

The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea region

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The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EU SBSR) is the first macro-regional strategy in Europe. Its main goal is to strengthen cooperation in this region, promoting balanced development and meeting common challenges.

EU SBSR is closely connected to the main EU policy directions and UN Sustainable Development Goals. EU SBSR was approved in 2009, following the [Communication from the European Commission concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region](#).

EU SBSR provides an integrated framework for improving the environmental condition of the sea, transport bottlenecks and energy interconnections as well as facilitating the development of competitive markets across borders and common networks for research and innovation.

EU SBSR MEMBER STATES

EU SBSR includes eight Member States in the Baltic Sea region: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Denmark, Poland, Finland, Germany and Sweden.

Within the EU SBSR, cooperation is promoted with the neighbouring countries – Russian Federation, Iceland, Norway and Belarus.

EU SBSR OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM

EU SBSR has three main objectives: (1) save the sea; (2) connect the region; (3) increase prosperity. Each target has a set of policy areas for corresponding actions, at the same time ensuring their interconnectivity.

The objectives are complemented by sub-objectives, which have been modified over time due to changes in circumstances and challenges. The current sub-objectives are:

- Clear water in the sea;
- Rich and healthy wildlife;
- Clean and safe shipping;
- Reliable energy markets;
- Good transport conditions;
- Connecting people in the region;
- Better cooperation in fighting cross-border crime;
- Improved global competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region;
- Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management.

EU SBSR aims at bringing together initiatives in different sectors, as well as promoting cooperation between stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region. EU SBSR promotes flagship projects in the Baltic Sea Region, which have a macro-regional impact and start from joint initiatives involving partnership from different countries. EU SBSR implementation mechanism includes an active participation of actors and stakeholders at local, national and macro-regional level.

EU SBSR doesn't have specifically allocated financial resources, funding for operations under the EU SBSR is intended to come from existing financial instruments. In the period 2021-2027, the Interreg Baltic Sea region transnational programme continues to support the implementation of the strategy, especially as regards its governance.

But it is important to mobilise and use also EU 'mainstream' national and regional programmes, cooperation programmes and other EU funding sources such as European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, European Social Fund+, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, Horizon Europe, TEN-T, Erasmus+, LIFE and the Connecting Europe Facility, etc.

EU SBSR POLICY AREAS

The implementation of the EU SBSR is based on the [Action plan](#), which is regularly revised. On 15 February 2021, the European Commission came up with the revised Action plan that includes 14 Policy Areas.

Policy Areas are specific areas for macro-regional cooperation that address the key challenges and opportunities in the region. The work carried out under each Policy Area involves stakeholders from various levels (international, national, regional, local) and sectors (public, private, civil society).

According to the EU SBSR Action Plan, actions are being implemented within the following 14 Policy Areas (PA):

PA Nutri - reducing nutrient losses and managing nutrients more efficiently to mitigate eutrophication and to mitigate climate change.

PA Hazards - reducing the use and impact of hazardous substances.

PA Bioeconomy – promoting a sustainable use of marine, agricultural and forest resources as well as development of rural areas.

PA Safe – providing a platform for reinforcing maritime safety and security in the Baltic Sea region.

PA Ship – facilitating the transition to sustainable shipping industry and making it a positive business opportunity.

PA Transport – promoting efficient, affordable and sustainable cross-border connections within the Baltic Sea Region and beyond, including third countries.

PA Energy – improving the access to, and the efficiency and security of energy markets.

PA Spatial Planning - increasing territorial cohesion in the Baltic Sea region.

PA Secure – a platform for cross-border, cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation to strengthen societal security.

PA Tourism – reinforcing sustainable tourism development in the Baltic Sea region.

PA Culture – promoting the Baltic Sea region cultural and creative sectors, encouraging creative entrepreneurship.

PA Innovation – promoting a globally competitive position within innovation for sustainable economic growth in the Baltic Sea region, and providing a strong platform for an enhanced macroregional collaborative ecosystem for innovation, research, SMEs and digitalisation.

PA Health – aiming to improve the health and well-being of people in the Baltic Sea region.

PA Education – promoting access to quality education and training for all, an effective and inclusive welfare system and a well-functioning labour market, supporting geographical, professional and socioeconomic mobility, as well as improving competitiveness in science and research through closer collaboration, making best use of our resources together in the Baltic Sea region.

EU SBSR IMPLEMENTATION IN LATVIA

In order to coordinate the cooperation of ministries, social partners and NGOs within the implementation process of the EU SBSR Action plan at the national level, a [working group](#) has been created, chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia.

THE ROLE OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE WITHIN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE EU SBSR

The Ministry of Education and Science in Latvia is a coordinating institution within the *PA Education* at the national level.

PA Education contributes to an increased prosperity that presupposes access to quality education and training for all, an effective and inclusive welfare system and a well-functioning labour market supporting geographical, professional and socioeconomic mobility. In science and research, we face an increased global competitiveness where even though our macro region is performing well, we can do more through closer collaboration, making best use of our resources together in the Baltic Sea region.

PA Education focuses on the following actions:

Preventing early school leaving and improving transition from school to work

International excellence and wider participation in science and research

A labour market for all, using resources of longer lives

Recognising potential – easing the way for migrants

More information is available on the [official website of PA Education](#).

National contacts

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More information on the EU SBSR is available [here](#).

<https://www.izm.gov.lv/en/european-union-strategy-baltic-sea-region>