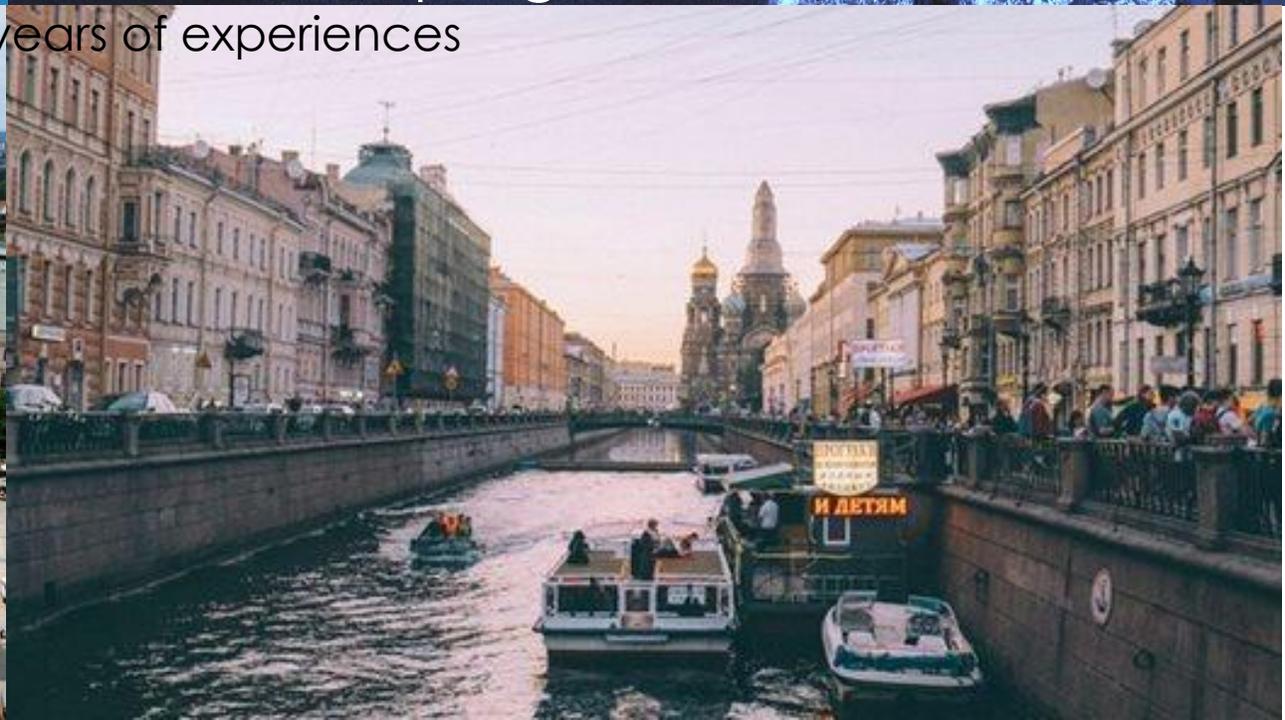




Embedding EUSBSR in the mainstream programmes  
learnings from 10 years of experiences



## Background

From the start Strategy was implemented by single projects, some labelled as flagship projects

In **2014/15 a major governance revision** was conducted where some of the conclusions were:

- Interreg projects are not enough to finance the implementation of the Strategy – need to **expand funding** to mainstream and sector programmes (Interreg 2.8% of the cohesion budget)
- Focus needs to be on **policy impact** – strategy need to develop own implementation format
- Need of **capacity building** for all parties involved, institutional and individual

The alignment of Strategy with mainstream programmes **prioritized for two reasons:**

- Access to sufficient funding of the Strategy
- Help to embed Strategy in Member States' own strategic development, national and regional

Preparing for next programme period, 2021 to 2027 – **two processes in parallel:**

- Prepare mainstream programmes for the alignment with Strategy, and
- Strategy to align with programmes

Early on, the mainstream programmes lacked **the infrastructure** to align with Strategy – no transnational monitoring committees or secretariats (JS)

## Background

The 1<sup>st</sup> network of Managing Authorities established **in 2011 by the ESF-programmes** in the Baltic Sea Region to promote transnational cooperation and alignment with EUSBSR

Following the revision in 2014/15 it was decided to establish similar MA-networks for ERDF, EAFRD and EMFF – the needed infrastructure and corresponding **partners** to PACs/HACs

HA Capacity / EUSBSR Support designed together with PACs/HACs **two programmes** to support the shift from *re-actively* labelling projects (flagship projects) to *pro-actively* develop formats that are able to deliver on the EUSBSR Action Plan.

The **thematic policy-action processes**, s.c. flagship process have developed over the years and was now defined as the superior format to implement the Strategy. An inclusive format where single projects, clusters of projects, networks, policy dialogues, co-creation are included as parts. The flagship is the response to one or more Actions in the Action Plan where MLG stakeholders are engaged. Flagships are the needed “homes” for mainstream projects and other formats.

PACs/HACs were offered trainings to use the new format in EUSBSR Support and later they applied the new knowledge and tested the flagships in own PA/HA with help of HA Capacity workshops.

## Embedding EUSBSR in ERDF/ESF

Spring 2019 a European wide conference was organized in Brussels to introduce the macro-regional strategies as strategic frameworks to Member States and DG Regio/DG Empl (geographical Units). The conference was organised by Interact and HA Capacity.

The embedding process continued in each of the four MRSs.

Needed was: (1) to develop **the mechanism** to use the mainstream programmes for the implementation of EUSBSR, and (2) to **thematically align** the EUSBSR Action Plan with the Operational Programmes (national/regional).

The new Common Provision Regulations (CPR) provide important support for the embedding:

The coordination is based on Article 17(3)d) of the proposed CPR Regulation stating: “**Each programme shall set out (...) for each specific objective the related types of actions, including a list of planned operations of strategic importance, and their expected contribution to (...) macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies [as well as] the interregional and transnational actions with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State**”.

In regard to eligibility the coordination is based on Article 57(4) of the proposed CPR Regulation stating: “**All or part of an operation may be implemented outside of a Member State, including outside the Union, provided that the operation contributes to the objectives of the programme**”. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region also include cooperation with neighbouring countries such as Belarus, Iceland, Norway and Russia.

## Embedding EUSBSR in ERDF/ESF – programme

**A capacity programme for the MA networks** was launched before the conference in spring 2019 , funded by the Swedish Institute. The “task force” to develop the programme consisted of the EU Commission (DG Regio/DG Empl), members of the two MA-networks (ERDF/ESF) and HA Capacity.

**5 Modules and 3 Round Tables** were included in the programme with the following aims:

- Draft provisions to be inserted under Specific Objectives (SO) where Strategy was going to be used.
- Draft mandates for the two MA-networks, guidelines on the coordination between them and the EUSBSR.
- Thematically align the EUSBSR with the Operational Programmes in the eight member states (national/regional).

Participants in Modules - members of the two MA-networks: line ministries, state agencies and others intermediate bodies.

Participants in Round Tables - National Coordinators, line ministries (in charge of ERDF/ESF-programmes) and DG Regio/DG Empl (Geographical Units).

3 Modules were held in person and two online (due to Covid-19) . The 5<sup>th</sup> and final one next week. 2 Round Tables were held in person and one remains.

## Embedding EUSBSR in ERDF/ESF – what has been achieved?

Raised awareness of HOW the macro-regional strategies can support the implementation of the Operational Programmes (ERDF/ESF) – the **macro-regional added value expressed in their language**.

Two teams - the ERDF and ESF MA-networks – are dedicated and motivated to support the implementation. Ready to facilitate communication within their respective “systems”. They communicate on a digital platform, “Howspace”. **Team spirit!**

A **mechanism** designed and is now being refined - **HOW to align funding in practice** between ERDF/ESF and the EUSBSR.

**Provisions** is now inserted in the Operational Programmes where member states articulated the added value for them (thematic alignment + interest) to use EUSBSR - monitored by DG Regio/DG Empl

**Mandate ready to be adopted** by Member States and EU Commission (DG Regio/DG Empl) – should have been adopted in Turku in June but the Round Table was postponed.

**Thematic alignment:** a matrix produced presenting the Policy Objectives/Specific Objectives in the new programme, the Country Reports, the National Priorities and the new EUSBSR Action Plan supporting the Member States when they decide in which SO to use the EUSBSR.

## Using the ERDF and ESF+ for the implementation - in practice

### § 4. Governance

#### 4.1. High-level meeting

A yearly high-level meeting is held with the Head of the Managing Authorities (or their delegates) in the eight Member States together with the corresponding Geographical Units at the EU Commission. If the two BSN networks for ESF and ERDF regard it as useful, they may decide to combine the high-level meeting of the two networks for practical reasons. The meeting makes strategic decisions and provide guidance to the MA-network. A yearly report is presented outlining the result of the work carried out by the network during the year.

### §5. Coordination with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

#### 5.1 Meeting with High-level group and group of National Coordinators EUSBSR

A yearly meeting is held with the high-level group of the BSN-ESF resp. BSN-ERDF and the group of National Coordinators of EUSBSR. Preferable back-to-back to the yearly EUSBSR Annual Forum.

#### 5.2 PA steering groups

The network is represented in the steering groups in relevant Policy Area's (PAs) of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. This includes sharing of relevant information and requests for opinion, where necessary. When a new Action Plan has been adopted it is decided by the joint meeting of the high-level group and the group of National Coordinators in which PA the BSN-ESF resp. BSN-ERDF should be represented. MAs may propose PAs to be represented in.

## Using the ERDF and ESF+ for the implementation - in practice

### §5. Coordination with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

#### 5.3 Practical coordination

The practical coordination between the Policy Area Coordinator (PAC) and the BSN-ESF and the BSN-ERDF is done at the meetings of the network where the PACs and for the ESF/ERDF relevant Flagship Leaders (FL) are invited and in between meetings in contacts between the PACs and the Chair.

### §6. Examples of transnational projects

**A. Macro-regional projects**, parts of the EUSBSR. New projects financed with help of synchronized calls with the programmes sharing the same specific objectives. Project applications are written from the outset with transnational cooperation as an integral part of the project. The partners who are to be included in the project from other Member States in the macro-region are part of a flagship and intend to apply for aid from their programmes in order to be able to take part in the flagship. The joint, transnational part is regulated in a “Transnational Cooperation Agreement”. A legally binding document. Attached as an Appendix. These projects follow the coordination outlined in paragraph 5.

**C. Micro projects**. Smaller projects aiming to prepare macro-regional or transnational projects. Activities to be financed by these projects are for example feasibility studies and forming transnational partnerships and flagships. The micro projects can also be used for enabling one or more institution(s)/organisation(s) to take part in a flagship or development processes organised in framework of a transnational partnership. For example, as members of one or more thematic working groups.

## **Taking a look at the Action and an example from a Policy Area**

## PA Education, Science and Social affairs

### Action 1: Preventing early school leaving and improving transition from school to work

Early school leaving often results in alienation and the young persons facing a NEET situation (Not in Employment, Education or Training).

Well-skilled teachers are a prerequisite for effectively tackle these societal challenges. The competence supply needs also to be secured making the profession as teacher more attractive.

#### This Action focuses on:

- preventing early school leaving, and
- re-integrating young people in NEET situations into education or labour market with
- vocational education and training as an important vehicle to achieve the above.

Indicator title	Value	Baseline	Target/deadline	Data source
Preventing early school leaving (ESL)	Strategy for ESL	0	MS informed/2023	Monitoring by PA
	Engaged members	20	100 members/2023	
	Absorbed funding	1 M EUR	10 M EUR/2023	
Re-integrating young people in NEET situations	NEET Agenda	0	MS informed/2023	Monitoring by PA
	Engaged members	40	100 members/2023	
	Absorbed funding	1 M EUR	10 M EUR/2023	

## School to Work (S2W)

<b>Flagship leader</b>	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)
<b>Coordination</b>	SALAR, Local Government (Denmark) and City of Turku (Finland)
<b>Advisory Board</b>	Representatives from Line Ministries in the 8 EU Member States
<b>Engaged stakeholders</b>	Approx. 120 members from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden
<b>Absorbed funding</b>	Approx. 5 million EUR (since launch in 2015)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.s2wflagship.eu/">https://www.s2wflagship.eu/</a>

## Embedding EUSBSR in ERDF/ESF – what remains to be done?

**PACs:** present flagships, existing or emerging where you expect funding from ERDF/ESF+ to the MA-networks

**NCs:** Engage in dialogue with line ministries in charge of ERDF and ESF programmes (national/regional) – make sure that their Managing Authorities are represented in the two MA-networks

**Maintain communication within the two MA-networks** (Howspace). Since September 2019 members are actively using Howspace for internal communication – discussing issues relevant for the alignment between Strategy and Operational Programmes.

**Facilitate the refining of the coordination** with topics such as synchronized calls, monitoring/ reporting/labelling projects etc. Support the working groups that will be needed to finalize the practical coordination, more detailed than in the mandate.

**Organize a meeting (the 3<sup>rd</sup> Round Table)** with NCs/line ministries in charge of ERDF/ESF and EU COM (DG Regio/DG Empl) **to adopt the mandate.**

Together with MA-networks **develop and implement capacity building programmes** for key staff (programme officers/lawyers/economists) in Managing Authorities respective PACs/ flagship leaders

## What next in embedding?

**Erasmus+** and **Horizon Europe** Baltic Sea Networks - National Agencies

**Interreg CBC/ENI-programmes** Baltic Sea Network for the in total 20 programmes



**EUSBSR**  
EU STRATEGY  
FOR THE BALTIC  
SEA REGION

