



EUSBSR EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Leveraging the City Blues experience for new opportunities in the EUSBSR, EU Missions and MFF 2028-2034



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Co-funded by
the European Union

From City Blues to Blue-Green Futures
Berlin, 30 September 2026

EUSBSR PA Innovation – Overall objective

- A specific focus with ‘challenge-driven innovation’ as the overarching approach and theme:
 - *PA Innovation supports transformative innovation policies and actions in the BSR aiming at tackling common macro-regional challenges.*
 - *By pooling resources, expertise and innovation capabilities, BSR countries can tackle common challenges that transcend borders more effectively than by individual efforts.*
 - *A collaborative approach allows countries to leverage their strengths, align policies and coordinate actions, resulting in more impactful and sustainable solutions and enhanced competitiveness and sustainable growth in the BSR.*

EUSBSR PA Innovation – New action plan 2026 ->

- In the three challenge-driven innovation focused Actions, key topics are:
 - Action 1: Tackling Common Challenges through Place-Based Innovation (*focus on cities and regions*)
 - Action 2: Leveraging Digital Transformation to Address Common Challenges (*data, connectivity, AI, bridging digital divides, equal access to digital infrastructure, enhanced digital skills, interoperable cross-border services*)
 - Action 3: Accelerating Growth and the Triple Transition by Connecting Business and Innovation Ecosystems (*focus on business sector - transnational value chains, SME capacity and co-creation, connecting regional ecosystems*)
- Increased focus on strengthening synergies between EUSBSR, other MRs and broader EU innovation policies
- Consideration of today's complex security challenges

EUSBSR PA Innovation – The new action plan and City Blues

PA Innovation links place-based innovation with climate adaptation and nature-based solutions

Action 1 on place-based innovation:

- joint pilots across cities and regions
- climate adaptation + mitigation
- sustainable urban planning
- nature-based solutions

Action 2 on digital transformation:

- digital climate solutions
- flood monitoring and climate data
- interoperable tools
- better planning and service delivery

Action 3 on connected ecosystems:

- cross-border co-creation
- clusters + SMEs
- green innovation practices
- routes from pilots to markets

City Blues - from pilots to a repeatable city model

- City Blues already contains the ingredients that also future EU funding increasingly emphasizes.
 - tested blue-green / NBS interventions + evidence of benefits
 - methods, governance, monitoring + citizen engagement
 - lead cities + links to follower cities across BSR and other macro-regions
 - embed in planning, investment and routine city delivery

City Blues – cross-macro-regional opportunities

- Different geographies, but same scaling challenge: turn local restoration into repeatable implementation models
- Synergies and shared agenda: evidence, governance, monitoring, financing, replication

EUSBSR
(PA Nutri, PA Innovation)

urban blue-green
systems

City Blues and other innovative
actions on water management,
climate adaptation, biodiversity
restoration and urban planning

EUSDR
(Priority Area 4 - To
restore and maintain the
quality of waters)

river-basin function

floodplains • wetlands •
retention

EUSAIR
(Pillar 3 – Environmental
quality)

source-to-sea

coastal + urban + catchment

EUSALP
(Action group 6 –
Resources)

ecological connectivity

green-blue infrastructure •
restoration

City Blues – cross-macro-regional opportunities in EU 2028-2034

From exchange to common demonstrations, common evidence and common projects

City twinning:

- matching BSR cities with Danube, Adriatic–Ionian and Alpine peers facing comparable water, heat or biodiversity challenges

Common NBS evidence:

- aligning indicators for water retention, heat, biodiversity, health, costs and citizen value

Replication:

- comparing governance models and procurement models, maintenance, financing and technical design

Joint new EU projects in EU 2028-2034:

- using macro-regional networks to build lead + follower cities –based proposals in post-2027 calls
- MRSs can be the consortium-building layer between local pilots and EU-wide scale

City Blues and EU Mission calls 2027 - near-term scaling opportunity

The 2027 joint Cities Mission + Adaptation Mission call, HORIZON-MISS-2027-07-CLIMA-CIT-NEB-01, “Urban nature: restoration of urban ecosystems, transport networks and the built environment” (https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/HORIZON_HORIZON-MISS-2027-07-CLIMA-CIT-NEB-01)

- A €40m indicative budget, around €10m expected per project.
- Addresses urban green space, stormwater, biodiversity, climate resilience and quality of life.

Why it fits City Blues:

- urban green space, stormwater, biodiversity, heat, quality of life

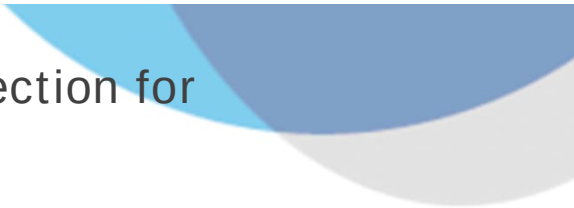
Consortium logic:

- ≥4 cities / 4 countries, ≥1 Cities Mission city, ≥1 Adaptation Mission Charter signatory

Project logic:

- ≥2 lead-city pilot sites + ≥2 follower cities
- monitoring of environmental, economic, social and health impacts
- build on earlier EU projects

Opening date: 9 February 2027 - Deadline date: 22 September 2027



A possible “City Blues 2.0” concept for the 2027 Mission call - a direction for consortium-building and concept development

Core proposition: demonstrate how blue-green urban systems can deliver adaptation + mitigation + biodiversity + wellbeing — and be replicated at city scale.

Next steps:

- Package the City Blues assets: results, methods, indicators, replication cases
- Discuss potential consortium (lead and follower cities) in BSR + Danube + Adriatic–Ionian + Alpine networks and MRS structures
- Start preparing for the call opening in February 2027

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