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Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021–2027

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE 2nd CALL FOR PROPOSALS

5th October 2023 – 30th November 2023

(Open for regular projects under all Programme Priorities)

Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027

The Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027 is a multilateral cross-border cooperation programme between the coastal regions of five EU Member States: Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Lithuania, and Poland, implemented in the framework of the Interreg policy of the European Union funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

Maritime cooperation in the South Baltic area (SBA) is based on joint challenges and opportunities strongly connected with a common natural resource – the Baltic Sea. The regions of the Programme have strong historical roots of cooperation, which is an important background for sustainable regional growth.

Over the years, the networks created by beneficiaries of the Programme were strengthened to make the potential of the South Baltic area more visible in the European context, and the Programme itself took on more strategic and focused approach to support the blue and green economy at a very local level.

The future priority and direction of growth is reflected in the motto of the Programme: *“United by the sea into action for blue and green future – Innovative, Sustainable, Attractive and Active South Baltic”*.

Actions with the focus on natural and cultural heritage together with economic, environmental and social development, bring cooperation of different actors in the SBA foremost aiming at improving the quality of life of its inhabitants.

Programme Priorities and Measure

The second call for project applications under all Programme Priorities and Measures is now open. However, the Monitoring Committee of the Programme emphasized that beneficiaries should pay special attention in future projects to identified challenges and expected solutions within each Measure. Furthermore, in ***Measure 2.3 Supporting a circular and more resource efficient development projects*** it is obligatory for the applying projects to plan activities dedicated to support enterprises and thus to contribute to output indicator ***RCO04 Enterprises with non-financial support***.

PRIORITY 1 - Innovative South Baltic

- **Programme Measure 1.1 Digitalising the region**

The project activities should propose i.a. innovative approaches including digitalisation of public services and increasing the level of digitalisation of different sectors to integrate services and strengthen connectivity within the South Baltic area. It is expected that proposals will support development of digital skills and boost the development especially of sectors related to the blue and green economy.

- **Programme Measure 1.2 Building connectivity of the region through internationalization**

The Project proposals are expected to enhance the SMEs competitiveness, innovativeness, and their presence in international markets: expansion of SMEs requires efficient cross-border learning and networking platforms, business advisory services and matchmaking actions to assist them in moving from domestic to international business.

PRIORITY 2 - Sustainable South Baltic

- **Programme Measure 2.1 Supporting transition towards green energy**

The cross-border projects are expected to be aimed at both raising the awareness and developing solutions to improve the production and use of renewable energy, which can further help implementing the energy transitions. Solutions may include complementary actions focusing on developing and adapting systems of energy storage and distribution in order to ensure the safe and efficient use of renewable energy.

- **Programme Measure 2.2 Promoting sustainable use of water**

The Baltic Sea and its tributaries suffer from a high level of pollution (e.g. plastics and chemicals) and eutrophication. Actions planned in project proposals should i.a. aim at broadening support of efficient and sustainable water management, especially in the field of reducing the outlets of nutrients and hazardous substances into river-basins, and subsequently the Baltic Sea to enhance the water quality.

- **Programme Measure 2.3 Supporting a circular and more resource efficient development**

There is a visible potential for cross-border projects aimed at promotion and implementation of circular economy related actions connected to reuse and recycling, circular product development and design, new resource efficient products and services, water efficiency methods for industry and public sector etc. Proposals of the new solutions for the areas of mobility, employment, healthcare and social security systems, use of natural (non-renewable) resources, business sectors etc. are expected from the project partners.

PRIORITY 3 - Attractive South Baltic

- **Programme Measure 3.1 Developing sustainable, resilient, and innovative tourism**

Project proposals are anticipated to address sustainable tourism development: the actions should focus on the improvement of the tourist and cultural offers and creation of new ones forming new and innovative services and products; reduction of the negative impact of travel and tourism on the natural environment; sustainable use of resources such as energy; mitigation of tourism seasonality and transition towards sustainable, all-year-round tourism. Projects promoting the common brand of the South Baltic and joint cultural or natural tourism heritage shall be expected as well.

PRIORITY 4 - Active South Baltic

- **Programme Measure 4.1 Strengthen the cooperation capacity of actors based within the South Baltic Area (including civil society)**

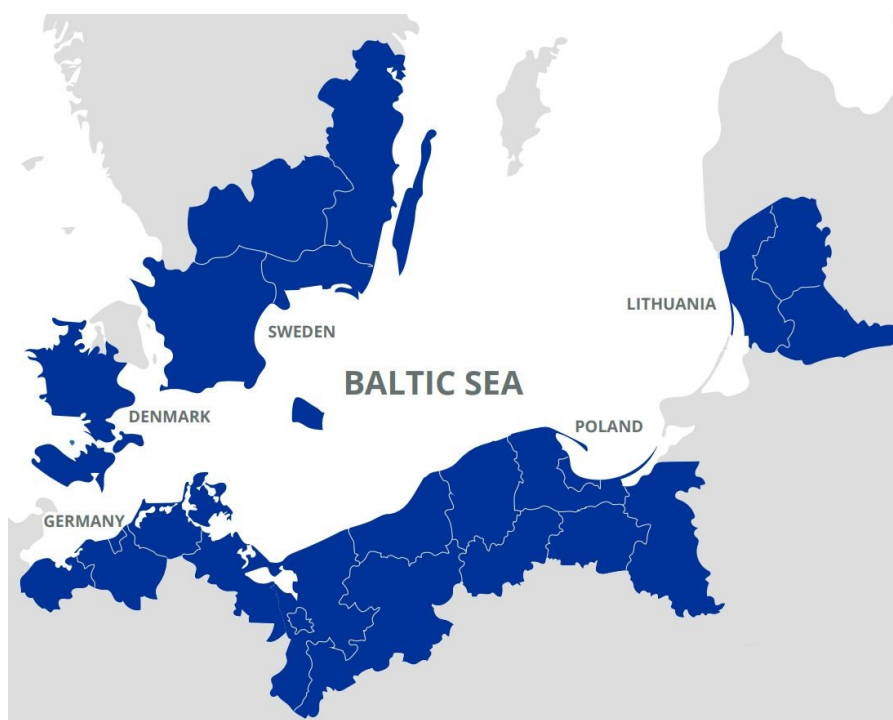
The projects are expected to focus on capacity building and strengthening the cross-border cooperation of different actors functioning within the eligible area to solve common cross-border problems and build mutual reliance. Projects are proposed to include a wide group of actors, especially local actors (e.g. NGOs, cultural institutions, non-formalized organizations, organizations supporting people with disabilities and from vulnerable groups, youth organisations), to cooperate, create ample opportunity for networking, exchange experience and build cooperation capacities under implementation of a joint project.

When applying for the Programme funding in the WOD2021 system, make sure to choose the call relevant to the addressed Measure:	
Measure 1.1	STHB.01.01-IP.01-001/23
Measure 1.2	STHB.01.02-IP.01-001/23
Measure 2.1	STHB.02.01-IP.01-001/23
Measure 2.2	STHB.02.02-IP.01-001/23
Measure 2.3	STHB.02.03-IP.01-001/23
Measure 3.1	STHB.03.01-IP.01-001/23
Measure 4.1	STHB.04.01-IP.01-001/23

Programme area

The eligible area for the Programme consists of regions from five EU Member States, which includes the following NUTS III units:

- **Denmark:** Bornholm, Østsjælland, Vest-og Sydsjælland
- **Sweden:** Skåne län, Blekinge län; Kalmar län, Kronobergs län
- **Germany:** districts (Landkreise) Nordwestmecklenburg, Rostock, Vorpommern-Rügen, Vorpommern-Greifswald and district-free city (kreisfreie Stadt) of Rostock
- **Poland:** Chojnicki, Miasto Szczecin, Szczeciński, Stargardzki, Koszaliński, Słupski, Szczecinecko-Pyrzycki; Gdański, Trójmiejski and Elbląski
- **Lithuania:** Klaipėdos apskritis, Tauragės apskritis, Telšių apskritis.



NB: As a general rule, project activities should be implemented in the Programme eligible area. In exceptional cases, if for the benefit of the Programme eligible area and the Programme's objectives, some activities may be implemented outside the Programme eligible area or even on the territories of other EU Member States.

Partner type in projects

In the South Baltic Programme the project partnership can consist of three types of partners:

- lead partner (LP);
- project partners (PP);
- associated partner(s) (AP).

While all types of partners are expected to commit themselves to the delivery of the project, only the first two types of partners (the lead partner and project partners) can benefit directly from ERDF funding and have to provide their own contribution as a counterpart to the Programme co-financing. The involvement of associated partners in the project partnership is not obligatory.

Lead partner

In order to act as a lead partner in the South Baltic Programme project an organization has to meet the following criteria:

Eligible legal form:

- national, regional and local authorities;
- bodies governed by public law (as defined in Art 2(1) of Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC (OJ L 94, 28.3.2014). This means body fulfilling all three conditions:
- established under public or private law for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character, and
 - having legal personality, and
 - financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law; or subject to management supervision by those bodies; or having an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.
- associations of one or several regional or local authorities;
- associations of one or several bodies governed by public law;
- European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) (as defined in the Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 as amended by Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013).

Eligible geographical location:

1. Programme area (referring to the legal address of the organisation).
2. In justified cases, organisations of national or regional level that are located outside the Programme area but in the Programme Member State and have a recognizable impact and/or functional links with the Programme area. In such cases it is strongly recommended that the JS is contacted in advance to confirm eligibility.
3. The national/regional authorities which have territorial jurisdiction over the Programme region also can become lead partners if justified.

NB: Each lead partner should have sufficient financial, management and organisational capacities: this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis during the quality assessment of applications. Therefore, such organisations, especially NGOs, should be able, on short notice, to present and provide the JS with three year's balance sheets and employment records to prove their ability to cover for potential irregularities during project implementation.

Project partner

In order to act as a project partner in the South Baltic Programme project an organization has to meet the following criteria.

Eligible legal form:

- national, regional and local authorities;
- bodies governed by public law (as defined in Art 2(1) of Directive 2014/24/EU);
- associations of one or several regional or local authorities;
- associations of one or several bodies governed by public law;
- European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) (as defined in the Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 as amended by Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013).
- SME associations and clusters;
- Chambers of commerce, trade unions and NGOs;
- other entities established under public or private law operating for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
- SMEs.

Eligible geographical location:

1. Programme area (referring to the legal address of the organisation).
2. In justified cases, organisations located outside the Programme area, but within the EU.
3. Applicants located outside the Programme area, but in the EU Member States, are entitled to receive a maximum of 80% of ERDF co-financing.

4. For partners from EU Member States outside the Programme area, special agreements are needed between the MA and the EU Member State in question, wherefore the JS should be consulted as early on as possible.

Involvement of SMEs as project partners

In order to act as a project partner in the South Baltic Programme project an SME has to meet the following criteria:

1. SMEs can participate as project partners in projects under all Programme Measures.
2. SMEs cannot act as the lead partners.
3. Each organisation representing SME should be established at least 3 years before the announcement of the call for proposals for which each respective SME is applying.
4. To confirm their status each SME must fill a relevant section in the Supplementary Application Form and submit it in the WOD2021 Application System.
5. Involvement of SMEs in projects as projects partners should be justified and explained to be relevant and necessary for achievement of project results.

NB: An organisation cannot join a partnership as a project partner if its only activity within its business profile consists of project coordination, management, project communication, and consulting!

It is strongly recommended to involve partners from the public sector located in the Programme area of the respective participating country from where any SME is involved for a broader coverage of target groups, wider communication, and sustainability of project results maintained with the help of the public sector organization.

Associated partners

If an organisation does not comply with the eligibility requirements or does not intend to become financially involved in the project but is willing to take part in the projects, it may take on the role of the associated partner: these partners participate in the activities of the project but are not directly involved in the design and implementation of the project and have no budget share.

Associated partners may come from the EU Member States only.

Financing of the Programme

Available Programme funding

The funding available under the 2nd call is 62 060 503.44 EUR ERDF (77.66% of the total ERDF allocation). Its distribution between the Programme Priorities and Measure for the 2nd call for proposals is presented in the table below:

Category	Available amount for the 2 nd call in EUR (ERDF)
PRIORITY 1 - Innovative South Baltic	8 670 812,00
1.1 Digitalising the region	5 424 681.32
1.2 Building connectivity of the region through internationalisation	3 246 130.68
PRIORITY 2 - Sustainable South Baltic	25 418 895.44
2.1 Supporting transition towards green energy	11 662 498.67
2.2 Promoting sustainable use of water	10 987 020.40
2.3 Supporting a circular and more resource efficient development	2 769 376.37
PRIORITY 3 - Attractive South Baltic	19 979 140.00
PRIORITY 4 - Active South Baltic	7 991 656.00

Co-financing rates

All partners regardless their geographical location can receive the amount of ERDF co-financing of maximum 80%.

The project budget formula is:

Max 80% of ERDF + 20% of co-financing = 100% of the total eligible budget.

Costs incurred during the project preparation

The Programme offers a lump sum for project preparation costs (no proof in the form of financial documents is needed), under the condition that the project application has been approved in the call for proposals.

The lump sum is the only way to cover preparation costs; real costs cannot be submitted and claimed for reimbursement.

NB: The lump sum is granted only if the project did not receive seed money from the South Baltic Programme 2014-2020 or another seed money instrument.

The Programme also foresees the use of simplified cost options for other costs than preparation costs; please see the Programme Manual for details.

Project start date

The earliest start date of the project can be the day after the end date of the respective call for proposals.

At the latest, the implementation phase is required to start three months after the decision of the Monitoring Committee.

NB: Project activities can be carried out before approval of the project by the Monitoring Committee, but at the project's own risk!

Application package

The documents necessary for application can be found in the application package published on the Programme website – <https://southbaltic.eu/call-for-proposals1>

The Programme documents will not be altered during the call for proposals and project assessment.

The application package consists of:

- Call for proposals announcement;
- Programme Manual;
- Guidelines on filling in and submitting the Application Form;
- The list of supporting documents to be attached to the Application Form;
- Complaint form template

All relevant documents have to be filled in English as this is the official and working language of the Programme. Applications submitted in another language will be considered ineligible.

It is recommended to get familiar with the draft template of the Subsidy Contract as well as with the draft template of the Partnership Agreement before submitting the application.

Submission of applications

In the programming period of 2021-2027 the Programme introduces an electronic system for the submission of the Application Forms: **the WOD2021 Application system**.

All Application Forms should be filled in and submitted via the WOD2021 Application system and accompanied with the supporting documents:

1. Supplementary Application Form (MS Excel).
2. Additional documents to be filled in, signed, dated, and stamped using the relevant template forms (where available):
 - Project Partner Declarations;
 - Letters of Commitment for all associated partners (if applicable);
 - Letter of Dedication and Support from EUSBSR PA (if applicable);
 - Declaration of compliance with the DNSH principle (if applicable);
 - Statements on non-discrimination (Polish partners only)

NB: The JS reserves the right to request any partner to submit additional documents during the assessment process to support their financial, organisational and/or management capabilities and eligibility in accordance with the Programme rules as well as documents related to the State aid/ De minimis aid.

The Application Form should be introduced to the system by 30th November 2023, 4 p.m. Warsaw time (CET) at the latest!

Selection and approval of projects

The decision on the selection and approval of project proposals is taken by the Monitoring Committee. Submitted and registered applications are subjected to a two-stage assessment carried out by the Joint Secretariat officers and external experts:

1. Admissibility and eligibility check.
2. State aid and quality assessment.

Only if the application passes the Admissibility and eligibility check it can be subject to State aid and quality assessment.

The Monitoring Committee's decision on the approval of projects submitted under the 2nd call for proposals is expected on **18 April 2024**.

Complaints

If the partnership does not agree with the project assessment and selection process and assumes the process of assessment and selection was not conducted in line with the assessment and selection procedures, it is entitled to submit a complaint.

Annex 5 Complaint procedure and template of the Programme Manual provides an explicit description of the complaint procedure and the form to be filled in. The Annex can be found at the Programme website at www.southbaltic.eu.

Further information and contacts

Comprehensive information on the South Baltic Programme can be found at the Programme website at www.southbaltic.eu.

In case of any questions please do not hesitate to contact the Joint Secretariat:

JOINT SECRETARIAT
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