

Interreg Baltic Sea Region

Mid-term evaluation of Programme impact

Case Study Report

BaltSe@nioR



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1 Executive Summary

Impact on Target Groups by BaltSe@nior

SO	Target Group	Processes where Target Groups are involved	Learning Experiences /Use of Project products and results	Specific Impacts on the Institutional Capacities of target groups	Dimension of institutional capacity
1.3	Furniture enterprises in the Baltic Sea Region which have ambitions to produce home furniture, improving the seniors' quality of life, comfort and safety.	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 sensible about the 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 in the field of furniture design and presenting 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 produced will be saved in a Virtual Library, where companies will have access to, even after the finalisation of the project and upon registration.	Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence; Increased capability to work in transnational environment.
1.3	Furniture enterprises in the Baltic Sea Region which have ambitions to produce home furniture, improving the seniors' quality of life, comfort and safety. Design and engineering students.	Target groups will participate at Workshops and an Innovation Camp, 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.	International design workshops where an international group of participants designed and produced furniture for children and senior: During 4 days, 41 students from 5 countries produced more than 50 pieces of furniture. ICT and wood technology experts worked together to prepare the prototype of smart chair for elderly	Students and future employees will have the possibility to learn different working methods through working together with all participating countries. Entering the market for furniture for the elderly and adapting to new needs	Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence; Increased capability to work in transnational environment.

2 Project description

The BaltSe@nior project brings together regional business capacities to tackle a regional challenge, promoting entrepreneurship and growth at the same time.

Ageing is one of the biggest demographic challenges, not only visible globally, but also at a European and Baltic Sea region scale. The project aims to improve the quality of life of seniors in the region, by expanding and adjusting the market offer of products in the region. Hence, to tackle the demographic challenge, the project brings together experts from different BSR countries and disciplines to transform this challenge into a business opportunity for enterprises.

The business sector involved is the furniture companies, which will contribute in empowering seniors' comfort and safety, enhancing at the same time their innovation capacity. This will be done through the design and development of furniture based on safety, reliability, specific needs and preferences of seniors, as well as problems they may face while using furniture. As a result, the aspirations to improve the life quality of older BSR citizens can give power to the furniture SMEs of the region. For this, the project will provide furniture SMEs of the region with ICT based tools, applications, databases, innovative product design methods by creating synergies through this ICT innovative solutions and knowledge and the companies.

Therefore, the project will inspire a common identity to the furniture companies, enhance their knowledge and competences, increase their capacity to work in a transnational environment and hence open up to them a new market, enhance their innovation capacity to create smart products adapted to seniors' needs and making them and the whole Baltic Sea Region more innovative and competitive.

The BaltSe@nior project supports priority axis 1 on innovation of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme and more specifically the specific objective 1.3 on non-tech innovation.

The project has a budget of EUR 2.39 million and a duration between May 2016 – April 2019. It has in total ten partners and the lead partner is the Poznan University of Life Sciences. Other partners come from universities, focusing however on different disciplines to bring the maximum knowledge added value to the project, a municipality, art academy and a development centre.

BaltSe@nior is a EUSBSR flagship project under the Priority Area Innovation.

3 Expected results, outputs and activities

The main target group of the project are furniture enterprises in the Baltic Sea Region which have ambitions to produce home furniture, improving the seniors' quality of life, comfort and safety. The project will provide those enterprises with knowledge about how to produce elderly-friendly furniture and opens to them a new market which they have not thought or exploited much so far. The project will also teach new methods of furniture design to Engineering and Master Students who will soon start their career in furniture companies.

Research across countries on elderly needs. The project has launched a research across the elderly to gain knowledge about the problems that seniors face in their daily activities. This was done through direct interviews and questionnaires among elderly in the Baltic Sea Region, engaging almost all partners of the project. The aim of this research was to collect the right information so as to better design furniture for the seniors, based on their needs. Furthermore, the project had the opportunity to discover similarities and differences across the countries, as well as any problems or special needs. The project managed to collect results from over 350 interviews from Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Latvia and Finland. In parallel, a process of creating a repository of reports, publications etc. on aging society is being conducted¹.

Production of the Age Simulator. One of the tangible results of the project so far is the Age Simulator. This is a prototype uniform-like device which has been produced to enable the experience of selected physical limitations of an aging human body, such as weakened muscles or sight illnesses that come with age. The aim of the Age Simulator is to enhance the empathy feeling in the product development phase, enabling designers and professionals to feel the age limitations. The prototype has been tested among students and professionals working with senior clients from Poland, Latvia, Finland and Estonia. A 3D model of this tool has been prepared for 3D printing, so that interested enterprises can create and print such a simulator themselves from the project's Virtual Library. A manual with instructions on how to use this prototype has also been developed.

Development of the Virtual Library. The project is in the process of the development of a Virtual Library which will make all results of the project available. This does not only concern the 3D model of the Age Simulator, but also relevant documents produced, articles, events newsletters etc. Furniture enterprises will have the opportunity to register to this Virtual Library and have access to all project results. To make this Virtual Library as user friendly as possible and adjust it to the end users' needs, the project has gathered views from 60 respondents (designers, students, researched, furniture and interior manufacturers) from seven Baltic Sea Region countries.

Testing new working methods for furniture enterprises to reach the senior market. The project has tested those new methods in workshops, involving researchers, companies, students. For example, the project has organised international design workshops in Poznan (May 2016 and September 2017), where an international group of participants designed and produced furniture for children and senior. They also redesigned Polish armchairs from the 70's adjusting them to the needs of seniors. During 4 days 41 students from Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Germany and Norway produced

¹ Project Progress Reports.

more than 50 pieces of furniture. The event was organized with the cooperation of the Poznan International Fair and the support of almost 30 companies, creating 4 armchairs. Furthermore, ICT and wood technology experts from Germany, Norway, Latvia, Estonia and Poland worked together to prepare the prototype of smart chair for elderly, while partners from Finland and Germany were developing first prototypes of fall detection system and the magic mirror (progress report). Other design workshops have been organised in Riga (November 2016) and Tallinn (February/March 2017) gathering all together with the event in Poznan 115 participants.

Organisation of the Innovation Camp. An Innovation Camp targeted to students, journalists and enterprises will take place in July 2018 in Denmark, where participants will have the chance to see and test the first results of the project. In this case, municipalities will bring their students to participate in the camp.

Expected project results and outputs*

Expected Project Results
The project aims to improve the knowledge and competencies of furniture companies in the Baltic Sea Region which aspire to improve the seniors' quality of life. Through the project, enterprises will have the opportunity to access a catalogue of solutions which they will be able to implement when designing and manufacturing furniture for elderly in practice. Through computer applications developed by the project, enterprises will be able to calculate the warranty period length and reliability of furniture joints and whole furniture constructions. All data and results produced will be saved in a Virtual Library, which will be developed by the project, and companies will have access to, even after the finalisation of the project and upon registration.
The project aims to increase the capability of furniture enterprises in producing senior-friendly furniture and to work in a transnational environment. Furniture companies will have the possibility to learn different working methods through working together with all participating countries. An example of such possibility is the Innovation Camp to be organised in July 2018. This way, the project will teach and implement design thinking, open innovation, and newly developed constant learning and designing process with cross-sectional specialisation methods.
Elderly, as end users, will benefit and gain more comfort and safety in home living.
Expected Documented Learning Experience
Operational manuals for the Baltic Sea Region furniture companies will be developed indicating and helping them to learn the requirements to be considered while designing furniture for elderly. The manuals will concern both the furniture form, incl. preferences of seniors on materials, functionality, ergonomics and functional dimensions of furniture and construction guidelines for the creation of safer furniture. The manuals will be available in the Virtual Library. So far, the Virtual Library is under development, however, different research steps on gathering information about seniors' needs took place, an age simulator has been produced, 4 articles were published in English, and a bibliography with available reports and publications is created.
Development of operational manuals for new working methods for new product development, so that companies can use their creativity in designing new furniture. The manuals will be available in the Virtual Library. Although the Virtual Library is still under development, a number of workshops involving different participants from different countries have taken place in several locations, where participants also had the chance to test these new tools in a transnational environment.
The project will involve Engineer and Master students who will start their career in the furniture design and manufacturing sector, to learn and use the new tools, knowledge and working methods of the project and be better prepared when they start their work. Changing the mind-set of young employees will be the most durable and valuable learning experience of the project. A number of workshops involving different participants from different countries have taken place in several locations, where participants incl. students from participating countries also had the chance to test these new tools in a transnational environment.
Expected Other Outputs
No of local / regional public authorities / institutions involved:1
No of enterprises receiving non-financial support: 250
No of enterprises cooperating with research institutions:60
No of documented newly developed market products and services: 7

*as defined in the Application Form Sections 3.8, 5.1 and 5.2.

4 Project partnership

The partnership of the project is comprised by ten project partners and six associated partners. There are seven higher education and research institutions, one business support organisation, one municipality and one interest group. Initially, two more partners were in the partnership, who however withdrew at a later stage. There are no private partners in the partnership, however, there are private associated partners (SMEs). Companies in the furniture sector represent the main target group of the project. The associated partners represent regional public authorities, local public authorities, a higher education and research institution (medical school) and SMEs (Architect Office).

Even if universities and research institutions are the majority of the partners, each is specialised in a different focus. For instance, university on medical care, provide expertise on how the body changes over the year, other universities focusing on technology and innovation or on economics, provide relevant knowledge and expertise. Having universities in the partnership benefit the project, as they facilitate exchange of knowledge and methodology and come with different ways on how to do this, new possibilities, new ways of working, supporting also students and their learning possibilities. The municipality mobilises its companies to participate and is in contact with seniors to see their needs, so they have a good network to the target group of the project.

Regional and Local Public Authorities	Ukmergė District Municipality Administration		
Research Organisations	Poznan University of Life Sciences	Tallinn University of Technology	Technische Universität München
	University of Skövde	Satakunta University of Applied Sciences	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Other	Development Centre UMT	Art Academy of Latvia	Hanseatic Parliament

According to interviews with project partners, there have been some challenges as regards SME involvement, especially as regards funding delays which might cause insecurity issues to companies, other risks concerning their cash flows, or low commitment of people and availability of resources. In addition, as there was a bureaucracy for companies, the project turned to involve SMEs via clusters and business support organisations, which could reach the target group of the project faster. For instance, the cluster in Denmark asked their members what are the companies interested and what is missing in their fields.

Overall, the project feels its partnership complete, as it was built wisely, based on a long cooperation among the main partners, which enjoys working on a transnational level. The partnership was also built on based on the available competences, so once the first members formed the project, they saw what competences are missing to complete the partnership. Although this was a long process, it was eventually worth it, as it works smoothly despite the physical distance.

5 Contribution of the project to the EUSBSR

BaltSe@nior is a flagship project of the EUSBSR under the PA Innovation. The project was part of the StarDust flagship umbrella projects of the EUSBSR in 2007-2013 programming period, as the Comfort in Living project. The project aims to reinforce cooperation within the region in order to face the demographic challenge of an ageing society, bringing together initiatives in different sectors, as furniture, design, ICT and different actors, as universities, companies, clusters, municipalities. The project will bring added value for the EUSBSR and the Baltic Sea Region in general in the field of non-technological innovation, by providing companies new insights to new markets, new working methods by strengthening their competitiveness and innovativeness.

According to interviews with project partners, there are no negative effects of having the EUSBSR flagship status, instead, project partners perceive the flagship label as an important factor in their project. The flagship label gives a sign that the project is 'special' and somehow also recognised as a good project, getting people interested in the project. The flagship label is connected with bigger recognition.

BaltSe@nior was present at the 9th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR, demonstrating the first results of the project to the public. The project has also been congratulated by the European Commissioner for Regional and Urban Policy, who made a field visit to one of the partners after the 9th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR and was presented the project's aims and achievements. This visibility can be partly linked to the status of being a EUSBSR flagship project.

6 Communication and outreach to target groups

As regards the internal communication of the project, the lead partner is the main communication manager, who however involves all partners in the communication process. The project has developed an online platform, maintained by the lead partner, where all partners who are involved have access to and can have access to archives of pictures, documents, national newsletters, press releases that are being uploaded to this platform. Each partner is responsible for uploading different relevant documents and material from the different national events, which are then available to all and free to use for communication practices. The communication manager sees only advantages in this approach, as all partners are engaged and they are the best people to tell the actual story. Furthermore, project partners also communicate with each other through emails, skype and phone calls. The Advisory Management Committee will also meet once a month over the three years duration of the project (three times a year through meetings and nine times a year through conference calls), organised by the project coordinator. For the post project phase there will be a responsible person indicated on the lead partner level in each of the project partners organisations to ensure that all information is available in case of reporting.

As regards the communication of the project activities and results to the target groups, this is done through different means. The main target group of the project are enterprises from the Baltic Sea Region with ambitions to produce home furniture which are elderly-friendly and improve the seniors' life quality.

Target Groups
WP2, 3, 4, 5: Baltic Sea Region enterprises with ambitions to produce home furniture, improving seniors life quality, comfort and safety. BSR companies will get the evidence for possibilities of implementation of ICT info furniture and interior design elements addressed for elderly population.
WP3: Students who will enter the labour market in the near future and start working in furniture companies.
End-users: the elderly consequently will benefit from the range of product on the market that will be safer and more comfortable for them, increasing their quality of life and safety.

Source: Project Application Form Section 4

The communication and outreach to target groups is therefore organised through marketing and targeted communication preparation. The project does not publish its activities everywhere, but to selected publications that address or are read by the project's target groups. The project also organises different exhibitions. Furthermore, the project tries to reach the target groups by 'being there where the companies and students are'². So, instead of inviting the target groups to project events, the project attends events from furniture companies. For instance, the project is present to demonstrate and show its results and achievements in furniture fairs, where it can also get in contact with more target groups and disseminate its results. So far, BaltSe@nior participated in a furniture fair in Stockholm and in Milan, as well as similar fairs in Poland and Riga.

In addition, the project involves its own network, e.g. the universities involve their students, or other national / regional organisations, through communication channels such as social media.

² Interview to project partners

BaltSe@nior has also received some good recognition from national media and TV. In addition, a documentary on National Geographic about the project will be broadcasted in July both on youtube and in the National Geographic Channel (in Polish with English subtitles).

The project has thus been very much exposed and a lot of people know about it, according to the interviewees. Through the project, people, also learn about Interreg, while there is more awareness about seniors.

Coming to the support from the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme, the project feels very much supported. This regards especially the support in the beginning of the project, where the lead partners participated in the workshops on management, financial etc. support, which was very good and useful for the development of the programme. Also the permanent support of the programme is very good and fast. The lead partner noticed that due to these workshops they attended, which were organised by the programme, they were more prepared and secure about their communication, which felt being easier to them. Apart from the trainings and workshops, also the templates and all the visual communication tools that the JS prepared have been of benefit. The JS also supported in writing articles and newsletters, which is good for the visibility of the project.

The MA/JS also supported the project in the specific case of a partner change, where the programme helped with the bureaucratic procedures. Similar was the case when the project changed one of its outputs and the programme provided advice on how to do so.

For future, bigger events could be organised with different projects coming together to produce a wider effect. For instance, communication managers from different projects could meet to develop a stronger cooperation and link among, at least, those who aim at the same or similar target groups.

7 Impact on target groups

The target groups of the project, i.e. enterprises that want to develop elderly-friendly furniture, have been involved in the project process from its beginning. The project partners contacted the target groups already at the beginning of the project application form, to see whether there is interest in such a project from the company side and wherever possible the project incorporated things that the target groups felt were missing.

The biggest expected impact of the project is that companies will get in touch and understand a new group of customers: the seniors. The project realised that companies are not fully aware and do not have the knowledge of the seniors' needs. For this, they create the knowledge on understanding seniors better through studies and tools, they provide innovative tools and ICT means to educate companies on what is better for the seniors. So even if companies do not have furniture which are tailored-designed for seniors, they would at least have the knowledge to provide the best advice to their senior customers on the products they already have, which would ease their lives. Therefore, the project provides an enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence, as it produces innovations and tools, and shares its knowledge with the target groups. A first step to understand seniors' difficulties and familiarise target groups with this, has been the testing of the age simulator, which sensitises people on the age challenges.

Furthermore, the workshops organised by the project result in increasing capability to work in a transnational environment, as they do not only aim to disseminate results, but also to share with participants and target groups the art of collaboration, on how to work with other countries. Target groups can therefore see the benefits this can have to broaden their perspectives and way of working, by inviting players and companies from other countries. The project benefits the Baltic Sea Region in general, as it builds capacity in companies, which through the project have the opportunity to learn from others, at a transnational level, work in a different way than they used to and hence develop a comparative advantage compared to other companies of their country.

Municipalities are a liaison between the project and the target group. They also benefit from the project themselves, as they connect the public with the private sector and work together. Through the project, municipality of Umerge for instance, will gain more knowledge and use this in their future work. This regards not only seniors needs, but also valuable experience as regards working with Interreg, networking and connecting with other municipalities, companies and students, as the knowledge, ideas and new partners gained are used in different projects. Due to the good results of the project so far, the team plans for a follow up of the project, taking the project a step further.

The expected results of the project lead to a potential impact among targeted stakeholders in the following dimensions and characteristics of institutional capacity:

Dimensions of Institutional Learning induced by the Project			
Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence	Impact on the availability of knowledge about seniors' needs and adequate furniture design	Impact on the availability of mechanisms for knowledge transfer	Impact on the utilisation of knowledge about designing elderly-friendly furniture through tools and methodologies developed
Increased capability to work in transnational environment	Impact on the available competences to work transnationally	Impact on the frequency of transnational contacts	Impact on the intensity of transnational contacts

Source: Application Form Section 3.8

Examples of target group outreach and learning experiences

Participation in furniture fairs and publications in relevant press

As mentioned earlier, the project has developed a tailored communication, trying to achieve maximum outreach to the target groups and disseminate its results to as a wide relevant public as possible. This does not only regard the involvement of the target groups from the beginning of the project by asking them their interest and needs from the project (e.g. in a current on-line survey to companies), but also in attending events (fairs) that the furniture companies organise or attend, present there the project achievements and gain publication. The project also publishes its activities and achievements in press that the target groups read or to which are these targeted.

Innovation Camp

An innovation Camp was organised in July 2018 in Denmark where students, furniture companies, journalists etc. will be invited to participate and learn about the project and its newly developed tools.

International design workshops

International design workshops where an international group of participants designed and produced furniture for children and senior: During 4 days, 41 students from 5 countries produced more than 50 pieces of furniture. ICT and wood technology experts worked together to prepare the prototype of smart chair for elderly.

8 Annex

List of Interviews conducted for the Case Study Research

Name	Organisation	Role in Project	Contact data (email or phone)	Date of interview
Beata Fabisiak	Poznan University of science	Project Manager	beata.fabisiak@up.poznan.pl +48 61 8487475	25/06/2018
Joan Jnudsén	Development Centre UMT	Project Partner	joan@ldcluster.com Tel +45 9616 6202 Mobil: 42421243	26/06/2018
Beata Fabisiak	Poznan University of science	Communication Officer	beata.fabisiak@up.poznan.pl +48 61 8487475	25/06/2018
Rima Boškevičienė and Linas Ruginius	Ukmergė District Municipality Administration	Project Partner	r.boskeviciene@ukmerge.lt l.rugienius@ukmerge.lt Tel.: +370 340 60343; +370 656 53117	25/06/2018

List of revised documents

- BaltSe@nior Application Form
- BaltSe@nior Progress Report
- Research for furniture industry. Book presenting scientific contributions to the XXVIII International conference Research for Furniture Industry, Poznan, Poland, held in September 2017. Supported by the BaltSe@nior Project.
- Websites:

<https://projects.interreg-baltic.eu/projects/baltsenior-30.html>

<http://www.baltsenior.up.poznan.pl/>

<https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/news-room/highlights-blog/item/47-anna-galyga-interreg-baltic-sea-region-ma-js-with-support-of-dr-beata-fabisiak-poznan-university-of-life-sciences-baltsenior-coordinator>

<https://www.interreg-baltic.eu/news-detail/news/lets-make-the-baltic-sea-region-a-better-place-for-seniors.html>