



IMPACT EVALUATION FOR THE CENTRAL BALTIC PROGRAMME  
2014-2020

# FINAL REPORT

4 July 2019



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# CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
ABBREVIATIONS .....	7
1. INTRODUCTION .....	8
1.1 BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION.....	8
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES.....	8
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY.....	9
1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT.....	9
1.3 THE EVALUATION TEAM .....	9
2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH .....	10
2.1 EVALUATION QUESTIONS .....	10
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY.....	12
2.2 EVALUATION METHODS AND TOOLS.....	12
THE RESULTS OF THE BENEFICIARY SURVEY .....	13
2.3 FACTORS AFFECTING THE VALIDITY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS .....	17
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERREG CENTRAL BALTIC PROGRAMME .....	18
3.1 PROGRAMME AREA.....	18
3.2 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE.....	18
3.3 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION .....	19
3.4 OVERVIEW OF FUNDED PROJECTS .....	22
4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME COMMUNICATION STRATEGY.....	34
5. ASSESSMENT OF THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND ANSWERS TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS .....	35
5.1 PRIORITY AXIS 1: COMPETITIVE ECONOMY .....	35
5.2 PRIORITY AXIS 2: SUSTAINABLE USE OF COMMON RESOURCES .....	42
5.3 PRIORITY AXIS 3: WELL-CONNECTED REGION.....	49
5.4 PRIORITY AXIS 4: SKILLED AND SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE REGION .....	53
6. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME AND ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS .....	60
6.1 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME.....	60
6.2 WIDER POLICY OBJECTIVES.....	65
7. ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS .....	67
7.1 HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE COMMUNICATION .....	67
INTERNAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE PROGRAMME BODIES (CO 1.1.).....	69
COMMUNICATION AND THE ACTIVITY OF POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES (CO 1.2.) .....	71
SUPPORT TO BENEFICIARIES FROM THE PROGRAMME BODIES (CO 1.3.) .....	75
COOPERATION WITH OTHER INTERREG PROGRAMMES (CO 1.4.) .....	78
SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT IN COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES (CO 2.1.).....	80
COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES UNDERLINING THE BENEFITS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION (CO 2.2.)	85
7.2 HAS THE PROGRAMME REACHED THE TARGET GROUP? .....	88
8. EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS .....	96
8.1 PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES .....	97
PRIORITY 1 .....	97
PRIORITY 2 .....	97
PRIORITY 3 .....	98



PRIORITY 4 .....	98
8.2 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY .....	98
8.3 GENERAL ISSUES.....	100
9. EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS .....	101
9.1 PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES .....	101
PRIORITY 1 .....	101
PRIORITY 2 .....	102
PRIORITY 3 .....	103
PRIORITY 4 .....	103
9.2 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY .....	104
9.3 GENERAL ISSUES.....	104
10. ANNEXES .....	106
ANNEX 1: LIST OF FUNDED PROJECTS BY SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE.....	106
ANNEX 2: INTERVENTION LOGIC OF THE INTERREG CENTRAL BALTIC PROGRAMME .....	109
ANNEX 3: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE INTERREG CENTRAL BALTIC PROGRAMME SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND THE EUSBSR POLICY AREAS AND HORIZONTAL ACTIONS .....	110

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the evaluation of the Interreg Central Baltic 2014-2020 Programme, which is a cross-border cooperation programme supporting projects in Estonia, Finland (including Åland), Latvia and Sweden in 18 core and 19 additional NUTS III regions. The programme has four strategic priorities (competitive economy, sustainable use of common resources, well-connected region, and skilled and socially inclusive region).

The total funding for the Central Baltic Programme's four priority axes and technical assistance is 170,54 million euros. Out of this, 132,63 million euros is EU funding and 37,91 million euros national financing. By the end of 2018, 150.98 million euros (88,51 % of the budget) had been committed to the projects and Technical Assistance. The committed funding to the projects has followed tightly the allocation of funds per priority. In the first three calls, around 90% of the programme funds (105,8 million euros) were committed to 97 projects. By April 2019, a total of 39,0 million euros had been paid out to the projects. By the end of 2018, forty projects had finished their operations.

The evaluation was conducted by an international consortium led by Consultancy for Regional Development MDI Public Ltd from Finland, with Safège Baltija AS from Latvia and Kontigo AB from Sweden as partners. The evaluation approach was based on Theory of Change, and the analysis was done using qualitative methods. The evidence base for the evaluation consisted of documentary evidence, indicators, face-to-face and telephone interviews, surveys to beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, and focus group interviews with the management bodies of the programme.

### **Rigorous selection, successful projects with cross-border added value**

The Interreg Central Baltic programme is a very compact and concentrated programme. The programme has a clear, streamlined structure with a pronounced intervention logic. The selected investment priorities, which are linked to the Priorities and Specific Objectives, have clearly been chosen with the Central Baltic added value in mind. Also, the project selection process is rigorous, and the proportion of successful projects is very high in the Interreg Central Baltic programme. The programme is progressing very well.

There are no objectives set at the programme or priority level. Hence, the only way to assess the programme is to look at the Specific Objective level. Overall, almost each Specific Objective has been successful in terms of reaching the set targets and benefiting from cross-border co-operation. However, the degrees of success vary between Specific Objectives and Priorities. Based on the assessment, it can be said that the Specific Objectives 4.1 and 4.2 of Priority 4 have been successful, as has Specific Objectives 2.4, 3.2 and, to a large degree, Specific Objective 1.2. The other Specific Objectives can have progressed well in terms of reaching targets and benefiting from cross-border co-operation. Only some Specific Objectives had low levels of target reaching, mainly due to challenging target-setting or low number of finished projects. Yet, a large number of projects is still ongoing.

The funded projects have cross-border added value. The business-related projects derive their added value from getting access to each other's networks and resources and from combining forces to create a critical mass. The education-related projects, on the other hand, benefit from each other's resources, as well as from learning from each other, and exchanging information and knowledge.

### **Higher education and research institutions most often Lead Partners**

The 97 funded projects have a total of 622 partners. Local public authorities represent the largest group of partners (39 %) in Interreg Central Baltic projects. Higher education and research institutions (22 %), Interest

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groups including NGOs (13 %) and business support organisations (9 %) are also important groups of project partners, higher education and research institutions are the Lead Partners in a third of the Interreg Central Baltic projects. Interest groups, including NGOs lead approximately a fifth of the projects.

The Interreg Central Baltic programme has contributed to the strengthening of co-operation between the regions in the programme area. Partners from all eligible regions participate in Interreg Central Baltic projects. Co-operation is especially strong between the capital regions of the participating countries (Põhja-Eesti, Helsinki-Uusimaa, Stockholm county, and Riga).

Of all the project partners, 38 % are Finnish, 26 % Estonian, 19 % Swedish, and 16 % Latvian. The Lead Partner is more often Finnish (58 %) or Estonian (27 %) than Swedish (12 %) or Latvian (3 %). In addition, there are two lead partners from Åland Islands. The distribution of Project Partners is however much more even across the four countries (19 - 27 %), with the highest number of project partners being Finnish.

### Communication Strategy

The Programme's Communications system was constructed in a network format comprising the Managing Authority, the Joint Secretariat (JS), National Contact Points (NCP) and members of the Monitoring Committee and the Steering Committee. The main responsibility for internal communication is assigned to the Head of the MA, which is in charge of communicating with the MC, SC, representatives of the Member States and EU structures. Communications activities are overseen by the Communication Manager in the JS.

The Communication Strategy has two objectives, and the programme communication activities focus on ensuring the generation and quality of cross-border projects and on ensuring wider awareness of cross-border benefits of the programme. The overall level of achievement of Communication strategy objectives is good.

The beneficiary and applicant survey, as well as the interviews with the project managers confirmed that the Central Baltic Programme is a well-known instrument in the region among professionals in the field. While the application process is regarded as time and resource consuming, a significant number of project partners have taken part in two or more Interreg Central Baltic projects. The beneficiaries are satisfied with the consultations provided by the Programme bodies during the application stage. The Consultations provided by the Joint Secretariat at the application phase are considered relevant, timely, consistent and sufficient. Also, the Joint Secretariat and National Contact Point staff are seen as friendly and easily approachable.

During the project implementation, the project managers most often view the Joint Secretariat as a partner who works together with the project partners to achieve joint goals. The Joint Secretariat communication and support are appreciated due to personal involvement and the attitude of the staff. Also, the events organised regarding implementation are particularly appreciated by the beneficiaries, since a clear understanding of rules, especially the financial rules, is crucial for the success of the project.

The Joint Secretariat and the National Contact Points provide support for the implementation of communication activities to the projects. The beneficiaries are happy with the support, although not all are aware of the kind of support they could get. The communication activity of the projects, as well as the entire programme, should transition from communicating the activities to communicating the achievements and benefits. For the programme communication to succeed, it is of utmost importance that the projects are able to communicate their achievements and results. At the moment, main focus of communication is on individual project results. In order to aggregate the results of the project into the Programme level, a wider result-oriented perspective is needed for communication activities. Furthermore, thematic communication on projects implemented in the same thematic areas could be strengthened.



## Recommendations

The Specific Objectives and the interventions funded under them differ very much from each other. This creates internal differences within the programme and project target-setting and indicators. Especially with the programme result indicators, closer attention to programme-level consistency would accrue benefits. The projects should make clearer plans on external or self-assessment, which would help create the fact basis on which the results-focused communication could be built on. Overall, there is a need to transition the communication activities both at the project and programme level from activities to the achievements. The programme lifecycle has reached the point where communication focusing on calls and activities can be reduced and greater focus placed on programme results and best practices. Programme-level communication on results should focus more on the broader perspective and on the most important thematic issues. The programme website and the project database should be developed to serve more cross-cutting needs in terms of promoting the results of the programme and the projects under different themes.

The administrative burden related to the eMS system, especially payment requests and reporting, should be reduced. Overall, the eMS system should be made more supportive to result-oriented policy and monitoring the project results.

The recommendations related to the Specific Objectives generally relate to monitoring, indicators, target groups, as well as finding the best possible niche for the cross-border co-operation in different areas of cross-border activity financed by the programme.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

JS = Joint Secretariat

MA = Managing Authority

MC = Monitoring Committee

NCP = National Contact Point

SO = Specific Objective

ToC = Theory of Change

VET = Vocational Education and Training

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 has two goals, namely investment for growth and jobs and territorial cooperation. Programmes contributing to the first goal is furthered through the Cohesion Fund, ESF and the ERDF. The territorial cooperation goal is advanced through Interreg programmes, which are funded by the ERDF. It has a budget of 10.1 billion euros, which is divided amongst 60 cross-border, 15 transnational and 4 interregional programmes. As all other ESI Funds, Interreg was reshaped for this programming period. The programme has eleven investment priorities (thematic objectives), which contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy. Furthermore, the programme has a greater result orientation focus in order to promote the more effective use of the investments with a view of producing a greater impact.

The Interreg Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 is a cross-border cooperation programme. It is a continuation of the Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2007-2013. The Central Baltic Programme supports projects in in Estonia, Finland (including Åland), Latvia and Sweden in 18 core and 19 additional NUTS III regions. The programme is divided into three geographically defined sub-programmes: Archipelago and Islands, Central Baltic and Southern Finland - Estonia.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess each Specific Objective of the Interreg Central Baltic programme (except for specific objective 2.2), as well as to evaluate the implementation of the programme Communication strategy.

The overall goal of the evaluation was to assess how the Central Baltic's funding contributed to the objectives of each programme priority. The evaluation considered whether the objectives of the priority were achieved through the projects. Furthermore, the efficiency and effectiveness of the Specific Objectives in reaching the desired results were assessed, where possible.

### Specific objectives

The evaluation covered all those projects that had concluded or were in their closure period by the end of 2018. This amounted to some forty concluded projects plus an additional 20 projects which were sufficiently far along in implementation terms to be evaluated. In order to analyse the programme objectives and the extent to which they have been reached however, it was not enough to cover only those projects that had finished or were finishing. Hence, a lighter assessment of ongoing projects (from calls 1 - 3) have been included in the specific objective -level analysis. Similarly, the partners of these projects were included in the group of informants who received the invitation to reply to the beneficiary survey.

The evaluation comprised the projects under the four priority axes and the specific objectives under each priority axis, except for priority axis 2.2 where no projects were concluded by the end of 2018.

The programme aims to strengthen co-operation among regions and solving common challenges across borders in four strategic priorities derived from the thematic objectives:

Priority axis 1: Competitive economy;

- 1.1. New Central Baltic knowledge intensive companies
- 1.2. More entrepreneurial youth
- 1.3. More exports by the Central Baltic companies to new markets

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Priority axis 2: Sustainable use of common resources;

- 2.1. Natural and cultural resources developed into sustainable tourist attractions
- 2.3. Better urban planning in the Central Baltic region
- 2.4. Reduced nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins inflow into the Baltic Sea

Priority axis 3: Well-connected region;

- 3.1. Improved transport flows of people and goods
- 3.2. Improved services of existing small ports to improve local and regional mobility and contribute to tourism development

Priority axis 4: Skilled and socially inclusive region.

- 4.1. More people benefiting from stronger Central Baltic communities
- 4.2. More aligned vocational education and training (VET) programmes in the Central Baltic region

## Communication Strategy

The Communication strategy and its implementation through the Joint Secretariat and the National Contact Points were also assessed in this evaluation.

The Communication strategy has two objectives, whose fulfilment were evaluated:

- Objective 1: To ensure the generation and quality of the cross-border cooperation projects
- Objective 2: To attract wide interest towards the benefits of cross-border cooperation

## 1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is divided into ten chapters. In the introductory chapter 1 the background, objectives and scope of the evaluation for the Specific Objectives and the Communication Strategy are explained. Chapter 2 discusses the methodological approach to the evaluation, including evaluation questions, methods and tools. Chapter 3 contains the description of the Interreg Baltic Programme, its financials and the funded projects, while Chapter 4 describes the programme Communication Strategy. In Chapter 5, the Specific Objectives are assessed, and the related evaluation questions answered. In Chapter 6, the evaluation questions for the entire programme are answered and the programme is assessed. Chapter 7 focuses on assessing the Communication Strategy. Evaluation findings and conclusions are summarised in chapter 8, and evaluation recommendations in chapter 9. Chapter 10 includes the annexes.

## 1.3 THE EVALUATION TEAM

The consortium conducting the evaluation consisted of MDI Public Oy (Finland), SIA Safege Baltija (Latvia), Kontigo AB (Sweden), and BSTR Luova Konttori Oy (Finland).

MDI Public Oy was as a lead partner in the evaluation in charge of the project management and coordination of the evaluation. The responsible evaluator for the project was Dr Tommi Ranta, and the project manager was Sari Rannanpää. Jaakko Huttunen, Anna Laiho and Aleksi Koivisto also participated in the evaluation. In addition, MDI was responsible for the analysis of Priorities 1, 2, and 3, as well as conducting the data collection in Finland. SIA Safege Baltija (Ieva Cebura, experts Krisjanis Veitners, Inga Uvarova, and Kai Raja) was responsible for the evaluation of the communication strategy, as well as conducting data collection in Latvia and Estonia. Kontigo AB (experts Göran Hallin and Anna Rudberg) was in charge of analysis of Priority 4 and data collection for Sweden. BSTR Luova Konttori Oy visualised the evaluation results into infographs.

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## 2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The evaluation approach was qualitative and theory-based, meaning it was based on Theory of Change approach. A theory of change forms a coherent story about how the programme should to work. Namely, a theory of change explains how the activities undertaken by the programme contribute to the chain of results that lead to the intended changes. Central to the theory of change is the change theory, which identifies the causal mechanisms which create the results.

In order to identify the intended causal mechanisms in the Interreg Central Baltic Programme, a separate Theory of Change was constructed for each Priority and the Communication Strategy. The theories of change were built on the intervention logic of the programme, utilising the programme document, programme manual, and the Communication Strategy as sources for information. The assessment of the Specific Objectives and the Communication Strategy are based on a theoretical comparison to the constructed theory: did the intended changes? Did unintended changes take place? The theories of change will be presented in Chapter 5 in conjunction to the assessment of each Specific Objective and the Communication Strategy.

In addition, Social Network Analysis was utilised to analyse the project partners' connections at regional level.

### 2.1 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation of the Programme Priorities, Specific Objectives, as well as the programme impact was conducted as per the evaluation questions spelled out in the ToR. Different methods were used to obtain and analyse data for each evaluation question, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation questions and methods used

Evaluation question	Survey - beneficiaries	Interviews JS	Interviews Lead Partners	Focus group SC / MC	eMS	Documents
Have Specific Objectives reached their set target or are they on a good way to do so?						
What interventions would be needed in this field in the future?						
What is the impact of the programme in the measured change?						
How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?						
What interventions would be needed in this field in the future?						
What is the impact of the programme in the measured change?						
Did cross-border cooperation bring added value to the funded intervention?						
What is the involvement of different kinds of partners in the implementation of the CB Projects?						
How has this priority contributed to wider policy objectives, in particular the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region?						
SO level evaluation questions						

## Communication Strategy

Evaluation of Communication Strategy was performed in accordance with the evaluation questions formulated in the ToR. A mix of methods were used to answer each evaluation question, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluation questions and methods used in the evaluation of the Communication Strategy

Evaluation question	Survey - beneficiaries/ Rejected	Interviews JS/NCP	Interviews beneficiaries	Interviews MC/SC	Social media
E.Q1 Have programme structures, including the National Contact Point structure established for the 2014-2020 programme, been efficient in ensuring a well-functioning communication flow in the whole programme area?					
E.Q2 Have the objectives set out in the Communication strategy been reached?					
E.Q3 Have the programme's communication measures reached the relevant target groups efficiently?					
E.Q4 Does the Communication strategy need to be updated for the remaining programme period based on the evaluation findings?					

## 2.2 EVALUATION METHODS AND TOOLS

The evaluation began with desk research, meaning that data from the eMS system (project applications, reports, financial information) was analysed and complemented with information from other sources such as project websites, Interreg Central Baltic project database and documents provided by the project managers. Furthermore, the programme level materials, such as Monitoring Committee and Steering Committee minutes and programme Annual Reports were analysed. In addition, statistical data regarding the programme, provided by the Joint Secretariat, was analysed.

The document analysis for the Communication Strategy included the Interreg Central Baltic Communication Strategy and its Annex 1, Programme Document, the Interreg Central Baltic Ex Ante Evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment, Annual Implementation Reports, Monitoring Committee (MC) Minutes, Steering Committee (SC) Minutes, as well as documents provided by the Joint Secretariat (media coverage of the Interreg Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020, statistics for Facebook and Twitter).

Four face-to-face interviews with the Joint Secretariat (JS) project managers were conducted in the period 11-15 January 2019.

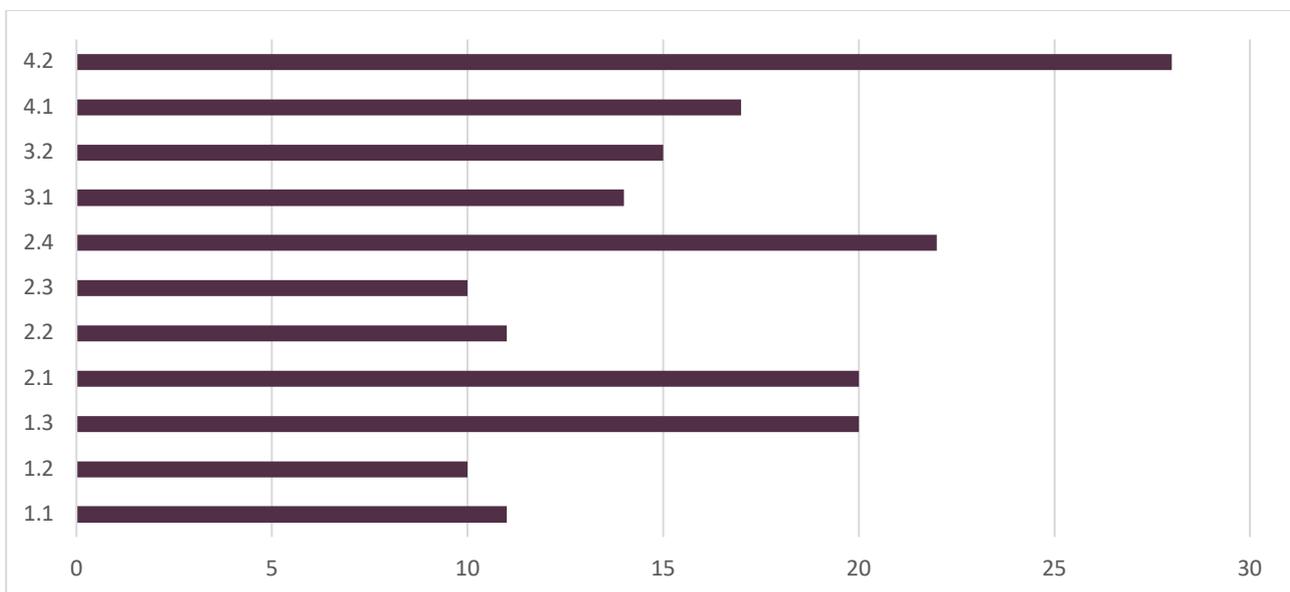
A total of 39 interviews with project managers were conducted in all programme countries in the period 7-21 March 2019. Some project managers of finished projects had already changed jobs and hence were unavailable. For two of these projects, the consortium interviewed other partner organisations.

For the evaluation of the Communication Strategy, 17 interviews with programme bodies (JS, National Contact Point information officers, MC members, and SC members) were conducted in all four programme countries between 7 and 26 February.

An electronic survey of unsuccessful project Lead Partners i.e. whose funding applications were not successful was conducted. The survey focused on programme-level communication, as well as consultations with the Joint Secretariat and contacts with the National Contact Points during the project planning and application phase. As there were some applicants that had made several applications, duplicates were removed from the address list. The survey was sent out to 262 recipients out of whom 39 responded, making the response rate 14,9%. Responses were received from all programme countries (Estonia 15, Finland 17, Latvia 4, and Sweden 5). The survey was open in the period 4-19 February 2019.

An electronic survey of all project partners was also conducted. The survey included general questions about the project partnership, implementation and outcomes, as well as questions on cross-border cooperation and programme-level communication. The programme-related questions were the same as those included in the survey for non-beneficiaries. Again, there were some partners that were involved in several projects. The partners were advised to answer primarily as Lead Partners, then as project partners. Furthermore, for those partners that were lead partners in several projects, the advice was to answer for the project that was closest to completion. The survey was sent out to 593 recipients, out of whom 178 completed their answer, making the response rate 30,0 %. Responses were received from all programme countries (47 from Estonia, 65 from Finland, 34 from Latvia and 32 from Sweden). The survey was open from the 4th to the 19th of February 2019.

The survey to all project partners was answered by 41 partners from Priority 1 projects, 63 partners from Priority 2 projects, 29 partners from Priority 3 projects and 45 partners from Priority 4 projects. Answers were received for projects in each Specific Objectives. The largest numbers of answers came from project partners from the Specific Objectives 4.2 (28), 2.4 (22), 1.3 (20) and 2.1 (20). Graph 1 below illustrates the responses received per Specific Objective.

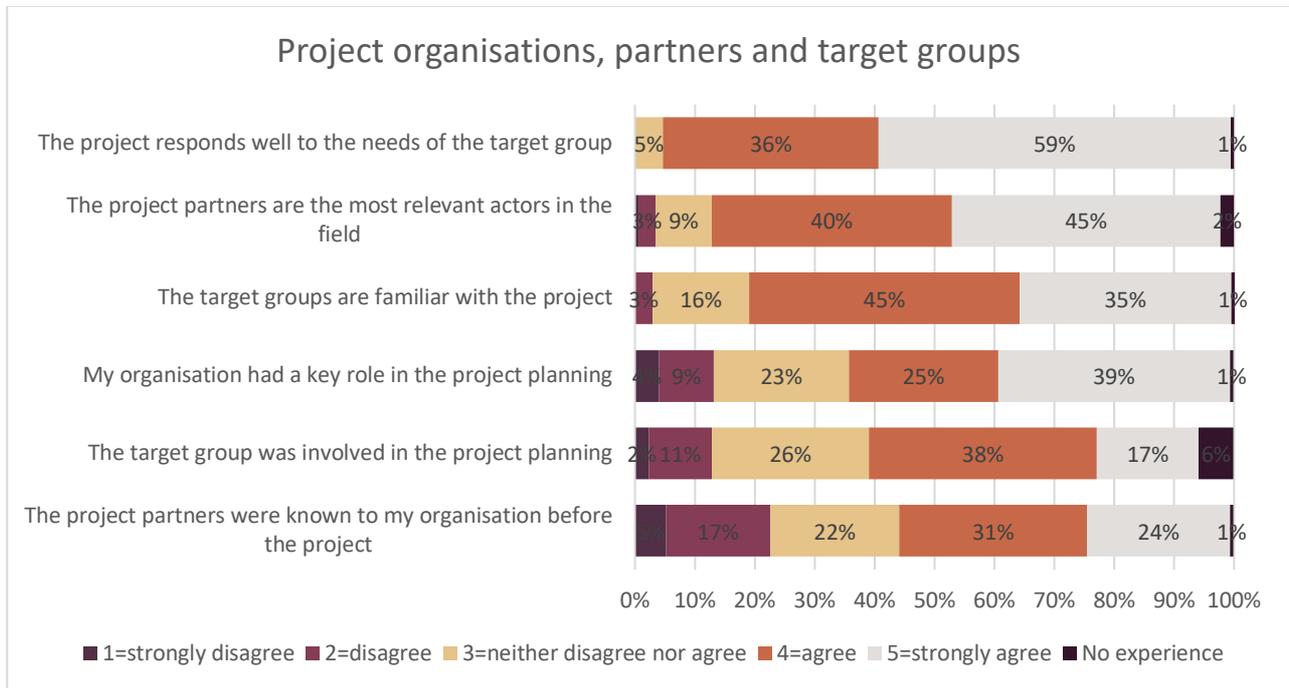


Graph 1. Responses to the partner survey by Specific Objective

#### The results of the beneficiary survey

According to the beneficiary survey, 95 % of the project partners who responded agreed with the sentence that the project responds well to the needs of the target group. 85 % were of the opinion that the project partners are the most relevant actors in the field. A little more than half of the respondents (55 %) answered that the target group was involved in the project planning and that the project partners were known to the respondent's organisation before the project. One in five (22 %) didn't know the project partners beforehand, as Graph 2 below shows.

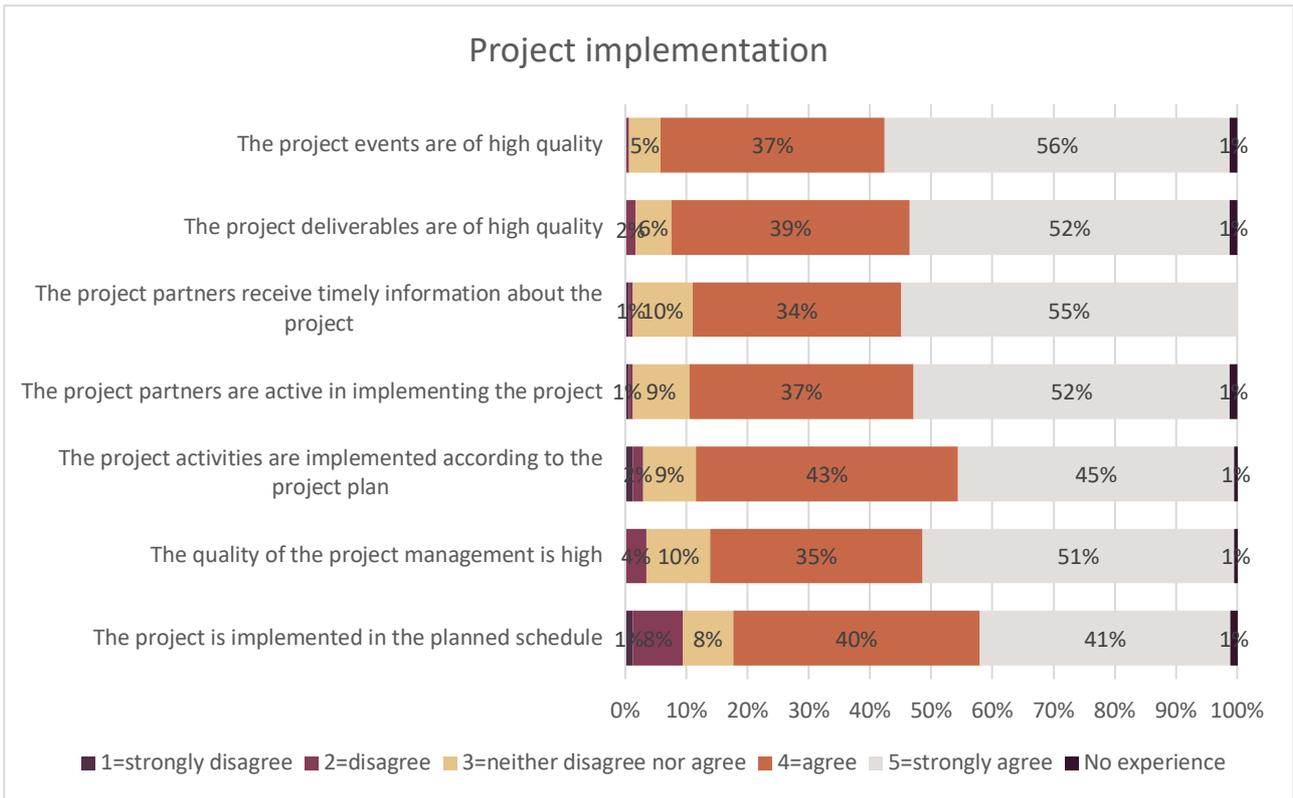
Partner answers in respect of the different priorities were quite coherent though the Priority 4 partners evaluated the assertions concerning the project organisations, partners and target groups slightly more positively than partners in other priorities.



Graph 2. Project organisations, partners and target groups according to the ICB beneficiary survey

The partners evaluated the project implementation very positively. As graph 3 below illustrates, the majority of the respondents, at least four out of five agreed with all assertions regarding the implementation of the project. 93 % of the project partners think that the project events were of high quality while 91 % consider the project deliverables to be of high quality. A great majority of the respondents also agreed that the project partners received timely information about the project (89 %), the project partners were active in implementing the project (89 %), the project activities were implemented according to the project plan (88 %), the quality of the project management was high (86 %) and that the project was implemented in the planned schedule (81 %).

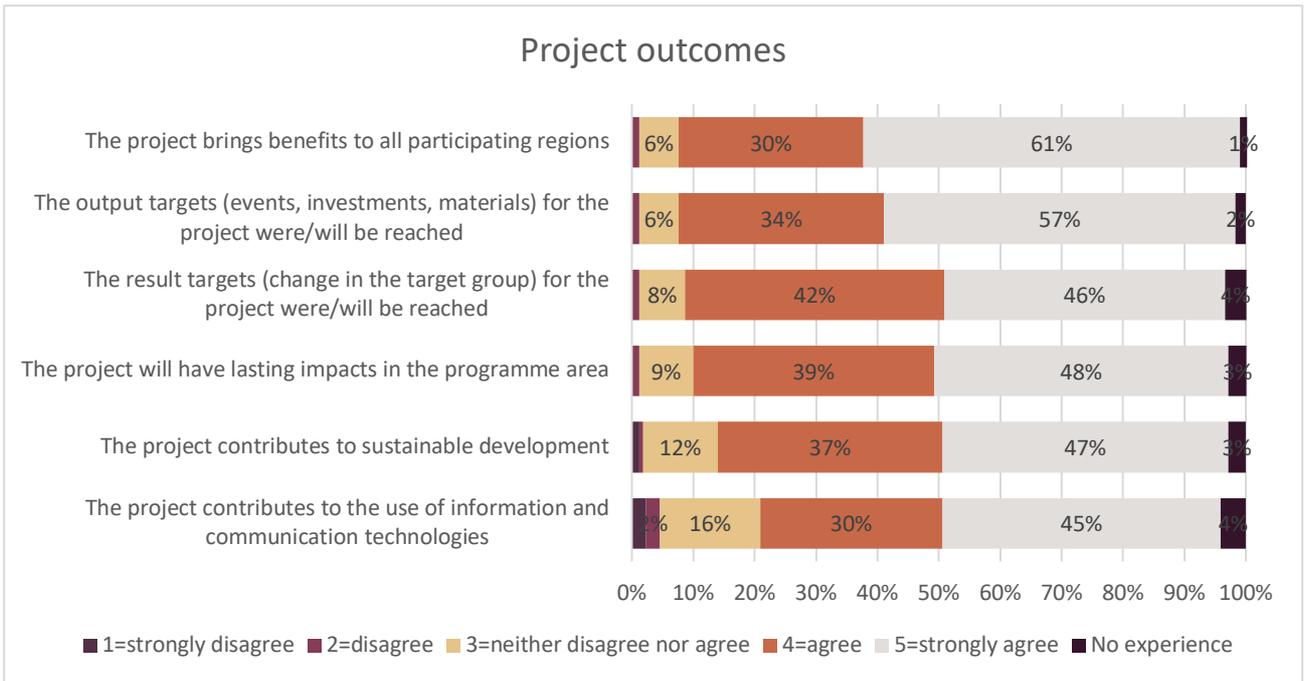
A little less than 1 out of 10 respondents (9 %) answered that the project implementation did not occur according to the planned schedule. Priority 3 project partners were the most critical in assessing the assertions about project implementation, especially in regard to the project being implemented in the planned schedule.



Graph 3. Project implementation according to the ICB beneficiary survey

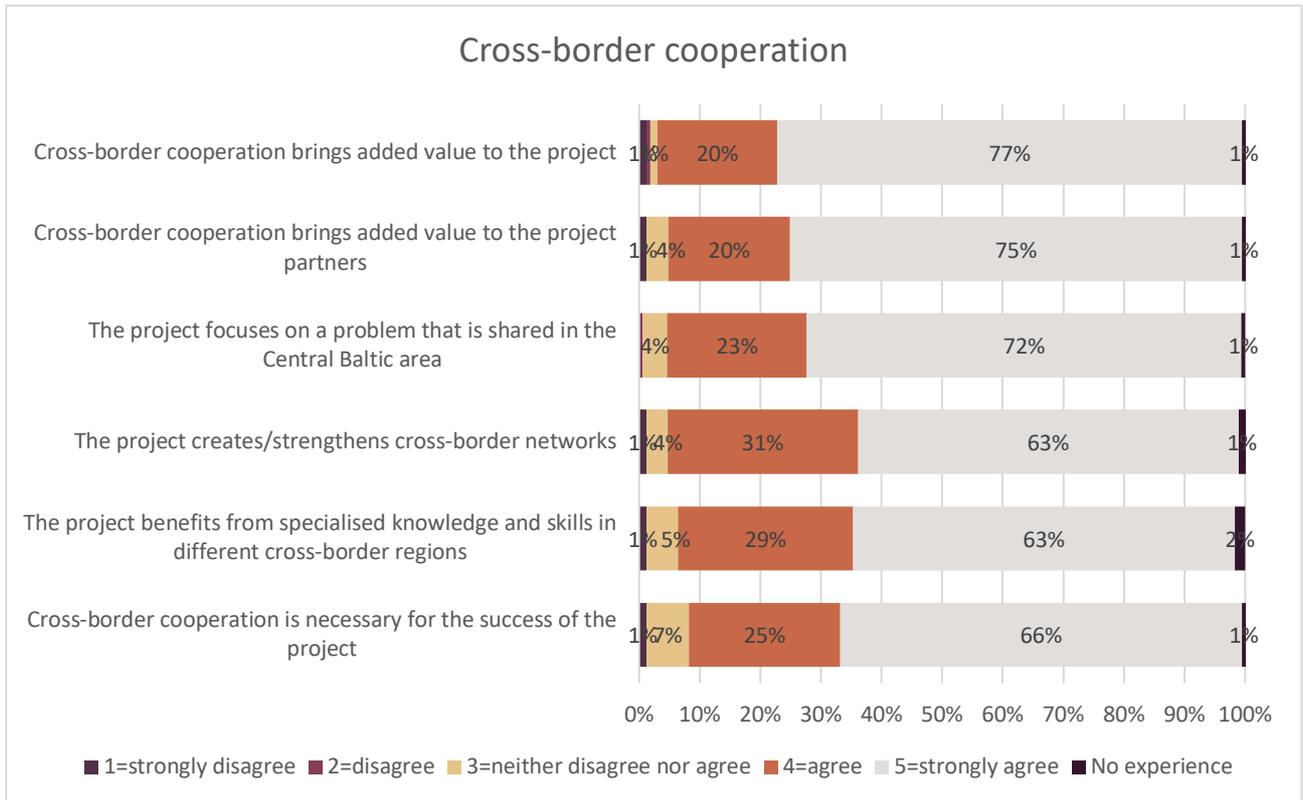
The respondents also expressed very positive views also about the project outcomes. At least three out of four respondents agreed with every assertion in the survey relating to project outcomes, as graph 4 below shows. More than 9 out of 10 project partners (91 %) agreed that the project brings benefits to all participating regions and that the output targets (events, investments, materials) for the project were, or will be, reached. Slightly less than 9 out of 10 were of the opinion that the result targets (change in the target group) for the project were, or will be, reached (88 %) and that the project will have lasting impacts in the programme area (87 %). More than four out of five (84 %) project partners viewed that the project contributed to sustainable development and three out of four (75 %) agreed that the project contributed to the use of information and communication technologies. Only a very small percentage of the respondents had negative views about the project outcomes.

Project partners assessments across the different priorities were overall quite uniform, but Priority 3 partners were a bit more critical on average while Priority 4 partners were slightly more positive on average in regards to the output targets and the result targets for the project being reached. Priority 1 partners evaluated a little more critically than the other partners the assertion that the project contributed to sustainable development.



Graph 4. Project outcomes according to the ICB beneficiary survey

Views in relation to cross-border cooperation initiated by the projects were also exceedingly positive, as graph 5 below illustrates. Over 90 % of the project partners who replied agreed with all assertions regarding cross-border cooperation. 97 % thought that cross-border cooperation brought added value to the project and 95 % believed that cross-border cooperation brought added value to the project partners and that their project focused on a problem that is shared in the Central Baltic area. A large majority of respondents also agreed that the project created or strengthened cross-border networks (94 %), that the project benefited from specialised knowledge and skills in different cross-border regions (92 %) and that cross-border cooperation was necessary for the success of the project (91 %). Only a very small percentage of respondents expressed negative views about the cross-border cooperation aspects of their projects. Partners representing different priorities answered quite homogeneously as regards the assertions in respect of cross-border cooperation.



Graph 5. Cross-border cooperation according to the ICB beneficiary survey

### 2.3 FACTORS AFFECTING THE VALIDITY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

As there were only 97 projects contracted by the beginning of 2018 and less than half of them had finished or were at the finishing stages when the evaluation was conducted, the evaluation findings related to the Specific Objectives are based on a relatively small number of projects.

The data obtained from electronic management system (eMS) is not completely reliable in terms of financing, programme monitoring, and programme contacts. Hence, the financial data for the overall programme spending and payments was received from the Joint Secretariat. Also, the final reports of several finished projects have not yet been submitted, so some interviewed Lead Partners have given different data on the project outputs and results from the latest report available in the eMS system. The output and result indicators were confirmed by the Joint Secretariat.

Several of the project managers changed during the project, and some are unreachable after the end of the project. Thus, it was not possible to reach all the finalised projects. Where this was the case, the evaluators interviewed other project partners in order to ensure a good coverage of each Specific Objective projects.

## 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERREG CENTRAL BALTIC PROGRAMME

### 3.1 PROGRAMME AREA

The programme area consists of selected NUTS III regions of Finland (including Åland), Sweden and Latvia as well as all of Estonia. The programme area is divided into core and additional areas.

Table 3. Regions participating in the Interreg Central Baltic Programme

Country	NUTS 3 Regions, Core area	NUTS 3 regions, Additional area
<b>Estonia</b>	Kesk-Eesti Kirde-Eesti Lääne-Eesti Põhja-Eesti	Lõuna-Eesti
<b>Finland</b>	Kymenlaakso Satakunta Uusimaa Varsinais-Suomi	Etelä-Karjala Kanta-Häme Pirkanmaa Päijät-Häme
<b>Latvia</b>	Kurzeme Pieriga Riga	Vidzeme Zemgale
<b>Sweden</b>	Gotlands län Gävleborgs län Stockholms län Södermaanlands län Uppsala län Östergötlands län	Västmanlands län Örebro län

### 3.2 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The Central Baltic programme contributes to the EU2020 goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in four thematic objectives (TO 3: enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs; TO6: preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency; TO7: promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures; and TO10: investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning). The programme also furthers the EUSBSR objectives (save the sea, connect the region, and increase prosperity).

The programme aims to strengthen co-operation among regions and solving common challenges across borders in four strategic priorities, which have been derived from the thematic objectives:

- Competitive economy;
- Sustainable use of common resources;
- Well-connected region; and
- Skilled and socially inclusive region.

Furthermore, two horizontal objectives (enhancing access to, and use and quality of ICT, and supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors) that run through the entire programme.

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The Central Baltic programme supports the sustainable growth of the region. The programme furthers this goal by developing and promoting the region as a knowledge-based innovation economy supporting enterprises under the priority 1 **Competitive economy**. The objective of this priority is to enhance the competitiveness of SMEs through promoting entrepreneurship and supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow markets and innovate. The objective is divided into three specific objectives:

- 1.1. New Central Baltic knowledge intensive companies
- 1.2. More entrepreneurial youth
- 1.3. More exports by the Central Baltic companies to new markets

The programme aims to improve the status of the Baltic Sea through innovative methods and technologies. The **Sustainable use of common resources** objective is to preserve and protect the environment and promote resource efficiency. The goals are furthered through conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage. The objective is divided into four specific objectives:

- 2.1. Natural and cultural resources developed into sustainable tourist attractions
- 2.2. Sustainably planned and managed marine and coastal areas
- 2.3. Better urban planning in the Central Baltic region
- 2.4. Reduced nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins inflow into the Baltic Sea

To support the sustainable growth and competitiveness, it is necessary to improve the accessibility of and within the Central Baltic region. To further the **Well-connected region** objective, the programme promotes sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key infrastructures. The objective is divided into two specific objectives:

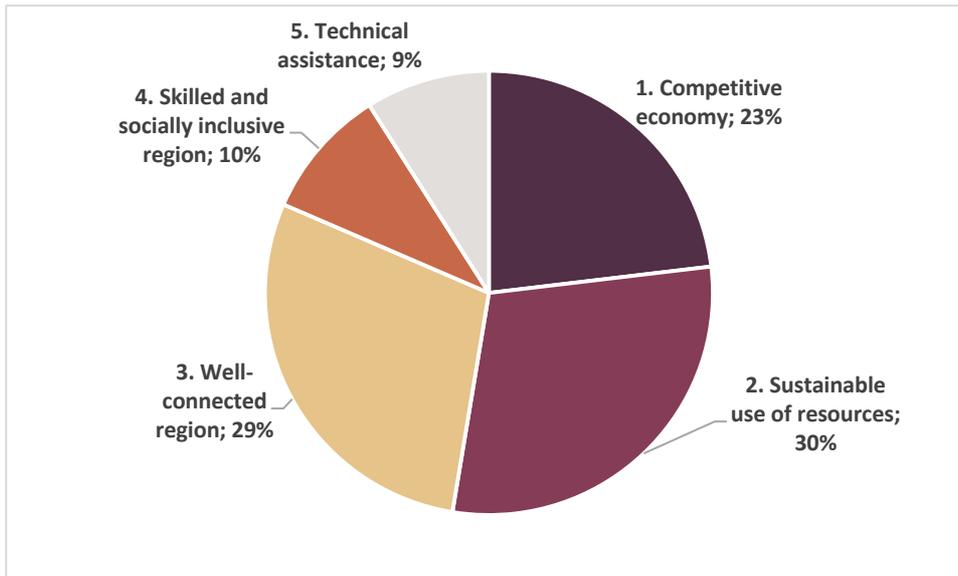
- 3.1. Improved transport flows of people and goods
- 3.2. Improved services of existing small ports to improve local and regional mobility and contribute to tourism development

The programme aims to achieve a more inclusive region by strengthening local communities and improving skills, knowledge and social well-being of people. The **Skilled and socially inclusive region** objective is to invest in education, training, and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning. This goal is advanced through the developing and implementing joint education, vocational training and training schemes. The objective is divided into two specific objectives:

- 4.1. More people benefiting from stronger Central Baltic communities
- 4.2. More aligned vocational education and training (VET) programmes in the Central Baltic region

### 3.3 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION

The total funding for the Central Baltic Programme's four priority axes and technical assistance is 170.54 million euros. Of this, 132.63 million euros is EU funding and 37.91 million euros national financing. These figures include the additional funding from the ERDF reserve that Finland and Estonia allocated to ENI CBC programmes in 2018. As graph 6 illustrates, almost a third of the funding has been allocated to priority axis 2 (sustainable use of resources) and 3 (well-connected region) respectively. Priority axis 1 (competitive economy) receives around a fifth of the total funding, whereas priority 4 (skilled and socially inclusive region) and technical assistance were allocated about a tenth of the programme funding respectively. The communication costs (information materials and publications, as well as events) was allocated 535 600 euros from the TA budget of the Central Baltic programme.



Graph 6: Breakdown of total budget by priority

By the end of 2018, 150.98 million euros (88,51 % of the budget) had been committed to the projects and Technical Assistance. At the same time, 51.81 million euros had been paid out, making the payment rate 30.01 %.

The Managing Authority (MA) of the programme is the Regional Council of Southwest Finland. The Joint Secretariat (JS), which is responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of the programme, is located with the Managing Authority. The Central Baltic programme has six Contact Points in Helsinki, Mariehamn, Stockholm, Norrköping, Tallinn and Riga to support the work of the JS and MA in the programme countries.

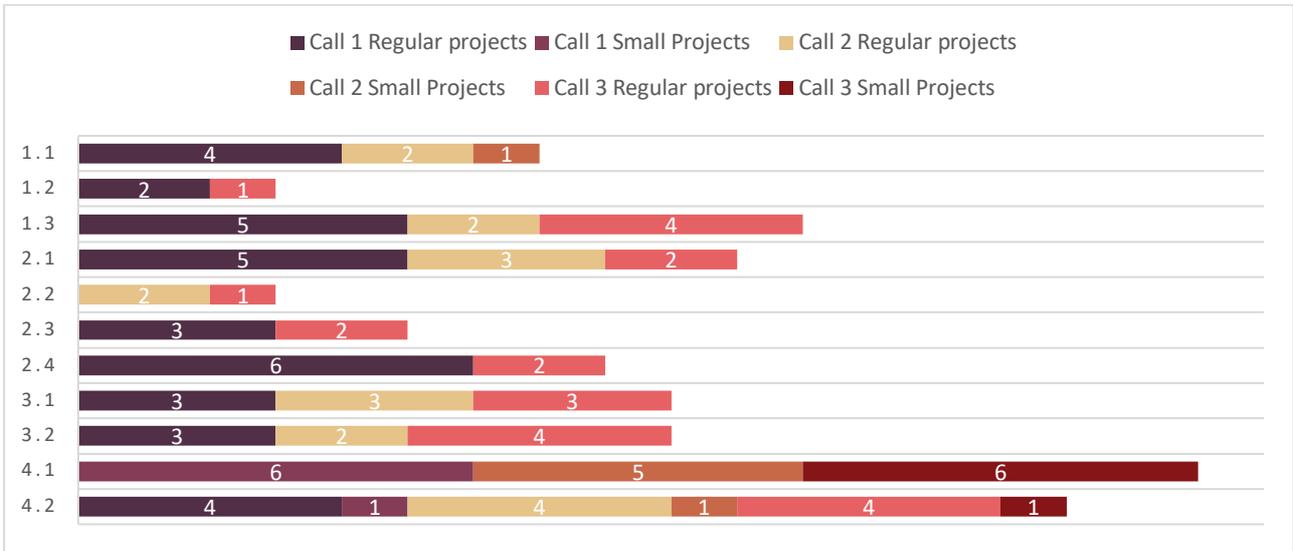
The programme completed three calls for projects during years 2014-2017. The 4<sup>th</sup> call was open for applications in October-November 2018, with the Steering Committee taking decisions on the projects in March 2019. The programme also received additional funding of 10,3 million euros from an ERDF reserve originally held by Finland and Estonia for ENI CBC programmes. Thus, it was decided to open the 5<sup>th</sup> call for applications in August-October 2019.

The number of applications has been high in the first three calls, although the volume shows signs of decreasing. This is partly due to the two-step application process, in which the applicant first submits an idea application, and only those invited to the second round submit a full application. The number of applications in the three calls was 177, 145 and 92 in the first round of the application processes. The fourth call had one application round only, meaning that the project applicants had to submit all the documentation at once. The fourth call received 37 applications.

The priority receiving most applications has been the priority axis 4 (skilled and socially inclusive region), which has provided funding for especially small projects. Also, the priority axis 1 (competitive economy) has attracted numerous applications. Priority axis 3 (well-connected region) has however a relatively few applications in comparison. The MA had limited the 4<sup>th</sup> call to some specific objectives under each priority axis, to get applications for all the specific objectives of the programme.

In the first three calls, around 90% of the programme funds (105.8 million euros) were committed to 97 projects. By April 2019, a total of 39.0 million euros have been paid out to the projects. In terms of distribution of projects amongst the sub-programmes, most (56) are on the Central Baltic area, whereas the

Southern Finland - Estonia sub-programme has 24 and Archipelago and Islands programme has 13 projects. Graph 7 illustrates the numbers of approved projects under calls 1 -3.



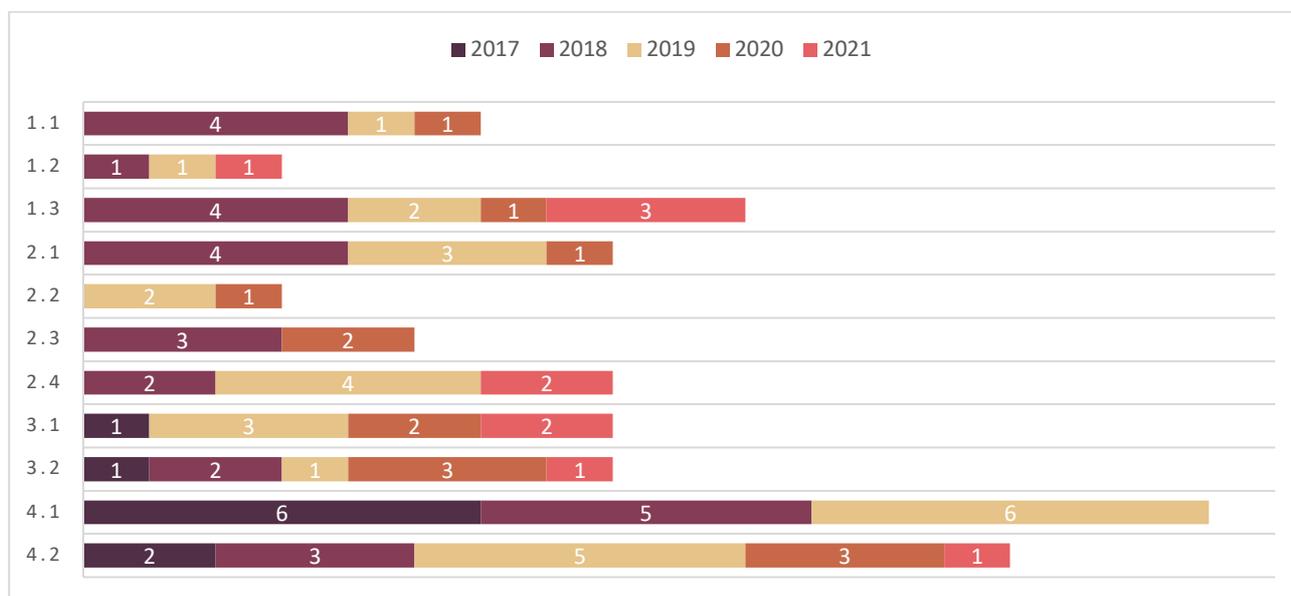
Graph 7: Number of approved projects under calls 1 - 3

The committed funding to the projects has followed tightly the allocation of funds per priority. Graph 8 illustrates the allocation of funds per Specific Objective. Specific objective 3.2 (improved services of small ports) has the biggest financial commitment, followed by Specific Objective 1.3 (more exports by the Central Baltic companies). The largest number of projects but the smallest financial commitment can be seen in the priority axis 4.



Graph 8: ERDF funding by specific objective

By the end of 2017, ten projects had finished. By the end of 2018, forty projects had finished their operations. Most of these were small projects related to the specific objective 4.1, as graph 9 shows.



Graph 9: Number of projects expected to be finished annually by specific objective

### 3.4 OVERVIEW OF FUNDED PROJECTS

#### PRIORITY AXIS 1: COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

The budget for Priority Axis 1 is 39.4 million euros after the 2018 programme modification. This constitutes 23.1 % of the ERDF budget of the Interreg Central Baltic programme. In the first three calls, a total of 26 million euros was committed to 33 Priority Axis 1 projects. Most of the funding was committed in the first call (14 million euros).

Priority 1 aims at developing and promoting the Central Baltic region as a competitive, knowledge-based innovative economy.

Priority 1 has three Specific Objectives; 1.1 New Central Baltic knowledge intensive companies, 1.2 More entrepreneurial youth and 1.3 More exports by Central Baltic companies to new markets.

#### 1.1 New Central Baltic knowledge intensive companies

Seven projects have been funded under this Specific Objective. Five have a Finnish Lead Partner (one from the Åland Islands), and two have Estonian Lead Partners. Five out of the seven Lead Partners are business support organisations. In general, most of the partners in the projects are business support organisations (40 %) and higher education and research institutions (28 %).

Most of the projects focus on providing their target groups (typically start-up companies or people with business ideas) with a supported path towards entrepreneurship through business incubation or acceleration programs, bootcamps, coaching, matchmaking and meeting with investors. The sectors covered by the projects were ICT, the computer games sector, cleantech, healthtech, and creative industries.

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Four of the projects (BELT, Springboard, SPARKS, and Talsinki) were concluded already in 2018, whereas two projects (Archipelago Partnerships and STARPABS) will finish in the autumn of 2019. One project (CB 4 GameCamps) will run until 2020.

Baltic Entrepreneurship Laboratories (BELT) aimed at developing joint and cooperating business opportunities under the theme of “Smart City”. The project operated through business development BootCamps, coaching and seeking additional team members across borders.

Central Baltic Startup Springboard (Springboard) focused on start-ups within the shared smart specialisation strengths of the participating regions (ICT, cleantech and healthtech). The project operated through business acceleration programmes, coaching and B2B matchmaking.

Sparkling Startups (SPARKS) scouted and activated talent and resources on the regional level and facilitated their cross-border development through joint platform and other methods (exchange of people, knowledge, ideas, and start-ups in 4-day bootcamps).

Talsinki Metropolitan Incubation (Talsinki) focused on start-up incubation in the Tallinn-Helsinki area within ICT, cleantech, healthtech and creative industries.

Out of the ongoing projects, the Archipelago Business Development (Archipelago Partnerships) project aims at developing ten new business models in the archipelago through diversification, new seasonal solutions and cross-border co-operation. The project operates through forming partnerships between existing entrepreneurs and start-ups, giving them business counselling and coaching. Digitalisation plays a large role in the project.

Startup passion in the Baltic Sea Region (Starpabs) aims at raising awareness of and interest in entrepreneurship among university students, helping them to build internationally competitive teams around their knowledge-based business ideas. The project also aims at creating a new cross-border model for supporting the creation of student-based knowledge intensive international companies utilising a common cross-border accelerator program for university students in three countries.

CB 4 Game Camps aims at strengthening the cross-border ties between the Baltic Sea countries’ game industries. Its goal is to create 10 cross-border game companies and have 240 aspiring game developers from Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Sweden participating in the activities. The project is implemented through game camps, where the idea is to form cross-border teams, create a game prototype from scratch and pitch it to the jury.

## **1.2 More entrepreneurial youth**

Three projects have been funded under this Specific Objective. One of the projects has a Finnish Lead Partner with the other two having Estonian Lead Partners. The Lead Partners are a higher education and research institution, interest group, and a local public authority. There is a wide variety of project partners from business support organisations to regional public authority. Almost a third of the project partners are interest groups.

All the projects focus on providing youth some structured opportunities for learning about business development. One of the projects (RIBS) concluded already in 2018, whereas CBEwB will do so in spring 2019 and DigiYouth in spring 2021.

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Rolling Images in Business Start-ups (RIBS) aimed at increasing youth media literacy and entrepreneurial knowledge by starting joint student companies and by arranging entrepreneurship courses, local and international workshops and student/teacher/coach exchanges between the partners. Throughout the project, the participants in all regions were engaged in cross-border activities together with the other partners in the project. The project was based on a previous youth and media project, hence its operations in practice focused on film and media.

The Central Baltic Student Enterprises without Borders (CBwB) project partners are involved in the Junior Achievement network in the Central Baltic area. The project operates like a miniature business acceleration programme for cross-border student companies. The project activities include conferences, an innovation camp, visits to trade fairs and training. The project aims at creating 50 international student companies and engaging 400 students, 80 teachers and 50 mentors.

Enhancing youth entrepreneurship with cross-border start-ups and digital technologies (DigiYouth) brings entrepreneurship education and the 'start-up' spirit to schools by engaging students in the development of digital products or services. The development starts from idea creation and the formation of teams, through prototyping and into marketing and sales. All the activities are a part of the general school curriculum. In addition to creating 40 cross-border student start-ups and involving 220 students in four countries, during the project, 45 teachers and mentors are to be trained and a 1.5-year study module on digital entrepreneurship for schools will be developed.

### **1.3 More exports by the Central Baltic companies to new markets**

The specific objective aims at supporting the Central Baltic SMEs to enter into new markets (outside the EU and EFTA) with a focus on innovation, product development and internationalisation. The main approach is to promote co-operation between already established clusters to enable the companies to expand into the new markets.

The activities eligible for funding include, for instance, product development and adaptation of products to new markets, branding, marketing, market analysis, feasibility studies and joint efforts.

Eleven projects have been funded under this Specific Objective. Four have either an Estonian Lead Partner, another four have a Finnish Lead Partner, two have Swedish Lead Partners, while one has a Lead Partner from Latvia. Lead Partners are most often business support organisations (55 %) or higher education and research institutions (28 %). The most important project partners in this Specific Objective represent business support organisations (48 %), higher education and research institutions (22 %), and local public authorities (18 %).

CB2East, SME2GO, CLUSME, CB HealthAccess concluded in 2018, FINEEX Music will conclude in 2020 while the other six will do so in 2021.

Central Baltic Region Smart City Solutions for Global Cities (SME2GO) focuses on cooperation between growth-oriented SMEs and multinational enterprises with solutions for smart cities within the Central Baltic region to create synergies, new cross-border business opportunities and exports.

Central Baltic Cleantech Clusters expanding to East of EU markets (CB2East) aims at creating commercially targeted open innovation platforms in Latvia and Finland through the capacity building of innovation intermediaries so that they can create strong transnational meta clusters in the areas of sustainable eco-efficiency and water expertise solution needs in North-West Russia and Central Asia. These target market

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areas have remarkable market potential for Finnish and Latvian SMEs but the lack of a critical mass and needed capabilities have created an obstacle for successful commercial entries into these non-EU markets.

The Chances and challenges of cluster-based marketing in mechatronics (CLUSME) project creates the preconditions and a solid a business platform for Central Baltic SMEs to enter new markets outside Europe (Georgia, Uzbekistan, South Africa, Brazil and Mexico) through benefitting from cluster-initiative and knowledge transfer in metalworking and the mechatronics field.

Access to Distant Markets in Health and Wellness (CB HealthAccess) focuses on supporting health technology companies to enter into distant new markets in South Korea, the US, India and Uganda with their products.

Central Baltic ICT - Export Meta Cluster (ICT Meta Cluster) aims to produce a complete value chain, offering 400 ICT-oriented companies in Estonia, Latvia and Sweden resources to generate first sales of their products and services in new markets, to expand sales within the respective countries and regions and finally to prepare for the further expansion of their business activities. The project provides a one-stop toolbox approach for involving and supporting SMEs.

The North Star Film Alliance (NNFA) project aims at attracting 25 % more foreign film productions into Estonia, Latvia and Finland by 2021. Project activities focus on international benchmarking and joint marketing.

SME Aisle focuses on increasing Central Baltic shipbuilding, maritime, renewable energy, automation and ICT SMEs' exports to Southern African countries by using Namibia as a stable entry point to these markets.

LEF Network to China (Creation of export support co-operation network to China in the Latvia-Estonia-Finland cross-border region) aims to create an export support network to China for wood products with value added industry. The project activities focus on getting an overview of the Chinese market, gaining visibility and contacts through study tours and expos, and establishing long-term co-operation between Central Baltic companies and China.

CAITO aims at promoting and supporting rural tourism companies wishing to attract Japanese visitors. Activities centre around improving the quality and marketing services for small businesses in Estonia, Latvia and Southern Finland.

IHMEC (Opening indoor hygiene SME's exports to Middle East construction markets) aims at exporting the joint indoor hygiene solutions of Central Baltic area SMEs into Middle East.

## **PRIORITY AXIS 2: SUSTAINABLE USE OF COMMON RESOURCES**

Priority 2 aims to contribute to promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage, improving the urban environment and revitalising cities, as well as promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency.

The planned budget for Priority Axis 2 is 50.32 million euros after the 2018 programme modification. This constitutes 29.5 % of the ERDF budget of the Interreg Central Baltic programme. In the first three calls, a total of 35 million euros was committed to 26 Priority Axis 2 projects. Most of the funding was committed in the first call (19 million euros).

Priority 2 has four specific objectives, namely, 2.1 Natural and cultural resources developed into sustainable tourist attractions, 2.2 Sustainably planned and managed marine and coastal areas, 2.3. Better urban

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planning in the Central Baltic region, 2.4. Reduced nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins inflow into the Baltic Sea, and 2.4. Reduced nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins inflow into the Baltic Sea.

## **2.1 Natural and cultural resources developed into sustainable tourist attractions**

Ten projects have been funded under this Specific Objective. Five of the projects have a Finnish Lead Partner, three have Estonian lead partners and two projects have a Swedish Lead Partner. The lead partners represent a variety of organisations. About a third of the lead partners are higher education and research institutions, and local public authorities and national public authorities each lead a fifth of the projects.

The projects focus on raising awareness about and improving the visitor experience of nature, cultural and historical attractions with a common history in the Interreg Central Baltic region.

Four of the projects (SmartZoos, NATTOURS, LiviHeri and HANSA) finished in 2018 and two projects (DefenceArch and LightsOn!) will be finished by the end of February 2019. Two projects (BALACAR and St Olav Waterway) will conclude by the end of 2019 while the last two projects (Baltic Wings and Lakesperience) will do so in 2020.

Cross-border services for creative adventure learning in the zoos of the Central Baltic Region (SmartZoos) aimed at integrating the zoos of the Interreg Central Baltic region to form a joint tourist attraction through developing, implementing and joint marketing of a cross-border service package of creative adventure learning with mobile devices.

Sustainable urban nature routes using new IT solutions (NATTOURS) was a project that aimed at improving public recognition of natural tourist attractions in Helsinki and Tallinn and at developing joint tourist attractions and products for sustainable nature tourism between the cities.

Living with Cultural Heritage (LiviHeri) focused on developing thematically joint tourist attractions based on cultural and natural resources as well as thematically and periodically joint tourist products. The participating towns (Rauma, Finland; Visby, Sweden; Kuldīga and Aizpute, Latvia) built joint platforms for communication in social media enhancing simultaneous activities, shared experiences and crowd-sourced innovations.

Hanseatic Approach to New Sustainable Alliances (HANSA) was a project where the Hanseatic heritage was developed for its great cultural value from three perspectives: the local, the national and the international. On the local level the existing attractions were made known to a broader public. The national perspective aimed at bringing cities and their attractions together to strengthen the national tourism product and offer interesting packages. The international perspective aimed at the development of cross-border tourism packages.

Footprints of Defence in the Archipelago (DefenceArch) had the objective to develop existing, though almost untapped defence historical resources of the Gålö seal farm (SWE), the Bomarsund fortress (ÅL), the southern cape of Örö (FIN) and Korpoström (FIN) into appealing and sustainable destinations by increasing the awareness and experience value of the visitors. In the end, the four pilot sites formed a themed tourism destination which highlights the Baltic Sea defence history.

LightsOn! (LightsOn!) focused on turning hitherto largely unknown, but key, historical sites on both sides of the Gulf of Finland from restricted areas or areas where control has been historically contested into true tourist attractions while improving the visitor experience.

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## 2.2 Sustainably planned and managed marine and coastal areas

Three projects have been funded under this Specific Objective. One of them, SustainBaltic, has already been concluded, whereas two projects are still ongoing. Two of the projects have a Finnish lead partner, and one has a Swedish one. The project leaders are a higher education and research institute, national public authority, and a regional public authority. All projects are related to marine and coastal planning.

The SustainBaltic project produced four integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) cases, out of which two were produced in Finland and two in Estonia. The coastal zone management cases are diverse in focus, such as tourism, ecosystem services, and spatial development plan.

Plan4Blue aim to identify pathways to the sustainable use of the sea areas and resources in the Estonian and Finnish sea areas in the Gulf of Finland and the Archipelago Sea areas.

Coast4Us aims at developing a holistic and inclusive approach into the marine and coastal spatial planning process, through involving stakeholders of different interests. The main outputs will be sustainable marine and coastal spatial plans for pilot areas in Åland, Latvia, Sweden and Estonia, as well as new tools and management strategies for the process.

## 2.3. Better urban planning in the Central Baltic region

Five projects have been funded under this Specific Objective. Four of the projects have a Finnish Lead Partner, and one has Latvian. Three of the projects have a local public authority as a Lead Partner, whereas two projects are led by higher education and research institutions. Out of all the partners in the SO 2.3 projects, almost two-thirds are local public authorities and a quarter represent higher education and research institutions.

All of the projects are some way related in urban planning. Some projects were more technical while others were more holistic in their approach. All of the projects focused on issues which concern people's everyday city life: the projects tried to enhance urban design, architecture and make it easier for people to take part in the city planning processes.

Three of the projects (Live Baltic Campus, Baltic Urban Lab, iWater) have already been concluded and two (Heat and Augmented Urbans) will be so later.

The Live Baltic Campus project focused on enhancing the quality of campus areas, as well as integrating many different actors into the planning process.

Baltic Urban Lab focused on *brownfield* development. The project sites were placed in Finland, Estonia, Sweden and Latvia.

The iWater project aims at improving urban planning by developing integrated storm water management in Central Baltic cities. The project develops guidelines and tools for integrated storm water management and introduces the practices into urban planning process.

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.

The HEAT project aims at addressing the problem of fragmented urban planning and cycling infrastructure.

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## 2.4. Reduced nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins inflow into the Baltic Sea

A total of eight projects have been funded under this SO. Four have a Finnish Lead Partner (Waterchain, Nutrinflow, Nutritrade and Seabased), while the Blastic and Insure projects are led by Swedish partners and Hewater and Greenagri by Estonian partners. In general, out of all the partners in the SO 2.4 projects, local public authorities (27 %), higher education and research institutions (24 %), and interest groups including NGOs (20 %) are the most numerous.

Each of the funded projects focus on enhancing the Baltic sea water quality via different methods. Four of the projects have already been concluded (Waterchain, Nutrinflow, Nutritrade and Blastic) while another four will be concluded later (Insure, Hewater, Seabased and Greenagri).

The Waterchain project focused on reducing nutrient and hazardous chemical inflows into the Baltic sea. There were six pilot areas in the project.

Nutrinflow aimed at reducing nutrient inflows to the Baltic Sea. The project was based on a holistic view and understanding of nutrient flow management.

The Blastic project focused on decreasing the volume of plastic and other litter in the Baltic sea, with the most important objective being to develop a method that the municipalities could work with to address this issue.

The Insure project aims at decreasing the impact of hazardous substances to the environment from contaminated sites. The idea here is to decrease leakage from contaminated sites to ground and surface water in order to reduce the inflow of hazardous substances and toxins into the Baltic Sea.

The Hewater project aims at attaining healthier water quality in the many small urban rivers of the Baltic Sea catchment through restoration of water bodies and the prevention of nutrient and hazardous substances inflow from watershed.

The goal of the Seabased Project (Seabased Measures in Baltic Sea Nutrient Management) is to reduce the consequences of eutrophication in the Baltic Sea. The project will assess measures that seek to improve the status of the marine area by reducing the internal load of the sea.

The project GreenAgri aims at reducing nutrient losses from agriculture in the Baltic States by introducing and testing the environmentally-friendly management of organic fertilizers. As agriculture is one of the sources of nutrients eventually entering from surface waters into the Baltic Sea, the project's primary focus is to amend this situation.

### **PRIORITY AXIS 3: WELL-CONNECTED REGION**

Priority 3 aims at promoting sustainable regional and local mobility through developing and improving environmentally friendly transport systems, corridors and nodes.

The budget for Priority Axis 3 is 49.3 million euros after the 2018 programme modification. This constitutes 28.9 % of the ERDF budget of the Interreg Central Baltic programme. In the first three calls, a total of 36 million euros was committed to 18 Priority Axis 3 projects. Most of the funding was committed in the third call (18 million euros).

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Priority 3 has two Specific Objectives, namely, 3.1 Improved transport flows of people and goods, and 3.2 Improved services of existing small ports to improve local and regional mobility and contribute to tourism development.

### **3.1 Improved transport flows of people and goods**

A total of nine projects have been funded under this Specific Objective. Five have Finnish lead partners, two have Estonian lead, one has Latvian lead and one has Swedish lead. The lead partners in three projects are national public authorities, whereas local public authorities lead two projects. Local public authorities represent more than a third of all the project partners in this SO.

Most of the projects try to integrate different transport modes to reduce overall transport time for cargo and people. In addition, the projects also focus on reducing CO2 emissions.

Only FinEst Link project has been concluded, with seven projects remain ongoing and one project (Mobicarnet) suspended due to clawback process related to state aid issues. The Mobicarnet project is excluded from this evaluation for above-mentioned reason.

The FinEst Link project takes a systematic fact-finding approach to the vision of a Helsinki-Tallinn railway tunnel and carries out a feasibility study that consists of the economic and technical analysis and a benchmarking to other important fixed link projects in the EU. The project was conducted as a preliminary study.

The project Adapt aims at developing safe, time-saving and fuel-efficient routes for the transportation of passengers and goods in the Åland and Stockholm archipelagos.

The FinEstSmartMobility aims to pilot smart solutions for reducing travel time, the number of vehicles in port area and thus also congestion between port of Tallinn and Helsinki.

The project Smart E67 aims at increasing the efficiency and safety of passenger and cargo mobility in the Central Baltic region by introducing Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) on a key transport corridor in Estonia and Latvia.

The EfficientFlow project is a joint Swedish - Finnish initiative contributing to the development of two transport corridors in the Central Baltic area e.g. the corridor between the ports of Gävle and Rauma and the ScanMed corridor between Stockholm and Turku. The project will render the transport flow in the corridors more efficient by means of improved processes and new digital solutions.

The E-ticketing project aims at connecting ticketing systems in Tallinn, Tartu, and Helsinki to enable seamless travelling.

The Refec project aims at reinforcing the establishment of the Eastern Finland-Eastern-Estonia transport corridor. The best solution to increase the performance of the Eastern Finland - Eastern Estonia corridor is to establish a ferry connection between the ports of Loviisa (FI) and Kunda (EE).

The Smart Log project develops and tests IoT-solution within the logistics sector and logistic companies across the two corridors; ScanMed and North Sea-Baltic. This results in reduced operational costs for the companies as well as reduced delivery times for goods.

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### **3.2 Improved services of existing small ports to improve local and regional mobility and contribute to tourism development**

Nine projects have been funded under this Specific Objective. Six have a Finnish lead partner, two have Estonian lead partners and one project has a Swedish lead partner. A third of the Lead Partners represent local public authorities, whereas higher education and research institutions and interest groups each lead two projects. Local public authorities represent about half of all the project partners in this SO.

Most of the projects focus on improving the services and the safety of small ports and on building networks between them.

One of the projects (SmartPorts) was concluded already in 2017 while two projects (MASAPO and 30MILES) were concluded in 2018. One project (PortMate) will conclude in 2019, three further projects (SEASTOP, Sustainable Gateway and FamilyPorts) will do so in 2020 and two projects (BATSECO-BOAT and Smart Marina) will run to 2021.

Modern and attractive small ports network through cross-border interactive information system, joint marketing and improved port services (SmartPorts) was a project aimed at improving and integrating a network of small ports via modern information and communications technology. The project's goal was to improve the service quality of small ports in the Central Baltic region and to help create better awareness of the marina network to double the number of visitors accessing the region by sea.

Development of Maritime Safety in the Small Ports in the Baltic Sea Region (MASAPO) aimed at developing maritime safety in small ports in the Baltic Sea Region. The project tackled the lack of information about small ports and safety services in Estonia and Åland and facilitated cooperation between small ports in Estonia and Åland islands to provide better information about the ports and their safety services.

Small port every 30 miles apart (30MILES) focused on improving the overall service level and safety in small ports and waterfront. The project idea was to organise small ports into a cooperating network at a distance of every 30 miles.

### **PRIORITY AXIS 4: SKILLED AND SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE REGION**

The planned budget for Priority Axis 4 is 16.2 million euros after the 2018 programme modification. This constitutes 9.5 % of the ERDF budget of the Interreg Central Baltic programme. In the first three calls, a total of 11 million euros was committed to 32 Priority Axis 4 projects. Most of the funding was committed in the first and second calls (4 million euros each).

Priority 4 aims to achieve a more inclusive region by strengthening local communities and improving the skills, knowledge and social well-being of people, especially of the youth and the elderly. The envisaged aim is to be attained in the main by enhancing the competitiveness of vocational education and training and by creating better connections between these target groups and the labour market.

Priority 4 has two Specific Objectives; 4.1 More people benefiting from stronger Central Baltic communities and 4.2 More aligned vocational education and training programmes in the Central Baltic region.

#### **4.1 More people benefiting from stronger Central Baltic communities**

The aim with specific objective 4.1 is to strengthen social inclusion in the Central Baltic region with activities meant to strengthen communities via 'people to people' projects that help to reduce the differences between social groups and improve mutual understanding, trust, empathy and resilient social

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ties. Those people in the Central Baltic under risk of social exclusion are the targeted communities for this measure though the target groups differ for the different projects and include, for example, immigrant groups, senior citizens and young people. The targeted beneficiaries are regional and local authorities and community-based non-governmental organisations with statutory objectives to deal with community development.

Seventeen projects have been funded under this Specific Objective. Eleven have already been concluded while six remain ongoing. Six of the projects (Let us be active!, PAD, REGI, SIPPE, TheatreEx and PIM) were concluded already in 2017, whereas five projects (YOUTH-SPORT-VOL, Active Age, FEM (Female Estonian Migrant), EmpowerKids, CROSS) did so in 2018. About half of the concluded projects had a Finnish Lead Partner while the other half had mostly Estonian lead partners. Ten out of the seventeen projects have a Lead Partner representing interest groups including NGOs, whereas five projects are led by higher education and research institutions. There are only three types of partners involved in the projects of SO 4.1, namely interest groups (which represent 46% of all the project partners), higher education and research institutions (25 %), and local public authorities (30 %).

*Let us be active!* aimed at decreasing social exclusion and loneliness among older people in Estonia, Finland and Latvia through involving them in voluntary work. Activities within the project aimed at improving the health and well-being of older people and their communities. The project analysed existing activities available for seniors, examined their needs in the area of volunteering and then produced guidelines for social and health care workers to promote and support voluntarism of the older people. Planned activities included, for example, workshops, meetings and events for seniors, health care workers and social workers to develop the new form of voluntary activity.

*PAD* was a project aimed at influencing general attitudes in respect of greater positivity towards young people suffering specifically from mental health and social problems. Through promoting better access to the labour market and a reduction in stigmatisation regarding mental problems, the idea here was that the project would improve the social integration of young people with mental health issues. The main activities took place in Finland and in Estonia where the project organized face-to-face meetings with citizens and employers and educational trainings for professionals.

*REGI* focused on supporting Estonian immigrant families who, for work-related reasons, have been divided between Estonia and Finland. Migration from Estonia to Finland has grown over the past 5-10 years and has brought about several difficult social issues, such as unhealthy or broken families. The project seeks to build stronger and healthier communities both in Finland and in Estonia.

*SIPPE* aimed at increasing the well-being and social inclusion of the elderly by means of fuller societal participation through social activities including better opportunities to engage in voluntary work. The project sought to develop innovative and voluntary work options, focusing on actively marketing the idea to and by elderly. The aim was to recruit enthusiastic elderly people to take part in voluntary training. By completing the training, these people will attain the title of registered volunteer and will gain the ability to organise well-being gatherings for local elderly people.

The project Theatre Expanded focused on raising the competitiveness of freelance artists. The idea here was to develop the level of entrepreneurial competence among the target group's and to establish international networks and innovative models. The purpose was to offer training courses to people in Estonia and Latvia over a two-year period. In addition, two dozen producers were expected to raise their qualifications in process leading, budgeting and marketing in relation to leading international co-productions in the Performing Arts Sector. The project also aimed at teaching creative artists how to find new ways to put their professional skills into practice.

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*The PIM project* aimed at supporting bilingual education for children in Russian-speaking minority groups in Estonia, Finland and Latvia. This was meant to be achieved by developing parent involvement models for the bilingual learning process. The activities in the project were divided into three stages:

- 1) overview of available knowledge and best practices
- 2) conducting a survey and preparing for piloting
- 3) conducting the pilot and delivering a complex, tested and applicable work package of PIMs, specifically targeting the parents of bilingual students and supporting in this context the bilingual learning process.

The main objective of the YOUTH-SPORT-VOL project is to increase the social inclusion of the young unemployed and to improve their access to the labour market. This will be achieved through development of a cross-border sport volunteering model that will be tested by the young unemployed during different sport events in Estonia and Southern-Finland. In addition, an innovative ICT-based platform to promote sport volunteering opportunities and to unite sport volunteers will be developed and piloted. By promoting sport volunteering possibilities as a labour-market advantage for the young unemployed the project also aimed to set up a promotion campaign and awareness raising seminars at vocational schools/universities.

*Active Age* aimed at creating equal access to the local labour market for long-term unemployed seniors over the age of 55. This was meant to be achieved through implementation of training activities for these seniors. Participants would improve their skills and knowledge in accordance with the real needs of local employees from the public and private sectors. Participation in support groups would, it was envisaged, help those with lower motivation and self-confidence to discover their inner strengths and resources. Seniors from different regions would meet and learn from each other's experiences and to develop ideas for the future.

*The FEM (Female Estonian Migrant)* project focused on identifying the key challenges faced by Estonian women who have immigrated to Finland. The project has two target groups: Estonian migrant women in Finland and women who are planning to immigrate from Estonia to Finland. The group is more economically and socially vulnerable compared to local residents. The project was in general aimed at strengthening those communities of women who have left, or are planning to leave, their country of origin to live and work in another country in the Baltic Sea area. This was meant to be achieved by compiling three peer groups of Estonian female migrants, in Turku, Helsinki and Tallinn. Peer Counselling techniques were used, enabling the provision of both knowledge and emotional, practical and social support to participants. Other activities organised by the project included peer group events throughout the duration of the project period and the making of a film on women's emigration.

*EmpowerKids* aimed at contributing to the improved health and social inclusion of young children coming from the low-income families in Estonia, Finland and Latvia. Health and social workers lack the methods and tools to promote daily healthy choices for young children in families with low socio-economic status. Improving the health and social inclusion of young children coming from these low-income families was meant to be achieved by means of targeted counselling and interventions developed by the health and social workers together with the children. The project's objective was to introduce the WellWe method, adapted to the local needs and conditions to be used in the practical work with children in the day centres and kindergartens. The use of the WellWe-based tool improves the quality of health and social work.

*CROSS* aimed at supporting the integration of unemployed immigrants who have lived in Estonia for 5 years or longer and Estonian immigrants living in Finland as well as second-generation immigrants. The project also involved Estonian and Finnish organisations that were prepared to hire people from different national backgrounds. The project is designed to improve the quality of immigrant integration in both countries and also to create new contacts and common cross-border cooperation networks within the integration field. This will be achieved by organising a mentor programme for immigrants as well as diversity management activities within the companies involved with a view to improving social inclusion in respect of those people

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with immigrant backgrounds while also raising awareness of the benefits of diverse workplaces among companies.

#### 4.2 More aligned vocational education and training programmes in the Central Baltic region

The specific objective aims at the further integration of the Central Baltic labour market by developing aligned vocational education and training programmes. The programmes are meant to be based on the specific needs of the enterprises operating within the region. By developing skills that are better matched with the enterprise's needs it is expected that social exclusion can be reduced. The main target groups here are people involved in vocational education and training on one hand and companies on the other. Targeted beneficiaries are public and private vocational education and training institutions, including universities of applied sciences, i.e. universities delivering professional degree programmes, national, regional and local authorities responsible for developing vocational education and training, as well as organisations representing employers and employees (social partners).

Fifteen projects have been funded under this Specific Objective. Six of these projects were concluded at the time of conducting the evaluation while nine were ongoing. Two of the projects (EDU-SMEs and SAFHY) concluded already in 2017, while three projects (DeDiWe, ACUCARE and EDU-RAIL) did so in 2018 leaving one project (ITSVET) to be concluded early in 2019. Four of the concluded projects had a Finnish lead partner while two had Estonian lead partners. Almost three quarters of the projects have a Lead Partner representing higher education and research institutions. Out of all partners taking part in the SO 4.2 projects, local public authorities (41 %) and higher education and research institutions (40 %) are the most numerous.

*EDU-SMEs* aimed at developing better matching between company needs and the competencies of graduates in the Central Baltic region by aligning the curricula in business management and entrepreneurship in the participating VET schools. The curricula include new knowledge on the internationalisation of SMEs. This was achieved by supporting individual SMEs in their internationalisation through cross-border activities that link SMEs with faculty and students in their target markets and by integrating classroom learning and practice in the workplace by strengthening cooperation between vocational educational training institutions and SMEs through real-life assignments.

*SAFHY* on developing labour skills in respect of the health care and cleaning service sectors in Estonia and Finland. The project aimed to align and enrich two curricula and produce cross-border multilingual digital learning material for students both in Cleaning services and Health care. Curricula were aligned from the hygiene point of view to create training material for skills development related to hygiene. By aligning curricula and training material these can be used both for vocational education and for the training of both the unemployed and those persons already working in the field.

*DeDiWe* aimed at developing digital health and welfare services by creating a new curriculum, "The Developer of Digital Health and Welfare Services", in Finnish, Estonian and Latvian vocational education programmes. The curriculum promotes multi-professional studying with students getting the opportunity to learn together in a real working life context through the "Learning by Developing" pedagogical model. The students are also given the opportunity to implement development projects that are useful for the citizens. By improving the eHealth competence amongst professionals', the project improves the development of the business ecosystem within the Central Baltics and creates better opportunities for public-private partnership, therefore supporting eHealth companies.

*ACUCARE* focused on developing vocational e-course training for nursing-, social work and social educator students to create more aligned joint VET programmes among partner countries. The project tried to

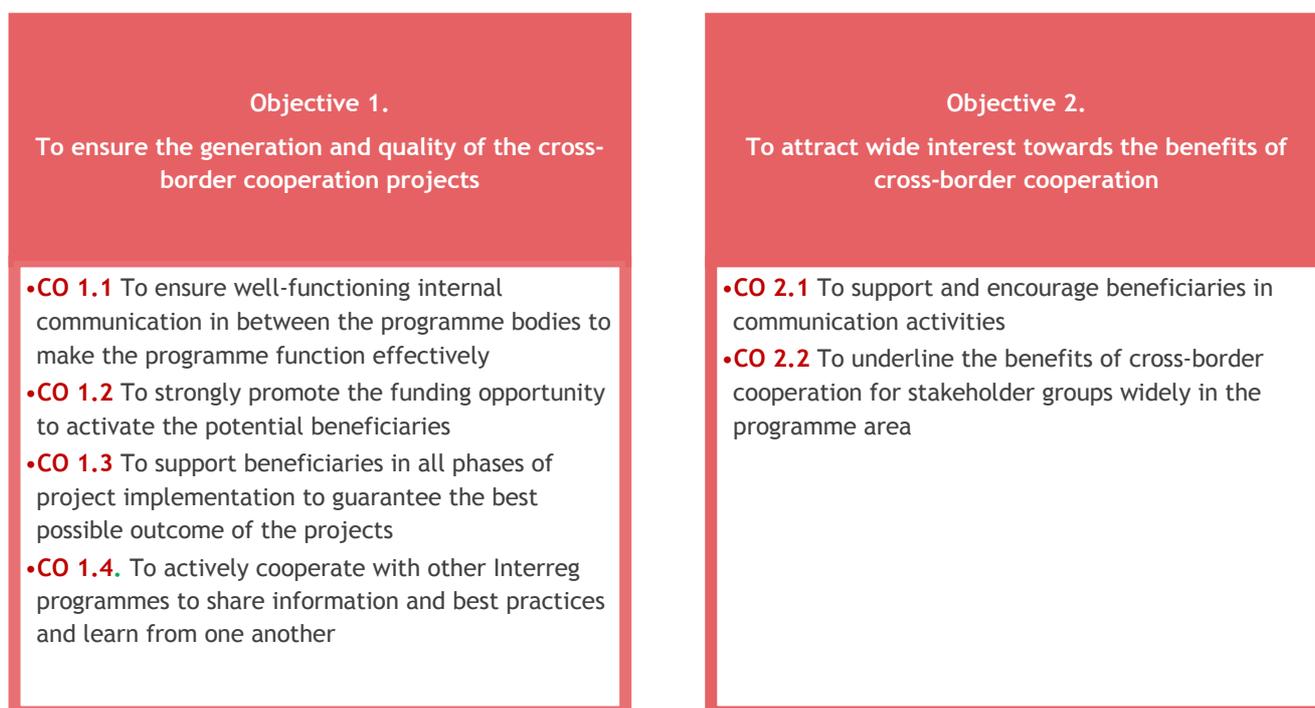
address problems associated with siloed professionals acting independently in separate sectors by using the acute teamwork model, a fairly new approach in youth psychiatric services in Finland which has proven to be a promising method to help children and adolescents. The e-course concerns interprofessional psychiatric acute teamwork and includes two parts: family work in open care (5 ECTS) and residential childcare in foster care (5 ECTS). The course is aimed at increasing collaboration between students and practitioners working on the borders of the different systems and different countries.

*EDU-RAIL* aimed at reducing the fragmentation of the railway engineering, transport and logistics vocational education and training programmes in the region. By modernising and harmonising railway education through jointly developed regional specialisation modules the quality and cross-border cooperation abilities of the future workforce in the railway sector will be significantly enhanced. The modules also address the needs of the regional labour markets relating specifically to the common challenges posed by further integration within the European railway system as well as other joint regional aspects.

*ITSVET* focused on developing a model for providing ICT security skills on the vocational education level with needed support systems in order to better meet the needs of employers while also decreasing the skills gap on the Central Baltic region labour market. Research to identify the required competences for ICT security specialists in the Central Baltic labour market was undertaken in the project.

## 4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The Interreg Central Baltic Programme communication strategy consists of communication objectives, the identification of target groups and their information needs, communication approaches and tools for reaching the different target groups and resourcing and division of labour, as well as evaluation. The communication activities of the Interreg Central Baltic are built upon the Communication Strategy of the programme, in line with the following objectives:



Graph 10: Objectives of the Communication Strategy

There are two main target groups of the Communication activities: the **internal target group**, which comprised the Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Audit Authority, National Contact Points in the Member States, Monitoring Committee, Steering Committee, National bodies responsible for coordinating the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes, European Commission / DG Regio Desk Officer of the programme; and the external target group which comprises potential beneficiaries, Project partners, other Interreg programmes, the Priority Area Coordinators and Horizontal Action Leaders of the EUSBSR, stakeholder organisations.

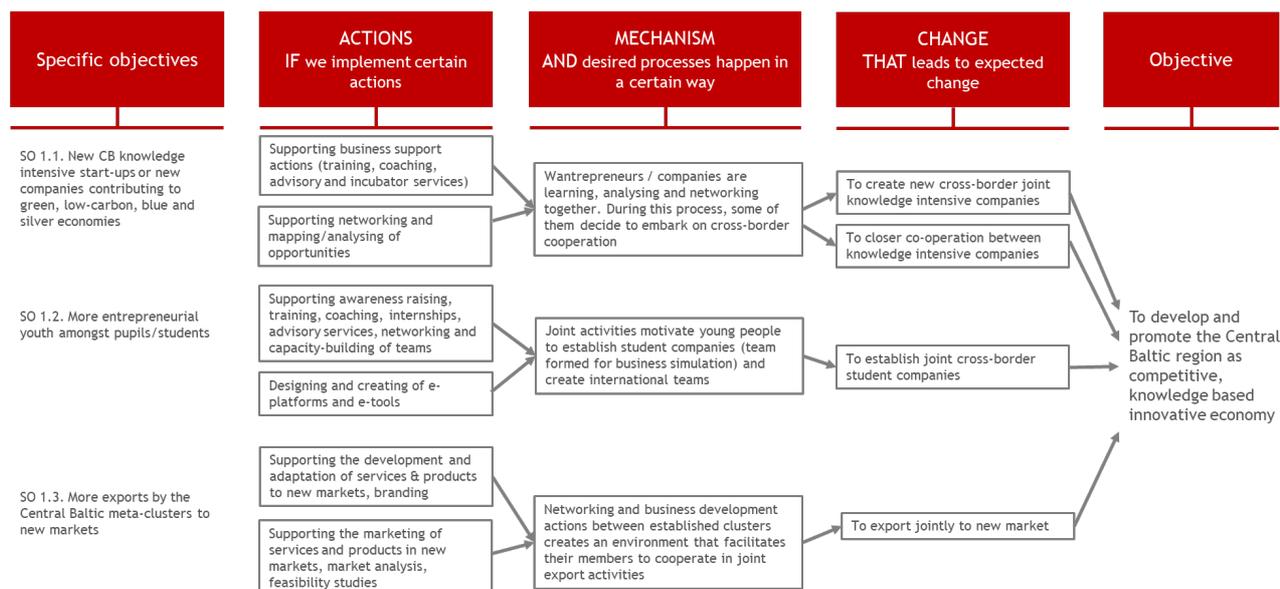
Implementation of the communications strategy is a part of each programme staff member’s work. The main responsibility, however, lies with the Communications Manager, who coordinates the programme communications work in close cooperation with the Information team of the JS. This team consists of the Communication Manager, Communication Officer as well as six national Contact Points working in different programme countries.

The communications costs (information materials and publications, as well as events) was allocated a total of 535 600 euros from the TA budget of the Central Baltic programme. Out of this, 232 800 euros were allocated to communication costs for information materials and publications. A further 302 800 euros are reserved for events (e.g. information and training seminars, as well as annual events).

## 5. ASSESSMENT OF THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND ANSWERS TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS

### 5.1 PRIORITY AXIS 1: COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

Priority 1 aims at developing and promoting the Central Baltic region as a competitive, knowledge-based innovative economy. As the Theory of Change for Priority 1 illustrates (see graph 11), the actions supporting this objective focus on new or starting knowledge-intensive companies, students and young people, as well as meta clusters with export potential.



Graph 11: Theory of Change for Priority Axis 1: Competitive Economy

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## 1.1 New Central Baltic knowledge intensive companies

The specific objective aims at creating new knowledge intensive enterprises with shared management, teams or key personnel in the Central Baltic area, or co-operation between new enterprises and new business models/directions of existing companies in the archipelago. The focus here is on cultivating the opportunities presented by the green, silver and blue economy. The main approach is to implement development projects through intermediate bodies involved in business development.

*To what extent have the set targets been reached? How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?*

At the programme level, the output target was 150 new enterprises supported and 150 enterprises receiving support. The result target was to create 100 joint or co-operating knowledge intensive companies. Already at the programming phase it was clear that this was a challenging target. As table 4 below illustrates, the number of new enterprises supported has been superseded already by the finished/finishing projects. Hence, it can be concluded that the Central Baltic funding has been efficient in terms of outputs. Table 4 shows also the target outputs and results for the ongoing projects.

Despite the good progress already made with respect of the envisaged outputs however, the expected results will be hard to attained for this specific objective as, currently only ten joint or co-operating companies have emerged as a result of these projects. Thus far, only one out of four concluded or concluding projects have fulfilled their target in terms of joint knowledge-intensive companies. It is still early to draw definite conclusions as at the moment the set result targets are reached only to a low extent and the realisation of targets depends on the success of the ongoing projects. The target-setting was known to be ambitious, and the MA knowingly focused the target on the creation of new joint companies within the niche of cross-border business development. However, the joint companies may well emerge later as well, as investments may be realised over a longer time period than that of the project duration.

Assessment of the results is further complicated by the fact that the projects have stated a range for result targets (e.g. 2 - 4). In this case, anything above the lower number would have to be counted as attainment of the target. Additionally, the target indicator includes two types of companies, namely joint cross-border companies and co-operating companies and new business directions and models of existing companies in the archipelago and island areas. At present, more than half of the weight of the result indicator target come from one project (Archipelago Partnerships), which refers to the co-operating companies in the archipelago. These are significantly different from joint cross-border companies.

Table 4: Output and result indicators for Specific Objective 1.1 projects

	<i>Output: Number of new enterprises supported</i>		<i>Output: Number of enterprises supported</i>		<i>Result: Number of joint or co-operating knowledge intensive enterprises</i>	
	Target	Realised	Target	Realised	Target	Realised
Talsinki	150	115	150	115	5	5
Springboard	60	61	60	61	2-4	4
Sparkling Startups	6	3	80	76	6	3
BELT	30	29	30	29	5	0
<i>Ongoing projects</i>						
Starpabs	48		48		10-15	
Archipelago Partnerships	15		60		65*	
CB 4 GameCamps	20		20		10	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>118-127</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Programme target</i>		<i>150</i>		<i>150</i>		<i>100</i>
<b>Target fulfilment rate</b>		<b>139 %</b>		<b>187%</b>		<b>12 %</b>

\*co-operating companies in the archipelago

#### *Are the joint companies really joint?*

On the basis of the interviews, the most typical case of ‘jointness’ is joint management or joint ownership (investors). For instance, one project manager reported Estonian teams getting investment from a Finnish company. The hardest to obtain however are joint teams, where people work in cross-border teams. This type of activity seems easiest to create in cases where the start-ups are already established, and they require certain a specific type of expertise to upgrade or further the business idea.

#### *Are the joint companies economically sustainable?*

Some funded projects have started alumni operations and keep in touch with their start-ups regularly. According to one project manager, whose project was finalised in 2018, fourteen out of their eighteen start-ups were doing well one year after the conclusion of the project. This number includes also non-cross-border start-ups created through the project. Out of three joint companies created in another project, two are still doing well, though one is not.

#### *Have additional new joint companies emerged after the project activities have ended?*

The interviewed project managers were not aware of additional joint companies emerging after the end of their project activities. Some projects have started alumni activities but in general, project monitoring and follow-up activities do not cover all projects and all participants after the end of the project.

#### *What were additional relevant results achieved by the projects?*

The interviewees mentioned here the creation of national start-ups as one of the main additional results. For instance, one project reported five times more national start-ups than cross-border companies being created through the accelerator programme. The project managers mentioned that more than twenty national start-ups had been created through the accelerator programmes. One project manager indeed noted that the project had had both direct cross-border and national leverage effects. Namely, the project activities contributed to the success of an Estonian team attracting investment from a Finnish company. Thanks to that investment, new companies were established in Finland. Furthermore, another project reported several national companies securing investment through these project activities.

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Other results mentioned in this context include increased knowledge, stronger cross-border networks and capacities within these networks. Furthermore, increased and deeper co-operation between the entrepreneurial divisions of Estonian and Finnish universities, as well as science parks has been an important result of the Interreg Central Baltic projects. In addition, international visibility through participation in e.g. international conferences and events can also be credited to some projects.

*What were the main challenges in joint new business development processes?*

The project reports and the interviews concur that in practice, it is not easy to develop cross-border joint companies as defined in the programme. One of the main challenges is the maturity of the business ideas and the start-up companies. The more mature the idea or the company, the easier it is for it to expand its operations in the Central Baltic area and become a joint company through cross-border team members, investors or management. This has to do with the business idea having been worked out already, and the needs of the company being clearer. Typically, it takes a lot of time, effort and brainstorming to develop an idea into a business. This is hard to do if the people in the team are in different locations or they are not very familiar with each other.

Other challenges mentioned in the interviews include the time required to establish trust, negotiate contracts or investments and, ultimately, for actions to be realised in results. This process was estimated to take about a year, namely, to get to know each other, build trust and negotiate contracts or investments. In a best-case analysis, results start emerging another year after that. Furthermore, matching cross-border teams was also mentioned as a challenge in the interviews and reports. In some cases, the companies included in the project were at different levels in different countries. Hence, it was not easy to match them in terms of challenges and requirements.

*Are the organisations who participated in the projects interested in continuing with joint new business development processes?*

Most of the lead partners do business development as their core activity, as such, and they are interested in cooperating with each other in the future. Based on the lessons of the current cooperation process, most interviewed project managers would however focus the joint new business development process towards more mature start-up companies as this seems to be a more fruitful strategy for cross-border cooperation.

*Did the “new joint company creation” logic work in the specific sector/business area?*

The interviewed project managers were of the opinion that in those sectors where the markets are cross-border and transnational there are opportunities for joint operations (e.g. the games industry). The challenges regarding joint company creation were not specific to any sector or business area. All concluded or concluding projects reported similar kinds of problems relating to the creation of new cross-border joint companies. This can be explained by the evident distance between developing an initial idea, something that requires a lot of inter-personal discussion, groundwork and a shared understanding between the founders, to expanding company operations across borders. The main determinant of whether the new joint company creation logic worked seemed, in general, to be the maturity of the companies involved. When the basic business idea is clear and the company already ‘up and running’, it is easier to see what kind of know-how is required, and/or whether the company needs or wants a cross-border investor.

## **1.2 More entrepreneurial youth**

The specific objective aims at engaging young people (under 18 years) in business simulation in cross-border teams. This international business simulation experience aims to motivate young people to create future business partnerships in the Central Baltic region. The main approach is to implement business simulation projects through intermediate bodies involved in business development, or organisations working with youth (youth organisations, educational institutions, or public authorities).

The activities eligible for funding include, for instance, awareness raising, training, coaching, team capacity building and team networking for students.

*To what extent have the set targets been reached? How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?*

At the programme level, the output target was 150 young people participating in the projects. The result target was to create 60 joint student companies, defined as teams formed for business simulation under adult supervision. As table 5 shows, the envisaged number of participating young people has already been superseded. The expected results will be attained for this specific objective with the three projects. Hence, it can be concluded that the programme funding has been effective in terms of creating the desired outputs and results. Furthermore, the intervention logic for this Specific Objective has worked as expected. Table 5 shows also the target outputs and results for the ongoing projects. The CBEwB project concluded its operations in 2018. As such, its realised outputs and results have already been reported.

Even though the quantitative targets will be attained, it has become clear that the definition of a joint student company varies slightly between projects. Whereas one project has applied a wider definition of a joint student company, meaning that it is more like a joint problem-solving group with some business skills elements, others have taken a narrower view to form cross-border teams aimed at business simulation during the project. This difference means that what has now been reported as a result indicator does not actually mean the same thing in the various projects.

Table 5: Output and result indicators for Specific Objective 1.2 projects

	<i>Output: Number of participating young people</i>		<i>Result: Number of established joint student companies</i>	
	Target	Realised	Target	Realised
<b>RIBS</b>	500	780	20	34
<i>Ongoing projects</i>				
<b>CBEwB</b>	300	480	50	74
<b>DigiYouth</b>	220		40	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1020</b>	<b>1260</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>108</b>
<i>Programme target</i>		<b>150</b>		<b>60</b>
<i>Target fulfilment rate</i>		<b>840 %</b>		<b>180 %</b>

*What was the impact on participating young people?*

The interviewees reported that the main impact on participating young people was a clear change in their attitudes towards entrepreneurship. One project also reported an increase in the entrepreneurship skills of the participating youth. The increase in skills was especially visible in the CBEwB, where the students created joint student companies for an academic year and they were trained in business start-up, product development and marketing. Furthermore, the networking and cross-cultural contacts increased significantly through the project. Concretely, the RIBS project resulted in professional work opportunities for some of the older participating students.

In addition to benefitting young people, some of the projects have also had an impact on the participating teachers. Cross-border entrepreneurship education has offered participating teachers a chance to both build their own professional networks and improve their own skills.

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*What was good, what did not work?*

One of the projects reported that it was relatively easy to engage pupils and students but getting teachers to participate is harder. Namely, teachers cannot easily arrange time off to take a group of students to another country. However, another project did not share this view as the entrepreneurship education was an accepted part of the curriculum in the participating schools.

*Is there a more positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among youngsters who participated in project activities?*

The interviewees reported that there was a clear change in the youth attitudes towards entrepreneurship. It was reported that as a consequence of the RIBS project, several young people realised that they can become entrepreneurs in a rural archipelago area and be self-employed in the long term. The increase in the entrepreneurial know-how and positive experiences in the CBEwB project have made the participating young people more positive about entrepreneurship.

### **1.3 More exports by the Central Baltic companies to new markets**

The specific objective aims at supporting the Central Baltic SMEs to enter into new markets (outside the EU and EFTA) with a focus on innovation, product development and internationalisation. The main approach is to promote co-operation between already established clusters to enable the companies involved to enter new markets.

The activities eligible for funding include, for instance, product development and the adaptation of products to new markets, branding, marketing, market analysis, feasibility studies and joint efforts.

*To what extent have the set targets been reached? How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?*

At the programme level, the output target was 300 enterprises receiving support, 300 enterprises receiving non-financial support and 60 enterprises supported to introduce 'new to the market' products. As the programme can provide only non-financial support to the companies, in theory the two indicators referring to number of enterprises receiving support and number of enterprises receiving non-financial support should be the same also at the project level, although this is not the case. The result target was to have 10 cluster co-operations exporting to new markets. As table 6 shows, the number of enterprises receiving support will most probably be reached if the ongoing projects deliver most of their expected outputs. Similarly, the programme result target will most probably be attained. Hence, the programme funding seems effective in creating the desired outputs and results under this Specific Objective. The intervention logic for this Specific Objective seems to also work as expected. Table 6 shows also the target outputs and results for the ongoing projects. Yet, there were some finished projects which had expressly stated neither their result indicator target, nor their realised result indicator.

The assessment of the results is hampered by the convoluted nature of the result indicator. Namely, the result indicator 'number of cluster co-operations exporting to new markets' is a yes/no-indicator in a sense that it only shows whether the project resulted in exports to new markets or not. The indicator does not express how many companies exported to new markets or how many new export deals there were, so in a way it does not express the change in the target group but remains at the project level. On the other hand, the result indicator is focused and measurable, whereas the real numbers of companies which achieve the sales would have been more complicated to prognose.

Table 6: Output and result indicators for Specific Objective 1.3 projects

	<i>Output: Number of enterprises receiving support</i>		<i>Output: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support</i>		<i>Output: Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products</i>		<i>Result: Number of cluster co-operations exporting to new markets</i>	
	Target	Realised	Target	Realised	Target	Realised	Target	Realised
SME2GO	150	163	150	163			1	1
CB2East	45	174	290	357	30	34	1	1
CLUSME	50	47	200	75	5	5	1	0
CB Health-Access	57	69	57	69			1	1
ICT Meta Cluster	50	52	50	52	50	47	1	1
<i>Ongoing projects</i>								
IHMEC	30		30		30		1	
FINEEX Music	45		45		25		1	
NNFA			65				1	
SME Aisle	38		38		38		1	
LEF Network to China	80		80				1	
CAITO	40		120		80		1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>1125</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Programme target</i>		300		300		60		10
<i>Target fulfilment rate</i>		<b>168%</b>		<b>239%</b>		<b>143%</b>		<b>40%</b>

In terms of achieved sales, four projects have reported sales so far. Two projects reported 2-3 sales, two reported 3-5 sales and one project reported 5-7 sales. It turns out however that tracking sales figures is a difficult process as exporting companies often do not want to share information with project managers about their realised exports. We should note also that exports can often be realised after the project has already ended and the projects have typically no established follow-up mechanism to record this. In cases where the project partners work directly with the companies also outside the project, it is easier to follow the sales also on a long-term basis. However, when the projects have finished, the project managers do not often have the opportunity or resources to follow the sales up later. Yet, this can be done at the programme level through a specific survey or the ex post evaluation.

The companies participating in the CBHealth Access project also have raised more than 10 million euros worth of investments so far. Furthermore, the results include the establishment of one joint company in and one local company in the target countries.

*Describe other additional results (to the achieved sales)?*

CB2East project reported the establishment of representative offices in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan for Central Baltic cleantech exports as a major result of the project. The representative offices will ensure continuity in these markets and assist in export promotion after the end of the project. CBHealth Access

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reported a couple of agreements for distribution, a contract for manufacturing, new university collaboration, the conducting studies and pilot projects in hospitals, as well as setting up of a company in the target market as additional results of the project.

*What is the potential to follow to the achieved sales, established channels of export, potential FDI deals?*

The interviews and document analysis point to potential export channels having been established during the projects. Targeted country visits with SME delegations in particular have opened up channels for future planning co-operation and possible export channels. Some projects have also resulted in the signing of memoranda of understanding for long-term collaboration which can form the basis for future exports. The main difficulty in linking Interreg Central Baltic funding to realised sales in the future however relates to businesses not being willing to share information about their business activities. Furthermore, the timeline between project activity and realised sales can often be very long. However, in cases where the project partners work directly with the companies also outside the project, it is easier to follow the sales also on a long-term basis.

*Did the project's approach (strategy, activities) work to enter to the targeted markets?*

In SME2GO, the market entry strategy was based on potential leads of individual companies, around which a consortium was built. CB2East noted that entry to Central Asian markets proved to be hard, but the representative offices in the two countries helped significantly in terms of specialised market knowledge and in creating relationships.

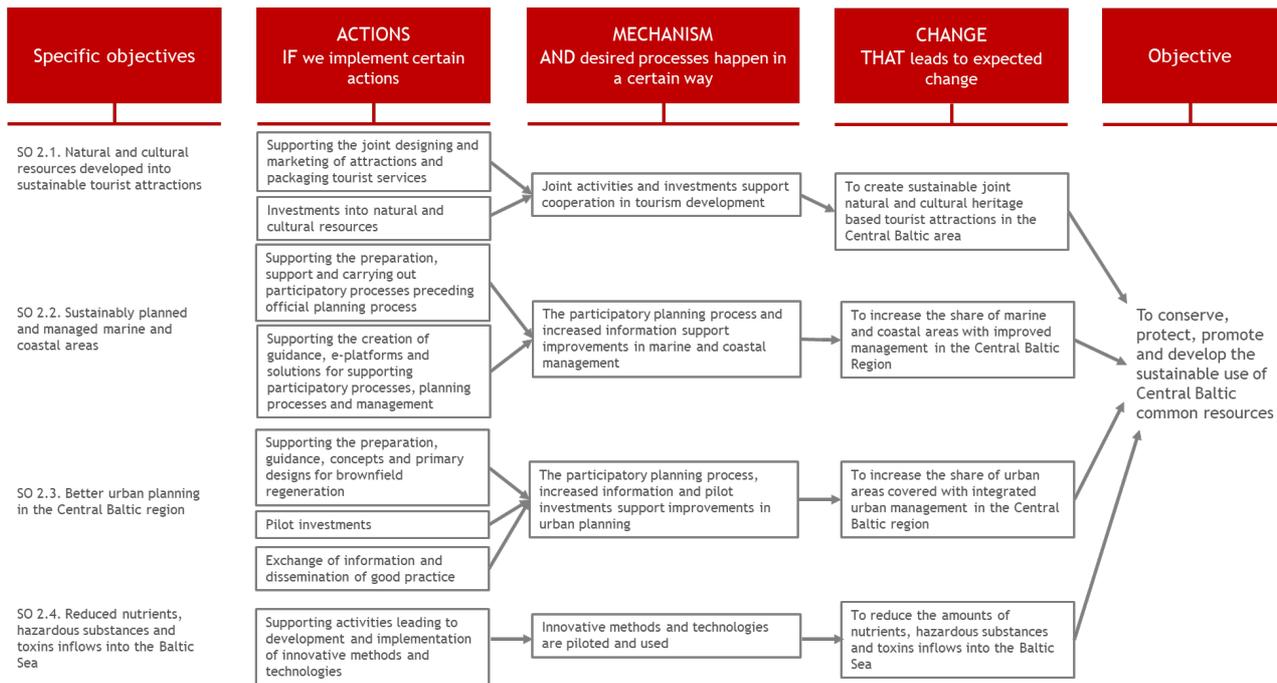
*What were the main challenges and obstacles for the cooperation and joint entering to the new markets?*

The interviewed project managers viewed the process of co-operation with previously unfamiliar project partners as challenging since it took time to get to know each other and build a working relationship. Furthermore, it also proved challenging to get SMEs to cooperate within one country as they generally have only limited resources for developing export potential. Once the projects got going however, these initial challenges dissipated. Challenges inevitably emerged in terms of entering new markets. For instance, in some new markets, political risks such as the change of a president, represent a critical factor and have the potential to slow or otherwise interrupt the work of public and private actors in the country. Additionally, each country's political situation and market structure are specific, so it is not possible to adopt a general approach to diverse markets. Before trying to enter a market, it is necessary to research the market and prepare the ground.

## 5.2 PRIORITY AXIS 2: SUSTAINABLE USE OF COMMON RESOURCES

This priority aims at promoting and developing the sustainable use of Central Baltic resources. As the Theory of Change for Priority 2 below in graph 12 illustrates, the actions supporting this objective focus on tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage, the sustainable development of marine and coastal as well as urban areas and innovative actions to reduce the nutrient load of the Baltic Sea.

Specific objective was excluded from this evaluation 2.2 by the MA as there is only one finished project.



Graph 12: Theory of Change for Priority Axis 2: Sustainable use of common resources

## 2.1 Natural and cultural resources developed into sustainable tourist attractions

This specific objective aims to develop cultural and natural resources into joint tourist attractions and products. Preserving nature and developing it as a resource for economic development simultaneously is to be done in a balanced and sustainable way.

*To what extent have the set targets been reached? How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?*

At the programme level, the output target was 10 targeted joint attractions. Furthermore, each project had its own output target of increase in expected number of visits to the site. The total output target for the finished and ongoing projects was 125 000 new visitors. The result target at programme level was 12 more sustainable joint natural and cultural heritage-based tourist attractions. So far, half of the programme-level output target has been realised. The result target has a slightly lower target fulfilment rate. Given that there are still several ongoing projects, it can be concluded that the programme funding has been relatively efficient in creating change in this field. Furthermore, the programme intervention logic is working as expected in this Specific Objective.

In general, the finished projects have met targets in term of creating joint attractions, although not all of them were necessarily attained within the target time. Some had some objectives that were not completely attained, for instance all target groups were not reached to the extent initially envisaged. The output target relating to increased number of visitors has been met in two out of six projects. Two other projects have not met the targets while information was not available for the other two projects.

A major difficulty in assessing target attainment relates to output indicator construction. Increases in expected number of visits is straightforward enough to assess in the situation where the site is created through the programme funding. For existing tourist attractions however, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether the visitor came because of the new attraction created with the programme funding. Moreover, it is not entirely clear how projects count the increased number of visitors. For some, information on realised outputs was simply not available. In addition, project target levels vary greatly from 700 to 55

000. The differences depend on the type, location and size of attraction, as well as whether the targets are set at a surely achievable or at ambitious level. Given that these projects do not vary so much in terms of duration and budget, it can be questioned whether the very high and low target-settings are either economically efficient or realistic.

Table 7: Output and result indicators for Specific Objective 2.1 projects

	<i>Output: Number of targeted joint attractions</i>		<i>Output: Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions</i>		<i>Result: More sustainable joint natural and cultural heritage-based tourist attractions</i>	
	Target	Realised	Target	Realised	Target	Realised
SmartZoos	1	1	6 000		1	1
NATTOURS	1	1	10 000	10 000	1	1
LiviHeri	1	1	800	2 345	1	1
HANSA	1		3 100		1	
DefenceArch	1	1	23 000	5 800	1	1
LightsOn!	1	1	55 000	24 045	1	1
<i>Ongoing projects</i>						
BALTACAR	1		2 000	1 000	1	
St Olav Waterway	1	1	700		1	
Baltic Wings	1		20 000		1	
Lakesperience	1		5 000		1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>125 600</b>	<b>43 190</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Programme target</i>		<b>10</b>				<b>12</b>
<i>Target fulfilment rate</i>		<b>50 %</b>				<b>42 %</b>

*How well do the created attractions represent joint Central Baltic natural and cultural resources?*

The joint attractions cover a wide range of Central Baltic natural and cultural resources. For instance, some projects utilise the common cultural heritage well, for instance by focusing the attraction on historical cities or fortresses built in the same era or a joint historical pilgrimage route etc. Other projects are based on the shared natural resources of the Central Baltic area, such as the archipelago, the lakes, or the fauna.

*What are the main characteristics which make the created attractions joint?*

The degree of ‘jointness’ of the created attractions varies among the projects, as do the characteristics which make the attractions joint. Some of the attractions have a common background in the cultural history of the Central Baltic area, e.g. they are Hanseatic cities or ancient fortresses that have been in interaction with each other. Some attractions share a common theme, e.g. defence history or they are in similar areas with a similar landscape. Some attractions are joint through a route, such as St Olav’s Waterway, which formed a part of a pilgrimage route, or Baltic Wings whose joint attraction is based on the route of migrating birds.

Several projects have utilised digitalisation in creating and enhancing the jointness of the attractions. For instance, some projects have common electronic brochures for the attractions or a common mobile guide or game for the attractions.

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*To which target group(s) and target market(s) is the attraction focusing?*

Most of the created attractions are targeted at the public in general, i.e. potential visitors to the sites and additionally for instance, to schools and other educational centres, various tourism service providers, local municipalities and tourism organisations, conference organisers, environmental education organisations and cultural heritage organisations. Only some of the projects identified more specified target groups, e.g. bird watchers.

In general, the target groups and target markets of the created attractions have not been defined very clearly in the project applications. Many of them seem to focus on those people who are interested in the Central Baltic joint culture and history.

*Is there marketing strategy and marketing plan in place or in implementation to attract visitors to the attraction?*

Most of the funded projects have undertaken common marketing or communication strategies or plans. A well-defined joint strategy for marketing and communication seems to be the key for enhancing the jointness of the attraction.

*Is the targeted number of visitors realistic to achieve?*

Thus far, the output target relating to increasing the number of visitors has been met in two of the six projects. Two projects have not met their targets while information was not available for the other two projects. For concluded and ongoing projects, the targeted number of visitors is 125 600. Given that four projects have thus far reported some 42 000 visitors when the target for the concluded projects was 97 900, it will likely be challenging for the set overall target to be attained.

In general, for some projects the targeted number of visitors seems very high while variation in respect of the targeted number of visitors between projects was also quite large. This combined with the challenges of counting the increased number of visitors make the entire target indicator slightly questionable.

*Is the tourist attraction sustainable environmentally?*

Environmental sustainability was emphasised throughout the project implementation process. Rather than print leaflets, many projects placed material online and on mobile guide apps that can be downloaded from app stores. In several projects, old buildings have been renovated with sustainable building materials instead of building new ones and these buildings have been made more energy efficient. Paths have been carved, boardwalks have been built and signposts have been placed in nature attractions to keep visitors on the paths and not have them wandering around trampling and harming nature. Visitors are also informed about sustainability at the attractions.

*Is the tourist attraction sustainable as the attraction?*

Many of the attractions are likely to sustain their attractiveness, partly because they have gained a lot of visibility over the project period. Some were already known to the public before the project and thus they are most likely to continue to be sustainable as attractions. There are other attractions however that were specifically created by the projects, such as the mobile app for the SmartZoos project which may prove to be challenging to sustain due to the need for updates and the continuous coordination required to keep the attraction afloat.

### **2.3. Better urban planning in the Central Baltic region**

Specific objective 2.3 targets the challenges and opportunities related to improving the urban space via joint urban planning activities. Integrated urban management here is understood as a broader set of activities than just doing the minimum required by legislation. It also includes those activities preceding and following the official planning process.

To what extent have the set targets been reached? How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?

The output target at programme level is 10 targeted integrated urban plans. The concluded and ongoing projects' total target is 37 integrated urban plans, meaning that the programme target will be superseded many times over. The programme funding can hence be seen as effective in creating change under this Specific Objective. At the result level, the programme aimed at increasing the share of urban areas covered with integrated urban management. The projects have not however indicated quantitative targets for the result indicator in the project applications at all. Where the result has been recorded, it has not been reported by the project clearly. As such, it is not possible to assess attainment in respect of this result indicator.

Furthermore, some of the projects seem to focus on qualitative objectives, such as improving the urban planning process through the introduction of advanced participatory methods. These objectives are simply not captured by the indicators.

Table 8: Output and result indicators for Specific Objective 2.3 Better urban planning in the Central Baltic region

	<i>Output: Indicator Number of targeted integrated urban plans</i>		<i>Result: Share of urban areas covered with integrated urban management</i>	
	Target	Realised	Target	Realised
Live Baltic Campus	5	5	Helsinki 715.49 km <sup>2</sup> Turku 306.37 km <sup>2</sup> Uppsala 48.79 km <sup>2</sup> Stockholm 188 km <sup>2</sup> Tartu 38.86 km <sup>2</sup> Riga 304 km <sup>2</sup>	N/A
Baltic Urban Lab	4	4		N/A
iWater	7	7		N/A
<i>Ongoing projects</i>				
Augmented Urbans	5		Local Actions, total city land area Helsinki 214.21 km <sup>2</sup> Tallinn 159.2 km <sup>2</sup> Gävle 42.45 km <sup>2</sup> Cēsis 19.28 km <sup>2</sup> Viimsi 72.84 km <sup>2</sup>	
HEAT	7		“improved urban and regional plans that they will include biking routes better than currently. In different cities the share of the urban area influenced is between 3 and 7%,” urban plans in Jurmala, Tartu and Stockholm and the regional plan of Southwest Finland	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>		
<i>Programme target</i>		<i>10</i>		
<b>Target fulfilment rate</b>		<b>160 %</b>		



*How is integrated urban planning understood in participating partner cities?*

Given the experiences of the Live Baltic Campus and Baltic Urban Lab projects (the Heat and Augmented Urbans projects are still ongoing), the integrated urban planning approach is clearly more familiar in Finland and Sweden than in Estonia and Latvia. Collaboration with different stakeholders should therefore be more strongly emphasised in the Baltic countries in future. Greater attention should be paid to the different owners of the planning process, as in the Baltic states it is usually the officials from ministries who play the key role in the planning process, whereas the municipality officials are the key stakeholders in Finland and Sweden.

*What specifically has been changed/improved in participating urban areas planning processes?*

New projects and initiatives have begun on the basis of this project. Indeed, one project manager realised that there are fewer complaints and delays in the planning process when local residents are heard.

*What added value have the projects given to urban planning processes?*

The urban planning process is being re-considered and re-envisioned in every participating city because of this project. New participatory elements have emerged specifically in terms of Baltic city planning and development but this is also true to some extent for the Nordic countries. The iWater project created a new approach in the field of urban planning: the project used storm water as a new element in urban planning, rather than treating it as waste which should be removed immediately through underground storm sewers.

*Are the achieved improvements in integrated urban planning processes sustainable?*

All interviewees noted that the improvements made in integrated urban planning processes were sustainable. They also emphasised that there can be no return to the old planning processes and methods after their experiences with participatory planning.

*Have all relevant stakeholder groups been involved in the integrated urban planning process?*

According to the interviewed project managers, the planned stakeholder groups were involved in the integrated urban planning processes.

*What have been the best methods to involve relevant stakeholders?*

All kinds of participatory methods have, in general, worked well, but it is important to note that choosing the right method for each group or stakeholder remains key. For example, 3D visualisation and VR-glasses have proven suitable for demonstrating new plans but facilitated group discussions or online consultations with local citizens are suitable for other purposes.

*What have been main challenges related to integrated urban planning processes?*

The main challenges here relate to administrative structures in urban planning. The planning process and stakeholders are different across the various countries involved. The project managers also mentioned that it was not always easy to reach the right officials, especially in the Baltic states. Furthermore, as already mentioned, participatory planning is not very familiar in the Baltic countries so a lot of groundwork had to be done for the methods to be accepted.

## **2.4. Reduced nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins inflow into the Baltic Sea**

This Specific Objective aims at reducing nutrients, hazardous substances and toxin inflows to the Baltic Sea from all types of land-based sources. This includes, among others, the impact of runoffs from agriculture and urban storm-waters into the Baltic Sea. The objective is to support activities which lead to the development and implementation of innovative methods and technologies within the Central Baltic region. The implemented methods and technologies should have the potential for being used in other regions and countries.

To what extent have the set targets been reached? How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?

The output target at programme level is 20 targeted sources of nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins. This output target will be superseded during the programming period. The programme can thus be concluded efficient in delivering the desired output targets. This indicator however only counts the targeted sources and disregards their size or significance. For instance, a single ditch can be a targeted source of nutrients as can a river or a sewage treatment plant. At the result level, the indicator measures the amount of nutrients, hazardous substances and toxin inflow into the Baltic Sea. The result targets by project are however expressed in varying terms (some express them in terms of % reduction, others in tonnes etc). Additionally, none of the projects have reported realised results. As such, it is not possible to assess attainment the result targets, nor validate the desired functioning of the intervention logic.

Table 9: Output and result indicators for Specific Objective 2.4 projects

	<i>Output: Number of targeted sources of nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins</i>		<i>Result: Amounts of nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins inflows into the Baltic Sea</i>	
	Target	Realised	Target	Realised
Waterchain	10	10	Pollution loads of nutrients from targeted sources are reduced 30 % in pilot watersheds by 2023	
Nutritrade	4	4,5	Removal of phosphorus from the Baltic Sea of at least 50 t	34 t
Blastic	4	4	100kg of plastic waste caught before entering the sea	5 kg
Nutrinflow	5	11		
<i>Ongoing projects</i>				
Insure	5			
Heawater	7			
Seabased	9		Removal of phosphorus from the Baltic Sea of at least 10 t	
Greenagri	20	15		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>44,5</b>		
<i>Programme target</i>		20		
<i>Target fulfilment rate</i>		<b>223%</b>		

What solutions (best practices) have been produced and applied to reduce inflows?

A number of different solutions and methods have been developed and used. Most solutions are very concrete, since methods are used to calculate nutrient and other hazardous inflows, map them and ultimately, manage and reduce them.

The Waterchain project produced an excel-tool for farmers and various teaching materials for universities, high schools and festival organisers. The Waterchain project mapped nutrient and substance hot spots in order to reduce inflows. In the Blastic project, an excel-tool was also created. The Nutrinflow project created a holistic and comprehensive system to manage nutrient inflows which helped landowners and other major actors in particular. The Nutritrade project created an online platform for emissions trading. The Blastic project also created a useful measuring method.

*What is the programme contribution compared with the general development?*

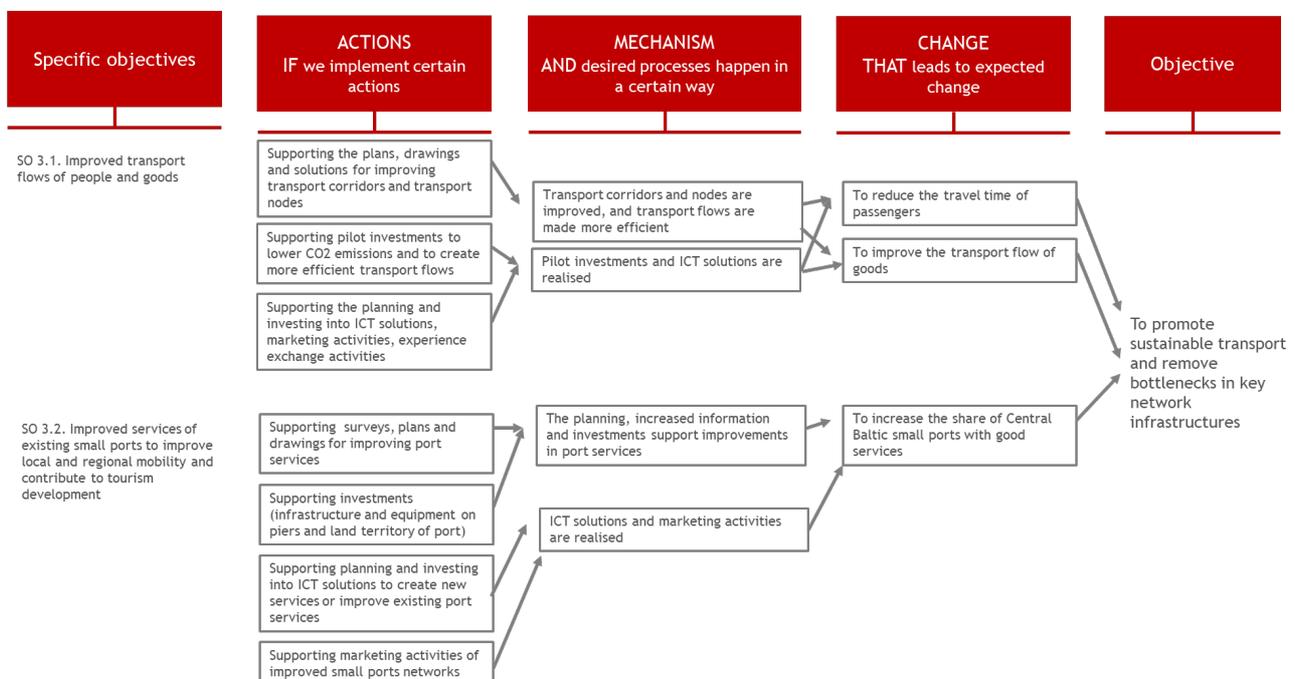
Each project is in many ways quite innovative. The Baltic Sea preservation work remains high on the EU agenda, so the programme is very much in line with general policy development, but the methods being used here are unique.

*What is the transferability of the new solutions?*

Most of the solutions are transferable, but there are some adjustments that have to be made in order to use them in other geographical areas.

### 5.3 PRIORITY AXIS 3: WELL-CONNECTED REGION

Priority 3 aims to promote sustainable transport in the Central Baltic area and to remove bottlenecks in key network infrastructures. As the Theory of Change for Priority 3 below (graph 13) illustrates, the actions supporting this objective focus on improving the transport flows of people and goods and on improving services in small ports.



Graph 13: Theory of Change for Priority Axis 3: Well-connected region

#### 3.1 Improved transport flows of people and goods

This specific objective aims to identify and target the challenges related to the integration of different transport modes so as to reduce time in the transportation of both passengers and cargo while at the same time reducing CO2 emissions. The objective here is also to identify and target challenges related to the improvement of the various transport corridors within the Central Baltic region in both the north-south and east-west directions.

*To what extent have the set targets been reached? How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?*

The output target at programme level for this Specific Objective 25 developed and improved transport corridors and nodes. Looking at the ongoing projects' target values for this output indicator, it is clear that it will be attained, given that the ADAPT project can realise its target. The programme target for the result

indicator Travel time of passengers is a 5% reduction in travel time in the chosen transport node/corridor. Similarly, for the indicator Transport flows of goods, the target is a 5% reduction in travel time. For several projects, there was no clear target set for travel time reduction. For others, a range of time reductions were provided. As only one preliminary study has been concluded, there are no reported results. As such, it is not possible, currently, to assess the project's result attainment. In the same vein, it is not possible to validate the proper functioning of the intervention logic for this Specific Objective.

The programme target for the result indicator Travel time of passengers is 5% reduction of travel time in chosen transport node/corridor. Similarly, for the indicator Transport flows of good, the target is 5% reduction of travel time in chosen transport node/corridor. For several projects, there was no clear target set for the reduced travel time. For others, there was a range of time reductions given as a target. As there is only one preliminary study that has been finished, there are no reported results from the projects. Hence, it is not possible to assess the result achievement of the projects at the moment.

Table 10: Output and result indicators for Specific Objective 3.1 projects

	<i>Output: Number of developed and improved transport corridors and nodes</i>		<i>Result: Travel time of passengers</i>	
	Target	Realised	Target	Realised
<b>FinEst Link</b>	1	1	Travel time HEL-TLN 30 min	*
<i>Ongoing projects</i>				
<b>Adapt</b>	40		10 % decrease expected	
<b>FinEstSmartMobility</b>	3		5-10% decrease expected	
<b>Smart E67</b>	1		0,57 % decrease expected	
<b>EfficientFlow</b>	2		7 % decrease expected	
<b>E-ticketing</b>	3		5 % decrease expected	
<b>Refec</b>	1		Not defined. Project works on feasibility studies for the potential new corridor and two transport nodes.	
<b>Smart Log</b>	2		5-20% decrease expected	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Programme target</i>		<b>25</b>		
<i>Target fulfilment rate</i>		<b>4 %</b>		

\*The project was conducted as a feasibility study.

*Identify the improvements in travel times of the passengers.*

Only one funded project has been concluded thus far, namely the FinEst Link preliminary study. If the tunnel would be constructed, the Helsinki-Tallinn route would last only 30 minutes (currently it is up to 3 hours). Realisation of the tunnel project is however still far in the future. As such, a reduction of travel time cannot be accounted to the preliminary study.

Based on the interviews and reports in respect of the Adapt project, some time savings have been recorded in the Åland Islands but not that much in Stockholm. The remaining projects are still ongoing and interviews have not yet been conducted.

No reported results currently exist in respect of improvements in passenger travel times. As such, it is not possible to adequately assess project result attainment at present.

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*Identify the improvements in the times for flows of goods.*

In the Adapt project the time savings for the flow of goods are the same as those for people (they use same routes and ferries).

No reported results currently exist in respect of improvements in travel times for goods. As such, it is not possible to adequately assess project result attainment at present.

*Identify whether transport corridors and nodes improvements have led to lower CO2 emissions.*

The Adapt project has seen overall reductions in CO2 emissions. Most of the projects are however still ongoing and there are no reported results as of yet.

*Are the methodologies in place for measuring the improvements in travel times and in the movement of the goods?*

For both FinEst Link and Adapt, the methodologies are in place but each partner basically used their own methods so method use here is difficult to analyse in greater detail. Most of the projects are still ongoing and there are no reported results as yet.

In general, it would be clearer to set the result targets relating to reduced travel time in terms of minutes. That way, notwithstanding the calculation method, the same unit would be reported and the information would be comparable.

*Are the achieved improvements in transport corridors and nodes sustainable?*

No results-based information is available yet for most of the projects as they are still ongoing. Based on the documents and interviews, it can be concluded that the improvements in transport corridors brought about by the Adapt project are sustainable. This is because the Adapt project produced maritime route maps based on hydrographical surveys and analysis.

*Identify end-user experience where applicable in using improved transport corridors and nodes.*

As the FinEst link was, essentially, a feasibility study, there are no end users. The Adapt project did not report any end user experiences.

*What have been main challenges in improving cross-border transport nodes and corridors?*

The project interviews have not reported any major challenges. However, as there is only one project relating to cross-border transport nodes. It can be concluded that there it is easier to develop transport corridors than transport nodes across borders.

### **3.2 Improved services of existing small ports to improve local and regional mobility and contribute to tourism development**

This specific objective aims to contribute to the improvement of services associated with the small ports' network. This will improve local and regional mobility thus improving travel opportunities for local people as well as attracting more visitors to these regions.

*To what extent have the set targets been reached? How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?*

At the programme level, the output target was 15 ports with improved services. This has already been exceeded four-fold with the finished projects. Indeed, the target output value for all finished and ongoing projects is 141 small ports with improved services. The result indicator focuses on the share of Central Baltic small ports with good services. None of the projects however mentioned targets at result level, only at output level. The result target at programme level was 75 % of Central Baltic small ports with good services, the baseline being 54% in 2014.

In terms of quantitative targets, the output targets are already met. Programme funding is clearly efficient in terms of delivering the desired outputs. In addition, the qualitative targets set by the projects, such as the creation of networks and improved marketing, were also met.

Table 11: Output and result indicators for Specific Objective 3.2 projects

	<i>Output: Number of ports with improved services</i>		<i>Result: Share of Central Baltic small ports with good services</i>	
	Target	Realised	Target	Realised
SmartPorts	16	16		
MASAPO	8	8		
30MILES	12	12		
<i>Ongoing projects</i>				
PortMate	19			
SEASTOP	21			
Sustainable Gateways	9			
FamilyPorts	4	1		
BATSECO-BOAT	18			
Smart Marina	34			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>37</b>		
<i>Programme target</i>		15		
<i>Target fulfilment rate</i>		<b>247%</b>		

*What public services of the small ports have been improved?*

The projects have first and foremost improved the safety of these small ports, for instance through investments in first aid kits and firefighting equipment. In addition, the safety of the pier areas has been improved in many cases. Several projects have also improved their port services (e.g. information and booking services), as well as their port amenities such as toilets and showers. These improvements make it easier for boaters and other customers to use the ports.

*Are the improved services adding value for the small ports' network attractiveness?*

The improved services not only make it easier to use the ports but they also make the ports attractive to the boaters and other customers. According to a survey produced by one of the projects, the safety and basic services of these ports are the most important things for boaters when deciding in which to dock. These types of improvements are reflective of the core issues addressed by the funded projects. Improved information about nearby ports also makes boating safer thus increasing the attractiveness of the port network. When boaters choose to dock in a port, they are not usually interested in that specific port per se, but in the region. Even if only some ports in a region are improved, word spreads quickly, creating a snowball effect which adds to the region's attractiveness.

*What are the improvements for local people?*

After service and amenity improvements these port areas are more likely to become 'living rooms' for the local inhabitants, who can visit them and participate in their events. The local people also benefit from the increase in maritime tourist inflow because it creates opportunities for local businesses in e.g. catering, tourism services, car rental and diving. In one project voluntary rescuers were trained and events on sea safety were organised for different groups of local people so sea safety raising awareness of these issues in the local area.



*Are the small ports' services improvements sustainable?*

Sustainability remains an important objective of these projects. The quality of the improvements is high and in general the services are sustainable, but in the end their sustainability depends upon the local port masters or other staff trained in the projects.

*Are there additional spill-over effects related to the improved services in the small ports?*

After the improvements, people other than boaters are also more likely to visit these port areas in order to access the services provided and enjoy the atmosphere. The improvements also provide better opportunities for other actors to operate in the port areas. Some projects reached a wider target group than initially planned. Since voluntary services have also been boosted, the police and border guard can more readily rely on this infrastructure than was previously the case.

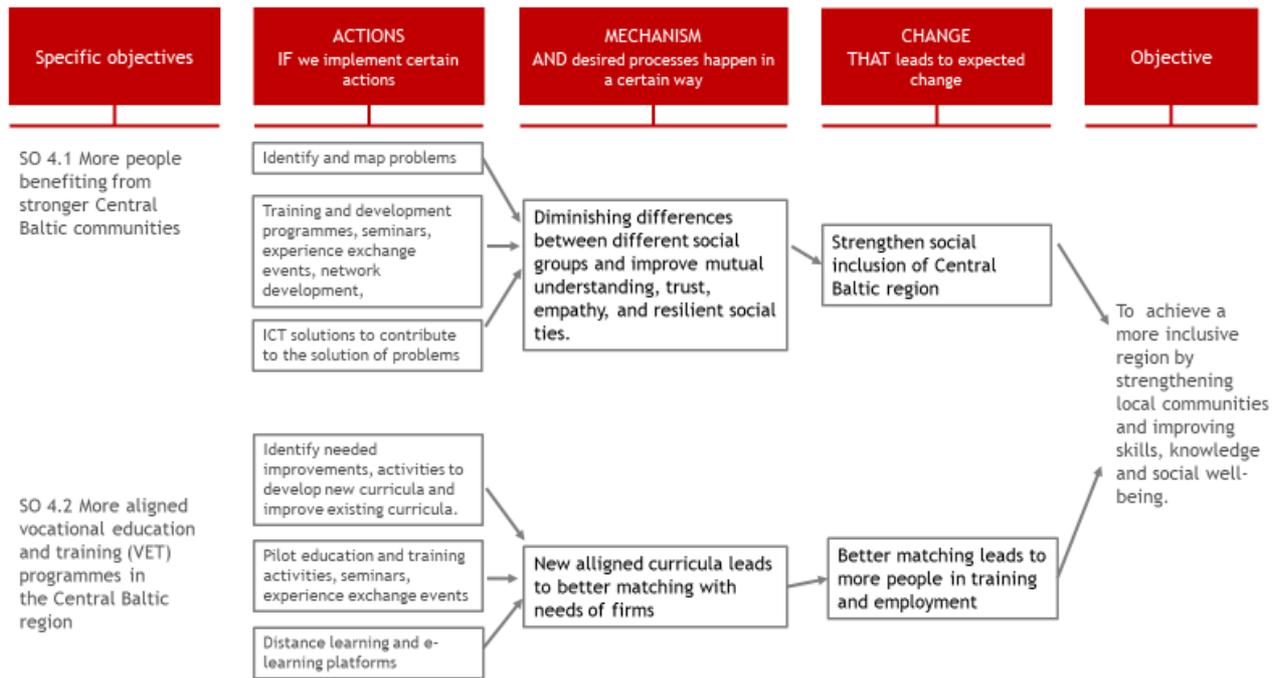
*Identify small ports' service improvements related to innovative solutions and technologies which have potential for wider use.*

One project created a model for developing small ports which is available on the project website. It is a comprehensive business model that other ports can also utilise for their own development. Another project created self-service machines that visitors to the ports can use to pay for services even when port staff are not there. The devices remain active and their design could be used more broadly in other ports. A third project developed an app informing boaters how to approach specific ports from a distance. The app is being further developed by another Interreg Central Baltic project.

## **5.4 PRIORITY AXIS 4: SKILLED AND SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE REGION**

Priority 4 aims to achieve a more inclusive region by strengthening local communities and improving the skills, knowledge and social well-being of people. The ways in which this aim is expected to be reached include, enhancing the competitiveness of vocational education and training and creating stronger links to the labour market. Priority 4 consists of two Specific Objectives; 4.1 More people benefiting from stronger Central Baltic communities and 4.2 More aligned vocational education and training programmes in the Central Baltic region.

The figure below portrays the theory of change and how the specific objectives will lead to the overall objective for Priority 4.



Graph 14: Theory of Change for Priority Axis 4: Skilled and socially inclusive region

#### 4.1 More people benefiting from stronger Central Baltic communities

The aim of objective 4.1 is to strengthen social inclusion in the Central Baltic region with the identified activities designed to strengthen communities via ‘people to people’ projects that help to diminish the socio-economic disparities between different social groups and improve mutual understanding, trust, empathy and resilient social ties. Those in the Central Baltic at risk of social exclusion include targeted communities and target groups but differ from project to project i.e. immigrant groups, senior citizens or young people. The targeted beneficiaries are regional and local authorities and community-based non-governmental organisations with statutory responsibility to deal with community development. The result indicator is the number of communities with improvements while the output indicator is the number of participating people.

*To what extent have the set targets been reached? How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?*

At the programme level, the output target was 5 000 participants. The target for result indicator communities with improvements was 30. As table 12 shows, the number of participants has already been far exceeded on the basis of concluded projects alone. The programme has therefore been efficient in delivering the desired outputs. There is clear evidence that the funded activities have contributed to the goal of more people benefiting from stronger Central Baltic communities, all of the projects interviewed have attained their objectives and all of the projects have reached their output and result indicator targets. It can therefore be said that the intervention logic is functioning in the intended manner. However, the result indicator ‘communities with improvements’ is a rather convoluted indicator, as it basically measures whether there were any successes in the project or not. It does not thus measure the degree or spread of improvements within a given community.

Table 12: Output and result indicators for Specific Objective 4.1 projects

	<i>Output: Number of participants</i>		<i>Result: Communities with improvements</i>	
	Target	Realised	Target	Realised
Let us be active!	405	1439	1	1
PAD	135	209	2	2
REGI	290	755	2	2
SIPPE	330	1216	1	1
TheatreEx	400	721	1	1
PIM	250	719	2	2
YOUTH-SPORT-VOL	500	985	1	1
Active Age	100	406	1	1
FEM (Female Estonian Migrant)	210	425	2	2
EmpowerKids	210	673	1	1
CROSS	250	719	1	1
<i>Ongoing projects</i>				
Gardens	150	39		
DSB	2080			
MuCH MORE	60	60		
PRIME	50	32	2	
CoMe Strong	250	64		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5670</b>	<b>8462</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Programme target</i>		<i>5000</i>		<i>30</i>
<i>Target fulfilment rate</i>		<b>169 %</b>		<b>50%</b>

The projects interviewed in connection with the evaluation of objective 4.1 were Active Age, FEM, Let us be active!, EmpowerKids, SIPPE, CROSS and PAD. According to the respondents, all the objectives have been met for all the projects within this objective, some projects even exceeded their targets. This was mainly because more people were engaged than initially planned (as we can see in table 12).

The projects are positive in terms of cross-border cooperation. The projects have benefited from different kinds of skills and lessons from other countries. However, it is not always obvious how the cross-border work has brought added value to some projects as the communities at the centre of the intervention might not interact with each other at all.

#### *What was the improvement for the community?*

How the projects helped communities to improve varies from project to project, for example, the respondent interviewed from the project Active age explains that the project directly contributed to the creation of a stronger community by either integrating senior unemployed people back into the labour market or creating better conditions for doing so. The project activated a noteworthy number of unemployed seniors in the region. The respondent explains:

*“This in turn creates a more positive attitude and atmosphere in the community, encourages people to start with new initiatives, provide support to each other and helps them to address different problems.”*

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The respondent from Let us be active! notes that older people were given the opportunity to be socially active and to do something meaningful while many also established new friendships. Awareness was raised in terms of senior volunteering; guidelines were produced on how to promote it and engage seniors in it etc. Senior volunteering and active ageing also gained better visibility. The project SIPPE was described as seeking to develop new forms of volunteering for older people to gather together. It reduced loneliness by promoting social networks through increased activity and inclusion.

The respondent from EmpowerKids explains that the children involved in the project spent time together having fun and learning together which expands their horizons. Another example here relates to the project FEM which is now an active network for Estonian women in Finland and women who are planning to emigrate to Finland with two information points now open in Finland to facilitate this.

*To what extent have people been directly involved in activities organised by funded projects?*

The respondents emphasise that the participants have been directly involved to a significant extent in the organised activities funded by the project. The interviewees noted that a great number of people have been involved, more than expected, but also that the same participants have been involved to a large extent in the activities. One respondent stressed that the interest of the target group was great and support provided by the training and other activities was much appreciated. For example, fourteen seniors participated in over ten activities which the respondents say is remarkable for a rural region with a limited number of people. Two of the respondents explained that the target group were involved actively in the development of the concept.

Another respondent explains the target groups involvement in the activity:

*“Participants of mentoring programmes were taking part in the mentoring activities at least once every month, in addition they were working in pairs (mentor and mentee) at least once a month. Later on, in project terms, employees and enterprises also took part in diversity management training exercises.”*

*What kind of tools/solutions worked best for achieving targeted improvements for the communities?*

The tools or solutions that worked best for achieving the targeted improvements for the community were differed on both a project and target group basis. Most respondents highlighted the value of practical training and best practice examples. Among the tools mentioned in this context were the setting up of a support group for unemployed seniors and study tours which were useful both for project partners and participants as they enabled each group to establish contacts with and learn from the neighbouring regions. Practical training, such as healthy lifestyle and first aid training and language training also contributed to attainment of the targeted community improvements.

Another project also stressed the importance of practical training noting that employees and enterprises were interested in very practical training relating to diversity management activities. They were exposed to best practice examples and learning from others in relation to successful and unsuccessful organisational practices. Additionally, participant involvement (of older people in this case) was also highlighted via project communication. Participants engaged their friends in the activities and therefore the project did not have to invest money in communicating them.

One of the respondents explained that the tool itself, which was developed within the project, aimed to improve community activity levels through realising the needs of the participants (children in this case) as they were using the tool.

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### *What worked well and challenges in implementing the projects*

Almost all respondents emphasise a good partnership as something that worked well in the projects. The partnerships were said to be efficient and the communication, respect between and the eagerness of the partners to learn from each other was also mentioned.

*“The project team was focused on solutions so even while working on a limited budget the project managed to create the X ...The partnerships were balanced, everyone had expertise and no one had the attitude that they knew more than other partners”*

Another thing that was highlighted as something that worked well was that the participants could influence the choice of proposed activities (through a survey), making the proposed activities more effective in relation to the target group.

The respondents highlighted numerous challenges in implementing the projects such as identifying and communication with target groups, budgets that were not efficiently divided between partners and adapting the activities to the needs of the target groups. One obvious challenge here was that the different countries used different definitions as regards which age a person is considered ‘old’. Another respondent also noted the difficulty in identifying and communicating with the target group since the target group did not have email addresses, making that phase of the project very time-consuming. Once the activities got underway however communication became easier.

Respondents also highlighted the difficulty in adapting activities to the various target groups; in identifying the most important training needs likely to be of interest to enough participants, in developing a tool that suits children of different ages and in creating a positive atmosphere for project participants such that they could feel able to open up to one another.

One respondent suggested that more local employers should have been involved in planning the project activities, such as development of the training plan and participation in the support group programme. The arrangement of some kind of contact between seniors and local employers is also said to have been useful to better match the expectations and needs of both groups.

One of the respondents noted that they had underestimated the time and money it took to develop a new online tool. The budget was not sufficiently well distributed amongst the partners. The respondent describes the situation thus:

*“Some of the partners had unallocated monies while similar amounts were required by another partner, but the money couldn't be shared so the project did not use all the money it had, although they would have needed money for different things. It would have required official modification procedures and they ran out of time.”*

## **4.2 More aligned vocational education and training programmes in the Central Baltic region**

This objective aims at the further integration of the Central Baltic labour market by developing aligned vocational education programmes. The education programmes are meant to be based on the specific needs of the enterprises operating within the region. By developing skills that are better matched with labour market requirements the objective can also decrease social exclusion. The main target groups are people involved in vocational education and training and companies. Targeted beneficiaries are public and private vocational education and training institutions, including universities of applied sciences, i.e. universities delivering professional degree programmes, national, regional and local authorities responsible for developing vocational education and training, as well as organisations representing employers and

employees (social partners). The output indicator is the number of benefitting vocational education schools and the result indicator is the share of aligned vocational education and training (VET) programmes in the Central Baltic region.

*To what extent have the set targets been reached? How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?*

At the programme level, the output target was the number of benefitting vocational educational schools, which was 22. The target result indicator, the share of aligned vocational education and training (VET) programmes in the Central Baltic region, was 18. As table 13 shows, the target for benefitting vocational educational schools has to a large extent already been achieved counting only those projects already concluded. Hence the programme can be said to be efficient in delivering the desired outputs. The result indicator target of 18 aligned VET programmes in the Central Baltic region has also largely been met.

Table 13: Output and result indicators for Specific Objective 4.2 projects

	<i>Output: Number of benefitting vocational education schools</i>		<i>Result: Share of aligned vocational education and training (VET) programmes in the Central Baltic region</i>	
	Target	Realised	Target	Realised
EDU-SMEs	4	4	1	1
SAFHY	3	3	2	2
DeDiWe	4	4	1	1
ACUCARE	3	3	2	2
EDU-RAIL	5	5	5	5
ITSVET	3	3	1	1
<b>Ongoing projects</b>				
NURED	4		2	
BOOSTED	6		1	
SimE	3		1	
Crea-RE	3		1	
UniLog	4		1	
NatureBizz	4		1	
CoMET	5			
OnBoard-Med	5			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>
Programme target		22		18
<b>Target fulfilment rate</b>		<b>100 %</b>		<b>67 %</b>

*What was aligned in the curricula? Are the aligned curricula in use or will they be?*

All the projects listed above (table 12) except ITSVET were interviewed. For the SAFHY project, two different degrees were harmonised, namely, learning modules for cleaning and health. In the DeDiWe project, a multidisciplinary e-services platform was developed in the social and health sector which strengthened information management and competence. In the ACUCARE project two online learning modules were developed, out-of-home care and nursing care, creating multi-professional cooperation in child protection. In the EDU-SMEs project, a common e-course was created on business cooperation. In the EDU-rail project, five harmonised and modernised specialisation modules (5-20 ECTS) were developed along with a teaching methodology for railway engineering and logistics VET. All the aligned curricula remain in use even after the projects that developed them were concluded.

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*Where relevant, what is the feedback from students who studied, or are currently studying, based on the aligned curricula?*

The students were very positive about the aligned curricula in all the interviewed projects. One of the respondents expressed the following:

*“Students have been cooperating with companies, they have engaged in genuine problem solving for businesses. Concrete tasks for small businesses were popular with students”*

It was also noted that students from different programmes met each other as a result of the aligned curricula. One of the respondents asked simply, “why had this not been done before”.

The most important project results for respondents were the learning modules and aligned curricula developed within the projects. In addition, one of the projects highlighted that the new learning material supports learning a new language since the material is available in four languages. Moreover, the learning material is cheap to buy and it has been bought by a number of hospitals in both Estonia and Finland. Another project notes that the most important result is that work practices changed due to the project and a new model of cooperation with small businesses emerged. Small businesses from Latvia gave cross-border assignments to Finnish students. The operating model, the course and the material remain in operation after the project was concluded.

The respondents also reiterated that the project partners were committed, that the cooperation process worked well and that the expertise provided was appropriate. It was also noted that project visibility and results will be disseminated but also continued to be developed in many different directions after the project had been concluded.

*The main challenges in the curricula alignment processes and the challenges in implementing the projects*  
The main challenges expressed in the curricula alignment processes were the different educational platforms used at different universities, the different technologies used and the different legislation and guidelines used for schools in the various countries involved. The need for region-wide relevance was also mentioned as an issue to be addressed.

Although the respondents noted that cooperation worked well in the project some also noted that cross-border cooperation generated significant challenges in respect of implementing the projects. Challenges associated with the cross-border cooperation were experienced within the project groups, such as those relating to the existence of different work cultures and continuing differences in learning platforms and technologies as noted above. One of the respondent’s notes:

*“The practical challenge is to make modules when one was done in Estonia and the other was in Finland. Different learning platforms and technologies vary from university to country”*

Even though cross-border cooperation proved challenging, it clearly increased learning in the projects.

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## 6. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME AND ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

### 6.1 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

The Interreg Central Baltic programme is a very compact and concentrated programme. The selected investment priorities, linked to the Priorities and Specific Objectives, have clearly been chosen with reference to the perceived 'added value' of the Central Baltic added value. The project selection process is also quite rigorous, and consequently the proportion of successful projects has so far been high. The Steering Committee members were relatively satisfied with the quality of the applications and with the two-step selection process, although they called for compulsory consultation with the Joint Secretariat at the application phase and further discussion on the jointness of the projects.

#### *Assessment of reaching of set targets at Priority level and overall programme level*

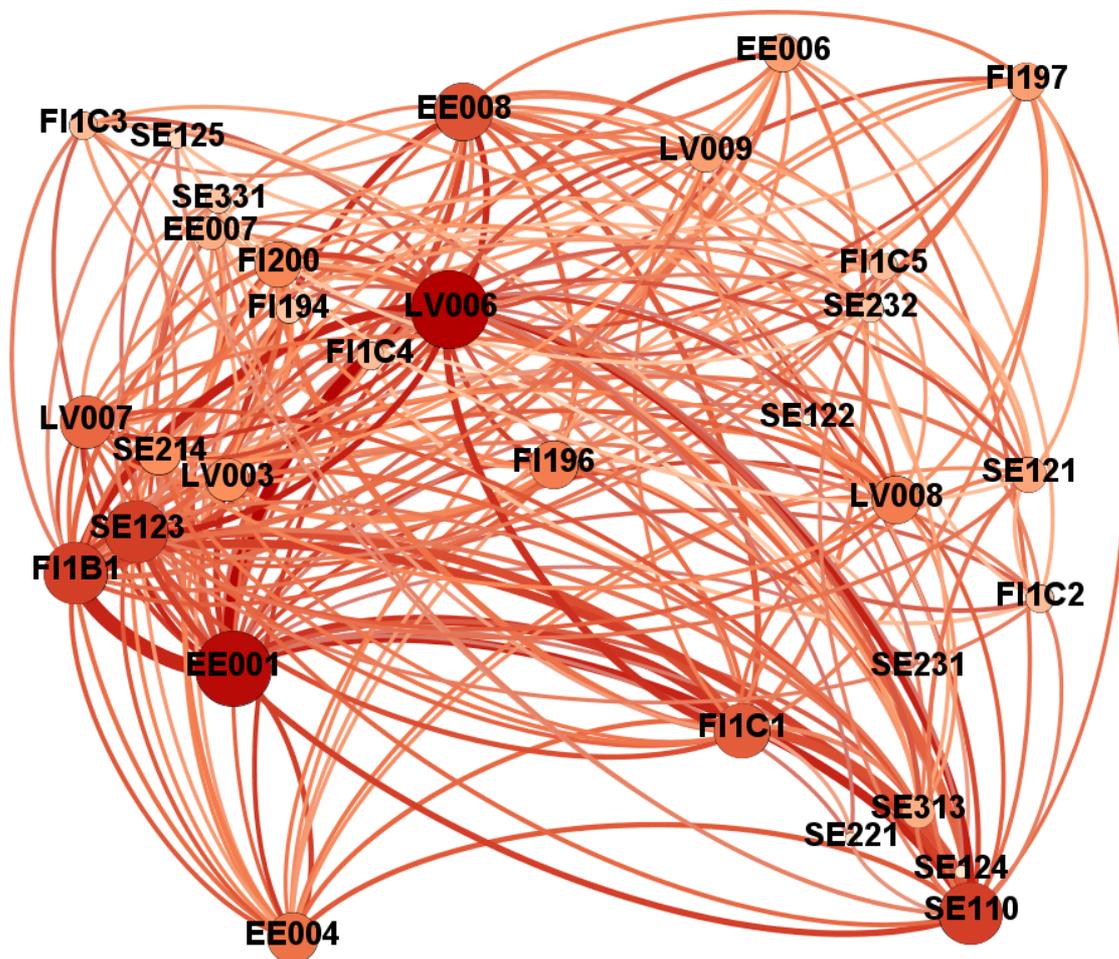
The overall goal for the Interreg Central Baltic programme is to strengthen cooperation among participating regions. This objective is furthered through actions related to the competitive economy, sustainable use of common resources and connecting the region priority goals, as well as through improving skills and social inclusion in the region. These are the four programme priorities which are further divided into Specific Objectives. Further information on the programme architecture can be found in Annex 2 which outlines the Interreg Central Baltic intervention logic.

When analysing the involvement of the regions in the Interreg Central Baltic programme<sup>1</sup> with the help of Social Network Analysis, it can be seen that the regions participating in most projects are<sup>2</sup> Põhja-Eesti EE001, Helsinki-Uusimaa FI1B1, Riga LV006, Stockholm County SE110, and Southwest Finland FI1C1. Other important project partner regions include the Åland Islands FI200 and Östergötaland County SE123. The thickness of the connecting lines illustrates the importance of connections in graph 15 below and the darkness of the node shows the number of connections the region has in the different projects in which it participates. Partners from all eligible regions participate in the Interreg Central Baltic projects, with the core areas having more connections to each other than the adjacent areas.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the analysis, each project was coded on the basis of the regions of the partners participating in the projects. All partners (Lead, Project, and Associated) were coded equally. As the coding referred to the involvement of regions in the projects, one or several partners from one region in a project were coded the same. The data was analysed using the UCINET program for Social Network Analysis.

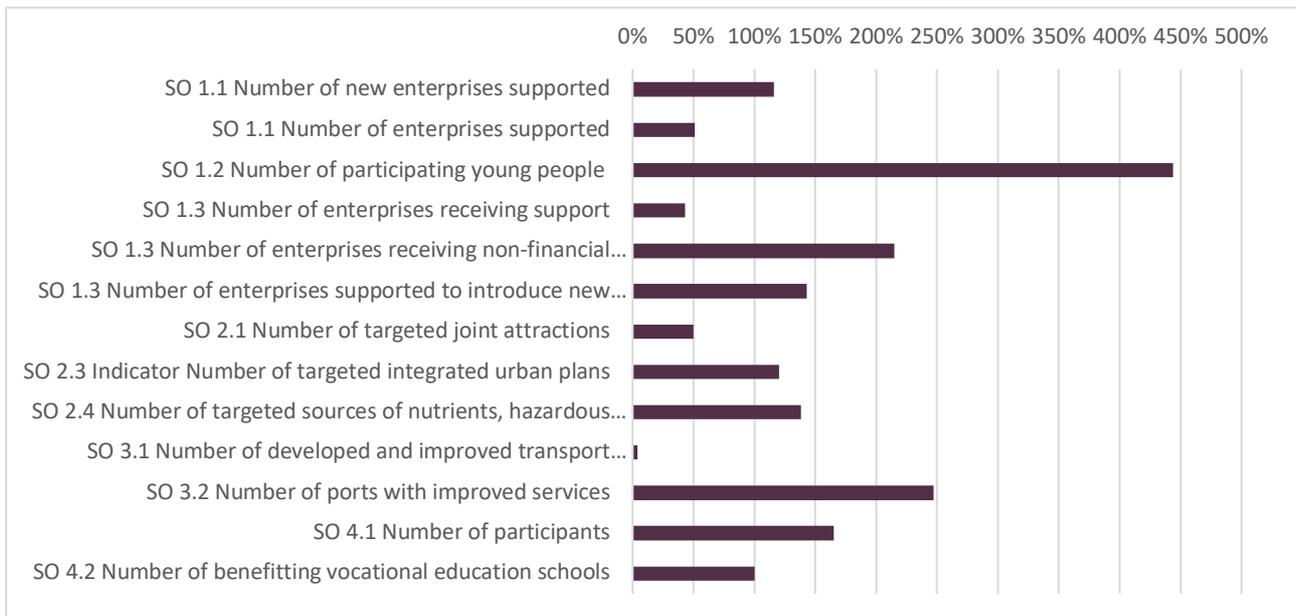
<sup>2</sup> These regions have the highest degree centrality values, i.e. the number of ties



Graph 15: Social Network Analysis of project participation amongst the Central Baltic regions

There are no objectives set at the programme or priority level. Hence, the only way to assess the programme is to look at the Specific Objective level. Thus, assessment of the priorities and programme will entail aggregating the degree to which the Specific Objectives reached their targets.

Overall, almost all Specific Objectives have been successful in terms of attaining the set targets and benefiting from cross-border co-operation. However, the degree of success varies between Specific Objectives and Priorities. On the basis of the assessment, it can be said that the Specific Objectives of Priority 4 have been successful, as has Specific Objective 2.4, and, to a large degree Specific Objective 1.2. The other Specific Objectives can be rated as good in terms of target attainment and benefiting from cross-border co-operation. A few Specific Objectives did not do well in terms of target attainment, mainly due to challenging target-setting or the low number of completed projects. Graph 16 illustrates the rate of fulfilment in terms of programme-level output targets by the finished projects in each Specific Objective.



Graph 16: Output target fulfilment rate at SO level (realised outputs / programme output targets)

#### *What is the impact of the programme in the measured changes?*

The current evaluation is a theory-based focus. This combined with the fact that, as yet, few results have been reported by the funded projects, makes it impossible to measure the impact of the Interreg Central Baltic Programme quantitatively. Also, the programme contributes to many fields where there is significant national activity (e.g. incubators for start-up companies and tourism development), making it difficult to isolate the programme's impact. There are however clear indications that the programme has had positive effects in several fields, such as youth entrepreneurship education, VET curricula alignment, social inclusion and nutrient load in the waters of the Baltic Sea.

#### *How effective has Central Baltic funding been in creating change in this field?*

The effectiveness of the programme varies greatly between Specific Objectives and even projects. Whereas one could argue that the Specific Objective 1.1 and 1.3 have not been very efficient in terms of results per euros spent, it is important to look beyond the output and result indicators. Both of these Specific Objectives have produced many positive effects, not captured by the indicators, such as national start-ups (as only cross-border start-ups are counted in the indicator). In order to better assess the effectiveness of the programme, it would be useful to collect more standardised information on the projects on other project outcomes as well.

#### *Did cross-border cooperation bring added value to the funded interventions?*

The Interreg Central Baltic programme requires genuine cross-border cooperation from each project. As the Programme Manual states, cooperation is based on networking and learning from each other. This cooperation can, over time, develop into people or organisations solving common issues/needs together. As recognised by the Interreg North mid-term evaluation (Kontigo, 2018), the added value of the projects can be derived from different sources, namely from critical mass, lowering barriers or recognising the border as a resource.

The concept of critical mass as a source of cross-border added value manifests itself in shared challenges and combined resources in a project. The point here is to have a positive-sum game, join forces and be a bigger player in the markets or solve a common problem together. The cluster exports in Specific Objective 1.3, reduction of Baltic Sea nutrient load in SO 2.4, and developing transport corridors in SO 3.1 are examples of critical mass as a source of cross-border added value.

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Other projects derive their cross-border added value from lowering barriers, namely tapping into the resources (skills, information, or contacts) of different networks of the partners. The projects focusing on start-up networking in SO 1.1 and the aligning of the VET curricula in SO 4.2 are good examples of lower barriers bringing cross-border added value.

In other projects, the border is seen as a resource in terms of learning from each other, exchanging information and knowledge. Those projects focusing on youth entrepreneurship in SO 1.2 and the urban planning projects under SO 2.3 derive their cross-border added value from this notion of the border as a resource.

The interviews with the project managers and some project partners confirmed that despite some culture- and project management -related challenges, most respondents were positive about the cross-border co-operation element bringing value to the project. In terms of sources of added value, the business-related projects clearly derived their added value from lowering barriers i.e. getting access to other partners' and countries' network resources and critical mass, i.e. combining forces for market entry. Many of the projects had similar target groups in this respect.

The project partners were very positive about the added value of cross-border co-operation in the survey to all project partners. 97 % of the respondents thought that cross-border cooperation brings added value to the project while 95 % believed that cross-border cooperation brings added value to the project partners and that their project focuses on a problem that is shared across the Central Baltic area. Only a very small percentage of respondents held negative views about cross-border cooperation in relation to the projects.

The Steering Committee saw that creating long-term co-operation is the most important element of cross-border added value in the selected projects. Furthermore, solving common problems through common solutions is also important, as is identification of economies of scale when entering foreign markets or using the project benefits/outputs in the entire Central Baltic area. The sharing of knowledge, methods, and good practices were also considered important elements of added value.

#### *What is the involvement of different types of partners in the implementation of CB projects?*

The 97 Interreg Central Baltic projects that this evaluation focuses on have a total of 622 partners. The number of partners varies between 2 and 25. On average, the projects have 4.7 partners with the median being 4.

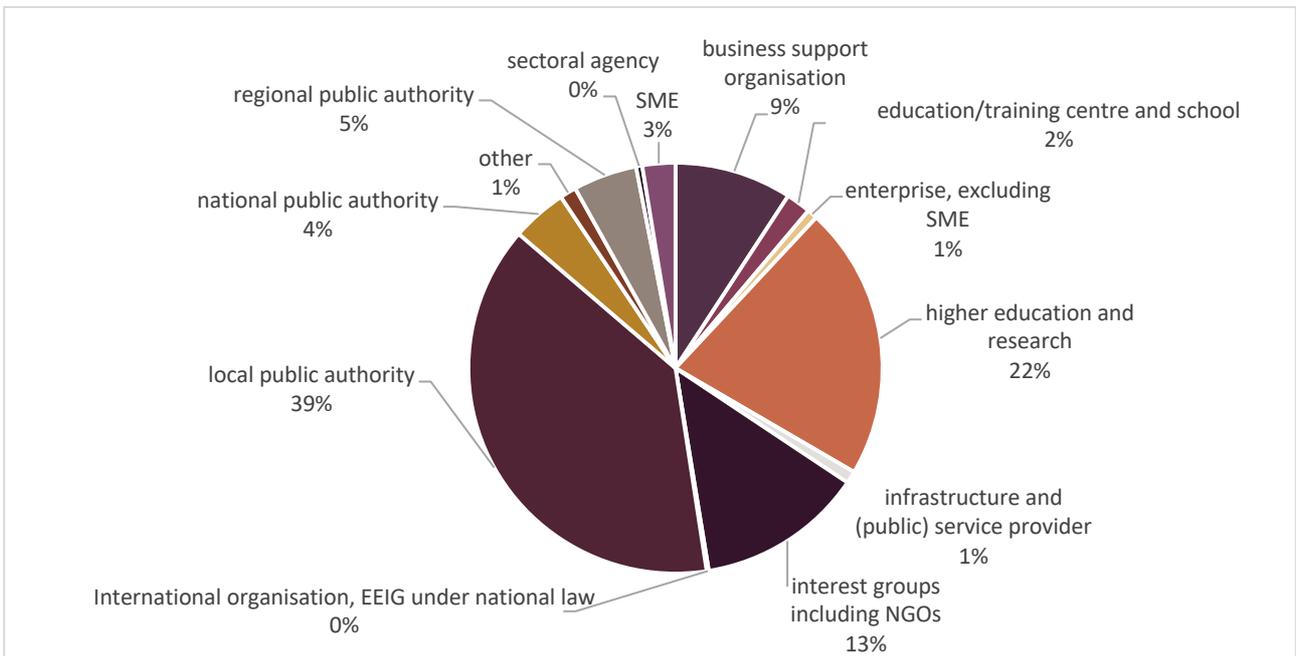
Of all the project partners, 38 % are Finnish, 26 % Estonian, 19 % Swedish, and 16 % Latvian. The Lead Partner is more often Finnish (58 %) or Estonian (27 %) than Swedish (12 %) or Latvian (3 %). In addition, there are two lead partners from Åland Islands. The distribution of Project Partners is however much more even across the four countries (19 - 27 %), with the highest number of project partners being Finnish. The programme could benefit from a more even distribution of lead partners and project partners- Especially the Latvian and Swedish partners should be encouraged to take part in the projects and even lead them. This would strengthen the connections within the entire Central Baltic region. However, the interest of project partners depends also on the national rules for own financing.



Table 14: Partners in Interreg Central Baltic projects by country

	Lead Partner	Project Partner	Associated Partner	Grand Total
Estonia	26	109	27	162
Finland	56	135	48	239
Latvia	3	87	11	101
Sweden	12	80	28	120
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>622</b>

Local public authorities represent the largest group of partners (39 %) in Interreg Central Baltic projects. Higher education and research institutions (22 %), Interest groups including NGOs (13 %) and business support organisations (9 %) are also important groups of project partners, as graph 17 below illustrates.



Graph 17: Types of partners in Interreg Central Baltic projects

The different types of partners tend, however, to adopt different roles in the projects. Even though local public authorities form the largest group of partners, they are far more likely to be associated or project partners than lead partners in the project. Indeed, when looking at table 15, it is clear that higher education and research institutions are the Lead Partners in a third of the Interreg Central Baltic projects. Interest groups, including NGOs lead approximately a fifth of the projects, and local public authorities and business support organisations lead approximately a sixth of the projects each.

Table 15: Types of partners in Interreg Central Baltic projects

	Lead Partner	Project Partner	Associated Partner	Grand Total
Business support organisation	14	43		57
Education/training centre and school	2	10		12
Enterprise, excluding SME	1	4		5
Higher education and research	32	102		134
Infrastructure and (public) service provider		6		6
Interest groups including NGOs	20	61		81
International organisation, EEIG under national law		1		1
Local public authority	15	112	114	241
National public authority	8	19		27
Other	2	6		8
Regional public authority	3	28		31
Sectoral agency		3		3
SME		16		16
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>622</b>

Local public authorities and higher education and research institutions are the most numerous as project partners but local public authorities are generally only associated partners in the projects.

Turku University of Applied Sciences has the largest number of projects, where it acts as a Lead Partner (7). The Satakunta University of Applied Sciences leads five projects, and the Baltic Region Healthy Cities Association leads four projects. Other Lead Partners lead 1-3 projects.

The involvement of the different types of partners varies according to Specific Objective due to the fact that the Specific Objectives have different target groups.

## 6.2 WIDER POLICY OBJECTIVES

### *EU 2020*

The EU 2020 strategy aims at smart, sustainable and inclusive growth through improving the coordination of national and EU policies. Smart growth focuses on developing the European economy based on knowledge and innovation. Sustainable growth, on the other hand, promotes a greener, more resource efficient and a more competitive economy. Finally, inclusive growth focuses on increasing the employment rate and on social and territorial cohesion. The EU 2020 strategy has been operationalised in the ESI Funds through 11 thematic objectives which are further divided into some forty investment priorities under ERDF.

The Interreg Central Baltic must also contribute to the EU 2020 strategy and its objectives. The Interreg Central Baltic programme has been structured in a way that its Specific Objectives relate to four the European investment priorities which in turn are related to the Europe2020 objectives. In the Interreg Central Baltic, Priority 1 contributes to the EU2020 objective Smart growth, whereas Priorities 2 and 3 contribute to the EU2020 objective Sustainable growth, while Priority 4 supports the EU2020 objective of Inclusive growth.



Table 16: Thematic objectives corresponding to the Interreg Central Baltic programme structure

Thematic Objective	Interreg Central Baltic
Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs (TO3)	Priority Axis 1: Competitive economy
Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (TO6)	Priority Axis 2: Sustainable use of common resources
Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures (TO7)	Priority Axis 3: Well-connected region
Investing in education, training and vocational training and skills and lifelong learning (TO10)	Priority Axis 4: Skilled and socially inclusive region
Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT (TO2)	<i>Horizontal objective</i>
Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors (TO4)	<i>Horizontal objective</i>

The EU 2020 goals are furthered throughout the programme implementation, where the chain starts from the project outputs and results, continues through the Priority Axes and further on to the EU 2020 level.

### *EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region*

The Interreg Central Baltic programme supports and contributes to the delivery of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Interreg Central Baltic Specific Objectives contribute to the EUSBSR Policy Actions and hence the EUSBSR priorities ‘Save the sea’, ‘Connect the region’, and ‘Increase prosperity’, as well as the horizontal actions ‘Spatial Planning’, ‘Capacity’, and ‘Climate’.

Most of the Interreg Central Baltic Specific Objectives, including all of the Priority axis 1 SOs, are directly connected to the EUSBSR goal ‘Increase prosperity’. Some of the Priority axis 2 SOs are directly connected to the horizontal action ‘Spatial Planning’. SO2.3 is directly connected to the ‘Connect the region’ priority while SO2.4 has a direct connection to the ‘Save the sea’ priority. Most Interreg Central Baltic SOs have an indirect connection to the EUSBSR horizontal actions ‘Capacity’ and ‘Climate’. Given the close connections between the Interreg Central Baltic Specific Objectives and the EUSBSR Policy Areas and Horizontal Actions, it is clear that all the Interreg Central Baltic projects support the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The table in annex 3 illustrates the connections between the Interreg Central Baltic programme and the EUSBSR Policy Actions.

The actions of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region are implemented through Flagships. As there is no specific funding for the implementation of the EUSBSR, the Flagships are financed from other sources, such as ERDF, EARDF, or national funding. A Flagship can be a single project, a group of projects’ contributions to the same action, or a process. The flagships projects must have a high macro-regional impact and be related to one or more of the EUBSR Policy Actions. Flagship status is awarded as a result of discussion within the EUSBSR National Coordinators and the Steering Group members of a EUSBSR policy area or horizontal action.

Despite the direct and indirect connections between the Interreg Central Baltic Specific Objectives and the EUSBS Policy Areas, there are only four Interreg Central Baltic projects with EUSBSR Flagship status. Namely, NUTRINFLOW contributes to PA ‘Bioeconomy’ under the umbrella project Baltic FLOW. BLASTICS, on the

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other hand, contributes to PA ‘Hazards’, NutriTrade to PA ‘Nutri’, and iWater to horizontal actions.<sup>3</sup> Given the small number of the EUSBSR Flagships financed from the Interreg Central Baltic programme, it is not meaningful to conduct a comparative assessment between the EUSBSR Flagships and other projects financed from the Interreg Central Baltic programme.

The Interreg Central Baltic website does not have a specific section related to the EUSBSR, nor is there a link to the EUSBSR. Furthermore, the website does not promote the Interreg Central Baltic-financed Flagships separately. Two of the four Flagships financed from the Interreg Central Baltic programme have the EUSBSR Flagship logo on their website, but the EUSBSR is not placed in a pronounced role on the project websites. The lack of capitalisation in respect of the EUSBSR by the Interreg Central Baltic programme and the Flagships is curious, especially since the major benefit of the projects being associated with the macro-regional strategies are related to the increased visibility and dissemination of the project results, in addition to increased opportunities for networking.<sup>4</sup>

*Horizontal objective: Enhancing access to, and use and quality of ICT*

The programme has contributed to enhancing access to and the use and quality of ICT in various ways. First of all, in Priority 1, IT was one of the supported sectors and hence the core of several projects. Also, the programme funded some IT platforms and tools in Priority 2 and 3 projects. All interviewed projects mentioned that digital tools were used in the project implementation and communication.

*Horizontal objective: Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors*

The programme has contributed to supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy through funding projects relating to green technology and sustainability, especially under Priorities 1, 2, and 3. The shift towards a low-carbon economy has been the core idea of several projects and these projects have engaged project partners and companies working in the field.

## 7. ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

### 7.1 HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE COMMUNICATION

In accordance with the Communications Strategy, communication activities are focused in two main directions:

- i) to ensure the generation and quality of cross-border projects,
- ii) to ensure wider awareness of cross-border benefits.

In support of these two fields of intervention, a range of specific objectives are set and indicators for their achievement designed.

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<sup>3</sup> Annex to the Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Ongoing and completed flagships of the EUSBSR (September 2018) at <https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/action-plan/25-ongoing-and-completed-flagships-of-the-eusbsr/viewdocument>

<sup>4</sup> Interact, Added Value of Macro-regional Strategies (2017) at [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/news/2017/03/17-03-2017-macro-regional-strategies-what-s-the-added-value-for-projects-and-programmes](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2017/03/17-03-2017-macro-regional-strategies-what-s-the-added-value-for-projects-and-programmes)

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To assist in evaluating the Communication Strategy objectives, the evaluators developed the Theory of Change (ToC). To aid reading the Theory of Change (in Graph 18), the following narrative provides an overview of the Strategy's main features:

*Communications Objectives:* The Communications Strategy is organised along the two main communications objectives mentioned above.

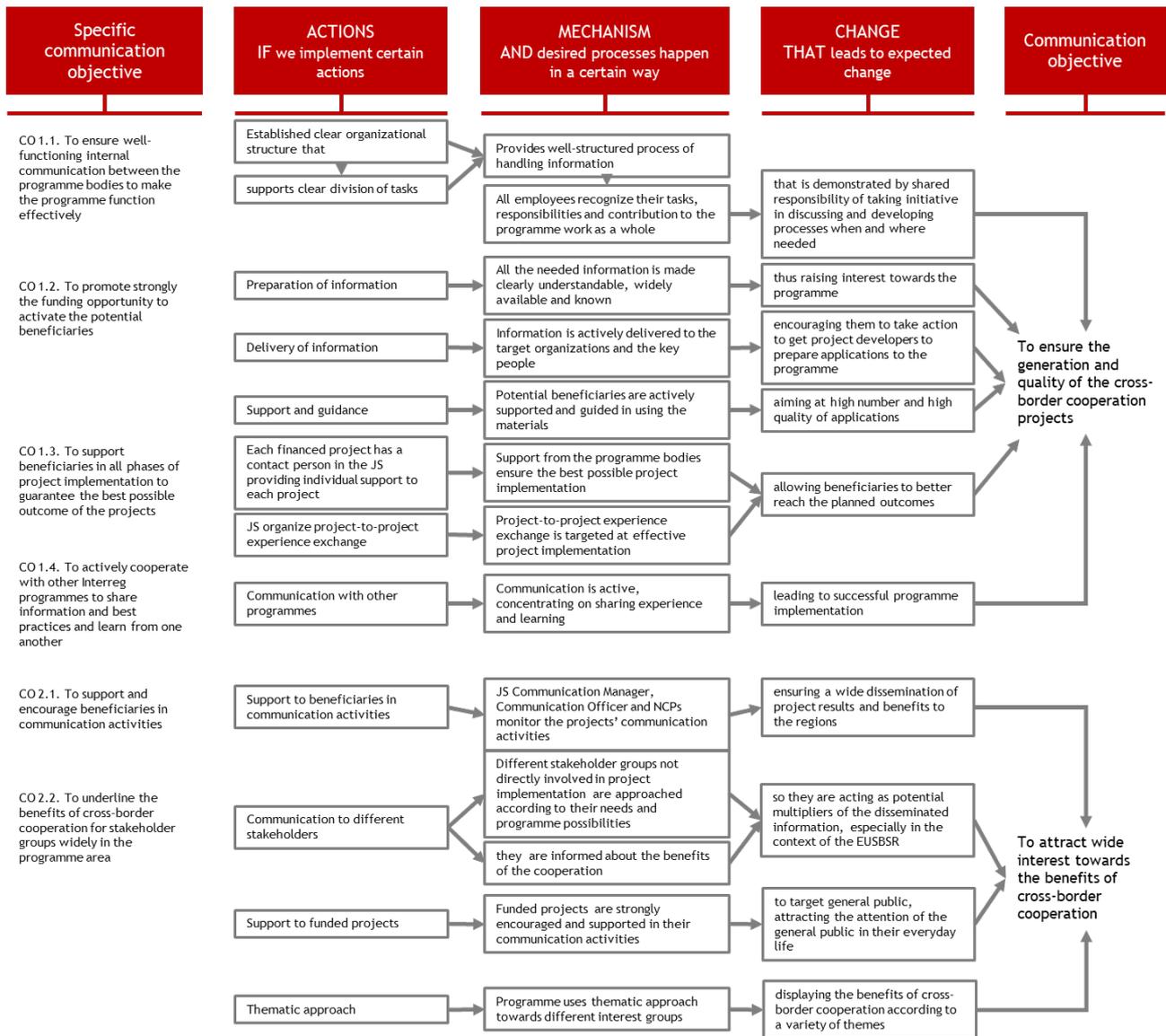
*Specific Communications objectives:* they constitute specific operational tasks, leading directly towards attainment of the communications objectives. The strategy comprises, in total, six specific communications objectives - four targeted at the generation and quality of cross-border cooperation projects and two at awareness raising on the benefits of cross-border cooperation.

*Actions:* they constitute activities implemented by the programme bodies in accordance with their functions and roles in respect of the attainment of specific communications objectives. These activities are specified in the intervention logic of the Communications Strategy.

*Mechanisms:* they constitute the desired processes that should occur in a certain way as a result of the undertaken actions, in order to generate the desired changes for the target groups. The Communications Strategy does not specify these processes, therefore evaluators constructed mechanisms based on a thorough analysis of the communications approaches mentioned in the strategy.

*Changes:* they constitute the expected changes that may occur as a result of actions implemented in a certain way (mechanisms). The Strategy does not specify the results to be achieved, focusing only on some output level result indicators used for measuring objective attainment. To fully cover the breadth of the objectives, evaluators hypothesised expected changes based on a thorough analysis of the strategy narratives.

The proposed ToC integrates previously mentioned elements into a single analytical framework. During the evaluation, it served as a point of reference and an evaluation tool, explaining the causal relationships between the intervention elements and allowing for qualitative measurement in respect of strategy objective attainment.



Source. Created by authors  
Graph 18. ToC for the Communications Strategy

### Internal communication between the programme bodies (CO 1.1.)

#### Assessment of the established communications system, its efficiency and effectiveness

The Programme's Communications system was constructed in a network format comprising the MA, the Joint Secretariat (JS), National Contact Points (NCP) and members of the MC and SC. The main responsibility for internal communication is assigned to the Head of the MA, which is in charge of communicating with the MC, SC, representatives of the Member States and EU structures. Communications activities are overseen by the Communication Manager in the JS.

Since there are several actors involved in the communications flow, internal coordination is extremely important. An information team (comprising the Communication Manager and NCPs,) coordinates all activities with the Project team (the Project Managers), who monitor implementation of the projects. Each team has separate weekly meetings to discuss their goals, tasks and activities. Thus, the priorities and activities of both teams need to be harmonised to achieve their common goals. In order to address these needs, joint meetings of both teams were initiated in 2018. Challenges however emerged particularly in

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respect of the availability of both teams - e.g., the Project Managers travel often and it is not easy for them to attend these meetings.

In addition, internal communication within the Information team itself remain challenging as the team members are located in different countries and NCPs are employed by different hosting institutions in the National administrations in their respective countries. Therefore, information activities require careful planning as each hosting institution has different working methods that are also reflected in the NCPs' work. This may however involve time constraints. In order to address these constraints, internal Information team meetings have been instituted (5 - 6 times per year). Weekly skype meetings are also organised.

Overall coordination between all MA and JS employees is ensured by the Management team meetings with their minutes available on the local server for everybody. The Communication Manager reflects upon the main outcomes of these meetings with the NCPs. Given the specifically international environment of this Programme, the organisation of frequent face-to face meetings is important and a valuable tool in building internal trust and intercultural relations between all the parties involved.

In addition to the Programme staff, other Programme stakeholders comprise the members of the MC and SC. While these structures are crucial to the operations of the Programme, the members juggle their tasks among many others duties in their National administrations. Thus, gathering timely and appropriate information on Programme developments and difficulties is a necessary activity to ensure the proper functioning of these structures.

#### *Achievements to date*

- + During the interviews the members of the MC/SC acknowledged the insights in general Programme developments (e.g., Communication Strategy, evaluation plans). This information helps the members to establish the overall picture of the Programme and its structures, hence the joint framework for actions is established;
- + Reportedly, the NCPs lacked access to the minutes of the Project team meetings and were not able to follow the progress of the projects implemented. Currently, the Communication Manager delivers the minutes to the NCPs while further activities are planned to improve the circulation of the minutes;
- + Information on project events is being stored in Google sheet format, in order to share it between Information team and Project team;
- + Representatives of the Member States (national and regional authorities) acknowledge establishment of the NCPs as a good approach and an important tool for promotion of the Programme and project results. The activities of the NCPs are appreciated by the beneficiaries since they can deliver information in national languages/in line with local needs
- + Communication between the MA/JS and MC /SC members is professional and well organised. This communication has helped to develop common trust. However, information on difficulties regarding projects implemented or the Programme could be communicated more quickly to the National Authorities in order to be able to contribute to and/or facilitate faster problem resolution.

#### *Areas for improvement*

- Since the NCPs are located outside the JS, but at the same time they are not integrated within the hosting National Administrations, close cooperation with the JS is important to ensure functioning of the NCPs as integral structures of the Programme. In this respect the JS has put in place an internal guide and mentoring and training is available to the NCPs. This support should be further strengthened, since the NCPs represent the Programme on the "front-line" and largely depend on information/support provided by the JS;

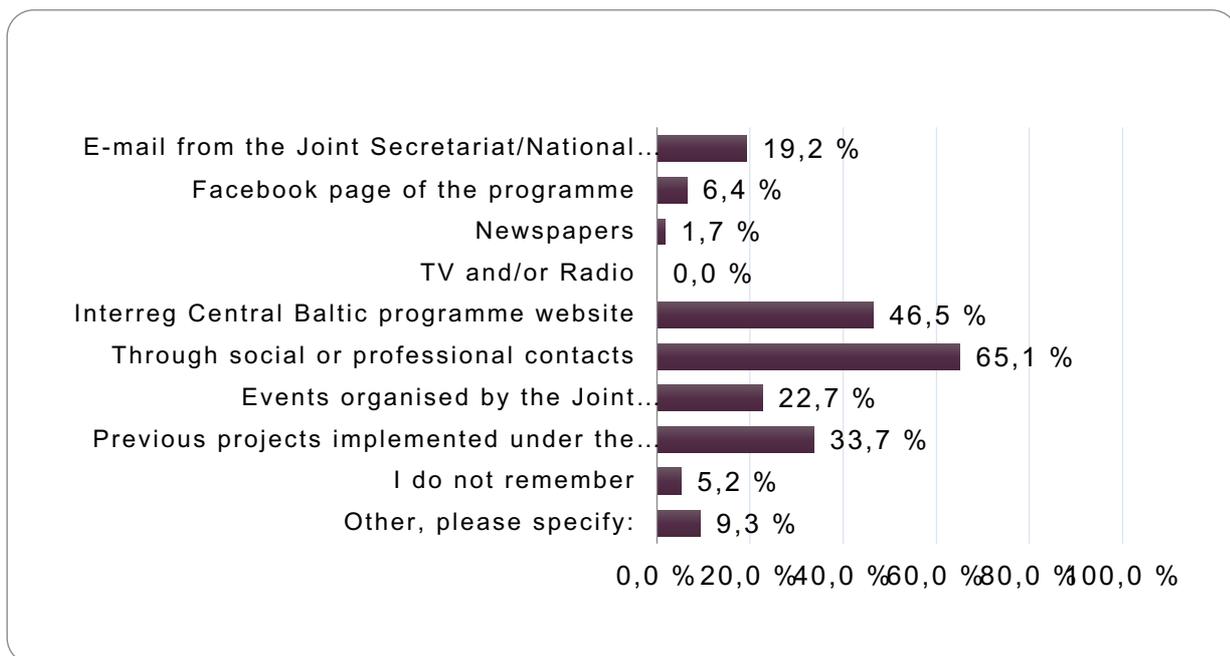
- Documents are stored internally in the JS, with a limited access for the NCPs. In several cases these limitations cause difficulties for the NCPs, as they would need access to the documents. Reportedly, efforts have been made by the JS to share relevant information/documents with the NCPs.
- Planning of the communication activities is not sufficiently advanced - timing is seen as potential area for improvement by some members of the MC.

### Conclusions

The Programme has undergone several changes during its lifetime. Progress has been made on the integration of the NCPs within the overall communication flow of the JS while internal coordination within the Information team has also been improved. Communication with the MC/SC is generally viewed as appropriate and sufficient, but greater effort is required to ensure more timely access to the Programme plans.

### Communication and the activity of potential beneficiaries (CO 1.2.)

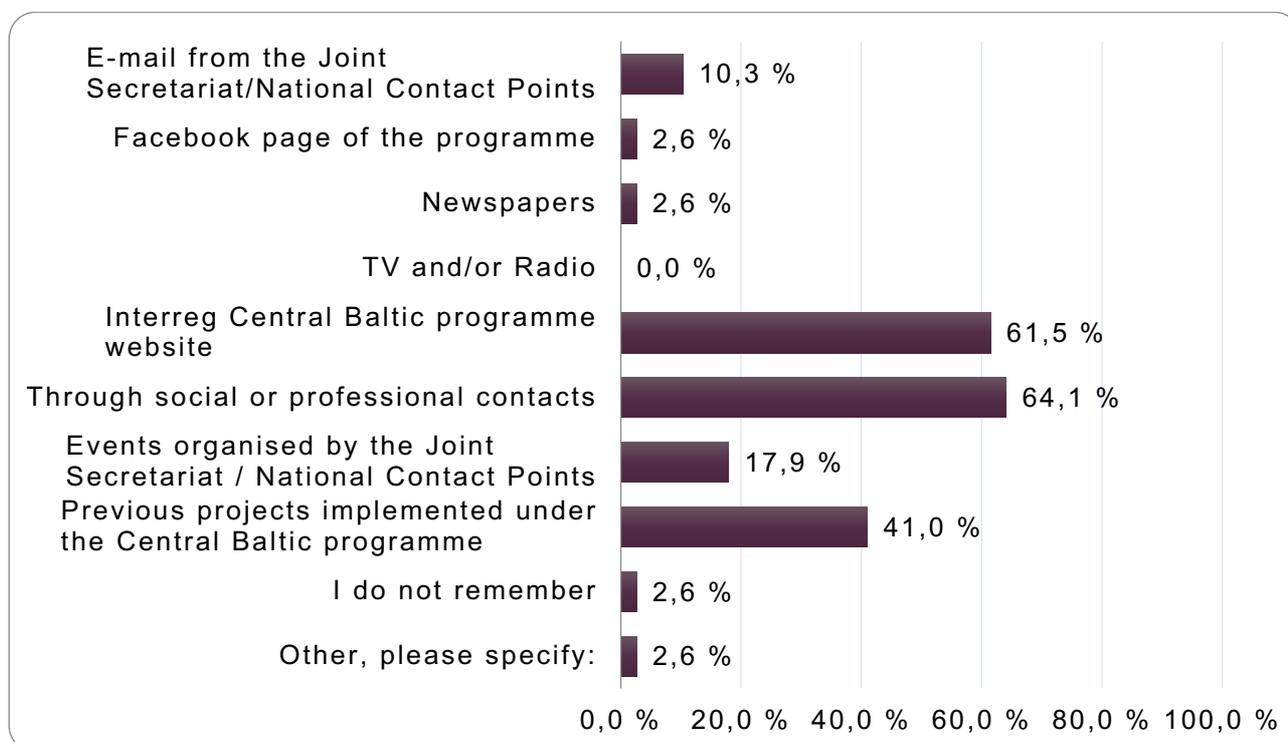
CO1.2. strives to foster activity of the potential beneficiaries of the Programme and the generation of good quality projects. Potential beneficiaries first encounter the Programme during the application phase, once information about the Programme’s Calls is made public. During the Survey both the beneficiaries and rejected applicants were asked about the sources they used to find out about the Programme.



Graph 19. Access to information about the programme (beneficiaries)  
*How did you find out about the Central Baltic programme? Multiple answers.*  
 All respondents: average 5.86, distribution 2.18 (N=172)

According to the Survey, the beneficiaries most often found out about the Programme from social or professional contacts (65.1%), closely followed by the Programme website (46.5%). Events organised by the JS provided such information for 22.7% and e-mails from the JS for a further 19.2%. It should also be noted that 33.7% of respondents had previously implemented projects under the Programme.

Similar answers were expressed by the respondents whose applications were rejected. Social and professional contacts were used by 64.1%. Slightly more applicants learned about the Programme from the website (61.5%). Events organised by the JS were mentioned by 17.9%. The most significant difference was noted regarding e-mails from the JS - only 10.3% mentioned this. Notably, 41% respondents mentioned that they had implemented projects under the Programme before and it was stated that **the Central Baltic Programme is a well-known instrument.**

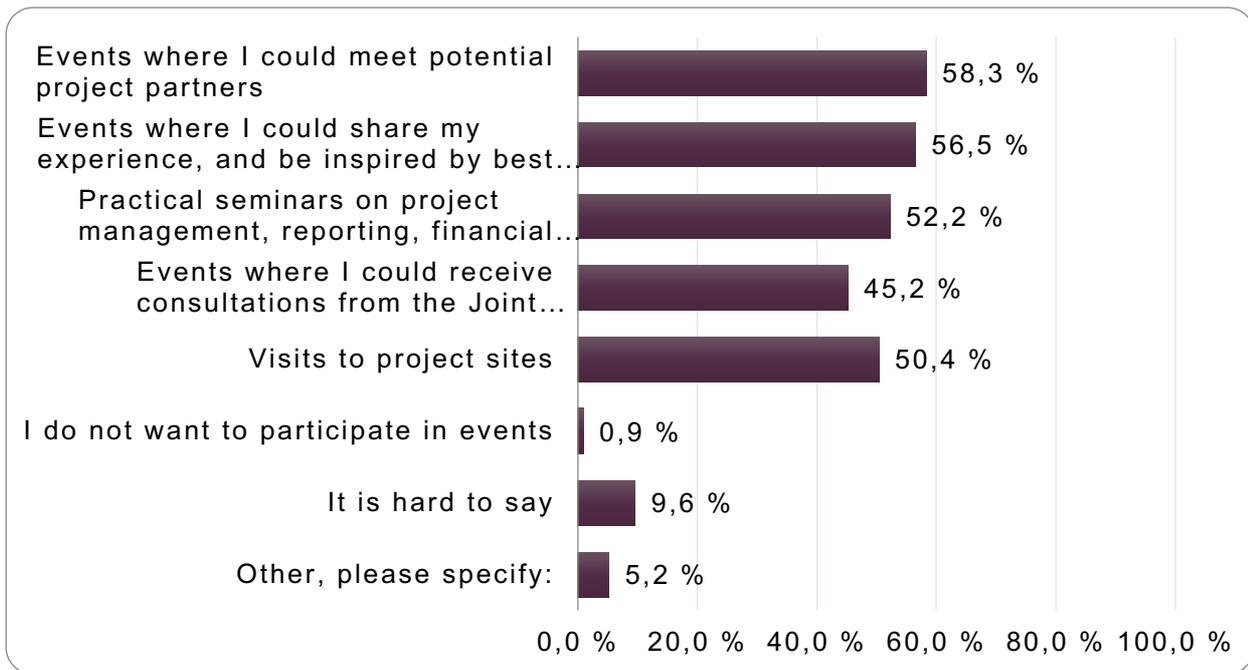


Graph 20. Access to information about the programme (rejected applicants)

*How did you find out about the Central Baltic programme? Multiple answers* All respondents: average 5.94, distribution 1.75 (N=39)

During the interviews it was stated that the Programme is better known among local and regional authorities, but less so among SMEs. In relation to NGOs, it was noted that the key barriers to participation related to their financial capacities rather than to their lack of information.

The events organised by the Programme are generally considered informative - the beneficiaries are mainly satisfied with the location, technical organisation and content of the events. Some comments were however expressed about the overly bureaucratic nature of the events. In future the beneficiaries would appreciate networking events to meet potential partners (58.3%), experience sharing (56.5%), practical seminars on project management, reporting, financial management (52.2%) and visits to project sites (50.4%). On the other hand, some beneficiaries noted that they were too busy to travel to attend seminars/events. Some suggestions were also made in respect of organising learning events on particular thematic areas, e.g., rural development.

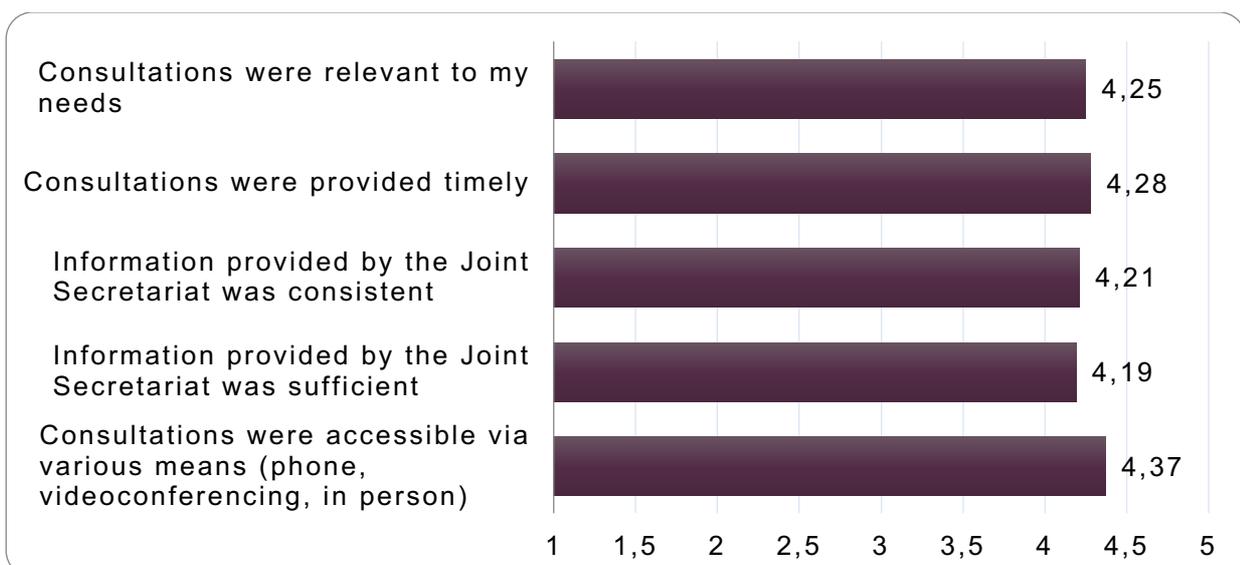


Graph 21. Recommendations for organisations of events (beneficiaries)

*In what kind of Programme events would you like to participate in the future? Multiple answers. All respondents: average 3.14, distribution 1.72 (N=115)*

The consultations undertaken by the JS are considered relevant, timely, consistent and sufficient by the respondents (beneficiaries). Notably, more than 30% of respondents have not used the consultations during the application stage. The respondents commented that the consultations provided by the JS were friendly and the staff were there to support the applicants. More problems were however mentioned regarding the eMS. Opinions were expressed that *“it is a big, complex and extremely time-consuming system that requires expert knowledge. We have put a huge amount of completely unnecessary time into this”*.

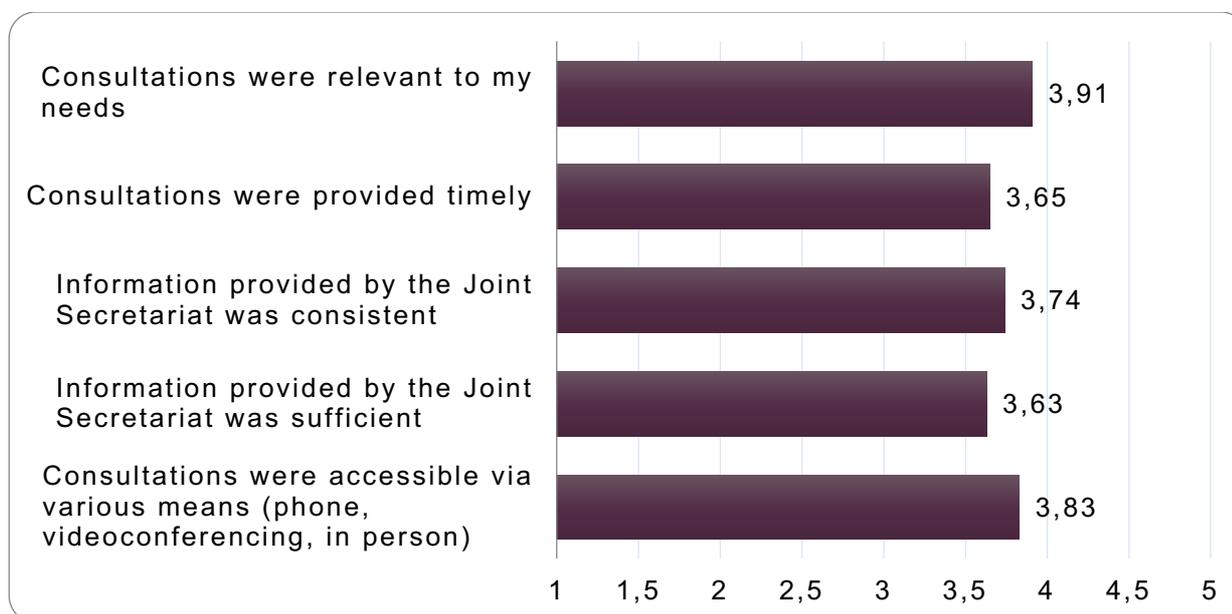
The average rating of consultations provided by the JS is presented in the table below (1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = agree, 5 =strongly agree).



Graph 22. Consultations during the preparatory stage (beneficiaries)

*How would you rate consultations during the preparatory stage?*

The applicants who were not successful were asked the same questions. The average rating is slightly lower than that for the beneficiaries. This could be explained in reference to their disappointment with the results. See the table below (1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = agree, 5 =strongly agree).



Graph 23. Consultations during the preparatory stage (rejected applicants)  
*How would you rate consultations during the preparatory stage?*

A respondent mentioned that the “overall process of application preparation takes time and effort. When a good project is not funded, it’s very disappointing. We did not clearly understand why we were not funded, as the stakeholders, the subject and goals of our project were at the heart of the programme’s values and aims.” The survey results reveal, that the applicants would appreciate more clear “green light or red light” signals in the initial stages of project idea development (i.e., even more strict selection of project ideas for the 2<sup>nd</sup> round) to avoid unnecessary activity. Nevertheless, the respondents acknowledged the efforts made by the Programme staff during the consultations. In the interview it was stated: “personal input of the staff was very good, and they were easy to contact”. During the application process, understanding the financial rules was considered as the most onerous part of the process by the applicants. It was noted in this context that the JS could perhaps organise thematic meetings bringing together organisations interested in the subject and that this could lead to partnerships.

#### *Achievements to date*

- + The evaluation confirms, that the Central Baltic Programme is a well-known instrument. 33% of respondents are returning customers which proves that the Programme is a well-established player among its target audience;
- + The survey results show that 65% of respondents learned about the Programme from social and professional contacts which proves that the Programme has a good reputation among professionals;
- + The majority of respondents are satisfied with the location, technical organisation and content of the events organised by the Programme;
- + Consultations by the JS are considered relevant, timely, consistent and sufficient by a majority of respondents.

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- + Thematic meetings for the exchange of knowledge and learning about the Programme are seen as important, particularly as they can facilitate the development of partnerships and good quality projects;
  - + Local and regional authorities are well aware of the Programme, though NGOs experience more difficulties in participation terms due to their lack of financial capacity.

### *Areas for improvement*

- Opinions differ as to the quality of information provided by the NCPs - some beneficiaries commented that the NCPs were the most important source of information, while others suggested that the NCPs could not readily provide the information they required. Hence, the quality very much depends on experience, professionalism and the dedication of the person involved.
- In general, the NCPs are a more valuable source of information for newcomers to the Programme; the more experienced applicants look for information from the JS which has more detailed internal information on the criteria of the Programme.
- Applicants would appreciate it if the Programme events were organised as back-to-back events, as more applicants would be willing to participate in such cases;
- Municipal and professional organisations (unions, associations, planning regions) could be used as umbrella organisations that can reach their members and share information about the Programme;
- Online meetings and workshops would be appreciated by some applicants, since travel to event locations takes time and generates a negative environmental impact from travel. Such meetings could also help to reduce applicants' financial costs;
- Applicants would appreciate more timely information about the events (especially those outside the country), in order to be able to plan as early as possible (even at the very beginning of the year) and to meet future partners in their respective thematic areas.
- Rejected applicants would appreciate a clearer indication of Programme expectations in the early stages of project idea development to avoid loss of time and resources.
- Applicants would appreciate a smoother/user-friendly eMS system, as the main difficulties during the application phase are associated with the technical parameters and modalities of the system. The current system is very time-consuming for the applicants meaning that less time can be devoted to the content of the project application.

### *Conclusions*

The Central Baltic Programme is a well-known instrument in the region among professionals in the field. While the application process is regarded as time and resource consuming, 33% of respondents are returning customers, proving that the “prize is worth the cost”. Beneficiaries are satisfied with the consultations provided by the Programme bodies during the application stage, they particularly praise the friendly and approachable communications approach from JS/NCPs staff.

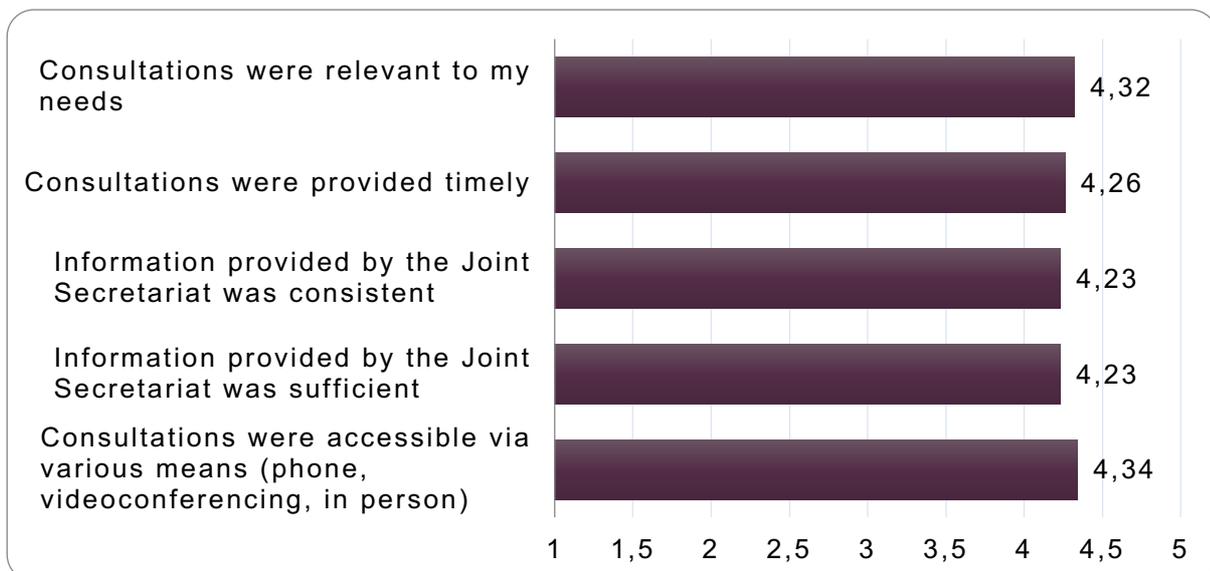
### Support to beneficiaries from the programme bodies (CO 1.3.)

Further project implementation processes will likely require closer cooperation between the beneficiaries and the Programme bodies, notably the JS. The CO 1.3. is defined in such a way as to address this question, namely, to foster support to the beneficiaries. It should be noted however, that the beneficiaries comprise both the Lead Partners and Partners. They each have different roles and responsibilities during project implementation, as such, they interact in different ways with the Programme bodies.

Communication between the JS and the beneficiaries is organised in a traditional way - mainly through emails, telephone, participation in project meetings and reports. Various thematic seminars are also organised for the beneficiaries' benefit. The overall approach is oriented toward results, therefore communication between the JS and the beneficiaries is encouraged.

During implementation, the JS communicates mainly with the Lead partners, who then pass this information to the other project partners. This LP principle does not always work properly however - in some cases, information is not delivered to other project partners in a timely manner. It is recommended that the projects organise kick-off meetings and a mid-term evaluation during the project implementation phase in order to improve their internal communication. Changes within the project management staff can often cause some measure of difficulty in terms of smooth communication and the flow of information between project partners.

During the survey answers were provided both by the Lead Partners and Partners, hence it represents the overall impression of the beneficiaries. According to the survey, consultations provided by the JS were relevant to the beneficiaries' needs, timely, consistent and sufficient. Consultations were also accessible via various means. See the table below (1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = agree, 5 =strongly agree):



Graph 24. Consultations during implementation (beneficiaries)  
*How would you rate consultations during implementation?*

Support and consultations during implementation are rated similarly to consultations during the application stage. The respondents were satisfied with their daily communication with staff in the JS: *“cooperation with the JS was very fluent, something I have not experienced ever before with any other Programme Secretariat. Their guidance was prompt, very friendly and based on mutual understanding. They wanted to paint a picture for us that we are on this journey together.”*

Nevertheless, the overall regulatory framework regarding project implementation is still seen as bureaucratic, especially concerning reporting, modifications and financial rules: *“the eMS, the reporting system is the critical point and makes us worry every time we reach the end of the reporting period.”* The administrative burden during implementation to some extent may discourage the beneficiaries from future participation: *“bureaucratic barriers make me really think if I ever want to participate in a similar project”*. It is now generally recognised that eMS was particularly problematic and slow during the early

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phase of Programme implementation. This situation has however been improved. During the next programming period, it is recommended that the level of details to be fulfilled in the system be properly analysed, for instance, relating to the description of Work packages and budget breakdown within the reports.

Furthermore, reporting is linked to payments and any delays can cause significant problems for the beneficiaries. During the survey there was a case reported where project implementation ended 16 months previously, but the beneficiary had yet to receive final payment. For the previous period the payment was made after 12 months. Apparently, during the initial stages of the project the beneficiaries were told that the Programme would pay 60% of the amount at the end of the reporting period prior any controls and the final amount in a 90-day period thereafter. Payment delays are clearly problematic, particularly for NGOs. The Programme had run out of liquidity (financial buffer) but this was not communicated in a timely enough manner, therefore changes in the financing conditions caused confusion and difficulties for project implementation.

The respondents mentioned different experiences with their respective FLC. Apparently, some partners have a more demanding FLC than others. This leads to the perception that there is no consistent system in place.

If possible, the beneficiaries would like to avoid any changes to the rules and conditions during implementation. Changes to the Programme Manual and Guide to Implementation are seen as problematic, as any changes to the eligible costs could cause potential financial problems, if not properly explained/ understood by the beneficiaries. Consistency in answers provided by the JS is seen as one of the most crucial aspects here and this needs to be ensured in all areas/ between all means of communication. Changes in the Programme manual have, in most cases, been communicated before the launch of the Call. During the project implementation phase there were changes in the Programme manual initiated by the audit. Information about such changes in the manual is made available on the webpage as well as being directly communicated to the LP.

#### *Achievements to date*

- + JS is seen by the beneficiaries as a partner, who works together with the project partners to achieve joint goals. Communication and support are appreciated due to personal involvement and the attitude of JS staff;
- + The project managers of the JS have a deep level of professional expertise and knowledge in the field related to a particular SO which is greatly appreciated by the beneficiaries and MC members. Thus, JS staff generally provide a very professional assessment of the content of particular projects as well as mentoring, advice and monitoring of projects to a highly professional level;
- + Programme events regarding implementation were appreciated by the beneficiaries, though some events were available for the Lead Partners only. Other partners felt they could also benefit from such events, and should not be left 'out of the loop';
- + In general, Programme implementation has been simplified compared to previous years. Nevertheless, it is still quite onerous for newcomers, especially smaller organisations, while they are learning and getting experience of cross-border cooperation projects.

#### *Areas for improvement*

- More standardised templates for any modifications would be appreciated by the beneficiaries, since they felt that the JS's comments were related to wording rather than content sometimes;

- 
- Consistency should be ensured between all information provided via emails, seminars and direct communication. For any recurring questions, standard answers should be made available on-line (FAQ);
  - Advance payments (up to 60%) upon submission of report, prior to any checks would help the beneficiaries to manage their cash-flow, and possibly could attract more potential beneficiaries to the Programme;
  - The beneficiaries would appreciate a more user-friendly eMS system, as the main difficulties during implementation are associated with the technical parameters and modalities of the system;
  - The beneficiaries expressed the opinion that the JS could help projects achieve more added value due to their (JS) extensive and lengthy experience and wider perspective in the field. In this role they would be acting more as consultants than as controllers in order to yield more impact in the Programme area.

### *Conclusions*

The JS is viewed as a partner during project implementation due to their friendly and timely communication. Events organised regarding implementation are particularly appreciated by the beneficiaries, since a clear understanding of rules, especially the financial rules, is crucial for the success of the project. The JS has therefore potential to capitalise on the experience and expertise accumulated to serve as a “Centre of Excellence” in the Central Baltic area.

### Cooperation with other Interreg programmes (CO 1.4.)

In accordance with the Communications Strategy, cooperation with other Interreg programmes is seen as an important tool in the successful implementation of the Programme. Communication activities supporting experience exchange with other programmes include participation in training seminars or network meetings organised by Interact, participation in thematic events organised by the European Commission, the creation and maintaining of individual contacts with colleagues from other programmes, being active in different inter-programme networks and sharing lessons learned within the Programme. Progress towards the attainment of this objective is measured by the participation of staff in Interact and other Interreg programme activities or other activities where inter-programme experience exchange is in focus.

These activities are implemented by the staff of the Programme bodies. Since 2015, representatives of the Programme have participated in inter-programme knowledge exchange on 133 occasions (attending events by Interact or other Interreg programmes). The number of events attended per year fluctuates between 23 (in 2015) to 56 (in 2016), on average reaching 33 times per year. These data are collected by JS and used internally for monitoring purposes.

Cooperation with colleagues from other programmes on an individual level is the most often mentioned cooperation example by representatives of the various Programme bodies, especially the NCPs. At the request of the NCPs, the Programme has supported a study visit to other INTERREG programme information units and participation in EU level networking meetings. The NCPs regularly cooperate with colleagues from other programmes, most often the Estonia-Latvia programme and the Baltic Sea Region programme. JS representatives also maintain close contacts with colleagues from other programmes, e.g. there are regular contacts with the JS of the Southern Baltic programme. MC and SC members do have contacts and are involved in cooperation with other programmes through the national or regional entities they represent. In 2018, the EC initiated discussions on the next planning period programmes. The MC members are therefore currently quite actively involved in consultations with their colleagues from other programmes aligning their positions on EC legislation proposals. Cooperation depends on the available programmes for the territory.

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Most often communication is made with the Baltic Sea Region programme, Estonia - Latvia programme, ÖKS programme<sup>5</sup> and the South Baltic programme.

Practical cooperation examples with other programmes comprise the EC Cooperation days, where several programmes that are working in the same territories organise joint events or coordinate their parallel activities.

At the programme level, the strongest factor contributing to inter-programme cooperation is the linkage of the CB programme with the EU Baltic Sea region strategy (EUBSR). The CB Programme is strongly linked with the EUBSR both during the programming stage and implementation stage - the Programme's priorities are closely aligned with those of the EUBSR; all projects have to demonstrate their link and contribution to the EUBSR objectives, something which is assessed as part of the project relevance and strategy. This link provides favourable conditions for closer cooperation with other programmes in the Baltic Sea Region area and enables cooperation at the project level on maritime issues as all of the countries involved in the programmes share a common sea.

At the project level, the strongest factors contributing to cooperation with other programmes is the availability of project data on different information networks and platforms, flagship project status and participation in capitalisation schemes. The Programme actively shares information about the projects within various inter-programme information networks and platforms e.g. the KEEP platform (Knowledge and Expertise in EU Programmes [www.keep.eu](http://www.keep.eu)) managed by INTERACT<sup>6</sup>. Flagship project status provides projects with an opportunity to improve their visibility and to prove the quality of their partnership, thus contributing to potential future cooperation possibilities.

In order to identify the most tangible Programme outcomes and best practices, the Programme has set up the capitalisation task force. In addition, several CB projects participate in the project capitalisation platforms - a framework of cooperation for different projects within a certain thematic field - supported by the Baltic Sea Region programme.

#### *Achievements to date*

- + Programme representatives (mostly JS) actively participate in inter-programme knowledge exchange events organised by INTERACT and other Interreg programmes, as well as regularly communicating with the JS of other programmes. Knowledge gained during these experience exchange and learning events is subsequently transferred to other programme bodies via e-mail reports and by storing information and materials on the internal drive.
- + Representatives from the Programme bodies, especially NCP representatives, communicate on a daily basis with their colleagues from other programmes. Most often this happens as the NCPs are located in the same hosting organisations as the JS of other programmes (e.g. Estonia-Latvia programme and Estonia-Russia programme for Estonian NCP, Latvia-Lithuania programme for Latvian NCP).
- + In addition to the Programme's communication channels, information about the Programme's results is also shared across EU-wide platforms e.g. KEEP.

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<sup>5</sup> 2014 - 2020 INTERREG V-A Sweden - Denmark - Norway (Öresund - Kattegat - Skagerrak)

<sup>6</sup> KEEP is a capitalisation tool for EU-wide promotion of Territorial Cooperation with the aim of demonstrating and communicating the benefits of European Territorial Cooperation.

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- + The CB programme has set up a capitalisation taskforce in order to map out the most tangible results and identify the best practices for communication with external audiences.
  - + Several Programme projects participate in the thematic project capitalisation platforms supported by the BSR programme.
  - + During the EC Cooperation days, several programmes with overlapping territories organised joint thematic events.

#### *Areas for improvement*

- Relating to the transfer of knowledge gained during the experience exchange and learning from other programme bodies, it is not clear whether and how knowledge gained from cooperation with other programmes is subsequently transferred to other programme bodies. MC minutes do not contain references to discussions about inter-programme learning or information sharing. Moreover, the interviewed MC members could not recall such discussions.
- The NCPs have been constrained in terms of the opportunities to exchange experience and knowledge within the events and activities organised by INTERACT, relating to information and communications issues. If this situation was addressed, it could bring added value in terms of capacity development.

#### *Conclusions*

According to the Communications Strategy, cooperation with other programmes, sharing experiences and mutual learning are considered interventions leading to successful Programme implementation and to better quality in terms of cross border projects. It is evident that there is cooperation and information exchange with other programmes. We found evidence of sharing in terms of the project results outside the Programme territory via various networks and platforms, including participation of Programme staff in various events and training exercises, individual cooperation with colleagues from other programmes and the promotion of project results via different platforms and supporting schemes (inside-out).

While there is an evidence of systematic cooperation with other programmes and capacity building measures in relation to programme implementation, there is an opportunity for closer cooperation with other programmes both at the planning stage (alignment of priorities), during the implementation stage (sharing of experiences and coordination of activities of the programme entities) and in relation to the joint communication of results to the wider public (communication of results by thematic areas and issues, not projects or programmes). There remains an opportunity for the more intensive use of the existing project networks and platforms to demonstrate the synergies between projects from different programmes.

#### Support and encouragement in communication activities (CO 2.1.)

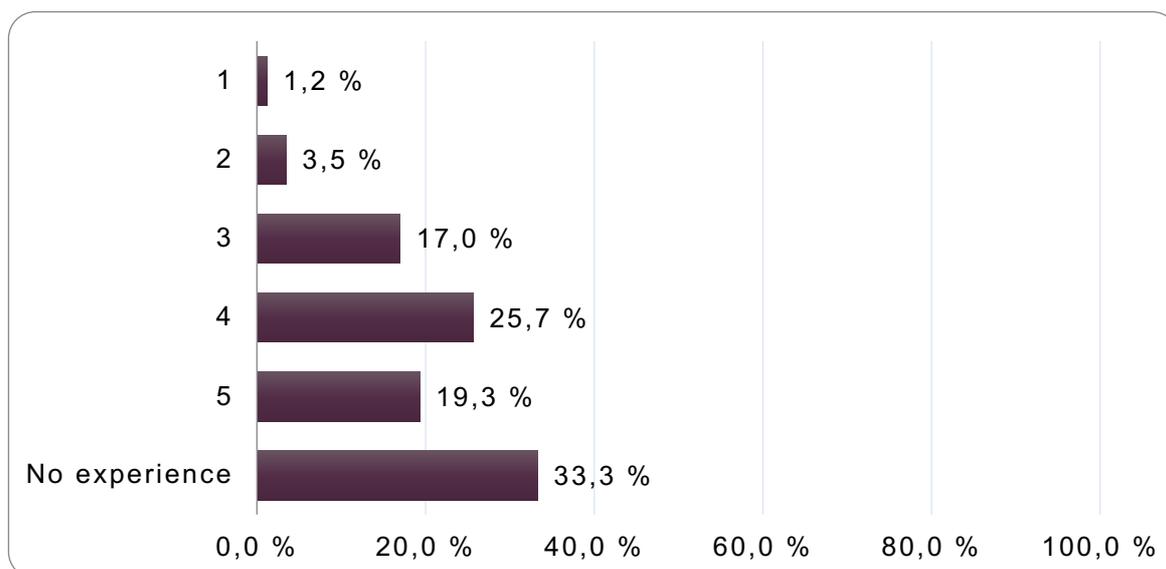
Communications activities are an integral part of the projects implemented by the beneficiaries. These activities are particularly important since they contribute to the overall visibility of the Programme, therefore the Communications Strategy emphasises the need to support the beneficiaries under CO 2.1.

In this respect, the beneficiaries are given a Guide for Project Communication<sup>7</sup>, to facilitate the planning and implementation of communications activities, comprising, *inter alia*, the logos of the Programme.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://centralbaltic.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Guide%20for%20project%20communication\\_291116.pdf](http://centralbaltic.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Guide%20for%20project%20communication_291116.pdf)

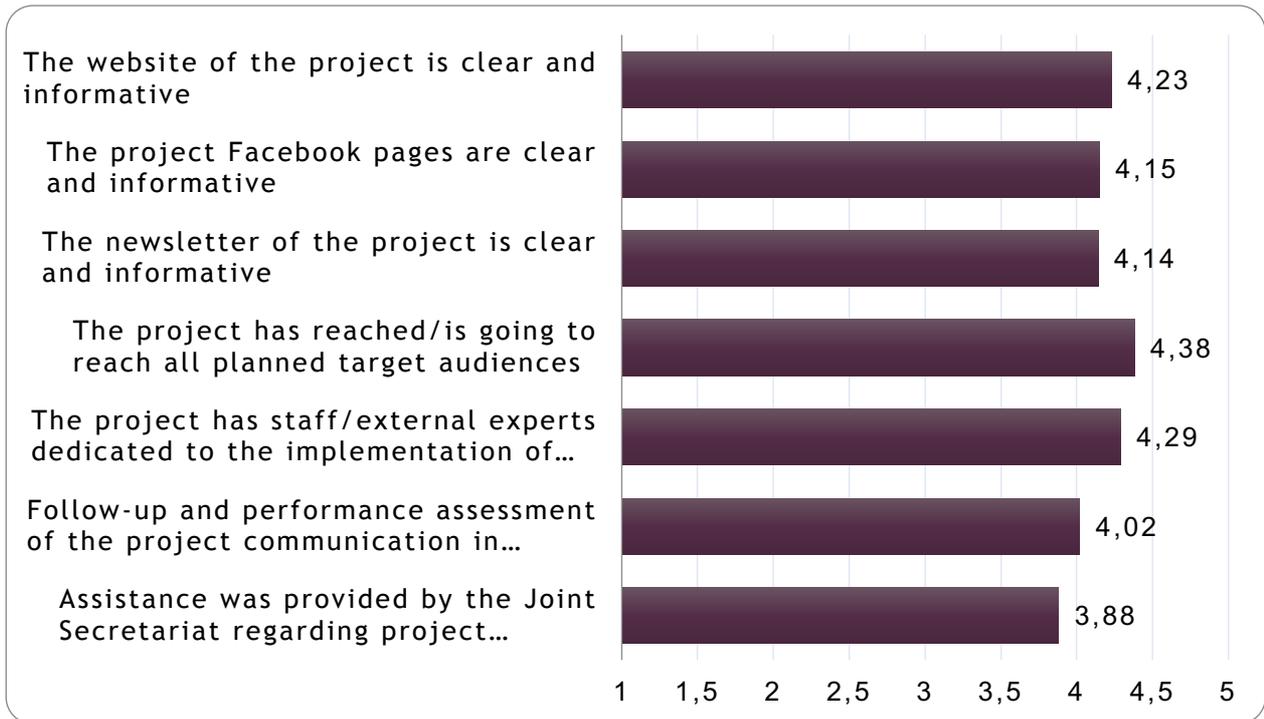
During the survey, the beneficiaries were asked about the assistance they had received from the JS regarding project communications activities, see table below (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree):



Graph 25. Assistance to the beneficiaries regarding communication activities  
Assistance was provided by the Joint Secretariat regarding project communication activities.  
All respondents: average 3.88, distribution 0.95 (N=171)

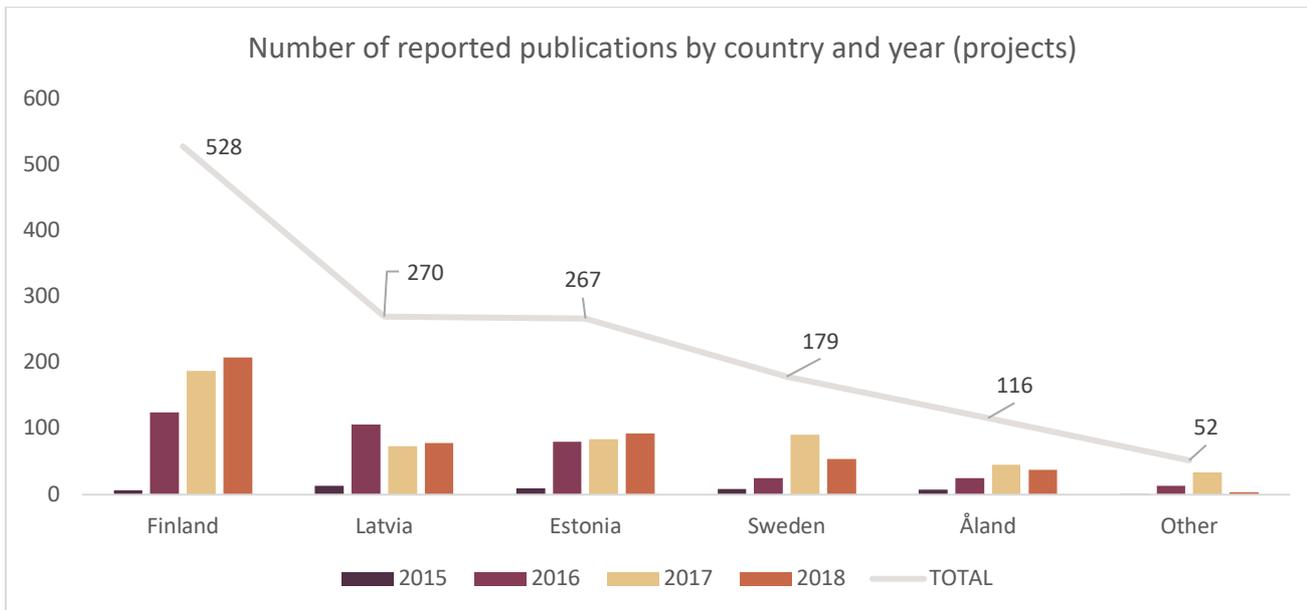
The average rating of support provided by the JS in this area is slightly lower than respondents' rating for consultations and communication during the application and implementation phases - 3.88 out of 5 scores. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that the respondents comprised both the Lead Partners and Partners, while the JS communicates directly only with the Lead Partners. Hence, the Partners may be unaware of the assistance in this respect. On the other hand, a comment was made in response to the question on assistance: "the assistance question is a bit misleading as the JS has not provided assistance, but when the project has asked for it, we have always received a good response". This shows that support is available, but the JS is not proactive in this respect. On the other hand, the opinion was expressed that the JS should not intervene too much in project activities, so the beneficiaries do not feel "pushed". In some cases, the NCPs also provided support when asked to do so by the beneficiaries (e.g., in Latvia).

When asked about their own communications activities, the respondents gave a relatively high rating to such activities implemented within the projects, see the table below (1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 4 = agree, 5 =strongly agree):

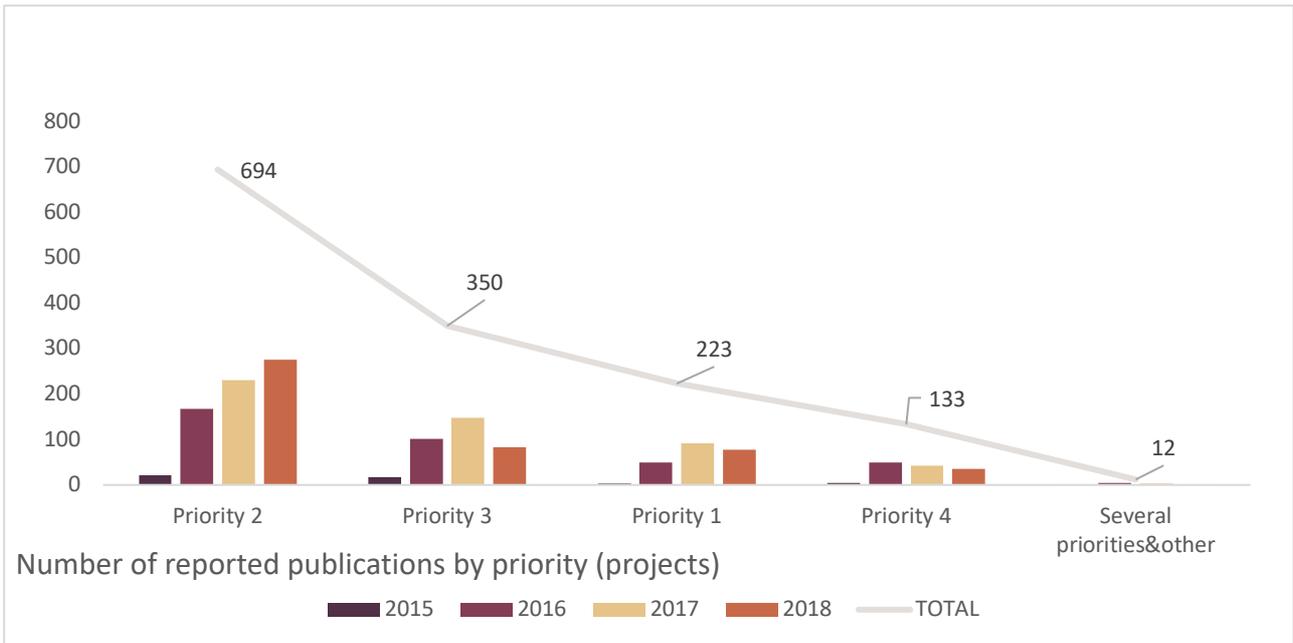


Graph 26. Communication activities implemented by the beneficiaries

The projects have produced more than 1412 publications to date, comprising publications in newspapers, radio, TV, online media and social media. The highest number of publications is observed in Finland (528), this correlates with the number of projects implemented in Finland. Next are Latvia and Estonia, with roughly the same number of publications. They are followed by Sweden and Åland. In terms of priorities, by far the highest number of publications is observed under Priority 2 (694), followed by Priorities 3, 1 and 4. For details please see Graphs 27 and 28.

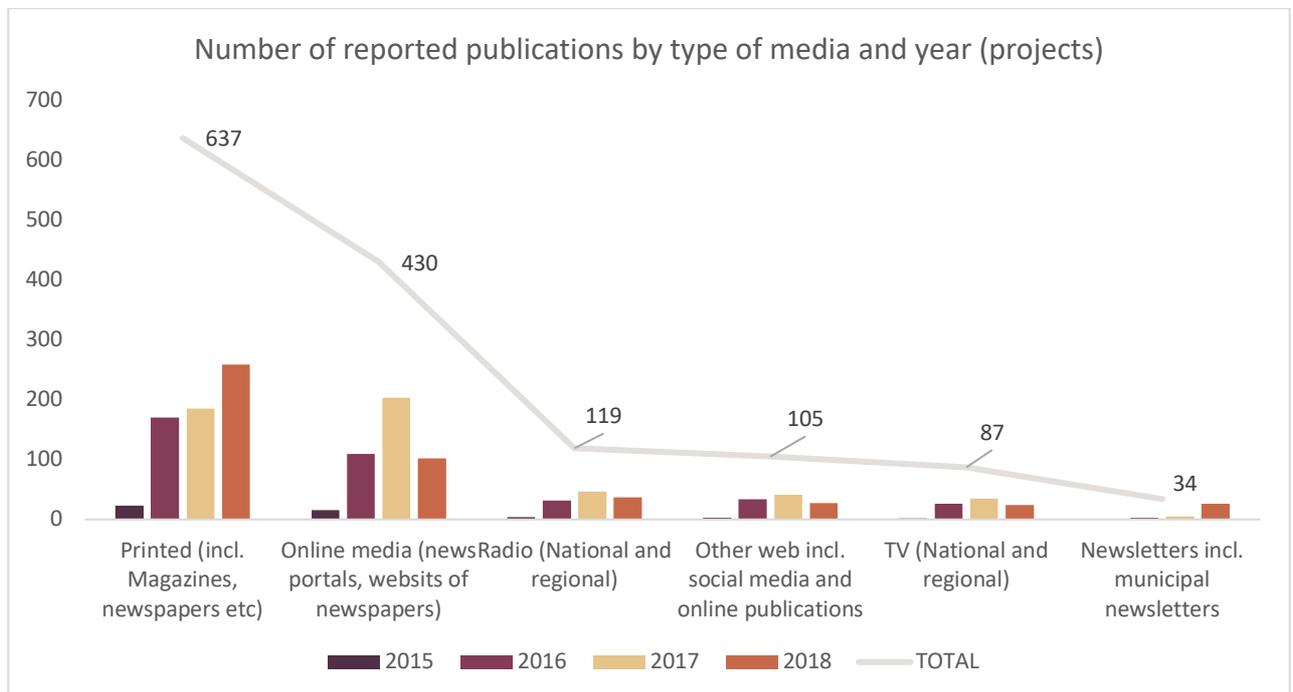


Graph 27. Number of publications per country



Graph 28. Publications by priority

In terms of media platform, the highest number of publications is reported in the print media. This is followed by online media, radio, social media and TV. See Graph 29. Given the overall shift from print media to online and social media we assume that this account does not fully reflect all online publications, including social media.



Graph 29. Number of publications per type of media

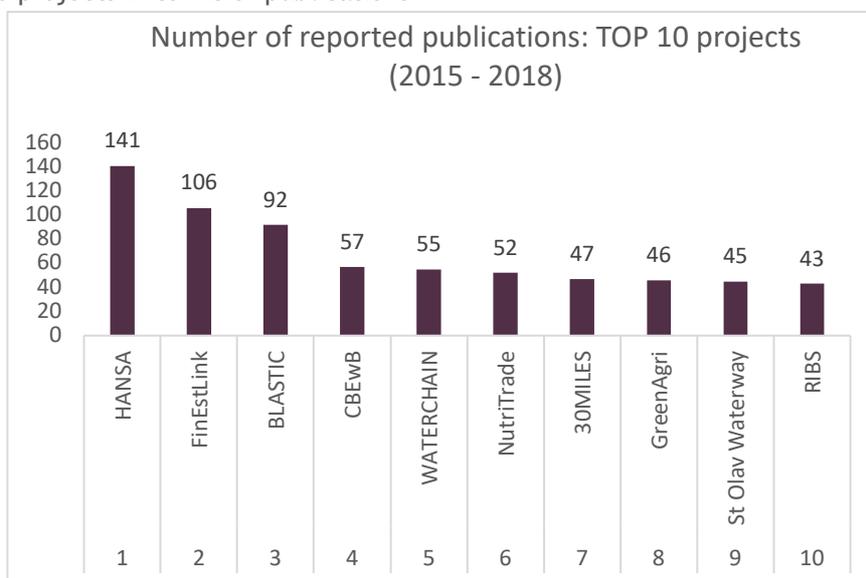
During the Survey the respondents noted that not all communications tools were used in each project - in some cases the organisation's website was used instead of the project's one, Facebook and/or Twitter accounts were used depending on the audience, marketing videos or even leaflets and T-shirts were also used. The general observation here was that communication is shifting towards targeted instruments: "We

had an efficient Facebook page that was visited by participating schools, students, teachers and their friends. The most difficult part was communication with old media.”

Clearly, communication aspects are sometimes not seen as a priority by the beneficiaries, because “real” project activities take up all the available human and time resources: “Communication has been important, but less so than implementing activities - which have taken more time than initially thought.” It is easy to think that the results of the projects will speak for themselves and the relevant audience will find out all necessary information about the project. In some cases, where there is a rather narrow circle of professionals involved, this might actually be plausible, but such cases are likely to be exceptional. In several cases, the beneficiaries acknowledged input and support from the JS which helped them to achieve a higher level of visibility for the project.

Furthermore, project visibility is a crucial element of the visibility of the Programme as a whole. The JS has acknowledged the former and has created an internal resource cataloguing project communication material in newspapers, websites and even radio broadcasts. The TOP 10 projects in terms of publications are shown in Graph 30.

Graph 30. TOP 10 projects in terms of publications



A public group, “the Central Baltic Communication network” has been created on Facebook which shares information on projects and programme-related activities. Interviewed beneficiaries highlighted the need for more structured content and targeted information, as currently this communications channel relays a broad range of information, making it hard to follow. Moreover, for some target groups, Facebook is associated more with leisure, not professional information flow. It was therefore suggested that some specific content relating to professional communication groups could be established on LinkedIn.

#### Achievements to date

- + There are internal resources in the JS/NCPs who are available/competent to assist the beneficiaries with their communications activities. The beneficiaries acknowledge that support from the JS is helpful in order to achieve higher visibility in terms of the project results;
- + Publicity materials produced by the projects are compiled in a database which could be used more extensively by the JS to increase the visibility of the programme results;

- 
- + Most of the projects have dedicated human resources (staff or external experts) in charge of their communications activities. Nevertheless, in some cases, other project activities take precedence over communications activities;
  - + Seminars organised by the JS and NCPs for project partners on the use of different communication and dissemination tools are seen as a good practice (e.g. a seminar on creating short video stories for dissemination in social media);
  - + The beneficiaries are generally aware of and make efforts to ensure follow-up and performance assessment of all communications activities. As such, data should be available at the project level on whether target audiences have been reached throughout the Programme.

#### *Areas for improvement*

- While the visibility of projects has an impact upon the Programme's visibility, the beneficiaries are not fully aware of the assistance they could receive from the JS/NCPs to facilitate implementation of their communications activities;
- The Central Baltic Communication network group could help to promote more targeted goals, approach and content of the communication;
- Sometimes projects do not see communication as an essential tool for project result attainment. They are overwhelmed with content activities and administrative work; thus, communication is something which is less prioritised;
- While being in their own "information bubble", projects often do not recognise the synergy effects with other projects in targeting the same regional/ local challenges and target groups. The JS and some National authorities have organised thematic events for projects with a common topic in order to demonstrate wider synergy results. The synergies between projects should be further encouraged and facilitated;
- The publicity materials produced by the projects compiled in a database could be used more extensively by the JS to increase the visibility of the programme results. In general, the programme communication should switch its focus more strongly towards the results of the projects, as well as the results of the programme.

#### *Conclusions*

Support to the beneficiaries for communication activities implementation is important as acknowledged by the CO 2.1. The results will be particularly important during the final stages of the programming period therefore efforts should be made to capitalise upon the communications activities implemented under the projects. Furthermore, the communications activity should transition from communicating the project and programme activities to communicating the achievements and benefits.

#### Communication activities underlining the benefits of cross-border cooperation (CO 2.2.)

According to the Communications Strategy, communication with different stakeholder groups not directly involved in project implementation is primarily aimed at attracting interest in the benefits of cross-border cooperation. Different stakeholder groups are approached according to their needs and capabilities. They are also regarded as potential multipliers in terms of the disseminated information, especially in the context of the EUSBSR. Communications activities supporting the dissemination of information to wider audiences include supporting and encouraging the projects in their communications activities towards the media and different general public groups, participating in or organising thematic events, thematic media releases and participating in or organising events for the general public (e.g. European Cooperation Day). Progress

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towards the attainment of this objective is measured by the level of media exposure gained through the direct effort of the Programme.

Wider communication is provided at different levels:

- i) at the project level it includes project communication with different stakeholder groups (mostly on a professional basis regarding specific results) and with the wider public (mostly on the general results and Programme support);
- ii) at Programme level it includes communication with the stakeholder groups, who use specific communication channels (communication networks and platforms) and to the general public (using official Programme communications channels). Programme activities related to wider communications activities also include Programme support to funded projects encouraging their communications activities with the general public (see section on CO 2.1. for more details).

Content-wise project communication usually contains information on specific tangible outcomes bound to a certain geographic location or specific issue, local news and benefits that attract attention of the wider society in their everyday life or specific stakeholder groups on more professional issues. The projects are seen as agents of change, as they are closer to the target groups and they have palpable outcomes to share and stories to tell. Programme level communication is targeted at a much wider scale, bringing results from various projects together, telling stories that cover thematic issues and target broader interest groups by displaying the benefits of cross-border cooperation in accordance with a variety of themes.

According to the survey results, many projects have published material in local newspapers and some also on radio and TV. During the period 2015-2018 877 publications in newspapers, television, radio or newsletters were documented. The projects also provided information via online media and different social media channels in 535 occasions. Programme-level publications are less numerous (102 publications since 2015). In addition to the official Programme communication channels, 'publications' were made also through various information platforms and networks (e.g. KEEP) and in the context of public events. During the period 2015-2018 the programme has directly reached more than a thousand people through various public events - mostly organised under the European Cooperation Days umbrella. The Programme-based public event organised in 2015 can be considered as the best practice example in reaching a wider public, encouraging real actions and also in cooperating with other programmes through joint beach cleaning activity together with the Estonia-Latvia programme.

The overall Programme orientation towards real and tangible outcomes that demonstrate not only theoretical possibilities but also practical solutions to the problems face is recognised among the beneficiaries as a strong factor in motivating participation in the Programme and facilitating communication to the wider public. According to the Programme's stakeholders, the Programme managing bodies are consistently encouraging project communication and promotes this through the communications channels of the Programme. At the same time, project-level communication lacks a wider perspective and Programme context that can be provided only on the Programme level or even more broadly. The programme stakeholders acknowledge the necessity to focus more strongly on the results in Programme level communication. During the last annual meeting, the Programme management bodies encouraged the projects implemented under the same thematic area to look for synergies and to locate their contribution to the common objectives at a wider regional scale. Project partners and Programme stakeholders mention communication in national languages as one of the most important factors necessary in reaching the wider public.



### *Achievements to date*

- + Projects have ensured active communication with different stakeholder groups and there are numerous media publications in various media.
- + The beneficiaries appreciate the support provided by the JS regarding sharing their results through the Programme communication channels as it increases the visibility of the results.
- + Programme events demonstrate good practice in reaching out to and enthusing a wider public to embrace real actions and also in respect of cooperation with other Programmes.
- + Beneficiaries appreciate the Programme's efforts which encourage the projects to look for synergies with other projects during the last annual meeting as this helps them to understand their contribution to the common objectives at a wider scale. As reflected in the interviews, the project partners appreciate efforts that bring together projects working on similar issues as this increases the impact of their work, provides higher visibility and lends further credibility to their work.

### *Areas for improvement*

- Programme stakeholders and beneficiaries consider that an even greater effort is required in communicating the Programme's results.
- The potential also exists to encourage synergies between different projects implemented under the same thematic priorities both within the programme and also with projects from other programmes. As mentioned in one of the interviews, "Special objectives should be emphasised more in the communications so that different projects could collaborate more."
- Programme level communication is still more focussed on the communication of the results of projects rather than on broader phenomena and thematic issues of importance.
- Communication in national languages is important in order to reach a wider public, particularly in respect of Programme-level communication. The evaluators, in particular, see the potential for strengthening the role and involvement of the NCPs in this area.

### *Conclusions*

Communication with different stakeholder groups and the wider public is ensured both at the project and Programme level. The purpose of both levels differs. Currently the main focus is on individual project results. The Programme level communication lacks a wider perspective and the thematic context of the projects implemented in the same thematic areas. The Programme efforts in promoting synergy both within the Programme and with projects implemented under other programmes should be continued. Mutual synergy and communication concentrating on thematic issues e.g. environmental protection, pollution of the sea etc., however, remain underutilised as regards their potential to promote closer cooperation with other programmes and the reaching of a wider public.

Overall achievement of Communication Objectives

Have the objectives set out in the Communication strategy been reached?	Assessment				
	Not applicable	Low	Sufficient	Good	Excellent
CO 1.1. To ensure well-functioning internal communication between the programme bodies to make the programme function effectively					
CO 1.2. To promote strongly the funding opportunity to activate the potential beneficiaries					
CO 1.3. To support beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome of the projects					
CO 1.4. To actively cooperate with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices and learn from one another					
CO 2.1. To support and encourage beneficiaries in communication activities					
CO 2.2. To underline the benefits of cross-border cooperation for stakeholder groups widely in the programme area					
Overall level of achievement of Communication strategy objectives is good.				Good	

Internal communication between the programme bodies functions well, though room for improvement exists in order to ensure symmetry of communication across all Programme bodies. The Programme bodies have strongly promoted funding opportunities to the beneficiaries who greatly appreciate the friendly and approachable nature of their communication. While the beneficiaries appreciate the support provided throughout the various phases of project implementation, the positive effect is diminished by the bureaucratic procedures relating to the reporting and use of eMS. There is systematic cooperation and sharing of the Programme results with audiences outside the Programme; less attention is however paid to learning from other programmes (outside -> inside). Further support for the beneficiaries in their implementation of communications activities is important and its significance increases during the final stages of the programming period. Active communication with different stakeholder groups and wider public is facilitated. Efforts to promote synergy within the Programme's projects and with other programmes should be maintained with communication activities concentrated on thematic issues.

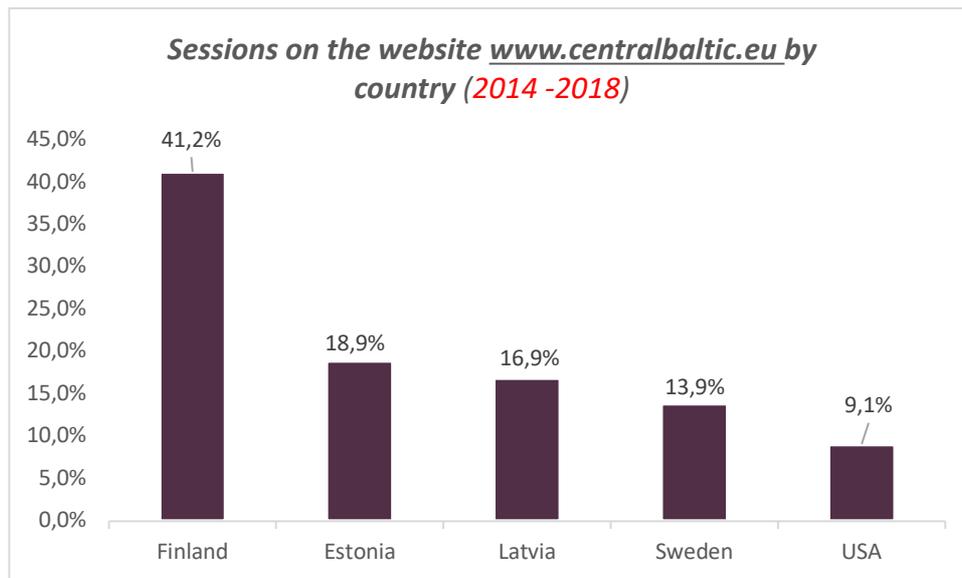
## 7.2 HAS THE PROGRAMME REACHED THE TARGET GROUP?

The main communication channels used by the Programme are the Programme website, Facebook, Twitter, publications in media and direct communication through email. This chapter presents an overview of the 'reach' achieved by the website, Facebook and Twitter.

*Who was reached through the Programme's website?*

Since the launch of the website on November 12, 2014 up to January 2019 the Programme website has attracted 88 545 visitors who have viewed 854 965 website pages in total, averaging to 1736 visitors per month and 16 764-page views per month (51-month period).

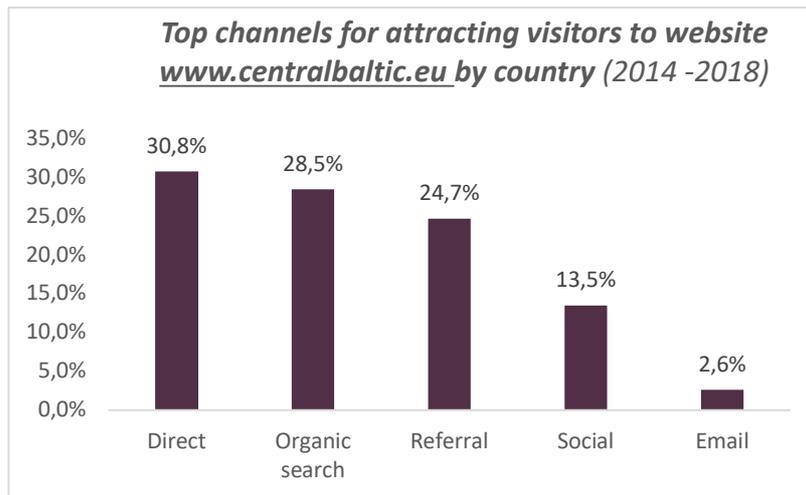
The Programme's website has attracted considerably more visitors from Finland (41.2%) than from Estonia (18.9%), Latvia (16.9%) or Sweden (13.9%). At the same time, the percentage of visitors from the USA should be viewed with a caution<sup>8</sup>. Also, it should also be noted that the JS is located in Finland and the browsers on work computers of the office staff are set to open on the landing page of the website, thus creating false visitor data for Finland.



Source: Google Analytics  
Graph 31 Statistics on Programme's website

Over the period, the largest number of visitors have found the page through direct address (30.8%), organic search (28.5%), referral from other sites (24.7%), but only 13.5% from social media. Thus, the potential of social media to serve as a tool in attracting new visitors remains, perhaps underutilised

<sup>8</sup> Recently there have been reports about bots from the USA causing false visitor data on Google analytics and more people use methods to scramble their location for privacy reasons.



Source: Google Analytics

Graph 32 Attraction of visitors to the Programme's website

Most visitors use desktop computer (82%) or mobile phones (14%) with only 3.6% using tablets. Globally, in 2018, the websites were mostly visited from mobile phones (52.2%)<sup>9</sup>. The data suggests that visitors mostly use the website for professional purposes through their work computers.

The most visited page over the period was the homepage or the landing page with approximately 47% of pageviews directed there. This was followed by the Document page (20.8%) and by the page on Programme information, Programme priorities (16.7%).

#### ***Who was reached through social media?***

The Programme has an active Facebook page<sup>10</sup> and Twitter account<sup>11</sup> as well as some minor activity on YouTube<sup>12</sup>. There is also a Programme presence on Instagram even without the Programme's profile there: there have been 404 posts on Instagram using #centralbaltic and 41 posts with #centralbalticinterreg<sup>13</sup>.

The Programme's Facebook page has 869 followers (796 likes)<sup>14</sup>. The number of followers is lower than for similar cross-border cooperation programmes, e.g., the Baltic Sea Region programme<sup>15</sup> with 2170 followers,

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/241462/global-mobile-phone-website-traffic-share/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/centralbaltic/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://twitter.com/CentralBaltic>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_AZRt-hKVrxwZjXOnw-ZIA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_AZRt-hKVrxwZjXOnw-ZIA)

<sup>13</sup> Checked on 08.04.2019.

<sup>14</sup> Checked on 19.03.2019.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/interreg.balticsearegion/>



the Estonia-Latvia<sup>16</sup> programme with its 2110 followers, the South Baltic<sup>17</sup> programme with 1540 followers and the Latvia-Lithuania<sup>18</sup> programme with 898 followers, but it has a higher number than the Latvia - Lithuania - Belarus Programme<sup>19</sup> with 575 followers and the Latvia - Russia programme<sup>20</sup> with 283 followers. It should however be noted that the Baltic Sea Region programme covers a larger territory than the Central-Baltic programme. At the same time, the Central Baltic Programme covers a considerably larger territory than the Estonia-Latvia and Latvia-Lithuania programmes which have managed to attract larger numbers of followers.

In the period March 2017<sup>21</sup> to February 2019 the Facebook page generated 153 daily impressions on average, reaching daily 85 users (out of 796 likes currently, thus close to an 11% reach) with about 9 users daily engaging in the interactions with the page, on average. These achievements have been gained through organic reach. In the third quarter of 2018, the Facebook pages in general experienced an average organic reach of 6.1%<sup>22</sup>, thus it could be considered that the programme page is performing well as a tool as regards the measure of 'reaching its audience'.

The Facebook page has been fairly successful also in reaching an audience in Finland (average of weekly reach per month by country), but has a considerably lower reach in Latvia, Estonia and Sweden. The page also shows a considerably higher reach in the Dominican Republic - a result that cannot be explained.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/estlat/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/SouthBaltic/>

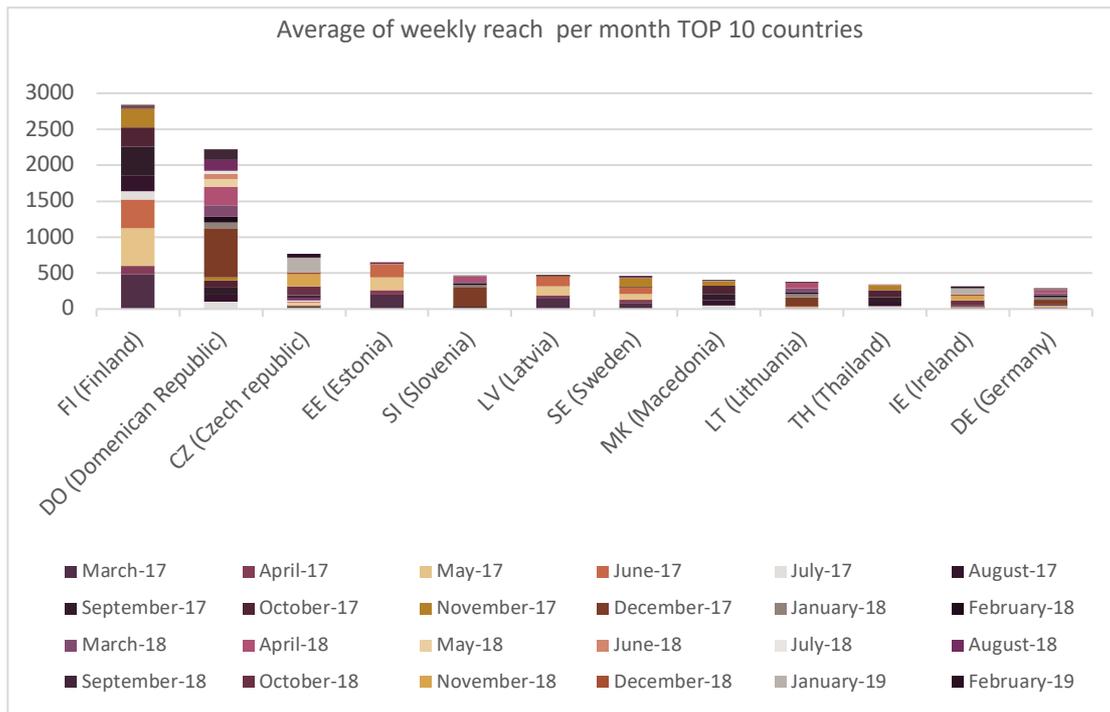
<sup>18</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/LatviaLithuaniaProgramme/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/latvialithuaniabelarus/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/latruscbc/>

<sup>21</sup> Data about previous period (2014-2017) are not available.

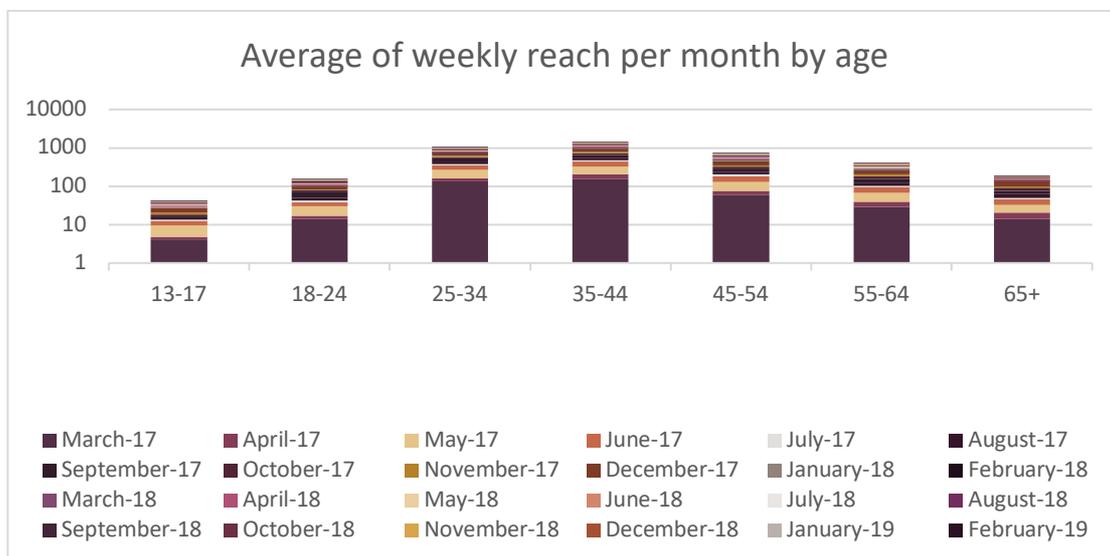
<sup>22</sup> <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2018-q4-global-digital-statshot>



Source: Facebook Insights

Graph 33 Weekly reach per country

The Facebook page has a similar level of reach among users in the age group 25-34 with a slightly better reach among the age group 35-44. Considering that a major portion of Facebook users are in the age group 25-34<sup>23</sup>, it is likely that the Facebook page has managed to attract the direct audience of the Programme - e.g. people employed in municipalities, enterprises and NGOs in the Programme area.



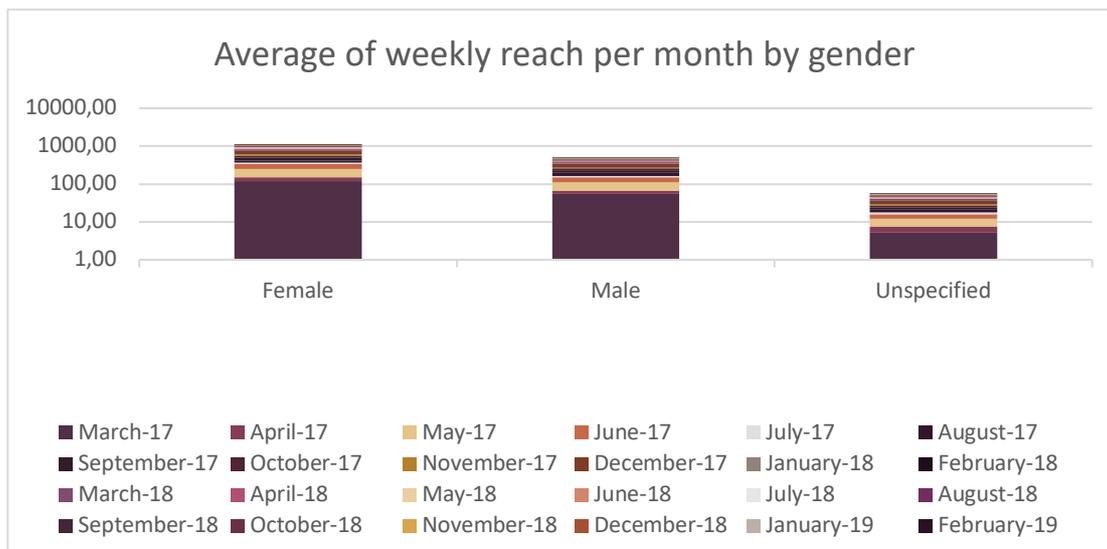
Source: Facebook Insights

Graph 34 Weekly reach per age

On average, the Facebook page has attracted more females than males. This contradicts the overall statistical profile of Facebook users, where men are more represented than women (57% to 43% in 2019)<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2019-global-digital-overview>

<sup>24</sup> <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2019-global-digital-overview>



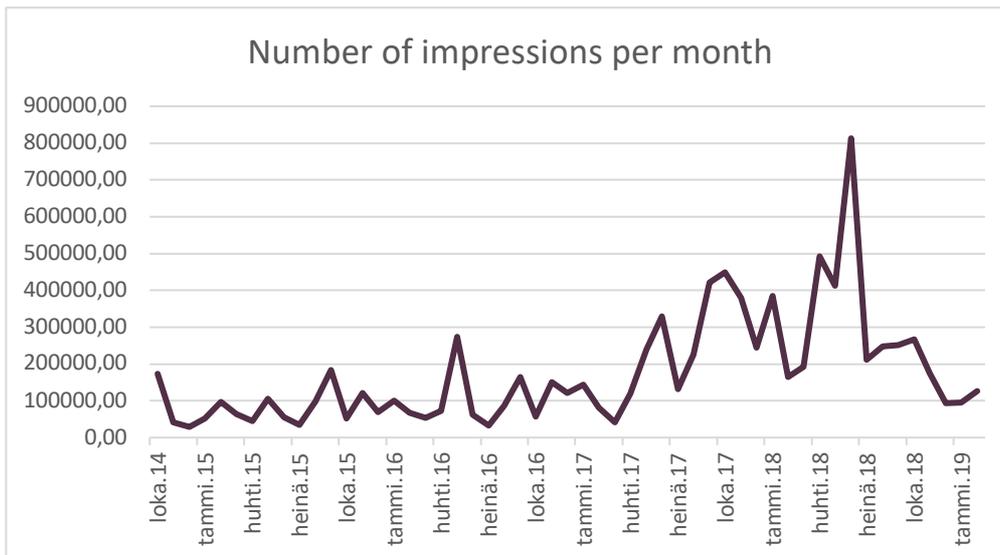
Source: Facebook Insights  
Graph 35 Monthly reach by gender

The peak of the Programme’s reach on Facebook in all age and gender groups was reported in March 2017. Perhaps, this could be related to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Call of the Programme (ended in February 2017). In addition, one of the top posts with the 5<sup>th</sup> highest number of reactions was reported in this period (a video presenting the auditor of the Programme).

The Programme’s Twitter account has 1007 followers<sup>25</sup>. This is considerably less than that for the Baltic Sea programme<sup>26</sup> which has 3072 followers. Nevertheless, it is more than for the South Baltic programme<sup>27</sup> which has 801 followers.

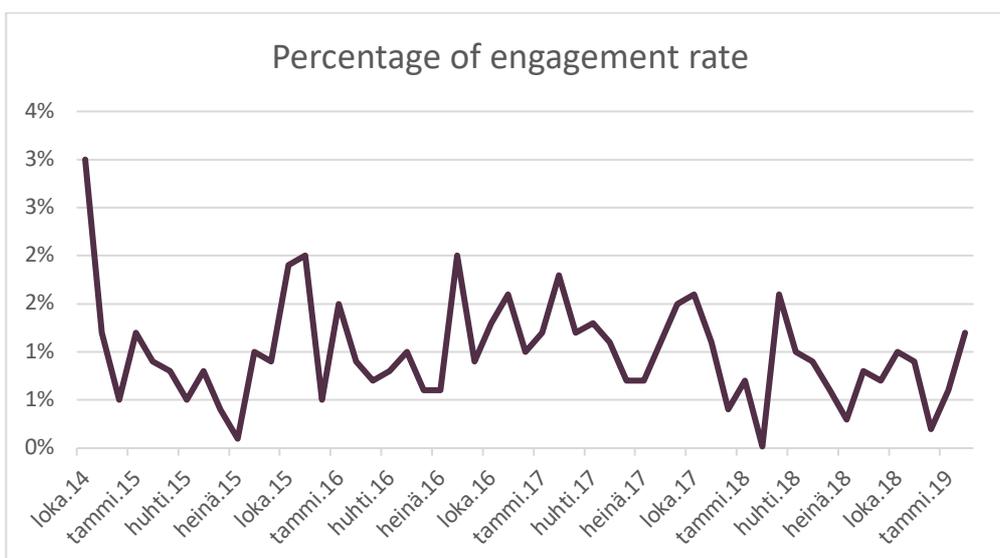
The monthly impressions (the times a user has presented a Tweet in the timeline or searched for results) of the Twitter profile range from 29 000 impressions in December 2014 to an impressive number of 813 000 impressions in June 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Checked on 07.03.2019.  
<sup>26</sup> [https://twitter.com/baltic\\_sea\\_prog](https://twitter.com/baltic_sea_prog)  
<sup>27</sup> <https://twitter.com/SouthBaltic>



Source: Twitter Analytics  
Graph 36 Twitter statistics per month

The engagement rate (number of engagements divided by impressions) for posts varies from 3 % in October 2014 to 0.02 % in February 2018. Considering the fact that the average engagement rate on Twitter is only 0.046 %<sup>28</sup>, the Programme’s level of achievement in engaging its audience is high.



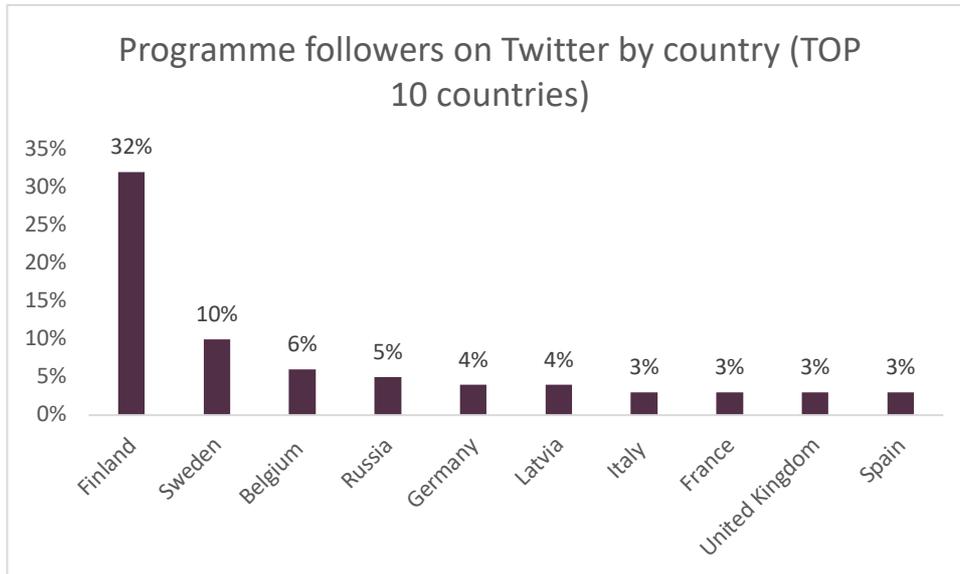
Source: Twitter Analytics  
Graph 37 Twitter statistics - engagement rate

The peak for impressions on Twitter was reported in June 2018 while the peak engagement rate is reported for October 2014. October 2014 coincides with the launch of the Programme. However, the peak for impressions in June 2018 does not correspond to any major programme milestones. Contrary to the Facebook data, March 2017 does not show a particularly higher than average level of engagement or impressions.

On Twitter the Programme has attracted more followers from Finland than from any of the other Programme countries. Estonia is not even present among the top 10 countries. It should however be noted that Estonia

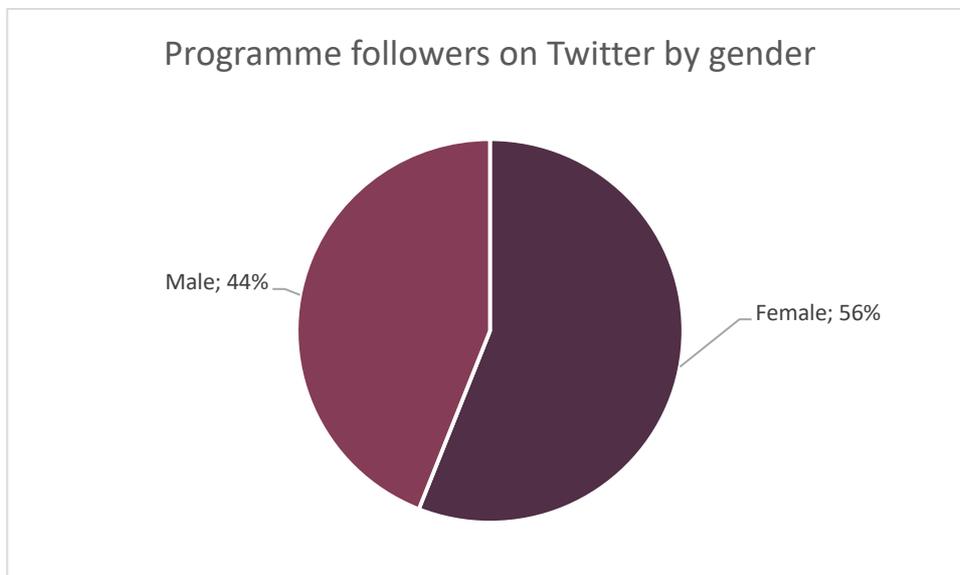
<sup>28</sup> <https://www.rivaliq.com/blog/2018-social-media-industry-benchmark-report/>

and Latvia have a considerably lower number of active Twitter users in general and over time, this number is actually decreasing.



Source: Twitter Analytics  
Graph 38 Twitter statistics - followers per country

On Twitter the Programme has attracted more female followers than male which again runs contrary to the average statistical profile of Twitter users, who are mostly male (66% male to 34% female in 2019)<sup>29</sup>.

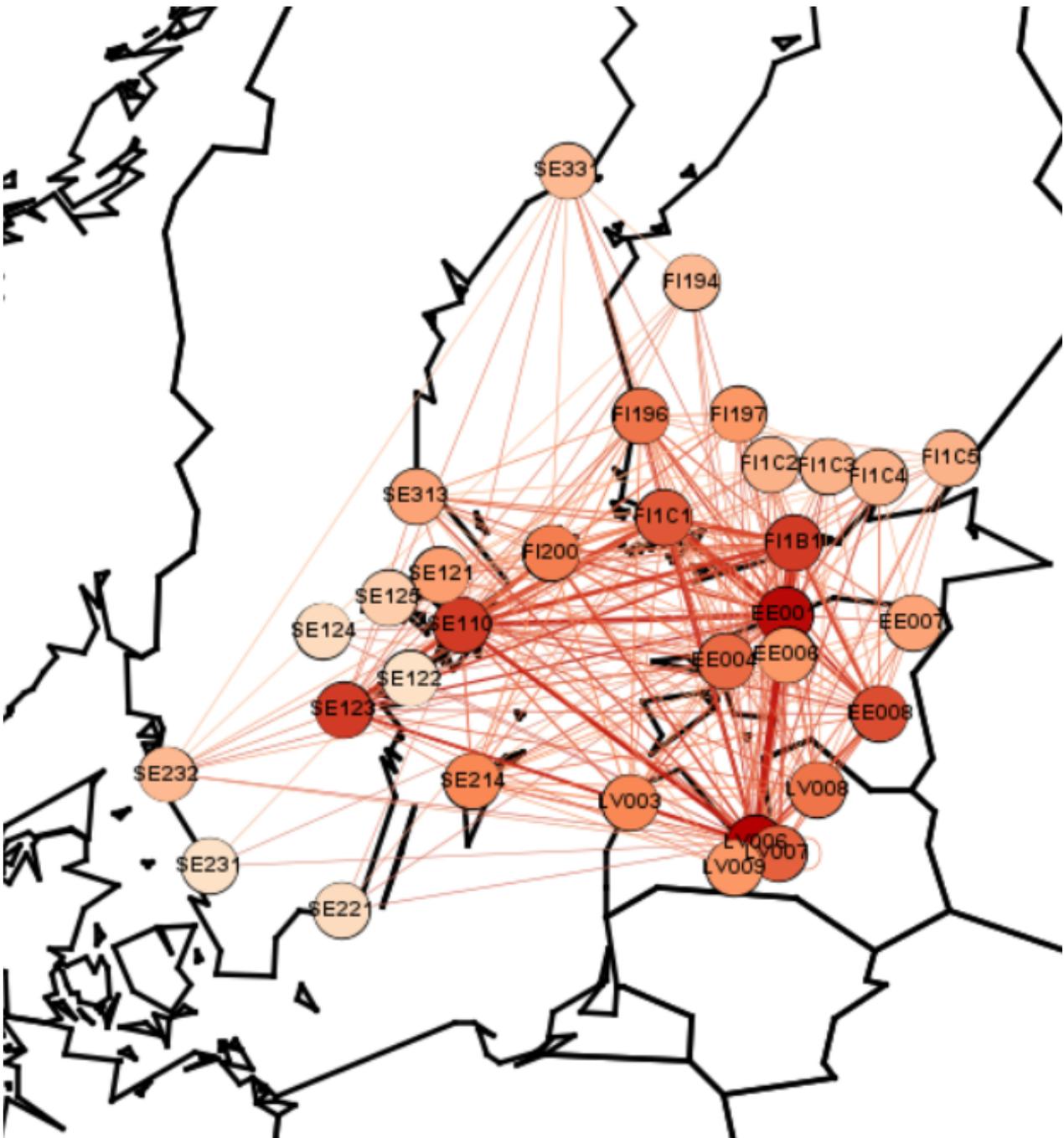


Source: Twitter Analytics  
Graph 39 Twitter statistics - followers per gender

<sup>29</sup> <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2019-global-digital-overview>

## 8. EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Interreg Central Baltic programme has contributed to the strengthening of co-operation between the regions in the programme area. Partners from all eligible regions participate in Interreg Central Baltic projects. Co-operation is especially strong between the capital regions of the participating countries (Põhja-Eesti, Helsinki-Uusimaa, Stockholm county, and Riga), as graph 40 shows. The network is also relatively dense among the core regions. The adjacent regions are however more loosely connected to the network, which is understandable.



Graph 40: Connections between the Interreg Central Baltic regions (counted as regional partners in projects)

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The funded projects have cross-border added value. The business-related projects derive their added value from gaining access to each other's networks and resources and from combining forces to create a critical mass. The education-related projects, on the other hand, benefit from each other's resources, as well as from learning from each other and exchanging information and knowledge.

The funded projects have a total of 622 partners. Local public authorities represent the largest group (39 %) in Interreg Central Baltic projects. Higher education and research institutions (22 %), Interest groups including NGOs (13 %) and business support organisations (9 %) are also important groups of project partners, higher education and research institutions are the Lead Partners in a third of the Interreg Central Baltic projects. Interest groups, including NGOs lead approximately a fifth of the projects.

## 8.1 PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The two-step application process has proven to be useful, although it presents a significant administrative burden on the SC in its attempt to reduce the burden on the applicants. The project selection process is rigorous, and the selected projects are, overall, very good. Most of the calls have been open to all Priorities and Specific Objectives. The funded projects have matched the specifications of the Specific Objectives well. The projects are supply-driven, that is, the project topics and focus are proposed by the applicants instead of the calls having a specific thematic focus.

Overall, almost all Specific Objectives have been successful in terms of reaching their set targets and benefiting from cross-border co-operation. However, the degrees of success vary between Specific Objectives and Priorities.

### Priority 1

Priority 1 has been partially successful in reaching its targets. This is mainly because the creation of joint cross-border companies has been more challenging than expected under SO 1.1. According to some project managers interviewed for this evaluation, support services for start-up companies in most Central Baltic countries are extensive. Especially Finland and Estonia in particular boast a vibrant start-up scene with numerous incubator programmes already in existence. In general, it is not easy to create a sustainable start-up company, even at the national level. The Interreg Central Baltic programme objective of creating joint cross-border companies has proven too challenging to achieve. Most interviewees stated that cross-border action is very hard to manufacture in the business start-up phase as people need to work together to form the idea and make it happen. Start-ups generally do not have the financial or human resources to create subsidiaries or enter into expensive co-operation projects, all of which take time and resources away from their core activities. Cross-border co-operation and 'jointness' is more natural when the companies are more developed and have a greater resource capacity to engage in such activities. That is, their business idea is clear, they have established processes and products and they already know what kind of specific talent or resources they would need to succeed in the market. Notwithstanding this, co-operation between start-ups and other knowledge-intensive companies is important, and good additional results have been achieved through the funded projects.

The other SOs (more entrepreneurial youth and more exports by the Central Baltic companies to new markets) under priority 1 have succeeded well. However, the follow-up of realised export sales is challenging as there is generally a time lag between the end of the project and realised sales.

### Priority 2

Priority 2 has been successful in reaching its targets under all Specific Objectives assessed. The priority has contributed to a variety of instances of the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources in the Central Baltic area. SO 2.4 has been successful in attracting innovative projects related to reduced nutrient,

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hazardous substance and toxins inflow into the Baltic Sea. The projects under this SO have also networked successfully amongst each other. All the EUSBSR Flagships funded from the Interreg Central Baltic fall under Priority 2, three of them under SO 2.4.

Some challenges did however emerge in relation to Priority 2 project monitoring and assessment. Namely, the indicators relating to the increased number of tourists (SO 2.1) and reduced inflows (SO 2.4) are hard to monitor in practice.

### Priority 3

Priority 3 has been generally successful in reaching its targets, although it is not possible to make a definite judgement on SO 3.1 due to the small number of completed projects. The ongoing projects will therefore be important in attaining the SO targets. In general, under SO 3.1 funding has focused on corridors rather than on nodes. There have been high profile projects (e.g. FinEst Link), as well as practical projects relating to concrete reductions in travel time for passengers and goods. The targets of SO 3.2 have already been exceeded. Under this SO, funding has focused on practical projects which have brought real improvements to small ports around the Central Baltic area.

### Priority 4

Priority 4 has also succeeded well. The projects have met their targets, and there have been a variety of different kinds of projects. The community-related projects under SO 4.1 have brought about improvements in a wide variety of target groups. However, the added value of cross-border co-operation could be strengthened in the community-related projects by focusing more clearly on a common challenge that the communities tackle together. Under SO 4.2, educational institutions have cooperated to align the VET curricula in different sectors. There has been clear cross-border added value in aligning VET curricula.

## 8.2 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

### **Mutual learning and cooperation within the programme**

CO 1.4. In addition to the existing systematic cooperation with other programmes and capacity building measures regarding programme implementation issues, there is an opportunity for closer cooperation with other programmes at the planning stage (alignment of priorities), during the implementation stage (sharing of experience and coordination of activities between the Programmes' entities) and in relation to the joint communication of results with the wider public (communication on results by thematic areas and topics, not according to projects or programmes).

CO 2.2. The potential exists to encourage greater synergies between the different projects implemented under the same thematic priorities both within the Programme and also with projects from other programmes.

### **Perspective and focus of programme communication on results**

CO 2.2. Programme level communication on results continues to focus on actions and on the results of individual projects rather than on broader phenomena and thematic issues of importance. Programme level communication *vis a vis* the results does not sufficiently address the thematic context of and synergies between the projects implemented in the same thematic areas.

Co 2.2. Programme efforts to promote synergies both within the Programme and with projects implemented under other programmes should be continued. There is clearly unused potential here in terms of the search for closer cooperation, reaching a wider public, mutual synergies with other programmes and the communication thereof concentrating on thematic issues such as environmental protection and pollution of the Baltic Sea etc.

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Co 2.2. Communication in national languages is important in order to reach the wider public, especially regarding the Programme level communication of results.

#### **Use of social media**

The Programme's Facebook page has 869 followers (796 likes)<sup>30</sup>. The number of followers is lower than for similar cross-border cooperation programmes.

There is a closed group "Central Baltic Communication network" created within the Facebook platform, which shares information on projects and Programme-related activities. Interviewed beneficiaries highlighted the need for more structured content and targeted information, as currently this communications channel reports on a wide range/diversity of information which makes it hard to follow. Moreover, for some target groups Facebook is associated more with leisure than professional information flow.

CO 1.4. While there is evidence of systematic cooperation and of the sharing of results with audiences outside the Programme, there was little evidence of systemic/institutionalised learning from other programmes within the CB programme (outside->inside). There is clearly then an opportunity for closer cooperation with other programmes at the planning stage (alignment of priorities), during the implementation stage (sharing of experience and coordination of activities between the Programmes' entities) and in relation to the joint communication of results with the wider public (communication on results by thematic areas and topics, not according to projects or programmes).

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<sup>30</sup> Checked on 19.03.2019.

<sup>31</sup> Checked on 19.03.2019.

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### 8.3 GENERAL ISSUES

#### **Programme intervention logic and Theory of Change**

The programme has a clear, streamlined structure with a pronounced intervention logic. A formalised Theory of Change has not however been created for the programme prior to this evaluation and the programme document does not explain the underlying assumptions very clearly.

#### **Result indicators**

The programme result indicators vary in terms of style, construction and ease of understanding. Whereas some result indicators are straightforward, others (e.g. SO 1.3 and SO 4.1) are rather convoluted, while yet others are either non-aggregable (e.g. SO 2.4) or simply impractical (e.g. SO 2.1 and SO 2.3).

#### **Output indicators**

In some cases, the projects have reported qualitatively different issues under outputs. This should be avoided as the indicators end up measuring different things.

#### **Project monitoring, self-assessment and evaluation requirements**

Project monitoring focuses on financial and activity monitoring in eMS. Systematic monitoring of results is not however a process which is built into all projects. Since the programme results depend on the ability and willingness of the projects to gather, assess, and communicate their results, improving the monitoring and assessment process is of great importance.

#### **Project partners**

At the moment, the project partners, especially Lead Partners, from Finland and Estonia are more numerous than those from Sweden and Latvia. Also, the network of project partners is the tightest amongst capitals and university cities in the programme area.

#### **eMS**

The system is not very user-friendly. There should be a section where the reported outputs and results of the project could be seen in a cumulative manner, preferably next to cumulative spending. There is currently a result indicator number listed in the application (with no space to insert a value for the target) but fulfilment cannot be found in project reports, while there is no place to report the result indicator value.

The interviewed project managers viewed the eMS system as burdensome, especially with regard to reporting. Excess time spent on reporting is time lost on project implementation which hinders the work of the smaller Lead Partners’ in particular.

#### **Project descriptions**

The project summaries in the Central Baltic Project Database (in the open internet) are not always clear. The texts are excerpts of the project application from the eMS, and they often do not describe the project in a comprehensive and clear manner. These texts should be reviewed thoroughly with a communications expert so that the project summaries are more informative for the general public.

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### **Project target groups**

The definition of target groups varies between projects. Some projects list only the main target group, others list all possible target groups and stakeholders. In SO 4.1, the target groups were left for the projects to define, meaning that the target groups varied from project to project.

### **Project target settings**

The target setting of the projects varies widely. Whereas some projects (e.g. in Objective 1) have high targets for small amounts of money, other similar projects have low targets for higher amounts of money.

### **Project communication**

Quality, style, tools and frequency vary significantly between projects. Whereas some projects seem to have professional-level communication, others are hard to find information on even from the internet (e.g. website archived or static website). The internal communications channels of the projects also vary significantly in quality terms.

### **EUSBSR Flagships**

There are four EUSBSR Flagships financed from the Interreg Central Baltic projects. The programme website does not however promote the programme's connection to the EUSBSR, nor do any of the Flagships.

## **9. EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **9.1 PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

For the next programming period, thematic calls could be considered in order to sharpen the thematic focus of the projects and to facilitate the creation of synergies between projects. Furthermore, having more projects under one theme would enhance the impacts of the programme under the given theme. In general, increased co-operation and synergies between the projects would add value to the projects and the programme. In this way, the programme's effect would be greater than merely the sum of the results of its individual projects.

The two-step application process is useful, but its administrative burden on the Joint Secretariat, the Steering Committee and the Monitoring Committee should be taken into consideration here.

#### **Priority 1**

##### **1.1 New Central Baltic knowledge intensive companies**

For the next programming period, where in the start-up support chain the Interreg Central Baltic has most added value should be carefully assessed as there are already numerous national and regional schemes for supporting start-ups. In order to get more joint companies, the cooperation could either start earlier or later. Namely, mixing potential target groups of wantrepreneurs as early as possible so that they come up with the business idea together could work in some sectors (e.g. game sector in the case of CB4GameCamps). Alternatively, it could be fruitful approach to encourage already established knowledge-intensive companies to co-operate in e.g. joint product development or joint service provision. The latter could be considered as an approach for the future programming period.

##### **1.2 More entrepreneurial youth**

The document analysis and the interviews with the project managers, project partners, and the programme management point to the importance of focusing the projects clearly on entrepreneurship education, rather than having entrepreneurship education added onto a project with a different subject matter. This also helps when aiming to create joint student companies focused on business simulation. Furthermore, projects

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based on existing youth entrepreneurship networks have succeeded in creating real joint student companies. They have also succeeded in increasing the entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of the participating youth through established entrepreneurship education models and processes. Going forward, it is important to ensure that these projects centre on entrepreneurship education and the projects clearly focus on creating joint business simulations based on pre-created methodologies of what student companies are and how they should be created. Projects where entrepreneurship education is a secondary goal or joint business simulations are not robust should not therefore be financed.

### **1.3 More exports by the Central Baltic companies to new markets**

The most successful projects in this Specific Objective worked in close contact with companies and have undertaken real actions to promote exports to new markets. On the basis of the document analysis and interviews, it can be seen that those projects that focused their work on the market analysis and preparatory work (i.e. the earlier stages of export development), were not as successful in ensuring export channels to new markets, compared to projects which worked with the exporting companies hands-on. Also, the number and type of new markets increases the market entry risk as each country's market has national specificities.

## **Priority 2**

### **2.1 Natural and cultural resources developed into sustainable tourist attractions**

The utilisation of joint cultural and natural heritage for creating joint attractions could have more impact if the focus changed to development of the Central Baltic area a unified tourism destination. This would mean that the focus would change from individual countries and regions to the Central Baltic area, and it would include the creation of joint packages (including accommodation, tours, sights, activities and services) for tourists. This change of focus would also require close cooperation between the tourism industry actors, national and regional tourist boards, and a focus on joint marketing and product development. The projects would necessarily also need to involve local tourism industry and improve their capacities in terms of product development and marketing. This kind of project could have a real impact in terms of numbers of tourists, overnight stays, and ultimately, in terms of money spent by the tourists. This vision may not be realisable during this programming period, but it could be in the next programming period.

### **2.3. Better urban planning in the Central Baltic region**

Lead partner interviewees noted that project partners from the Baltic states benefited most from knowledge and know-how exchange relating to participative city planning. This may be because the communicative planning approach is more widely used in urban planning in Finland and Sweden. Nevertheless, experiences showed that cross border cooperation is very beneficial for city officials such that they can learn new methods and approaches for their own city planning projects and processes. In the future, it will be important to build the capacities of the city officials both in terms of integrative city planning processes and in regards to participatory methods.

In general, greater attention should be paid to the comparability of the result indicators as well as to the availability of result targets for each project. Currently, it is not possible to form a coherent picture of the changes introduced by Interreg Central Baltic funding as the projects are all rather different and comparable information about the targets and realised results remains insufficient.

### **2.4. Reduced nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins inflow into the Baltic Sea**

The funded projects have covered different sources of nutrient inflows (agriculture, fisheries, headwater) and other pollutants (plastic). Some of them aim to reduce the inflows directly at the source, others have a more horizontal and political agenda. Both kinds of projects are needed. The various projects have formulated a number of innovative methods to reduce the nutrient load of the Baltic Sea. Based on the interviews and document analysis, it is also clear that some of the projects (Waterchain, Nutrinflow, and GreenAgri) in this Specific Objective, network and co-operate successfully, increasing the information flow

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between projects and multiplying the effect of the projects. This is a highly positive development. The true benefit of innovation however comes from the spreading and use of the innovative method, tool, or practice. As such, it is vital for the innovative projects to connect with other nutrient load reduction actions and projects, particularly those funded by other ESI Funds (e.g. the Rural Development Fund), thus disseminating their innovation more broadly. Increased communication with all target groups is also a necessity.

### Priority 3

#### **3.1 Improved transport flows of people and goods**

Most of the funded projects have focused on transport corridors. Only FinEstSmartMobility project included the development of two transport nodes. This may be because of the plans made and projects financed at the national and city levels, for instance relating to mobility as a service (MaaS), or the differences in structures and ownership of transport nodes in different countries. As such, whether there is added value in the cross-border development of transport nodes requires critical assessment.

#### **3.2 Improved services of existing small ports to improve local and regional mobility and contribute to tourism development**

The projects have been very practical, bringing about real improvements in these small port areas. Many of the improvements have however been simultaneous, such as investments into piers, safety equipment, and public facilities. The joint or network aspect of these improvements has therefore been less prominent. In future, greater attention should be given to jointness and networking, especially networking between the projects. Furthermore, now that investments have been made in terms of the infrastructure, focus should turn to utilising the infrastructure and creating events, services, routes and business opportunities based on the improved services of these small ports.

When considering the transport projects for the next programming period, it is important to see where the programme can have the greatest impact and complementarity as there is already a lot of national and other European funding (TEN-T).

### Priority 4

#### **4.1 More people benefiting from stronger Central Baltic communities**

The projects covered a wide range of topics and communities. Some projects, such as the Female Estonian Migrant, have worked directly with cross-border issues and communities. Others have worked with similar communities in different countries. For community-related projects, it is important to focus on those areas or issues where cross-border value added is at its greatest. Projects should not simply be mirror projects in different countries, rather, the cross-border challenge should be a decisive element in the project success.

The choice of the communities to be targeted by the project is left to the project partners to define. In the future however, it may be more beneficial to define the target groups in a clearer manner in the programme. This would help in assessing the results and changes in the target groups, as well as magnify the added value of the programme.

#### **4.2 More aligned vocational education and training programmes in the Central Baltic region**

The aligned curricula cover a wide range of fields, most of which are related to the Interreg Central Baltic priority axes. The alignment of curricula is an important step in the co-operation between the VET institutions. The challenge here is to keep the aligned curricula in use after the project ends. In future, cooperation between the educational institutions should deepen, for instance through visiting teachers/professors or joint courses held on the aligned curricula. For the future programming period, it may be useful to promote a deeper form of co-operation between the institutions, for instance, through jointly delivered VET modules.

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## 9.2 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

### **Mutual learning and cooperation within the programme**

Encourage mutual learning among the various programmes regarding planning, implementation and the communication of results on the basis of common topics of importance in the BSR area. Mutual learning and co-operation between the Interreg Central Baltic projects should also be encouraged further.

Encourage synergy between different projects implemented under the same thematic areas by identifying projects, motivating and facilitating the process of learning and the communication of results while focusing the search options of the database on thematic issues.

### **Perspective and focus of programme communication on results**

The programme communication lifecycle has reached the point where communication focusing on calls and activities can be reduced and greater focus placed on programme results and best practices. Programme-level communication on results should focus more on the broader perspective and on the most important thematic issues. Emphasis should be placed on the contribution made by the Programme's results along with the results of other programmes and initiatives regarding BSR-level challenges, including EUSBSR. It is advisable to structure the communication along the thematic issues (e.g., #hashtags) rather than via the administrative division of the programme (e.g., priorities, specific objectives) and to encourage use of national languages during communications with the wider audience. This would also encourage use of the project database by other projects / programme beneficiaries and permit easy identification of projects of common interest. The programme website should also have a search function.

### **Use of social media**

The purpose and content of the Programme's Facebook page should also be revised in order to provide more focussed and relevant content from the user's perspective. A closed Facebook group is good for sharing internal information, but an open account is needed to promote the results of the projects and the programme. Facebook is predominantly associated with leisure / social activities, therefore more professionally oriented tools (e.g., LinkedIn) should be considered as an alternative. A more active presence on Twitter is also recommended. The programme account should be a focal point for collecting information under one hashtag while the project results and activities could get a boost from re-tweets by the programme account and other projects.

## 9.3 GENERAL ISSUES

### **Programme intervention logic and Theory of Change**

For the future programming period, the programme would benefit from a Theory of Change formulated already at the programming phase. The Theory of Change would help both to check the validity of underlying assumptions as well as assisting in better communicating the programme aims.

### **Result indicators**

Harmonise the concept of result indicators, using SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) indicators.

### **Output indicators**

Indicator descriptions should be developed and communicated to the project applicants/managers. The projects should follow the agreed definitions and report only if the indicator definition is fulfilled.

### **Project monitoring, self-assessment and evaluation requirements**

Each project should already have a clear plan at the acceptance phase, outlining how the monitoring and assessment of project results is organised both during the project and afterwards. As the result-orientation

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of all EU programme is only likely to grow in future, it is important for projects to show results which build on the broader programme results.

### **Project partners**

The reasons behind there being more Finnish and Estonian than Swedish and Latvian project partners should be investigated further. Communication efforts in Sweden and Latvia should be increased, as well as further assistance in finding project partners for Swedish and Latvian-led projects could be provided.

### **eMS**

The user experience of the eMS tool should be further developed. Where possible the JS should collaborate with the eMS developers and provide feedback in order to improve the system for the project applicants/managers.

The eMS should include a place to insert the target value for a result indicator, as well as a place to insert the realised value of the result indicator. This is vital for the result-orientation of the programme. Moreover, there should be a section where the reported outputs and results of the project could be viewed in a cumulative manner, preferably next to the cumulative spending entry.

The administrative burden of the eMS should be assessed and reduced, where possible.

### **Project descriptions**

Create a template for project descriptions (e.g. answer questions Who? What? Why? To whom?) and review the texts thoroughly with a communications person such that the project summaries are also informative for the general public. The project database should include a key word search function as well as the classification of projects under thematic headings.

### **Project target groups**

Clarify the extent of project target groups listed in the project application. For some specific objectives (e.g. SO 4.1), the target groups could be more clearly indicated in the programme document.

### **Project target settings**

Set a unified range for targets and advise the applicants clearly on target-setting.

### **Project communication**

Each project should have a clear communication plan which is implemented through various communications channels. Internal and external communication should be an integral part of the projects and should be allocated an appropriate level of resources and skilled staff to complete the task. Projects should have clear processes and day-to-day platforms for discussing issues, such as Slack.

### **EUSBSR Flagships**

The programme's connection with the EUSBSR should be made more visible, either as a separate page on the programme website, or as a link on the main page. Programme communication should highlight the Flagships and their results. Finally, the Flagships themselves should utilise the Flagship status in their own communications and external visibility.

## 10. ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of funded projects by Specific Objective

SO	Project code	Project acronym	Sub-programme	Lead partner nationality
<b>1.1 New Central Baltic knowledge intensive companies</b>				
	CB113	STARPABS	Central Baltic	FI
	CB181	Springboard	Central Baltic	FI
	CB198	Talsinki	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE
	CB291	BELT	Central Baltic	FI
	CB348	Archipelago Partnerships	Archipelago and Islands	FI (AX)
	CB421	CB 4 GameCamps	Central Baltic	FI
	CB588	SPARKS	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE
<b>1.2 More entrepreneurial youth</b>				
	CB9	RIBS	Archipelago and Islands	FI
	CB276	CBewB	Central Baltic	EE
	CB619	DigiYouth	Central Baltic	EE
<b>1.3 More exports by the Central Baltic companies to new markets</b>				
	CB41	CB HealthAccess	Central Baltic	FI
	CB66	CB2East	Central Baltic	SE
	CB133	ICT Meta Cluster	Central Baltic	SE
	CB152	SME2GO	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE
	CB216	CLUSME	Central Baltic	EE
	CB340	CAITO	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
	CB473	FINEEX Music	Central Baltic	EE
	CB614	NNFA	Central Baltic	EE
	CB662	SME Aisle	Central Baltic	FI
	CB664	IHMEC	Central Baltic	FI
	CB679	LEF network to China	Central Baltic	LV
<b>2.1 Natural and cultural resources developed into sustainable tourist attractions</b>				
	CB55	LiviHeri	Central Baltic	FI
	CB64	SmartZoos	Central Baltic	EE
	CB110	HANSA	Central Baltic	SE
	CB137	LightsOn!	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
	CB226	NATTOURS	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE
	CB379	St Olav Waterway	Archipelago and Islands	FI
	CB435	DefenceArch	Archipelago and Islands	FI
	CB531	BALTACAR	Archipelago and Islands	EE
	CB663	Baltic Wings	Central Baltic	SE
	CB688	Lakesperience	Central Baltic	FI
<b>2.2. Sustainably planned and managed marine and coastal areas</b>				
	CB354	SustainBaltic	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
	CB395	Plan4Blue	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
	CB627	Coast4us	Central Baltic	SE

### 2.3. Better urban planning in the Central Baltic region

CB77	Baltic Urban Lab	Central Baltic	FI
CB155	Live Baltic Campus	Central Baltic	FI
CB187	iWater	Central Baltic	LV
CB604	Augmented Urbans	Central Baltic	FI
CB693	HEAT	Central Baltic	FI

### 2.4. Reduced nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins inflow into the Baltic Sea

CB39	INSURE	Central Baltic	SE
CB50	WATERCHAIN	Central Baltic	FI
CB87	BLASTIC	Central Baltic	SE
CB264	NutriTrade	Central Baltic	FI
CB272	GreenAgri	Central Baltic	EE
CB295	NUTRINFLOW	Central Baltic	FI
CB698	SEABASED	Central Baltic	FI
CB716	HEAWATER	Central Baltic	EE

### 3.1. Improved transport flows of people and goods

CB227	ADAPT	Archipelago and Islands	SE
CB241	SMART E67	Central Baltic	LV
CB293	MobiCarnet	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE
CB359	FinEstSmartMobility	Central Baltic	FI
CB426	SmartLog	Central Baltic	FI
CB505	FinEst Link	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
CB607	EfficientFlow	Central Baltic	SE
CB736	REFEC	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
CB737	E-TICKETING	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE

### 3.2. Improved services of existing small ports to improve local and regional mobility and contribute to tourism development

CB94	30MILES	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
CB239	SmartPorts	Central Baltic	EE
CB296	MASAPO	Archipelago and Islands	EE
CB350	FamilyPorts	Archipelago and Islands	FI
CB393	PortMate	Archipelago and Islands	FI
CB616	Smart Marina	Archipelago and Islands	FI
CB630	Sustainable Gateways	Archipelago and Islands	FI
CB637	BATSECO-BOAT	Archipelago and Islands	FI
CB650	SEASTOP	Archipelago and Islands	SE

### 4.1. More people benefiting from stronger Central Baltic communities

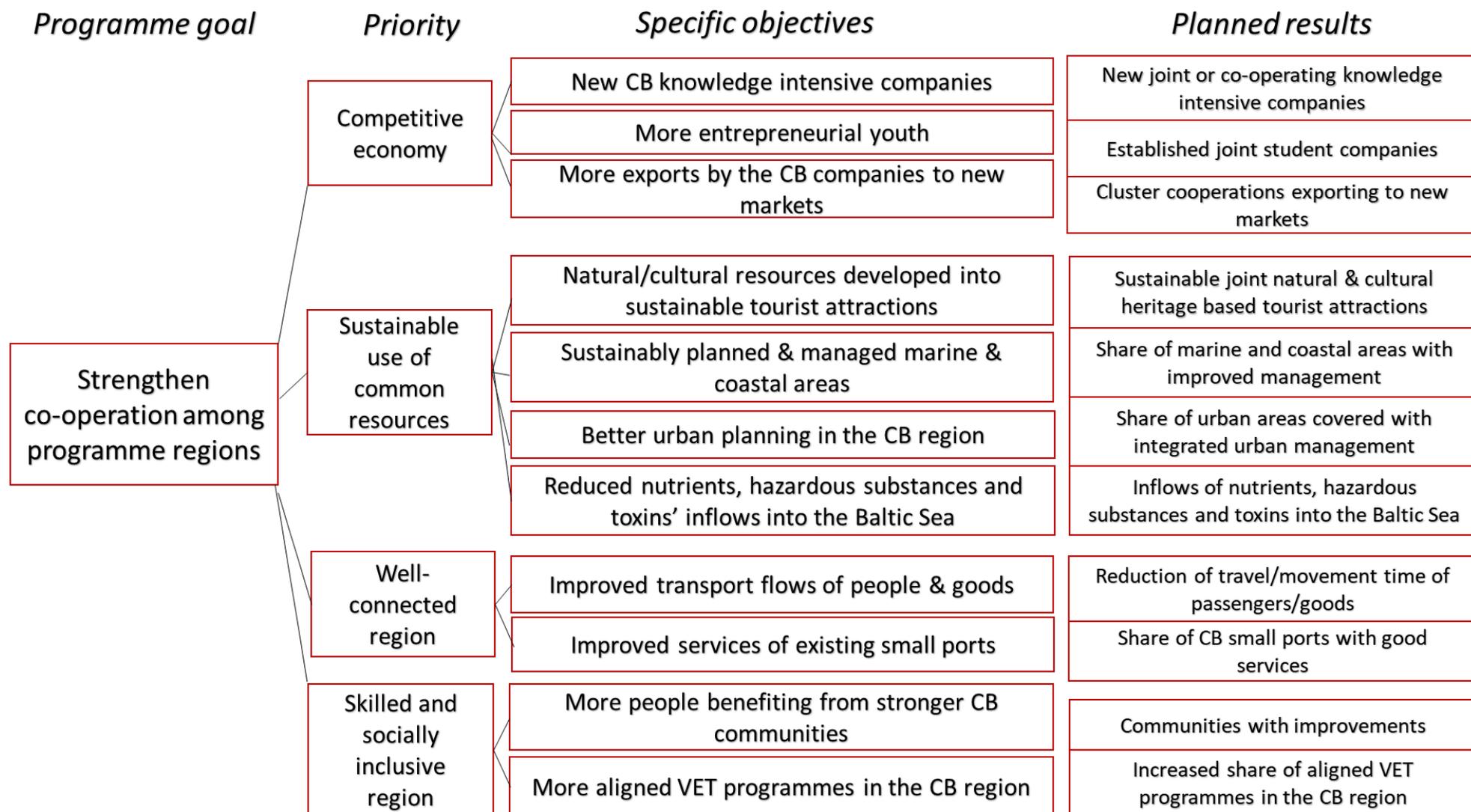
CB15	PAD	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
CB35	PIM	Central Baltic	EE
CB85	Let us be active!	Central Baltic	FI
CB98	REGI	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
CB103	SIPPE	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
CB270	TheatreEx	Central Baltic	EE
CB465	EmpowerKids	Central Baltic	FI
CB468	Active Age	Central Baltic	EE

CB521	YOUTH-SPORT-VOL	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE
CB525	CROSS	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE
CB571	FEM (Female Estonian Migrant)	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE
CB605	Gardens	Archipelago and Islands	FI (AX)
CB652	PRIME	Central Baltic	SE
CB670	CoMe Strong	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
CB680	ARC	Central Baltic	FI
CB694	MUCH MORE	Central Baltic	FI
CB739	DSB	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE

#### 4.2. More aligned vocational education and training (VET) programmes in the Central Baltic region

CB25	DeDiWe	Central Baltic	FI
CB36	ITSVET	Central Baltic	EE
CB54	EDU-SMEs	Central Baltic	FI
CB79	SAFHY	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
CB207	EDU-RAIL	Central Baltic	EE
CB338	ACUCARE	Central Baltic	FI
CB342	BOOSTED	Central Baltic	FI
CB399	NURED	Central Baltic	FI
CB406	OnBoard-Med	Central Baltic	FI
CB409	HPP	Southern Finland - Estonia	EE
CB612	NatureBizz	Central Baltic	FI
CB625	SimE	Central Baltic	FI
CB642	Crea-RE	Central Baltic	FI
CB714	CoMET	Southern Finland - Estonia	FI
CB743	UniLog	Central Baltic	SE

Annex 2: Intervention logic of the Interreg Central Baltic programme



Annex 3: Connections between the Interreg Central Baltic Programme Specific Objectives and the EUSBSR Policy Areas and Horizontal Actions

EU strategy for Baltic Sea Region		Save the sea			Connect the region		Increase Prosperity					Horizontal Actions						
		Nutri	Hazards	Bio-economy	Ship	Safe	Transport	Energy	Secure	Tourism	Culture	Innovation	Health	Education	Spatial planning	Neighbours	Capacity	Climate
<b>Priority axis 1:</b>	1.1. 'New KICs'																	
<b>Competitive economy;</b>	1.2. 'Entrepreneurial youth'																	
	1.3. 'Exports to new markets '																	
<b>Priority axis 2:</b>	2.1. 'Sustainable tourist attractions'																	
<b>Sustainable use of common resources;</b>	2.2. 'Marine and coastal area planning'																	
	2.3. 'Urban planning'																	
	2.4. 'Reduced inflows into the Baltic Sea'																	
<b>Priority axis 3:</b>	3.1. 'Improved transport flows'																	
<b>Well-connected</b>	3.2. 'Improved services of small ports'																	
<b>Priority axis 4:</b>	4.1. 'Stronger communities'																	
<b>Skilled and socially inclusive region.</b>	4.2. 'Aligned VET programmes'																	

■ Direct connection   
 ■ Indirect connection