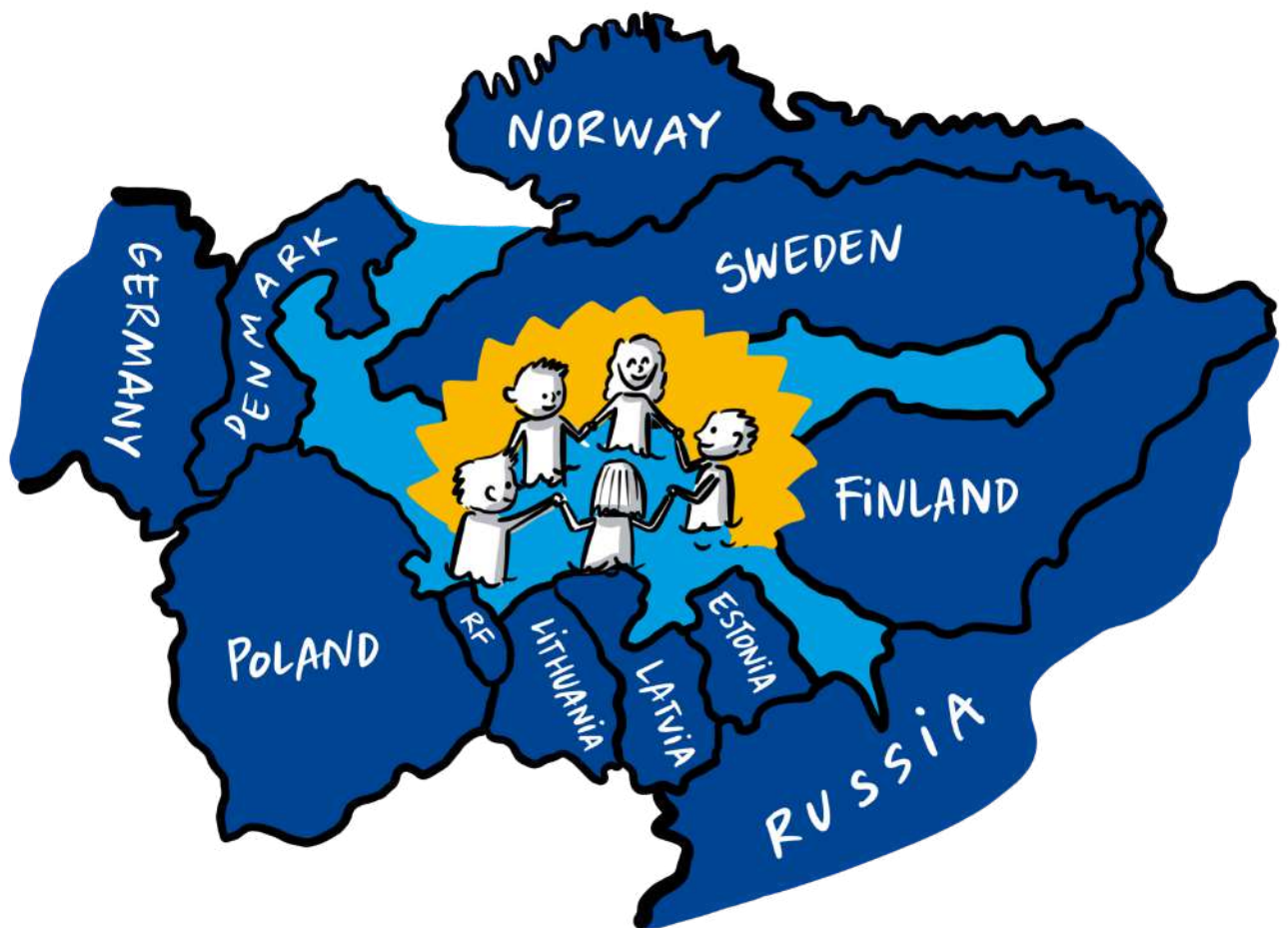


UMBRELLA 2.0 REPORT: “ENTRY POINTS” TO EUSBSR COOPERATION



UMBRELLA 2.0 



UBC | UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES



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- Why are macro-regional strategies needed?
- What's new in the action plan?



1. INTRODUCTION

Introduced in 2009, the [EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region](#) (EUSBSR) was the first EU macro-regional strategy of the European Union. Formally adopted by the European Council after a communique from the European Commission (EC), the EUSBSR is an agreement signed between the Member States and the EC to strengthen cooperation between the countries bordering the Baltic Sea and to meet the many joint challenges as well as benefit from common opportunities facing the Baltic Sea region through three objectives: Save the Sea, Connect the Region and Increase Prosperity. These are divided into 9 sub-objectives which currently translate in 14 thematic Policy Areas (PA), which develop several actions. This entire cooperation structure is based on 3 NOs (no new institutions, no new funding, no new legislation) with open and transparent participation, inclusiveness and multi-level governance (MLG).



Indeed, EUSBSR is a complex, multi-dimensional instrument full of EU jargon and abbreviations, which are often difficult to grasp or utilise to addressing local challenges.

So, how does all of this make sense for local stakeholders preoccupied with daily work in their municipalities, schools, organisations, small companies? Many newcomers would say - it does not. Others would say – it is too difficult, too complex, too abstract for us. We have no interest in it because it does not help us to solve any of our challenges and problems. Still, others, especially those who have been working with it in the past, could say that it is an interesting tool, but we are still unsure how to use it effectively on the local level.



The **Umbrella 2.0** project has been developed precisely to make the EUSBSR more “user-friendly” for the local stakeholders. The Umbrella 2.0 project was initiated by the [Euroregion Baltic \(ERB\)](#) and is implemented throughout 2021 with two partners: [Union of the Baltic Cities \(UBC\)](#) and [Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation \(BSSSC\)](#). This project is funded by the [Swedish Institute](#), which has supported Baltic Sea cooperation for many years, especially among the local actors. The project also builds on two previous capacity building projects successfully implemented by the Euroregion Baltic and its Partners within the [Interreg South Baltic Programme](#). The first one, called the Capacity Building Project (2010-2011), focused on developing practical knowledge and project management skills needed for the participation of local actors in cross-border cooperation within the Programme.

The second project, called the [South Baltic Umbrella](#), went a step further to developing know-how capacities for small local and regional actors and civil society organisations in the Interreg South Baltic Programme area to improve their participation in cross-border cooperation. To achieve this goal, Umbrella implemented a significantly more comprehensive approach, determined by a strategic decision of the partnership to address different levels of capacity building processes – from a single institutional capacity of potential project partner, via micro-activities addressed to the micro organisations till strategic capacity building on the programme macro level. It was also the first time the project was coordinated directly with the EUSBSR and its Horizontal Action Capacity.

UMBRELLA 2.0 



Over the course of two months, the experts conducted a series of 14 interviews with Coordinators of all [Policy Areas of the Strategy](#), attempting on the one hand to gain a broad picture of the current status of local stakeholders' participation but also to listen to interesting ideas and proposals on what should be done further to integrate them in the works of the Strategy. To this end, we asked several questions through which we have received a great deal of interesting feedback and some concrete proposals for the future of the EUSBSR implementation.

The resulting report is directed both towards the local stakeholders who are newcomers to the Strategy as well as those local actors who are more experienced in Baltic cooperation but would like to organise their knowledge and understanding of how the Strategy can be of use for them. Lastly, this report will help all institutions directly or indirectly involved in implementing the EUSBSR to learn more about the importance of improved collaboration with the local level of governance to achieve the goals outlined in the Strategy.

2. EUSBSR AND STATUS QUO – ASSESSING THE ENGAGEMENT LEVEL

One of the goals of this report was to assess the current perception of local stakeholder involvement with the Strategy from those working within its framework every day, the Policy Area Coordinators (PACs).

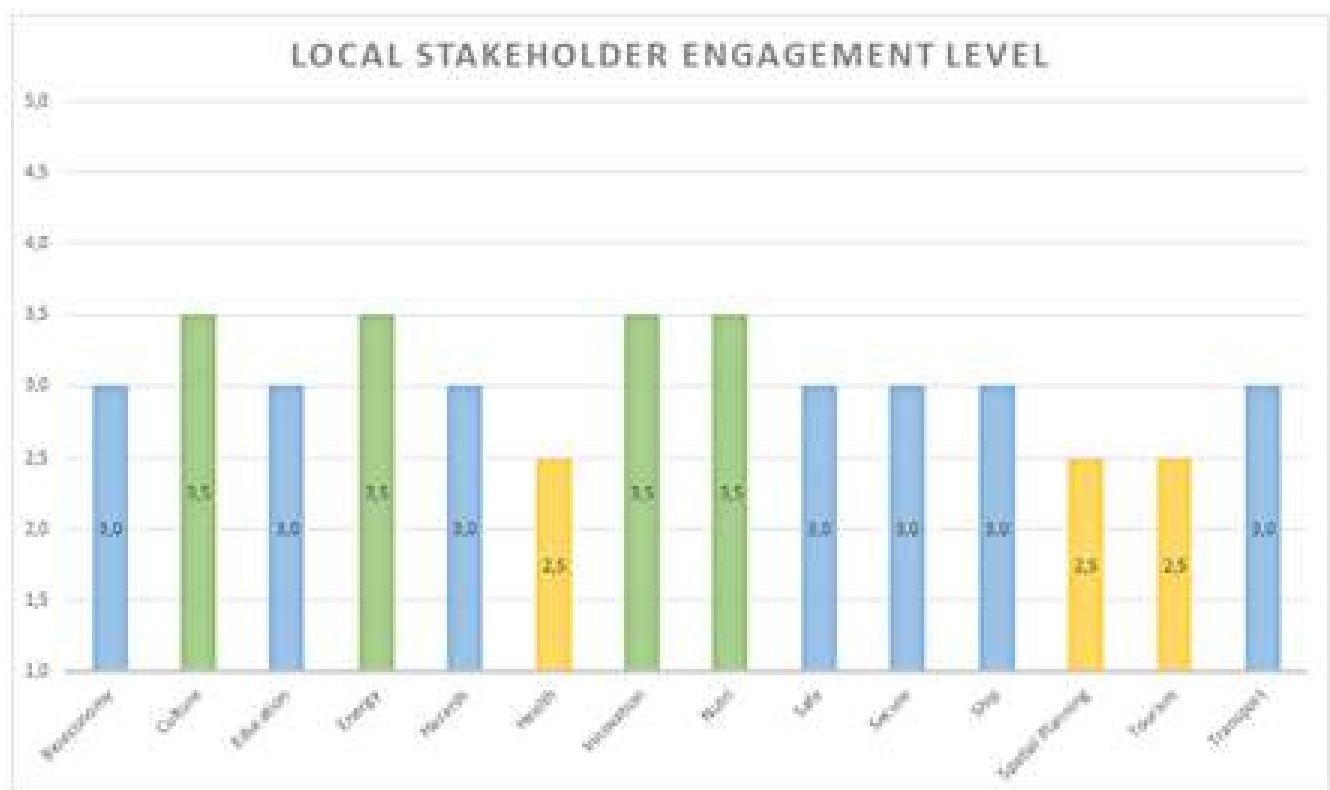


This was covered in one of the questions of our interviews where PACs were asked to describe the current level of engagement of local stakeholders in implementing the Policy Area on a scale from 1 to 5 (from non-existent to satisfactory to outstanding). During the interviews, it became apparent that most of the PACs had a very similar take on the current situation, with the majority (7) agreeing on the satisfactory level, while 4 assessed the participation as more than satisfactory and only 3 giving less than satisfactory.

THE CONSENSUS AMONG THE PACS'S WAS THAT THE LOCAL ACTORS ARE BEING ENGAGED WITHIN THE STRATEGY, BUT THERE WAS STILL WIDE ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT.

UNDERSTANDING THE FACT THAT THE EUSBSR WORKS MAINLY ON THE STRATEGIC LEVEL IN MINISTRIES OR PUBLIC AGENCIES, IT WAS STILL ACKNOWLEDGED THAT OVER TIME MORE AND MORE LOCAL ACTORS HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED TO IT VIA DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS. THIS HAS INCREASED AS THE RESULTS OF EUSBSR ACTIONS BEGAN TO IMPACT THE LOCAL CHALLENGES POSITIVELY.

An important fact mentioned is that **the engagement is not an end to itself but rather stems from actual challenges, specific subjects and projects that the stakeholders may have in their pipelines**. It was, of course, said that mostly the actors from the public sector take part in the implementation of the Strategy while private actors are less represented with some prominent exceptions in, for example, PA Ship and Safe. Otherwise, it were mainly business support organisations (branch associations, chambers of commerce, etc.) that represented the private sector in the activities and projects developed within the strategy. Still, private actors' engagement provides additional positive visibility for the Strategy.



Source: own elaboration

Pan-Baltic organisations such as the [Council of the Baltic Sea States](#) (CBSS), [Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission](#) (HELCOM), [Visions and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea](#) (VASAB), [Union of the Baltic Cities](#) (UBC), [Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation](#) (BSSSC) or [Euroregion Baltic](#) (ERB), as well as regional governments were often mentioned as facilitators of local engagement helping both sides to establish communication and collaboration via their own activities, projects and events.

Still, it was often acknowledged that PACs found it difficult to reach and engage effectively at the local level or that there was a lack of interest when they did. Common reasons for this lack of interest were the complexity of the EUSBSR working structure and the lack of understanding of what benefits the local level could receive from the Strategy when they decide to participate.

3. ADDED VALUE OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS



One of the important aspects of the EUSBSR is that its implementation is based on the multi-level governance approach. This means, in general, that the cooperation within the Strategy should include actors from all levels of governance, starting with the local level and then going up the governance ladder to regional, national and EU levels. Yet, what looks good and inclusive in strategic documents is often difficult to translate into realities on the ground. Despite 12 years in existence and important achievements tackling many difficult region challenges, the EUSBSR remains elusive for many actors on the local level. This issue is being addressed to make the Strategy simpler to work with, but still more needs to be done to build and develop the capacities of local actors to work with it effectively.

At the same time, the added value coming from the participation of local actors in the implementation of the Strategy remains vital for its ultimate success. There are two crucial elements or approaches that prove it. First, the so-called top-down approach means that the local stakeholders, as the final implementers of different policies within the Strategy, help assess the impact and effectiveness of these policies. The second one, the so-called bottom-up approach, and one that is especially important for local actors, means that they are the ones who bring their local challenges to the attention of the higher levels of governance, thus allowing for the creation and implementation of improved policies helping to tackle those challenges.



4. POLICY AREAS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES FOCUSING ON LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Each Policy Area has its unique set of goals and objectives compatible with the strategy's main goals. Currently, they include 14 priority areas that cover most of the important challenges of the region. The PAs organise their work in accordance with the EUSBSR Action Plans and its governance structure. They often include high-level civil servants from national and regional levels, experts, employees of different agencies and institutions. The implementation work of each PA is described in several specific actions, and flagships implement those. These can either be specific projects of strategic importance implemented via one of EU funding instruments, e.g. Interreg BSR, or sets of activities or processes that translate the planned actions into concrete activities. Some of the flagships have been briefly described in each of the PA analysed.

It is important to underline that the PAs work based on the concept of multi-level governance, which means that they are working with all levels of government, be it national, regional or local, public or private. This report focuses on local actors and how they can be better engaged in the EUSBSR implementation.

Below we are also presenting how local actors can become engaged and work with the EUSBSR framework. The most important thing is to match their local challenges or activities with relevant PAs of the Strategy. For example, if a challenge is developing sustainable tourism solutions, it would be best to get in touch with PA Tourism. One can also focus on PA Hazards if the problem concerns microplastics or pharmaceutical substances. For solutions concerning social challenges, e.g. Youth addiction, PA Secure or PA Health is the best place to start with, and PA Culture can be of assistance if you form a creative industry project with partners around the Baltic Sea.



It is also helpful to analyse the activities within the PAs to identify other local stakeholders who are already engaged and active in the EUSBSR. They are usually working with one of the many flagships within the PAs and can provide you with first-hand information on the Strategy in the local context. This is especially useful in the case of flagship projects that usually follow the customary project methodology and build large partnerships, including many local actors.

You can also engage in the Strategy indirectly by contacting or becoming a member of one of the Baltic cooperation organisations targeting the local level. There are many of them out there both on international, pan-Baltic level, eg. Union of the Baltic Cities, Euroregions, etc., and local level, e.g. associations of municipalities that work with cross-border issues, local branches of the global organisation, e.g. International Red Cross.

Comprehensive valuable information about all important developments can be found via the [Let's Communicate!](#) project, which is responsible for internal and external communication of the Strategy and can provide you with details on how different projects operate, which flagships invite stakeholders to their activities or events, etc.

- **PA Spatial Planning**

The main goal of this Policy Area is to achieve territorial cohesion in the Baltic Sea Region by using maritime and land-based spatial planning as well as integrated/territorial approach to development policies in all Member States around the Baltic Sea and developing a common approach for cross-border cooperation. This PA has two strands – land-based spatial planning (managed by VASAB) and maritime spatial planning (jointly VASAB and HELCOM).

“We've been working together at the local and regional level a lot in various projects relevant to the strategy. Local municipalities and local players and local communities start to play a crucial, crucial role because that's the interface where they actually can feel the consequences of spatial planning carried out at the national level”

Liene Gaujeniete, EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning Coordinator, VASAB

Augmented Urbans was a project of relevance for PA Spatial Planning; it was really dedicated to local municipalities where they were exploring how to use virtual reality to improve their planning processes and participatory processes. Augmented Urbans aims at strengthening the integration of three aspects of urban planning: timeframe, participation and technology. It improves stakeholder participation and links long-term visions with short-term actions to provide a high level of expertise to Central Baltic cities. For this reason, new, augmented, virtual and mixed reality technologies are explored and utilised as tools to support urban planning processes in guiding discussions and providing immersive scenarios.

Currently ongoing is the Mara Project which aims to improve accessibility in touristic rural areas. It engages mostly municipalities working on testing various innovative accessibility mechanisms or pilots.

Currently, within the PA, VASAB is working on updating the Long-Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region and on giving a better territorial perspective to the Strategy. This will be a very open process where the key stakeholders from the local level will be invited to participate. It will be a collaborative process taking place mainly this year.

PA Spatial Planning contact information at VASAB and HELCOM

- **PA Tourism**

The goal of PA Tourism is to reinforce cohesiveness of the macro-region through tourism, networking and clustering of tourism stakeholders for example by strengthening the [Baltic Sea Tourism Forum](#) Process and promoting the establishment of a [Baltic Sea Tourism Center](#), mobilising the full potential for sustainable tourism.

"It's really ambitious to explain the strategy. With three sentences, it's really hard to teach local actors the added value they have working with us. It's a never ending story and I think the most important argument is to give them solutions for the problems they do have"

Andrea Krabbe, EUSBSR Policy Area Tourism Coordinator, Ministry of Economics, Employment and Health Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

The main achievement of the PA has been the establishment of The Baltic Sea Tourism Center (BSTC), which was a leading centre for improved communication and cooperation within the BSR. With a focus on the Core Competencies Partnerships, Insights and Skills, the BSTC aimed at becoming the central contact point for tourism stakeholders in the BSR, providing services in the fields of Tourism Policies, Market Research, Training Offerings and Sustainable Tourism.

A strategic annual event of the PA is the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum (BSTF), which offers interesting opportunities for local stakeholders focusing on sustainable tourism.

One of the upcoming projects already approved is the Baltic Sea Food Project, a seed money project in the Swedish Institute to concentrate on remote areas for sustainable tourism development, focusing on local actors.

[PA Tourism contact information](#)

- **PA Transport**

The goal of this PA is to improve internal and external transport links by facilitating a sustainable and efficient transport system in the Baltic Sea Region.

Four Flagship projects have been successfully carried out, focusing on implementing the complementary governance activities facilitating the development of TEN-T transport corridors. Further, 25 projects were completed with the support of the PA.

One of the current flagships also focusing on local stakeholders is [BSR Access](#), which facilitates innovative and sustainable transport by creating linkages between traditional infrastructure nodes and smart transport solutions to develop the TEN-T Core Network Corridors further and contribute to sustainable growth the region.

'Travel and transport of goods has a start and finish. So it has to work all the way. For instance, if you are flying then you have to go to your destination. And then for instance, the public transport system is very important. How do you buy the ticket? How do you know the schedule? Which train line or bus should you take etc. And these things are managed locally or regionally. Every stakeholder in the multi-level system is important in that way. So participation from local authorities or local partners, like the ports, for instance, is an added value to the whole efficiency of the system.'

Thomas Erlandson, EUSBSR Policy Area Transport Coordinator, Swedish Ministry of Infrastructure

[PA Transport contact information](#)

- **PA Bioeconomy**

The goal of the PA is to reinforce the sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fisheries by promoting an integrated approach. PA's actions concentrate on pursuing the bioeconomy actually and practically, for example, by improving policy coherence and policy learning and by engaging the private sector. For example, recycling nutrients in agriculture and finding a common approach for sustainable strategies for wood are seen as essential.

One of the successes of the PA was the implementation of three [Baltic Leadership Programs](#) (BLP) financed by the Swedish Institute, including the most recent promoting bioeconomy among young people from the region.

It also developed the Baltic Sea Bioeconomy Council, a policy dialogue platform composed of members from all over the Baltic Sea Region. All the members are actively involved in the development of bioeconomy policies and initiatives in the region. It includes both big and small NGOs, universities, research institutions, and also governmental agencies.

"It's very important to realize that many of our ideas must be implemented locally. And it's also very important for us to understand the challenges better and to be able to develop policies that address the local challenges."

Torfi Jóhannesson, EUSBSR Policy Area Bioeconomy Coordinator, Nordic Council of Ministers

[PA Bioeconomy contact information](#)



- **PA Culture**

This PA focuses on culture and creative sectors and industries in the Baltic Sea region. It promotes the Baltic Sea region's creative entrepreneurship and presents Baltic Sea region culture using the innovative force of culture for societal development. PA Culture also focuses on the preservation and presentation of the Baltic Sea region cultural heritage and strengthening the cultural identity of the region.

One of the projects focusing on the local level is the [Baltic Sea Cultural Cities](#) project, where cities and regions fostering are invited to cooperate among themselves, not to compete. There is a strong focus on citizen participation and ownership, increasing the number of contacts between people and cultural actors. It addresses especially the younger generation as well as excluded parts of society.

The second project worth mentioning is the [Urban Cultural Planning](#) project which uses co-creation among citizens and between citizens and authorities as a way to overcome the increasing exclusion of socially sensitive groups, such as the elderly and minors, and to advance the Baltic Sea region social innovation. The project uses cultural events and gaming methods to engage people in urban social innovation and compile a toolbox with good practices for other cities. And besides scientific organizations, it also includes local authorities and local actors.

'Involvement of local actors is really important. It's because the local actors understand what they need, and what the local community needs when it comes to culture.'

Rafał Jewdokimow, EUSBSR Policy Area Culture Coordinator, Polish Ministry of Culture, National Heritage and Sports

[PA Culture contact information](#)

- **PA Education**

PA Education focuses on education, research and employability, including all educational levels, and employability signifying the transition from education to the labour market.

Local actors are well represented in one of today's 4 flagships, the [School to Work](#) (S2W). This flagship is addressing challenges where cross-sectoral and multi-level collaboration is a need. The responsibility for tackling the challenges is in most countries at the local level, and many of the solutions are measures that need to be implemented locally. Local partners are well represented in the projects supporting this flagship. There are no local actors represented in the steering group.

There are two more flagships, one existing and one emerging, where local stakeholders involvement is important. The existing one is [Baltic Sea Labour Forum](#) (BSLF), addressing challenges related to the ageing population. The flagship gathers today mostly social partners and at the national level. The existing platform for collaboration on the topic of sustainable working life has not enough capacity to host local actors. There will be new initiatives later this year enabling local actors' involvement.

The emerging flagship will address challenges related to the integration of migrants. The platform is expected to be launched later this year and will welcome, from the start, local actors. The added value is that most policies need to be implemented on the local level; hence the local level perspective needs to be integrated into developing measures and policy briefs.

'I will say that in our policy area, local actors and their involvement are very important. And what we struggle with is to set up the platforms where we can engage them. So it's not about lacking awareness of the importance of local actors. It's about the capacity to engage and even more about suitable funding for platforms for long-term collaboration in BSR.'

Anders Bergström, EUSBSR Policy Area Education Coordinator, Norden Association in Sweden

[PA Education contact information](#)

- **PA Energy**

PA Energy focuses on ensuring competitive, secure and sustainable energy in the Baltic Sea region.

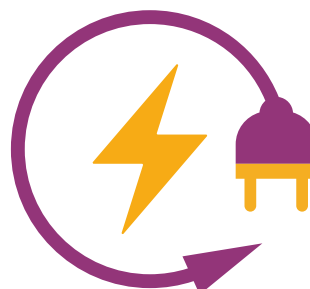
Regional cooperation in the energy sector is conducted within the framework of the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP), whose actions are to be implemented mainly in the areas of energy infrastructure, gas and electricity markets, power generation, security of energy supply, energy efficiency and renewable energy. Regarding electricity and gas markets, the focus is on achieving an open, competitive and fully integrated regional energy market in the Baltic Sea region.

One of the important flagships of the PA was the Act Now! project which focused on energy efficiency in the Baltic cities. Its goal was to help municipal staff involved in energy efficiency measures by improving their knowledge about energy losses, competencies for preparing investments, and skills to stimulate private investments in energy efficiency.

"Without the stakeholders, there is no meaning at all for the plans that we make. So, it's really important that they have this involvement already in the first steps of making, for example, policy recommendations, or some kind of funding plan. For example, we are now working pretty deeply with local stakeholders to learn and launch a new initiative to promote energy community development around Baltic states"

Edvarts Emersons, EUSBSR Policy Area Energy Coordinator, Ministry of Economics of Republic of Latvia

[PA Energy contact information](#)



- **PA Hazards**

PA Hazards focuses on reducing the use and impact of hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea. Its actions concentrate on reducing the use and preventing emissions of hazardous substances by developing and implementing primarily non-regulatory measures and Baltic Sea Region-wide policies, as well as mitigating and remediating historic contamination still causing negative effects on the Baltic ecosystem.

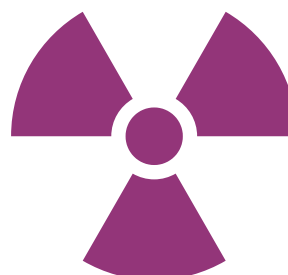
The PA developed and implemented a successful Baltic Leadership Programme on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which was later repeated due to significant interest (BLP PFAS Extension).

The flagship NonHazCity has developed chemical action plans for several BSR cities, regions and municipalities, paving the way to more sustainable management of chemicals in the region.

"The flagship projects hold a crucial role as they lead the work of translating the objectives and actions of PA Hazards into concrete activities, it is therefore essential to find the right flagship leaders with a solid commitment, strong local connection and broad network."

Eva Iveroth, EUSBSR Policy Area Hazards Coordinator, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency

PA Hazards contact information



- **PA Health**

PA Health aims at improving and promoting people's health and well-being, including its social aspects. It works to raise awareness among other policy areas for the impact of their domain on health and the need to implement a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach.

PA Health has an established structure of thematic experts and a network of stakeholders in the region. In addition to the NDPHS Partner Organisations, several stakeholders from civil society, academia, and national, regional and local authorities are involved in the implementation of PA Health activities and projects.

In the future, PA Health will work on further broadening its stakeholder outreach and engagement, in particular to NGOs working on health-related issues in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond. A strategy on stakeholder relations will be part of the future increased communication activities of PA Health.

One of the important projects of PA Health is BaltCityPrevention that develops and tests a new approach that helps Public Health Authorities (PHA) in prevention and intervention planning. It also involves eHealth technologies in the planning and implementation of the intervention. Finally, it initiates cooperation between PHAs and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Another important project is Healthy Boost which focuses on cross-sectoral cooperation within cities and between city administrations, city residents and SMEs and other relevant stakeholders to seek methods and tools to do cross-sectoral cooperation better for a more holistic approach to health promotion.

'We have just recently started a big project, which is a grant from the European Commission. And this project is called Mittens. One work package in this project is setting up a network of municipalities. And this network is supposed to cooperate on the topic of alcohol and drug prevention. But the idea is that once the network is established, there would be a possibility to work on other topics as well. So we start in drug prevention, but hope that this network will grow and will become more established and that this will be our way to reach local stakeholders.'

Wiebke Seeman, EUSBSR Policy Area Health Coordinator, Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being

[PA Health contact information](#)

- **PA Innovation**

PA Innovation aims at promoting global competitiveness and growth of the Baltic Sea Region through support for entrepreneurship, business development, science and increased innovation capacity.

The regional authorities have been really active within the PA, especially because of this strong focus on smart specializations in policy or innovation in recent years. And there have been many projects related to smart specialisation strategy (S3). Those flagships have really included a lot of activities in which the partners have been working closely with their regional stakeholders. A key thing for smart specialization is this kind of entrepreneurial discovery process, which is basically about stakeholder engagement.

A relevant flagship is the BSR S3 Ecosystem Platform which aims to influence, improve knowledge and raise discussion among regional, national and EU-level innovation policymakers and experts of the opportunities, challenges and needed capacities related to the development of inter-regional innovation cooperation based on joint strategic fields in the Baltic Sea Region.

Real-Time Economy (RTE) is another interesting flagship of PA Innovation that facilitates discussion on topics related to ongoing RTE activities, and the goal of the event is to strengthen the Nordic-Baltic region's position in RTE development and piloting. The RTE concept itself encompasses many highly relevant concepts for the future development of the Baltic Sea Region. It is key to realizing an automated business environment, with technologies such as e-Receipts, e-Invoicing, Real-Time Payments etc.

'I would say that with this kind of a stakeholder engagement and understanding that we need to engage new stakeholders, we should move on from this policy development and policy learning level increasingly to the stakeholder and their level and activity should be based on their needs.'

Esa Kokkonen, EUSBSR Policy Area Innovations Coordinator, The Baltic Institute of Finland

[PA Innovation contact information](#)

- **PA Nutri**

PA Nutri aims at reducing nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels. Its actions concentrate on promoting measures and practices that support nutrient recycling and reduce nutrient losses and promote cost-efficient nutrient removal and sustainable sludge handling in waste-water treatment. Dialogue among all sectors, reliable nutrient load data, cooperation with non-EU Member States and investigation on cost-efficient nutrient reduction mechanisms are required to meet the set targets.

One of the projects focusing on the local challenges was the [BEST \(Better Efficiency for Industrial Sewage Treatment\)](#) project. Local water utilities, wastewater treatment plants, industrial companies, and permitting authorities elaborate and test guidelines and procedures for more efficient management of industrial sewage within the project. It included several local actors such as municipalities, water utilities, private companies, waterwork associations and universities.

Another example is the [BSR Water \(Platform on Integrated Water Cooperation\)](#). It develops an interactive online platform about the management of water, namely fresh, sea, storm and wastewater management. The platform allows wide dissemination of piloted practices and tools. The purpose of the platform is to help operators to manage the water resources of the BSR smartly.

[PA Nutri contact information](#)



- **PA Safe**

The goal of PA Safe is for the Baltic Sea region to become a leading region for maritime safety and security. It aims at reducing the risk of maritime accidents and marine pollution, including hazardous spills. PA Safe actions focus on many aspects that can improve maritime safety and security, including resurveying shipping routes, improving navigation safety through e-navigation and new technology, emergency preparedness, and winter navigation.

One of the successful flagships projects within this PA is the FAMOS project, which started back in 2014 and aimed to improve navigation safety in the Baltic Sea by increasing hydrographic survey efficiency. One of the target groups of this project was the private companies interested in safer and more efficient shipping.

Another important project was the MONALISA project and its continuation projects, aiming to promote automated shipping and vessel traffic management.

"The policy area on maritime Safety and Security provides a sound platform for reinforcing maritime safety and security in the Baltic Sea region. PA Safe contributes to the objective "Save the sea" and its sub-objective "Clean and safe shipping". PA Safe will ensure that horizontal aspects, notably addressing climate change and cooperation with non-EU neighbouring countries and organisations, are appropriately integrated into the work of the policy area."

Valtteri Laine, EUSBSR Policy Area Safe Coordinator, Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom

[PA Safe contact information](#)

- **PA Secure**

PA Secure focuses on protection from land-based emergencies, accidents and cross-border crime. It promotes a comprehensive and coherent approach to reducing transboundary vulnerabilities and building common capacities for societal security in the Baltic Sea region. It closely works with the UBC, which is also a member of the Steering Group. The Union, via its commissions (Sustainable and Safe Cities Commissions), directly links to a network of local Baltic cities and municipalities.

One of the projects focusing on local stakeholders is the CASCADE (Community Safety Action for Supporting Climate Adaptation and Development) project, where the PA is working on a curriculum for the local level, mostly municipalities, on how to work with climate change adaptation.

Another project started last year is the ChYResilience Project which aims to empower children and youth to play an active role as contributors to societal resilience and remove barriers to their active involvement in prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

'In this way, cooperation with local stakeholders is so important, because you have always asked the question who delivers exactly in this system of Civil Protection activities. Local structures are those who deliver. Finally, they should fight fires. They should fight floods, they should take care about chemical biological contamination. They should be well prepared to respond and then to organize the proper response and prepare themselves for this.'

Janusz Gąciarz, EUSBSR Policy Area Secure Coordinator, Council of the Baltic Sea States

[PA Secure contact information](#)

- **PA Ship**

The main goal of the PA Ship is to make the Baltic Sea region a model region for clean shipping. PA Ship actions include creating infrastructure for alternative fuels in the Baltic Sea region and supporting measures that reduce emissions from ships, such as technical installations or issues of enforcement of environmental regulation for ships operating in the Baltic Sea.

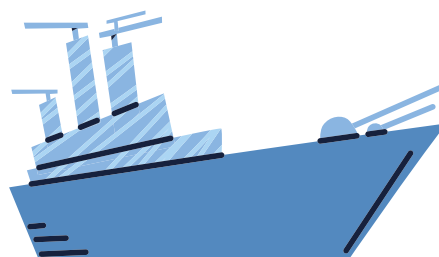
One of the key examples involving the local stakeholders, mainly private companies, is the ECOPRODIGI project (Eco-efficiency to maritime industry processes in the Baltic Sea region through digitalisation). Its goal was to increase eco-efficiency in the Baltic Sea region maritime sector by creating and piloting digital solutions in close cooperation between industry end-users and research organisations.

The project was so successful that it was later extended as EXOPRODIGI, which intends to enhance further maritime industry end-users institutional capacity at various stages of vessel life-cycle, i.e. during voyages, stowage operations, and the assembly processes at shipyards.

"The ECOPRODIGI partnership included 21 partners whereof 10 of these were private companies. ECOPRODIGI was therefore a very good example of how to use an EU-funded macro-regional project to gather stakeholders that are not only representing official government entities"

Josefine Pallesen, EUSBSR Policy Area Ship Coordinator, Danish Maritime Authority

[PA Ship contact information](#)



5. ENTRY POINTS



When implementing macroregional strategies, the two main obstacles are the lack of tailor-made funding of flagships and lack of capacity to implement these Strategies among implementing stakeholders. Both obstacles originate from the above mentioned three NO's paradigm. These NO's should, of course, not be questioned but need to be counteracted by proper alignment of funding and mobilisation of existing institutions (ministries, state agencies etc.)

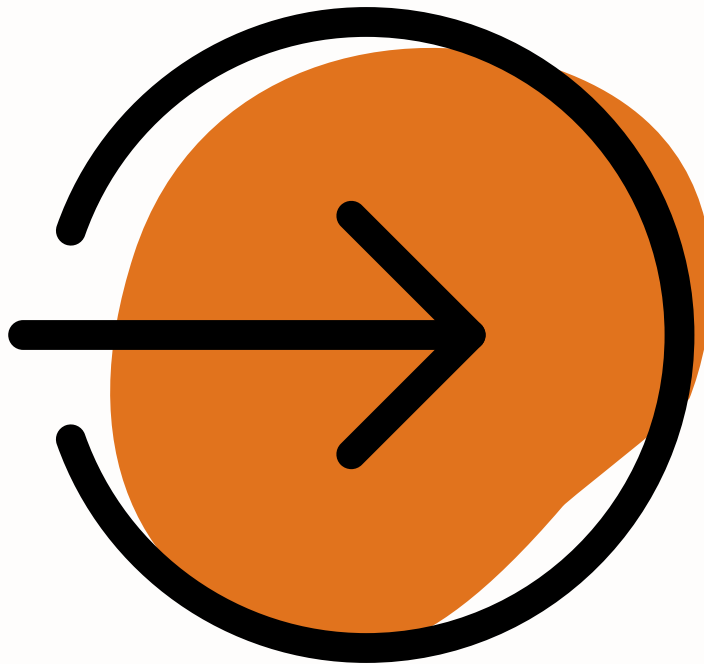
To this day, *the Strategy has more than 150 active, finalised or emerging flagships* - cooperation platforms for transnational, cross-sectoral cooperation based on multi-level governance. Within them, multiple actors are invited to develop solutions, new approaches and policy recommendations collectively.

It is a fact that the flagships have proved their consolidative role, as they offer processes that enable different actors from all levels of governance to work together on challenges and opportunities in the chosen area. The most experienced and usually engaged actors represent regional or national authorities and academia. They are aware of the opportunities posed by the flagship processes and often engage in them. Yet, it is still rare to see local and rural local entities like municipalities, local socio-economic actors and institutions, and NGOs work effectively in these setups. Therefore, it is imperative that they be as adequately informed as to the others and be able to pursue the same possibilities for their cross-border and transnational cooperation within the EUSBSR and other relevant EU agendas.

Today's funding programmes, where 3-years projects are a standard, allowing just a limited number of partners and a predefined outcome, does not do the job, nor for macroregional strategies, nor for effectively tackling today's complex societal challenges. This funding format will take time to change, but discussions on how to reform the funding model of today need to start. Regarding local stakeholder involvement, funds for smaller projects are needed. However, it is foreseen that the mainstream programmes will offer such project funding in the next programmes.




Individual and institutional capacity among all implementing stakeholders needs to be heightened. Investments have been made in capacity building of most of the implementing stakeholders; also local stakeholders but much more needs to be done. Macro-regional strategies are still relatively new collaboration formats and introduce a new, more integrated approach to developing solutions to our societal challenges.

Within the project, we have identified several entry points that can help local stakeholders to access the Strategy and its benefits. Based on the interviews with PACs, we have divided them into existing and future entry points within this report.





Existing entry points:

-  Project funding from the EU's Interreg Programmes within the Baltic Sea Region ([Baltic Sea Region Programme](#), [Central Baltic](#), [South Baltic](#) etc.) have become some of the most important entry points for local actors to access cooperation within the Strategy. With the no need finding principle in place, these programmes serve as the main funding source for implementing all Strategy initiatives and projects. Starting from 2009, all projects implemented within these programmes had related their activities to relevant goals of the Strategy and described their contribution towards them. In this respect, one has to underline the special role of the Baltic Sea Region Programme (Interreg BSR), which has offered to fund earmarked for the implementation and coordination of the Strategy. Apart from Interreg, other financial instruments can also be used as entry points, e.g. [EU Structural Funds](#).
-  Baltic organisations, e.g. CBSS, HELCOM, VASAB, UBC and its commissions (Sustainable Cities, Safe Cities), Euroregion Baltic and its Core Groups (Water, Mobility), Baltic Sea NGO Network etc. As mentioned before, the Baltic organisations form the backbone of Baltic cooperation prior to the development of the Strategy and serve as excellent entry points to EUSBSR. Most of them were created before or shortly after the fall of the Iron Curtain, during a period that has been named New Regionalism. Focusing initially mainly on environmental issues, such as HELCOM, they have gradually become cooperation hubs for local and regional stakeholders seeking to resolve their challenges through cross-border or transnational cooperation. Today, these organisations are very active in implementing the EUSBSR and can be of effective assistance for local actors deciding to engage with Strategy.
-  A good example of a capacity-building programme supporting local stakeholders engagement in EUSBSR is the workshops organized in Sweden where a broad group of stakeholders are invited to “test using macro-regional strategies”. Participants in the workshop represent stakeholders from different sectors and levels of governance. They start by agreeing on a common challenge they would like to address and discussing perspectives that need to be considered. This is followed by stakeholder analysis, answering the question of who needs to be involved in tackling this specific challenge. Later in the workshop, participants design thematic working groups and elaborate on suitable funding for the transnational collaboration structure.

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- ▶ Capacity-building projects and initiatives offered by both EU and national instruments and organisations. These can really kick-start the local actors into cross-border cooperation within the Baltic Sea. Over the years, they were implemented in different Interreg Programmes with the Baltic Region, but also via regional organisations. To give just a few currently available examples - the Baltic Leadership Programme funded by the Swedish Institute offers a diverse range of programmes for capacity building in which local actors are often engaged. Another example is the Strategy itself which in the current Action Plan has included the capacity building activities horizontally within all Policy Areas.
 - ▶ Seed funding instrument to start the cooperation processes within the Baltic Sea Region are important entry point and can offer concrete support for interesting ideas for cooperation. One example is the Council of the Baltic Sea States and its Project Support Facility which offers small grants of 65 000 EUR for the partnership of at least three organisations from the CBSS countries. The projects can cover various topics, including cooperation (networking, experience exchange, knowledge platforms), workshops, seminars and awareness-raising events, cultural events or educational programmes. Another example is the Swedish Institute Seed funding for cooperation projects in the Baltic Sea Region to start or expand collaborations that contribute to sustainable economic, environmental or social development in the region. Such projects can run up to 18 months with a budget between 10 000 – 50 000 EUR. A project application must include at least three actors in three different countries eligible for support, one of which is Sweden (main applicant). The projects database now includes more than 130 successful projects covering many topics and allowing partners to develop larger project applications in the future.
 - ▶ During interviews, several PACs suggested that it would be beneficial to extend the existing Policy Area Steering Groups (SG) with representatives of the local actors to serve as 'EUSBSR Ambassadors' in their local contexts. This goes against the provisions of the current Action Plan, which defines SGs as including representatives of national or regional governments of EUSBSR Member States. Nevertheless, it could be possible that the current members of relevant SGs maintained contacts with representations of local actors interested in the Strategy implementation and thus becoming the ambassadors although not representing the local level itself. Another solution could be introducing thematic working groups, which is a concept known in other EU macro-regional strategies.
 - ▶ Study tours or other direct activities targeting local stakeholders organised by the relevant PACs. These are often organised within the framework of current flagships or platforms.

POTENTIAL FUTURE ENTRY POINTS



Future entry points:

- ▶ Small projects included in the mainstream programmes where local stakeholders can definitely use this funding as seed money to start cross-border or transnational collaboration and participate in flagships that have been outlined by both the Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. To this end, it is important to engage in dialogue with the respective MA to make sure this option will be offered in the local actors' country or region.
- ▶ Organize capacity building projects for local stakeholders, e.g. South Baltic Umbrella, Umbrella 2.0 and its follow-up. Despite years of efforts to better engage local actors in international cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, still many stakeholders lack these capacities. Therefore, it seems important to continue with projects similar in nature to, e.g. the South Baltic Umbrella project. Oftentimes, local actors still need practical knowledge in project management, languages, and cultural differences. They also need more information on how different cooperation structures work and how they can use them to their advantage.
- ▶ Organize macro-regional strategy (MRS) workshops on the national level, starting from the challenge perspective and using MRS as a conceptual tool to solve local challenges. Good experiences from Sweden are expected to be spread to other countries around the Baltic Sea, but this depends on the organisational capacities of relevant National Coordinators.
- ▶ Better utilise the many sectoral NGOs on the national or global levels, e.g. SPEK Finnish National Rescue Association, International Red Cross (PA Secure), which already work strategically with PAs. To this end, it is important to set up networks on PA level (or Action level) where these NGOs can be "docked in".
- ▶ Better integrate organisations of local and regional authorities on a national level, e.g. the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). It would really be an important step forward to mobilize all these Associations in BSR to facilitate municipalities' involvement in EUSBSR jointly. That would indirectly cover most of the municipalities and cities in the BSR under one umbrella, allowing for better coordination of activities for local stakeholders within the Strategy.
- ▶ Organise more targeted webinars also involving local stakeholders within specific PA – fewer resources and more participants. The new normal after the COVID-19 crisis may see more of these events organised for local actors who cannot afford time and resources to attend live meetings in other countries. Better to organize these workshops cross-sectorial, transnational and multi-levels instead of organizing separate groups (NGOs/Local/Regional etc.)

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE



- Expand PA Steering Groups to include at least representatives of regional level or one of the pan-Baltic organisation, e.g. UBC in PA Secure Steering Group, private companies in PA Safe. Also, thematic working groups could be added to the governance structure on the PA level to develop concrete policy solutions better.
- Promote project-policy-project loop (PA Health) to show the interdependence of policy development and practical challenge solving.
- Further promote SI seed funding and the Baltic Leadership Programmes, two successful instruments in building sustainable cooperation and networks in the region.
- Create less administrative strain in project reporting for different project partners in flagship projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

for different levels of governance **1**

DEVELOP EUSBSR FLAGSHIPS with different levels of involvement **TAILORED TO THE NEEDS** of stakeholder - example of EUSBSR PA EDUCATION with 3-tier involvement (basic, challenge oriented, strategic)



ORGANISE national workshops on EUSBSR and MRSs as a **CONCEPT** and **Tool** to solving local problems.



IMPROVE interactions, communication and cooperation between national and local level within EUSBSR PAs



BETTER ADDRESS GLOBAL CHALLENGES eg. climate change that have local consequences



- Develop Policy action processes with different levels of involvement tailored to stakeholder's needs – example of PA Education with 3-tier involvement (basic, challenge oriented, strategic).
- Promote participation of local stakeholders in PA Steering Group meetings – local actors can present policy briefs and measure proposals to the strategic level, e.g. line ministries.
- Use more effectively other existing cooperation networks, e.g. Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (PA Education), e.g. joint conferences and workshops.
- Include more local stakeholders in existing and future PA activities that lack participation from the local level. This could be done by underlining the long-term impact the Strategy has on local challenges.



- Better promote emerging Flagships among the local stakeholder to secure their early participation.
- Synchronize mainstream programmes calls with emerging Flagships to ensure better strategic alignment and improved funding opportunities.
- Shorten the time from identification of challenges to implementing measures – challenge → project → measures → results.
- Better alignment of EUSBSR Flagships with Interreg programmes for the next programming period – beyond 2027.

RECOMMENDATIONS

for different levels of governance 2



INCLUDE the representatives of regional/local LEVEL or one of the **PAN-BALTIC** organisation in EUSBSR PA working groups/action groups.....



BETTER PROMOTE emerging EUSBSR FLAGSHIPS among the **LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS** to secure their early **PARTICIPATION**.....



PROMOTE PARTICIPATION of **LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS** in EUSBSR annual meetings i.e. **PARTICIPATION DAY**.....



SHORTEN TIME from identification of **CHALLENGES** to implementing **MEASURES**



CHALLENGE **PROJECT** **MEASURES** **RESULTS**



BETTER ALIGN of EUSBSR FLAGSHIPS with Interreg programmes for the current and next programming period - beyond **2027**



PROVIDE more **STRATEGIC APPROACH** for **CAPACITY BUILDING** for **LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS** to understand how this can be done with the help of the **EUSBSR**



-
- Provide a more strategic approach for capacity building for local stakeholders to understand how this can be done with the help of the EUSBSR.
 - Organise national workshops on EUSBSR and MRS as a concept and tool to solving local problems, e.g. PA Education And these kinds of workshops with four Swedish state agencies which are managing authorities for structural investment funds (European Social Fund and ESF+, Regional Development Fund, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and European agricultural fund for rural development).
 - Improve interactions and cooperation between national and local level within PAs.
 - Use existing networks of twin cities – find common challenges and frame them within particular PAs on different levels of governance (local, regional, etc.)
 - Organise focused policy dialogue events with local stakeholders – PA Secure.
 - Better address global challenges, e.g. climate change that has local consequences – PA Secure.
 - Encourage participation in pan-European projects (e.g. Horizon Europe) that have practical local dimension, e.g. the FIRE IN project.
 - Further develop communication more tailored to particular target groups – local level – practical dimension of EUSBSR – local challenges → policy development → policy impact.





What will happen in EUSBSR in the next coming years?

- Flagships, or the name used in all 4MRS, “policy-action processes”, will emerge in some PAs faster than in others. It is expected that PAs with the option to absorb funding in the Interreg TN programme will be slower than those PA without access to these funds. Another factor influencing the speed is the capacity of individual PACs. It takes time to set up flagships, and one also needs to have a good understanding of funding, EU in particular.
- When new flagships are being launched (and developed), PACs need to have access to local actors. What competencies do they have, and what is their interest in international collaboration? Such an overview will be important. That is why we suggest closer contacts with the associations of local authorities, like the one in [Sweden](#), [Lithuania](#) or [northern Poland](#). Hopefully, Baltic Sea NGO Network [BSNGON](#) will be restored and updated to be able to offer the same service to PACs but concerning NGOs.
- Engage in dialogue with PACs on the matter of setting up networks linked to the PA but not to be compared with the Steering Group. Networks that can be the intermediate platform until flagships emerge for stimulating dialogues with local actors. The networks could organize workshops, study visits and policy dialogues where results from projects are discussed. If you like the idea, we can together elaborate it further.

Worth to remember



Why are macro-regional strategies needed?

- Complexity of issues that can't be tackled by a single actor or a single project.
- Long term collaboration.
- Moving targets and goals – new dynamic, calls for agility.
- Need to engage stakeholders who can contribute and who can bring about change.
- Participation as a democratic value.
- Co-creative action formats – collaborative platforms, learning in-action, networks.
- Action-informed policy creation – policy to action to policy (loops).
- Facilitation of multi-party initiatives – a must-have competence.
- Outcomes – policy gets enacted.



On 17th February 2021, the European Commission has approved the revised [EUSBSR Action Plan](#), and the revision process is now completed.

What's new in the action plan?

- Shorter and easier to communicate
- New targets and indicators aligned with [SDGs](#) and EU policy frameworks like the [EU Green Deal](#)
- Clear division of responsibilities
- Widen participation with a focus on civil society, youth and businesses
- "Baltic Sea Strategy Point" – a support structure



Flagships – joint transnational development processes

Within the MRS framework, the collaborative processes are called flagships – strategic actions born to respond to macro-regional challenges, for which they gather relevant stakeholders from all levels of society.

Flagships become “the home” for projects, chains of projects, processes, thematic groups and platforms – that together produce a much higher impact on the issue.

For more information on EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, [click here](#).

UMBRELLA 2.0



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