

THEME 2: Inclusive interregional collaboration in Baltic Sea macro-region smart specialization strategy implementation

Challenge 2: How to engage and collaborate across regional borders in Baltic Sea regions? How to create and develop the spearhead initiatives together in the macro-region?

Sub-questions:

- Building common potential from a diverse representation of regions and their strategies being at different stages
- How to support the creation of networking and collaboration culture among RIS3 stakeholders

Background / Context

The concept of macro-regional strategies (MRS) refers to an integrated framework, which addresses shared challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area. Together these benefit from strengthened cooperation, contributing to achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion. The concept of macro-regional strategies has started and spread from the Baltic Sea Region to three other European macro-regions: the Danube Region, the Adriatic and Ionian Region, and the Alpine Region.

As suggested by OECD, there are different goals for inter-regional collaboration in innovation policy: 1) common problems to be addressed; 2) opportunities to be exploited; 3) learning and mentoring between regions with different stages of development.

Macro-regional strategies highlight the role of regions, as well as the need for cross-border cooperation. They operate in a highly complex multi-level environment, pursuing various jointly defined objectives to tackle common concerns and challenges at macro-regional scale. Macro-regional approach has also been used to provide feedback from one strategy to another, i.e. as a feedback and learning process.

Currently, the different regions in the Baltic Sea area are at various development stages in their RIS3 strategy processes. Some regions have just started building up their strategy, while others have gone through two or more of development rounds. In addition, even more diversity is due to the fact that strategies can be of different levels: national or regional, depending on the size of the country/region. The complex macro-regional processes involve multiple stakeholders across several levels of governance – balancing out these differences is very demanding in the process of organizing collaboration. Possible challenges can vary from competing national and sectoral interests and insufficient information sharing to under-representation of key stakeholders.

Collaboration in inter-regional context means that partners are working “together on a concrete, distinct project on the policy level in order to achieve common goals” (Edler 2010). In the Baltic Sea Region the stakeholder actor landscape is still fragmented, so there is a need for mapping of stakeholders and competences available in the macro-region. The results of such exercise can serve as a common platform for thinking around the shared vision of the future, and for promoting intercultural exchange as a means to build relations and trust.

Objectives

- Identifying and promoting synergy areas around project’s spearhead topics: climate change, circular economy, digitalisation in the smart city, and healthy ageing.
- Mapping stakeholders and competences on macro-level of Baltic Sea Region
- Identifying working methods that can unite the groups of stakeholders from multiple governance levels around the same process of regional development or planning
- Developing existing cooperation structures and coordination for inter- and macro-regional collaboration