



INTERREG SOUTH BALTIC PROGRAMME



What is the Interreg South Baltic Programme?

The South Baltic Programme is a multilateral cross-border cooperation programme created on the coastal regions of five EU Member States: Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Lithuania and Poland. Maritime cooperation in this region is based on joint challenges and opportunities strongly connected with a common natural resource - **the Baltic Sea**. The basis for cross-border cooperation is the existence of a border, separating communities who have a common interest in undertaking joint actions in a given area. Sea border is one of the boundaries that separate neighbouring communities from each other, but at the same time it focuses significantly more cross border problems and perspective cooperation channels than other natural or political borders.

The maritime cross-border character is defined by the sea, which is located in the centre of a cooperation programme area and determines specific conditions for cooperation.

The regions of the programme have very strong historical roots of cooperation, dating back centuries ago to the traditions of trade exchange within the Hanseatic League. A long-term trade exchange contacts are manifested in joint cultural heritage, which afford evidence that strong common identity of the maritime region still exists.

[Good practice from the South Baltic Programme 2007-2013:](#) The Four Corners heritage is a combination of past and present culture and history. The four regions - Bornholm, Rügen, Świnoujście and Skåne implemented the project which aimed to increase knowledge and to promote the Four Corners' natural and cultural heritage in a manner that can attract more tourists to this destination. Partners established the strategic network among harbours to facilitate greater communication and joint promotion of the rich cultural heritage surrounding small ports. The project products for tourists included treasures discovery and facilitation through events and knowledge sharing.

Project FOUR CORNERS HERITAGE

Nowadays tradition of cooperative relationship is an important background for sustainable regional growth in the South Baltic area.

The South Baltic programme unites the regions with common or similar problems, which are not the subject of transnational programmes and helps combat significant regional disparities. Effectiveness implementation of maritime cross border programme enhances the idea of regional territorial integration, manifesting itself in various areas e.g. business, tourism, education, etc. The programme is their main chance to thrive and build their competitive advantage on the cooperation in this part of the Baltic Sea (e.g. cooperation between businesses of maritime sector in the South Baltic area). Moreover, coastal regions are struggling with the problem of sea pollution from economic activities in urban centres and coastal areas (e.g. related with tourism, marine activities). Nutrient loads are causing higher eutrophication as well as fragmentation and losses in biodiversity.

[Good practice from the South Baltic Programme 2007-2013:](#) Local governments from Lithuania, Poland and Sweden established a Water Users Partnership (WUP) on smaller rivers. The goal of WUP is the development of local programmes of measures aiming at a decrease in outlets of nutrients and hazardous substances. The results from the pilot measures are used as input to the WUPs and local action programmes.

Project MOMENT UP

The South Baltic member states and their regions differ substantially regarding economic performance, while the labour market is hampered by the barriers in labour mobility, such as lack of information, institutional barriers and missing cultural and language skills. One of the main service activities of the Programme area is tourism, being a good source of employment. There are also untapped potentials e.g. internationalization of business activities, solid educational base in the regions, that can be utilized for knowledge and research-intensive industries and the growing demand for solutions to the environmental problems specific for the region, i.e. eutrophication or pollution through hazardous substances.

Good practice from the South Baltic Programme 2007-2013: Universities and educational institutions from Sweden, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Denmark made educational system in their regions more open for cross-border mobility culture. Based on initial knowledge about the main barriers for mobility, partners elaborated courses for education of teachers and nurses. The project results in better mobility culture on the labour market.

Project COHAB

Coastal regions can be characterized by maritime economy, which means an activity undertaken in the marine environment by various subjects. To ensure the possibility of cooperation for various maritime entities it is necessary to develop transport connections between regions separated by the sea, including multimodal transport ones. Accessibility is a major issue in the South Baltic area, where a lack in connections (air, railway and ferry) and infrastructure deficits pose a cross-cutting challenge for the economic and social dimensions of the area.

Good practice from the South Baltic Programme 2007-2013: Several airports from coastal cities carried out a project aiming to increase external and internal accessibility of the maritime cross-border region by air. The project envisaged the implementation of three new flight connections from the participating airlines.

Project SB GLOBAL ACCESS

And most **importantly**, wherever cooperation instrument has been implemented, citizens should want to cooperate. The South Baltic Programme is a good example of people-to-people cooperation, as well as of capacity building initiatives. Moreover, boosting local relationship is shared also outside eligible area. Russian actors from Kaliningrad region are very welcome associated partners in many projects.

Good practice from the South Baltic Programme 2007-2013: Regional council units turned the European Youth Board into a steady platform and nucleus for cross-border youth exchange, cooperation and involvement in the South Baltic area. The most important result was the possibility for young people to meet.

Project Yc3

The essence of maritime cross-border cooperation is the existence of mentioned conditions that are common only for coastal regions, not for countries which cooperate in transnational programmes. For this reason, South Baltic area is home to **functional areas**, where numerous cooperation links condition opportunities of development. Natural functional links in South Baltic area have been developing for a thousand years and now are based on **business relationship, culture** and **natural assets**.

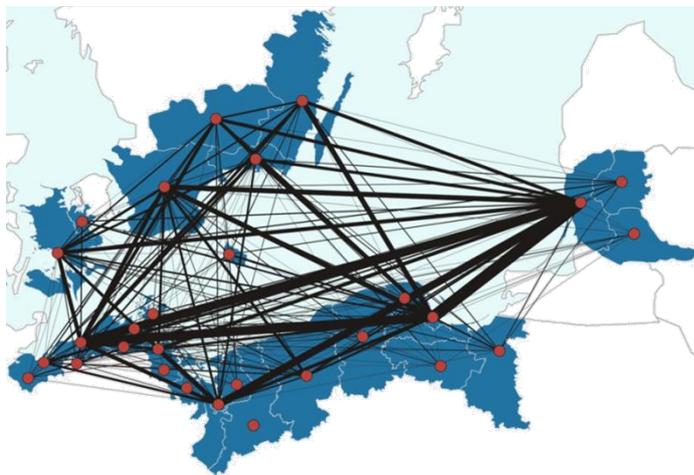
Cross-border cooperation programmes are often the only platform for coastal regions to work together in this specific area. But to make good use of the tool which is an Interreg CBC program, cross-border cooperation must be based on a shared vision of challenges and goals. The objectives of joint development of the whole Baltic area have been defined in **the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region**. The South Baltic Programme is particularly fulfilling the objectives of the Strategy, by giving a chance to reinforce cooperation for beneficiaries, which are located closely to the Baltic Sea coastline and have the greatest impact on changes in this large region. Therefore, the Programme is highly compliant with the Strategy in 5 of the 15 priority areas and has successfully contributed to its implementation. Nearly 80 regular projects are in line with objectives of the Strategy, contributing with almost 80% of the Programme financial allocation. Moreover, **five projects** from the 2007-2013 Programme as well as **seven** from the current one serve as **flagship projects of the EUSBSR's Action Plan**.

11 years of maritime cooperation!

Implementation of the South Baltic Programme has been the first successful attempt to fully utilize the potential of regions located in the Southern shores of the Baltic Sea in alliance with Euroregion Baltic and Pomerania. Bearing in mind the geographical scope of the Programme area, where a maritime border exists, and significant development disparities between the regions occur, the realization of joint, innovative cross-border projects as well as exchange of knowledge and good practices led to tangible results, **bringing innovation to the area and thus contributing to the overall objective of the Programme.**

The South Baltic Cooperation Programme started as pilot programme in 2008. The Member States decided that cooperation between regions on local level should be the main theme of the Programme. This intention of the participating stakeholders was reflected in the Programme's motto: **'Going local. Meeting your needs. Connecting people and ideas.'** With its projects implemented and **100 long-lasting networks**, the Programme has been presenting successful stories and tangible results of deepening the cooperation and exchanges.

86 projects had been successfully carried out in the first edition of the Programme (2007-2013), while in the current period (2014-2020 Programme) already **81 were approved** for co-financing, joining altogether more than 500 partner entities from all regions covered by the Programme. In its social dimension, the Programme gathered **over 12 000 participants** directly involved in cross-border activities and **affected almost 145 000 citizens**, what constitutes c.a. 1.5% of the total Programme area population of approximately 8.9 million inhabitants. Moreover, only 30% of committed funding have been allocated to support maritime issues and the rest has been intended to resolving problems on land. It means that the programme **is more involved in reducing terrestrial barriers such as cross-border cooperation instruments** on land borders. At the same time smaller communities had significantly better chance to build maritime cooperation on subregions level than on transnational level.



Comparing the outcomes of two calls for proposals in the Baltic Sea Region programme and five calls for proposals in South Baltic programme, **small communities** (under 20 000 inhabitants), located in area covered by both instruments, **are more interested in cooperation** in the cross-border programme. Among the total number of all beneficiaries from Baltic Sea Region 14.7% partners came from South Baltic area and only 20 of them were located in small communities. After 5 calls for proposals in the South Baltic programme, there are 91 entities from small localities.

Strength and intensity of networks created, based on formal agreements in the South Baltic Programme (NUTS3)

Despite a predominantly “soft” than infrastructural character, the 2007-2013 Programme also supported small-scale investments, allowing for pilot activities and testing of developed solutions in practice. One of the most important aspects emphasised by the Programme bodies is the transferability of project results, which served as “blueprints” for institutions and regions not involved in the projects. From an economic point of view, the Programme supported development **of more than 600 new innovative solutions**, tools and concepts, leading to intensification of the relations between SMEs and strengthening links between higher education and the labour markets. It has stimulated improvements in management of the environment and stronger commitment to renewable energy and energy efficiency, more efficient use of natural and cultural heritage, as well as the improvement of transport connections and services. Furthermore, **more than 1 400 companies** have already benefited from the project activities (i.e. training, workshops, exchanges etc.).

Reducing the barriers of the cross-border cooperation



Management of a common natural and cultural heritage for sustainable tourism

The cooperation of maritime museums started in the project **Baltic Museums** in 2008 and is continued and growing in the project **Baltic Museums loveIT** until now. The project worked on implementation of eGuides with cross-border shared content for South Baltic Oceanographic Museums and joint development of cross-border tourism information products. In the second edition of the Programme the network is focused on developing new IT-enabled tourism products and gamification for natural and cultural heritage tourist destinations in the South Baltic Region.



Improving the legislative process

In the previous perspective the Programme had also impressive results in overcoming the identified cross-border problems or barriers with legal setting. For instance, with the aim to harmonize legal issues across borders: investors can apply for the offshore wind farm location permits, after the national maritime law in Poland has been amended because of the cross-border campaign of **South Baltic OFFER** project. Another example for improving municipal law is **LIFEScape** project. In its assumptions, it served to develop good landscape protection patterns, which were lacking in the South Baltic area. An initiative has been taken to implement a spatial plan that would inhibit the degradation of the most beautiful areas of landscape parks. Thanks to the implementation of **LIFEScape**, official documents were signed to manage the parks in a better way, including a legal act containing recommendations for the management of landscape parks for 8 public areas in the Zemaitija National Park.



Supporting cross-border employment

In the previous edition (2007-2013) as well as in the current one (2014-2020), South Baltic projects have been providing educational and work services in the regions around the sea. The currently running project **BBVET** carries on the cooperation initiated in South Baltic Training Programme (2007-2013). It plans to internationalize vocational education and training (VET). The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is used as the basis for cross-border programs which are planned to be established for companies and schools. BBVET encourages authorities, schools and companies from the region to develop and pilot the first entirely ECVET-based international VET program with a joint curriculum in the South Baltic area. It includes cross-border internship opportunities in order to boost mobility of VET students and teachers. Thereby, the project mitigates the barrier of the knowledge gap and lack of cooperation.



Enabling cross-border accessibility

Similarly, both in the current and the previous Programme, sustainable transport and facilitating cross-border accessibility in the South Baltic area are represented in several projects. A perfect example of continuous work in this topic is the fact that results created in the frame of the **INTERFACE** (selected in 2009) project are at present used in the project Interconnect. Within the project **INTERFACE** and its spin-off **INTERFACE PLUS**, a multimodal cross-border ticket, a.k.a. "InterCombi ticket", was designed to conveniently connect ferry and bus services, operated by different carriers across the border. With more than 7,000 InterCombi tickets sold during the project's trial phase, this multimodal product is now available on the market. It enables convenient cross-border journeys of South Baltic passengers travelling from Nykøbing Falster (south-eastern Denmark) via Gedser to Rostock in Germany and vice versa. In addition, a dynamic passenger information system was set up and screened in buses, terminals and at bus stations.

Tilman Schubert, cross-border passenger from Rostock on the INTERFACE Plus project: 'I like to travel. Denmark and Sweden are among my favourite destinations. I am quite familiar with deficits of ferry traffic in former times, and I'm very pleased that foot passenger services and facilities have changed a lot to make travelling easier and more comfortable.'



Monitoring of environmental pollution

The environmental theme connected to the Baltic Sea is represented in a few projects financed under the Programme. The background to **MORPHEUS** project is the constant release of pharmaceuticals and other micropollutants via wastewater treatment plants to the Baltic Sea. This affects the population of fish in the Baltic Sea; it has been decreasing and the fish itself are smaller or even wounded. The project stimulates the development of new advanced waste water treatment technologies by combining information on upstream pharmaceuticals consumption patterns with estimates of the downstream discharge of pharmaceuticals from selected wastewater treatment plants located in the coastal regions Skåne (Sweden), Mecklenburg (Germany), Klaipeda (Lithuania) and Pomerania (Poland). This information will aid wastewater treatment plants and authorities in a future implementation of the most suitable advanced treatment technologies, lifting the barrier of lack of cooperation and information.



Limited access to business information

Finally, to illustrate the influence of South Baltic Programme on the development of the region and successful combatting the barrier of information gap and lack of information, project **MarTechLNG** shall be mentioned. The project MarTechLNG is the founder of a powerful business cooperation network golng.eu. This platform gathers businesses, consultancies, research facilities and regulative authorities relevant for the establishment of business partnerships and research projects as well as for the development of support schemes streamlining LNG-based business models, products and services. The platform facilitates business alliances that shape a strong South Baltic LNG supply chain. It also helps monitor the competence and build capacity of the regional LNG industry, enables access to state-of-the-art LNG services and products and to streamline partnerships for R&D projects. As a result of cooperation between regional stakeholders, several investments were created, adding up to 47 MEUR of value, including a LNG bunker station, a bunker vessel and a LNG dredger.

Frank van Dijk, Regional Marketing Director of General Electric Gas and Oil Europe: "The collaboration with MarTech LNG has allowed us to connect with other companies in the value chain, and as a result this has created commercial opportunities as well as partnership discussions."

Obstacles we still have to face

Even though cooperation between countries located in the southern part of the Baltic Sea has developed significantly through last decades, a number of barriers still exists and influences the future regional development. Existing problems focus mainly on economic, environmental, transport and human resources sectors:

- inadequate nutrients management leading to eutrophication and losses in biodiversity of the Baltic Sea;
- insufficient number of strategies for cross-border waste management initiatives;
- coordination of emergency services in case of incidents at sea (e.g. ship collisions, yacht disappearance);
- insufficient quality of public intermodal transport services which could encourage to modal shift from cars;
- diversity in educational systems leading to difficulties in acceptance of certificates;

- lack of cross-border advice and training services focusing on labour issues hampering integration of cross-border labour market;
- institutional barriers and missing language skills resulting in low level of international activity of local actors;
- lack of common regional tourism strategies;
seasonal pattern of tourism influencing negatively tourism sector.

After 11 fruitful years of maritime cross-border cooperation the Programme knows well the barriers that can be overcome and the opportunities that need to be further exploited. There are still areas of cooperation to which the Programme has not yet arrived and could be reached out in the future.