

Interreg Baltic Sea Region Third Call for Applications Priorities 1-3

Announcement Note Timeline: 5 October 2017 – 9 April 2018

1. Introduction

Interreg Baltic Sea Region is launching the third call for applications for its priorities 1-3. The Programme offers financial support to transnational projects contributing to the development of a more innovative, better accessible and sustainable Baltic Sea region. The Programme is designed under the territorial cooperation goal of the European Union. In practice, the Programme combines financing from the EU structural funds European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)¹ as well as the financial contribution of the Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation.

The Programme funding is allocated through calls for applications.

2. Objectives and priorities

The Programme promotes transnational cooperation and integration by projects addressing common key challenges and opportunities of the region. It exploits opportunities and addresses issues which cannot sufficiently be dealt with by single countries but require a joint response by partners from several countries from the Baltic Sea region.

The Programme is divided into three thematic priority axes addressing transnational key challenges and opportunities of the Baltic Sea region:

Priority 1 - Capacity for innovation

The priority is dedicated to actions strengthening the ability of the Baltic Sea region to create and commercialise innovation. Thus, the Programme encourages experimentation with new approaches and solutions to be practically tested through pilot actions. Furthermore, the priority aims to increase the capacity of the public sector as an innovation driver and enhancing innovation uptake by SMEs. Thematically, one of the priority's focuses is the utilisation of the potential of existing and planned research and innovation infrastructures. Additionally, the priority supports capacity building for smart specialisation strategies and their implementation, e.g. through test and pilot activities. Finally, the priority provides support for non-technological aspects of innovation.

Priority 2 - Efficient management of natural resources

The priority supports transnational cooperation enhancing the capacity of public authorities and practitioners to ensure a better environmental status of the Baltic Sea region waters and to strengthen resource-efficient growth. It will help develop integrated approaches to reducing nutrient loads and decreasing discharges of hazardous substances in the waters. Moreover, the priority supports development and testing of governance and funding models as well as technological solutions for

¹ ENI financing for Russia is conditional upon conclusion of a Financing Agreement between the European Commission, the government of the Russian Federation and Germany as host of the Managing Authority.

production and distribution of renewable energy and for improved energy efficiency. Finally, it aims to strengthen the sustainable and resource-efficient blue growth in the Baltic Sea region.

Priority 3 - Sustainable transport

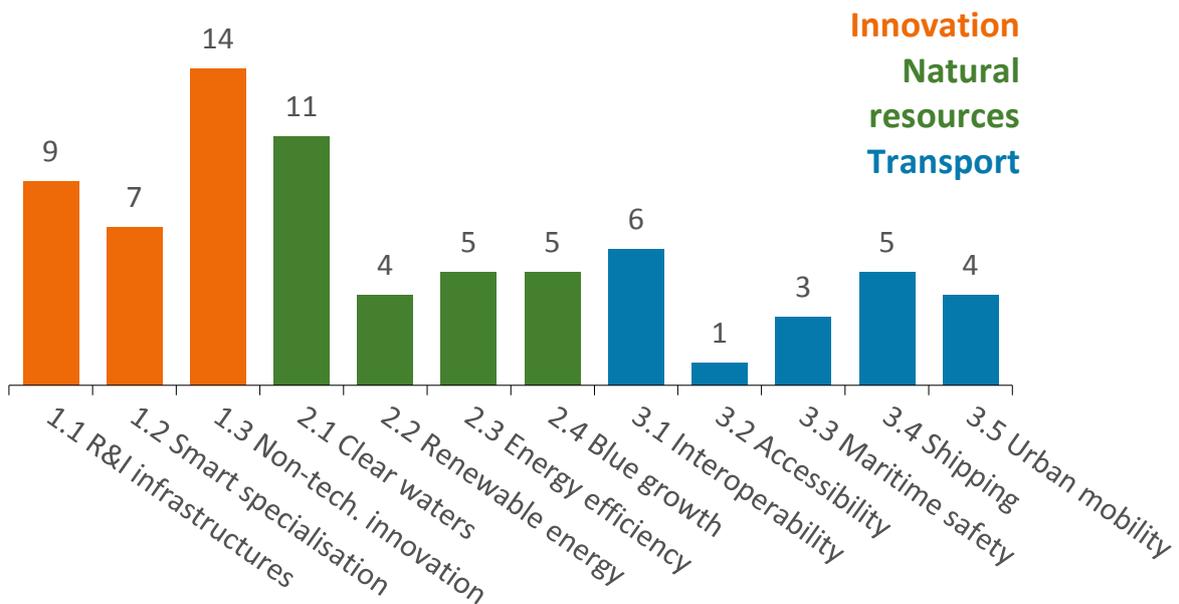
The priority covers capacity-building measures ensuring more sustainable transport solutions in the region. In particular, it aims to better connect the secondary and tertiary transport networks and nodes in the Baltic Sea region to core transport networks. Furthermore, the priority aims to improve the accessibility of distant areas that have accessibility deficits to urban, administrative and economic centres as well as areas affected by demographic change. Due to the significance of maritime transport for the region, the priority also focuses on the improvement of maritime safety and environmentally friendly shipping. Finally, the priority specifically focuses on urban areas of the Baltic Sea region with the aim of increasing environmentally friendly mobility.

A detailed description of the actions to be financed under each of the priorities can be found in the Cooperation Programme.

3. Focus of the third call for applications

The first and second call for applications resulted in 74 projects contributing to twelve Programme specific objectives in priorities 1-3. Applicants preparing proposals for the third call are encouraged to become acquainted with the current project portfolio of the Programme to enable synergetic effects and to avoid overlaps. Summaries of all projects are available on the Programme website: www.interreg-baltic.eu. Further details are available in the project library: projects.interreg-baltic.eu.

The graph below shows the current number of projects per specific objective.



In addition, applicants are encouraged to get familiar with similar projects funded by other programmes.

The third call is open for applications in all specific objectives of the Programme priorities 1-3. **The call focuses on projects that increase institutional capacity of public authorities at all levels of governance. All applications, except with specific objective 1.1 ‘Research and innovation infrastructures’, should clearly demonstrate how they achieve this.** It is expected that projects include public authorities with relevant roles in the partnership.

Furthermore:

- regarding specific objective 1.1 ‘Research and innovation infrastructures’ the Programme welcomes in particular applications that include private partners; and
- regarding priority 2 ‘Natural resources’ and priority 3 ‘Transport’ the Programme welcomes in particular applications that plan investments to be realised with funding outside of the Programme.

4. EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Interreg Baltic Sea Region takes an active part in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and its Action Plan. The funding for implementing the Action Plan should be drawn from a variety of funding sources, including other territorial cooperation programmes in the area. Applicants are encouraged to become acquainted with the Action Plan and to consider the possible contribution of their project to a policy area or a horizontal action of the Strategy.

The Programme particularly encourages flagship projects of the Action Plan thematically relevant to the Programme to apply. The coordinators of the policy areas and horizontal actions of the Strategy together with their steering groups are responsible for selecting flagship projects and for issuing a “letter of commitment” to be submitted with the application. Applicants are encouraged to be in contact with the relevant Policy Area/Horizontal Action Coordinator as early as possible. In the event that there are several applications demonstrating the same level of quality according to the quality assessment criteria of the Programme, priority will be given to the flagship project.

For more information on the Strategy please go to: <http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/>.

For contacts to Policy Area/Horizontal Action Coordinators please go to: <http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/contacts>

5. Availability of funds

The available² Programme co-financing allocated to priorities 1-3 is shown in the tables below:

ERDF in million euros

Priority	Total	Committed in first and second call	Available
1. Capacity for innovation	84.4	61.1	23.3
2. Efficient management of natural resources	84.4	65.9	18.5
3. Sustainable transport	66.0	50.3	15.7

² Please be aware that the figures are preliminary and might slightly change in the course of contracting of the projects selected in the second call for applications.

Norwegian funds in million euros

Priority ³	Total	Committed in first and second call	Available
1. Capacity for innovation	5.5	2.9	2.6
2. Efficient management of natural resources			
3. Sustainable transport			

Planned ENI/Russian funds in million euros

Priority ⁴	Total	Committed in second call	Available
1. Capacity for innovation	7.9	2.9	5.0
2. Efficient management of natural resources			
3. Sustainable transport			

It is envisaged that Russian partners of the projects applying in the third call for applications receive Programme co-financing for their project activities. The Programme co-financing will combine the contribution of the European Union provided by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and the financial contribution of the Russian Federation.

Russian partners should note that the Programme co-financing can be made available only when the Financing Agreement has been concluded between the European Commission, Russian Federation and Germany as the country hosting the Managing Authority, and there will be enough liquidity on the Programme accounts for the respective funds to make payments to the projects.

The negotiations on the Financing Agreement are in their final stage.

Belarus has not signed a Financing Agreement and therefore partners from this country are not eligible for Programme funding.

6. Project partnership

Public authorities at local, regional or national level, research and training organisations, NGOs, sectoral agencies and associations as well as private for-profit organisations from the Programme area are invited to apply. The Programme Manual specifies which legal entities can act as lead partners and project partners. Organisations not falling under these legal requirements may participate in the projects as associated organisations.

The Interreg Baltic Sea Region area covers eleven countries. It comprises eight EU Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, parts of Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden) and three partner countries (Belarus, Norway and parts of Russia). The detailed geographical coverage of the Programme is defined in the Cooperation Programme.

³ For Norwegian funds there is no binding allocation among priorities. Some of the funding is dedicated to actions supported under Priority 4 of the Programme.

⁴ For ENI/Russian funds there is no binding allocation among priorities.

As a general rule, project partners can only receive co-financing from the Programme if they are located in the regions belonging to the Programme area. However, in exceptional cases partners located outside the Programme area can join the project partnerships. More details can be found in the Programme Manual.

Each project has to involve at least three project partners from three different countries of the Programme area: a lead partner and at least two project partners. Lead partners must be located in the territory of an EU Member State in the Programme area or in Norway. At least one of the partners has to be located in the territory of an EU Member State in the Programme area.

Specific implementing provisions for participation of Russian partners have not been finalised and are under discussion. Please refer to point 5 of this Announcement Note. Further details on the composition of the project partnership can be found in the Programme Manual.

7. Lead partner principle

Each project has to appoint a lead applicant/lead partner who is responsible for the preparation and submission of the application form. If the project is approved, the lead partner takes over the full responsibility for management, communication, implementation, and co-ordination of activities among the involved partners. The lead partner bears legal responsibility for the whole partnership. The lead partner is also the link between the project and the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat (MA/JS) of the Programme.

8. Duration of projects

The project duration consists of three phases: a contracting phase, an implementation phase and a project closure phase. The contracting phase lasts three months and starts the day after the Monitoring Committee decision. The duration of the implementation phase may vary from 12 to 30 months. The closure phase lasts three months.

9. Co-financing rates

Project partners have to provide their own contribution to receive Programme co-financing. The level of these contributions depends on the Programme co-financing rate, which varies between countries and funds. Partners from Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden are entitled to receive 75% ERDF co-financing, while partners from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland are entitled to 85% ERDF co-financing. Norwegian partners will receive 50% co-financing from Norwegian national funding. Russian partners will receive 85% Programme co-financing, combining the EU funding from the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the financial contribution of the Russian Federation⁵.

The Programme works with the reimbursement principle. Further details can be found in the Programme Manual.

10. Application procedure

Projects are selected for funding in a one-step application procedure including a compulsory consultation with the MA/JS. All lead applicants are asked to submit a **project idea form (PIF)** available at - <https://www.interreg-baltic.eu/apply-for-funds/consultations.html> briefly describing the project's strategic relevance, main outcomes, core activities and the planned partnership. The completed PIF can be sent any time but no later than **15 January 2018** to idea@interreg-baltic.eu. The MA/JS will provide feedback on

⁵ Provided the Financing Agreement has been signed.

project ideas by organising consultations at its office premises, during information events or via online meetings. Only after a consultation lead applicants can obtain access to the online application system (BAMOS), where they can submit a complete **project application** no later than **9 April 2018** .

Please note that PIFs submitted to the MA/JS will be forwarded to the Monitoring Committee of the Programme along with comments from the MA/JS. Applicants may be contacted by Monitoring Committee members or National Contact Points on their project ideas. Any information in the project idea form, including MA/JS feedback or feedback from Monitoring Committee members and National Contact Points will not influence the quality assessment of the application.

The table below summarises the information about documents that applicants need to submit during the call:

Project idea form	
Digital version	
Which documents?	Project idea form
When?	By 15 January 2018
How?	E-mail to: idea@interreg-baltic.eu

After launching the call the MA/JS offers consultations for all applicants. Participation in a consultation is obligatory for obtaining access to BAMOS.

Project application	
Digital version	
Which documents?	Online application
When?	By 9 April 2018, 16:00 CEST (UTC+2)
How?	Submitting via online system: ba.bamos.eu Log-in will be provided after a consultation with MA/JS.
Paper version	
Which documents?	Signed application (identical to the digital version) Partner declarations for all project partners (including lead applicant) original or copies State aid self-declarations for all project partners (including lead applicant) original or copies Optional: Scanned letters of support from associated organisations Scanned letters of commitment from relevant Policy Area Coordinator/Horizontal Action Coordinator
When?	By 9 April 2018 The date on the post stamp must be the date of the deadline or earlier !!!
How?	Mail documents to: Interreg Baltic Sea Region Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat ,IB.SH Grubenstraße 20 18055 Rostock, Germany

The applicants are asked to carefully follow the guidance provided in the project idea form as well as in the online submission system. The guidance outlines the Programme expectations regarding the quality and amount of information to be provided.

The MA/JS is responsible for the verification of completeness and correctness of the submitted documents as well as for the quality assessment of the applications. The assessment criteria are presented in Annex I to the Programme Manual. The Monitoring Committee of the Programme will be responsible for the final selection of applications at its meeting in September 2018.

11. Reimbursement of preparation costs

Project partners eligible for ERDF, Norwegian national funding or ENI/Russian funding can apply for reimbursement of costs related to the preparation of the project proposal. Only projects selected by the Monitoring Committee can have their preparation costs reimbursed. The reimbursement of preparation costs is lump sum based. Projects that have received seed money funds from the EUSBSR Seed Money Facility, Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme or any other EU funds for the preparation of the same project will not receive reimbursement of preparation costs. Further details can be found in the Programme Manual.

12. Programme language

The official language of the Programme is English. Therefore, all communication between applicants and the MA/JS is held in English. Information in project idea forms, application forms as well as official correspondence must be treated accordingly.

13. Further information and assistance

The official Programme documents are available on the Programme website www.interreg-baltic.eu and include:

- Interreg Baltic Sea Region Cooperation Programme;
- Programme Manual;
- Guidance for Russian partners; and
- Application package for third call.

The MA/JS offers the following assistance to applicants:

- For general advice please contact: info@interreg-baltic.eu;
- The MA/JS provides written feedback to project ideas and offers face-to-face consultations at its offices in Rostock and Riga, as well as during events and via online meetings. If interested, please write to: info@interreg-baltic.eu;
- The Programme provides a search tool for project ideas and partners on LinkedIn - <https://de.linkedin.com/in/interregbaltic>;
- The MA/JS organises events to facilitate the project development process. An Information Seminar for the third call will be organised in Riga, Latvia, on 18-19 October. The MA/JS will be present in national information events during autumn. Information about upcoming events is available at the Programme website: <http://www.interreg-baltic.eu/events.html>.