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Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021–2027

Terms of Reference

Of the 3rd Small-scale projects call for proposals

dedicated exclusively to Programme Measure 4.1

version 1.0

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1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027 (hereinafter – “Programme”) opens the **3rd Small-scale projects** call for proposals with the aim to address particular needs and challenges in the field of strengthening the cooperation capacity of actors based within the South Baltic Area (including civil society) through the cross-border cooperation and collaboration between project partners.

The scheme is proposed to form and test new partnerships engaging not only the partners experienced in the Programme, with relevant management knowledge and skills, but also small, newcomer organizations, NGOs, and local actors.

The Small-scale project facility is seen to implement focused smaller-scale actions that do not require the financing as a regular project as well as to serve as a “training platform” or a first step for the project partners before submission of project proposals of higher complexity, more significant impact, and financing volume under regular calls for proposals.

2 SET-UP OF THE SMALL-SCALE PROJECT

2.1 Thematic focus

The thematic focus of the 3rd Small-scale project facility is dedicated **exclusively to Programme Measure 4.1** *Strengthen the cooperation capacity of actors based within the South Baltic Area (including civil society)*. This approach is intended to create a more diverse range of projects by encouraging new partnerships to develop and enhance cross-border collaboration.

More information about the Programme Measure 4.1 details can be found in the [Programme document](#).

2.2 Call specific requirement on project partnership

Programme Measure 4.1 as well as the Small-scale projects call place specific focus on building cooperation capacity and supporting above all small, newcomer organizations, NGOs, and local actors. Therefore, the Programme introduces the following call-specific requirements:

- **The whole project partnership (project + associated partners) must include at least 10 organisations.**
- **At least 1/3 of project partners in the project shall be newcomers to the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027.**

Projects that do not comply with these requirements will be rejected during Admissibility & eligibility checks.

The Programme defines newcomer as an organisation that fulfill **both conditions** below:

- Did not participate in approved regular project(s) financed under the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020;
- Does not participate in approved regular and/or Small-scale project(s) financed under the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027.

Besides organisations that have not participated in any Interreg South Baltic project, the following organisations that previously participated in Interreg South Baltic projects may be considered as newcomers if they were:

- Project partners of Interreg South Baltic Programme 2007-2013;
- Associated partners in any Interreg South Baltic Programme project type and financial perspective;
- Seed money project partners in any edition of the Interreg South Baltic Programme.

Calculation and rounding rules

- Only project partners are considered when calculating the number of newcomers in the project, i.e. associated partners are excluded from this requirement.
- In case of rounding, the mathematical rules apply, i.e. rounding up from 0,5. To comply with the requirement the following number of newcomers shall be included as project partners:

Number of project partners	Minimum number of newcomer organisations as project partners
2-4 PPs	1 newcomer PP
5-7 PPs	2 newcomer PPs
8-10 PPs	3 newcomer PPs
11-13 PPs	4 newcomer PPs
14 -16 PPs	5 newcomer PPs
More than 16 PPs	Following the same way of calculation as above.

2.3 Project content, outputs, and result indicators

Project content

Due to a simplified nature of Small-scale projects, the Programme identifies only 1 [content-related work package](#) to describe main deliverable and core activities (including management and coordination) that leads to achievement of obligatory indicators.

Output and result indicators

Identically as for the regular projects, Small-scale projects are expected to make direct contribution to Programme implementation by addressing the pre-identified indicators.

However, due to a limited size and scope of Small-scale projects, the Programme expects projects to contribute to the obligatory indicators only.

Programme Measure (PM)	Obligatory Indicators
PM 4.1: Strengthen the cooperation capacity of actors based within the South Baltic Area (incl. civil society)	Output indicator: Organisations cooperating across borders Result indicator: Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion

More detailed information on the Programme indicators and the intervention logic can be found in [Chapter III, Section 2 Contribution to the objectives of the South Baltic Programme of the Programme Manual](#) and [Annex 7 Indicator factsheet](#).

2.4 Partnership

Location of project partners

Each project must be implemented by a consortium of organisations consisting of **at least two eligible project partners from the Programme Area from two different Member States**. As additional requirements, it is obligatory that at least 1/3 of the project partners are newcomers to the Programme and that the whole partnership (project and associated partners) includes minimum 10 organisations. At the same time, the Programme primarily supports multilateral cooperation with the inclusion of organisations from more Programme Member States.

Organisations located outside the Programme Area (but within the EU) can join the partnership; however, they should justify their involvement and specify their role in the project, identify their specific competencies, and functional links within and outside the Programme Area contributing to the Area's prosperity. More information about the rules of their participation can be found in [Chapter III, Section 3 Partnership principles in South Baltic projects of the Programme Manual](#).

The Small-scale projects call for proposals invites especially NGOs, small and not experienced organisations, new entrants into the Interreg cooperation, institutions from hinterlands, to improve their capacities, strengthen knowledge, and cooperation skills.

Note:

With the decision of the European Commission from 15 December 2023, the [Olsztyński sub-region of the warmińsko-mazurskie region of Poland](#) is now a part of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027 area.

Types and eligibility of partners

In each Small-scale project one partner should act as a lead partner and the other(s) act as project partners.

The Programme sets eligibility requirements for project partners depending on their role in the project. All partners should meet the set requirements to be deemed eligible by the Programme (please see [Chapter III, Section 3 Partnership principles in South Baltic projects of the Programme Manual](#)).

Partnership Agreement

If the project is selected for funding, in order to formalise the joint implementation of a Small-scale project, its partners must sign a Partnership Agreement.

To avoid any potential delays in the project start, it is recommended that the preparation and signing of the Partnership Agreement is undertaken in parallel to signing off the [Subsidy Contract](#).

The template (minimum scope) of Partnership Agreement is available on [the Programme website](#).

2.5 Duration, financing scheme, and eligibility of costs

Duration

Duration of the Small-scale project is up to **18 months**.

All project activities should be finalised within the project duration. The prolongation of the project period may be requested only in well justified cases. Each case will be verified and decided upon separately for each requested project prolongation (please see Section 5.2. of these Terms of Reference).

Financial scheme

In the Small-scale projects, partners should use two types of costs when creating the project budget:

1. **Staff costs** are to be planned, calculated, and reported **as real costs** only.
2. All **other costs** are to be planned, calculated, and reported **as a 40% flat rate** from the amount of the real costs.

Project budget = Staff costs + other costs (staff costs*40%).

NB: Voluntary work is eligible and is included in other costs (staff costs*40%).

More information regarding staff costs (required documents, eligible and ineligible expenditure etc.) can be found in [Chapter IV, Section 3 Cost Categories of the Programme Manual](#).

Other costs

The other costs may imply to the following cost categories that generally cover needs of projects implemented under the Programme:

- Office and Administration;

- Travel and Accommodation;
- External expertise and services;
- Equipment;
- Infrastructure and works.

Please note that **no preparation costs and no closure costs** can be reported for Small-scale projects.

The total amount of other costs is calculated as a flat rate of 40% staff costs expenditures reported and approved in each given progress report.

NB: Over or under-compensation of a project partner's expenditure for other costs are a natural consequence resulting from the application of a flat rate.

The 40% flat rate for other costs must be included in the Indirect costs technical work package in WOD2021.

Eligibility of costs

[Chapter IV, Section 1 General Rules on cost eligibility of the Programme Manual](#) specifies financial requirements and eligibility rules relevant to all projects implemented in the framework of the Programme.

According to the financial scheme applied for Small-scale projects, partners have to submit supporting financial documents for staff costs only; no other costs should be supported by financial documents when reporting to the First Level Controller.

However, all partners are obliged to act according to the rules of sound financial management, follow accounting principles, carry out relevant procurement procedures, and store respective documents in accordance with the relevant EU, national legislation, and the Programme rules.

NB: Partners should remember that the flat-rate method of cost reimbursement does not exempt them from adhering to the national regulations and controls conducted based on national law.

2.6 Financial aspects and specifications of the Small-scale projects

Allocated Programme funding

In total the Programme dedicated 800 000,00 EUR of ERDF to the 3rd Small-scale projects call for Proposals.

Size of the subsidy

The total maximum project budget of each Small-scale project is up to 200 000,00 EUR (160 000,00 EUR of ERDF funding).

Co-financing rates

The Programme provides ERDF co-financing rates for organisations participating in projects (lead partner and project partners) in the amount of 80% of eligible expenditure regardless of partner's geographical location.

The partners implementing Small-scale projects are obliged to complement awarded funding with their own contributions. These contributions must not come from other EU financing.

State aid

The activities implemented under the Small-scale projects and granted ERDF co-financing are subjected to State aid regime, where relevant.

Application of State aid regime in the Programme is described in detail in [Chapter IV, Section 9 State Aid of the Programme Manual](#).

VAT

The Value Added Tax (VAT) is eligible for projects implemented in the Programme.

NB: The eligibility of VAT in projects involving State aid is defined by the provisions of the GBER and depends on the possibility of its recovery according to national regulations.

3 APPLICATION PROCEDURE AND SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Each Application Form is submitted via the WOD2021 Application system.

Call number: STHB.04.01-IP.01-002/25

NB:

1. Information provided in the Application Form submitted in WOD2021 prevails over information in all other obligatory documents, attachments to the Application Form, etc.
2. The lead partner (acting as a lead applicant in the WOD2021) of the project is the only responsible partner for submitting the application on behalf of the project consortium.

Documents necessary for the application process can be found in the Application pack available on the https://southbaltic.eu/lista_nabory/3rd-ssp-call-for-project-proposals/.

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

The Application pack consists of:

- Terms of Reference;
- Supporting documents (including Supplementary Application Form template);

- Guidelines for submitting and filling in the Application Form;
- Complaint template.

Applications must be completed in English, the official and working language of the Programme. Applications filled in another language(s) will not be considered.

Where relevant, documents should be signed with certified electronic signature OR provided in the form of a scan of handwritten signed documents and attached to the WOD2021.

Application Form in WOD2021 with all obligatory documents **must be submitted by the Lead Partner by 12 November 2025, 4.00 p.m. CET at the latest.**

4 PROJECT SELECTION

The decision on selection for funding of the Small-scale project proposals is taken by the Monitoring Committee of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027. It is based on results of the assessment procedure carried out by the Joint Secretariat (JS) and external State aid experts.

The assessment procedure consists of:

- Admissibility and eligibility check (JS).
- Quality assessment (JS).
- State aid assessment (external expert).

Detailed information on the assessment criteria is available in the Programme Manual ([Annex 6 Project selection process and criteria](#)).

Please note that external experts will not be involved to the Quality assessment.

Results of the 3rd Small-scale projects call for proposals will be in line with the Monitoring Committee's decision that is expected to be announced on 26 March 2026.

5 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Contracting process

Subsidy Contract

After a project is approved by the Monitoring Committee, the lead partner is obliged to sign the Subsidy Contract to receive the subsidy from ERDF. The JS is responsible for contacting the project as soon as the requirements necessary to sign a contract are met.

A Subsidy Contract is signed between the Polish Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (Managing Authority of the Programme) and the lead partner of the approved Small-scale project. It confirms a final allocation of ERDF funding to the project and forms a legal and financial framework for the implementation of project activities. In particular, the contract specifies the

mutual rights and obligations of contracting parties with regards to the payment of ERDF funding, monitoring, and reporting, recovery of funds, control, and audit of the project. The Subsidy Contract must be signed bilaterally by the legal representatives of the Managing Authority and of the lead partner before the project's end date.

Please note that the Subsidy Contract is expected to be signed electronically by both signatories.

In exceptional cases, it is possible to conclude the Subsidy Contract in a traditional written form, however this must be arranged beforehand by the JS.

5.2 Rules of implementation and reporting

Unless specified otherwise in these Terms of Reference, all Small-scale projects are obliged to follow the implementation rules of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027 defined in [Chapter VI Project implementation of the Programme Manual](#).

Project reporting

The Small-scale projects are required to submit progress (and final) reports every 6 months of the project implementation. The reporting cycle for 3rd call Small-scale projects will be: April-September and October-March.

Each report shall be submitted via CST2021 system together with the financial documents (scans) to each partner's First Level Controller responsible for verification. Afterwards, the lead partner prepares a project progress report for the purpose of summarising activities and expenditures at the project level.

The lead partner must provide the report and the attachments supporting achievement of outputs and results to the JS in the CST2021 system within 120 calendar days from the end of the 6-months implementation period and end date set in the Subsidy Contract for the final report respectively.

More information on the reporting procedures is provided in [Chapter VI, Section 5 Monitoring and reporting of the Programme Manual](#).

Project changes

Even though as a predominant rule each Small-scale project is expected to be implemented in line with the approved Application Form and the Subsidy Contract, it might meet challenges that require changes to the project set-up.

Please see [Chapter VI, Section 4 Changes during project implementation of the Programme Manual](#) for more details on the types of changes recognised by the Programme, relevant procedures, and timelines.

5.3 Communication obligations

All small-scale projects are obliged to follow the communication obligations of the Interreg Regulation and Common Provisions Regulation.

NB: If the project partner does not comply with the obligations listed under items a)–e) of this section and does not take any remedial actions, the Managing Authority shall reduce the funding awarded to a given partner by a maximum of 2%. Detailed information on the reduction of funding and examples of remedial actions can be found in the Programme Manual.

The rules to be followed are:

- a) using the Programme logotype during the implementation of activities related to visibility, transparency, and communication. There is no need to create the project logo.

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- b) placing permanent information boards¹ with the Programme logo in public places. This should take place immediately after the commencement of the project implementation, which includes physical investments or the purchase of equipment, or after the installation of the purchased equipment. It applies to projects which total cost exceeds 100 000 EUR.
- c) for projects that do not fall within the scope of point b), placing at least one poster in public with a minimum size of A3 or a similar size electronic display, immediately after launching a project, with information about the project and the support received from the Programme;
- d) displaying the information about the support from the Programme and its logo in a visible manner in documents and information materials related to the implementation of the project, intended for the general public and participants (i.e. letters, presentations, certificates, attendance lists etc.);
- e) publishing a short description of the project on each partner's respective website or social media sites (if the partner has one), including: project goals, project results, information about receiving financial support from the Programme.

In case a partner implements a few projects supported by the Interreg South Baltic Programme at the same location (understood as its premises or the place where the investment is carried out), the partner may display at least one common information board for these projects at the location.

5.3.1 Additional communication obligations

1. When the project partners publish posts in social media, they should use hashtags:
 - a) related to the Programme: #SailingTogether, #SouthBaltic, #InterregSouthBaltic, #NameOfYourProject,
 - b) related to the EU: #EU, #EuropeanCommision,

¹ Complete information on the features of the information board can be found in the Communication Guidelines for Project Beneficiaries.

- c) thematically related to the project activities: #GreenEnergy, #InnovativeTourism, #CooperationCapacity etc.;
- 2. The project partners should inform the JS about the project events at least 14 days in advance. This will allow the Programme to promote the event or to plan the participation of its representatives in the event.
- 3. Branding materials should be used during the project event, such as roll ups, posters, or banners.
- 4. The project partners should inform the JS about issuing a publication and provide one copy or send a link to it. This way allows not only to fulfil beneficiaries' obligation, but also gain an additional channel of promotion (website and social media profiles of the Programme).
- 5. All written outputs developed by project partners must include the notation "Free copy" and a disclaimer: "The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of its author[s] and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union, the Managing Authority or the Joint Secretariat of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027".

All text documents and graphic elements included should be in a format accessible to people with special needs. An alternative text should be added to the images.

Note: The project's information and promotional activities should be effective. The project partners should consider what form of promotion will work for their small-scale project. Answering the questions below should help to specify the approach:

- What tools and communication channels allow to reach the public with information about the small-scale project?
- What actions are needed to encourage the public/target groups to participate in the project events and use the results of the small-scale project in their everyday lives?

Before closing, each project should provide the following communication materials:

Photos

1. The lead partner is obliged to provide the JS with at least two photographs that present the challenge and/or topic of the project (networking meetings, study visits, pilot sites etc.). The photo material should be accompanied by a written summary (up to 2700 characters with spaces) of the project activities and their results.
2. Together with the photos, project partners should provide the following information:
 - Subject of the photograph/take (short description of the situation/background of the picture/film, so that the picture/film covered by the present authorisation that can be easily identified).
 - Date of the photograph/take.
 - Location.
 - Name and email address of the photographer.
3. The photographs should have at least 300 DPI (dots per inch) resolution to enable professional printing or uploading to the Programme website.

4. At least two quotes about the project, along with photos of the chosen project partner or the target groups involved.

Success story

It is not obligatory for a small-scale project to provide a success story. If the project decides to do so, the success story should be delivered in the form of a written interview or video-recorded interview (minimum 2 minutes) with the selected project partner(s).

6 TIMEFRAME OF THE 3rd SMALL-SCALE PROJECTS CALL

Timeframe for the Small-scale Facility	Date
Announcement of the call for Small-scale projects	17 September 2025
Deadline for the submission of proposals	12 November 2025, 4.00 p.m. CET
Assessment of submitted proposals	13 November – 25 February 2026
Decision of the Monitoring Committee	26 March 2026
Conclusion of Subsidy Contracts	May – July 2026