems of some partners to keep deadlines'* *'Partner dropout and time-consuming follow-up processes to re-arrange project activities in order to achieve all foreseen outputs.'* *'One partner dropout from the Project'* *'Partners' ability to involve stakeholders'* *'Specific project results depend on the possibility to obtain data or on the project partners to provide data'* *'Staff changes at partner organisations'*
Problems with target groups/ pilots	*'We cooperate with municipalities. The local empowerment network is based on two municipalities. We have seen barriers regarding staff continuity and empowerment perspectives in the process.'*

Obstacles and factors	Examples (quotes by project partners)
Cultural and policy differences (larger than expected) between countries	*'Intercultural project management itself remains a challenging task'* *'Especially on policy level there are different strategies on how to develop inland waterways which are border crossing'* *'Working together with other organisations, and with other countries is always a challenge. Cultural differences, language misunderstandings and other obstacles always occur to some extent. We have solved those problems, but it has taken time.'*
Natural conditions and problems	*'There have been delays due to weather (affecting survey of XY)'* *'Due to weather conditions the results are coming later than expected'*
Accidents, disasters, personal tragedies	*'Bankruptcy of industrial partner'* *'Fire in partner organisation's premises'* *'Death of other partner leading executor of the project'*
Other	*'Danger of lack of continuity of project and network and therefore lack of motivation'* *'Lack of essential scientific data to support industrial development'* *'Uncertainty with leasing equipment'* *'Dependence on external contractor and his delay in performing selected task'*

Source: Data from survey of projects for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

About b) Factors that hamper the generation and uptake of benefits from projects by target groups:

For the factors that might hamper the generation and uptake of benefits by target groups, the survey included two questions. 83% of 70 survey responses from project partners indicate **no obstacles** within the project making it difficult for their organisation to benefit from the project. 17% confirm that there are obstacles. On the other hand, 91% of 70 survey responses confirm that there are **no other external factors** and only 9% confirm that external factors hamper the generation and uptake of benefits. This means that project partners in general perceive less obstacles and problems than project managers who are closely linked to project management processes (as presented above). It also indicates that project partners and target groups still benefit from projects, even if there are small obstacles to implementation.

The **obstacles and factors** mentioned by project partners are similar to those for implementation, for example:

Original statements

- *'There is a quite short time to disseminate and upgrade the final outcomes. The usability of those would be multiplied with extra time for dissemination and optimisation to the wider stakeholder group.'*
- *'Poor input from some partners'*
- *'Problems with the technical development of tools/applications'*
- *'Partial overlapping of new tools developed by the project and existing tools'*
- *'Data availability (for Maritime Spatial Planning)'*

- *'Russian bureaucracy'*

- *'Difficulty for Russian partners to understand Interreg rules'*

- *'Certain difficulties in requiring necessary permits for our pilot implementation on regional and municipal levels'*

- *We develop a tool that has as input datasets that follow the INSPIRE Directive. But because of the schedule / implementation of this directive in the countries, it is hard to get the datasets. The schedule of the project and the INSPIRE directive don´t match.'*

- *'The amount of bureaucratic obligations scares away possible Partners'*

- *'Extensive administrative requirements like reporting'*

About c) Factors that influence changes in target group institutional capacity:

It is still early to ask representatives of target groups about the changes in institutional capacity for their organisations. Projects still cannot report final results, in addition benefits and effects on target groups are not yet fully deployed. So, the question about factors influencing a change in institutional capacity for target groups can only be answered tentatively based on individual cases or opinions. For future evaluations, such questions would need to be answered by a survey/ interviews with target group representatives or additional case studies.

Case study analysis reveals that the change in institutional capacities of target groups generally depends on the macro-economic climate and other economic factors (e.g. the oil price), cultural factors such as entrepreneurial spirit and propensity for risk, but also on language capacity. In the transnational and international environment, new knowledge is widely published in English and not all target group representatives are able to work with this language. Target group representatives mention that public authorities can stimulate more institutional change with innovative regulations and procurement rules. For the results of Interreg projects, target group representatives appreciate continuity of action and support, so that after the project ends, structures or services for the benefit of target groups can be maintained (with other resources), up-dated and further promoted.

In the survey of thematic experts, additional external factors were named as potentially having an impact on changes in institutional capacities in different policy fields. Of course, some factors apply not only to one specific policy field but to many others.

Table 2-4 Factors that influence changes in institutional capacities of target groups

SO	Factors
1.1	• Inefficiency of organisational structures • Distribution of technical resources (in the BSR region)
1.2	• Recent reforms in the R&I sector (have been positive)

SO	Factors
	• Lack of critical mass of people understanding work with S3 and triple/quadruple helix approaches • Language barriers • Lack of capacity to attract private funding or highly competitive funding • Personal contacts and networks
1.3	• Fragmented knowledge base in many different types of knowledge and competence, little overview, few synergies • Low resources available in SMEs for R&I • Heterogeneity of social innovation infrastructures and approaches
2.1	• Lack of use of scientific knowledge at the institutional level, • Continued sole reliance on established technical solutions • Insufficient cross-sectoral work and research on the national level • High dependency for innovation funding from the EU (more national funding needed) • Low representation/participation of local and regional authorities in transnational structures
2.2	• Lack of independence, impartiality and transparency in organisational structures • Diversity of compensation and support mechanisms in different countries • Fear of the public sector to collaborate with private sector due to inflexible regulations
2.3	• Economic framework that requires projects to be profitable • Energy efficiency depends not only on technical innovation but also on social responsibility and behaviour • Data gathering for energy efficiency is complicated as it usually goes beyond the regular statistics • Sometimes the institutions do not have the right staff and attitude for international activity
2.4	• Lack of knowledge on the topic (resource-efficient blue growth), in particular in local authorities • Complexity and intersectoral character of the topic is a challenge • Transnational work mainly in rather closed circles of public authorities, practitioners and researchers
3.1	• TEN-T policy circles are comparatively closed and would not necessarily represent all the interests • Brain drain from the public sector to the private sector • Efforts to introduce Pan-European railways are fragmented in the BSR • Better transnational cooperation would require also hard cooperation on investments, construction
3.2	• Demographic change is progressing at a faster pace than public authorities are able to react, making the existing improvement – in terms of organisational structures and technological innovations – insufficient and undersized • Lack of awareness and interest in remote and sparsely populated areas, rather concentration on population nodes • Lack of interest of private companies and service providers in the less populated and remote regions, unless there are public funds available
3.3	• --
3.4	• Risk aversion to investing in new technology, depends on the oil price • Bureaucracy might sometimes cause inefficiency in the use human and technical resources
3.5	• Lack of more formal and stable structures for knowledge transfer

Source: Data from survey and interviews to thematic experts for this evaluation. Extracted from qualitative information on factors that influence institutional capacities. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

3 Involvement of different types of partners

The features of partnerships and quality of stakeholder involvement largely determine the final quality of projects and programme outputs. Therefore, understanding the composition of partnerships is a key element in the mid-term evaluation of the Programme's impact. This chapter analyses the involvement of different types of project partners in the programme.

3.1 Summary of conclusions

The analysis answers the following evaluation questions:

> **How has the participation of for-profit private companies changed the nature of projects? Has it added value to project results? If so, how and what kind?**

- 76% of selected project partners fall under the definition of 'public body or ruled by public law', while 24% are private bodies. Analysing priorities 1, 2, and 3, the share of projects involving at least one private for-profit partner is 49%, which is high. The initial expectations were that 2% (in Priority 1) or 1% (in Priorities 2 and 3) of project partners should be private, for profit bodies. These goals have been widely exceeded, with 7% private partners in Priority 1, 11% in Priority 2 and 14% in Priority 3.

- The share of SMEs and large enterprises in the associated organisations is 15%. It is also more evenly distributed across the three priorities.

- Private, for-profit partners bring certain benefits to a project, with the transfer of project results into practice seeming the most relevant. Other effects indicated by survey respondents are other market-related concerns, such as the knowledge of specific needs of target groups, and enabling wider distribution of project results. There were also implementation-related topics identified by the provision of practical 'on-the-ground' knowledge.

- Case Study research confirms the manifold benefits of involving private partners in projects. Moreover, some projects highlight the role of large companies and industry partners when it comes to test, develop and prepare new products, solutions or services for the market.

> **What are the main challenges and obstacles in the involvement of for-profit private companies in projects? How can they be solved?**

- The key issues related to the difficulty in involving private for-profit partners are linked to formal factors. State aid requirements followed closely by general administrative requirements, and, to a lesser extent, reporting requirements, make up most of the explanations by respondents. In some cases, and especially for State aid, these factors are outside the Programme's control. Lack of time is also regarded as an obstacle for involving this type of partner. This suggests that cooperation between projects and private for-profit actors may be perceived as a low-priority activity, with the result of being pushed back behind 'core' tasks.

- More participation might be possible with fewer obstacles. Proposals made by project partners include reducing the administrative requirements, an exception to State aid regulations, as well as clearer guidance and definition of rules by the programme. Furthermore, proposals include

providing a service for administrative support. Some respondents advanced the idea of increasing spending though the use of pre-payments which would reduce private risk and ensure sufficient capacity and commitment from the private partner.

- Many private partners participate as associated partners. This seems to be a good option to be close to a project but without the administrative burdens of a project partner.

How and why has the participation of public authorities changed compared to the predecessor programme? What effect has this had on project results?

- In the Interreg BSR 2007-2013 Programme, it is possible to estimate that public authority partners made up roughly 39% of project partners in that programming period. In Interreg BSR Programme 2014-2020 public authorities make up 27% of project partners, a sharp reduction.

- Apart from the relative participation, the absolute number of public authorities involved in the two periods has roughly halved. This might be due to different factors; sometimes, they no longer count as a 'public authority', there are fewer resources for cooperation projects in local, regional and national authorities, an increased competition for cooperation resources, a shift in the IBSR towards promoting and developing new business products and services that reduces the potential benefit for public authorities, or even cooperation fatigue to participate in 'yet another' Interreg project.

- The involvement of public authorities is regarded as key both in terms of policy orientation and quality of the overall project goals, and in terms of knowledge transmission and sharing.

- Other high impact benefits for the projects include 'upstream' knowledge transfer from the authorities to project managers. This is through insights on rules and procedures, knowledge on the needs of target groups, practical knowledge, input from experts, and, to a lesser extent, data. Contacts and access to networks, which can be used for both upstream and downstream information sharing, is the second most relevant benefit according to survey respondents.

- Thus, a reduced participation of public authorities might lead to a lower transfer of project results into public policies and narrower dissemination of project results.

How and why has the participation of research organisations changed compared to the predecessor programme? What effect has this had on project results?

- Comparing the participation of academic and research organisations between Interreg BSR 2007-2013 and Interreg BSR 2014-2020 reveals that the overall share of such partners across projects increased from 25% to 30%. There was slightly less involvement for projects under Priority 3 'sustainable transport', which, in turn, has the highest relative concentration of both public authorities and private for-profit partners.

- Many programme body interviewees pointed to the over-representation of research institutions and universities as a key issue.

- In the survey of project partners, 93% of respondents confirmed that their project involves at least one research or higher education organisation. Academic and research organisations bring specific benefits to projects. In many cases, they provide new and updated knowledge, as well as evidence on general beliefs and observations for the other partners.

- Research and higher education partners are key to most projects, as they provide input from experts in the project content field through studies and research results. But academic and research partners also benefit from the projects, as they receive feedback from other types of partners (e.g. public authorities, infrastructure and service providers, private companies, business associations, companies) and feed this again into the academic research and, in particular, into education. This means that projects in general benefit from the inputs provided by academic and research experts, and also from the organisational capacities in HEI and research organisations to organise larger and transnational projects.

- At the same time, there is a risk, when too many research and academic partners are in a project, that the projects gets too expert-driven and too academic and fruitful exchange with other types of partners and feedback circles gets lost. In this sense, it is important to have a balance of different types of organisations in the project to avoid this institutional 'lock-in' effect.

The following recommendations can be derived from the conclusions:

- A reduced administrative burden for private, for-profit partners could make their involvement easier.

- Local, regional and national public authorities should be specifically targeted in campaigns to attract applicants and partners. Their benefits should be pointed out to any project promoter.

- If desired, the share of HEIs in a project can be limited to a degree (60%) by the Call requirements (maybe with an exception for SO 1.1 that focuses widely on large research infrastructure and universities).

3.2 Analysis of relevant data

The picture of involvement of project partners in the 2014-2020 Interreg BSR builds on the experience of the predecessor programme, with some substantial innovations. The 2007-13 Interreg BSR Programme was essentially aimed at a wide range of public institutions at different levels, as well as the participation of 'bodies established under public or private law for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character, and having legal personality'[3].

The key innovation to this picture in the 2014-2020 period has been the removal of requirements regarding general interest, practically removing any limitation to the involvement of any kind of private partner (including for-profit private partners) in projects. The limitation on private partners acting as lead partners is maintained in the current programming period.[4]

The support of private partners is a key goal for the Programme, in particular for Programme Priority 1. This can be observed by the output indicators defined in the Cooperation Programme. They show that a specific focus on involving private partners is intended for projects under Priority 1 (Capacity for innovation), which has a target of 270 supported enterprises. Moreover, Priority 1 included an output

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[3] Interreg BSR 2007-2013 Cooperation Programme

[4] Interreg BSR 2014-2020 Programme Manual

indicator focusing on the number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions, for which the target is 220 enterprises. Priority 2 (Efficient management of natural resources) and 3 (Sustainable transport) have a target of 95 and 84 supported enterprises, respectively. Support can be offered by projects and their results, as well as through involvement as project partners or associated partners.

Priority 1 'Capacity for innovation' is aimed at tackling 'the lack of effective mechanisms for knowledge transfer from research to enterprise, thus counteracting insufficient demand for some existing research capacities. To this end, better opportunities for the involvement of infrastructures' users have to be provided, and cooperation among public, academic and private sectors improved to foster market-led R&D and demand-driven innovation. The BSR provides an opportunity to build on diversity as a strength to achieve unique, smart combinations of competencies with potential to find new solutions to market needs.'[5] It is therefore clear that the involvement of both research institutions and private partners is key to the success of the Programme's endeavours, particularly under Programme priority 1.

The Programme's strategy involves pursuing its chief objective to strengthen integrated territorial development of the region by improving target groups' institutional capacities deriving from transnational cooperation. A focus on ways in which public institutions are involved in the projects is therefore a primary concern of the Programme.

A total of 3 422 organisations[6] participated in applications (successful and unsuccessful) to the Programme. From that, 1 206 organisations started to work as project partners in contracted projects. Moreover, 1 328 organisations have been involved in the programme as associated partners, as cooperation partners or as target groups of the projects.

The figure below and the tables on the next pages give an overview of project partners and associated partners per type of organisation. In absolute numbers, the most relevant organisations are HEIs (as Project Partners) as well as Interest Groups, including NGOs (as Associated Partners).

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[5] Interreg BSR 2014-2020 Cooperation Programme
[6] The numbers in this paragraph are indicative as they have not been cleaned from possible double counting e.g. due to participation in several applications or appearance in several projects with slightly different names.

Figure 3-1 Participation of different types of organisations in the Programme
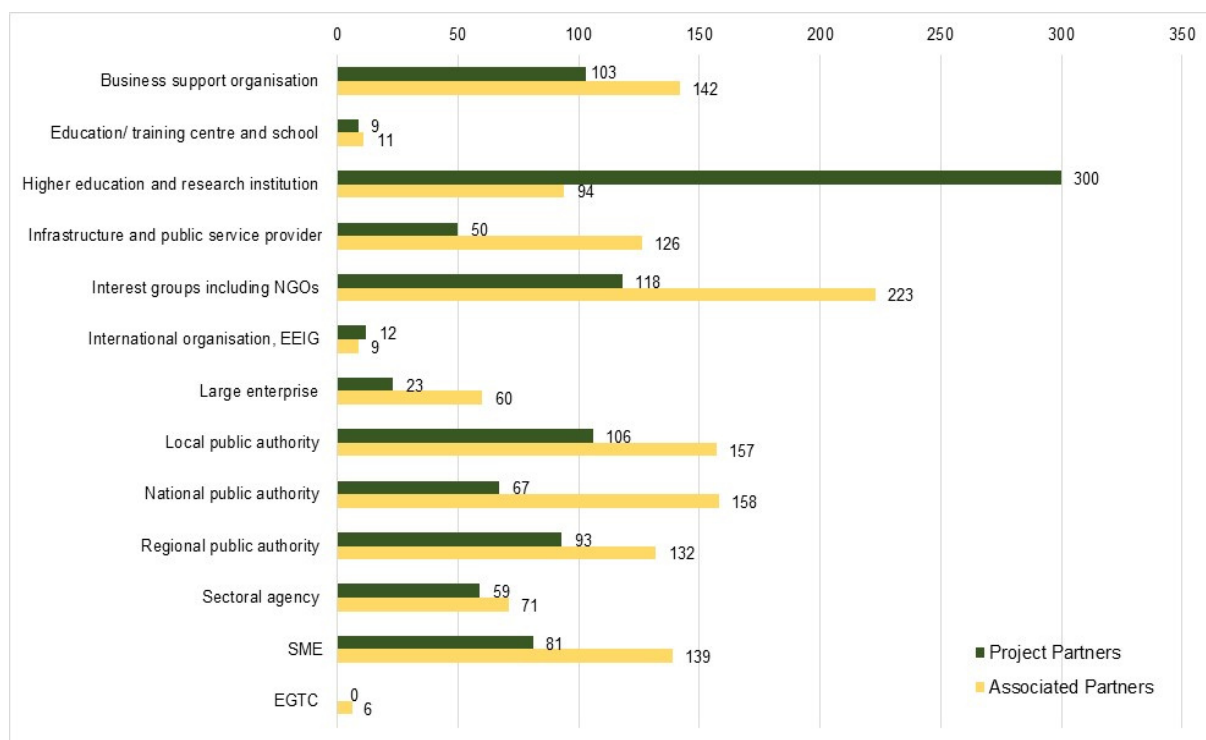
Source: extraction from the Programme's BAMOS system (June 13th, 2018). Table does not distinguish when the same organisation is involved in different projects or with different roles, so the actual total number of partners is lower.

The tables on the next pages show the distribution of the types of organisation per SO, indicating with colours where certain types of organisation predominate.

Table 3-1 Project Partner per SO per type of organisation

SO	Business support organisation	Education/ training centre and school	HEI	Infra-structure and public service provider	Interest groups including NGOs	International organisation, European Economic Interest Groupings	Large enterprise	Local public authority	National public authority	Regional public authority	Sectoral agency	SME	EGTC
1.1	16	0	46	1	12	3	5	1	6	6	10	14	0
1.2	16	0	16	1	7	1	0	6	5	24	1	0	0
1.3	43	5	50	1	30	0	1	16	9	3	9	5	0
2.1	1	2	52	18	23	1	3	16	11	2	9	14	0
2.2	2	0	20	0	7	0	0	1	1	8	10	4	0
2.3	4	0	21	4	7	0	1	13	0	6	10	7	0
2.4	3	0	29	2	5	5	1	6	10	10	2	12	0
3.1	8	0	23	12	14	0	6	14	9	21	4	5	0
3.2	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	3	1	5	2	0	0
3.3	0	2	6	0	0	0	1	1	11	1	0	6	0
3.4	9	0	25	10	5	2	5	2	3	1	1	10	0
3.5	1	0	9	1	7	0	0	27	1	6	1	4	0
Total	103	9	300	50	118	12	23	106	67	93	59	81	0

Source: extraction from the Programme's BAMOS system (June 13th, 2018). Table does not distinguish an organisation involved in different projects or with different roles, so the total number of partners is lower.

Table 3-2 Associated Partner per SO per type of organisation

SO	Business support organisation	Education/ training centre and school	HEI	Infra-structure and public service provider	Interest groups including NGOs	International organisation, European Economic Interest Groupings	Large enterprise	Local public authority	National public authority	Regional public authority	Sectoral agency	SME	EGTC
1.1	18	0	14	0	11	3	6	1	7	9	1	16	0
1.2	16	0	18	0	9	0	1	9	14	14	1	1	2
1.3	48	2	17	4	33	1	3	22	12	18	9	19	0
2.1	2	3	17	33	57	3	6	5	43	14	24	8	1
2.2	4	0	2	1	12	0	9	13	7	11	8	7	0
2.3	6	1	4	18	27	0	4	31	7	11	12	25	0
2.4	5	2	7	0	11	0	3	9	11	11	2	12	0
3.1	38	1	2	27	29	0	15	22	22	18	5	22	2
3.2	0	0	0	5	5	1	0	3	5	0	2	0	0
3.3	0	0	3	0	2	0	1	0	9	4	1	0	0
3.4	3	1	3	22	12	1	10	7	15	5	4	22	1
3.5	2	1	7	16	15	0	2	35	6	17	2	7	0
Total	142	11	94	126	223	9	60	157	158	132	71	139	6

Source: extraction from the Programme's BAMOS system (June 13th, 2018). Table does not distinguish an organisation involved in different projects or with different roles, so the actual total number of partners is lower.

3.3 Evaluation findings

Following the key points of interest about partner involvement in the Programme, the evaluation focuses on tackling questions about the novelty deriving from involving for-profit private companies, and the main challenges which come with this. The involvement of public actors is also analysed to verify if their involvement is affected by the increased focus on private actors, by comparing public institution involvement compared to the previous Programme. Lastly, the participation of research institutions is investigated, given their key role in knowledge production and transfer, both being among the most relevant Programme activities.
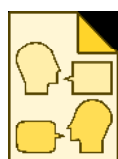
Interviews with MC members, the MA/JS director and project and programme unit leaders, JS communication officers, and JS project officers included questions on balance between partners. Six out of 13 respondents indicated that the overall balance from involving different types of partners is good, whereas the remaining seven interviews highlighted some need for improvement. Details of insights from the interviews is presented in the following section.

> How has the participation of for-profit private companies changed the nature of projects? Has it added value to project results? If so, how and what kind?

76% of selected project partners fall under the definition of 'public expenditure', 1% are International Organisations or European Economic Interest Groupings, while 23% are private, for profit bodies.

Figure 3-2 Legal status of project partners
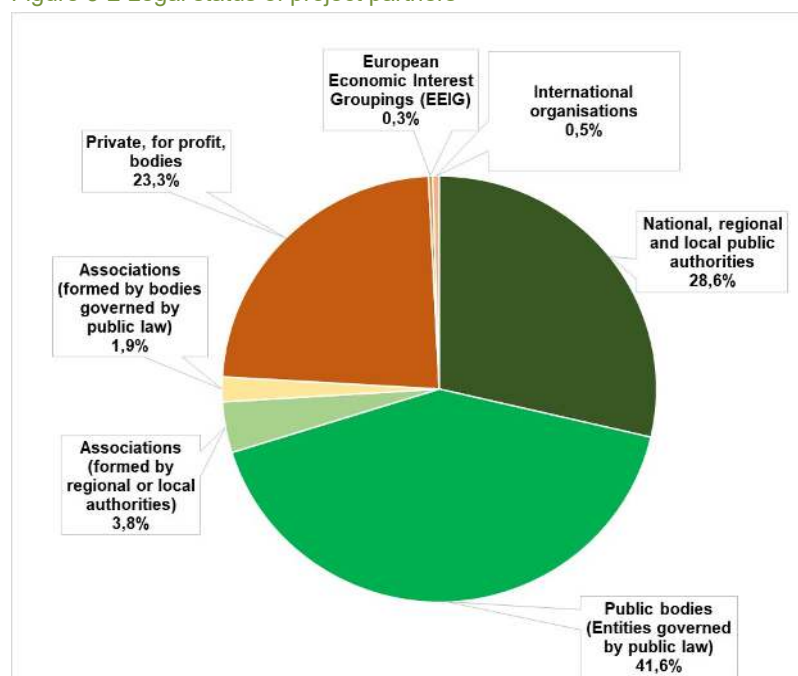
Source: own elaboration based on extraction from the Programme's BAMOS system (June 13th, 2018).

By focusing the analysis on private contribution partners that are SMEs, large enterprises, and infrastructure and public service providers, it is possible to gain an understanding of private for-profit partner participation in the programme. The total share of such partners is 9%.

Analysing data from the BAMOS system, 36 projects of 124 (29%) involve at least one private for-profit partner. Given the features of Priority 4, no such partners are involved in projects under this priority. When limiting the analysis to Priorities 1, 2, and 3, the share of projects involving at least one private for-profit partner is 49% (36 of 74 contracted projects).

These organisations have been eligible for the Programme only in the 2014-2020 programming period, so the programme has been largely successful in attracting private for-profit actors to projects. The expectations were that 2% (Priority 1) or 1% (for Priorities 2 and 3) of project partners would be private, for profit bodies. These goals have been widely exceeded, as can be seen in the figure below, with 7% of private partners in Priority 1, 11% in Priority 2 and 14% in Priority 3.

Figure 3-3 Distribution of private for-profit partners across programme priorities and share of such partners by programme priority
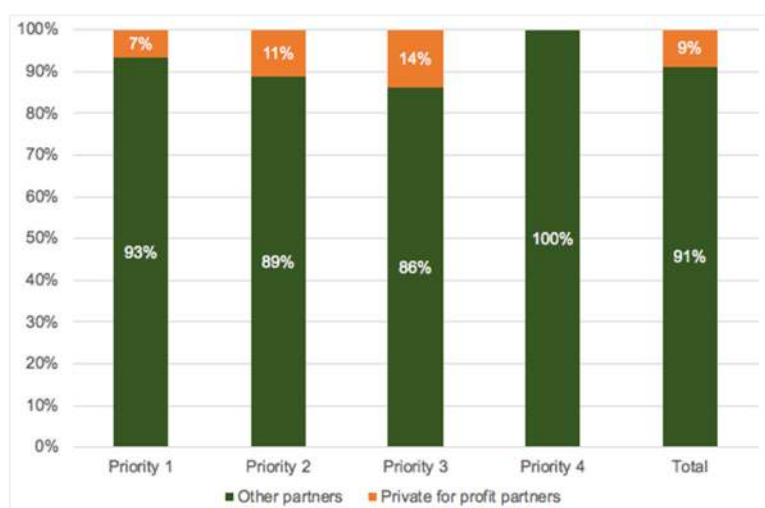
Source: own elaboration based on extraction from the Programme's BAMOS system (June 13th, 2018).

When looking at the distribution of private partners across the four priorities, there are more types of partner in projects under Priority 3, and fewer under Priority 2. Priority 1 has a below-average share of private for-profit partners. This contrasts with the fact that projects under Priority 1 had the largest interest in involving private partners. However, the initial estimations have been reached.

Another perspective to analyse is the distribution of projects which involve at least one private for-profit partner. By comparing the four priorities in this perspective, it is even clearer that private for-profit partners have often been involved in projects dealing with the efficient management of natural resources and sustainable transport, while they are relatively uncommon in innovation capacity projects.

By looking at the breakdown by SO in the table below, most SOs involve this type of partners. However, critically, no private for-profit partner was involved in any project under SO 1.2 'Smart specialisation',

and few were also involved in projects under SO 1.3 'Non-technological innovation', which is the SO with the largest number of projects. On the other hand, the SO with the largest share of projects involving at least one private for-profit partner is SO 3.1 'Interoperability of transport modes'.

Table 3-3 Number of projects involving at least one private for-profit partner, by SO

Partners involved SO	1.1	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	Tot
At least one private for-profit partner	4	0	3	7	3	3	3	5	0	2	4	2	36
No private for-profit partners	5	7	11	4	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	38
Total	9	7	14	11	4	5	5	6	1	3	5	4	74

Source: own elaboration based on extraction from the Programme's BAMOS system (June 13th, 2018).

In general, the difficulty to establish a direct causal relationship between the legal status of a partner and its role in the project hampers the analysis. For example, can a Cluster have the legal status of a not-for-profit association, but be highly relevant as a partner representing the 'private sector'. On the other hand, when the partner is an energy agency it can be private, for-profit, but does not have to be a company or even an SME. Due to restricted detail on organisations in the data, it is harder to precisely assess the participation of private for-profit partners as associated organisations.

Figure 3-4 Share of enterprises (SMEs and large) as associated partners per Priority
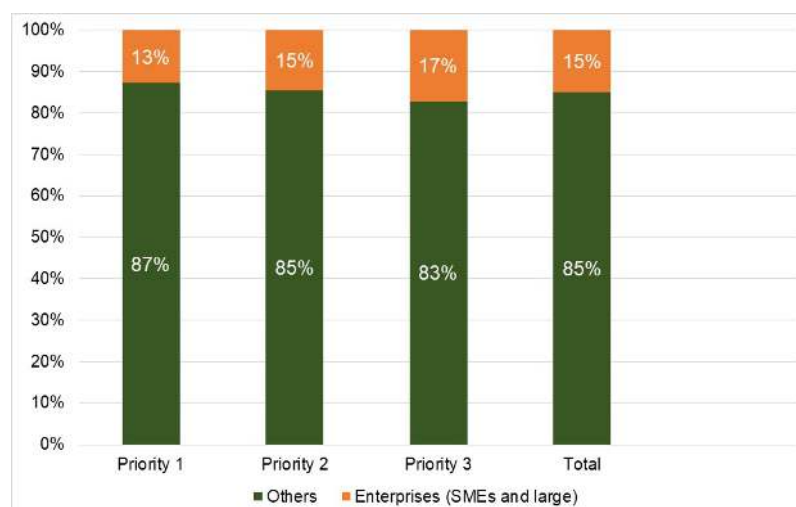
Source: own elaboration based on extraction from the Programme's BAMOS system (June 13th, 2018).

The share of enterprises (SMEs and large) as associated organisations for each project, can be used as a proxy. The overall share (15%) is higher than for project partners. It is also more evenly distributed across the three priorities.

The slightly lower involvement of private-for-profit organisations in Priority 1 might be due to the fact that even if innovation is the topic, the projects deal mainly with innovation at a (transnational) governance

level of policies and networks. The emphasis is on smart specialisation, and less on direct innovation support to enterprises or business sectors. At this governance level, the involvement of business support and intermediary organisations such as Cluster, Technology Centres or Technology Platforms can be more effective for project success than the involvement of single companies. So, the low level of involvement of private, for profit partners in Priority 1 cannot be interpreted as leading to lower quality or effectiveness of projects under Priority 1.

The in-depth analysis of projects in the case study research shows that Projects under each Priority reach out to private companies as target groups through many different methods and tools. Not necessarily is the involvement of private partners the only way to consider private sector needs and disseminate results to them. One way to involve the private sector include creating regional coordination groups within an Interreg project, where private and for-profit partners can participate indirectly in the project as associated partners. Another way is to involve (public or quasi-public) business support or intermediary organisations such as Clusters, Technology Centres, Foundations, Chambers of Commerce or Economic/Innovation Agencies.

Additional information on the value of private, for–profit participation in projects comes from the survey of project partners. Respondents were asked to indicate which benefits for them and the pursuit came from the involvement of private for-profit partners. The results are summarised in the figure below.

The transfer of project results into practice appears the most relevant benefit of private for-profit partners. Other effects often indicated by respondents are also market-related, such as the knowledge of specific needs of target groups, wider distribution of project results, as well are implementation-related topics identified through practical 'on-the-ground' knowledge. Access to specialised knowledge in the private environment is another key benefit brought by private for-profit partners, identified by the access to networks and input from experts. Information not related to the business environment (such as regulatory knowledge, studies and research) is less relevant. Data sharing is regarded as being of little relevance, as, predictably, is support to turn project results into public policies or academic research.

Other benefits reported by respondents include product development-related matters, such as:

- Support in defining product concept and in implementation;

- The active involvement of private partners in pilot activities;

- Support to ensure the product's market relevance.

These points are closely connected to enabling the transfer of project results into practice, which is the key benefit of private for-profit partner involvement.

Figure 3-5 Benefits brought by private for-profit partners to the projects (Q22, n=37)
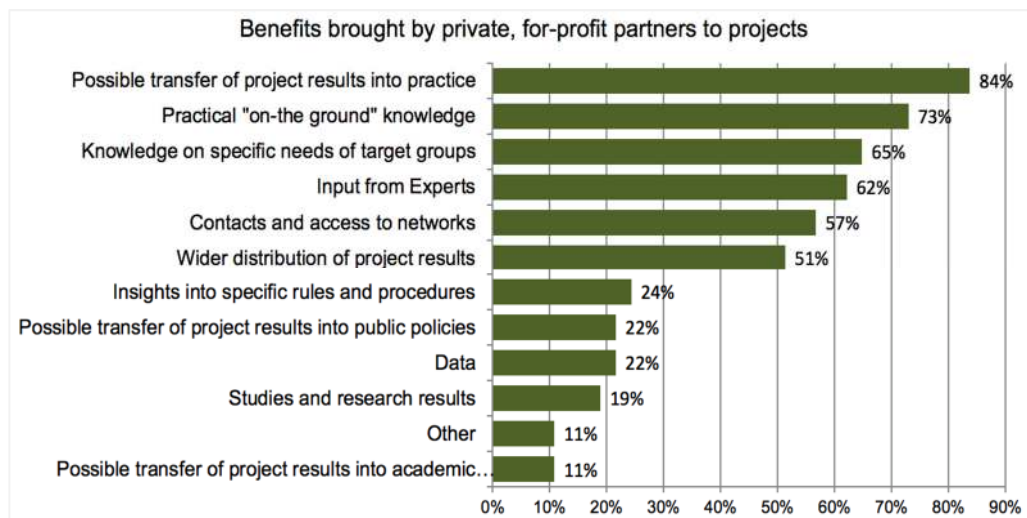
Survey Question Q22: 'What are, in your opinion, the benefits brought by private, for-profit partners to your project?.' (Given response options + Other).
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

Case Study research confirms the manifold benefits of private partners for projects. Some projects highlight the role of large companies and industry partners when it comes to testing, developing and preparing new products, solutions or services for the market. They also highlight the obstacles to convince larger companies and industry partners in participating in such a (for them) small project. For these types of organisation there are often more adequate programmes in the EU or the BSR to participate in (e.g. COSME, H2020, ERA-Net).
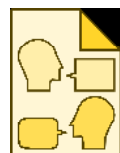
Interviews with programme bodies (MC and MA/JS) indicate that there is, overall, a positive feeling towards the involvement of private organisations, since they help promote more practical, business-oriented, and innovative approaches. Programme body representatives do not see the low relative involvement of private, for-profit companies as a failure but rather as a natural consequence of the high expectations for project outcomes. This was largely linked not to shortcomings on the side of the private partner or on motivation misalignments, but to higher than expected difficulties with administrative and State aid constraints.

> What are the main challenges and obstacles in the involvement of for-profit private companies in projects? How can they be solved?

In the survey of project partners, respondents were asked to indicate the main challenges and obstacles that they faced in involving for-profit companies in projects. Respondent answers covered for-profit organisations as project partners, as associated organisations, or in other roles. The result clearly identifies formal requirements as fundamentally influencing the relationship of projects with private for-profit organisations, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 3-6 Challenges and obstacles in involving private, for-profit partners in projects (Q23, n=36)
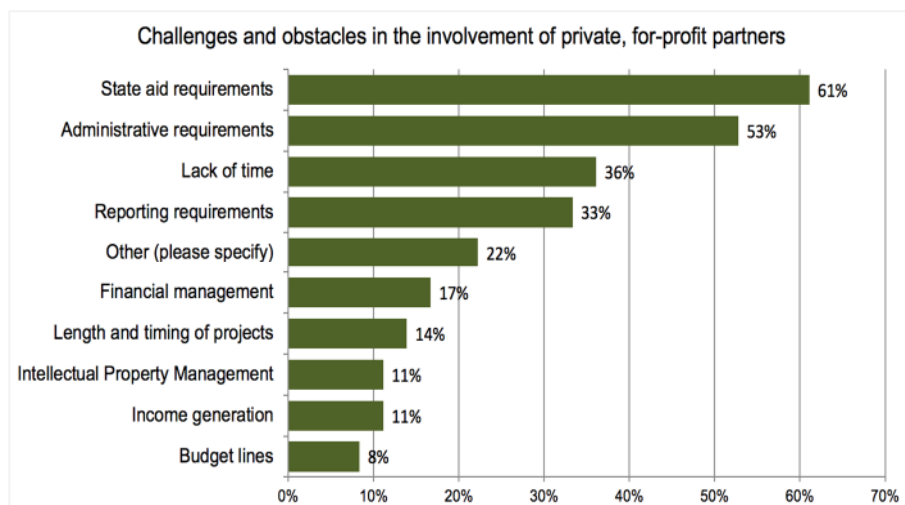
Survey Question Q23: 'In your opinion, what are the main challenges and obstacles in the involvement of for-profit private companies in your project?.' (Given response options + Other).
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

State aid requirements followed closely by general administrative requirements, and, to a lesser extent, reporting requirements, cover most of the explanations by respondents, related to difficulties in involving private for-profit partners. In some cases, and especially for State aid requirements, these factors are outside the Programme's control.

Lack of time is also regarded as a major obstacle for this type of partner, suggesting that cooperation between projects and private for-profit actors may be perceived as a low-priority activity, with the result of being pushed back behind 'core' tasks.

Other aspects such as financial management, timing of projects, intellectual property management, the possibility to generate income, and budget lines, are not generally regarded as being core issues.

22% of respondents indicated other factors as being relevant. These include:

- The lack of for-profit actors' interest in specific non-performing market segments may limit their involvement in projects in these fields;

- Uncertainty: private partners may have difficulties in planning their continued support to projects in line with their day-to-day operational perspective;

In sections of the survey dedicated to analysing project results, a small number of respondents reported more individual, ad-hoc difficulties due to bankruptcy or other kinds of financial difficulties for private partners. This may suggest that, in some cases, the involvement of private partners may be linked with an increase in risks, in spite of the measures in the selection phase to identify and exclude organisations that may be in financial distress.

Survey respondents were asked to provide suggestions on how to overcome the issues which limit for-profit involvement. The most common proposals involve reducing administrative requirements, an exception to State aid regulations, and the need for clearer guidance and definition of rules from the programme. Other proposals include providing a service for administrative support. Some respondents advanced the idea of increasing spending through pre-payments, reducing private risk and ensuring sufficient capacity and commitment on the private partner's part.

 The case study research confirms the identified obstacles to private involvement in Interreg projects. The most important are administrative requirements, issues with State aid or with the limitation of generating income, as well as lack of interest in something that only brings medium or long-term return to the company. However, there were also private partners (in one case not a company, but a foundation dedicated to research) that did not see any obstacles at all and were very positive about the 'easy' participation in the Interreg project.

Most of the analysed projects presented their application with more private, for-profit organisations as project partners. So, there was a commitment from projects to increasing private participation. However, most projects saw the withdrawal of one or more private partners during the process of selection, negotiation and contracting, mainly for two reasons. For some private partners the long period of time between application and project start was already a flaw. In addition, they changed in their business orientation or staff and no longer deemed it relevant to participate in the project. The second reason was linked to changes in the projects during negotiations with the MA/JS. Several partners confirmed that project activities were reshuffled and sometimes parts (e.g. testing, pilot applications, development) relevant for the private partners were abolished.

In most cases, when still interested in the project as a whole, private partners choose to participate as an associated partner. This seems to be a good option to keep close to a project but without the administrative burdens related to being a project partner.

In general, participation seems to be possible if there is a real interest and also a benefit for the private partner. As in other situations regarding funding or capacity building, SMEs and, in particular, small private companies suffer from their lack of capacity and resources to take part in a project beyond their daily work and other obligations. This is another reason to stimulate the participation of intermediary organisations such as business associations in projects rather than trying to convince individual SMEs.
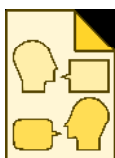
 A number of interview respondents confirmed the situation highlighted by the projects that the main issue for the involvement of private, for-profit partners – and SMEs in particular – is the constraints of State aid regulation. Countermeasures are proposed by interviewees, such as introducing exceptions to State aid regulations for Interreg funding, as well as administrative support.

> How and why has the participation of public authorities changed compared to the predecessor programme? What effect has this had on project results?

In the Interreg BSR 2007-2013 Programme, public authority partners made up roughly 39% of the project partners in that programming period. Analysis of the data shows that, in Interreg BSR Programme 2014-2020, public authorities[7] account for 27% of the total number of project partners involved. Therefore, there has been a strong reduction in the share of public partners. Two elements can be identified as reasons for the relative decrease:

- new rules, including the eligibility of private for-profit partners, enabled a larger involvement of private partners compared to public authorities,

- the share of academic and research institutions has grown with respect to the previous programming period. This aspect is discussed in more detail in the next section.

The lower participation of public authorities might also have been caused by other factors:

- compared to previous years, some public organisations may no longer count as a 'public authority' but have been transformed/outsourced into a new type of organisation now counted under another heading (e.g. sectoral agency, infrastructure/public service provider, business support organisation).

- less resources available for cooperation projects in local, regional and national authorities,

- related to the previous point, increasing competition for resources for cooperation or other initiative's, such as BSR and EUSBSR networks and projects, ERA-Nets, EIP-Agri networks, S3-Thematic Platforms),

- a shift in the IBSR towards promoting and developing new products and services that reduces the potential benefits for public authorities, but increases them for research and technology-related organisations, as well as sectoral agencies and infrastructure /public service providers,

- cooperation fatigue to participate in 'yet another' Interreg project, having already touched on issues relevant for the authority in previous projects. This might particularly affect small local authorities who do not have many resources for this kind of project and where opportunity cost compared to other activities is high. Also, for departments in regional and national authorities Interreg projects – in the opinion of decision-makers – may not make a sufficiently large contribution to regional/national policy agendas or when these agendas shift due to elections or staff changes.

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[7] Under both programming periods, public authorities are understood as organisations under 'partner type' local, regional, and national public authority.
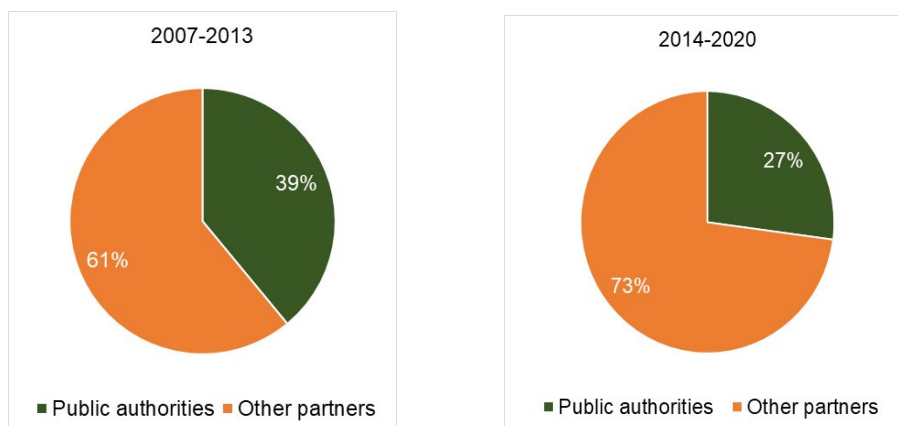
Source: Interreg BSR 2007-2013 data   Source: Interreg BSR 2014-2020 data

The relative weight of public authorities in each SO differs. Under Priority 1, which sees the participation of many public research organisations, the involvement of public authorities is very low on SOs 1.1 'Research and innovation infrastructures', and 1.3 'Non-technological innovation'. It is far above the average for SO 1.2 'Smart specialisation'.

The involvement of public authorities is consistently between 19 and 26% in Priority 2 'Efficient management of natural resources', and high in Priority 3, with the notable exception of SO 3.4 'Environmentally friendly shipping'.

A more in-depth look at the involvement of local, regional and national public authorities per SO (see previous Table 3-1 and Table 3-2) shows that involvement varies between the SOs for these types of institution. However, local, regional or national authorities are not generally under-represented.

Figure 3-8 Split between public authorities and other partners (2014-2020), by SO
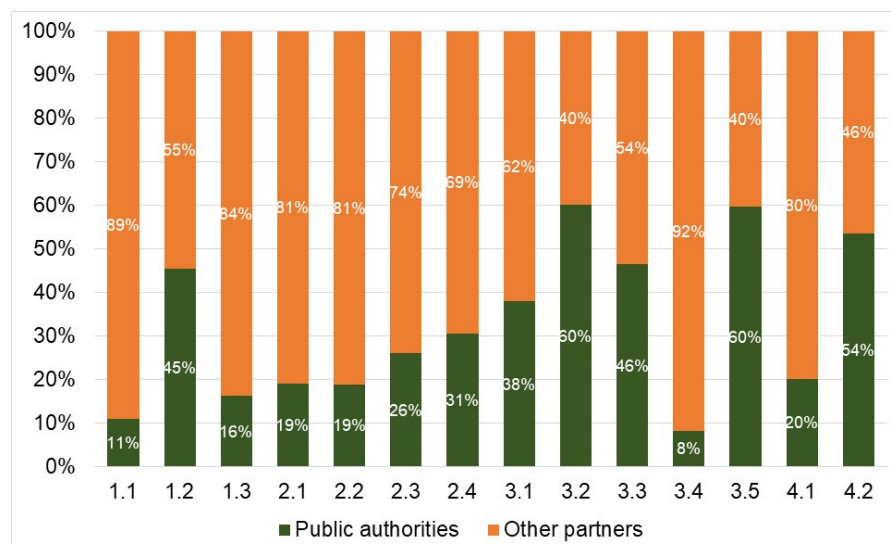
Source: own elaboration based on extraction from the Programme's BAMOS system (June 13th, 2018).

In the survey of project partners, 87% of survey respondents indicated that their project involved a public authority. They also indicated a wide range of benefits brought by involving public authorities in projects.

The vast majority of respondents regarded the translation of the project into public policies as the main advantage of involving such partners. Another 'downstream' contribution, related to the former point, is wider distribution of project results.

Other benefits with a high impact on the projects include 'upstream' knowledge transfer from the authorities to project managers, especially insights on rules and procedures, knowledge on the needs of target groups, practical knowledge, input from experts, and, to a lesser extent, data. Contacts and access to networks, for both upstream and downstream information sharing, is the second most relevant benefit according to respondents.

Academic-related contributions about sharing research and the transfer of project results into research are regarded as low in importance in the relationship with public authorities. This aspect, although largely understandable and in line with expectations, may expose weaknesses in the links between public authorities and academia, given that public authorities seem unable to function as a liaison between the projects and academic institutions.

Figure 3-9 Benefits brought by public authorities to projects (Q28, n=48)

Benefits brought by public authorities to projects

Benefit	%
Possible transfer of project results into public policies	88%
Contacts and access to networks	73%
Wider distribution of project results	67%
Insights into specific rules and procedures	65%
Knowledge on specific needs of target groups	60%
Practical "on-the ground" knowledge	56%
Possible transfer of project results into practice	48%
Input from Experts	46%
Data	27%
Studies and research results	17%
Other (please specify)	8%
Possible transfer of project results into academic research	6%

Survey Question Q28: 'What are, in your opinion, the benefits brought by public authorities to your project?' (Given response options + Other).
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

Other benefits reported by survey respondents include most relevantly:

- the role of public authorities as advocates of public interest makes them interested in broadly applicable solutions (not merely research or profit oriented);

- longer-term plans (as a policy-driven intervention) bring an added value to drive the concept and implementation of actions.

So, lower participation of public authorities might lead to a reduced transfer of project results into public policies and narrower dissemination. This might hamper the transfer of project results in general and reduce the effectiveness of learning in projects. However, as long as other public or quasi-public organisations (such as sectoral agencies or public service providers) increase their share among project partners, the functions of public authorities might still be present in projects.

Case study research shows that local, regional and national public authorities are still well represented in projects. Each administrative level has a different function and can be relevant for the project's success, depending on the content and objective of each project. None of the analysed projects had problems with (low) public authority participation.
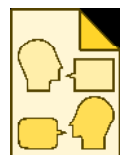
An increase in the involvement of public institutions is often regarded by programme body interviewees would test the relevance of projects for feasible and relevant policy objectives. This suggests that involving public authorities can be key in steering the projects toward objectives that are more likely to be consistent with local policy orientations, and could therefore be more likely to receive support and create impact outside the Programme context.

> How and why has the participation of research organisations changed compared to the predecessor programme? What effect has this had on project results?
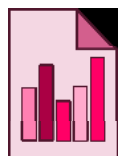
Comparing the participation of academic and research organisations between Interreg BSR 2007-2013 and Interreg BSR 2014-2020 reveals that the share of such partners has increased from 25% to 30%.

When analysing the relative distribution of academic and research institutions in Interreg BSR 2014-2020 across SOs, shares for single SOs are more than 16% away from the average, with the exception of SO 4.2 'Coordination of macro-regional cooperation'.
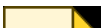
This generally balanced picture suggests that the thematic focus of the project does not explain the level of involvement of academic partners. That may be more linked to the availability of capacities and competences compared to other types of partners, as suggested by some interviewees (see the interviews section below). However, there is slightly less involvement for projects under Priority 3 'sustainable transport', which, in turn, has the highest concentration of both public authorities and private for-profit partners, as discussed above.

Figure 3-10 Split between academic and research partners and other partners, by SO
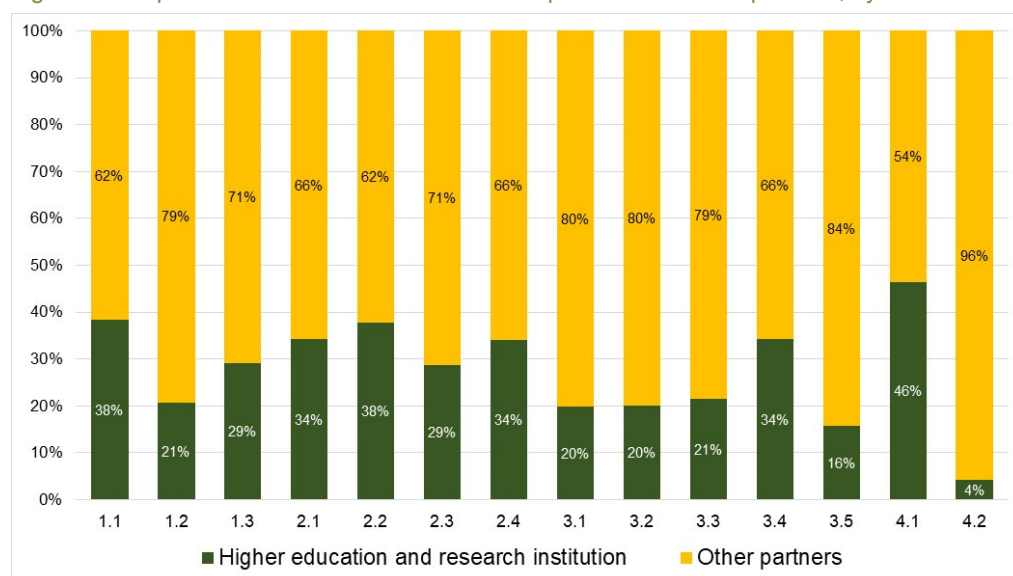
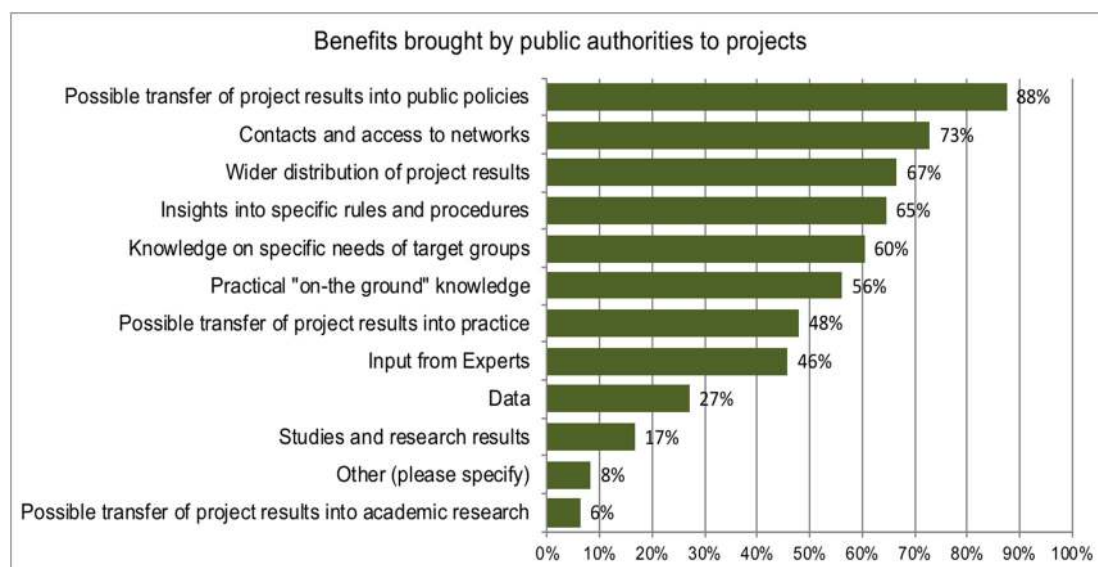Source: own elaboration based on extraction from the Programme's BAMOS system (June 13th, 2018).

The reduced involvement of academic partners in transport-related measures is also evident when analysing the distribution of such partners across priorities for the last two programming periods. Fewer academic institutions are involved in transport-related priorities (Priority 2 for 2007-2013, and Priority 3 for 2014-2020) than in innovation-related priorities (36% in 2007-2013, and 33% in 2014-2020) and resources-related priorities (25% in 2007-2013, and 34% in 2014-2020).
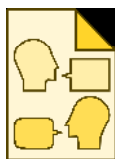
A large share of programme body interviewees pointed to the over-representation of research institutions and universities as a key issue and regard more involvement of public authorities to be desirable instead. This point was the most referred-to observation on partner involvement. The overrepresentation of academic and research institutions is explained by some respondents as being due to advantages enjoyed by such institutions in drafting applications. Academic institutions are deemed to have more capacity and competences available for preparing Interreg projects compared to public authorities and, arguably, to private, for-profit partners as well. Some respondents regard this factor as distorting the selection of projects, which can be sustained by the analysis.

In the survey of project partners, 93% of respondents confirmed that their project involves at least one research or higher education organisation. Academic and research organisations bring a set of specific benefits to projects. In many cases, they provide new and updated knowledge, as well as evidence on general beliefs and observations to the other partners.

Figure 3-11 Benefits brought by research organisations to projects (Q26, n=50)
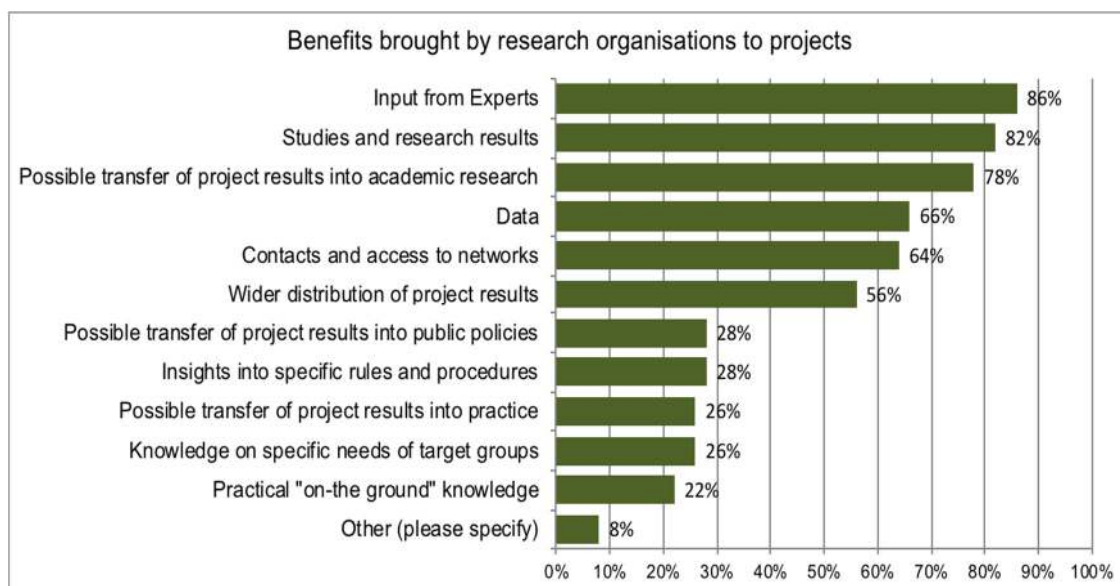
Survey Question Q26: 'What are, in your opinion, the benefits brought by research organisations to your project?' (Given response options + Other).
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

The most often indicated benefits brought by academic and research organisations to the projects, for survey respondents, have all been research-related contributions (inputs from experts, studies and research results, and possible transfer of project results into academic research, as well as data). Contacts and access to networks, as well as the possibility to distribute and share project results and findings to a wider public, are also benefits deriving from the involvement of this kind of partner. Less common were benefits related to more practical and implementation aspects, as well as a knowledge of target groups.

Research and higher education partners are key to most projects, as they provide input from experts in the content field of the project. During the project, they provide and elaborate studies and research. But academic and research partners also benefit from the projects, as they receive feedback from other partners (e.g. public authorities, infrastructure and service providers, private companies, business associations, companies) and feed this into the academic research and, in particular, into education. This means, that projects generally benefit from inputs provided by academic and research experts, and also from the organisational capacities in HEI and research organisations to organise larger and transnational projects.

At the same time, when too many research and academic partners are in a project, the projects could get too expert-driven and too academic so the fruitful exchange with other types of partners and feedback circles get lost. In this sense, it is important to balance the types of organisations in the project, to avoid this institutional 'lock-in' effect.

 Case study analysis confirms that research and higher education partners are well represented in projects. These partners have a clear role in the project and provide knowledge and expertise. This high representation also seems to be beneficial as it brings together a) researchers from different countries, b) researchers with practitioners, decision-makers and business people, and c) researchers from different disciplines – which is most relevant for any innovative project. Hence, it is not as easy to say that the number of HEI and research partner should be limited in a project, as it depends on the type and role of the different partners. An example is the BALT@SENIOR project that brings together researchers and experts in ergonomics and health (for elderly people) with colleagues in design, engineering, architecture and innovation. This mixture produces new knowledge that is transferred to 1) furniture companies, 2) students, and 3) policy-makers. At the same time, the high representation of HEI partners in the project compared to target group representatives (e.g. clusters, business associations) leads to a slight bias towards academic research and prototype development, rather than disseminating practical and hands-on results to the final target groups. They could indirectly prefer the second target groups of students, as they are in the direct surroundings of the HEI project partners.

This example shows the advantages and potential inconveniences of having many research and academic partners in a project. To avoid this, each project should ensure a mix of different types of partner from the beginning.

4 Contribution to EUSBSR

This section looks at the contribution of the Interreg Baltic Sea Programme to the EUSBSR.

4.1 Summary of conclusions

The analysis provides answers to the evaluation question:

> How has the Programme, through its thematic objectives, contributed to the (successful) implementation of the EUSBSR?

- The Interreg BSR programme supports 44 of the flagship projects through programme priorities 1-3. Overall, 60% of IBSR projects are labelled as flagships or parts of flagship initiatives supporting the EUBSBR.

- Given the thematic alignment and character of IBSR projects (transnational, innovative, inviting non-EU partners), not only projects qualified as EUSBSR flagships, but most IBSR projects contribute to the implementation of EUSBSR in one or more thematic areas. Of course, EUSBSR flagships have a clear and obvious contribution to the EUSBSR, but non-flagship projects can also be relevant if they find other ways to exchange and articulate with EUSBSR stakeholders.

- The strong contribution of IBSR to EUSBSR implementation can also be observed in the increased formal communication between the two. In June 2017 a joint meeting of Interreg BSR Monitoring Committee and the EUSBSR National Coordinators (NC) took place. Corresponding jointly coordinated activities started in 2017, so the contribution of IBSR to EUSBSR even increase in the future. While this can be seen as generally positive as it increases the alignment between Programme and Strategy to the benefit of project partners and final beneficiaries, it also raises the question of EUSBSR becoming more dependent on the IBSR for its implementation and support for coordination and governance.

- In addition, the new instrument of 'project platforms' might increase the contribution of IBSR to EUSBSR implementation. These platforms will clearly support the work of EUSBSR stakeholders and facilitate knowledge management around EUSBSR implementation.

- 92% of the 50 project partners (Priorities 1-3) that responded to the survey feel that their project strongly contributes to EUSBSR. 32% of them even think that their contribution is very strong. It is noteworthy survey responses even highlight links that are not formally fixed through the status of a EUSBSR flagship. 92 % of respondents assess the effect of the project's alignment to reach to target groups as positive / very positive, with 87% mentioning the largest effect of EUSBSR alignment as the dissemination of project results. 86% of respondents mention that the definition of challenges in the policy area is another positive / very positive effect of the alignment, while 84% assessed the use of project outputs in policy-making as positive / very positive.

> Are there differences in quality and achievements between EUSBSR flagship projects supported by the Programme and other projects in the Programme?

- The separation into flagship and non-flagship projects in IBSR seems to be artificial, not strict across all Policy and horizontal areas, and ambiguous in some cases.

- Whether the flagship status makes a difference in overall regional development compared to projects with no flagship label, the analysis shows no large differences. An overall judgement is also difficult to make, as quality and achievements differ between EUSBSR flagships.

- Overall, it seems there is no structural difference in quality and achievements between flagships and other IBSR projects. All good quality projects can contribute to the EUSBSR. However, flagships seem to benefit in some areas more from their status, for example, in the preparatory project phase (better definition of larger challenges in a given policy field) and in the final and ex-post project phases (better outreach to target groups, higher visibility, including to EUSBSR PACs and HACs and stakeholders, more effective dissemination of project results and the facilitation and use of project outputs in policy-making).

Has the Programme's alignment with the EUSBSR raised awareness about the Programme?

- The analysis reveals that, overall, alignment with the EUSBSR increased awareness of the Programme, even if it was known to many stakeholders from before the EUSBSR existed.

- According to the analysis, the EUSBSR is an important channel to raise awareness of the IBSR Programme.

- A survey of thematic experts in the BSR asked those not naturally involved with the Programme or any of its projects about their awareness and links with EUSBSR. 48% of respondents are aware or well aware of the IBSR Programme. This figure can serve as a baseline for future evaluations and studies.

- A regular update of the survey of thematic experts to check the awareness of IBSR is recommended and to be able to compare over time.

Are there new project partners or target groups due to the Programme's EUSBSR support?

- The analysis shows that the programme's support for EUSBSR helps reach target groups, but ambivalent in attracting 'new' partners. Most project partners indicated in a survey that alignment with EUSBSR has a positive effect on the outreach to target groups. Some project partners and MC members indicate that there are new partners due to the Programme's alignment with EUSBSR, while others think there are not. There may be an effect on the attraction of partners, but this cannot be quantified or generalised for all projects.

- One example of an effect can be seen in the case study projects for national public authorities, ERDF MAs or national and regional sectoral agencies (e.g. innovation agencies).

4.2 Context

According to Article 27 of the ESIF Common Provisions Regulation (No. 1313/2013), programmes in regions or Member States that participate in macro-regional strategies should set out the contribution of the planned interventions in the strategies, according to the needs of the programme area. The Interreg Baltic Sea Programme contributes to implementation of the EUSBSR, not only through Priority 4, a

priority dedicated to supporting the EUSBSR, but also through projects in its other three programme priorities and the synergies that can develop through them.

The Interreg BSR programme recognises the mutual benefits of the programme and EUSBSR. The Programme offers a functioning instrument to finance flagships and support EUSBSR implementation, while the strategy offers a platform to increase visibility and relevance of the BSR programme projects[8]. Hence the programme and EUSBSR have interlinked and thematically aligned further to leverage the effects for funding and institutional support.

The Interreg Baltic Sea Programme and EUSBSR have established many synergies. The priorities and SOs are not directly aligned, since both programming cycles have been mostly independent with different time frames and objectives. However, many similarities can be found. The Programme's priorities and the strategy's objectives are largely consistent, even though both cover the same territory, there is no official or formal alignment of the two. Nevertheless, covering the same territory implies that both the Programme and the strategy and their synergies aim for territorial development of the BSR.

4.3 Evaluation findings

The following section gives answers to the evaluation questions based on the desk study, interviews with programme bodies, survey with project partners and PACs/HACs, case studies, focus group and monitoring data.

> How has the Programme, through its thematic objectives, contributed to the (successful) implementation of the EUSBSR?

Given the commonalities between the Programme and the EUSBSR, an important contribution to successful implementation of EUSBSR can be expected. With regard to thematic objectives 1 to 3, the contribution becomes evident with the synergy between SOs for the IBSR with policy and horizontal areas for EUSBSR.

In addition, the high number of EUSBSR flagships supported under the IBSR Programme indicates the relevance that the IBSR programme has for implementing the EUSBSR. Other information sources confirm this important contribution. The following in-depth analysis shows details of the contribution.

From analysis of existing documents, Interreg BSR Programme's priority axes and SOs are mostly thematically aligned with EUSBSR objectives and sub-objectives. The EUSBSR objectives and sub-objectives have largely stayed the same despite Action Plan revisions in 2013 and 2015. Nevertheless, the Interreg BSR Programme adjusted its priorities and SOs widely to EUSBSR objectives, enabling more alignment and synergies between the two.

The matrix analysis (see figure 4.1 on the next page) shows that all Programme SOs contribute directly and indirectly to one or more sub-objectives of the EUSBSR. All priority axes of the Programme

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[8] Interreg BSR: Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. Page 4.

contribute to objectives of the EUSBSR. The matrix below shows the thematic alignment between IBSR SOs and EUSBSR Policy Areas and Horizontal Areas. The matrix distinguishes between direct alignment, where IBSR SOs have a direct link with the areas covered by EUSBSR, and indirect alignment, where IBSR SOs are indirectly linked to EUSBSR. An example is a horizontal issue, or an SO which can have indirect thematic linkages with a policy area. Overall, each SO contributes to at least one policy area of the EUSBSR, either directly or indirectly.

Given the specific character of the Interreg Programme, all of its projects could indirectly contribute to horizontal areas of Neighbours and Capacities. Most of the projects also cover Spatial Planning. While there is no SO explicitly for climate change adaptation in the Programme, 'climate change mitigation and adaptation' is a cross-cutting issue for IBSR and there are many projects contributing to this topic dealing with e.g. energy efficiency, renewable energy, water management or sustainable urban transport. Many projects indicate their contribution to climate change in the AF.

Given the thematic alignment and character of IBSR projects (transnational, innovative, inviting non-EU partners), beyond EUSBSR flagship projects, most IBSR projects contribute to EUSBSR in one or more thematic areas. Of course, EUSBSR flagships have a clear and obvious contribution to EUSBSR, but non-flagship projects can have the same relevance if they find other ways to exchange and articulate with EUSBSR stakeholders. Even if the classification into flagships and non-flagships is somehow artificial, analysis of EUSBSR flagships in the IBSR Programme shows the strong contribution of IBSR projects to EUSBSR implementation.

Figure 4-1 Matrix with thematic alignment between the Interreg BSR Programme and EUSBSR Policy Areas and Horizontal Areas

Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme	EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea	Save the sea						Increase Prosperity					Connect the region		Horizontal Actions			
		Nutri	Hazards	Bio-economy	Ship	Safe	Secure	Tourism	Culture	Innovation	Health	Education	Transport	Energy	Spatial Planning	Neighbours	Capacity	Climate
Priority axis 1 - Capacity for innovation	SO 1.1 'Research and innovation infrastructures'			indirect						direct	indirect	indirect				indirect	indirect	indirect
	SO 1.2 - 'Smart specialisation'			indirect						direct	indirect					indirect	indirect	indirect
	SO 1.3 - 'Non-technological innovation'							indirect	indirect	direct	indirect	indirect				indirect	indirect	indirect
Priority axis 2 - Efficient management of natural resources	SO 2.1 - 'Clear waters'	direct			direct						indirect				indirect	indirect		indirect
	SO 2.2 - 'Renewable energy'							indirect						direct	indirect	indirect		indirect
	SO 2.3 - 'Energy efficiency'													direct	indirect	indirect		indirect
	SO 2.4 - 'Resource-efficient blue growth'			indirect				indirect		direct					indirect	indirect		indirect
Priority axis 3 - Sustainable transport	SO 3.1 - 'Interoperability of transport modes'		indirect		direct		direct						direct		direct	indirect	indirect	
	SO 3.2 - 'Accessibility of remote areas and areas affected by demographic change'														direct	indirect	indirect	
	SO 3.3 - 'Maritime safety'				indirect	direct	direct					indirect			indirect	indirect		
	SO 3.4 - 'Environmentally friendly shipping'				direct			indirect					indirect		indirect	indirect		indirect
	SO 3.5 - 'Environmentally friendly urban mobility'														direct	indirect	indirect	

direct alignment   indirect alignment

Source: IBSR Cooperation Programme and EUSBSR Action Plan.

What is a EUSBSR Flagship? Flagships are macro-regional projects which demonstrate the progress of the EUSBSR and serve as pilot initiatives for desired change in the region. They can take various forms including a single project, a set of projects contributing to the same action, a network or a thematic cooperation platform. The flagship label is the result of a policy discussion among EUSBSR PACs or HACs and the Steering Group members of a EUSBSR policy area or horizontal action. It can lead to key solutions, new methodologies, practices or new forms of cooperation[9]. The process of flagship labelling is independent from the selection process of projects within the IBSR Programme. An IBSR project can be labelled as a flagship in the application phase or later during its implementation. An IBSR project can be a flagship project in itself or only one part of a larger EUSBSR flagship initiative. A formalised network labelled as a EUSBSR flagship can be a project partner within an IBSR project. Hence, the types of relationships (and the potential magnitude of contributions) between IBSR projects and EUSBSR flagships can be very diverse and cannot be easily classified or quantified.
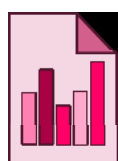
In the current 2014-2020 programming period the Interreg BSR programme supports 44 of the flagship projects through its first three programme priorities. Overall, 44 of the 74 Interreg BSR projects are labelled as flagships or parts of flagship initiatives supporting the EUBSBR, accounting for about 60% of all IBSR projects. The supported projects are presented per programme priority in the table below.

Table 4-1 EUSBSR flagships under the different IBSR Programme priorities

IBSR Programme Priority	EUSBSR flagships	Flagships in % of IBSR projects	Non-EU partners in flagships
1. Innovation	16 Flagships: Baltic Game Industry, Baltic Tram, BFCC, BSN, CM, DIGINNO, Smart Blue Regions, BSR Stars S3, Baltse@nior, BIC, SmartUp Accelerator, IRIS, PRoVaHealth, LARS, RDI2Club, Smart-Up BSR	53%	Nine involve non-EU member states as partners. CM (Cross Motion), Baltse@nior, BSR Starts S3, LARS, RDI2CLUB, DIGINNO involve partners from Norway, while SMARTUP ACCELERATOR, IRIS and SMART-UP BSR involve partners from Russia.
2. Natural Resources	18 Flagships: ActNow, ALLIANCE, Baltic Blue Growth, Baltic InteGrid, Baltic Lines, Baltic Slurry Acidification, BalticRIM, BEA-APP, BEST, CWPharma, DAIMON, EFFECT4Buildings, HAZBREF, IWAMA, MANURE STANDARDS, NonHazCity, RETROUT, WAMBAF	72%	Six flagships involve partners from non-EU partner states. DAIMON and EFFECT4BUILDINGS involve partners from Norway, while MANURE STANDARDS, BEST, BALTICRIM and ACT NOW involve partners from Russia.
3. Transport	10 Flagships: ChemSAR, DiveSMART-Baltic, EMMA, EnViSum, HAZARD, NSBCore, Scandria2ACT, TENTacle, R-Mode Baltic, ECOPRODIGI	53%	Five flagships involve partners from non-EU partner states. SCANDRI®2ACT, ENVISUM, TENTACLE, ECOPRODIGI and R-Mode Baltic involve partners from

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IBSR Programme Priority	EUSBSR flagships	Flagships in % of IBSR projects	Non-EU partners in flagships
			Norway, while none involves partners from Russia.

Source: Own elaboration based on information from https://projects.interreg-baltic.eu/projects

At the moment, there are 30 projects supported under Priority 1, of which 16 are EUSBSR flagships funded by the Interreg BSR under the priority 'Capacity for innovation'. These flagships correspond to EUSBSR Policy Areas Innovation (13 projects), Education (1) and Culture (2).

Priority 2 'Efficient Management of Natural Resources' supports 25 projects of which 18 are EUSBSR flagships. These flagships correspond to EUSBSR Policy Areas Bioeconomy (4 projects), Culture (1), Energy (3), Hazards (4), Innovation (1), Nutri (3), as well as two projects which support the EUSBSR Horizontal Action 'Spatial Planning'.

Of the 19 Interreg BSR programmes under Priority 3 'Sustainable transport', 10 are EUSBSR flagships. These correspond to EUSBSR Policy Areas Safe (3 projects), Secure (1), Ship (2) and Transport (4).

The strong contribution of IBSR to EUSBSR implementation can also be observed in the increased formal communication between the two. In this line, in June 2017 there was a joint meeting of Interreg BSR Monitoring Committee and the EUSBSR National Coordinators (NC). It was initiated by some IBSR MC members to see how to better exploit and enhance the IBSR contribution to EUSBSR. It was the first of its kind and a background note was published with conclusions[10]. The meeting was well received by participants, who agreed that the Programme substantially contributes to implementation of the EUSBSR. It was concluded that further efforts can be put into maximising the mutual benefits for both Programme and Strategy, for example, through better coordination during Project initiation and development and better capitalisation of project results through instruments like project platforms. Another meeting between the EUSBSR NC and the IBSR MC took place in June 2018, where further alignment was also envisaged during programming for post 2020. Corresponding activities started in 2017, so the contribution of IBSR to EUSBSR should increase in the future. While increasing the alignment between Programme and Strategy to the benefit of project partners and final beneficiaries can be seen as generally positive, it also raises the question of EUSBSR becoming more dependent on the IBSR for implementation and support with coordination and governance.

A new element that might increase the contribution of IBSR to EUSBSR implementation is **project platforms**. Project platforms support cooperation among core partners of projects funded by Interreg BSR and other funding programmes in a certain thematic field, such as blue growth or transport interoperability. Project platforms aim to increase impacts of Interreg BSR and other EU-funded projects in the area. Platforms should ensure more intensive use, better durability and transferability of project

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[10] Swedish Government (2017): Background note: Joint Interreg BSR Monitoring Committee and the EU Strategy for the BSR National Coordinators group meeting. 15 June 2017.

outcomes[11]. Taking into account the results of similar initiatives of project clustering from the previous programming period 2007-2013, project platforms increase visibility and cooperation between projects in a thematic field. Even if platforms have to be built on IBSR projects, they invite and integrate EUSBSR PACs and HACs, as well as partner organisations from projects from other Interreg programmes, such as South Baltic, Central Baltic, North Sea Region, Central Europe, Northern Periphery and Arctic. The BONUS Programme and other EU funding programmes are invited to join. Furthermore, platforms are encouraged to involve other important stakeholders (e.g. intergovernmental organisations or national decision-makers). Project platforms clearly support the work of EUSBSR stakeholders and facilitate knowledge management around EUSBSR implementation.
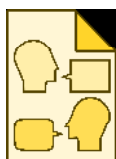
The views among the MA/JS, national delegations and Monitoring Committee members of Interreg BSR programme support to the EUSBSR through Priorities 1-3 vary, as does their awareness of EUSBSR. More information exchange and awareness raising would be beneficial, while more communication between the programme and EUSBSR players could be envisaged, to also develop more strategic projects together. The number of flagships supported is seen as satisfactory by interviewees who say the label gives more visibility, although there is no sign of quality in the flagship label. Interviews with national delegations also confirmed the importance and usefulness of Interreg BSR programme funding support. Interviewees say that more alignment between the Programme and EUSBSR would be positive for both, as well as for all stakeholders. However, it should be clear that the Interreg programme should not be the only funding source for the EUSBSR. National funding and funds from the mainstream programmes also need to be capitalised on in the future. This will also require a political commitment which at the moment is not very high. Furthermore, the strategy is broader than projects, and would need to go beyond their administrative focus to a more strategic perspective. A first step would be the project platforms.

The survey of all IBSR project partners gives interesting insights on project alignment with EUSBSR. 92% of the 50 respondents feel that their project strongly contributes to EUSBSR, 32% even think their contribution is very strong. Most respondents indicate a link to at least one EUSBSR policy area. This shows that they know the EUSBSR and feel that they contribute to the Strategy.

It is noteworthy that survey responses even mention links that are not formally fixed through the status of a EUSBSR flagship. This confirms that the contribution of IBSR projects to EUSBSR implementation is not only limited to the flagship projects.

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[11] Interreg BSR Website: Project Platforms. Six project platforms have been approved in the first call (by end of July 2018). A second Call for Project Platforms will be launched in October 2018.

Figure 4-2 Opinion of IBSR project partners about their contribution to the EUSBSR in different policy areas (Q34, n=54) (multiple answers were possible)
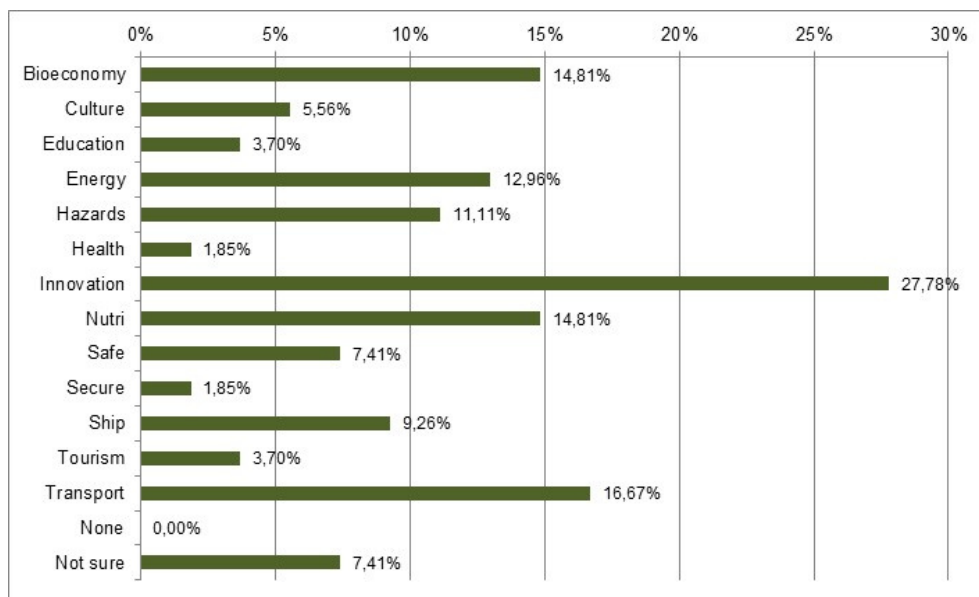
Survey Question Q34: 'Is your project aligned/linked to one or more policy areas of the EU Strategy for the BSR (EUSBSR)?' (Multiple answers were possible).
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

Asked about the effects of having a (perceived) link to the EUSBSR), survey respondents highlight that alignment of their project with the EUSBSR is generally very positive effect for defining challenges in the policy area, for using outputs in policy-making, disseminating project results and for a wider outreach to target groups.

Some 92% of respondents assess the effect of the project's alignment to outreach to target groups as positive / very positive, with 87% mentioning the largest effect of EUSBSR alignment as dissemination of project results. 86% of respondents mention that the definition of challenges in the policy area is another positive / very positive effect of the alignment, while 84% assess the use of project outputs in policy-making as positive / very positive. Project management, continuity of action and attraction of partners were named as areas where EUSBSR alignment rarely has a negative effect. None of the respondents replied that aligning their projects with the EUSBSR brought any very negative effect.

Figure 4-3 Assessment by project partners of effects aligning projects with EUSBSR (Q36, n=44-47)
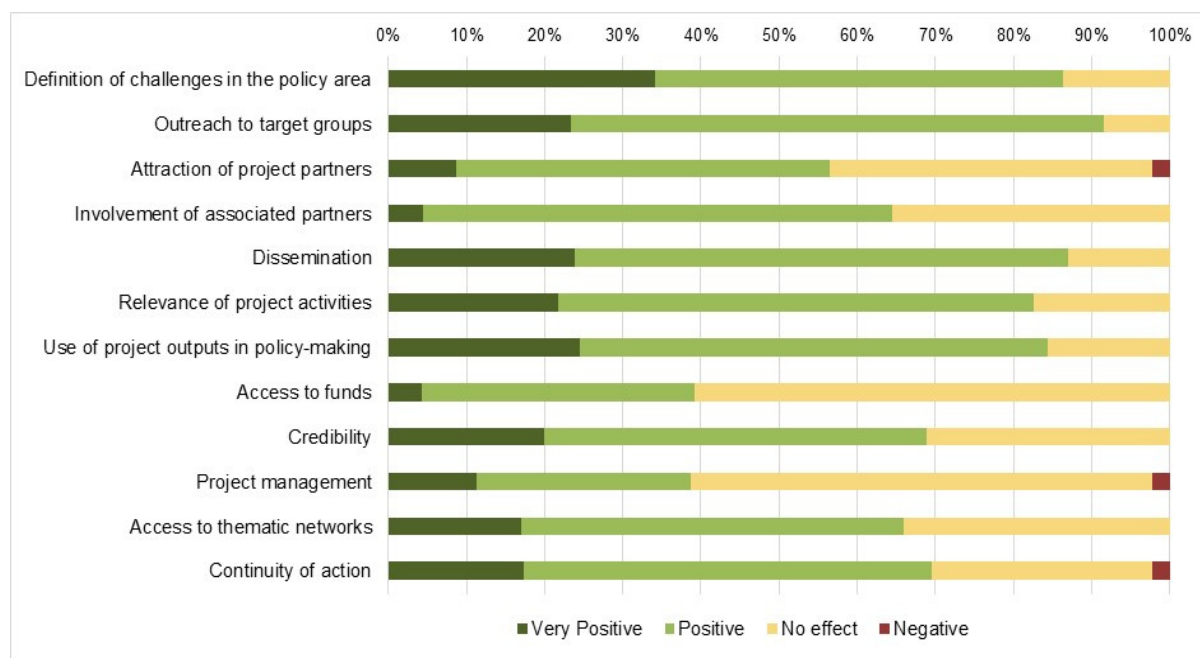
Survey Question Q36: 'How do you evaluate the effect of your project's alignment with EUSBSR on each of these aspects in relation to your project?' (Very negative, negative, no effect, positive, very positive).
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

Survey respondents mentioned examples of projects that significantly contribute to the EUSBSR. For them, this is mainly achieved by project results produced, which contribute to implementing the EUSBSR. For instance, the Baltic InteGrid project increased awareness about meshed grids in the energy policy discussions, as well as of sustainable energy and increased security of supply, being in line with EUSBSR goals. Another example is the IWAMA project, which apart from being a EUSBSR flagship, also contributes to horizontal action 'Neighbours of the EUSBSR'. The project IRIS contributes to EUSBSR priority axis Innovation, promoting support for entrepreneurship, business development, science and increased innovation capacity.

The case study analysis and qualitative review confirms the positive contribution of projects to EUSBSR. Projects contribute either directly (e.g. as a flagship project) or indirectly to EUSBSR implementation.

One example is the EUSBSR flagship project SMART BLUE REGIONS under the SUBMARINER umbrella network. The link with the programme leads to further joint dissemination activities, including participation in international seminars on combining smart specialisation with maritime and blue growth issues. To extend knowledge on this issue, meetings with priority axis Innovation have also taken place. The project benefits by disseminating its results from established links with the network of ERDF MAs established within EUSBSR.

Are there differences in quality and achievements between EUSBSR flagship projects supported by the Programme and other projects in the Programme?

When it comes to whether flagship projects make more difference to regional development compared to projects with no flagship label, the analysis shows no large differences. An overall judgement is also difficult, as quality and achievements vary also within the group of EUSBSR flagships.

Analysing the planned and achieved output indicators for IBSR projects in general, there are no large differences in achievements between flagship and other Interreg BSR projects. This supports the evaluation that there is no structural difference in effectiveness and achievements between flagships and non-flagship projects. However, minor differences can be observed with regard to the pattern of expected and achieved outputs, as can be observed below.

Table 4-2 Outputs expected per project: IBSR average, EUSBSR flagships and non-flagships

Target values	Average of expected outputs per project		
Output Indicator	Average of IBSR Projects	Average of IBSR Projects that are EUSBSR flagships	Average of IBSR Projects that are not - flagships
P1 No. of local/regional public authorities/institutions involved	3.46	3.62	3.25
P2 No. of national public authorities/institutions involved	1.55	2.02	0.94
P3 No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support	1.91	1.81	2.03
P4 No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support	96.00	94.62	97.81
P5 No. of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	31.36	35.79	25.56
P6 No. of documented newly developed market products and services	3.24	1.93	4.97
P7 Amount of private investments matching public support in innovation or R&D projects in EUR	111 949.92	161 442.14	46 991.38
P8 Amount of documented planned investments to be realised with other than the Programme funding in EUR	86 318.14	129 976.31	29 016.78

Source: Analysis based on values for Output Indicators in AFs. Data extracted from BAMOS Monitoring System

As can be observed, EUSBSR flagships do not generally expect higher outputs than non-flagships. In fact, some flagships foresee higher outputs (highlighted in the table), but also some non-flagships envisage higher outputs than the IBSR project average.

Table 4-3 Outputs achieved so far per project: IBSR average, EUSBSR flagships and non-flagships

Achievements	Average of achieved outputs per project		
Output Indicator	Average of IBSR Projects	Average of IBSR Projects that are EUSBSR flagships	Average of IBSR Projects that are not - flagships
P1 No. of local/regional public authorities/institutions involved	1.51	2.26	0.53
P2 No. of national public authorities/institutions involved	0.57	0.88	0.16
P3 No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support	0.96	1.38	0.41
P4 No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support	17.97	9.31	29.34
P5 No. of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	5.38	6.71	3.63
P6 No. of documented newly developed market products and services	0.35	0.38	0.31
P7 Amount of private investments matching public support in innovation or R&D projects in EUR	1 394.76	770.83	2 213.66
P8 Amount of documented planned investments to be realised with other than the Programme funding in EUR	677.03	1 192.86	0.00

Source: Analysis based on values for Output Indicators in most recent Progress Reports. Data extracted from BAMOS Monitoring System.

Also, for achieved outputs, no general difference can be observed for flagships or non-flagships compared to the average. Again, flagships have more achievements for some indicators and non-flagships more with others. The differences might be explained as follows:

- Flagships involve more national public authorities/institutions than non-flagships, as they receive more support from national institutions in general.

- Flagships focus more on cooperation between enterprises and research institutions, as they are more often based on a triple helix approach or a network approach.

- Flagships are less focused on markets, or product development, but more on policies and public policy solutions.

- Flagships have a higher leverage of additional financial commitments and resources beyond Programme funding due to wider access to national institutions and sectoral agencies, and more synergies with other International and transnational cooperation programmes.

- Non-flagships are generally more focused on markets and private sector development, so they target enterprises and the development of new products and services more.

- Non-flagships aim more at leveraging additional private investments and try to establish continuity of project results through private commitments.

These explanations describe general trends and cannot be applied to every single project.

It is still too early to carry out a thorough analysis of the effectiveness of projects. Some projects still do not report any achievements. However, analysing the level of effectiveness, i.e. achievements compared to expected outputs, effectiveness still varies a lot between different indicators. Given the early stage of project implementation, a detailed analysis would only give incomplete and biased results.

The survey of EUSBSR PACs and HACs confirm the valuable contribution of IBSR projects to EUSBSR implementation. Respondents stressed that **Interreg Baltic Sea projects in general** contribute significantly to EUSBSR. 82% of respondents believe that Interreg BSR projects have a high or very high contribution to implementation of the EUSBSR, of that 25% believe they have a very high contribution. 11% believe there is a medium-high contribution and 7% think there is a low contribution. Asked the same question of **EUSBSR flagships funded under IBSR**, the picture confirms the opinion that '*flagship projects are the most important instrument for the implementation of our objectives*' with 96% of respondents they make a high or very high contribution to EUSBSR implementation. Of that 56% believe that they have a very high contribution. 4% believe that there is a medium-high contribution and nobody thinks there is a low contribution to the EUSBSR.

The answers vary from one HAC/PAC to another, depending if there are currently projects or flagships funded by the IBSR in their field. However, IBSR projects are generally valued as highly relevant for EUSBSR implementation. In the opinion of HACs and PACs, projects and especially flagships have high quality and broad visibility. Furthermore, flagships extend and build networks, while producing outcomes that feed into macro-regional policy. Examples of flagships that contribute to EUSBSR implementation, according to respondents are HAZARD, BSR Stars, IWAMA and Baltic Blue Growth flagship projects implementing priority axis 'Nutri' actions.

The case studies do not highlight any differences in quality and achievements between flagships and other IBSR projects. Projects seem not to work or perform differently if they are flagships or not. One project (GoLNG) even looks forward applying for flagship status due to its successful implementation in their thematic field.

Overall, it seems that there is no structural difference in quality and achievements between flagships and other IBSR projects. All projects, if they are good quality, can contribute to EUSBSR. However, flagships seem to benefit in some areas more from their status, mostly in the preparatory phase (better definition of larger challenges in a policy field) as well as the final and ex-post project phases (better outreach to target groups, higher visibility, including EUSBSR PACs and HACs and stakeholders, more effective dissemination of project results and the facilitation and use of project outputs in policy-making).

Has the Programme's alignment with EUSBSR raised awareness about the Programme?

The analysis reveals that aligning the Programme with EUSBSR increased awareness of the Programme, even if it was known to many stakeholders from before the EUSBSR even existed.

The survey of project partners included the question 'how did you initially become aware of Interreg BSR 2014-2020?'. 16% of respondents became aware of the programme through EUSBSR networks and activities. For example, one project partner highlights that through working in EUSBSR and the policy areas, visibility of the project has increased and so awareness of the programme for target groups. The EUSBSR can, therefore, be seen as an important channel to raise awareness of the IBSR Programme.

Another survey launched in the framework of this evaluation of thematic experts and stakeholders not naturally involved with the Programme or any of its projects asked about their awareness and links with EUSBSR. 48% of respondents are aware or well aware of the IBSR Programme. This does not enable any conclusion on a possible increase in awareness but can serve as a baseline for future evaluations and studies.

Figure 4-4 Awareness of Interreg BSR Programme among thematic experts (n=61)
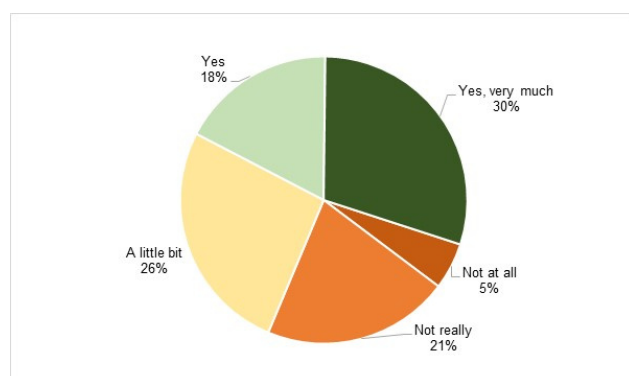
Survey Question QA.1: 'Are you familiar with Interreg BSR 2014-2020?'
Source: Data from survey of thematic experts in the BSR. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

60% of the experts that responded to the survey agree with the idea that alignment between Interreg BSR and the EUSBSR raised awareness of the Programme.

Figure 4-5 Agreement of experts with 'The alignment between Interreg BSR and the EUSBSR raised awareness
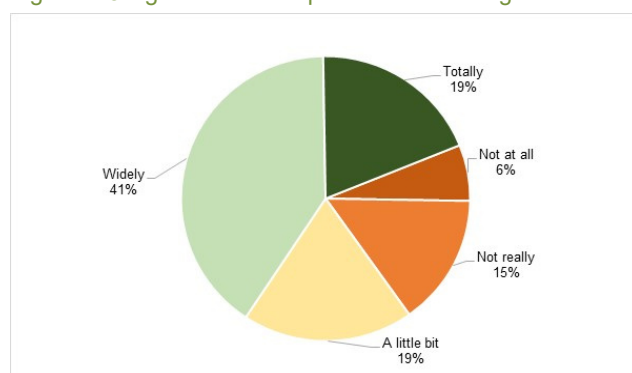
Survey Question QA.4: 'Do you agree with the following statement: 'The alignment between Interreg BSR 2014-2020 and the EUSBSR raised awareness about Interreg BSR 2014-2020'?'
Source: Data from survey of thematic experts in the BSR. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

At the same time, most experts seem to be aware that the Interreg BSR programme supports the EUSBSR, with experts in the thematic fields related to SOs 2.1, 2.3 and 3.4 being the most aware.

Figure 4-6 Awareness regarding support from IBSR to EUSBSR (n=61)
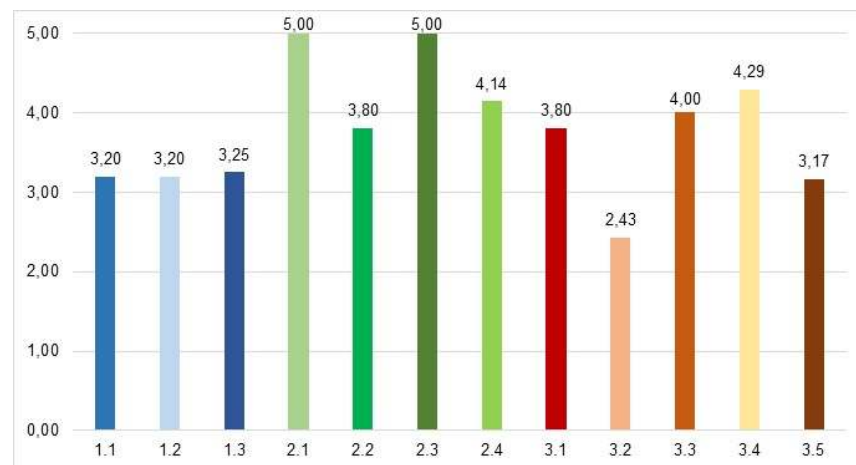
Survey Question QA.3: 'Do you know that Interreg BSR 2014-2020 supports the implementation and coordination of the EUSBSR?'
Source: Data from survey of thematic experts in the BSR. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

> **Are there new project partners or target groups due to the Programme's EUSBSR support?**

The analysis shows that the Programme's support to EUSBSR is useful in improving outreach to target groups, but ambivalent in attracting 'new' partners. Most project partners indicated that alignment with EUSBSR has a positive effect on the outreach to target groups. Some partners and MC members say there are new partners due to the Programme's alignment with EUSBSR, while others think there are not. Thus, alignment may attract partners, but this effect cannot be quantified or generalised for all projects. A small effect can be observed in the case study projects with national public authorities, ERDF MAs or national and regional sectoral agencies (e.g. innovation agencies).

With regard to partnerships, a study on macro-regional strategies shows that these strategies offer more networking opportunities that allow projects to expand their partnerships (Interact, 2017). This is especially the case for flagship projects which gain visibility which encourages extended partnerships. Indeed, the most visible added value of macro-regional strategies is mainly at the final project phase, as they not only offer networking opportunities, but also increase the visibility, dissemination and sustainability of project results (ibid, pg.5).

As regards the responses from the survey to IBSR projects to the question 'how do evaluate the effect of your project's alignment with EUSBSR?' on attracting project partners, replies were 48% positive and 41% no effect. To the same question but for outreach to target groups, 68% of respondents confirmed a positive effect.
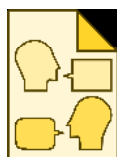
The views from the interviews vary on whether the Programme's EUSBSR support resulted in new partners. One interviewee confirms that flagship projects bring new partners, while another stresses out that this is due not to the Programme's support per se, but to interest in the thematic priorities. A number of interviewees do not confirm this opinion, while some are not aware of such a link.

The analysis of case studies indicates no specific effect on attracting new partners or new target groups due to alignment with EUSBSR. Some projects highlight that they have an easier outreach and contact with specific target groups, mainly national public authorities, ERDF MAs or national and regional sectoral agencies (e.g. innovation agencies).

5 Effectiveness of programme support for EUSBSR coordination (priority 4)

This section looks at the effectiveness of programme support for EUSBSR coordination, focusing on SO 4.2 'Coordination of macro-regional cooperation'.

5.1 Summary of conclusions

The analysis leads to the following answers to the evaluation questions:

> How has Programme support influenced the coordination capacities of PACs/HACs? How has Programme support influenced the (improved) governance structures of the EUSBSR?

- In general, there is a notable and in some areas substantial influence of the Programme on the maintenance and on-going development of EUSBSR governance structures. EUSBSR governance structures are not dependent on the IBSR, as is stressed by many EUSBSR stakeholders. However, other representatives of IBSR and EUSBSR highlight the vital importance of IBSR support to the governance structures and activities such as communication, capacity-building, coordination in the framework of the EUSBSR and the different policy areas and horizontal areas.

- A survey of EUSBSR stakeholders confirms the usefulness of Interreg BSR Programme support to the coordination capacities of PACs and HACs. EUSBSR HACs and PACs perceive an influence of the support in many of their policy area and horizontal activity functions. The most influence is perceived in facilitating the development and implementation of actions and flagships, followed by supporting liaison and cooperation with other PACs and HACs and ensuring the communication and visibility of policy area and horizontal activity. The Interreg BSR programme facilitated policy discussions in the policy area and horizontal activity and monitoring of their progress. Alignment of funding resources and fostering dialogue with bodies in charge of implementing the programme and financial instruments seem to see less support.

- The support is generally appreciated by EUSBSR stakeholders, but the drawbacks (administrative burden) are also highlighted.

- Practical examples of this support were also given by PACs and HACs. The support is especially important as it covers costs which would have been challenging to cover otherwise, such as staff and travel costs, meeting costs, communication activities and the Annual Fora.

- For the Programme, the support to EUSBSR is valuable despite the unexpected heavy workload. The MA/JS sees clear and visible benefits for EUSBSR PACs/HACs, but there may not be a return for the Programme or for regions in the Programme area. Support from the IBSR is convenient for Member States but might weaken their commitment to the EUSBSR, delegating the support to the IBSR. Support via SO 4.2 also creates an increasing dependency of PACs and HACs on the IBSR Programme which may hamper innovative proposals for developing governance in the BSR.

- MC members confirm in interviews that alignment between the Programme and EUSBSR is positive for the whole BSR and for final beneficiaries. There is also a mutual benefit for both,

IBSR and EUSBSR. Without IBSR support, many things in the EUSBSR, such as thematic networking and EUSBSR communication, cannot take place. However, the Interreg programme should not be the only funding source for the EUSBSR.

- Representatives of all programme bodies agree that support for governance and capacities of EUSBSR stakeholders can and should continue but reducing administrative burden (e.g. within the Technical Assistance budget, or as a single larger project or within a single coordination framework supporting all macro-regional strategies). At the same time, countries should show and increase their commitment, for example, by financing governance staff and capacity-building.

> What types of activities have PACs/HACs needed and used the Programme funding for (in comparison to costs covered through other resources)?

- Interreg BSR Programme is in the majority of responses the most relevant funding source for PACs and HACs in their work. Its support is used mainly for covering operational costs such as staff costs and travel costs of PACs/HACs. The programme's support has also been used for covering expenses of organisational activities such Steering Groups meetings, participation in events, seminars, workshops and conferences, but also staff and travel costs. In general, support under SO 4.2 is given to PACs/HACs and not to NCs whose work is financed by their respective ministries. 79% of EUSBSR stakeholders that responded to the survey believe that IBSR resources are highly or very highly relevant for EUSBSR coordination.

- EUSBSR stakeholders mentioned other resources for their own work and overall EUSBSR coordination. Internal resources and national funding are the main alternative sources, while ESIF and other Interreg funding also play a role. ENI programmes have also been mentioned, and the same holds for resources from foundations and NGOs. Additional sources regard direct technical assistance from the European Commission, as well as support from sub-regions, cities, universities and other institutions.

- The PACs and HACs use funding from other sources, as mentioned during the focus group by participants. These include their own organisational resources, Swedish Institute funds, the Baltic Leadership Programme, Erasmus+, Bonus, Horizon 2020, DG ECHO and ESIF as well as Agricultural funds, however these sources are used for funding implementation of flagships and projects and not for coordination per se.

> How has Programme support to PACs/HACs influenced the involvement of the Programme's non-EU partner countries in the EUSBSR?

- EUSBSR stakeholders do not have a clear opinion on the involvement of non-EU partner countries in EUBSSR. 20% of HACs, PACs and NCs that answered the survey think there was a high or very high influence of the Programme on the involvement of non-EU partner countries in EUSBSR. 36% of respondents found that programme support to EUSBSR coordination moderately influenced the involvement of non-EU partner countries in EUSBSR, 28% found that it has a very low influence, and 16% a low influence.

- What is recognised is that the programme has supported projects with the involvement of partner states and has positively influenced the involvement of non-EU member states,

however, for some respondents this is not through Programme support to EUSBSR coordination but rather through projects.

5.2 Context

This chapter concentrates on the SO 4.2 to '*increase capacity of public institutions and pan-Baltic organisations for transnational coordination in implementing the EU Strategy for the BSR and facilitating the implementation of common policies with the partner countries*'[12]. This SO supports EUSBSR PACs and HACs for additional tasks related to their role as coordinators and relating to the implementation of common priorities with partner countries. Programme funds can also cover additional costs for activities such as travel, meetings, communication material or studies as well as staff costs if the tasks are clearly linked to specific activities such preparing specified meetings, coordinating expert inputs for studies, etc. These must be presented in a work plan for implementing different policy and horizontal areas[13].

Figure 5-1 IBSR Support to EUSBSR governance in figures

Source: Interreg BSR. MA/JS. June 2018.

The main target groups of this SO are PACs and HACs as well as international bodies, national ministries and agencies that are coordinators between priorities of the partner countries and the EUSBSR, national coordinators, other national, regional or local authorities, research institutions, intergovernmental organisations and NGOs[14]. Further targeted support regards organisation of the Strategy Annual Forum, information and data gathering, data analysis and promoting flagship results. To date, 29 projects have been supported by SO 4.2. These include:

- Support to PACs and HACs through 25 projects
- Support for organisation of three EUSBSR Annual Fora (2016, 2017 and 2018)
- Support for communication activities through the 'Let's communicate' project.[15]

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[12] Interreg BSR: Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. Page 14.

[13] Interreg BSR: Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. Page 92.

[14] Interreg BSR: Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. Page 93-94.

[15] https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/highlights/item/5-new-chapter-begins-in-the-eusbsr-story

⚘ Some support has been dedicated to capacity-building for EUSBSR stakeholders.

In general, supporting macro-regional coordination and governance is a core challenge for macro-regional areas. Macro-regional strategies are implemented under the 3 NOs principle, i.e. no new funding, no new institutions and no new legislation. Therefore, the 3 NOs presuppose that ownership of macro-regional strategies lies purely in the hands of its key implementers who should best use and capitalise on existing structures and existing funds. This builds a shared responsibility and commitment among stakeholders in the strategies[16]. At the same time, macro-regional strategies have a complex governance structure across different levels, covering different stakeholders and requiring ambitious work for integration of the macro-regional governance system[17]. In general, there is also a different concept of working, macro-regional strategies are more geared towards long-term goals and processes (not specific projects) while at the same time programmes are more short-term, focusing on projects and with strict timing, objectives, administrative rules, reporting, etc.[18]

Nowadays, the implementation and coordination of macro-regional strategies builds on the support of national and regional governments, but mostly and particularly on existing transnational programmes, i.e. Interreg Programmes. Given that no new institutions are created and there are usually limited national or regional resources to cover staff costs for the strategies, such costs for EUSBSR are covered by projects under SO 4.2 of the IBSR. In other macro-regional strategies other ad-hoc solutions were found to support governance. The Interreg Alpine Space supports EUSALP with one large project under its Governance Priority[19]. The EUDSR is supported by European Commission's JRC and has the Danube Strategy Point[20].

The 'use' of existing Interreg Programmes to fund governance activities within macro-regional strategies has several disadvantages. The support has to be organised in the form of projects and with a time limitation in that contradicts the 'process' character of macro-regional cooperation. Because of this there is a relatively high administrative burden on macro-regional stakeholders that have to formulate projects and report on results and expenditure, as well as a high administrative and additional workload on the Interreg Programmes that have to find ways to make the macro-regional support fit into a project structure, design specific Calls, carry out selection processes and accompany and control specific

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[16] Toptsidou, M., Böhme, K. (2018). The EUSBSR after 2020. Governance remastered?
(www.spatialforesight.eu/tl_files/files/EUSBSR-after2020_Governance-Remastered_FinalReport(1).pdf)
See also European Commission (2014): Concerning the Governance of Macro-regional strategies. Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - 20.05.2014 - COM(2014) 284 final. And Böhme, K. (2013): Added Value of Macro regional Strategies: A Governance Perspective. Spatial Foresight Brief 2013:3.

[17] Haarich, S. (2016): The GOA Tool: Assessment of Macro Regional Governance Systems. Spatial Foresight Brief 2016:6

[18] Toptsidou, M., Böhme, K., Gløersen, E., Haarich, S. & Hans, S. (2017): Added Value of macro-regional strategies, Interact Programme.

[19] European Commission (2017), Study on macro-regional strategies and their links with cohesion policy, Data and analytical report for the EUSALP, Directorate General Regional and Urban Policy. On pg. 145 the project is described.

[20] http://www.danube-region.eu/contact/danube-strategy-point

governance projects. Another inconvenience is that regional and national governments can become more relaxed about their own commitment to the macro-regional strategies and lose the motivation to increase their national resource funding and capacities for the Strategy.

Obviously, funding macro-regional strategies through Interreg programmes has also advantages, exploits existing synergies and builds on a certain tradition within a general transnational logic in a given geographical area.

Alternative or improved solutions for supporting the governance of macro-regional strategies could be to create a macro-regional secretariat, or a single coordination framework supporting all Strategies, to fund the macro-regional governance within Interreg Programmes under the Technical Assistance Axis or to commit and use more widely national and regional funds[21].

The evaluation of IBSR support to EUSBSR coordination and governance has been analysed within this general context.

5.3 Evaluation findings

The following section answers the evaluation questions based on the desk study, interviews with programme bodies, a survey of PACs/HACs, case studies, a focus group and monitoring data.

How has Programme support influenced the (improved) governance structures of EUSBSR? How has Programme support influenced the coordination capacities of PACs/HACs?

In general, there is a notable and in some areas substantial influence of the Programme on the maintenance and on-going development of EUSBSR governance structures. These structures are formally distinct and are not dependent on the IBSR, as stressed by many EUSBSR stakeholders. However, other IBSR and EUSBSR representatives highlight the vital importance of IBSR support to macro-regional Strategy governance structures and activities such as communication, capacity-building, coordination in the framework of the EUSBSR and the different policy and horizontal areas. '*Without the IBSR support not much could be done*'. Such an opinion was also confirmed by some PACs/HACs in the focus group, who argued that their work '*would not have been possible without programme support*'.

The survey of EUSBSR PACs/HACs and NCs confirms the relevance of IBSR support. Overall, approximately 48% of EUSBSR stakeholders that answered the survey indicate that the Programme as a high or very high influence on EUSBSR governance structures.

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[21] See also Toptsidou, M., Böhme, K. (2018). The EUSBSR after 2020. Governance remastered? (www.spatialforesight.eu/tl_files/files/EUSBSR-after2020_Governance-Remastered_FinalReport(1).pdf) for alternatives.

Figure 5-2 Influence of Programme support on governance structures (Q13, n=29)
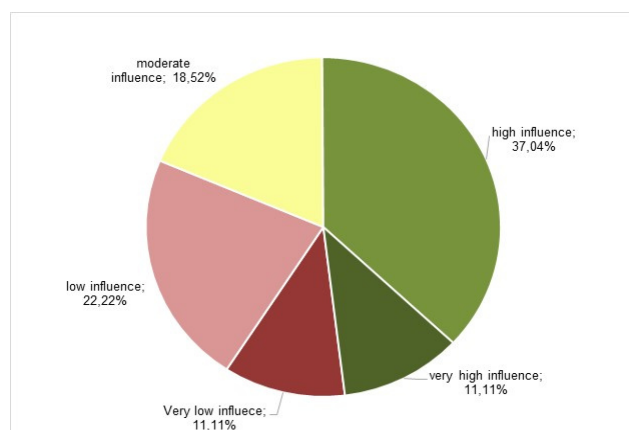
Survey Question Q13: 'In your opinion, how has Programme support to EUSBSR coordination influenced the governance structures of the EUSBSR? Please rate the influence with a mark ranging from 1 = very low influence, to 5 = very high influence?' Source: Data from survey of EUSBSR NCs, PACs and HACs. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

Opinions on the extent that programme support influences EUSBSR governance structures vary. Some PACs/HACs recognise that several meetings of Steering Groups would not have been possible without the Programme support. Others highlight that the support enabled the continuation of work, while allowing the development of a network of people to work towards the same goal. Given that the EUSBSR does not have its own institutions, this support has been very important. Through its funding support, the Programme enabled more flexibility to develop PAC/HAC activities in a more strategic way. Other PACs/HACs underlined existing governance challenges, which would benefit eventually from Interreg BSR support. These include for example, the commitment of Focal Points, which is not always clear, as well as the engagement of Steering Groups.

Particular comments from survey respondents on the influence of the Programme on governance are:

- *'The Programme support has allowed the formation of a network of people all working towards the same goal, which would have been next to impossible without the support. This network (the PACs and HACs) is especially crucial [because] the strategy does not have any [of its] own institutions.'*
- *'It seems that in some cases meetings of steering groups in PAs/HAs were possible mainly thanks to the IBSR support.'*
- *'It has enabled continuation.'*
- *'The coordinating role of the PAC/ HAC has been strengthened through funding received. Funding has given us the flexibility to steer our activities in a more strategical way and ensured necessary stakeholder involvement'.*
- *'There is too much paperwork associated to the support.'*

As can be seen in the comments, the support is generally appreciated, but the drawbacks associated with it (administrative burden) are also highlighted by the EUSBSR stakeholders.

Survey Question Q11: 'In your opinion, how has Programme support to EUSBSR coordination influenced the coordination capacities of PACs/HACs with regard to the following PAC/HAC functions? Please rate the influence with a mark ranging from 1 = very low influence, to 5 = very high influence on each function?'
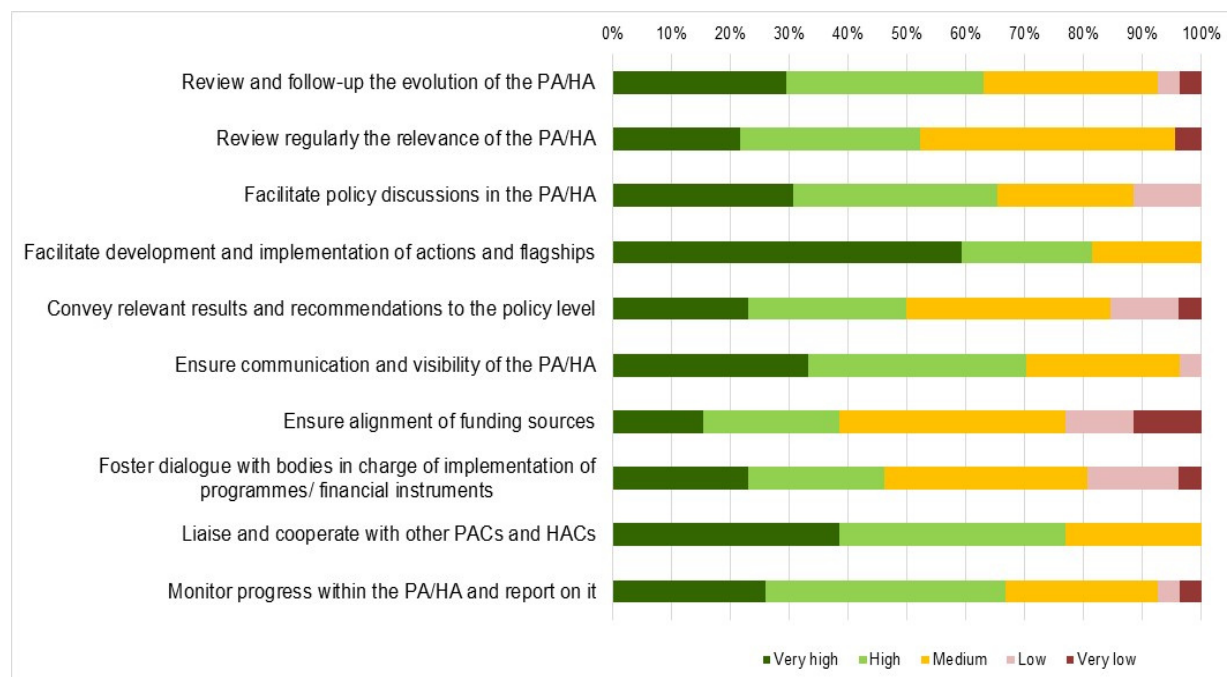Source: Data from survey of EUSBSR NC, PACs and HACs. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

Moreover, the survey confirms the usefulness of Interreg BSR programme support to the coordination capacities of PACs and HACs. As the figure below shows, EUSBSR HACs and PACs perceive an influence of IBSR support in many of their functions. The most influence is perceived for facilitating the development and implementation of actions and flagships, followed by supporting liaison and cooperation with other PACs and HACs and ensuring the communication and visibility of the policy area/horizontal action. Interreg BSR programme supported the facilitation of policy discussions in the policy area/horizontal action and monitoring their progress. Alignment of funding resources and fostering dialogue with bodies in charge of the implementation of the programme and financial instruments seem to be the areas where the programme's support is less.

Practical examples of this support were also given by the PACs and HACs. The support is especially important as it covers costs which would have been challenging to cover otherwise, such as staff and travel costs, meeting costs, organisation of communication activities and the organisation of the Annual For a (for more information, see relevant questions below).

The focus group carried out with EUSBSR stakeholders confirmed these findings. According to the participants, the governance structures of the EUSBSR already existed, therefore the IBSR support is not key for the survival of governance structures of the EUSBSR. On the other hand, the programme support is necessary to implement the strategy and continue with networking, communication, monitoring, learning and other relevant governance activities. Participants stressed that although the support of the programme to the EUSBSR organisational and communication support works sufficiently well, more effort given to support the PACs

and HACs would be appreciated. The PACs and HACs confirmed that the support through projects under 4.2 was, in fact, useful for their work. Without the support from Interreg, the coordination would have been more difficult. The Interreg BSR Programme has supported different PACs and HACs functions, supporting this way the coordination capacities of the EUSBSR implementers. The focus group participants highlighted that the Interreg BSR programme helped in facilitating policy discussions in the policy area/horizontal action, supported the liaison and cooperation with other PACs and HACs, as well as fostering dialogue with bodies in charge of programmes implementation. Interreg BSR supported conveying the relevant messages to the policy level, ensure alignment of funding and monitor the progress within the policy area/horizontal action and report on it. PACs and HACs participating in the focus group mentioned that Interreg BSR Programme support has influenced different functions of PAC and HAC coordination. More specifically, these regard facilitating policy discussion and fostering dialogue with bodies in charge of Programme implementation, ensuring the communication and visibility of the policy area as well as liaison and cooperation with other PACs, HACs and flagship stakeholders. It also influences the transfer of results and recommendations to the policy level, as well as activities regarding monitoring, follow up activities and reviews.

Participants highlighted that although Interreg facilitates the activities of PACs and HACs, there are long bureaucratic procedures to comply with, such as reporting. The Interreg project logic does not reflect EUSBSR process logic. PACs and HACs would appreciate greater involvement in content related discussions, being invited to NC or Commission meetings to support their strategic orientation. For the future participants ask for more structural dialogue and contact, to have more joint decisions between the programme, the NC and the PACs/HACs, as well as more involvement in project application selection.
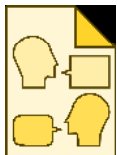
From the perspective of the Programme, support for EUSBSR is valuable, yet an important workload is generated that was not expected by the Programme. Interviews with programme bodies generally confirmed the usefulness of Interreg BSR programme support to EUSBSR. The interview with the MA/JS presented the consequences of adding the support in 4.2 to the usual project-related work: '*We had to create a new technical assistance scheme and formats complying with the rules of the Programme. We had to use the terms 'calls' and 'projects' – even though the beneficiaries were clear at the beginning, and there was no competition. In fact, the MA/JS helped the beneficiaries fill in the formal Application Form, understand the contract. We explained what to put into the reports to get the funding, etc. Having to comply with these 'artificial' requirements – just to comply with Interreg requirements – caused frustration on all sides*.'

The MA/JS sees that there are clear and visible benefits for EUSBSR PACs/HACs, but it is questionable if there is a return for the Programme or for regions in the Programme area. The MA/JS mentions that support via SO 4.2 takes budget away from key Programme priorities and other projects. Support via the IBSR is convenient Member States but might weaken their commitment to EUSBSR, merely contributing support through the IBSR. The support via SO 4.2 also creates an increasing dependency of PACs and HACs on the IBSR Programme which might hamper other innovative proposals for governance development in the BSR.

MC members confirm in interviews that aligning the Programme and the EUSBSR is positive for the whole BSR and for the final beneficiaries. There is also a mutual benefit, identified by some interviewees,

for both the IBSR and the EUSBSR. Without IBSR support, many things within the EUSBSR, such as thematic networking and EUSBSR communication, cannot take place. However, the Interreg programme should not be the only funding source for EUSBSR, which should mainly use national funding and funds from mainstream ERDF programmes. The IBSR programme alone would not be large enough to support the EUSBSR in terms of scale and level of intervention. Also, the Strategy should address a broader range of topics and requires, by definition, political commitment and strategic vision to be useful.

The role of the IBSR should, in the view of most MC members, be to support the EUSBSR, through the implementation of projects and through an aligned capitalisation of results, for example via project platforms. Some MC members feel it would be helpful to involve NCs, PACs and HACs in meetings with the Programme (MC) in the future. Better coordination and a better exchange of information on projects would help to exploit more synergies.

Representatives of all programme bodies agree that support for EUSBSR stakeholder governance and capacities can and should continue but reducing the administrative burden (e.g. within the Technical Assistance budget, or as a single larger project, or within a single coordination framework supporting all macro-regional strategies). At the same time, countries should show and increase their commitment, for example, by financing governance staff and capacity-building. It should become clear that the IBSR should not carry out monitoring and control functions on the EUSBSR as such (even if monitoring of supported actions is needed to a certain degree).

> **What types of activities have PACs/HACs needed and used the Programme funding for (in comparison to costs covered through other resources)?**

The survey asked EUSBSR stakeholders about the sources for funding and types of activities funded by Programme support. The Interreg BSR Programme in most responses is the most relevant funding source for PACs and HACs. Its support is used mainly to cover operational costs such as staff costs and travel costs of PACs/HACs. The Programme's support has also been used for covering expenses of organisation activities such as Steering Group meetings, participation in events, seminars, workshops and conferences, but also staff and travel costs. In general, support under SO 4.2 is given to PACs/HACs and not to NCs whose work is financed by their respective ministries. 79% of EUSBSR stakeholder respondents believe that IBSR resources are highly or very highly relevant for EUSBSR coordination.

For the **type of activities** funded by the IBSR Programme, there are only minor differences to those funded by other resources. According to responses from the EUSBSR stakeholder survey, IBSR support goes mainly into supporting monitoring and dissemination as well as coordination and networking activities, including for the EUSBSR Annual Forum and the organisation of seminars, workshops and other events.

Other sources fund activities such as the initiation and implementation of flagships, staff and travel costs, the promotion of EUSBSR activities through seminars, workshops and information days, capacity building activities and coordinating work and activities.

Table 5-1 Types of Activities funded by IBSR and other resources (Q15 and 17, n=27 and 24)

Type of activities	Activities funded with support from IBSR (Examples)	Activities funded by other resources (Examples)
Development of projects	*'Project identification and development'* *'Organising seminars and other events in order to promote flagships'*	*'Many projects, processes and activities within the framework of the EUSBSR receive their funding from other Interreg programmes'* *'For flagship sub-projects'* *'Initiating and implementing flagships'*
Organisation of the EUSBSR Annual Forums	*'Funding to arrange the Annual Forum of the EUSBSR.'* *'Organizing Annual Forum - great support and assistance. Communication including Let´s Communicate. So-called spring meetings with NCs and PAC/HACs'* *'Organization of Annual Forum of the EUSBSR, support to communication activities'*	--
Networking – Seminars, events and workshops	*'Usually for organising stakeholders' seminars, meeting with project promoters and leaders as well as for dissemination activities, including participation in transnational seminars, workshops and conferences'* *'Conferences/ Workshops, travel costs'* *'Events/workshops/seminars producing (fee, catering, venue, etc.), business travel costs'* *'Communications, organizing meetings and seminars and travel expenses.'* *'Travel and accommodations (PACs/HACs need to be present in the member states for the involvement of stakeholders and support of flagships)'* *'Workshops/seminars (gathering policy makers for presenting results from flagships/initiating new flagships)'* *'Travel expenses, Steering Committee meetings, events (seminars, workshops etc.), involvement of external experts, moderators and publications.'* *'Conferences, seminars, meetings, visual promotion materials, travel and accommodation'* *'Organisation of meetings, workshops, expert participation, expert knowledge (analyses)'*	*'Co-funding, arranging e.g. communication events, producing communication materials etc.'* *'Participation in meetings, workshops (national sources)'*
Staff costs	*'Staff cost (needed to be able to recruit and keep PACs/HACs with the needed leadership skills)'* *'Staff costs, day-to-day work…'*	*'Salary of public servants who are involved with implementation of the EUSBSR'*
Dissemination of results	*'Covering costs of communication activities'.* *'Surveys/feasibility studies (when preparing new flagships)'* *'Coordination, promotion & visibility, targeted events'* *'Organising seminars and other event in order to promote flagships.'* *'Ensuring communication and visibility'*	*'Conducting research and surveys on the current state of play regarding relevant fields within the policy area.'* *'Promotion of EUSBSR at activities (e.g. seminars, information days) supported by other sources.'* *'Staff costs (salaries etc.), travel, external expertise, costs related to events, communication etc. etc. - for all coordination activities'*

Type of activities	Activities funded with support from IBSR (Examples)	Activities funded by other resources (Examples)
Monitoring	*'Monitoring the progress and development of the policy area; Developing the policy area, incl. development of new actions and flagships (with specific kick-start and greenfield activities).'* *'Monitoring implementation of the EUSBSR, improvement of the BSR transport cooperation with third countries, as well as, an exchange of best practices in implementing innovation and smart specialization measures among EU Members States in the BSR need more funding.'*	--
Capacity Building and Other	*'Capacity building, training, supporting the steering group, stakeholder consultations, studies, dissemination of information, workshops, leaflets, other communication and advocacy activities'* *'We have/ are developing new thematic areas within the policy area with the Technical Assistance funding received. We built up new expert networks, arranged capacity building workshops, Conferences and Project development workshops that led to Project and policy cooperation as important pillars of our thematic work within the area. We could make the shift from implementing the objectives and actions of the policy area through single short-term flagships to more strategic long-term processes.'*	*'National / host organisation funding were mostly used for supporting back-up organisational activities of Policy Area'* *'Capacity building activities'* *'On development automation which should integrate the functions of all conventional transport modes and serve as basis for new, user - centric mobility and freight services, in other words, -in building an interconnected transport system uniting all modes of transport, where the boundaries between different transport modes are disappearing and where people and business are provided easy door - to door mobility services.'*

Source: Data from survey of EUSBSR NC, PACs and HACs. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

EUSBSR stakeholders mentioned other resources for their own work and overall EUSBSR coordination.

Figure 5-4 Other resources for EUSBSR stakeholders (Q16, n=29)
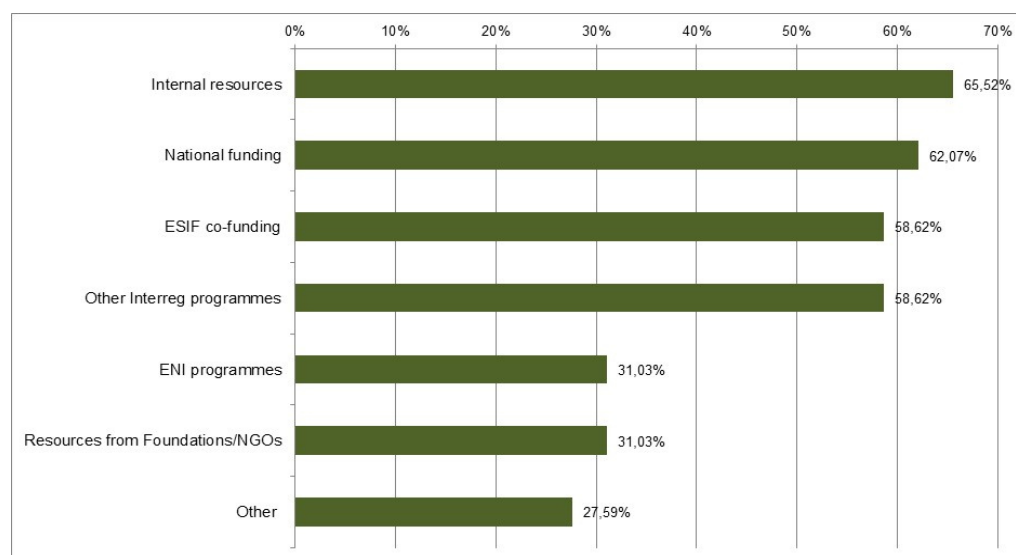
Survey Question Q16: 'Which other resources do you consider also relevant for EUSBSR coordination?'
Source: Data from survey of EUSBSR NC, PACs and HACs. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

Internal resources and national funding are the main alternative sources, while ESIF and other Interreg funding are also relevant. ENI programmes were also mentioned, as were resources from foundations and NGOs. Additional sources include direct technical assistance from the European Commission, as well as support from sub-regions, cities, universities and other institutions.

To the question of how existing financial support from Interreg BSR corresponds to existing needs, 24% of survey respondents believe that the support is short of the needs, while 38% of respondents estimate that it largely covers existing needs. 35% believe that it partially covers the needs. Some ideas from HACs and PACs on how the Programme support to EUSBSR coordination could be improved are:

Original statements

- '*Simplification of reporting procedures, less bureaucracy*'
- '*Align understandings and definitions, e.g. what is flagship and how the label is given*'
- '*Align and diversify more the priorities of the programme with those of the strategy (e.g. in areas such as tourism and culture)*'
- '*Involve PACs/HACs in content discussions and close the gap between the National Coordinators and the PACs/HACs. Funding then to be allocated based on goals and visions and not to a specific frame*'
- '*Provide more assistance and feedback when it comes to the justification for rejected projects*'

PACs and HACs that participated in the Focus Group indicated that they have used Interreg BSR programme funding, as well as other sources to cover different costs. These include their own organisational resources, Swedish Institute funds, the Baltic Leadership Programme, Erasmus+, Bonus, Horizon 2020, DG ECHO and ESIF as well as Agricultural funds, however these sources fund implementation of flagships and projects and not coordination per se.

Furthermore, funding from the Interreg BSR programme has been used to support and communicate projects as an important means to implement EUSBSR strategy in different thematic fields and policy areas. In more detail, funding support under SO 4.2 has been used for staff costs, travelling costs, the organisation of seminars, workshops and the involvement of experts in such workshops (where applicable and necessary), but also to organise Steering Group meetings. Funding supports publicity and the development of small studies. A challenge here is that the funding ceiling is irrespective of the number of coordinators, so if one country is coordinating, then the funding stays in this country, compared to policy areas with more coordinators where the activities vary and costs multiply.

> How has Programme support to PACs/HACs influenced involvement of the Programme's non-EU partner countries in the EUSBSR?

EUSBSR stakeholders do not have a clear opinion on the influence of the Programme on the involvement of non-EU partner countries in the EUBSSR.

20% of HACs, PACs and NC that answered the survey think that there was a high or very high influence of the Programme on the involvement of non-EU partner countries in EUSBSR. 36% of respondents found that programme support to EUSBSR coordination moderately influenced the involvement of non-EU partner countries, 28% found that it has very low influence, and 16% a low influence. What is recognised is that the programme has supported projects involving partner states and has positively influenced the involvement of non-EU member states. However, for some respondents this is not through Programme support for EUSBSR coordination but rather through projects. Other respondents said that it is mainly for the horizontal action 'Neighbours' that programme support has been very useful and essential in sustaining and growing the involvement of certain actors, which would have been very limited without the funding and steering capabilities of the programme.
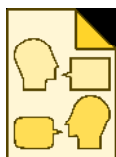
Interviews with MC members also confirm that Programme support to EUSBSR stakeholders had little to no influence on the involvement of non-EU partner countries in the EUSBSR. If any, there is some influence through the involvement of project partners from non-EU countries at project level but not linked to the overall EUSBSR governance.

6 Evaluation of the communication strategy

This chapter presents specific evaluation of the communication strategy and activities of the BSR Programme.

6.1 Summary of conclusions

The analysis answers the following evaluation questions:

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Which communication activities have proven most useful in communicating the Programme?

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- According to the survey of project partners, the most useful Programme communication activities are the project websites and Programme events. 66% of respondents believe that the website is useful or very useful, as can be seen in the figure below. Only slighter less useful are the events (62%). A high level of usefulness is also seen for the programme newsletter and the project library.

- Social media channels and tools are generally seen as less useful. However, the usefulness of dissemination tools is more differentiated when looking at the different types of partner organisations that use them. For example, SMEs and Enterprises see events as the most useful tool, while they think that the website and newsletter are less useful. Interest groups/NGOs and international organisations have to follow many different information channels and appreciate the usefulness of Twitter and Facebook much more.

- Projects make an important contribution to communication for the Programme. The survey shows that most project partners are broadly satisfied with the tools. Asked about communication support tools and activities, people are mostly satisfied with the Communication Seminars, individual consultations and the communication toolbox. On the other hand, some tools are not so well known or not used by project partners, such as the online forum for communication managers on LinkedIn.

- Recommendations to improve include '*in the second half of the project a further 'communication seminar', for example, about how to transfer project results in an optimal way; exchange experiences; direct questions; networking; looking forward to new calls and changes (from outside the programme)'*. Interviews indicate that specific support for communicating results and making achievements visible in certain thematic fields may be required (e.g. networking with similar projects, exchange with other projects and other programmes, outreach to other levels of decision-makers (local or national).

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Has there been an increase in awareness of the Programme among its target groups?

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- The surveys of both project partners and thematic experts in the BSR, suggest there is more awareness of the Programme compared to the past. 84% of project partners feel there is more awareness among target groups due to their projects. The survey and interviews with thematic experts in relevant policy fields in all BSR countries also indicate a high level of awareness of the Programme. 48% of the thematic experts know the Programme (very well). Only 21% indicate that they are not really aware of it, and 5% are absolutely not aware at all that the

Interreg BSR Programme exists. The lack of a baseline for this question hampers assessment of any increase in awareness among thematic experts or not.

- The evaluators recommend using this assessment as a baseline for future assessments and evaluations. Additional studies could also help to establish a more differentiated baseline about awareness of the Programme among different target groups.

> **What has been the impact and added value of implementation of the Programme's communication strategy?**

- Interviews with the MA/JS confirm a general effectiveness of communication tools and the communication strategy from their point of view. MA/JS highlights that communication is getting more professional within the Programme. However, communication could be improved with more resources and more professional support.

- The communication strategy has not defined intermediary steps and specific indicators at the level of communication fields that could help with monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the different communication objectives and aims. This limits any evaluation of specific communication impact to analysis of secondary sources and qualitative assessments.

- The level of communication strategy effectiveness is high with regard to its indicators as defined in the Coordination Programme within the Technical Assistance axis. Many current achievements already exceed the targets set for 2023, i.e. a level of effectiveness of over 100%. Two indicators show reasonable progress (56% and 68% of target value achieved). Only the indicator 'Number of other events attended by MA/JS staff' has a low achievement with 28%. Overall, this is a good result and shows very effective communication by the Programme. For management purposes, an adjustment of the target values for 2023 would be helpful to continue to monitor meaningful progress over the next years.

- From the perspective of the project partners that answered the survey, the Programme is widely effective or even very effective in achieving its general communication objectives

- The analysis shows that evaluability of the efforts for communication can be further improved through an improved communication strategy.

The following recommendations can be derived:

- For communication strategy 2014-2020, the targets should be updated and measurement of awareness among thematic experts repeated to be able to evaluate this objective in future.

- For the next programming period, a more thorough communication strategy and intervention logic for communication is recommended, with intermediate objectives, and measurable ('SMART') output indicators, regular monitoring with more specific identification and monitoring (on 'awareness') of target groups and multipliers.

6.2 Context

Communication activities of the MA/JS are financed by the Technical Assistance budget of the Programme. Technical Assistance includes a budget line for marketing and events as well as two staff positions (communication officers).

Interreg BSR has developed a programme communication strategy that aims to support Programme management. Communication objectives are built around these managerial objectives. The communication strategy rests on a clear intervention logic. It defines four communication objectives, which are aligned to the four programme communication fields and different communication aims:

Communication objective 1: Attracting relevant partners

Aim 1: Multipliers know the programme and have tools to inform their audiences
Aim 2: Raise awareness: potential applicants know the Programme as funding source
Aim 3: Increase knowledge and engage potential applicants
Aim 4: Applicants are aware of the rules and requirements and where to get details

Communication objective 2: Supporting projects

Aim 1: Applicants are aware that they have to identify and communicate with decision makers in their fields
Aim 2: Lead partners and project partners have capacity to communicate with target audiences
Aim 3: Lead partners and project partners understand and apply the rules and requirements
Aim 4: Lead partners and project partners are aware of the role of the MA/JS

Communication objective 3: Making achievements visible

Aim 1: Thematic experts in the region are aware of the Programme results and achievements
Aim 2: Relevant decision makers are aware of and know Programme results and achievements and consider the Programme as useful and efficient

Communication objective 4: Facilitating cooperation in administration

Aim 1: Auditors and controllers are aware of the Programme and understand their role and Programme rules
Aim 2: EUSBSR stakeholders are aware of the scope of Priority 4 and understand their role and Programme rules
Aim 3: Other Interreg programmes and INTERACT know about the Programme´s approaches
Aim 4: Organisations/authorities hosting the managing bodies are aware of the Programme and the usefulness of its achievements

The Programme uses different communication tools and activities to achieve the targets. A key tool for dissemination of project activities and results is the project library, which is a database, run by the MA/JS, containing key information about all projects.

The key activities of the MA/JS in the field of communication are[22]:

- establish and maintain a website in English under the domain www.interreg-baltic.eu

- establish a searchable database of projects and frequently update information from projects (e.g. contact information, social media postings, project videos) at projects.interreg-baltic.eu

- frequently provide news on transnational Programme topics in English and continuously produce easy-to-understand content about projects (postcards, summaries, stories and achievements) in English;

- participate regularly in international conferences, workshops and other events;

- run seminars and provide advisory services for project applicants;

- provide targeted seminars to support project implementation at different stages (e.g. lead partner, financial, communication, finalising project);

- provide communication training, templates and technical tools to projects including guidance on the use of EU visibility requirements and on media work.

Specific tools used and prepared in 2017 and 2018 are presented in the table below.

Table 6-1 Communication tools and activities

Communication Objective	Communication activities and tools for Interreg BSR in 2017 and 2018
Horizontal	- Implement and monitor communication strategy - Attend meetings of the Interreg communication officer network in the BSR & EU, and contribute to the joint Interreg web portal (coordinated by INTERACT) - Develop & maintain the Programme website + social media (Facebook, LinkedIn & twitter) as main information channels - Programme newsletters & mass mailing solution: review and maintain 4-5 issues per year - Promotional items & marketing material - Update EUSBSR section on the programme website: http://www.interreg-baltic.eu/about-theprogramme/relation-to-eu-strategy-for-the-baltic-sea-region.html
Attracting applicants and partners	- Provide advice to applicants (together with the area of project application, assessment and selection): e.g. National information events (e.g. national info days) for open calls, Lead Applicant Seminars, Development Seminars) - Prepare presentations and contributions to events of relevant organisations: (e.g. MA/JS participation in Programme info days organised by the participating countries with support

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[22] See also Communication Strategy of Interreg BSR. 2016. Page 11.

Communication Objective	Communication activities and tools for Interreg BSR in 2017 and 2018
	mainly in underrepresented regions of the Programme; joint activities with other transnational programmes) • Partner Search forum on LinkedIn • Publish announcement notes, applicant package, Programme documents, news, event notifications, etc. on main channels
Supporting projects	• Provide training and support for project implementation, e.g. Communication Seminar for approved projects and individual advice and support in setting up project communication strategies, use of Interreg/Programme's visual identity • Update project management tools and reporting forms on the Programme website • Maintain and update Programme/Interreg style guide for visual identity & templates for projects • Publish updated programme documents (mainly linked to Programme Manuals) and FAQs
Making achievements visible	• Prepare annual Programme event as part of EUSBSR strategy forum 4-5 June 2018 • Meet with other Interreg programmes, EUSBSR stakeholders (NC; PACs/HACs) • Contribute to the European Week of Cities and Regions • Compile and produce content for the project library (images, summaries, videos, social media streams, stories, outputs etc.) • Provide overviews/statistics for funded projects (online & print)
Facilitating cooperation in administration	• Provide training and support for project implementation (internal support to project officers) • Attend meetings of the Interreg communication officer networks in the BSR & EU, and contribute to the joint Interreg web portal (coordinated by INTERACT) • Support for Second Level Audits, e.g. cooperation with the Audit Authority and meetings of the Group of Auditors • Meet with other Interreg programmes, EUSBSR stakeholders (NC; PACs/HACs) or Interact • Publish updated programme documents (mainly linked to programme manuals) and FAQs • Update the country-specific section and First Level Controller information on the Programme website (e.g. designation procedure, confirmation, report and checklist) • Raise awareness of hosting organisations to programme management bodies

Source: Annual Work Programme 2018. Interreg BSR Programme

As defined by the communication strategy, projects are expected to contribute to communication aims C1 ('Thematic experts in the region are aware of the programme results and achievements') and C2 ('Relevant decision makers are aware of and know programme results and achievements'). Every project defines the human resources and budget for communication activities individually as part of the project application. Every project is expected to employ one communication manager. Therefore, the communication work implemented by the projects has to be seen as an integral part of communicating programme results and achievements.

The level of intensity of the different communication aims and activities varies throughout Programme implementation, due to the natural project cycle. Currently, priority is given to the objective 'supporting projects', with increasing emphasis on 'making achievements visible'.

6.3 Evaluation findings

The evaluation analysis focused on the following questions in the initial Terms of Reference and the Inception Report.

<div style="background-color:#c3d69b; padding:4px;">

Which communication activities have proven most useful in communicating the Programme?

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According to the survey of project partners, the most useful communication activities of the Programme are the project website and the Programme events. 66% of respondents believe that the website is useful or very useful, as can be observed in the figure below. Only slighter less useful for project partners are the events (62%). A high level of usefulness is also seen for the programme newsletter and the project library. Between 20% and 25% of respondents consider that social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn are also useful. Among the 'other' tools, respondents mentioned, for example are '*personal contacts with producers, researchers, local and governmental administration*' or '*contribution of project partners to third party events (e.g. conferences, project meetings)*'.

Figure 6-1 Usefulness of Programme dissemination tools – share of useful or very useful responses (Q55, n=86)
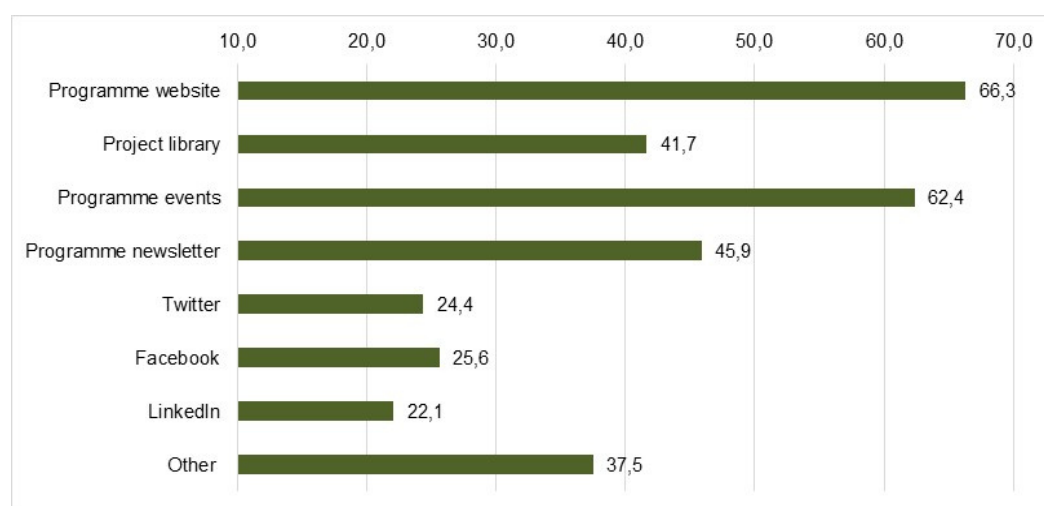
Survey Question Q55: 'How would you assess the usefulness of the different dissemination tools of the Programme? Please rate from 1 = not at all useful, to 5 = very useful.'
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

On the other side, project partners consider social media-related tools such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook as least useful. Many respondents admit they do not use these tools. This means that even if the outreach of social media channels is potentially much larger, the effect is limited by the lack of acceptance among project partners and target groups. Other communication tools, such as the newsletter, website, events, or the project library are considered as not useful only by a very limited number of respondents.

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region

EUROPEAN
REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
FUND
EUROPEAN UNION

Figure 6-2 Not useful Programme dissemination tools – share of all responses that find tools not useful (Q55, n=86)

from 1 = not at all useful, to 5 = very useful.'
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

The analysis of usefulness of dissemination tools becomes more differentiated when looking at the partner organisations that use them. The results can be observed in the figure below.

There is some variation in the usefulness of the Programme website, project library, events and newsletter. SMEs and Enterprises see programme events as most useful, while they think the project website and newsletter are less useful.

Estimates of usefulness are much more diverse when it comes to social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn). Interest groups/NGOs and international organisations have to follow many different information channels and appreciate the usefulness of Twitter and Facebook much more. International organisations also estimate the Programme website, project library and newsletter as very useful.

Moreover, 'other tools'[23] are mostly proposed by organisations who have their own specific peer networks that are used for dissemination (e.g. business support organisations, HEIs and regional authorities).

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[23] Not displayed in the figure but answered in the survey.

Figure 6-3 Usefulness of Programme dissemination tools – average rating by type of organisation (Q55, n=86)
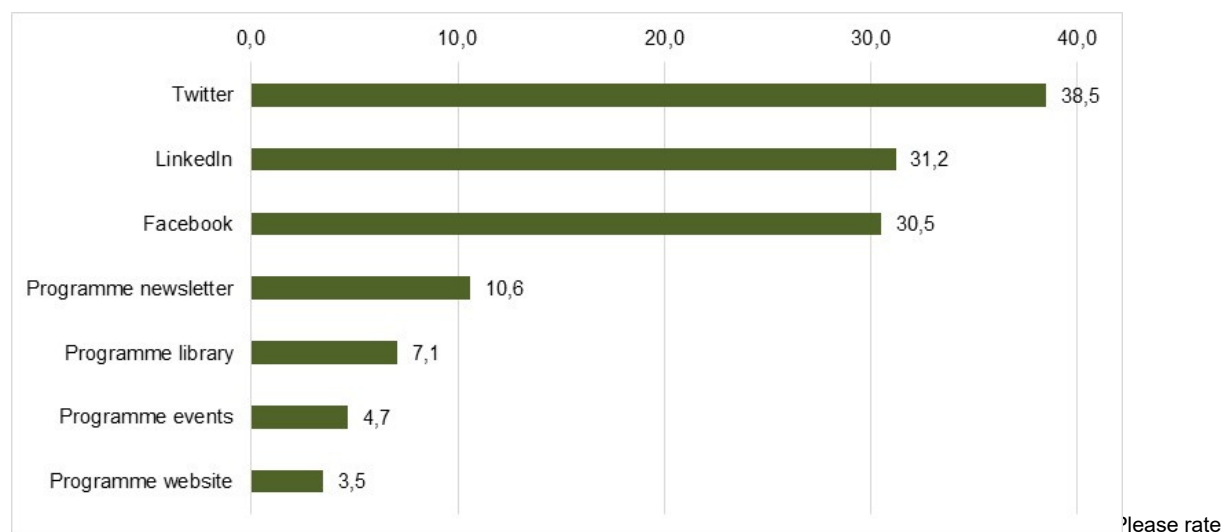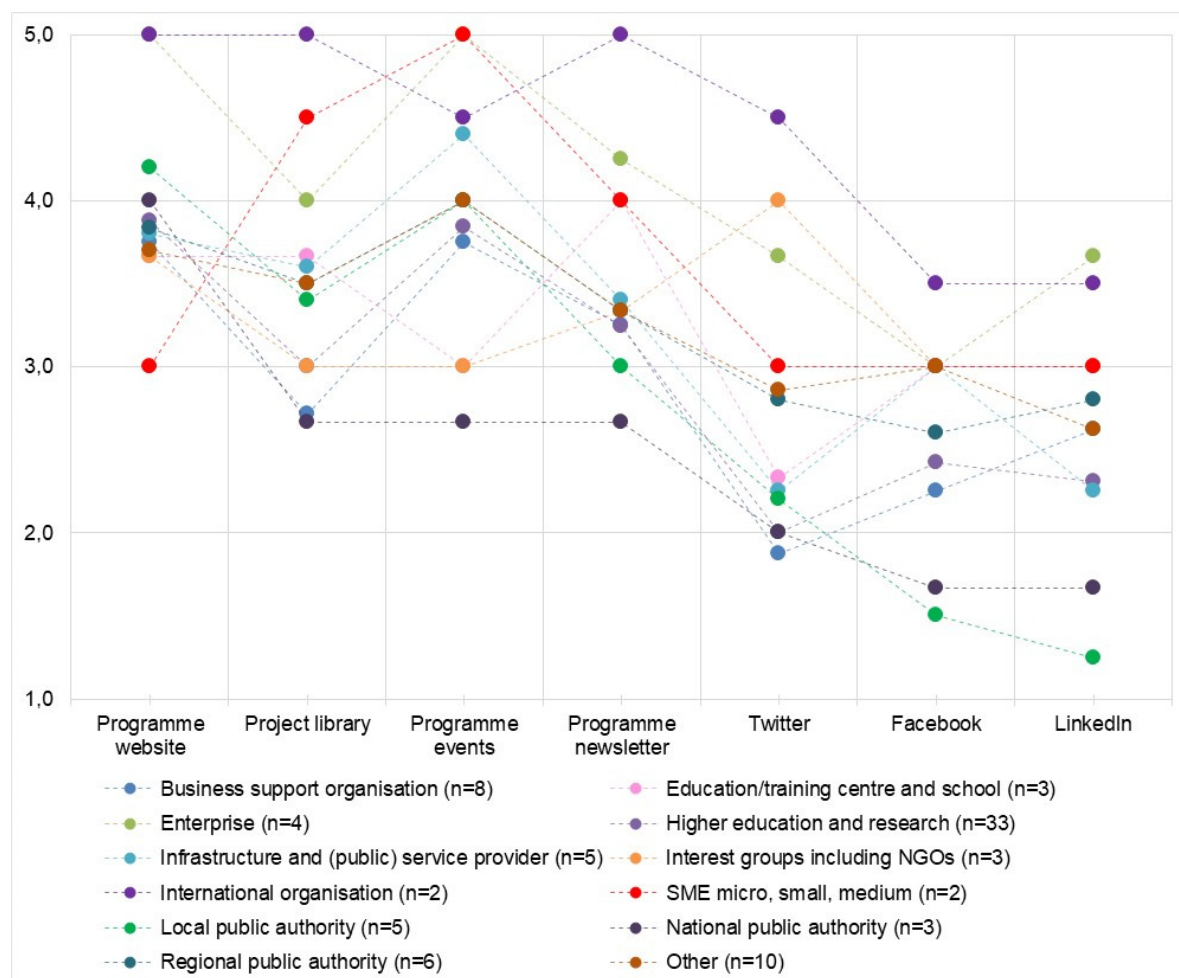

Survey Question Q55: 'How would you assess the usefulness of the different dissemination tools of the Programme? Please rate from 1 = not at all useful, to 5 = very useful.'
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

Projects play an important role in contributing to communication aims of the Programme.

With regard to the tools that the Programme uses to support projects in general and in the field of communication, the survey shows that most project partners are widely satisfied with the tools. In particular, tools such as the Programme Manual, lead applicant seminar, lead partner seminar and information on the programme website receive very high levels of satisfaction.

On the other hand, some tools are not so well known or not used by project partners, such as the online forum for communication managers on LinkedIn. To strengthen the communication capacities of projects, the Programme offers support, in particular to communication managers. Regarding the usefulness of this support, 69% of communication manager respondents estimate rate the support as useful or very useful. This is positive feedback for the Programme.

Figure 6-4 Usefulness of Programme support to projects to strengthen capacities to communicate with target groups (Q43, n=16)
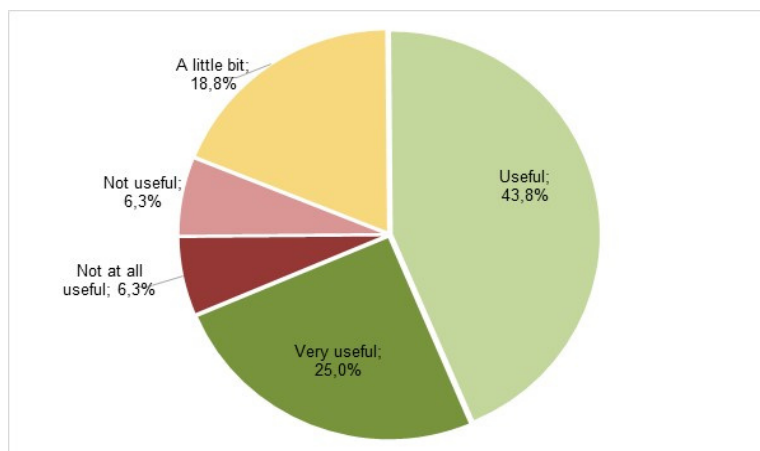
Survey Question Q43: 'How useful was the Programme's support (e.g. communication seminars) to strengthen your capacities to communicate with target audiences since the beginning of the project? Please rate from 1 = not at all useful.'
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

For communication support tools and activities, people are mostly satisfied with the Communication Seminars, individual consultations and the communication toolbox. Some tools are not so satisfying for communication officers or they have not used them or do not know them (e.g. Online Exchange Forum, Visits to projects).

Figure 6-5 Satisfaction with different forms of support from the Programme related to communication (Q44, n=16)
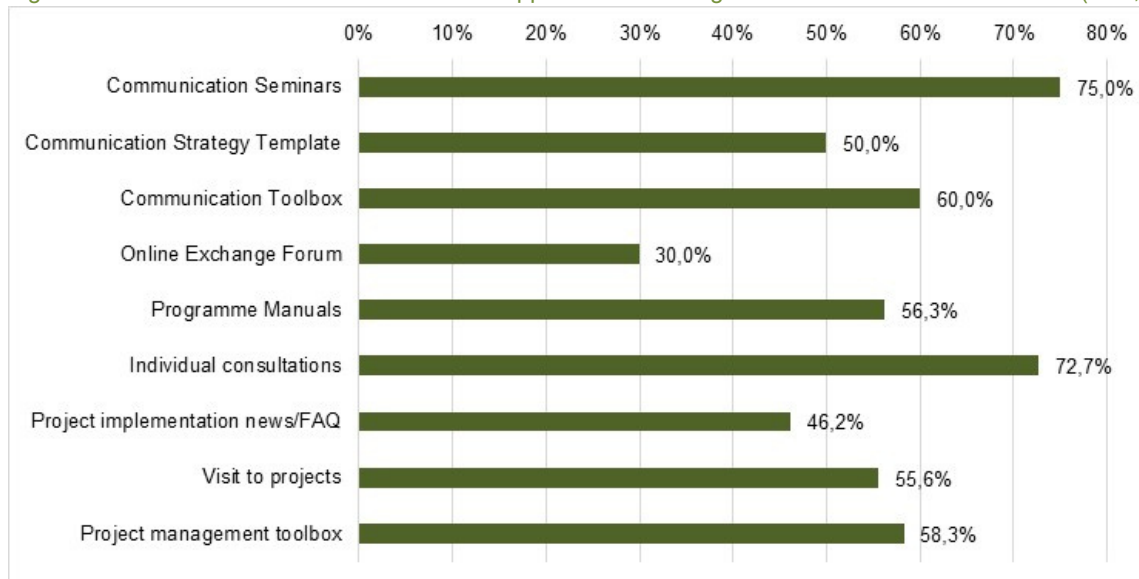
Survey Question Q44: 'How satisfied are you with the support of programme bodies to you during project implementation? Please rate from 1 = not satisfied to 5 = completely satisfied, with respect to each of the following tools and initiatives.'
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

Recommendations by the communication managers and project partners suggest, among others:

<table>
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<td>Original statements</td>
<td>

- '*more communication trainings*'
- '*training and information on how project results are communicated upstream and how those influence different decisions*'
- '*more coordination of communication between projects with a similar focus*'
- '*the support should be less in the Interreg jargon but propose more things in a user-friendly language*'.
- '*the seminars in the beginning were very supportive; I could imagine that in the second half of the project a further 'communication seminar' could be helpful, for example, about how to transfer project results in an optimal way; exchange experiences; direct questions; networking; looking forward to new calls and changes (from side of the programme ...); use such a seminar also for evaluation, direct feedbacks and creation of 'solutions' (if needed)*'.
- '*A search function on the website, not only within FAQ. Also, things like finding the PIF (Project Idea Form).*'
- '*An annual event to inform EU Commission about results would be nice. E.g. that some projects shortly showcase their achievements and having a panel discussion afterwards.*'
- '*It would be great to have more support in communication, someone who could pro-actively lift results from projects to newsletters, conferences etc.*'
- '*Stronger connection to relevant policy bodies, i.e. through setting up peer groups for priorities / objectives or more closely collaborating with EUSBSR PACs and HACs.*'
- '*More coordination of communication between projects with similar focus.*'

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</table>

Overall, it seems that more support from the Programme to projects is needed to build further capacities in communication. Moreover, the analysis highlights that projects also need support during project implementation and not only at the beginning. Sometimes, communication managers change, or new people are hired, so there is an on-going need for communication support. Projects comment that seminars and training sessions might be organised with separate groups for beginners and for experienced practitioners who would still like to learn more.

Finally, interviews with the case study projects indicate that specific support in communicating results and making achievements visible in certain thematic fields might be required (e.g. networking with other projects with a similar focus, exchange with other projects and other programmes, outreach to other levels of decision-makers (local or national).

> Has there been an increase in awareness of the Programme among its target groups?

Information on awareness among target groups is fragmented. The projects do not have to quantify their expected target group outreach in the AF and also do not need to report on progress in reaching out to target groups during implementation. There is also no baseline on awareness of the Programme among target groups in general. Therefore, this question cannot be easily answered.

The surveys of both project partners and thematic experts in the BSR suggest there is more awareness of the Programme than in the past. 84% of project partners say their direct target groups are more aware.

Figure 6-6 Share of project partners that think awareness of the Programme among its target groups has increased (Q38, n=45)
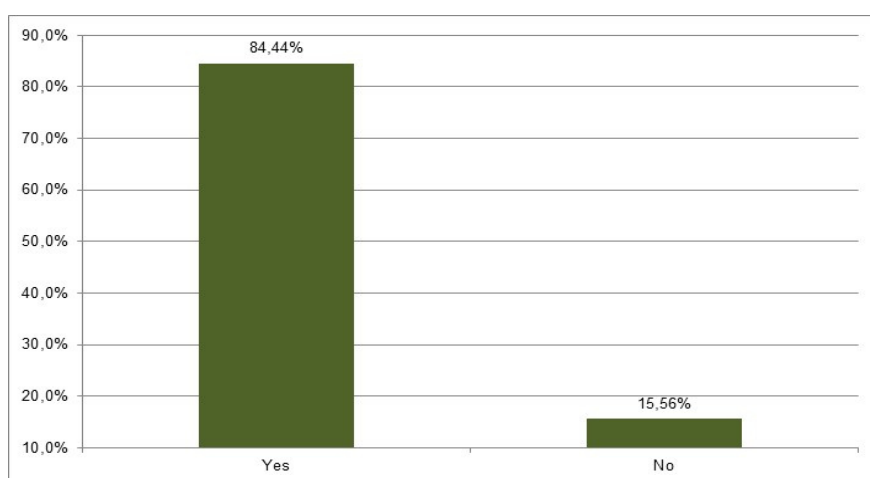
Survey Question Q38: 'In your opinion, has there been an increase in awareness of the Programme among the target groups you deal with in the last years?'
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

This opinion is confirmed by most interviewees in the in-depth case studies and interviews with programme bodies.

The survey and interviews with thematic experts in all BSR countries also indicate a high level of awareness of the Programme. 48% of the thematic experts know the Programme (very well). Only 21% indicate they are not really aware of it, and 5% are absolutely not aware at all that Interreg BSR Programme exists.

Figure 6-7 Awareness of thematic experts in the BSR of the Programme (n=61)
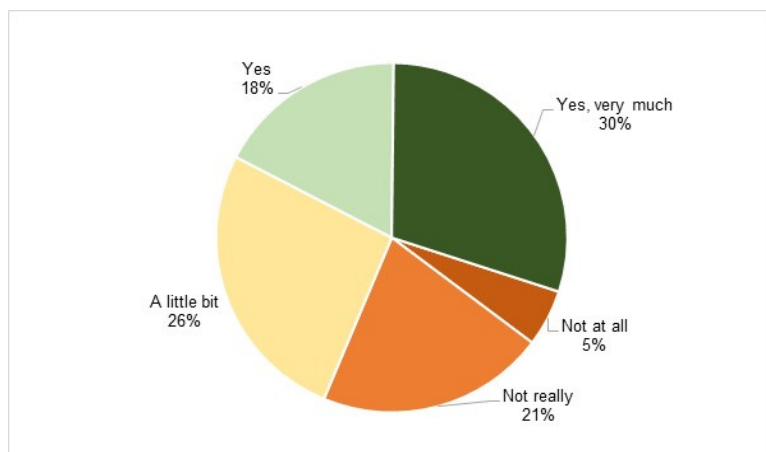
Survey Question QA.1: 'Are you familiar with Interreg Baltic Sea Region (BSR) 2014-2020?'
Source: Data from survey of thematic experts in different policy fields in the BSR. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018

The lack of a baseline for this question hampers assessment of any increase in awareness among thematic experts.

> **What has been the impact and added value of the implementation of the Programme's communication strategy?**
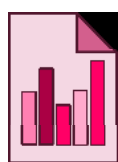
To assess the overall impact of the Programme's communication strategy the evaluation focuses on communication indicators in the Programme' Technical Assistance Axis. As presented in the draft 2017 Annual Implementation Report, the effectiveness of indicators is high. Many indicators already exceed the targets set for 2023, i.e. a level of effectiveness of over 100%. Two indicators show a reasonable level of progress (56% and 68% of target). Only the indicator 'Number of other events attended by MA/JS staff' has a low achievement with 28%. Overall, this is a good result and shows very effective communication by the Programme. For management purposes, an adjustment of the target values for 2023 would be helpful to be still able to monitor meaningful progress over the next years.

Table 6-2 Communication indicators of the IBSR Programme

Communication Indicators	Target Value (2023)	Current Situation (2017)	Level of Effectiveness
Number of (potential) applicants advised	415	827	199%
Number of applications received and assessed	260	705	271%
Number of news items to be published on the Programme's website	168	176	105%
Number of own events carried out	14	20	143%
Number of participants at Programme events	1 580	1 079	68%

Communication Indicators	Target Value (2023)	Current Situation (2017)	Level of Effectiveness
Number of other events attended by MA/JS staff	700	194	28%
Visitors on programme's website	350 000	194 908	56%

Source: Draft Annual Implementation Report 2017. Interreg BSR Programme.

However, for communication fields, the communication strategy has not defined intermediary steps or specific indicators that could help monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of communication objectives and aims. This limits the evaluation of communication impact to analysis of secondary sources and qualitative assessments.

For project partners that answered the survey, the Programme is widely effective or even very effective in achieving its communication objectives linked to projects.

- 55% of project partners that responded to the survey think the Programme is effective or very effective in 'attracting applicants'.

- 74% of the project partner respondents think the Programme is effective or very effective in 'supporting projects'.

- 45% of the project partner respondents think the Programme is effective or very effective in 'making achievement visible'.

Specific assessments of communication objectives and communication aims are presented in the next pages.

Table 6-3 'Attracting applicants' – Qualitative assessment of communication aims

Communication Aims	Source of Information/Method	Evidence	Qualitative Assessment
A.1 Multipliers know the programme and have tools to inform their audiences	Survey of thematic experts, Annual Implementation Report	According to the survey of thematic experts, 48% are (well) aware of the Programme and 26% are somehow aware of it. AIR 2017: The Programme made information available in the new project library (projects.interreg-baltic.eu) and actively spread across various channels.	The Programme is promoted and many experts/multipliers in the Region are aware of it.
A.2 Raise awareness: potential applicants know the Programme as funding source	Survey of thematic experts, Survey of project partners, Call Statistics	26% of thematic experts in the Region indicate that they do not know (well) the Programme. 84% of the project partner respondents think there has been an increase in awareness of the Programme among their target groups.	The high number of applications reflects the efforts. Potential applicants know the Programme. Probably more can be done to promote the

Communication Aims	Source of Information/Method	Evidence	Qualitative Assessment
		Statistics: 282 Concept Notes received for Call 1. 212 Concept Notes received for Call 2.	Programme among new and 'unusual' suspects: e.g. work with MS and national federations to identify and disseminate information in national languages among member organisations (such as municipalities, SMEs, Cluster, NGOs, infrastructure providers). Activities such as roadshows or exhibitions in the different countries might be an innovative tool to both disseminate results and raise interest among new organisations.
A.3 Increase knowledge and engage potential applicants	Annual Implementation Report, Project Website, Manual	AIR 2017: MA/JS supported applicants in various ways, with individual project consultations through online meetings and at MA/JS, with information events and seminars, and via information about the Programme at external events. In 2017, MA/JS provided for 276 individual consultations. 5 events were held to inform potential applicants about the Programme and the different forms of application.	The Programme offers relevant information and diverse forms of delivery for potential applicants.
A.4 Applicants are aware of the rules and requirements and where to get details	Annual Implementation Report, Project Website, Manual		

For the second communication objective, the assessment is as follows:

Table 6-4 'Supporting projects' – Qualitative assessment of communication aims

Communication Aims	Source of Information/Method	Evidence	Qualitative Assessment
B.1 Applicants are aware that they have to identify and communicate with decision makers in their fields	Review of AFs, case studies	AFs: Projects are well aware that they have to identify and communicate with decision makers in their fields. They include dissemination activities and engagement strategies and activities. Projects interviewed for case studies are well aware of this too.	Applicants are well aware. The application and selection process helps to plan the necessary outreach and engagement.

Communication Aims	Source of Information/Method	Evidence	Qualitative Assessment
B.2 Lead partners & project partners have capacity to communicate with target audiences	Survey of project partners	75% of communication managers that answered the survey feel that they have more or less sufficient financial resources to communicate with target groups. 88% of communication manager respondents feel that they have more or less sufficient personal capacities and resources to communicate with target groups.	Many project partners have sufficient capacity and resources to carry out communication with target audiences. Some project partners might need constant reminders on why communication is important and how communication is done best in an Interreg project. Information should go to all project partners and also try to reach the communication officers in partner organisations.
B.3 Lead partners and project partners understand and apply the rules and requirements	Case studies	Interviews with projects for case studies show that project partners understand and apply the rules and requirements.	Project partners seem to understand rules and requirements.
B.4 Lead partners and project partners are aware of the role of the MA/JS	Case studies	Interviews with projects for case studies show that project partners are aware of the role of the MA/JS.	Project partners seem to be aware of the role of MA/JS.

The specific assessments for communication objective 3 are presented below:

Table 6-5 'Making achievements visible' – Qualitative assessment of communication aims

| Communication Aims	Source of Information/Method	Evidence	Qualitative Assessment
C.1 Thematic experts in the region are aware of the programme results and achievements	Annual Implementation Report, Survey of thematic experts	According to the survey of thematic experts, 48% of them are (well) aware of the Programme and 26% are somehow aware of it. 26% of thematic experts in the Region indicate that they do not know (well) the Programme.	Many thematic experts in the region are aware of the programme and its results in specific policy fields.

Communication Aims	Source of Information/Method	Evidence	Qualitative Assessment
C.2 Relevant decision makers are aware of and know programme results and achievements and consider the programme as useful and efficient	--	No data available	Evidence is too limited to answer this question.

For the communication objective 'facilitating administration', the qualitative assessment shows that the aims of internal and horizontal communication are widely achieved.

Table 6-6 'Facilitating administration' – Qualitative assessment of communication aims

Communication Aims	Source of Information/Method	Evidence	Qualitative Assessment
D.1 Auditors and controllers are aware of the programme and understand their role and programme rules	Annual Implementation Report, Internal Operational Evaluation	AIR 2017: The audit and control system of Interreg BSR is fully established and works well as confirmed by the Programme's Audit Authority in its latest control report (ACR 2017). The Audit Strategy for the Programme was updated by the Audit Authority. Internal Operational Evaluation: The Audit Authority fulfils its responsibilities, chairing the Group of Auditors and maintaining the audit strategy. Annual Control Reports were submitted to the EU Commission and accepted.	This communication aim is achieved at least to some degree.
D.2 EUSBSR stakeholders are aware of the scope of priority 4 and understand their role and programme rules	Survey of EUSBSR stakeholders	79% of EUSBSR stakeholders answering the survey feel the support from Interreg BSR to EUSBSR coordination is relevant or very relevant compared to other resources.	There is a high level of awareness among EUSBSR stakeholders.
D.3 Other Interreg programmes and INTERACT know about the programme´s approaches	Annual Implementation Report, Annual Work Plan	According to the 2017 AIR draft the MA/JS met regularly with other programmes on financial, certifying, communication or evaluation matters as well as on 'Transnational programmes post-2020', and participated in network meetings or project related events around the Baltic Sea.	This communication aim is achieved at least to some degree.
D.4 Organisations/ authorities hosting the managing	Annual Implementation Report, Annual Work Plan	--	Evidence is too limited to answer this question.

Communication Aims	Source of Information/Method	Evidence	Qualitative Assessment
bodies are aware of the Programme and the usefulness of its achievements			
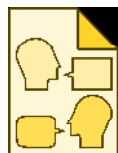
Interviews with MC members confirm the general effectiveness of the communication strategy from their point of view. Most interviewees feel well informed and think that Programme communication is useful. In particular, MC members highlight the website and project library as valuable tools. Some MC members very much appreciate the programme website (in particular, the MC section) as an '*excellent source of information*'. Some MC members also highlight the project library, the newsletter and representation of the Programme and projects at the EUSBSR Annual Forum as very useful. Individual opinions also mention communication seminars as effective and '*well organised*'. The postcards of projects receive an ambiguous assessment, some think this is a good summary that can easily be distributed. Others see no usefulness in postcards in times of social media. Potential for improvement is seen for using third parties to communicate about projects and the Programme (media, social media channels, from local to macro-regional level). This would reach out to target groups not yet familiar with the Programme. Some MC members see a potential to involve national and regional ministries more in communication. For example, a German Ministry organised a press trip to projects for regional journalists and received a good response in the regional/national press.

Interviews with the MA/JS (heads of unit) confirm the general effectiveness of the communication tools and communication strategy from their point of view. MA/JS highlights that communication is getting more professional within the Programme. However, communication would still be improved with more resources and more professional support. The important role of projects in communication is stressed – there is a lot of unexploited potential as projects can and should invest more in communication and support the MA/JS's work with, e.g. stories on project learning and aggregated results in certain policy areas. The MA/JS feels that involving multipliers to reach out to target groups is important and that an 'easy' language (not ERDF or scientific language) should be used in communication.

Finally, interviews with Communication Officers at the MA/JS confirm the effectiveness of communication strategy within the framework of available resources. In particular, support to projects is effective, as well as making the achievements visible. However, the interviewees have a critical view on communication and see unused potential for better communication to EUSBSR stakeholders with achievements of projects and the programme in general, if there were more resources. For example, better coordination and collaboration with the 'Let´s Communicate' project and PACs/HACs would help reach the EUSBSR NC. Moreover, with more resources, it would also be good to set up a community management tool. More contribution from projects on communication is requested. The work on 'storytelling' is time-consuming and projects sometimes do not have the capacity to do it themselves. The case study analysis confirms that not all projects have a communication strategy or a stakeholder engagement /outreach strategy and that certainly more can be done in this regard. The Communication

Officers also propose more exchange among peers on communication issues (e.g. an online forum for project communication managers).

In general, the analysis shows that evaluability of the efforts for communication can be further improved. As this requires a re-organisation of the intervention logic and baseline data, this is a recommendation for the next programming period. In particular, the intervention logic and steps between 'inputs' (e.g. number of documents, number of events) and final communication goals require the identification of intermediate objectives, milestones and indicators. The communication strategy should also foresee regular monitoring and reporting on these intermediary indicators. The monitoring requires additional resources, but it is the only way to increase the knowledge of what works, or not. For example, the number of contacts who receive the newsletter is a typical input indicator. The average level of satisfaction of readers would be an output indicator and would allow further assessment. An annual in-depth satisfaction survey of readers would gather information on the usefulness of newsletter information and whether it has impacted their work (impact indicator). The regular review of the list of recipients (who is in there?, who should be in?) would add further information on the impact of the newsletter. This is only one example, and of course the intermediate outputs and outcomes of other actions are more difficult to define[24].

Moreover, to formulate and design a good communication strategy and to monitor the effectiveness of programme communication would benefit from knowing the final target groups of projects better (quantification, identification). So projects should document and quantify their outreach to target groups, and know the BSR, national and regional decision-makers and multipliers better. For the programme it could be helpful to structure and manage information on target groups of the different projects, to have a better overview of the specific target groups. Coordination with national and regional multipliers, intermediaries, associations and federations in the programme area could help to increase awareness and to reach out to more 'unusual' clients of the IBSR. This requires good preparatory work in the programming phase and the establishment of baseline values. For the goal on awareness that more or less is included in every communication strategy, it would be helpful to establish a baseline and a similar method of measurement to monitor and update the indicators regularly (and not only in the framework of evaluations). Organised as an online survey, this would also not require many resources.

For the 2014-2020 communication strategy, targets and measurements of awareness among thematic experts is recommended to be able to evaluate this objective in the final evaluation. For the next programming period, a more thorough communication strategy and intervention logic for communication is recommended, with intermediate objectives, and measurable ('SMART') indicators, regular monitoring activities and better identification of target groups and multipliers.

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[24] Further guidance and examples can be found in Document 3: How to develop your indicators and your monitoring system (PDF) in 'TOOLKIT for the evaluation of the communication activities' (European Commission, 2015) under https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-evaluation-toolkit_en.pdf as well as 'Are We There Yet? A Communications Evaluation Guide' under https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/arewethereyet.pdf Moreover, the INTERREG Central Europe 2014-2020 Communication Strategy offers good examples of communication output indicators that help to evaluate the strategy.

7 Performance of the MA/JS

This chapter reflects the analysis and appraisal of evaluation questions with regard to the performance of the MA/JS.

7.1 Summary of conclusions

The analysis answers the following evaluation questions:

> **Has the MA/JS managed to implement all its assigned tasks? Are the tasks implemented to a sufficient level of quality?**

- In general, document review shows that the MA/JS carries out all the assigned tasks. Implementation seems to be of sufficient quality.

- The internal operational evaluation can be seen as a valuable tool for quality assurance within the MA/JS. It gives a complete overview of MA/JS tasks and functions and the Programme. Evaluations covering 2016 and 2017, found satisfactory management of the MA/JS and the Programme. Where smaller problems were detected, lessons learned were identified and follow-up measures proposed and implemented.

- A few recommendations can be made for internal operational evaluations: a) content-related monitoring of project progress and the related task of ensuring relevant monitoring data for upcoming evaluations could be more adequately covered, b) if feasible, more effort should be put on assuring data availability for regular quality checks to make internal evaluation more effective.

- In addition, a recommendation from the ex-ante evaluation is being reiterated: to put more efforts and ensure adequate measures so projects commit to disseminating results and effects after project finalisation, through measures such as conferences and articles.

> **How effective is the MA/JS in providing support to its clients?**

- Interviews with MC members confirmed their effective and highly-professional work. MC Members are generally very satisfied with the work of the MA/JS. Members of the Monitoring Committee regard the MA/JS as very professional and competent.

- In general, support to applicants by the MA/JS and feedback in form of satisfaction and concept notes as well as the number of applications can be considered adequate. The work with applicants seems to be highly effective.

- The support of the MA/JS to projects can be considered highly useful and effective. Project partners are widely satisfied with their work.

> **How efficient is the MA/JS in using its resources?**

- Analysing the resources available and spent by the MA/JS for management and implementation of the programme in comparison to the achievements and results of its work on management and communication, the MA/JS is efficient in spending its resources.

- Overall, the high level of effectiveness seen in the achievements of the MA/JS confirms that the resources are spent in an efficient way.

- The analysis shows that assessment of concept notes and applications is a resource-intensive activity for Project Officers and financial officers. Other resource-intense activities are clarifications in the contracting process as well as the support on State aid.

- The programme should offer more support to stimulate the dissemination and transfer of results. Demand for communication increases with new and modern communication tools (social media, storytelling, etc.). New demands can be faced with more staff dedicated to communication, or more funds for external communication professionals, to deliver high-quality work in the future, in particular, for the dissemination of project and programme results.

The analysis leads to the following recommendations:

- The annual internal operational evaluation is a very good instrument to summarise and reflect what has been done. To increase the usefulness of internal evaluations, an external expert/moderator could be considered. The external expert could, for example, review the methodology for internal evaluations, raise points for further analysis and reflect together with the MA/JS in a workshop on relevant issues. This would help to further improve the work of the MA/JS.

7.2 Context

The MA of IBSR is Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein (IB.SH). The tasks of the MA and the JS are carried out by IB.SH's department 'Interreg BSR'. The JS main office is in Rostock/Germany. The Riga branch office of the JS is operated by the State Regional Development Agency.

MA and JS tasks are integrated in one functional unit, working on a vertical level. The MA has established thematic teams (Programme Unit, Project Unit and Finance Unit). According to the MA/JS, 31 people are working for them, of those seven are part-time.

Functions, processes and tasks of the MA/JS are defined in the **Cooperation Programme**. A more specific overview of tasks is defined each year within **Annual Work Programmes**. The MA/JS developed a task list for MA and JS staff. There are individual job descriptions for each position. The **Annual Implementation Report**s detail general activities for each year, including activities under the Technical Assistance axis.

Figure 7-1 Organisational structure of the MA/JS
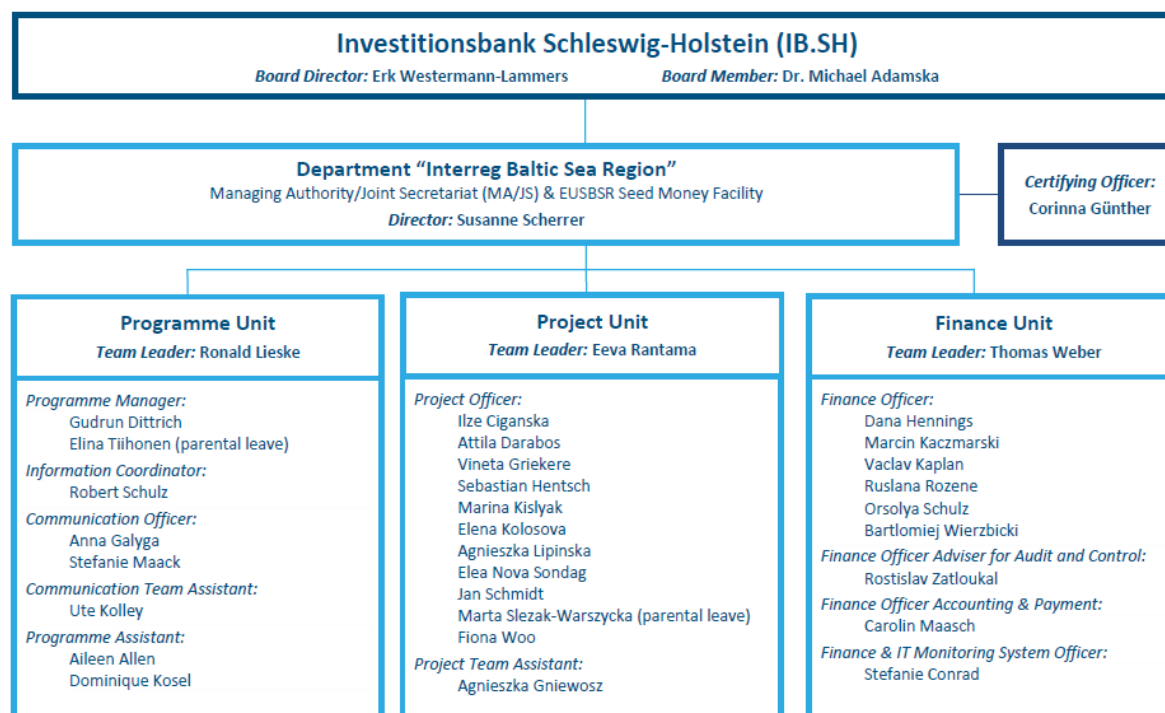
Source: https://www.interreg-baltic.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Contacts/MA-JS/MA-JS_organisational_chart.pdf

The Programme has also established yearly internal operational evaluation in its **Evaluation Plan**. '*This type of internal evaluation aims at measuring, assessing and analysing the progress in implementing the Programme as well as ensuring the good and appropriate functioning of the Programme bodies. […] Operational evaluation is carried out internally by the MA/JS that is most familiar with the monitoring and management system of the Programme. External support will be used to evaluate selected processes or approaches in the Programme implementation and administration in case malfunctioning is suspected.*'[25]

7.3 Evaluation findings

This chapter reviews the performance of the work of the MA/JS within the Programme. It builds on existing information from the Ex ante Evaluation, internal operational evaluations and AIR, as well as on the opinion of clients of the MA/JS, namely MC members, applicants and project partners.

> Has the MA/JS managed to implement all its assigned tasks? Are the tasks implemented to a sufficient level of quality?

The Annual Work Programme 2018 defines the following tasks for the MA/JS:

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[25] Evaluation Plan. Interreg BSR 2014-2020. Chapter 3.6. Pages 24-25.

0. Staff and Office Management
1. Interreg BSR, programme period 2014-2020

1.1 Cooperation Programme
1.2 Committees
1.3 Communication activity Plan
1.4 Project level

1.4.1 Documents and tools for practical implementation
1.4.2 Project application, assessment and selection
1.4.3 Project implementation
1.4.4 Project monitoring and finances

1.5 Programme finances
1.6 Audit and controls
1.7 Programme reporting
1.8 Other (EUSBSR, INTERACT, Post2020 preparation)

2. Closure of other tasks (related to the 2007-2013 Programme)

In general, the document review shows that the MA/JS carries out all these assigned tasks. Implementation seems to be of sufficient quality.

This assessment is mainly based on the annual internal operational evaluation carried out by the MA/JS. These evaluations can be considered a valuable tool to ensure quality control within the MA/JS. Such evaluations also often increase the quality of the implemented tasks. There were internal operational evaluations for 2016 and 2017. These review in the form of a check list aspects of a) programme management, b) project management, c) financial performance and d) programme delivery. An evaluation of Programme delivery was not applicable for 2016 and 2017 since no results on finalised projects were available. At programme level the tasks MA/JS management, financial management, certifying authority, the Audit Authority and Group of Auditors, work with the MC, as well as communication and public relation tasks are covered. At project level, the following tasks are evaluated –support during project development, admissibility check, assessment procedure, contract process, support for approved projects, monitoring process, project closure process. The same aspects are evaluated separately for priorities 1-3, 4.1 and 4.2 as projects in each respective priority are different. In addition, performance and availability of the BAMOS e-monitoring system is assessed. The evaluations propose follow-up actions and check on the previous year's proposed follow-up action. This feedback loop can be seen as very positive for the usefulness of the evaluation tool.

According to the internal operational evaluations all tasks planned for the respective year were implemented.

In general, the internal evaluation found a satisfactory management of the MA/JS and the Programme. '*For 2017 an internal operational evaluation of the Programme was carried out to evaluate management structures, processes and financial performance. According to the Programme's Evaluation Plan it was*

conducted by MA/JS. Overall, structures and processes related to Programme management as well as financial performance were found to be sound, sufficient and timely.'[26]

The MA/JS stated in the internal evaluation that '*during 2017, the MA/JS was fully staffed, including for carrying out the Certifying Authority functions (MA/JS as joint unit of the hosting organisation IB.SH). Leaving MA/JS staff (maternity leave, termination of contract) were replaced accordingly to ensure continuity of tasks*'.

The 2017 evaluation highlights some areas where improvements are possible. The first point is the comparatively long period sometimes needed for the contracting process, leading to delays in the start of projects. This point is analysed and proposals for improvement made. Largely, delays are due to technical, external reasons, but also to bottlenecks at the MA/JS (sometimes many and lengthy clarification rounds needed, which exceed the capacities at the MA/JS). In general, the problem seems to be adequately identified and analysed ('lessons learned'), and solutions proposed, if possible. The second point concerns delays and lack of functionalities in the BAMOS system. As stated in the evaluations, BAMOS has not yet reached its full functionality, though delays and first errors have been solved and the system now runs smoothly with the necessary support available.

In general, the internal operational evaluation can be seen as a valuable tool for quality assurance within the MA/JS. It gives a complete overview of the tasks and functions of the MA/JS and the Programme. It highlights the complexity of management tasks at project level, requiring three more or less separate systems for working with priorities 1-3, 4.1 and 4.2, with very different nature of 'projects' in each.

Only a little room for improvement can be identified for the internal operational evaluations:

a) content-related monitoring[27] of project progress and the related task of ensuring monitoring data for upcoming evaluations could be more adequately covered. In particular, impact evaluations require more structured data and information on projects which is currently collected and structured at the MA/JS. This refers, for example, to printing progress reports[28] or tailor-made data sets in a format that can be further used for analysis (e.g. Excel) from the BAMOS system on output indicators, foreseen impact on institutional capacities and learning experiences. Another supportive measure would be regular satisfaction surveys of project partners, applicants or target groups of certain MA/JS activities, independent of the external evaluations.

b) for some questions in the internal operational evaluations, there is no data. If feasible, more effort should be put on ensuring data availability for regular quality checks.

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[26] Annual Implementation Report 2017. Draft Version May 2018. Chapter 4-6_page 1
[27] The internal operational evaluations focus mostly on financial monitoring of projects and any progress reports, but not on project output indicators or other variables related to project progress.
[28] Several project partners in interviews and surveys say they miss the print function of progress reports in the BAMOS system. Working with the document is much easier for project partners and evaluators if it can be printed, at least as a summary.

Another source of information on the quality of MA/JS management has been the Ex ante Evaluation. '*The ex-ante evaluator recommends that more efforts are made in the new period in terms of making projects commit to disseminating results and effects after project finalisation through measures such as participation in conferences, publish articles etc. […] as part of the overall communication strategy the programme could focus on this area, in the new period.*'[29] Even if it is still early to evaluate the effectiveness of any response, this evaluation would like to remind the MA/JS about this recommendation. Another Ex ante evaluation recommendation referred to the usefulness of policy learning platforms for presenting results to the MC as well as to the public. This evaluation appreciates that this recommendation has been taken on board and project platforms are being implemented in the current programme.

Interviews with desk officers at the MA/JS and with project managers highlight that the State aid assessment causes a high burden for project and programme management. The participation of for-profit private organisations and companies is intended, as mentioned by the MA/JS, to make projects more concrete and bring more business orientation. It is not in the hands of the MA to apply different procedures, but the European Commission should strive for clear simplification, e.g. making Interreg State aid free. Ensuring compliance with State aid uses lots of resources in the MA/JS. Applicants are provided with information about State aid rules and requirements of the programme during seminars, as well as during individual project consultations. The MA/JS reported that these procedures have increased work in particular during the contracting phase. The complexity, inter alia, leads to private for-profit partners dropping out in this phase.

How effective is the MA/JS in providing support to its clients?

Effectiveness reviews if the activities were adequate to accomplish a purpose, e.g. providing adequate support to its clients. The main client groups can be identified: a) Monitoring Committee members, b) applicants, and c) partners of approved projects. This evaluation has analysed the opinions and feedback of these client groups, as far as possible.

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[29] COWI (2014): Ex-ante Evaluation of Cooperation Programme of the BSR 2014-2020. Final Report.

Monitoring Committee members
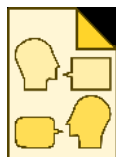
Interviews with MC members confirmed the effective and highly-professional work of the MA/JS as they are generally very satisfied and regard the MA/JS as very professional and competent. There are clear structures and procedures for the MC, meetings are always well prepared and documents are high quality. Some members mentioned even that the documentation is sometimes too extensive and the information '*is hard to digest*'. MC members appreciate the speed of responses to information requests.

Most MC members stress that the MC has an active role in programme management. They appreciate the vivid and constructive (sometimes time-consuming) discussions in MC meetings. One or two MC members wish for even more discussions, in particular on project decisions. In general, there were very few recommendations for improvement from MC members.

Table 7-1 Feedback from MC members on the work of the MA/JS

Question	Comments from MC members
Assessment	'*MA/JS supports the MC to a very high degree*' '*feel well supported, relationship with MA/JS is very good*' '*They explain everything*' '*Meetings are prepared well*' '*Good and constructive discussions in MC meetings*' '*very happy with the administration, very professional, also compared to other programmes*' '*MA/JS provide documents of a high quality*' '*Meetings have a clear agenda, good discussions in MC meetings*' '*Clear structures and procedures*' '*Representatives at the MC meetings are very professional*' '*MA/JS covers all needs of the MC*' '*Easy and quick to get every information, but hard to 'digest' everything*' '*Positive that the MC has an active role*' '*Is very satisfied with the support, highlights the excellent cooperation*' '*High professionalism of the MA/JS sometimes leads to the feeling that MC is only to nod off, in particular in project approvals*'
What can be improved?	'*Would like to have more flexibility, more discussions and less prefabricated decisions*' *MC meetings are so well prepared, they seem to become redundant, all decisions are already taken*' '*More discussions would be good*'

Source: Data from interviews to MC members for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-July 2018.

Applicants

There is no specific primary data available on the satisfaction of applicants with the work of the MA/JS. However, some information is available in existing internal operation evaluations and satisfaction surveys of events.

According to the 2016 and 2017 internal operational evaluations, the MA/JS offers a wide variety of support to applicants:

- Project Idea Forms (PIFs)
- Information events and seminars
- Individual project consultations in Rostock and Riga offices, information events (see 1.2 and 1.11)
- Project Database and Output Library regarding IVB Interreg BSR 2007-2013
- Consultations per telephone / skype
- written feedback on PIFs
- Website (e. g. Operational Programme, Programme Manual, one thematic description per priority, newsletters)
- Information about the Programme in external events
- Provision of Programme material to events
- Online group for partner and project idea search
- Publication of calls in thematically relevant professional online groups.

In 2016, two Project Development Seminars were held, in Berlin (12/13 October) with 71 participants and in Riga (19/20 October) with 74 participants. The response for the Development Seminars was about 73%. 81 - 89% of participants stated that the events fulfilled their expectations (taking into account the specific thematic blocks). Some 90% were satisfied with the amount of information received.

In 2016, 21 ideas consulted during the Berlin event (personally), 167 projects consulted the MA/JS in general (phone, skype, written feedback…). 200 consultations reached the MA/JS for the First Call. Out of 212 submitted Concept Notes (for the Second Call), 75 were invited to submit a full application. Consultations were requested by 74 parties and which were all provided in 2016.

'Although the time was tight and the workload was quite high, the MA/JS was able to give support and consult almost all CNs invited to submit a full application. The invitation for consultation was sent to all 75 CNs. The one that was not consulted, didn't use the offered possibility but also didn't submit the full application. There were no time constraints in the MA/JS.'[30]

[30] Internal Operational Evaluation 2017.

In general, support to applicants by the MA/JS and feedback in the form of satisfaction, concept notes and full applications can be considered as adequate. The work with applicants seems to be highly effective.

Project partners

The survey of project partners showed a high level of satisfaction with the tools and activities provided by the MA/JS. All seminars (lead applicant, lead partner, financial and communication) received scores between 4.13 and 4.38 out of 5, with the highest scores for the lead applicant and project development seminar. In written comments, project partners particularly appreciated the individual consultations and visits to projects.

Figure 7-2 Satisfaction with support from Programme Bodies during implementation (Q29, n=54)
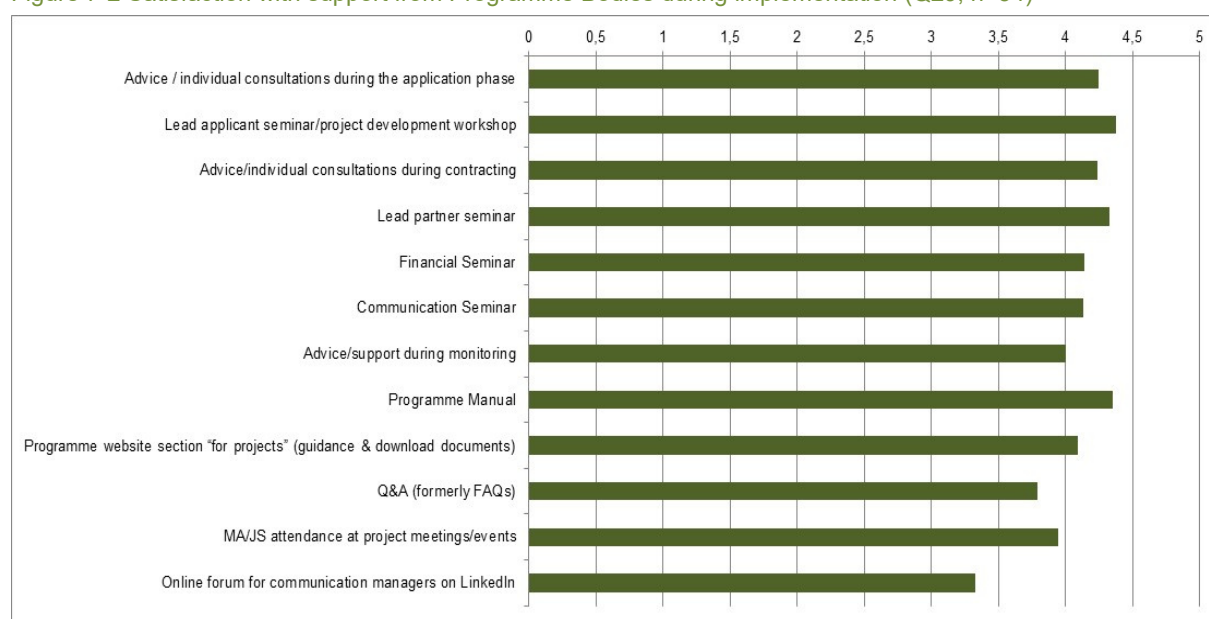
Survey Question Q29: 'How satisfied are you with the support of programme bodies to you during project implementation? Please rate from 1= not at all satisfied, to 5= completely satisfied.'
Source: Data from survey of project partners for this evaluation. Spatial Foresight. May-June 2018.

Consultations during the application and the contracting phase were rated 4.25 and 4.24. Only advice during monitoring was rated slightly lower, at 4.

Within the case studies the project managers were asked how satisfied they were with the support of MA/JS to projects during project implementation. The level of satisfaction is generally very high. The seminars were regarded as helpful for implementation. The interlocutors stressed the good personal support of the project and financial managers in particular in difficult situations (partner change, problems with First Level Controllers in some countries).

Examples of assessments by project partners on the work of the MA/JS are presented below:

In general, the support of the MA/JS to projects can be considered as highly useful and effective. Project partners are broadly satisfied with the work of the MA/JS.

How efficient is the MA/JS in using its resources?

Analysing the resources available and spent by the MA/JS for management and implementation in comparison to Programme achievements and its work on management and communication, the MA/JS is efficient in spending its resources.

The AIR 2017 states: '*The total Technical Assistance budget will be approximately EUR 21.6 million and cover all Programme management costs, including costs for the MA/JS and contribution to the Audit Authority for the period 2014-2023. In the year 2017 the overall spending of Technical Assistance amounted to EUR 2,716,302, or 83.8% of the annual budget of EUR 3,241,250. Expenditure was incurred by Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein (IB.SH) and the State Regional Development Agency, Latvia, as well as by the Audit Authority in Kiel, Germany. All expenditure was subject to national first level control. […] Overall, compared to the previous calendar year, the spending decreased slightly but remained at a high level. It became obvious that the budget plan provides sufficient resources to finance all necessary expenditure. No significant problems were encountered in this priority.*'[31]

The budget for Technical Assistance is 6% of the total ERDF volume. According to interviews with the MA/JS, this is sufficient to effectively implement MA/JS tasks, despite the high administrative efforts.

The Annual Implementation Report for 2017 gives an overview of common and programme specific output indicators for the technical assistance priority. The number of applicants advised is already twice as high as planned (target 415, actual 827). The number of applications received and assessed is three times as high (target 260, actual 705). In total 1 079 people attended 20 programme events. These 20 events are already 6 more than targeted for the whole programme period. The only indicator which needs to catch up is the number of other events attended by MA/JS staff. Only 194 were attended to the end of 2017 with a target of 700. The MA/JS confirms that this is due to a shift to more important priorities related to core tasks in programme and project management compared to attending other events.

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[31] Annual Implementation Report 2017. Draft Version May 2018. Chapter 3.1_page 3

Overall, the high level of effectiveness seen in the achievements of the MA/JS confirms also that the available resources are spent efficiently.

The high satisfaction of project partners with the programme support[32] also demonstrates that adequate staffing is needed for efficient programme implementation. The MA/JS organisational structure, procedures, tools and activities seem to be adequate to manage the Programme and to implement all required functions efficiently. The integrated tasks of MA and JS under one roof is highly efficient and leads to synergies.

During the interviews the MA/JS mentioned ways to reach higher efficiency and to avoid conflicting priorities. Priorities of the JS for the next time is to have closer contact with running projects and to improve monitoring. This is counteracted by a high effort to double-check if the first level control was done properly and to solve problems with the First Level Controller. Another requirement with high administrative burden and reduced efficiency is the annual closure of accounts that does not fit to the duration of the projects and categories of intervention.

The overall analysis shows that assessment of concept notes and full applications is a resource-intensive activity for project and financial officers. Overall, the evaluators regard it as positive that the assessment of projects is considered as a core function of the JS and thus is done internally. It was highlighted that there were no complaints about the quality assessment. Nevertheless, this places high demands on project officers. Further resource-intensive activities are clarifications in the contracting process as well as support on State aid.

The focus of the first three years of the programme was on consulting new projects and assessing the three calls. For the second half of the programme period the programme should shift to more support for projects during implementation. This is also the wish of the project officers and the projects. The project platforms are a good approach to help projects to find an optimal way to transfer results through exchange and mutual learning between projects. They should be closely monitored and accompanied by the MA/JS which will bring them new tasks.

The programme should also offer more support to stimulate the dissemination and transfer of results. Demand for communication increases with new and modern communication tools (social media, storytelling etc.). Expectations for communication are rising from the European Commission, Member States and project partners. A quick analysis of the staff available for communication shows that in BSR there is roughly one communication officer per 150 million Euros of funding. New demands put on communication officers lead to a recommendation to increase the number of dedicated staff, or to contract external communication professionals, to deliver high-quality work in the future, in particular, when it comes to the dissemination of project and programme results.

The annual internal operational evaluation is a very good instrument to summarise and reflect what has been done. The MA/JS conducts the evaluation more as a check list with some parts of a qualitative

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[32] Results presented under the previous evaluation question.

analysis. To make the internal evaluation even more effective, it could contain more in-depth analysis, e.g. why the return on investment of individual consultations is so limited.

To increase the usefulness of internal evaluations, the support of an external expert/moderator could be considered. The external expert could, for example, review the methodology for internal evaluations, raise points for further analysis and reflect together with the MA/JS in a workshop on relevant issues. This would help to further improve the work of the MA/JS.

To involve an external expert has the following advantages:

- An external moderator can help to think outside the box. They usually have a better 'look from above' and get an overview on the whole MA/JS system more easily.

- They can act as a 'critical friend, ask 'stupid' questions and help to discuss new ideas.

- An external moderator is free of assumptions like 'we do not have resources for that', 'when we do that we would have more work'. They can steer a workshop away from self-imposed constraints.

- An external moderator is neutral and can concentrate on the process of the workshop and the goals.

8 Annex

References

Programme Documents

- IBSR Cooperation Programme

- IBSR Programme Manual

- IBSR Annual Implementation Reports 2014/2015, 2016 and Draft Version 2017

- IBSR Annual Work Plan 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018

- IBSR Communication Strategy

- Internal Operational Evaluations 2016 and 2017

- Ex ante Evaluation IBSR 2014

Interviews to Programme Bodies

Programme Body	Name and Position	Date of the Interview
MA/JS	**Susanne Scherrer**, Director of the MA and JS	May 16 2018
MA/JS	**Eeva Rantama**, Team Leader Project Unit	May 16 2018
MA/JS	**Ronald Lieske**, Team Leader Programme Unit	May 16 2018
MA/JS	**József Attila Darabos**, Project Officer Transport	May 16 2018
MA/JS	**Ilze Ciganska**, Project Officer Innovation	June 29 2018
MA/JS	**Elena Kolosova**, Project Officer Natural Resources	June 29 2018
MA/JS	**Stefanie Maack**, Communication Officer	May 16 2018
MA/JS	**Anna Gałyga**, Communication Officer	May 16 2018
Monitoring Committee	**Kaarina Williams**, Ministry of Justice, European Affairs, Consumer Protection and Equality of Land Schleswig-Holstein, Germany	May 16 2018
Monitoring Committee	**Anna Bergdahl**, Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth	May 29 2018
Monitoring Committee	**Iruma Kravale**, The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Latvia	May 29 2018
Monitoring Committee	**Monika Strojecka-Gevorgyan**, Ministry of Economic Development, Poland	June 1 2018
Monitoring Committee	**Margarita Golovko**, Ministry of Finance Estonia	June 11 2018
Monitoring Committee	**Matti Lipsanen**, Regional Council of Häme, Finland	June 11 2018
Monitoring Committee	**Niels Bjering Hansen**, Danish Business Authority	July 5 2018
Monitoring Committee	**Ann Irene Saeternes**, Eastern Norway County Network	October 26 2018
Monitoring Committee	**Diana Paukštiene**, Ministry of the Interior, Lithuania	Written answer
Monitoring Committee	**Irina Karelina**, The International Centre for Social and Economic Research - Leontief Centre, Russia	Written answer

Focus Group

A focus group was organised with EUSBSR PACs/HACs for them to discuss and verify preliminary conclusions and early hypotheses regarding the contribution of the Interreg Baltic Sea Programme. The PACs and HACs provided input for assessing the value of the current contribution and alignment and for defining recommendations on how to better define support from the Programme to EUSBSR. In short, participants discussed Interreg Baltic Sea Programme support for EUSBSR coordination under SO 4.2 and the Interreg Baltic Sea Programme contribution to EUSBSR (Priorities 1-3).

The focus group took place on Monday, 4 June 2018, from 11:00-12:30, in Tallinn, Estonia back to back with the 9th EUSBSR Annual Forum.

The table below gives an overview of the participants and their PAC / HAC.

No	First Name	Last name	PAC / HAC
1	Dmitry	Frank-Kamenetsky	HA Spatial Planning
2	Julia	Fredriksson	PA Secure
3	Rikke	Holst Søndergaard	PA Ship
4	Krista	Kampus	HA Climate
5	Jouni	Lappalainen	PA Safe
6	Tālis	Linkaits	HA Spatial Planning
7	Darius	Liutikas	PA Bioeconomy
8	Maxi	Nachtigall	PA Hazards
9	Sanni	Turunen	PA Nutri

Surveys

Survey of project partners:

The survey of project partners ran from 23 May 2018 and collected responses until 18 June 2018. A total of 146 complete and usable responses were collected and analysed. The survey was aimed at project managers, communication managers, project partners, and associated organisations/ stakeholders, which were asked to respond to different sections of the questionnaire. The survey was launched on 23 May to 74 project managers and 59 communication managers. Project managers were asked to forward the survey to their respective project partners and associated organisations. Reminders were sent out on 8 June. There were 58 final responses from project managers (response rate of 78%), 17 from communication managers (response rate of 29%), 61 from project partners, and 10 from associated partners.

Survey of EUSBSR HACs and PACs and NCs

The survey of EUSBSR Horizontal Area Coordinators (HACs), Priority Area Coordinators (PACs), and NCs ran from 23 May 2018 and collected responses until 15 June 2018. A total of 27 complete and usable responses were collected and analysed. The survey was aimed at EUSBSR HACs, PACs, and NCs which were all asked to respond to the same set of questions. The survey was launched on 23 May to 53 contacts for HACs and PACs, and 14 contacts for NCs. Reminders were sent out on 8 June and on 13 June. There were 5 final responses from HACs, 15 from PACs, 1 from an organisation covering both HAC and PAC functions, 5 NCs, and 1 partner to an NC. Responses cover 22 HACs and PACs of 35 (63%) and 5 of 8 NC offices (63%).

Survey of thematic experts in the BSR

Surveys of thematic experts in the Baltic Sea Region to update the baselines of institutional capacity in the Region was launched on 8 May 2018, and collected responses until 29 June 2018.

A total of 115 experts were invited to take part, some experts were invited to surveys for more than one SO, so 126 questionnaires were sent. The final number of complete and valid responses is 58 questionnaires from 54 respondents (response rate of 46% for questionnaires and 47% for experts).

Case Studies

The following projects have been analysed more in-depth case.

Project Name	SO
Baltic Tram	1.1
Smart Blue Regions	1.2
Baltse@nior	1.3
IWAMA	2.1
LOWTEMP	2.3
Baltic Blue Growth	2.4
EMMA	3.1
GO LNG	3.4

For each case study, a separate report has been elaborated that is available as an annex to this evaluation report.