

What is the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B programme?

europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/interreg3

The **Baltic Sea Region (BSR) INTERREG III B** programme belongs to one of the three strands of the European Community Initiative INTERREG III. These programmes address transeuropean co-operation and intend to encourage harmonious and balanced development of the European territory. Strand B of the INTERREG III Initiative supports transnational co-operation projects.

The INTERREG III B programme for the Baltic Sea Region is seeking to achieve a higher level of spatial integration and competitiveness through intensified regional, economic and social interaction and development. The programme is implemented in line with the Northern Dimension Action Plan, the VASAB 2010 strategies, programmes of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and with the programmes of HELCOM and Baltic 21.

BSR INTERREG III B is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), as part of the Structural Funds, and co-financed by national project partners. The application period is 2001-2006 (two open calls for project applications per year), the project implementation period is till 2008.

What is the co-operation area? What are the EU financing instruments available?



The **cooperation area** of the BSR INTERREG III B includes eleven countries separated by numerous land and sea borders. The Baltic Sea Region covers a large European area stretching from Bremen to the Barents Sea, from Kaliningrad to Kirkenes, from Brest to Bodö.

Only project partners from EU Member States can apply for funding from the BSR INTERREG III B programme. Entire Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden are eligible areas, as well as the German federal states (Länder) of Berlin, Brandenburg, Hamburg, Bremen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schleswig-Holstein and Niedersachsen (only NUTS II area Regierungsbezirk Lüneburg).

For EU Member States the total ERDF-budget amounts to EUR 127.5 million. The general ERDF-funding rate for projects is up to 50 % of the total eligible budget. To encourage participation of project partners from Objective 1 areas (East German Länder, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, parts of Sweden and Finland) in transnational projects, the ERDF assistance can be increased to up to 75 %. ERDF funds have to be matched with co-financing from national project partners of the EU Member States. National co-financing is mainly to be public funds.

For partners from Norway the Norwegian government has provided a separate budget of EUR 6 million for BSR co-operation.

Russian partners from Kaliningrad, St Petersburg surrounded by Leningrad Oblast, the Karelian Republic, Pskov Oblast, Novgorod Oblast and Murmansk Oblast are welcome to participate in joint projects as well as partners from Archangelsk Oblast and Nenets Okrug. A potential funding source is the EU Tacis programme.

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For partners from Belarus, the provinces of Minsk, Grodno, Brest and Vitebsk are eligible areas for co-operation. A potential funding source is the EU Tacis programme.

In addition, private funds are welcome to top up project budgets.

What are the topics addressed by the BSR INTERREG III B programme?

The BSR INTERREG III B partners should address topics identified under the priorities and measures of the programme. The projects are directed at three main fields (priorities):

The first type – **Priority 1: promotion of spatial development approaches and actions for specific territories and sectors** with regard to the whole Baltic Sea Region or at least to larger development zones, islands and other specific areas. Projects in this priority will also support preparation of spatial development concepts within specific sectors. Within this priority three measures will be distinguished:



Measure 1: Supporting joint strategies and implementation actions for larger development zones (macro-regions)
Measure 2: Promoting sustainable spatial development of specific sectors
Measure 3: Strengthening sustainable integrated development of coastal zones, islands and other specific areas



The second type – **Priority 2: promotion of territorial structures supporting sustainable BSR development**. The creation of preconditions for improved access to information society is also a topic to be developed within this priority:
Measure 1: Promoting balanced polycentric settlement structures
Measure 2: Creating sustainable communication links for improved spatial integration
Measure 3: Enhancing good management of cultural and natural heritage, valuable landscapes and natural resources

The third type – **Priority 3: transnational promotion of institution building, strengthening the capacity for spatial development activities** between regional and local authorities in order to enhance transnational spatial development. The purpose is to strengthen local and regional authorities to run efficient spatial policies and to remove legal and administrative barriers hampering a balanced economic and spatial development.



You can find a more detailed description of measures in chapter 2.3. of the Programme Complement. Please check already approved projects for examples of projects for each measure.

www.bsrinterreg.net/programme.html

What are the BSR INTERREG III B projects working on and what results are expected?



Eligible activities are, for example, workshops and seminars, dissemination of information and analyses such as market research. Joint pilot actions, implementation of best practice and building up networks are other examples.

Examples of outputs are:

- framework plans or sector concepts for specific areas,
- feasibility studies including investment plans,
- management and marketing concepts,
- small scale infrastructure investment for model and pilot projects of transnational relevance,
- transnational networks and databases.

Who can apply for funding from the BSR INTERREG III B?

The **eligible project partners** are public authorities on national, regional, sub-regional and local level, research and training institutions, foundations, NGOs and non-profit organisations from the EU Member States. Project's partners can originate from the whole BSR.

Where to present project ideas and how to search for partners?

The Joint Secretariat assists and gives advices in developing project ideas and also gives support when it comes to project partner search. If you have a project idea you would like to disseminate to the public and market it for potential project partners or look for other ideas, you are welcome to visit the on-line project idea database on the BSR INTERREG III B homepage at www.bsrinterreg.net.

How is the programme managed?

A joint Steering Committee comprising representatives of eleven participating countries selects projects and makes funding decisions. A joint Monitoring Committee oversees the use of ERDF funds. The Joint Secretariat in Rostock & Karlskrona is responsible for administration and management of the programme, advising on INTERREG/Tacis co-operation, assisting project generation and development.

The participating countries have entrusted the Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein (IB) to act as legal body responsible for correct implementation and payments to project partners. IB is a state owned development bank governed by public law. All ERDF funds are pooled in a joint bank account managed by IB. National sub-committees were set up representing the local and regional level. They have advisory status and work in close contact with the Joint Secretariat and the Steering Committee members.

Which projects will be selected?

Priority will be given to projects requiring transnational action and delivering added value through joint solutions. Partners from at least three different countries must be involved, of which at least two should be financial contributors, and one from an EU Member State. Projects should contribute to a harmonious, balanced and sustainable development and to ecological, economic and social cohesion in the region. The projects should also refer to spatial planning, follow a multi-sectoral and territorial approach, and respect EU policies. Preference will be given to projects addressing real problems and involving decision makers and end users as well. Project activities should go beyond networking and exchange of experience. Preparing investments will gain support above research or purely methodological studies. Participation of project partners supported from the Tacis programmes will receive extra scores.

If you wish to know more about the BSR INTERREG III B programme and BSR co-operation or need assistance on how to involve partners from BSR and use also Tacis CBC programme feel free to contact us or visit our web site at

www.bsrinterreg.net

How to get more information?

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The Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B Programme

A Community Initiative concerning transnational co-operation on spatial planning and regional development



European Union