



Baltic Sea Labour Forum for Sustainable Working Life PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT (09.2019 - 05.2020)

Project title:	Baltic Sea Labour Forum for Sustainable Working Life (BSLF-SWL)
Aim of the project:	Improve working life conditions and lifelong learning provisions, systems and policies for an elderly labour force in order to promote active ageing and employability
Implementing organisation:	Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Secretariat
Funders:	The Swedish ESF Council and Swedish Institute
CBSS Transnational Cooperation Agreement and partners:	Entrefox (Turku University of Applied Science, University of Helsinki and Finnish Institute of Occupational Health), State Employment Agency of Latvia, Polish Confederation Lewiatan
Project budget:	8 691 798 SEK (7 992 188 SEK -ESF + 699 610 SEK -SI)
Project starting date:	December 2018 (implementation phase started in June 2019)
Project duration:	3 years

1. RESULTS PROGRESS

1.1 SUMMARY

Overall, the assessment is that the project activities are on track and following the timeline of the project work plan. The strongest perceived added value of the project so far (through observations from meetings of our thematic working groups, TWGs, in April 2020) lies in the opportunity for comparisons between heterogeneous national contexts in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). These have important potential for providing input towards policy development at macro level.

The autumn of 2019 was dedicated to the identification and recruitment of members to our thematic working groups (TWGs), culminating in the kick-off event in November. The spring of 2020 saw TWGs starting their work via their project platform: good practices were identified, first TWG meetings were held online in April and work on policy briefs resulting from these meetings started. The first policy briefs are to be completed by the beginning of June.

1.2 PROGRESS BY RESULTS AREA

Note on revision of project outcomes: in October 2019, the research component was moved from being a results area to constituting a support for the other project activities. Facts, statistics, and research on forecasts and trends in the BSR regarding future work and Lifelong learning, including country profiles concerning relevant policy/system fields remain an important knowledge base for the project.

Outcome 1: A number of identified good practices and policy recommendations at macro and national level on increased labour force participation in the age group 55+, Lifelong learning and Active ageing to be delivered to actors from public, private and NGO sectors, stakeholders and policy makers. This is

in order to support them in their own initiatives to develop systems and policies in the field. ESF horizontal principles are integrated in analysis and recommendations.

Milestones in Sep – Nov 2019:

Thematic Working Groups. The central project mechanism - the transnational and multisectoral thematic working groups (TGWs) – were formed by the end of October 2019. The project now has two TGWs: (I) Age Management and Working Conditions and (II) Future jobs for and ageing work force, including entrepreneurship. Lifelong Learning, knowledge transfer between generations and mutual knowledge transfer between younger and elder professionals are cross-cutting themes in both groups. Each TWG comprises members from 11 countries: Belarus, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. Third-party funding from Swedish Institute made it possible to include the non-EU countries of Russia and Belarus. The TWG members are professionals in the field of sustainable working life, coming from employers' organisations, trade unions, line ministries and academia (Lifelong learning and occupational health.)

Further needs for capacity support for the TGWs were also identified and recruitment followed: expertise on ESF horizontal principles and a facilitator with expertise in co-creation processes who was to lead the TWG meetings.

Project kick-off event 14-15.11.2019. The TWG leaders, experts and stakeholders gathered in Stockholm for two days as a starting point for the work of the TGWs. The event included sessions of both informative and capacity building character on the themes of EUSBSR, EU Pillar of Social Rights and ESF horizontal principles (gender equality, non - discrimination and accessibility). The TWG members met for the first time had co-creation based working sessions towards determining scope and focus of their future work.

Milestones in December 2019 – February 2020:

Capacity building support to TGW members. For the purpose of identifying good practices, a good practice checklist was developed, which also included guidance of how to integrate ESF horizontal principles. This checklist included the project's definition of a good practice and criteria that would guide the TWG members in identifying good practices.

Project platform on Microsoft Teams created. As an essential part of the work of the TWG will take place between in-person meetings, Teams now constitutes the forum for all digital communication between the TWG members: webinars, chats, phone calls. The application SharePoint is used for the project library. This is where all project documentation, including the good practices database, is accessible to all TWG members. Trainings, both in group and individuals was provided in how to use Teams and SharePoint.

Milestones in March – May 2020:

11 good practices were identified by TWG members. The work of identifying good practices will be ongoing through the project, and the analysis of these and possible testing and adaptation to other country contexts will be further explored. Some examples of good practices: Labour Centre for Seniors in Gdansk, Engagement for Late Career project in Finland, and the roadmap for mainstreaming ageing in Belarus.

TWG meetings held digitally on Teams:

- TWG I: 15th April, theme: "Push and pull factors (determinants of early retirement or staying longer in work life. "The workshop included two keynote speakers, the first spoke about his

research on the push and pull factors and the second presented a case study from the Polish private sector on age management practices. The meeting was facilitated by the TWG leader from Lewiatan and the project manager, supported by the co-creation facilitator. Work on several policy briefs, building on issues raised during the online workshop are now under way.

- TWG II: 21st April, theme: “skills and competence development for an ageing work force”. The workshop started with a keynote speaker, a professor in working life science who talked of future working life. The work sessions that followed were led by the group leaders from TCA partner Entrefox, and the work on several policy briefs on issues stemming from the work sessions of the workshop are now under way.

Outcome 2: A toolbox for transnational cooperation and development of projects in the Baltic Sea Region, including the core mechanism TWG, methods for screening of gender equality/horizontal principles/social innovation and co-creation of new ideas/innovations and project proposals.

The recruitment of an expert in horizontal principles and a facilitator with expertise in co-creation had the purpose to ensure the inclusion of these elements in the work of the TWGs. The project is essentially to be driven towards social innovation – testing and adapting good practices and coming up with new solutions. The project has taken a first step towards this end in the identification of good practices and work is to follow towards this outcome.

Outcome 3: A transnational, multisectoral partnership between potential project promoters and stakeholders, built on mutual learning, who are using the ESF (and other EU programmes) for innovation and development in the BSR. They have increased competencies in transnational cooperation linked to the EUSBSR.

The first steps towards this partnership was already taken through the formation of the TWGs. We can see that the interaction between TWG members from different countries and sectors has already resulted in some positive synergies in terms of involvement in initiatives also outside the project itself. The kick-off session of the project served as a good introduction to how the project is anchored in the EUSBSR, and the work will continue on two parallel levels: macro and national level.

1.3 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

ESF horizontal principles: the ESF horizontal principles have been integrated in the project in many ways. A capacity building session in the principles was provided during kick-off event, the principles were integrated in the good practice checklist and several of the identified good practices deal with gender and non-discrimination issues. Furthermore, the policy briefs under writing will also include elements of the horizontal principles.

Evaluation: An evaluation team that will undertake a formative evaluation and thus provide support and constructive criticism to the project management until the end of the project period, as per ESF requirements, was recruited in April 2020. The start-up meeting took place on 20 April 2020.

2. CONSEQUENCES AND CHALLENGES DUE TO COVID-19

The BSLF Roundtable in St. Petersburg, “Future work and provisions of Lifelong Learning systems in the context of an ageing labour force” that was planned to take place on 26-27 March 2020 has been postponed to the autumn of 2020. This is a project activity made possible via the funding of Swedish

Institute, with a specific focus on creating fora for mutual learning and sharing of experiences between TWG members and stakeholders from EU countries and the non-EU countries.

The in-person TWG meetings, planned to take place in Turku on 15th April for TWG I and in Warsaw on 21st April for TWG II were moved online. The set-up of the meetings changed, instead of a one-day meeting, comprising 8 working hours, we had to design the online workshop differently in order to make it more efficient. We included several shorter working sessions from 9 to 14 h. The process of co-creation would require an in-person setting in order to be optimal. However, a form of co-creation tool was used, involving the chat function of Teams.

A new risk analysis for the project, that includes different scenarios depending on the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic, will be prepared. As it looks now, it is possible for the project activities to proceed in a digital format, as much of the work was already initially planned to be taking place through digital communication, this being a transnational project. Besides possible health concerns and stress factors related to potential changes to the working conditions of our TWG members, other factors that might determine the mobility of our TWG members are the most problematic ones: possibility that prices for flights will be high and that the flexibility we have had until now regarding travel routes and schedules might be drastically reduced.