

Interreg



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ABBREVIATIONS

EU - European Union

EUSBSR - European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Jems - Joint Electronic Monitoring System

MA/JS - Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat

SME - Small and medium-sized enterprise

VAT - Value added tax

INTRODUCTION

The Central Baltic programme provides funding for cross-border cooperation in order to support regional development and cohesion in the region.

This Programme Manual is written for project applicants and partners. It sets out to give you the key information needed both when applying for funding and while implementing your project. The Programme Manual contains legally binding information on the programmes processes and rules and is the most important document available.

The information in the Programme Manual is on a general level. The Programme Manual is complemented with several **practical guidance documents**. A reference to these is made in the Manual, where relevant. These documents give you detailed and technical information and should be read together with the Programme Manual. In addition, you may find tips, frequently asked questions or videos further explaining the programme's rules and practices, on our website or in our events.

Last, but certainly not least, the **programme staff** is here to help all applicants and projects. We offer support at all stages of the project lifecycle: consultations when you prepare the project idea and continuous support while implementing the project. We also have a network of contact points in all programme countries to provide information about our programme.

The language of our programme is English. All official communication is conducted in English and all programme documents are produced in English only. The project application and reporting is also done in English. Unofficial communication within the project and between the project and programme bodies may of course take place in other languages.

We use an online application and reporting system, Jems. It is used for all official communication and for all steps of the application and implementation of a project. All projects and programme bodies use the system.

If a new version of the Programme Manual is published on the programme website, it becomes valid from that point onward. The latest version of the Programme Manual should always be used.

1. What is the Central Baltic programme?

The Central Baltic programme is a cross-border cooperation programme and one of the so-called Interreg programmes. These programmes are funded from the European Regional Development Fund and Interreg itself is one of the EU Cohesion Policy instruments. That means that the framework for Central Baltic programme projects is improving the lives of the inhabitants in the Central Baltic cross-border region and bringing about development and cohesion among the region.

1.1. Basic characteristics of a Central Baltic project

How to define a project

To be successful in applying for and implementing a project, it is crucial to understand what a project essentially is. A project is an operation that is limited by its objectives and tasks, its duration, and its budget. To be more precise:

- A project has limited and fixed objectives, results, outputs and deliverables. The project activities must be additional to the activities normally carried out by the organisations involved and not part of their ordinary activities.
- A project has a limited budget. Results and outputs are to be met with the financial resources foreseen in the project budget and with the ERDF amount and share foreseen.
- A project has a limited lifetime. Results and outputs are to be met within the specified timeframe after which the project is closed.
- A project must have a clear cross-border character.

The **objectives, results, outputs** and activities of any project must be clearly defined. A project tackles a certain problem or task using a pre-defined set of measures. Tasks that are part of an organisations regular work and that are intended to carry on indefinitely cannot be labelled as projects and will not receive project funding. Basic research is not funded by the programme.

A project is typically implemented to try a new method or solution using external funding. Projects are particularly good for trying out or spreading new innovative models or methods or to establish new cooperation.

If a project tests new approaches, the conclusions should be drawn once the testing period is over. If the tested method has proven successful, the organisations involved, together with other potential end-users, should take the good new tools into use. Due to the nature of testing new solutions, projects always involve an element of risk. The programme accepts this, but in order to minimise the risk of using money to no avail, each project should have a good understanding of the need that they intend to find solutions to as well as a credible plan for reaching these solutions.

As said, a project should always be built around a need. One should make the distinction between ‘interesting’ and ‘important’ project ideas and the programme aims to fund the project ideas that are of importance for the region.

The need-based approach should also be reflected in how the project objective and results are formulated: the project should be about finding solutions rather than about developing existing things. This difference should be kept in mind when preparing project activities.

The need-based approach calls for involving target groups and end users of your project as much as possible in planning phase. You should consider how the target group’s opinions are taken into account in planning the project, how they are involved in implementation and how the sustainability of project results and impact of the project results and outcomes is ensured with them.

In line with the principles of taking a risk, and answering to needs, the programme will not fund the same activity twice. Therefore, each project should bring new results, even if it builds on another project. This applies regardless of the source of funding of the original project. Keeping this in mind, each project must give an account of what work has been done in its field of activity already, how the project links to larger-scale strategies and how it differs from or brings added value to earlier work.

The **duration** and the activities of a project are interlinked. The duration of a project is set according to the objectives and tasks at hand but is always limited and clearly defined. Projects typically last for 1,5-3 years, depending on the theme, objectives and targeted results. Projects that develop new working methods or tools should always include a test period, followed by analysis and drawing conclusions for the future use of the project results.

Despite the limited lifespan of a project, it is crucial to consider the **durability** of the project outcomes and achievements. A successful project creates practices, models, solutions, networks and/or knowledge that live on after the project ends even without project funding. The sustainability of results must already be considered when planning a project.

For achieving the objectives, results and outputs, a project must have a realistic and viable **budget**. The budget is defined in the Application Form and confirmed by the project funding decision. The total ERDF funding, the total project budget and the co-financing rate will be set in the Subsidy Contract. These levels may not be exceeded.

Cross-border cooperation is required

To receive funding from this programme, projects must have a clear cross-border character and involve partners from at least two programme countries. Cross-border cooperation should always bring added value to reach the project objectives and results. In the project application partners are asked to explain why cross-border cooperation is needed for reaching the project objectives and results. For other types of projects national funding programmes or transnational funding programmes would be more appropriate.

Cooperation in the Central Baltic programme is about working together to solve joint problems or support joint possibilities of the Central Baltic region. For this to take place, the programme expects the partners to work together as equals. Each project partner should contribute to the project by bringing in expertise, ideas, personnel or other resources. The programme does not

support projects, where one partner has the role of a teacher and the other(s) simply copy a model.

The picture below (Figure 1.) shows the typical development of cooperation. Cooperation usually starts from networking and getting to know each other. If the first phase is successful and the cooperation continues, people or organisations start learning from each other. In the closest form of cooperation people or organisations involved have identified common needs that they can solve (only) together.

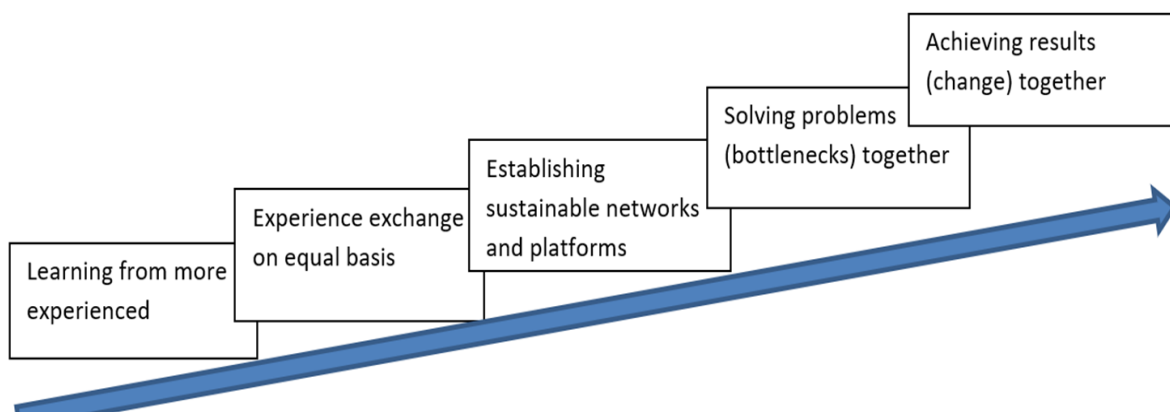


Figure 1. The development of cooperation

We **do not support pure networking projects**. Networks are assumed to be in place already. Projects should focus on work that allows them to reach the results and objectives expected by the programme. A project may contain limited elements of networking if it is required for concrete activities to take place during the project. In some cases, it may be enough that the partners have identified a joint need and that they learn from each other to develop their individual approaches, and thus generate an improvement on a larger scale and support the results of the chosen Programme Objective.

Similarly, we assume projects would have the readiness to start working on reaching results from the beginning of the project. It is not expected that the partnership would spend much time of project implementation to plan or analyse, but that this work has already been done.

The programme aims at solving common problems together or working on joint opportunities. All projects should demonstrate this intention and contribute to the achievement of the programme objectives and results.

The nature of cooperation is reflected in all stages of a project lifecycle:

Joint development means that your project must be prepared by representatives from all partner organisations together. The project proposal must clearly integrate the ideas, expectations, priorities and contributions from all participating partners. The partners relevant for reaching the project objectives and results should be included in the preparations. The partners should share the understanding of the project needs and contribute to achieve the results.

Joint implementation means that activities must be carried out and coordinated by all participating partners. Projects should have a joint approach and work together and finally, joint solutions should be put in place. There must be a balanced division of tasks and responsibilities, links between the activities of each partner and regular contacts.

Joint staffing means that the project should have divided the tasks and that the partners should not do overlapping work. There should be one joint project manager for the whole project. Normally, this would be the lead partner's responsibility.

Joint financing means that the different partner budgets form together the joint budget for the whole project. There is only one Subsidy Contract per project.

Working together for the common good

The goal of our programme is to use cooperation to improve the lives of the inhabitants in our cross-border region. Therefore, the main outcomes and project approaches shall be possible to copy, transfer and promote within our region and as widely as possible. We want you to share your accomplishments with the region. Think from the beginning about other projects/organisations/people etc. that can benefit from and use what you will create. You are asked to not hold on to your work, but to spread and share it as much as possible. Our projects are expected to produce open-source data or solutions that can be copied by others. Simply put: public funding means public access to relevant outcomes of the project.

A logical consequence of the above is that no money should be taken for the use of what is produced in an Interreg project. What is created in projects should be free and without fee for all. The EU logo and Central Baltic programme logo, or references in texts to the project funding, are signs of public money being spent to deliver these outcomes to everyone and should normally be an indication of the service, solution or other outcome being free of charge. In some very rare cases it may be unavoidable to ask for fees to cover costs. These cases need to be discussed with the secretariat as early on as possible.

2. Suitability of the project idea to the Central Baltic programme

We fund projects in seven Programme Objectives. These are presented under four priorities (Figure 2.):

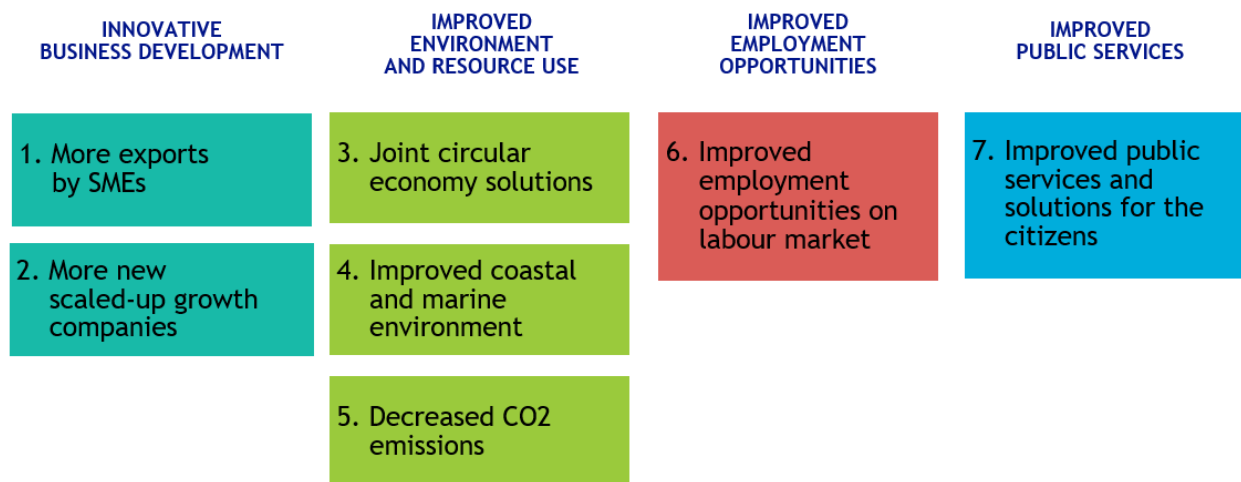


Figure 2. Programme priorities and 7 Programme Objectives

The contribution of the programme is determined by Programme Objectives with specific result indicators and target values of the programme are defined as Programme Objectives and are illustrated through the result indicators. **The result indicators capture the change that the programme wants to achieve in the region.** As projects are assessed based on their relevance for the programme and on how well they help the programme reach its objectives, projects should directly contribute to the result indicators to be funded. The key elements of the output and result indicators are explained in the Programme Manual. The complete description of the indicators, as defined in the Programme Document, is included in Annex 2 for reference.

Each project must choose one Programme Objective only. If the Programme Objective has several result indicators available, each project must choose one of the available result indicators only. This is needed to ensure sufficient focussing of the projects. The project plan must be clear and focussed on the relevant target group.

Each Programme Objective has been designed to have its specific character. Therefore, there is a division of work between Programme Objective 7 and the others: Programme Objective 7 cannot support projects within the specific themes of Programme Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE 1

MORE EXPORTS BY SMEs

Approach and scope

The approach derives from challenges related to SME-dominated economies and their capacity to take products and services to new markets. The main bottleneck for mature SMEs is identifying and entering the new markets for their products and services. Focus on export allows to achieve real economic impact. In addition to marketing and new market entry activities, development of products, processes and skills are relevant activities.

All relevant economic sectors where joint interest to enter new markets is in place are included in the scope of this Programme Objective. Joint efforts of CB companies (SMEs) to enter new markets (markets outside the European Union/European Free trade Area (EU/EFTA)) will be supported. This Programme Objective is also considered to be fulfilled if projects participate with joint offers towards international organisations (sales to an international organisation (for example UN agencies, World Health Organisation (WHO), International Labour (ILO), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)). The headquarters of the international organisations should be outside of the Central Baltic programme area and the products or services should be for use outside EU/EFTA areas.

Innovative companies are defined as companies that are targeting higher value added than the sectoral and regional average.

Indicative joint actions supported

- Awareness raising of SMEs and relevant organisations in the targeted markets
- Product/service development of potentially exported products or services
- Developing joint offers of products and services for the targeted markets
- Process development and digitalisation of processes related to product/service development and new market entry
- Skills development and quality management of participating companies
- Market information and research for improved market entry plans
- Branding and marketing of products and services towards the targeted markets
- Sales support activities on target markets: visits to target markets and buyers visits to CB region, fairs, market expert services
- Experience exchange and learning as result of joint implementation

The list above is not in order of priority. Any project should use a suitable mix of these actions based on the project topic. The chosen mix of actions must be relevant for achieving the contribution to both the project and programme results.

Regarding the project approach, the joint elements should be clearly described. A cluster-based approach is encouraged.

This Programme Objective contributes to the actions of EUSBSR Policy Areas Innovation and Tourism.

Eligible markets

Markets outside EU/EFTA, international organisations

Potential partners

Non-commercial organisations relevant and capable for implementing new market entry projects, for example non-commercial organisations with competence and experience on export and product development, sectoral associations, chambers of commerce or regional development agencies.

The main target groups

Established, mature innovative small and medium sized companies (SMEs) of different sectors with international cooperation experience and capacity.

Additional explanations

The projects targeting the entry to new markets of all economic sectors are eligible.

Regarding the services export the provision of the services often takes place within programme area but for target market customers.

An example would be the tourism sector where export takes place by visitors/tourists from targeted markets who arrive to our region and purchase the services of local service providers (accommodation, restaurants, events, transport etc.).

Clarification of the cross-border elements

In each project the joint elements which justify and add value by cross-border cooperation should be described. The project approach and the activity plan should be joint and integrated.

The indicative joint cross-border elements in projects are:

- Mixed target group participants in project activities (e.g., in joint trainings, joint business missions, joint stands on trade fairs etc.);
- Joint product/service offerings and packages;
- Joint acquisition and use of market information;
- Joint development and implementation of marketing campaigns;
- The use of joint target market experts;

Indicators

Programme Objective 1

For Programme Objective 1 projects, the result indicator „Companies with achieved sales and contracts to new markets“ is used.

Sales should be achieved by target group companies via joint actions to the new markets (markets outside EU/EFTA).

Counted for the result the company should have, for example, written or digital contract, proof of transaction with buyer from the targeted market for delivery of goods or services or other equal written/digital proof.

Sales for tourism sector and other service sectors are counted if foreign buyer uses the service within the Central Baltic programme area - purchases by tourists from targeted markets.

The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating companies and their achieved sales (name of company, name of contact person, proofs of the sale/contract). Confidentiality rules apply: no information on sales and deals will be disclosed without the permission of the concerned company.

For numeric results the unique companies are counted and aggregated on project level over project duration.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually from the 2nd full year of the project implementation. Last overall count of results will be reported by the projects 1 full year after project has ended.

The following output indicators are used:

1. „SMEs introducing marketing or organisational innovation“

Marketing innovations are defined as new and adopted methods and ways of marketing for particular companies.

Organisational innovations are defined as changes and adaptations within companies organisational structures and/or processes. Including the usage of new software solutions for marketing.

2. „Enterprises with non-financial support“

For achievement of this indicator, the companies representatives' active participation from project activities is counted. Purely recipients of information (newsletters, emails) and other passive types of activities aren't counted.

For both output indicators the unique companies are reported as achievements: 1 company may participate in several project activities but 1 is counted. There can be more than 1 representative from 1 company but 1 is counted.

The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating companies. The records should include the company's names, the contact information and in which project activities the participation took place.

The achievements of the output indicators are reported annually (1 year/12-month periods) during project duration and aggregated on project level. On programme level the achievements of all projects' contributions are aggregated.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually and after the project ends in final report.

For programme objectives 1 and 2 on programme level the output indicator „Organisations co-operating across borders“ is used for reporting towards European Commission.

This indicator achievements will include the achievements of the indicator „Enterprises with non-financial support“ achievements plus the numbers of project partners. Note, that aggregation and reporting will take place on programme level by Joint Secretariat.

Projects will need to provide information on participating organisations / companies / participants (in trainings) via pre-defined forms so that the uniqueness of participants and organisations participating in project activities will be ensured.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE 2

MORE NEW SCALED-UP GROWTH COMPANIES

Approach and scope

The approach derives from the challenges of scaling up the activities of new growth companies. New companies with potential to grow and to use the potential of Central Baltic start-up ecosystems will be supported. They should have the necessary product development capacities and ambition to grow. They should target scaling up (raising investments, establishing presence outside of the home market or developing business models) their businesses.

Potential participant companies' ambition to grow is identified by partner organisations.

Indicative joint actions supported

- Awareness raising of potential growth companies
- Product development to facilitate growth of the target group companies
- Process development and digitalisation of the target group companies
- Skills development for improved capacity of target group companies
- Market opportunities research to support scaling-up activities of supported companies
- Branding and marketing promoting the business development of target group companies
- Business model development and expansion of operations in targeted companies
- Experience exchange and learning as result of joint implementation

The list above is not in order of priority. Any project should use a suitable mix of these actions based on the project topic. The chosen mix of actions must be relevant for achieving the contribution to both the project and programme results.

Regarding the project approach, the joint elements should be clearly described.

This Programme Objective contributes to the actions of EUSBSR Policy Area Innovation.

Potential partners

Non-commercial organisations with competence and experience for new business development, product development, internationalisation such as business development organisations, science parks, associations of companies and regional development agencies.

Main target groups

New companies with scaling-up challenges and ambition. All sectors where growth potential and joint interest exists are targeted.

Clarification of the cross-border elements

In each project the joint elements which justify and add value by cross-border cooperation should be described. The project approach and the activity plan should be joint and integrated.

The indicative joint cross-border elements in projects are:

- Mixing target group participants in project activities (e.g., joint trainings, events, etc.);
- Joint scaling-up and product development processes;
- The use of joint business development experts;
- Jointly developed and used development methodologies and technics;

Additional information

The main target group is “new companies with ambition to grow 5 years from start of operations.

In exceptional cases the target group can be new companies with the ambition to grow up to 7 years from start of operations:

- the project includes sectors where development takes longer time because of science/knowledge intensity;
- e.g., deep tech, biomedicine, pharmaceuticals, material technologies etc.;
- the project includes companies operating in sparsely populated and isolated areas where the scaling up and growing is hindered by surrounding conditions;

In justified cases the project partners can also work with companies which are older but with similar scaling-up challenges.

Indicators

Programme Objective 2

For Programme Objective 2 projects, the result indicator „Number of scaled up new growth companies“ is used.

The status as “scaled-up company” should be achieved via joint actions by project partners for the participating target group companies.

Scaled up company is defined as: company which raised investments, company established presence outside of home market, company developed the business model, company developed the new product/service, company expanded the key team, company merged or acquired, company implemented the Initial Public Offering (IPO).

The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating companies and their achieved scaled up achievement (name of the company, name of the contact person, proofs of the scaled-up status). Confidentiality rules apply: no information will be disclosed without the permission of the concerned company.

For numeric results the unique companies are counted and aggregated on project level over project duration.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually from the 2nd full year of the project implementation. Last overall count of results will be reported by the projects 1 full year after project has ended.

The output indicator „Enterprises with non-financial support“ is used.

For achievement of this indicator, the companies’ representatives’ active participation from project activities is counted. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive types of activities are counted.

For both output indicators the unique companies are reported as achievements: one company may participate in several project activities but one is counted. There can be more than one representative from one company but one is counted.

The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating companies. The records should include the companies names, the contact information and in which project activities the participation took place.

The achievements of the output indicators are reported annually (1 year/12 month periods) during project duration and aggregated on project level. On programme level the achievements of all projects contributions are aggregated.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually and after the project ends in final report.

For programme objectives 1 and 2 on programme level the output indicator „Organisations co-operating across borders“ is used for reporting towards European Commission.

This indicator achievements will include the achievements of the indicator „Enterprises with non-financial support“ achievements plus the numbers of project partners. Note, that aggregation and reporting will take place on programme level by Joint Secretariat.

Projects will need to provide information on participating organisations / companies / participants (in trainings) via pre-defined forms so that the uniqueness of participants and organisations participating in project activities will be ensured.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE 3

JOINT CIRCULAR ECONOMY SOLUTIONS

Approach and scope

The approach derives from challenges related to high levels of waste, low levels of product and material reuse, inflows of nutrients and hazardous substances and low levels of awareness.

Three basic components will be targeted within Circular Economy: Design of the whole life cycle of products and/or services, awareness raising, and behaviour change of consumers as well as producers and service providers. This Programme Objective will not target the efforts to directly reduce the impact of nutrients, toxins, and hazardous substances on the Baltic Sea by water management activities.

All main categories of waste can be targeted by the projects if the Central Baltic scale can be identified and justified, and where there are opportunities for decreasing waste or increasing the reuse of products or materials. The Central Baltic scale will be defined by the existence of cross-border product/service life cycle or chain, or a solution which extends across Central Baltic borders or can be downsized to Central Baltic scale.

The key product value chains identified in the European Commission's Circular Economy Action Plan (the list of value chains is not exhaustive, and value chains of other areas can also be targeted):

1. Electronics and ICT
2. Batteries and vehicles
3. Packaging
4. Plastics
5. Textiles
6. Construction and buildings
7. Food, water, and nutrients

Indicative joint actions supported:

- Awareness raising of consumers and organisations with the potential to adapt circularity
- Mapping the cross-border product cycles/chains in the project for more focused understanding of the needs to improve circularity
- Feasibility studies, plans and designs to further target the activities
- Trainings and skills development of targeted actors to better implement the principles of circular economy
- Joint product development prototyping activities and cross-border hackathons
- Development and implementation of methods and technologies to reduce the use of materials, reduce the waste and increase the reuse of materials
- Process developments and digitalisation of processes within circular economy

- Small scale investments to reduce the use of materials, waste and increase the reuse of materials
- New resource efficient solutions for improved circular economy
- Experience exchange and learning as result of joint implementation

The list above is not in order of priority. Any project should use a suitable mix of these actions based on the project topic. The chosen mix of actions must be relevant for achieving the contribution to both the project and programme results.

Regarding the project approach, the joint elements should be clearly described.

This Programme Objective contributes to the actions of EUSBSR Policy Area Bio-economy.

Potential partners

Public and non-profit organisations relevant for the targeted product chains.

The main target groups

People, communities and businesses benefitting from reduced use of virgin materials, decreased waste, and increased reuse of products and materials.

Clarification of the cross-border elements

In each project the joint elements which justifies and add value by cross-border cooperation should be described. The project approach and the activity plan should be joint and integrated.

The indicative joint cross-border elements in projects are:

The joint CB cross border product/service chain should be in place and identified as precondition for the project.

- Mixed target group participants in project activities (e.g., joint trainings, events etc);
- Jointly developed or adopted approaches, methodologies and/or technologies;
- Jointly developed and applied solutions;

Indicators

Programme Objective 3

For Programme Objective 3 projects, the result indicator „The number of improved product/service cycles/chains“ is used.

Projects should in joint action target the improvement of the product/service chains which are in place on cross-border within Central Baltic programme area.

The chain is improved if the following impact is achieved:

- Reduced amounts of used virgin materials and/or
- Amounts of decreased waste and/or
- Amounts of reused products and materials

By 1 project 1 or all 3 components of the result indicator can be targeted.

For each targeted chain the baseline is determined by the start of the project activities so that the improvement can be understood. The target is set for what should be achieved. If the set target is achieved, the chain is counted as “improved”.

If a project will start with mapping activities related to determining its more detailed approach and focus, these activities must take place during the first implementation period, prior to the core implementation activities. The methodology of measuring the improvements must also be presented once the detailed focus is determined."

The baseline and target for the improvement should be set numerically wherever feasible.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually from the 2nd full year of the project implementation. Last overall count of results will be reported by the projects 1 full year after project has ended.

Different components of the potential improvements are not aggregated.

If improvement is achieved in 1 or more components it is counted as “the improved chain” - numerically as 1.

There can be more than 1 chain improved by 1 project. Improved chains by all projects are aggregated to single numeric value on programme level.

The following output indicators are used:

1. “Participations in joint actions across borders

For achievement of this indicator the organizations/companies’ representatives’ active participation from project activities is counted. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive types of activities are counted.

One organisation/company may participate in several project activities but 1 is counted. There can be more than 1 representative from 1 company but 1 is counted.

The achievements of the output indicators are reported annually (1 year/12-month periods) during project duration and aggregated on project level. On programme level the achievements of all project’s contributions are aggregated.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually and after the project ends in final report.

2. “Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects”The indicator counts the pilot actions developed jointly and implemented by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or the transfer of practices.

In order to be counted by this indicator, the pilot action needs not only to be developed, but also implemented within the project and the implementation of the pilot action should be finalised by the end of the project.

Jointly developed pilot action implies the involvement of organisations from at least two participating countries.

The achievements of the output indicators are reported annually (1 year/12-month periods) during project duration and aggregated on project level. On programme level the achievements of all project’s contributions are aggregated.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually and after the project ends in final report.

For programme objective 3 on programme level the output indicator „Organisations co-operating across borders“ is used for reporting towards European Commission.

Note, that the aggregation and reporting will take place on programme level by Joint Secretariat.

Projects will need to provide information on participating organisations/companies/participants (in trainings) via pre-defined forms so that the uniqueness of participants and organisations participating in project activities will be ensured.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE 4

IMPROVED COASTAL AND MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Approach and scope

The approach derives from challenges related to the poor health of the Baltic sea.

The approach is to use existing and new measures to reduce the inflows of nutrients, hazardous substances, plastics, and toxins' inflows to the Baltic Sea. Both preventive and direct measures are supported. This focused approach will also contribute to enhancing biodiversity.

The focus areas with impact to the Baltic Sea have been defined in the national water management plans and marine strategies. As the load of harmful substances originate mainly from catchment areas, land-based load sources like for example the agricultural sector, forestry and the impact from urban systems are most relevant to be targeted by joint actions. Sea-based load sources such as sediments as can also be targeted. Projects resulting into direct positive effects to the Baltic Sea are prioritised.

Indicative joint actions supported

- Awareness raising activities for the project target groups on how to improve the state of the sea
- Information collection and surveys to support and specify concrete project activities to reduce the load
- Analysis, plans, drawings, and designs for the implementation for load-reducing activities
- Designing and adapting methods of load reduction from targeted sectors
- Planning and investing into digital solutions and processes that help to reduce the environmental load
- Joint practical pilot actions to reduce inflows of nutrients, toxins and hazardous substances
- Small scale investments to reduce inflows of nutrients, toxins and hazardous substances
- Experience exchange and learning as result of joint implementation

The list above is not in order of priority. Any project should use a suitable mix of these actions based on the project topic. The chosen mix of actions must be relevant for achieving the contribution to both the project and programme results.

Regarding the project approach, the joint elements should be clearly described.

This programme Objective contributes to the actions of EUSBSR Policy Areas Nutri and Hazards.

Potential partners

Public and non-profit organisations and authorities on national, regional, and local level, as well as private companies relevant for reducing nutrients, toxins and hazardous substances

The main target groups

People, communities, and businesses benefitting from reduced emissions.

Clarification of cross-border elements

In each project the joint elements which justify and add value by cross-border cooperation should be described. The project approach and the activity plan should be joint and integrated.

The indicative joint cross-border elements in projects are:

- Mixed target group participation in project activities (e.g., joint trainings, events, etc.);
- Joint and synchronized planning and management processes;
- Joint development and use of solutions and technologies;

Indicators

Programme Objective 4

For Programme Objective 4 projects, the result indicator „The number of improved urban and agricultural runoff/load sources“ is used.

The reduction or elimination of the runoffs/loads should be targeted and realistically achievable by the jointly implemented projects.

1 project can target and achieve more than 1 „improved runoff/load source“.

The improved runoff/load source is defined as dispersed or spot source where measurable reduction of inflows of nutrients or toxins or hazardous substances is achieved.

Potentially improved source can be located on land area/coast or in sea (bottom).

For each potentially improved source the baseline is determined by the start of the project activities. And the target is set for what should be achieved. If target is achieved the source is counted as “improved”.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually from the 2nd full year of the project implementation. Last overall count of results will be reported by the projects 1 full year after project has ended.

The following output indicators are used:

1. “Participations in joint actions across borders”

For achievement of this indicator the organizations/companies’ representatives’ active participation from project activities is counted. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive types of activities are counted.

1 organization/company may participate in several project activities but 1 is counted. There can be more than 1 representative from 1 company but 1 is counted.

The achievements of the output indicators are reported annually (1 year/12-month periods) during project duration and aggregated on project level.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually and after the project ends in final report.

2. “Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects”

The indicator counts the pilot actions developed jointly and implemented by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or the transfer of practices.

In order to be counted by this indicator, the pilot action needs not only to be developed, but also implemented within the project and the implementation of the pilot action should be finalised by the end of the project.

Jointly developed pilot action implies the involvement of organisations from at least two participating countries.

The achievements of the output indicators are reported annually (1 year/12-month periods) during project duration and aggregated on project level. On programme level the achievements of all project's contributions are aggregated.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually and after the project ends in final report.

For programme objective 4 on programme level the output indicator „Organisations co-operating across borders“ is used for reporting towards European Commission.

Note, that the aggregation and reporting will take place on programme level by Joint Secretariat.

Projects will need to provide information on participating organisations / companies / participants (in trainings) via pre-defined forms so that the uniqueness of participants and organisations participating in project activities will be ensured.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE 5

DECREASED CO2 EMISSIONS

Approach and scope

The approach derives from challenges related to CO2 intensity of transport systems, the lack of multimodal integration, and the low level of use of less CO2 intensive mobility solutions.

Existing Central Baltic transport nodes and areas, improving the mobility solutions in large and small urban transport systems (also the ones servicing hinterlands of the urban areas) are in the scope of this Programme Objective. The goal is to achieve joint mobility solutions and improved intermodal mobility that help reduce CO2 emissions.

Improvements in efficiency and usability of transport nodes and areas and urban intermodal systems should be achieved as well.

Indicative joint actions supported

- Awareness raising of target groups on how to reduce the CO2 footprint
- Analysis and surveys to support and focus the chosen concrete project activities
- Plans, drawings, and designs for less CO2-intensive solutions in the targeted nodes or areas
- Planning and investing into digital solutions and processes to help to achieve carbon neutrality in the transport sector
- Small scale investments to practical activities leading to lower CO2 emissions from targeted nodes and areas
- Piloting new mobility solutions to promote less CO2 intensive transport
- Experience exchange activities as joint seminars, study visits, and trainings to support achieving CO2 reductions

The list above is not in order of priority. Any project should use a suitable mix of these actions based on the project topic. The chosen mix of actions must be relevant for achieving the contribution to both the project and programme results.

Regarding the project approach, the joint elements should be clearly described.

This Programme Objective contributes to the actions of EUSBSR Policy Areas Ship and Transport.

Potential partners

Public and non-profit organisations and authorities on national, regional and local level, private companies relevant for improving transport nodes/areas and achieving CO2 reductions.

The main target groups

People, visitors, businesses as the users of less CO2 intensive, improved transport nodes/areas, multimodal and mobility solutions.

Additional explanations

Intermodal transport node refers to a place or location where different transport modes interlink.

Intermodal transport area/system refers to an urban area with its hinterlands, where different transport modes interact and coexist.

Clarification of cross-border element

In each project the joint elements which justify and add value by cross-border cooperation should be described. The project approach and the activity plan should be joint and integrated.

The indicative joint cross-border elements in projects are:

There should be intermodal cross border transport node or intermodal/multimodal transport system with common challenges in place.

- Mixed target group participants in project activities (e.g., joint trainings, awareness raising events);
- Joint synchronised planning processes;
- Joint solutions and technologies used;

Indicators

Programme Objective 5

For Programme Objective 5 projects, the following result indicator is used:

- 1. “Improved intermodal transport nodes and transport areas with CO2 reductions”;**

The reduction of CO2 emissions must be targeted and realistically achievable within transport node or intermodal transport area/system to qualify as „reduced CO2 transport node, intermodal transport area “.

One project can target and achieve more than 1 „intermodal transport node and area with CO2 reductions “.

The measurable amount of CO2 decrease should be achieved for counting the node as “improved”.

The baseline situation is determined by the start of the project activities. And the target is set for what should be achieved. If the target is achieved, then the transport node/transport area is counted as “improved”.

In addition to the CO2 reduction the efficiency of the intermodal transport node/ intermodal transport area should also be achieved.

To be able to achieve the targeted CO2 reductions, projects under this Programme Objective may have a longer implementation time than a typical regular project.

If by the end of the project the realistic action plan is in place and the implementation decided it can be counted as “improved transport node/transport area”.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually from the 2nd full year of the project implementation. Last overall count of results will be reported by the projects 1 full year after project has ended.

The following output indicators are used:

1. “ Participations in joint actions across borders”.

For achievement of this indicator the organizations/companies’ representatives’ active participation from project activities is counted. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive types of activities are counted.

One organisation/company may participate in several project activities but 1 is counted. There can be more than 1 representative from 1 company but 1 is counted.

The achievements of the output indicators are reported annually (1 year/12-month periods) during project duration and aggregated on project level. On programme level the achievements of all project’s contributions are aggregated.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually and after the project ends in final report.

„ Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects The indicator counts the pilot actions developed jointly and implemented by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or the transfer of practices.

In order to be counted by this indicator, the pilot action needs not only to be developed, but also implemented within the project and the implementation of the pilot action should be finalised by the end of the project.

Jointly developed pilot action implies the involvement of organizations from at least two participating countries. The achievements of the output indicators are reported annually (1 year/12-month periods) during project duration and aggregated on project level. On programme level the achievements of all project’s contributions are aggregated.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually and after the project ends in final report.

For programme objective 5 on programme level the output indicator „Organisations co-operating across borders“ and “The number of projects targeting intermodal transport nodes and areas” is used for reporting towards European Commission.

Note, that the aggregation and reporting of these will take place on programme level by Joint Secretariat.

Projects will need to provide information on participating organisations / companies / participants (in trainings) via pre-defined forms so that the uniqueness of participants and organisations participating in project activities will be ensured.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE 6

IMPROVED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ON LABOUR MARKET

Approach and scope

The approach derives from the challenges of less competitive groups in the society to access work opportunities, and labour market inflexibility.

The goal is to strengthen and improve employment opportunities on the labour market through joint efforts in the region. The scope of this Programme Objective includes activities towards all counterparts of the labour market (i.e., employers organisations, trade unions, governments) and all sectors where work opportunities (including part time) are available. Facilitating employment supply and demand across borders is also supported, as well as entrepreneurship development activities towards the less competitive age groups and youth. Entrepreneurship training for target groups may include social entrepreneurship training. All activities need to consider the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination (please see section 2.1 Other key characteristics of a Central Baltic project).

Indicative joint actions supported

- Awareness raising among the targeted less competitive groups and employers
- Designing and implementing trainings for the target groups to improve their skills and employment possibilities
- Incentives and services for employers (e.g., mentoring) to improve accessibility to jobs
- Networking and dialogues between counterparts of labour market (e.g., job search assistance)
- Tools for digital and online skills development and working
- Entrepreneurship-enhancing simulations and problem-solving exercises to promote entrepreneurship
- Mobility of participants to facilitate the demands of the joint labour market
- Experience exchange and learning as result of joint implementation

The list above is not in order of priority. Any project should use a suitable mix of these actions based on the project topic. The chosen mix of actions must be relevant for achieving the contribution to both the project and programme results.

Regarding the project approach, the joint elements should be clearly described.

This Programme Objective contributes to the actions of EUSBSR Policy Area Education.

Potential partners

Public and non-commercial organisations with competence and experience on labour market, organisations representing employees, employers, public authorities, organisations representing disadvantaged groups, social enterprises and organisations with competence and experience on entrepreneurship development.

The main target groups

Less competitive groups (including young people under 25, people in pre-retirement, retired people, immigrants, and people with special needs and other less competitive groups) and companies.

Note, that the target groups differ per result indicator:

1. “Number of people with increased competitiveness on labour market” - all target groups;
2. “Number of organisations with applied anti-discriminatory policies” - companies/employers;
3. “Number of people with increased entrepreneurship” - less competitive age groups and youth.

The target group should be narrowed down to ensure that planned activities are relevant to this target group as general target groups are wide and may have different needs. For example, youth with similar education and no work experience (instead of all youth), people with similar kind of disability (instead of all people with special needs).

Additional explanations

- Less competitive groups within society: includes young people under 25, people in pre-retirement, retired people, immigrants, and people with special needs and other less competitive groups
- Each project should define the less competitive group that they work with; the project application should also specify how or why this group is considered less competitive.
- Projects working towards result indicator “Number of people with increased competitiveness on labour market” are encouraged involve employers in project activities and strive for actual matching of vacancies and jobseekers (not just training).
- Each project should describe the main elements of the project - demand from the target group, participant selection criteria, outreach to participants, length and content of the training/other activities planned, which organisations (partners or via procurement) will implement the activities and what type of certificate will be provided (if provided) and by which organization.
- The projects should mention what kind of support the countries already offer to the project target groups and highlight the added value of their project compared to the existing offers.

Clarification on cross-border element

In each project the joint elements which justify and add value by cross-border cooperation should be described. The project approach and the activity plan should be joint and integrated.

The indicative joint cross-border elements in projects are:

- Mixed target group participants in project activities (e.g., joint trainings, seminars, etc.);
- Jointly developed and implemented seminars training programmes for target group employees and employers;
- Jointly developed and used methods for learning and working;
- Jointly developed and implemented teleworking and distant learning solutions;
- Preparing and applying anti-discriminatory policies by organisations;

Indicators

Programme Objective 6

For Programme Objective 6 projects, the following result indicators are used:

1. “Number of people with increased competitiveness on labour market”;
2. “Number of organisations with applied anti-discriminatory policies”;
3. “Number of people with increased entrepreneurship”;

As there are 3 distinct focuses within this Programme Objective for which three programme specific result indicators are used. The target values and achievements of the three result indicators are aggregated separately.

- People with increased competitiveness: work contract achieved; work affiliation achieved; new qualification gained, certificate proving the completion of study programme; actively job-searching.
- Companies with anti-discriminatory policy applied: policy prepared, approved and applied. People with increased entrepreneurship: successful completion of complex entrepreneurship programme.

For numeric results, the unique persons and companies are counted and aggregated on project level over project duration.

For all three components of the indicator the aggregation is applied separately.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually from the 2nd full year of the project implementation. Last overall count of results will be reported by the final report.

The following output indicators are used:

1. “Participations in joint actions across borders” :
 - the organizations/companies with the result indicator 2,or
 - the individuals (target group participants) with the result indicators 1 and 3.

Organizations and individuals’ participation in project activities in which the organizations/companies’ representatives or individuals takes active part. That means that “unique active participants” (organisations or individuals) are counted in each project.

Recipients of information (newsletters, emails) and other passive type of activities are not counted.

One Organisation/company/individual may participate in several project activities - we count it as one.

When counting the organisations there can be more than one representative from one organisation/company - we count one. The achievements of the output indicators are reported annually (1 year/12-month periods) during project duration and aggregated on project level. On programme level the achievements of all project's contributions are aggregated.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually and after the project ends in final report. For programme objective 6 on programme level the output indicator „Organisations co-operating across borders“ is used for reporting towards European Commission.

Note, that the aggregation and reporting will take place on programme level by Joint Secretariat.

Projects will need to provide information on participating organisations / companies / participants (in trainings) via pre-defined forms so that the uniqueness of participants and organisations participating in project activities will be ensured.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE 7

IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS FOR CITIZENS

Approach and scope

The approach derives from challenges and obstacles related to the administrative, regulatory, language and cultural barriers in public administration. It includes all branches of the society which are not covered by the scope of Programme Objectives 1 - 6, and levels of public administration experience exchange and learning from each other. These should lead to practical solutions and policy improvements, and/or new or improved public services. The digitalisation of public services is included. The participatory processes taking place when designing the improved solutions and services are also supported. The scope of the Programme Objective does not include joint curricula development within the educational systems.

Indicative joint actions supported

- Awareness raising;
- Trainings and networking;
- Feasibility studies;
- Plans and designs (including strategic and land use planning);
- Improving participatory processes for developing services;
- Improving public services and solutions;
- Creating joint cross-border services;
- Digitalising joint public services;

The list above is not in order of priority. Any project should use a suitable mix of these actions based on the project topic. The chosen mix of actions must be relevant for achieving the contribution to both the project and programme results.

Regarding the project approach, the joint elements should be clearly described.

This Programme Objective is foreseen to contribute to the actions of several EUSBSR Policy Areas. The potential contribution, which will be clarified during assessment, will depend on the focus of the projects.

Potential partners

Public sector organisations on local, regional, and national levels.

The main target groups

People benefitting from improved services and solutions provided by public sector on all levels.

Additional explanations

The intervention logic of this programme objective is aimed at creating, taking up or up-scaling the public services within Central Baltic programme area.

There are 2 different types of interventions possible:

1. With regular projects with which cross-border public services and digitalization of public services should be targeted and achieved.
2. With small projects where experience exchange and learning from each other should be accompanied with practical solutions leading to improvement of the public services.

The details of small and regular projects are explained in chapter 2.4 Different types of projects.

Projects within this programme objective cannot be overlapping with programme objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6. They may work in the same general field but should then be aimed at different content and results.

To give an example - under programme objective 1 projects are expected to work jointly to boost exports by SMEs in a way that SMEs are benefitting from the project. Under programme objective 7 the same partners are encouraged to work jointly to digitalize services they provide to SMEs or to exchange the experience and to learn leading to an improved service they provide. In such cases, two different projects should be applied. Similar examples can be found with other programme objectives as well.

Clarification of the cross-border elements

In each project the joint elements which justify and add value by cross-border cooperation should be described. The project approach and the activity plan should be joint and integrated.

The indicative joint cross-border elements in projects are:

For regular projects - there should be description of challenges, obstacles or barriers within CB the project is to target and to solve or to overcome.

Indicative joint actions for regular projects:

- Awareness raising for stakeholders and target groups to improve planning and implementation of joint policy and public services
- Trainings for target groups and networking (for example organisation of public events to support improving public services)
- Feasibility studies to support creation and improvement of joint public services in targeted service sectors
- Plans and designs (including strategic and land use planning) for new or aligned joint services and service infrastructure
- Improving participatory processes for developing services
- Improving public services and solutions by for example synchronising and harmonising them

- Creating new joint cross-border services or aligning existing services
- Digitalising joint public services (including data economy solutions) to improve usability

For small projects - there should be description of the best practice, experience to be shared and the improvement targeted.

- Mixed target group participants in project activities (e.g., joint trainings, seminars, events);
- Joint development and implementation of trainings and seminars;
- Joint development of solutions (e.g., leading to improvement of the public services, digitalization of public services, new joint public services, new strategic or land use planning practice etc.);

Indicative joint actions for small size projects:

- Study visits and experience exchange seminars;
- Trainings and networking;
- Feasibility studies, plans and designs relevant for improvements;
- Improving public services and solutions leading to improvement of public services;

Indicators

Programme Objective 7

For Programme Objective 7 projects, the result indicator „Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations“ is used.

“Solutions” include 2 sub-components representing 2 different interventions within Programme Objective 7:

1. New joint cross-border public services and digitalized public services (by regular projects);
2. New practical solutions leading to improvements to public services (by small projects);

Both types of results are counted separately but can be aggregated to single target value.

The improvement or new solution is achieved if it is tested/piloted or taken into use by customers (users).

The practical solution and improvement of the public services must be defined in each project plan.

Examples include: increased quality level of the service, adopted improved regulation, adopted policy document or plan, shortened time of the service delivery, expanded target group, improved usability of the service, improved participation (including feedback) opportunities etc.

The created joint public service and digitalised public service should be tested/piloted by customers (users) or taken to use by customers (users).

Reporting by the projects will take place annually from the 2nd full year of the project implementation. The last aggregated results will be reported one year after the end of the project.

The following output indicator is used:

1. “Jointly developed solutions”.

Both types of results are counted separately but can be aggregated to single target value.

Under this indicator all solutions tested/piloted or taken into use by customers (users) are counted plus the ones which did not reach the level “taken into use”.

One project may achieve more than 1 “developed solution”.

Reporting by the projects will take place annually from the 1st full year of the project implementation. Last aggregated results will be reported by the final report.

For programme objective 7 on programme level the output indicator „Organisations co-operating across borders“ is used for reporting towards European Commission.

Note, that the aggregation and reporting will take place on programme level by Joint Secretariat.

Projects will need to provide information on participating organisations/companies / participants (in trainings) via pre-defined forms so that the uniqueness of participants and organisations participating in project activities will be ensured.

2.1. Other key characteristics of a Central Baltic project

Additional to the relevance to POs, all projects will be assessed based on their contribution to the horizontal principles of the programme. These are sustainable development (including the Do no Specific Harm Principle), equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is a horizontal principle in all programme implementation. The objective is to ensure that all programme activities are socially, ecologically, culturally, and economically sustainable. The impact on the environment, climate and human wellbeing should be positive. Sustainability of a project and its results is also important. This refers to the practices, models, solutions, networks and/or knowledge created by the project that should live on after the project ends.

The contribution to sustainable development will be assessed during the assessment process. The project needs to report on its impact and in case a negative impact would be foreseen, the project needs to explain how it will mitigate the negative impact. Projects with a direct negative impact on the environment and sustainable development will not be funded.

Several Programme Objectives relate directly to environmental protection and resource efficiency. Thus, projects funded under these goals need to have a direct positive impact on sustainable development. Sustainable development should be in focus in all programme objectives, thereby supporting the programme's contribution to sustainable development.

Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

Guaranteeing equal opportunities and preventing discrimination are important principles in all programme implementation. No-one should be discriminated based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Instead, programme and project activities should, where possible, increase the possibilities of all groups to participate in the activities of the society.

These principles apply in the implementation of the programme as a whole, but also in the selection and implementation of individual projects. Contribution to the horizontal objectives is an assessment criterion. Projects with a negative impact on equal opportunities and anti-discrimination will not be funded.

These principles must be taken into account by all projects when arranging their activities. Especially, learning and training activities (whether online or face-to-face) must be broadly available to all regardless of disability, follow the accessibility directive (online activities) and be non-discriminatory. Projects should make adjustments to training activities to accommodate the needs arising from disability. It is also important to include digital accessibility awareness training in the training offers.

Projects supporting equal opportunities and anti-discrimination directly may be most relevant under programme objective 6 or 7, but relevant actions can also be foreseen under all Programme Objectives. Projects are expected to be positive or neutral on equal opportunities and non-discrimination, none should have a negative impact on these principles.

Equality between men and women

In addition to the general principle of anti-discrimination the programme pays attention to the equality between men and women. An assessment will be made of the relevance of gender in the project: does the project take gender into account, does the project have an impact on the equality between men and women, etc. Projects with a negative impact on equality between men and women will not be funded. This principle is relevant for all projects and priorities. Projects focusing on one gender in disadvantaged situation can be supported. Equality between men and women is taken into consideration also in programme implementation, for instance when recruiting staff and in all personnel policy.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

The Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027 is designed to contribute to the EUSBSR supporting all three objectives of the strategy: 'Save the sea', 'Connect the region' and 'Increase prosperity'. The programme also directly contributes to seven out of nine EUSBSR sub-objectives. The programme objectives as well as the selection criteria for the projects to be financed all reflect the objectives of the EUSBSR (Figure 3.).

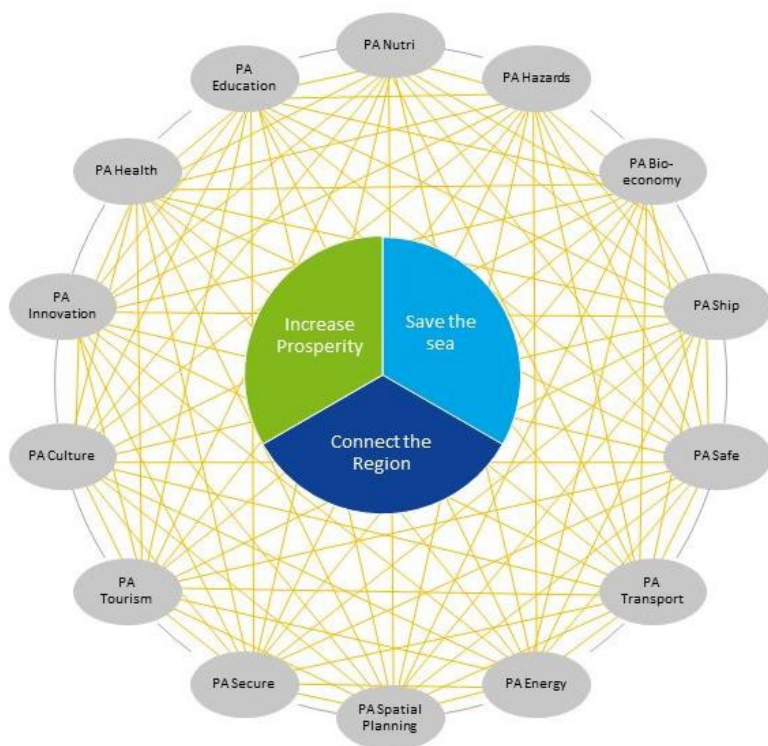


Figure 3. EUSBSR objectives and policy areas ¹

Project applicants should be familiar with the objectives of the EUSBSR. The relevant links between the programme and the EUSBSR are explained in this chapter. Projects should strive to support the EUSBSR and to be in touch with Policy Area coordinators or other EUSBSR-relevant actors to ensure maximum added value between programme funding and the EUSBSR.

The projects must describe their contribution to the EUSBSR in the application form. Where relevant, the projects should obtain the flagship project status as explained later in this chapter and inform the programme about the links in the application form.

More detailed information on the EUSBSR, its relevant actors and the division of responsibilities can be found at www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu.

The table below (Table 1) describes how the programme priorities contribute to the EUSBSR policy areas.

¹ EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Action Plan

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/baltic/action_15022021_en.pdf

Table 1. The connection between the programme priorities and the EUSBSR policy areas and horizontal actions.

EUSBSR Policy areas	Priority 1 Innovative business development	Priority 2 Improved environment and resource use	Priority 3 More accessible and inclusive labour market	Priority 4 Improved solutions for the citizens
Bioeconomy	x	x		x
Culture				x
Education			x	x
Energy				x
Hazards		x		x
Health			x	x
Innovation	x			x
Nutri		x		x
Safe				x
Secure				x
Ship		x		x
Tourism	x			x
Transport		x		x
Spatial planning				x

Additionality and other programmes

The principle of additionality refers to the fact that the activities of the project should bring additional value or be supplementary to those already implemented or planned within other financial instruments or national schemes. Contributions from the programme must not replace public or equivalent expenditure for partners organisations but be additional to national regional policy funds.

It also means that each partnership should carefully consider what is the best funding instrument for their idea. In several cases the Central Baltic programme will not be the most suitable option, but instead a national, regional or another international funding source would be better.

There are several Interreg programme partly overlapping with the Central Baltic programme area. Therefore, a careful division of work between the Central Baltic programme and the nearby programmes of Interreg Baltic Sea Region or Estonia-Latvia has been done.

In the process of assessment and selection special attention will be paid to avoid potential thematic and geographic overlaps. Overlaps should be avoided if a combination of thematic and geographic overlap exists. A thematic overlap exists if the programmes have chosen the same specific objectives. A geographic overlap exists if the programmes have overlapping geographies. Therefore, bilateral projects between Estonia and Latvia should be directed to the Estonia-Latvia programme if both programmes work on the same themes. Bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral projects within Central Baltic and Baltic Sea Region (BSR) should be clearly directed to where the idea best fits.

For identifying potential overlaps the coordination mechanism between the programmes will be set up.

2.2. Different types of projects

The programme can be implemented through either small or regular projects. The differences of the two types of projects have been explained below (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of small and regular project characteristics

	Small project	Regular project
Budget	Max 213.550 EUR total (including the preparation cost lump sum) Note that if the total project budget remains under 200.000 EUR the project can only choose simplified cost options; such projects cannot apply any real cost.	Min 213.551 EUR total Max 4.000.000 EUR total Max 2.000.000 EUR total/partner
Project duration	max 1,5 years (18 months)	no set limit, but typically 2-3 years
Application	only selected parts of the Application Form, less detail required	full Application Form
Reporting	shorter reporting forms wide use of Simplified Cost Options	full reporting form wide use of Simplified Cost Options
Relevant Programme Objectives	All Programme Objectives, if relevant, but in particular Programme Objective 7	All Programme Objectives

Small projects

Small projects offer the possibility to jointly solve issues on grass-root level. The small projects are limited by duration and budget size. To match the small size, their application and reporting is simpler.

Small projects can be used for all Programme Objectives, in case it is considered possible to contribute to the result indicators.

Small projects may not have a budget of more than 213.550 EUR total including, 13.550 EUR for the preparation cost lump sum. Small projects cannot last for longer than 18 months.

The Application Form has been kept simple to match the small size of the project. The questions concentrate on the objectives of the project and how they will be fulfilled. Similarly, the reporting forms are simpler than for regular projects.

Regular projects

Projects with a total budget between 213.551 EUR and 4.000.000 EUR are understood as regular projects. The budget per partner is limited to 2.000.000 EUR in total. No technical limits have been set for the duration of regular projects. The budget, duration and partnership of each project should follow the principles of relevance and be in line with the key characteristics of a project (as presented earlier).

3. Applying for a project in Central Baltic

This chapter gives you all the information that you need for applying.

Our national Contact Points and Joint Secretariat project managers are available for support at all stages of the application process. Consultations with our staff are strongly advised; we are here to help you.

There is a national Contact Point in every country, giving you the first guidance to indicate whether the project idea is suitable for the programme.

If the project idea helps to meet the programme objectives, you can start more detailed planning. At this stage you should contact our Joint Secretariat colleagues for in-depth discussions on the project idea, relevance of the partnership and project activities, budget planning or any other question you may have.

3.1. Who can be a partner?

Each project must have 1 lead partner and 1 or more project partners (Figure 4.):

1 lead partner;

1 or more project partners;

Figure 4. The minimum requirement for project partners

The minimum requirement for projects is to have partners from at least two of the Member States (Table 3). Therefore, in the case of involving partners from the Åland islands, there must be at least one partner from Estonia, Latvia or Sweden in the project. Projects between only Åland islands and mainland Finland are not possible.

Table 3. Participating (NUTS 3) regions

Participating areas by countries
Estonia Kesk-Eesti Kirde-Eesti Lääne-Eesti Põhja-Eesti Lõuna-Eesti
Finland Kymenlaakso Satakunta Uusimaa Varsinais-Suomi Etelä-Karjala Kanta-Häme Pirkanmaa Päijät-Häme Etelä-Savo Åland (autonomy)
Latvia Kurzeme Pierīga Rīga Vidzeme Zemgale Latgale
Sweden Gotlands län Gävleborgs län Stockholms län Södermanlands län Uppsala län Östergötlands län Västmanlands län Örebro län

Central Baltic Programme 2021–2027
programme regions according to NUTS 3

Interreg  Co-funded by the European Union
Central Baltic Programme

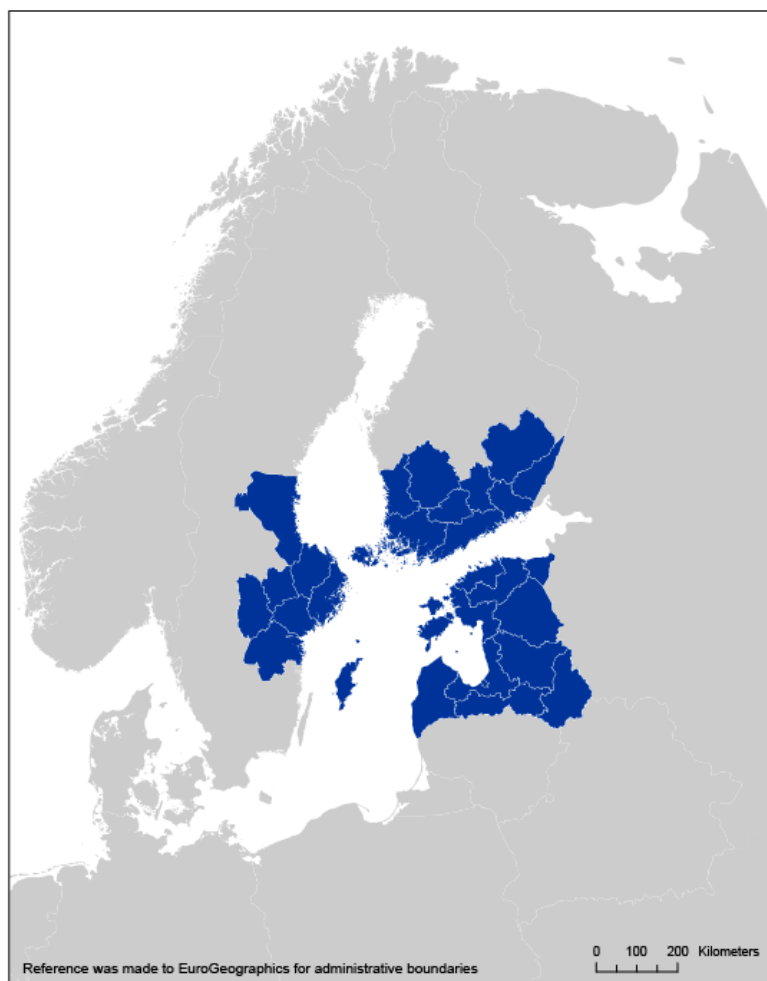


Figure 5. Programme regions according to NUTS3

The partners must be from the participating Member States (including Åland).

If relevant, partners can come also from EU Member States outside the programme area. In this case their role in the project should be explained particularly well. They must be needed to reach the project results. They must bring to the project added value that doesn't exist in the programme area. Keep in mind that in all cases, the impact of projects must come to the programme area. For partners from EU Member States outside the programme area, special agreements are needed between the Managing Authority and the EU Member State in question, wherefore the Joint Secretariat should be consulted as early on as possible.

Relevance of the partnership

The partnership must be relevant for achieving the results of the project and must have the needed capacity to implement the project. This means that the partners should have a statutory authority or mandate to act in the chosen field. Participating in a project should be considered a priority for the organisation.

The size of the partnership should be based on the relevance of each partner for the project. The best size of the partnership should be considered for each project individually. Experience shows that projects with a large partnership are more difficult to manage. Being a partner always involves administrative tasks and costs even for the smallest partner organisation. Therefore, the partnership should be limited to 10. If there are exceptional reasons to have more partners, this should be clearly justified.

There is no demand to have partners from all countries. Bilateral projects and projects with partners from more (or all) countries are assessed equally.

The eligibility of partners has been defined according to their legal status and the location of the partner. **The programme will accept public authorities (national, regional and local) as well as bodies governed by public law and bodies governed by private law.**

Only **large companies are entirely excluded** from acting as partners. The principle of consolidation will not be used when defining if a company is considered large.

The public equivalent criteria are used for the assessment of eligibility and how to mark the partner's source of funding (see Chapter [3.3. Budget planning, eligibility of funding](#)).

For details on the eligibility of different types of organisations as partner, see the table below (Table 4).

Table 4. Eligibility of different types of organisations as partner

Type of organisation	Eligibility as partner
Public authorities	Eligible
Bodies governed by public law	Eligible
Bodies governed by private law	Eligible: Organisations operating under private law which are for general purpose and not for profit (For example: chambers of commerce, sectoral associations, NGOs) Eligible with limits: SMEs; SMEs are only eligible for Programme Objective 4 Improved coastal and marine environment and Programme Objective 5 Decreased CO2 emissions. Not eligible: Large companies

The rules defined in this Programme Manual apply to all partners, regardless of their legal status. As the programme gives public funding, the regulations reflect practices of the public sector. Possible private partners must follow the same rules (such as public procurement requirements, daily allowances etc.).

The financial stability of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private partners will be confirmed as part of the administrative and eligibility check. They are asked to submit a Declaration of Financial Capacity to Undertake Project Activities.

If the Joint Secretariat/Managing Authority considers it relevant, it has the right to ask and receive additional information from any partner for the following to prove their financial capacity:

- Annual Report (most recent, audited);
- Balance sheet (most recent);
- Confirmation of not having public financial obligations;

Bank account information on 'funds available';

- Any other document deemed relevant;

There are many other ways to contribute to the project. In the planning phase you are advised to consider carefully who needs to be a partner, for whom it is enough to be in the project steering group or be consulted as an end-user and what kind of organisations are service providers.

In some cases, an organisation may better serve the needs of the project by being involved in the Steering Group, by being involved as a stakeholder or by providing external expertise to the project. This is especially true for SMEs. SMEs are technically eligible to act as partners in a few programme objectives (Programme Objective 4 Improved coastal and marine environment and Programme Objective 5 Decreased CO2 emissions). In case an SME participates, its role and rationale for acting as a partner should be especially well explained. Also, the selection process should be explained. Usually, all similar organisations should have the possibility to participate and benefit from the project and only if the organisation has unique skills should it be selected directly. Private partners cannot be added as project partners with the ambition to avoid public procurement of their services.

The role of the lead partner

The project lead partner bears the **overall responsibility for the project** towards the partnership and the Managing Authority. This means that the lead partner is responsible for joint planning, involving the stakeholders and target groups in planning, as well as ensuring a joint understanding of the project general approach and results among the whole partnership.

Each project is an entity with one project plan, one set of targets and one budget. In all questions related to these topics the Joint Secretariat/Managing Authority communicates with the lead partner. The lead partner is the link between the project (partners) and the programme management, responsible for coordinating the information flow between these.

In case the project fails, it also is the lead partner which will be held (financially) responsible by the Managing Authority. The cooperation between the partnership as well as the responsibilities of the lead partner and other partners are stipulated in the Partnership Agreement.

The lead partner is responsible to ensure that all partners have a joint understanding of the project results and the activity plan that will lead to those results. The lead partner is responsible for coordinating the work of the partnership. This refers both to activities and project management. The lead partner should monitor and guide the partnership on issues such as budget flexibility, reporting, following the activity plan or the following the ERDF support level. Managing a joint project team, ensuring common understanding of the goals and monitoring project requires resources. Therefore, sufficient staff resources should be reserved for this task. The focus of management resources should be in capacity to lead the project content work as well as putting together activity reporting for the whole project. The financial reporting will be based very largely on Simplified Cost Options, wherefore a separate financial manager is no longer accepted under the staff costs (applied from the 5th call projects onward).

The lead partner must follow all the requirements set for a project partner; the lead partner responsibilities are in addition to the regular requirements.

Who cannot be a lead partner?

Private companies and organisations with their legal address outside the programme area are excluded from being lead partners.

The role of project partners

The key characteristics of project partners are that they have a budget and that they have an active role in the project implementation. All project partners should take an active part in the project preparation, implementation of thematic, as well as information and communication, project management activities. Each project has a responsibility to implement its own activities (as defined in the project plan) and to manage its budget.

Each partner should ensure that they have enough staff resources to implement the activities and to contribute to the reporting on partner and project level.

Each partner is also responsible for the availability of financing the project activities. The financing is needed to generate the ERDF amount. The partners should also follow the use of their own budget and the fulfilment of their part of the activity plan as the performance of individual partners may have implications for the partnership as a whole.

Project partners are required to keep the lead partner informed of their financial progress and the progress of their activities. Should the partner have questions about project implementation, they should always approach the lead partner in the first instance.

Table 5. The roles of the lead partner and the project partner

	Lead partner	Project partner
General	Ensure the implementation of the entire project according to the responsibilities defined in the Partnership Agreement, Subsidy Contract and approved application. Forward all relevant information from the Joint Secretariat/ Managing Authority to the partners and guide the partners in project implementation.	Fulfil the project activities responsible for or involved in, as defined in the project application and Partnership Agreement. Being aware of and following programme rules.
Project management	Ensure a joint understanding of the project's goals and activity plan among the partnership. Set up an efficient and reliable system for the project management and co-ordination (incl. thematic activities, administrative). Inform all partners of management requirements at the very beginning of the projects as well as keep the partners informed of any relevant information shared by the Joint Secretariat/ Managing Authority.	
	Appoint or sub-contract a project manager fluent in English and qualified to handle the thematic co-ordination of project activities, to act as a driving force in the partnership and to mobilise the partners to achieve the project objectives.	Nominate a coordinator to be the contact point between the project partner and the project manager.
	Ensure resources of a book-keeper responsible for book-keeping in the project partner organisation (covered by the Office and administration flat rate)	Ensure resources of a book-keeper responsible for book-keeping in the project partner organisation (covered by the Office and administration flat rate).
Financial management	Guarantee the sound financial management² of the funds allocated to the project, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid.	Manage the partner budget according to the principle of sound financial management.
	Follow up of the spending (per partner and per cost category, the use of the flexibility rule, the ERDF co-financing rate of the project) and inform the partners of any potential problems on project level and/or instruct the partners of any actions needed.	Manage partner budget according to programme rules and in line with guidance from the lead partner. Keep the lead partner informed of the spending.

² As defined in REGULATION (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046, Article 33

	Lead partner	Project partner
	Ensure that expenditure presented by project partners has been paid for the purpose of implementing the project and corresponds to the activities agreed upon between the project partners.	Assume responsibility in case of any irregularity in the expenditure which the project partner has declared.
	Have its expenditure verified by the national control.	Have its expenditure verified by the national control.
	Transfer the ERDF contribution to the project partners without delay as soon as received from the programme.	Repay to the lead partner amounts unduly paid in accordance with the Partnership Agreement.
Reporting	Monitor and manage the reporting timeline. Submit regular Project Reports and verify that all partners have had their expenditure verified by the national control (NB! Observe the duty to keep the relevant documents like any other project partner). Keep available all its documents related to the project costs and activities 5 years after the closure of the project by the Managing Authority. Some materials may be kept for a longer period due to national rules. It is the responsibility of each partner to find out and follow the national rules, where relevant.	Keep available all its documents related to the project costs and activities 5 years after the closure of the project by the Managing Authority. Some materials may be kept for a longer period due to national rules. It is the responsibility of each partner to find out and follow the national rules, where relevant.
Communication	Agree on a joint communication strategy for the project. Agree on and follow responsibilities during implementation. Actively inform about the project and its results.	Actively inform about the project and its results on the project partner level.

3.2. Building up the project

Planning a project well is extremely important. It sets the basis for the whole implementation. Preparing a project takes time. You must find the right partners, agree on activities and responsibilities, prepare the budget and secure co-financing. Thus, it is advisable to start the process as early as possible.

It is important to involve the relevant people in content and budget planning. For the success of the project, the key stakeholders and end users should be consulted in the planning phase. Their needs and opinions should be considered carefully when defining the activity plan.

Where possible, the people who will participate in implementing the project should participate in the planning. Remember to involve people from the partner organisations in a broad way: bookkeepers and other administrative staff as well as experts on content will probably have many useful comments. Experience shows that the quality of planning is reflected during the years of project implementation.

The **activity plan** is made for the whole implementation period of the project. You should strive for a realistic and clear plan for how to achieve project results but on the other hand leave room for updates and unforeseen changes during project implementation. It is good to carry out an internal risk assessment of the project to identify the possible bottlenecks or critical points.

The activity planning should focus on how you will go about in reaching the project objectives and results. The plan should be realistic in that enough time is reserved for the key processes. The plan should provide a roadmap for how to reach the objectives and results. Considering that the projects last several years and preparations for the project are done much in advance, the activity plan should not consist of a detailed list of actions that the project would then be bound to for the coming years. The activity plan could rather be a process description, showing who takes responsibility for what types of actions at which stage, what kind of tools will be used in order to achieve the results and objective and what kind of outputs are foreseen to come out of the project.

The **duration of the project** is strongly dependent on the objectives and targeted results of the project and the capacity of the partnership to implement the project in the given period.

Planning project activities should also include a **plan for the sustainability of project results and durability of project outputs and outcomes**. Already from the beginning, there should be a plan for how and by whom the project results, outputs or outcomes will be used. Necessary steps to ensure that this happens should be included in the project plan.

Starting a project

Projects will be approved by the Monitoring Committee. The dates of the relevant Monitoring Committee meetings will be published on the programme website at www.centralbaltic.eu. The contracting phase starts one day after selection of the project by the MC.

Approved projects consist of a contracting phase, implementation, and closure phase (Figure 5.).



Figure 6. Phases of projects

The Monitoring Committee usually approves projects with conditions. The conditions, which might be related to the project budget, activity plan or other issues, will be clarified during the contracting phase. During this time, we will also prepare the Subsidy Contract.

The actual starting and ending dates of your project will be defined in the contracting phase. While the start date depends on the project activities, it is assumed that projects start no later than 6 months from the Monitoring Committee approval. The start and end dates will then be fixed in the Subsidy Contract.

Only costs incurred and paid during the duration of the project (between the start and end date) or within the preparation period are eligible. The project duration consists of the implementation and closure periods. The preparation time is not included with the project duration period.

For projects that are finally approved, costs for the preparations phase will be covered as a lump sum. This means that all approved projects will receive a lump sum of 13 550 EUR (total cost). Therefore, all projects should budget for this contribution.

The lump sum is intended to cover costs which have incurred in the preparation phase and are related to meetings between partners, staff costs and costs related to preparing any content work, such as mapping the situation, preparing investment documentation or similar. The costs incurred in the preparation phase must follow the conditions set out in the Programme Manual, but for these costs no invoices or supporting documents are required. The lump sum is paid to the lead partner. It is up to the partnership to agree on how the lump sum is divided between partners; a fair division should be agreed upon within the partnership.

Once the project has started, you will be invited to a Lead partner seminar, where programme requirements will be explained in detail. Participation in the seminar is mandatory for all the lead partner of all projects.

Closing a project

Each project should end with a **closure period**. In practice, this means that the activities should be finalised 1 month before the end date of the project so that the project accounts can be closed, and the project can be finalised.

The project partners should understand that all project reporting may not be finalised even in the closure period but that it is the responsibility of the partner organisations to ensure that sufficient resources exist for finalising the project. These will in all cases be received by the project after the project has ended. Specifically, projects will be asked to report on result indicator achievements and sustainability one year after the project ended.

Detailed guidance related to closing the project is given in the Guide for Project Implementation.

There should always be someone available to settle all open questions with the Joint Secretariat/ Managing Authority. Changes in contact information must be communicated to the Joint Secretariat/ Managing Authority until the Managing Authority has closed the project.

Investments

The Central Baltic programme allows for small-scale investments. These are particularly foreseen in the programme objectives 3-5. All investments must have cross-border added value and must be crucial for reaching the results of a project.

Investments are understood as equipment that are permanently used for reaching the results of the project. Our focus is on solutions that are operable after the project has ended. If pilot activities are included, they should be timed so that they can be analysed and made operational during the project lifetime.

Investments must be planned in the project application. The information should explain what investments are needed, how they contribute to the project results, and what risks are related to their implementation. The relevance of the investment will be assessed as part of the application.

Permits needed for the investment must be detailed in the Application Form, together with a timetable for when they will be received. The confirmation about received permits must be sent during project implementation.

3.3. Budget planning

Like all project planning, also the financial plans must be made jointly between all partners, striving for a realistic budget for each partner as well as for the project as a whole. The budget is based on the project objectives and activities set by the project partners and must be built in a way that ensures that these targets can be met cost-effectively. When planning project, you are advised to take into consideration the amount of money available for your programme and policy objective. Up-to-date information regarding availability of funds and a follow-up of the result indicator target achievements can be found on the programme website at www.centralbaltic.eu.

The starting point for drafting your budget should be a thorough analysis of which activities you need to reach the objectives and targets of your project.

In order to simplify project implementation, the Central Baltic programme uses a wide range of so-called Simplified Cost Options. Real costs are used for very limited cases. As this will be a significant change in how you will report costs and be refunded, you are strongly advised to read chapters 4.5 Eligibility of costs and 4.6. Other rules of the Programme Manual.

Once you have clarified the project activities adequately, you must identify the required resources to implement these activities. Considering the financial and human resources of each project partner, you must also decide who is going to do what. Each project partner would then have to calculate the budget for the activities it has taken the responsibility for.

In the project Application Form the budget will be broken down in several dimensions (e.g. by partner and cost category). This ensures that the partners have considered all aspects of the budget. The individual partner budgets are at the same time a useful tool for the lead partner to keep the overview of to which extent project partners fulfil their obligations.

The project budget should cover only the realistic costs that the project will be able to spend in a justified way. The programme has a spending profile that is binding towards the European Commission. The spending is made up of the payments to projects (based on project reporting). Therefore, the project budget split from the Application Form is crucial information for the programme implementation. The project spending should be considered carefully as the programme will follow up the spending. In case the programme is not able to meet its annual spending targets (due to projects not reporting according to schedule) the programme may lose ERDF funding. In such a case, the projects that were not reporting according to plan may suffer financial consequences and not receive full ERDF funds.

All partners should already in the planning phase read chapters [4.5 Eligibility of costs](#) and [4.6. Other rules](#). These chapters give the needed understanding of what costs are eligible during project implementation and how you will report the costs. This information is crucial to know how to plan the budget.

It is important to understand that the projects will be reporting mostly on the basis of Simplified Cost Options. Only very few costs will be reported as be so-called real costs. The principles for reporting all types of costs are explained in detail in chapter 4.5. Eligibility of costs. It is important to understand the logic of Simplified Cost Options and how they are reported. The

simple explanation is that the Simplified Cost Options will be paid based once the conditions for each Simplified Cost Option is fulfilled and the sums are fixed by the programme.

Bear in mind that the **partners will first have to cover all expenses and that you will get the costs reimbursed only afterwards**. Reimbursement of the ERDF funding will take place only after all checks have been performed by the national control and the programme (Joint Secretariat/Managing Authority). It is important to understand that the time between paying the costs yourself and receiving the reimbursement is long; the shortest waiting time for costs paid at the beginning of a reporting period would be around 10 months, but the waiting time can be much longer if clarifications are needed. Therefore, all partners must have enough liquidity to cover their costs without problems.

The lead partner should reserve funds to be able to participate in up to two events per year, organised by the programme. Also partners may reserve some funding for such activities. Seminars on communication, financial management and project management as well as other meetings among projects funded by the programme will be arranged. All events will take place in the programme area.

Our programme operates in euros only. This means that in the application documents and all reporting you must use euros.

Once the budget is ready, you must consider the funding plan. The funding consists of ERDF co-financing and the partners' own contribution. The partners' contribution financing is needed to generate ERDF funding. The ERDF funding is up to 80%. Thus, the partners' contribution is at least 20%.

Eligibility of funding

Each project partner is responsible for its own budget. The partner budgets are based on the jointly agreed activity plan and division of tasks. Partner contribution cannot be covered by funding from other projects or programmes. The programme accepts both public and private funds as own contribution.

Whether partner contribution is reported as public or private financing depends on the type of the partner organisation (Table 6):

Table 6. The type of the partner organisation

Type of organisation	Funding counted as
Public authorities	Public
Public equivalent bodies	Public, if the organisation fulfils the public equivalent criteria Private, if the organisation does not fulfil the public equivalent criteria
Private sector	Private

The public equivalent criteria are met if the organisation is:

1. Established under public or private law for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having only an industrial or commercial character³ **and**
2. having legal personality **and**
3. is either financed, for the most part, by the state, or regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law,
 - a) **or** is a subject to management supervision by those bodies,
 - b) **or** is 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.

³ This does not exclude bodies having only partly an industrial or commercial character from being eligible. NB! It is the applicant's responsibility to provide the necessary information to the Joint Secretariat on the legal nature and organisational structure related to the public/commercial character of the organisation. The failure to do so will result in the application not being approved or in the termination of the Subsidy Contract and the repayment of granted co-financing if violations of partner eligibility rules are detected during the project life-span.

3.4. Application and assessment procedures

All projects must fill in an Application Form in Jems. It consists of:

- Activity plan and its relevance for the programme
- Information about partners and their relevance for the project
- Budget and funding information

Several documents need to be attached to the Application Form. The required annexes are listed in the Guide for Applying for a Project.

The lead applicant submits it on behalf of the whole partnership. The lead applicant takes responsibility for the correctness of the information provided.

For detailed guidance on how to fill in the Application Form, please see the Guide for Applying for a Project. The amount of information required varies for regular and small projects.

The programme uses calls with an opening and closing date. The applications must be submitted between certain dates during the call. More detailed information on the exact opening and closing times (date and time) is made available on the programme website at www.centralbaltic.eu.

By default, when a call opens, all priorities of the programme will be open to applications. However, depending on the specific demand for certain topics or the availability of funding (especially later in the programme period) restrictions might become necessary. These will also be announced on the programme website.

Assessment methodology

The **same assessment methodology logic will be applied for both small and regular projects**. Some differences follow from the small projects having a limited Application Form. The **details for both types of projects are explained below**.

Admissibility check

All projects must first comply with the **admissibility check** criteria of the programme. An admissibility check is done when a project is submitted. If the project doesn't meet the set criteria, it isn't admissible and will not continue to content assessment.

The admissibility check criteria are:

1. Obligatory annexes are attached to the application form.
2. The application form and its annexes are according to the programme rules.
3. The application package is filled in in English.
4. All applicable sections of the application form are correctly filled in. There is no incorrect information, e.g. "to be added later".
5. Information presented in the application form and in annexes is consistent (e.g. co-financing amounts, partner names etc.).
6. The Lead partner is an eligible organisation.
7. All project partners are eligible organisations.
8. The project has a Lead partner and at least one project partner from different Member States.

The programme uses a set of **selection criteria**, which can be found below for both types of projects. Each selection criteria has been given a weight. For each sub-criteria presented below, a reference is made in brackets to the main question/part of the Application Form where this information is mainly requested.

For all criteria the scores as 4, 3, 2, and 1 are used. 4 means „very good“, 3 „good“, 2 „acceptable/weak“ and 1 „poor/unsatisfactory“. The explanations of each score in more detail are given below:

4 - very good - the project is exceptionally well in line with the requirements set by the programme: the common challenges are tackled in a joint way providing results that are in scope and the approach of the Central Baltic programme objectives; project work plan is exceptional, well-balanced and partners have the capacity to implement the project and reach the target group(s); partnership composition is balanced and they are relevant and statutory entitled to act in the area they are applying, reaching the results is foreseen in a cost-efficient way providing added value for the programme area; project provides sustainability of results and durability of actions, complements and does not overlap with other projects and activities; there is positive impact to one or more horizontal principles related to project management and project content (PO and project theme specific).

3 - good - the project is in line with the requirements set by the programme, however there are some shortcomings in regard to tackling common challenges or planned joint actions; the scope and the approach are in line however there is some in-balance in the work plan or in the balance and composition of the partnership; partners are relevant and have the statutory entitlement to act in the area they are applying, results are in line and the cost-efficiency of reaching the results is ensured; results are of strategic importance to the programme area and bring added value; sustainability (where relevant) could be improved, durability of activities is ensured, project complement and does not overlap with other projects and activities; there is positive impact to one or more horizontal principles related to project management or project content (PO and project theme specific).

2 - acceptable/weak - the project meets the minimum requirements of the programme, however there are serious shortcomings in regard of tackling common challenges or undertaking joint actions; the scope and the approach are having shortcomings either in work plan, the balance, relevance and the statutory entitlement of the partners, the results are weak and the cost-efficiency is weak, or the results are not of strategic importance to the programme area or does not bring added value; project overlaps with other projects, sustainability of results (where relevant) is weak, the durability of the actions is weak; there is neutral impact to all 3 horizontal principles and the impacts are realistically described.

1 - poor/unsatisfactory - the project is not in line with the requirements set by the programme: either there are no common challenges tackled or there is no joint actions planned, or the project is out of scope and the approach of the Central Baltic programme objectives, or project work plan is weak, not balanced and partners do not have the capacity to implement the project, or are not relevant or partnership is not balanced in their composition, or the results are not targeted and achievable. Results are not cost-effective, or not providing added value for the programme area; there is negative impact to one or more horizontal principles.

Full numbers are used in the assessment. The scores are consolidated and weighted into total score for the project. The projects will be put in priority lists for each programme objective according to the score they received.

To qualify, each project should achieve the minimum threshold score, which is set at 2,5. Projects receiving scores under 2,5 are proposed to be rejected. If a project receives the score 1 for even one criterion, it will be suggested to be rejected for the MC.

In each stage of the assessment, the Joint Secretariat may ask clarifying questions once. A deadline is set for receiving the reply. The Joint Secretariat assesses the project based on the information provided in the application and as a reply to potential questions.

If a project fails to meet any of the thresholds explained, it will be presented to the Monitoring Committee as a project suggested to be rejected.

3.4.1 Application and assessment of regular projects (as of the 5th call)

As of the 5th call for applications all applications will be submitted and assessed in one step. Applications must be filled in fully.

Projects must comply with the programme objectives and preconditions for each call (if relevant) in terms of content (topics to be covered, type of results, etc.) and comply with the admissibility check criteria. See the following table (Table 7).

Table 7. Application and assessment of regular projects

APPLICATION PROCESS			
	Managing Authority informs of the approval and the applicant submits the whole AF	Joint Secretariat assesses the projects and makes a proposal to Monitoring Committee	Monitoring Committee evaluates and takes its decision
Total approximate number of days per activity	Min. 60	Approx. 120	Meeting date published on the website

The Application Form is filled in online in Jems. The deadline for submitting the application is published on our website.

The information is submitted in English and it has to be precise and concise as the number of characters is limited.

It is strongly recommended for the applicant to get in touch with the Joint Secretariat as early as possible in the planning phase. The Joint Secretariat organises a series of project applicant seminars for each call as well as provides individual consultations. All applicants are expected to contact the Joint Secretariat project managers before the submission of the application.

The project application is first assessed based on the strategic assessment criteria. If the project receives at least a score “2” for all strategic assessment criteria it moves on to be assessed against **the operational assessment criteria**. In case the project fails the strategic assessment, it will not pass on to the operational assessment and a proposal will be made to the Monitoring Committee to reject the project based on the findings of the strategic assessment. This approach highlights the strategic approach and content focus of the programme.

Strategic assessment criteria - 60%

I The project's contribution to programme results and strategic relevance - 30%

- The relevance of the particular challenge/resource in the location of the project intervention. (C.2.2.)
- How the project belongs/fits to the „scope and approach“ of the chosen programme objective. (C.2.1.)
- Demand/need for the project from the side of stakeholders and final beneficiaries (target group). (C.2.4.)
- Project's contribution to programme objective's results (to result indicator's target value). (C.5)
- Coherence of result and output indicators (related to main target group where relevant). (C.5)
- The project's strategic relevance based on sectoral, local, regional, national or macroregional strategies. (C.2.5)
- Whether the impact to horizontal principles is neutral or positive? (C.7.6.)
- Sustainability of results (where relevant). (C.8)

II The project's cross-border value added - 10%

- Whether the scale of the challenge/resource and the scale for achieving results is optimal in Central Baltic programme area (larger than local/regional/national and smaller than transnational/macroregional/over European)? (C.2.3)
- Partners' capacity to implement international projects. (C.3)
- The approach towards the preparation and implementation of the project is balanced in regard roles, contributions and resources. (C.4)
- The presence of the cross-border elements in project approach. (C.4)

III Partnership relevance and capacity - 10%

- Experience and capacity to implement the project and achieve results in thematic field of programme objective. (C.3)
- Partners statutory authority or mandate to act in field of intervention, priority for the organisation to undertake the project. (Part B)
- Whether the partnership is optimal in size (overall size of partnership and thematic and country representations). (Part B)
- Partnership's capacity to reach target group(s). (C.3 and C.2.4)
- Durability of activities and outputs (where relevant) by partner organisations. (C.8)

IV The project approach - 10%

- The Project approach/intervention logic (main activities, the sequence of activities, proportions of activities, methods of work) are optimal for achieving targeted outputs and results? (C.4)
- Whether there is the complementarity and/or duplication with other ongoing or implemented projects and activities. (C.2.6)
- The budget is proportionate to the expected results. (Part)
- Innovativeness of the project approach (where relevant). (C.2.2)

Operational assessment - 40%

V Work plan/Activity plan 15%

- Project approach is in sufficient detail elaborated into activities and deliverables. (C.4)
- The proposed activities are relevant and lead to the planned main outputs and results. (C.4, C5)
- Activities, deliverables and outputs are in a logical sequence. (C4)
- Time plan is realistic. (C6)
- All partners have proportionate roles based on budget allocations. (D2)
- The added value of investments and equipment purchases and their cross-border relevance is demonstrated to reach the project objectives (if applicable). (C4)
- Communication approach and activities are sufficient to reach target group(s). (C4)
- Communication approach and activities are sufficient to communicate project activities and results to wider public and stakeholders. (C4)

VI Management 10%

- Management procedures (such as reporting and evaluation procedures in the area of finance, project content, internal communication) are in place, are transparent and efficient to ensure the result orientation of the project. (C7.1., C7.2)
- Project management team and structure is proportionate and includes relevant competencies related to the project content, international project management, financial management, communication, procurement and other /depending on project theme). (C7.1)
- Necessary provisions for risk and quality management are in place. (C7.2)
- The Lead Partner demonstrates competency in managing EU cofinanced projects or other international projects or can ensure adequate measures for management support. (C7.1, C7.2)

VII Budget 15%

- Whether the resources are sufficient to implement planned activities and achieve results? (Part D, D2)
- Budget allocations among partners are proportionate. (Part D, D2)
- The partner budgets reflect real partners' involvement (are balanced and realistic). (Part D, D2)
- The financial allocation per cost category is in line with the work plan. (Part D)
- The distribution of the budget per period is in line with the work plan. (Part D)
- Cost efficiency: justifications of costs, sufficient detailness. (Part D)

3.4.2 Application and assessment of small projects

Small projects are asked to fill in a simplified Application Form. The projects complete the whole application, and the Joint Secretariat assessment and Monitoring Committee selection is made on this application.

To be eligible, the project must comply with the programme objectives for each call (if relevant) in terms of content (topics to be covered, type of results, etc.) as well as technical aspects (submission of the application and its annexes, budget, partnership, etc.).

The project must first comply with the admissibility criteria of the programme. All projects that are found admissible, will move to the content assessment (Table 8).

Table 8. Application and assessment of small projects

	Opening/closing the call	Joint Secretariat assesses the projects and makes a proposal to the Monitoring Committee	Monitoring Committee evaluates and selects projects
Total max days per activity	Min. 20	Approx. 120	Meeting date published on website

The call is launched and stays open for a predefined time. During this timeframe, the applicant should submit the Application Form through Jems. The template for the Application Form will be made available in the beginning of the call.

The information is submitted in English and it has to be precise and concise as the number of characters is limited.

It is strongly recommended for the applicant to get in touch with the Joint Secretariat as early as possible in the planning phase. We organise a series of project applicant seminars for each call as well as provides individual consultations. All applicants are expected to contact the Joint Secretariat project managers before the submission of the document.

After the call is closed, the Joint Secretariat assesses the submitted proposals. The project will be assessed against strategic and operational assessment criteria (below, applied as of the third call). Every applicant is encouraged to critically assess the project idea against these criteria. Only projects that pass the strategic assessment will move onto an assessment of the operational criteria.

The strategic assessment criteria - 60%

I The project's contribution to programme results and strategic relevance- 30%

- The relevance of the particular challenge/resource in specific chosen territorial area of the project intervention. (C2.3.)
- How the project belongs/fits to the „scope and approach“ of the chosen programme objective. (C.2.1)
- Demand/need for the project from the side of stakeholders and final beneficiaries (target group). (C.2.4)
- Project's contribution to programme objective's results (to result indicator's target value). (C.5)
- Coherence of result and output indicators (related to main target group where relevant). (C.5)
- Sustainability of results (where relevant). (C.8.)
- Whether the impact to horizontal principles is neutral or positive

II The project's cross-border value added - 10%

- The approach towards implementation of the project is cross-border balanced in regard roles, contributions and resources. (C.4)
- The presence of the cross-border cooperation need and Central Baltic cross-border added value in project approach. (C.2.3., C.4)

III Partnership relevance and capacity - 10%

- Partners experience, capacity and statutory authority or mandate to act and achieve results in field of intervention. (Part B)
- Whether the partnership is optimal in size (overall size of partnership and thematic and country representations). (Part B)
- Partnership's capacity to reach target group(s). (C.2.4.)
- Durability of activities, outcomes or outputs by partner organisations. (C.8.)

IV The project approach - 10%

- The Project approach/intervention logic (main activities, the sequence of activities, proportions of activities, methods of work) are optimal for achieving targeted outputs and results? (C.4)
- Whether there is the complementarity and/or duplication with other ongoing or implemented projects and activities. (C.2.6.)
- The budget is proportionate to the expected results. (C.5., Part D)
- Innovativeness of the project approach (where relevant). (C2.3.)

Operational criteria - 40%

V Work plan/Activity plan 15%

- Project approach is in sufficient detail elaborated into activities and deliverables. (C.4)
- The proposed activities are relevant and lead to the planned main outputs and results. (C.4., C.5)
- Activities, deliverables and outputs are in a logical sequence. (C.4.)
- Time plan is realistic. (C.6)
- The added value of investments and equipment purchases and their cross-border relevance is demonstrated to reach the project objectives (if applicable). (C.4.)
- Communication approach and activities are sufficient to reach target group(s). (C.4.)
- Communication approach and activities are sufficient to communicate project activities and results to wider public and stakeholders. (C.4.)

VI Management 10%

- Management procedures (such as reporting and evaluation procedures in the area of finance, project content, internal communication) are in place, are transparent and efficient to ensure the result orientation of the project. (C7.1.)
- Project management team and structure is proportionate and includes relevant competencies related to the project content, international project management, financial management, communication, procurement and other /depending on project theme). (C7.1)
- Necessary provisions for risk and quality management are in place. (C7.1)

VII Budget 15%

- Whether the resources are sufficient to implement planned activities and achieve results? (Part D, D.2)
- Budget allocations among partners are proportionate and reflect their involvement according to roles. (Part D, D.2)
- The partner budgets reflect real partners' involvement (are balanced and realistic). (Part D, D.2)
- The financial allocation per budget line is in line with the work plan. (Part D)
- The distribution of the budget per period is in line with the work plan. (Part D)
- Cost efficiency: justifications of costs, sufficient detailness. (Part D)

Members of the Joint Secretariat will assess each project. The assessment will always be made by two members of staff. They will first make an individual assessment of the project and then they will coordinate their assessments and produce one joint assessment. This system ensures that the assessment is transparent and free from any bias.

The Monitoring Committee selection will be made no later than 120 days after the closure of the call. The selection will be made by the member states representatives in the Monitoring Committee. The dates for the Monitoring Committee meeting for each call can be found on the programme website at www.centralbaltic.eu.

3.5. Selection of projects by the Monitoring Committee

Based on the assessment of the projects, the Joint Secretariat will prepare a proposal for the Monitoring Committee. Projects whose score did not exceed the threshold in the Joint Secretariat assessment will be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for rejection. The Monitoring Committee will discuss the project applications and especially their general strategic relevance.

The proposal prepared by the Joint Secretariat is in no way binding for the Monitoring Committee but the Monitoring Committee is free to prioritise and select the projects to be co-financed (including the total budget and the duration of the project) based on the assessment criteria.

The Monitoring Committee may approve the project directly or under certain conditions. The conditions set by the Monitoring Committee must be fulfilled before signing the Subsidy Contract. The assessment of the fulfilment of conditions is made by the Managing Authority. If a project fails to fulfil the conditions set by the Monitoring Committee, the project will be rejected by the Managing Authority. The Monitoring Committee may also give recommendations to the project. The project must report to the Managing Authority on its reply to the recommendations.

The Joint Secretariat will publish information about approved projects latest the day after the Monitoring Committee meeting. It is the responsibility of the lead partner to inform the other project partners about the outcome.

The Monitoring Committee rejection is also justified. Projects are rejected if they do not meet the assessment criteria. A project can also be rejected in case the programme does not have funding available (in the priority or based on other financial concerns on programme level). Projects rejected by the Monitoring Committee will receive an Administrative Decision on Rejecting the Project Proposal from the Managing Authority. This includes the reasoning behind the rejection (protocol note of the respective Monitoring Committee meeting) and information for the lead partner on the possibility to appeal against this Managing Authority's administrative decision.

4. Implementing a project

4.1. Contracting phase

When a project is approved, the Managing Authority does an Administrative Decision on Project Approval and signs a Subsidy Contract with the lead partner. This can be done at the earliest when eventual conditions set by the Monitoring Committee have been fulfilled. The Subsidy Contract is the legally binding agreement between the Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027 (the Managing Authority) and the approved project (the lead partner). By setting out the rights and obligations of the contracting parties, including the appeal options during various later procedures, and confirming the final commitment of EU grants to each project, the Subsidy Contract regulates the legal and financial framework for the implementation of the project activities. All Managing Authority decisions can be appealed.

A standard Subsidy Contract template is available on the programme website at www.centralbaltic.eu. The Subsidy Contract always refers to the approved Application Form and is not amended if the project is modified.

The Subsidy Contract covers the following points:

- Applicable legal framework and programme rules;
- Role and obligations of the Managing Authority and the partnership;
- Information about the approved budget (including state aid);
- Budgetary principles;
- Financial management provisions for accounting, reporting schedules and consequences of delays, financial control, receipt of ERDF payments;
- Liability in case of failures in project delivery and project spending including provisions for changes in the work plan;
- Recovery of project costs found ineligible;
- Framework for how to use project funds;
- Information and publicity requirements;
- Ownership rights of the project results;

The Managing Authority signs the Subsidy Contract with the lead partner on behalf of the whole project. The lead partner, in turn, must prepare a Partnership Agreement to be signed with the whole partnership.

A basic template of Partnership Agreement has been made available by the Managing Authority on the programme website at www.centralbaltic.eu. A Partnership Agreement should include at least the following:

- Role and obligations of each project partner (including the lead partner) in the partnership and the project implementation;
- Budgetary principles (including state aid);

- Financial management provisions for accounting, reporting schedules and consequences of delays, financial control, receipt of ERDF payments;
- Distribution of the ERDF co-financing between the project partners (partner budget tables annexed) according to the approved project application;
- Liability in case of failures in project delivery and project spending including provisions for changes in the work plan;
- The partner's financial liability and provisions for the recovery of funds in case of amounts incorrectly reported and received by project partners;
- Information and publicity requirements;
- Resolutions of conflicts in the project partnership;
- Ownership rights of the project results;

Clearly defined procedures and responsibilities make cooperation easier and are of special importance to the lead partner.

The Managing Authority or Joint Secretariat are not a party to the Partnership Agreement. All legal disputes that may arise from the Partnership Agreement are solely between the project partners.

The partnership is strongly advised to agree on an internal reporting procedure and to set internal deadlines in the Partnership Agreement to ensure that the documents reach the Joint Secretariat on time. The lead partner should ensure timely submission of the reports and for that purpose it is suggested to conduct trainings for the project partners. The partners should also carefully consider and agree on how the results and outcomes of the project really are joint property of all project participants (LP and PP(s)), and how each project participant grants a simple, non-exclusive right of use of any produced work to all other project participants.

The agreement must be concluded and signed by the partners as soon as possible and before any ERDF funding can be paid out to the lead partner. A copy of the signed agreement must be provided to the national control with the first Partner Report.

We have a zero-tolerance policy on fraud. All programme bodies will pay attention to risks of fraud in all stages of programme implementation. The projects must also commit themselves to acting in compliance with all relevant EU rules, programme rules and national rules. For further information on practical steps and policies, see Chapter [4.6. Other rules, Fraud declaration](#).

For the sake of transparency, a list of all partners and the amount of ERDF financing to be received will be published on the programme's website.

4.2. Implementing the project

Once your contracting phase is over, the real work with implementing your project starts. To support a smooth launch of your project, the Joint Secretariat will organise relevant training events for the lead partners' key staff on the details of project management, reporting and communication. The first important and mandatory event is the Lead partner seminar. Also, individual meetings may be arranged with the programme staff.

You will be assigned a contact person in the Joint Secretariat for the whole project duration. The contact person will be in touch with you immediately after project approval. The contact person should always be your first contact when any questions related to the implementation of your project arise. The contact person will actively follow your progress and support you. A mid-term project meeting will be arranged to discuss how you are proceeding with your activities, achieving your results, outputs, if project management structures are well established and functioning, and if there are any obstacles or if some updates to the project plan needed.

In all of the implementation, the focus will be on the project reaching its results. As a way to ensure that the project works for the benefit of its end users, it will be mandatory for project partners to collect feedback from participants at all events organised in the project.

Steering Group

The lead partner is obliged to set up a Steering Group and arrange its first meeting during the first reporting period. The Joint Secretariat should be informed about the set up and the first meeting arranged so that the project's contact person can participate in it.

The Steering Group should **consist of representatives of project partners and especially key stakeholders and/or end users** (who are not necessarily project partners). With such a set-up the Steering Group can be a valuable support to the project in providing access to new networks and acting as catalysts for the change through analysing the achieved results and spreading information about them.

The Steering Group should:

- Monitor and steer the project in order to meet the targets/objectives set in the project application.
- Support the project in consulting and acting in an advisory function towards key stakeholder and/or end users.
- Support and advise the project in challenging situations. If necessary, the Steering Group can propose changes to the implementation of the project. The lead partner then makes the official change request to the Joint Secretariat;
- Handle project modifications before the lead partner submits the material to the Joint Secretariat/Managing Authority;

- Consider the Programme's Anti-Fraud policy and needed actions of the project to fulfil it;
- Participate in the planning of information activities and spreading information about the project and its results;

The Steering Group bears **no legal responsibility** towards the Central Baltic programme or the project partners. The Steering Group should literally steer the project towards the best possible achievement of the objectives and doesn't need to spend much time on administration or day-do-day management. Thus, the Steering Group meetings can be used as an innovative and inspirational support forum for the project.

The willingness for stakeholders to participate in the Steering Group can also be seen as an indicator for how relevant they find the project to be. Due to the role of the Steering Group in influencing the project work, people working for the project (as staff or external experts) cannot be official members of the Steering Group.

No fees or compensation can be paid for participating in Steering Group meetings.

4.3. Reporting and payment procedures

During the project implementation, all projects will report on their progress regularly. The reporting covers both the project activities and the financial implementation. The project contact person is responsible for the follow-up of the project progress and also supporting the lead partner in the project implementation. The central instrument for the project monitoring is the Project Report.

The report allows the monitoring of expenditure and is the basis for the regular payments made to the project. Furthermore, it is a tool to foresee and communicate potential problems and delays in the implementation process to the Joint Secretariat.

The reporting and payment procedures have been presented in the table below (Table 9) and more detailed information is given in this chapter.

Table 9. The reporting and payment procedures

	End of the 6-month reporting period	Lead partner +project partners submit Partner Reports to the National controllers	Lead partner compiles and submits the Project Report to the Joint Secretariat	Joint Secretariat assesses the report	Payment of the approved costs to the lead partner
Deadline		15 days from the end of reporting period	4 months from the end of reporting period (including 3 months for national control)	80 days + needed days for clarifications from the lead partner	
Total time passed since the end of the reporting period (indicative)		15 days	4 months	Approx. 7 months	Approx. 7 months

According to EU regulations the National Control has three months to conduct their check of the project costs, calculated from when the report is submitted to National Control.

Anyone checking your Project Report can request you to clarify or provide additional information. The deadlines for processing the Project Reports are put on hold for the period when the project provides its answer. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the project to submit correct and complete reports and to reply to questions within the set deadlines. Both the Joint Secretariat/ Managing Authority and the National Control also handle reports in the order of arrival. Thus, timely submission of the reports ensures that your projects are handled as early as possible.

Although all programme bodies carry out their work as quickly as possible, it is important to understand that the programme cannot guarantee when money will be paid out to projects. Therefore, partners must have sufficient liquidity to carry out the project even in unforeseen events.

Reporting periods

All projects must submit Project Reports to the Joint Secretariat twice a year during the lifetime of the project. The reporting period is six months. The reporting periods are automatically set based to the start date of the project. The first period starts on the first eligible cost date of the project, which is at its earliest the first day of the month after the Monitoring Committee meeting for the selection of projects.

At the end of a reporting period each project partner will finalise the Partner Report and submit it for the national control through Jems. The lead partner will compile and prepare Project Report and submit it to the Joint Secretariat in 4 months after the end of the reporting period.

For detailed guidance on how to report in Jems, please read the Guide for Project Implementation, available on the programme website at www.centralbaltic.eu.

The reporting of the project consists of:

Partner level reporting (Partner Report)

Within 15 days after the end of each reporting period each project partner (including the lead partner) must fill in the Partner Report and send that with all supporting documents to its national control body for the verification of the costs. For a more detailed explanation of the control system please read chapter [4.8. Audits](#).

The national control verifies Simplified Cost Options and the real cost expenditure. For the Simplified Cost Options the correct use of the methodology will be checked as well as that the Simplified Cost Option reporting is justified. The real costs check is based on supporting documents such as invoices and procurement documentation and other relevant material or information. The controller can clarify any issues and deduct any expenditure that is considered ineligible. The controller confirms eligible expenditure in a form of the national control Certificate, which is available in Jems for the relevant project partner, the lead partner, and all relevant programme authorities.

Project level reporting (Project Report)

Four months after the end of each reporting period the lead partner submits the Project Report. Project Report consists of information at project level. The lead partner should make sure that individual Partner Reports include only costs and activities occurred which are relevant for and belonging to the project. This report is then submitted to the Joint Secretariat for assessment.

In case a project partner has not managed to get its costs verified in due time, the lead partner may submit the Project Report without the costs of that partner. This will mean delays for the partner receiving the funds. Costs must be reported no later than a year after the deadline.

After this the costs will not be approved by the Managing Authority but will be borne by the project partner.

The Project Report provides a description of project activities and the outcomes achieved or progress made towards achieving results during the respective reporting period. The partnership is expected to implement the activities and make the costs according to the approved Application Form and should always keep in mind that the project is monitored against the approved Application Form.

Lead partners are advised to use these reports as efficient communication tools: be concise and to the point while reflecting on the overall progress of the project. The main text of the reports should summarise the implementation of the actions and their outcome(s). A brief, relevant and informative description is better than a profuse and detailed account of activities without a clear relation to the project and its action plan. In this respect, the reporting should focus on the implementation of the project itself, rather than on each partner's activities. Lead partners are encouraged to ensure the informative quality and consistency of the reports. Accompanying the Project Report, lead partners should provide relevant supporting material such as copies of studies and reports, press articles etc. These should be listed in the report next to the relevant actions and copies should be uploaded to Jems in electronic format when possible.

Along with information about implemented activities, financial data are submitted to request the payment of ERDF funding. It corresponds with the activities and shows the expenditure incurred and actually paid by the lead partner and the partners during the reporting period or eligible costs reported based on Simplified Cost Option methodologies.

Assessment of the reports

The assessment of the Project Reports by the Joint Secretariat will begin when the documents are received. They will be dealt with on a 'first come first served' basis. If there are questions about any part of the report during the assessment, the Joint Secretariat will contact the lead partner project's manager for clarification or additional information. The lead partner must ensure that it gets replies from project partners in due time.

The Joint Secretariat has 80 days to process the reports and make a payment to the project. The clock stops whenever a request for clarification is being sent out to the lead partner and continues after the answer provided by the lead partner is considered satisfactory. If the lead partner does not answer to the Joint Secretariat request during 2 weeks without a solid reason, the Joint Secretariat proceeds with the processing of the report based on the incomplete information. This might lead to the deduction of the questionable costs.

All payments will be made to the lead partner in euro and deposited into the bank account indicated on the approved Application Form. It is the lead partner's responsibility to inform the Joint Secretariat immediately of any changes to bank account information. The lead partner bears the risk and any costs that may incur if the payment is made to the wrong bank account.

Payments to projects

The payments should always cover the last reporting period. The Project Report must include all real costs that have been incurred and paid out. It also includes all Simplified Cost Options that have been completed and where the indicator has been met. Costs should be reported in later reporting periods only in exceptional cases; this exception does not apply for the last period as all costs must be paid during the project duration.

After receipt of funds from the Managing Authority, the lead partner is obliged to transfer in time and in full the share of ERDF which corresponds to each project partner. It is the lead partner's responsibility to transfer ERDF money to partners as soon as possible. These arrangements should be made clear in the Partnership Agreement.

Partners should be aware that the Managing Authority can make payment only under the condition that the European Commission has made the necessary funds available to the programme. In case funds are not immediately available, the Managing Authority makes payments to projects as soon as possible when funding becomes available.

Use of euro

Expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro is reported in euro for euro countries, even if the cost has incurred in a non-euro zone.

A conversion method applies to only non-euro partners, meaning in practice Swedish partners. Swedish partners report real costs in Swedish Crowns and unit costs in the currency they are established. The reported sums will be automatically converted into euro by Jems, using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission in the month during which expenditure was submitted for verification to the national control.

The costs of fluctuation of foreign exchange rates are not eligible.

4.4. Updating the project plan during implementation

The activity plan, partnership and budget should be planned thoroughly. Still, it must be taken into consideration that the development of the project can take place years before implementation. It is likely that there will be needs to modify the project plan. In these cases, it the Joint Secretariat contact person should be approached for advice.

There are different types of project modifications that a project might face: partnership, budget, activities, outputs and results, extension of the project end date, etc. The different modifications have been divided into two groups depending on whether the change requires a modification of the Application Form or not.

The programme follows the project budget based on the total costs per cost category. Therefore, costs per cost items are not binding during project implementation.

Project modifications are in force from the date of the decision (by the Joint Secretariat, Managing Authority or Monitoring Committee as relevant). No costs requiring formal approval can be incurred before the decision has been made.

Practical guidance on the different types of modifications can be found in the Guide for Project Implementation.

Minor changes

Several types of minor changes can be foreseen. They will be treated in the following ways:

Minor adjustment like change of timetable for activities or deliverables, or place of meetings should be communicated as deviations in Partner Report and Project Report.

Technical modifications that don't have an impact to the content of the project (bank data change, change of the partner's name, legal status, change of hosting organisation, change of contact person etc.) are made based on need. These changes are made in Jems. The lead partner should notify Joint Secretariat of these types of changes as soon as possible.

Small adjustment or technical corrections related to the budget or activity plan (such as adding new activities or equipment items) should be brought to the attention of the Joint Secretariat contact person as soon as possible. Small adjustment to equipment items must be always approved before the purchase is done. The correspondence is done by e-mail, and the changes are entered to Jems when a formal modification procedure is initiated, and Application Form is opened for modifications.

Flexibility rule

There is flexibility between the cost categories. This flexibility can be used when planned activities cost more than originally expected. Minor modifications to the individual cost categories are not monitored by the Joint Secretariat: projects are allowed to overspend by a maximum of 20% or 40 000 euro (whichever is higher) of the individual cost categories at project level. Increases above that threshold need an official modification process.

The use of the flexibility rule must be agreed with the lead partner before using it. The lead partner is responsible for coordinating the budget of the whole partnership. Thus, it is also responsible for allowing a partner to use the flexibility. If the flexibility rule is exceeded the lead partner is responsible for making the necessary cuts in partner costs.

The flexibility is shown when the project reports. The increases are cumulative on project level and not on partner level.

Restrictions for flexibility rule:

- The project or partner total budget may never be exceeded. If the project partner budget needs to be changed then a formal modification procedure is necessary.
- The flexibility rule does not apply to the predefined calculation methods of Simplified Cost Options.
- Due to the large number of simplified cost options used by the programme, the real flexibility between remaining cost categories is rather limited. Still, the option has been kept.
- Note that due to several simplified cost options being paid out based on staff costs, you must carefully consider the flexibility for increasing staff costs. Several other cost categories (office and administration, travel and management equipment) will increase at the same time.

Formal Project Modifications

Any modifications beyond the scope of the flexibility rule, minor changes or technical modifications require a formal approval. The lead partner should inform the Joint Secretariat contact person about necessary modification as soon as the need for them appears.

A decision by the Monitoring Committee is needed in case of:

- Increasing the ERDF co-financing rate or the total ERDF amount of the project,
- If more than two partners withdraw from the project and/or are replaced. The replacement with new partners is always subject to the approval of the Member States/Åland locating the partners,
- If the objectives of the project would considerably change or the results indicator achievements would be reduced.

All other cases are approved by the Managing Authority.

Prolongation of project duration can only be approved in exceptional cases and usually not for more than 3 months. Any prolongation must be justified by external reasons hindering the timely closure of the project. It should not be used as a tool to prolong the project without severe reasons and delays during the project implementation.

Once the need for a modification has arisen and the Joint Secretariat has been informed, the lead partner must justify and describe the modifications in relevant places in Jems. The Joint Secretariat has 20 days to assess a Modification Request and forward it to the Managing Authority /Monitoring Committee for approval.

Please remember that project **modifications come into force on the date of the Managing Authority/Monitoring Committee approval only.**

It is strongly suggested to carefully plan ahead and incorporate as many of such modifications as possible needed by the project into one modification request, in order to avoid the lengthy procedure of changing the Application Form too often. The lead partner must involve all partners in the discussions in due time so that the needs of the whole partnership are reflected in the modification request.

Modifications related to activities or the budget should be done not more than two times during project implementation.

Please note that the final modification request must be submitted no later than 6 months before the end date of the project.

Once the Managing Authority has signed a Subsidy Contract with the lead partner, no separate amendments will be prepared for modifications. As stated in the preamble and in Concluding provisions, the Subsidy Contract refers to the project Application Form in Jems and all modifications or changes related to implementation are made in Jems. Thus, the Subsidy Contract always refers to the valid version of the project Application Form. The person authorised to sign documents on behalf of the Managing Authority confirms these changes in Jems, upon which the new version is valid.

4.5. Eligibility of costs

The programme uses both real costs and simplified cost options. **Real costs** must be visible in the partner bookkeeping on a separate project account. **The Simplified Cost Options** are reported based on pre-defined calculation methods. Therefore, these costs are not expected to match with bookkeeping and don't have to be in the separate project account. All programme rules apply also when using simplified cost options.

The programme has pre-defined for which cost types Simplified Cost Options are used and where real costs are used. The use of Simplified Cost Options is mandatory for all projects and project partners when the conditions apply.

In cases where Simplified Cost Options are used it is important to keep in mind that costs covered by a Simplified Cost Option cannot be reported under any other cost categories as real costs. This would be double financing and is never eligible.

To be eligible, all reported costs must be paid by the project partner and be directly supporting the achievement of the results or outputs of the project. For SCOs specific criteria apply and for flat rates the cost category must exist for each partner.

All costs must follow the principles of sound financial management. All costs incurred must be free from partiality and conflict of interest. By definition, this is the case when a decision is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, or where any economic interest or any other interest is shared with another person.

The rules for eligibility, as all programme rules, apply to all types of partners, regardless of their legal status (public or private). Thus, all requirements for documentation, tendering or any other relevant rules apply for all partners.

The following costs are not eligible:

- Costs incurred and/or paid outside project duration (except for preparation costs);
- Fines, financial penalties and expenditure on legal disputes and litigation;
- Costs of gifts including awards;
- Costs related to fluctuation of foreign exchange rate;
- Advance payments not foreseen in the contract and not supported with an invoice or another document of probative value. Also, advance payments cannot cover the whole sum of the product or service as this must be delivered before the final payment can be made;
- Partner organisation employees as external experts and other services between partners;
- Internal invoices, invoicing between partners or sharing invoices between partners;
- In kind costs.

Note that during the closure period the only costs that can be incurred are project management salaries for the lead partner (and the corresponding Simplified Cost Options). Other invoices can still be paid by all partners and flat rates will be generated from staff costs.

Publicity rules must be respected for all costs, particularly events, equipment and publications. More instructions on publicity rules is given in chapter [4.7 Project communication](#).

For details on reporting, see the Guide for Project Implementation. The programme website Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) also gives good practical guidance on the application of programme rules in project implementation.

Income and revenue

As has been explained in the Manual Chapter 2.1. Basic characteristics of Central Baltic projects, projects are expected to share any outputs and results widely and for free. In the rare case where income to the project could happen, the partners should check for possible national legislation on how to handle such income.

4.6. Simplified Cost Options used by the programme

Our goal is to focus efforts on what is important: reaching results in projects. Therefore, we carefully follow the project activities and their relevance in reaching the foreseen objectives. According to the same main principle, we have simplified the reporting of costs as much as possible. This is done by making full use of Simplified Cost Options.

Simplified Cost Options are a way of reporting project costs. When using Simplified Cost Options costs are not based on real costs but based on a pre-defined methodology. There are three types of Simplified Cost Options, each with their own characteristics. Our programme uses all of these:

- Flat rates - are calculated as a % of the defined base cost (office and administration and travel costs that are calculated from staff costs)
- Lump sums - are paid once the indicator set for a cost has been fully reached (preparation cost)
- Standard Scale of Unit Costs - are paid once the unit has been reached (staff hourly rate, face-to-face event unit cost and project management equipment unit cost)

For all Simplified Cost Options used, the sums are index-linked for the entire program period 2021-2027. The sums will, therefore, remain the same for the whole programme period.

The benefits of Simplified Cost Options are many. As Simplified Cost Options are typically very easy to calculate, the beneficiary rarely makes mistakes in applying them. Reporting becomes much easier as there is no need to attach invoices. Thus, Simplified Cost Options help us to focus our efforts on what actually matters - results - and less on technicalities and practicalities that come with regular reporting.

There can also be some downsides worth mentioning. As Simplified Cost Options are calculated on the principle of being approximately suitable, some partners or projects will, by definition, be undercompensated where others will be overcompensated. Another aspect to consider is that Simplified Cost Options are always defined in advance and cannot be modified later.

4.6.1 Staff costs (simplified cost option)

Definition

Staff costs cover costs of staff members employed by the partner organisation, who are directly working on the project. Staff costs include salary payments and other costs directly linked to salary payments and paid by the employer (such as employment taxes and social security including pensions) in line with the employment/work contract or other document.

Both the employment/work contract and an appointment decision/contract of natural persons working for the partner organisation and receiving salary payments are hereinafter referred to as 'employment document'.

Payments to natural persons working for project under a contract other than an employment or work contract may be assimilated to salary payments and such a contract shall be considered to be an employment document.

General principles

The programme reimburses staff costs only as a pre-defined hourly rate. This is a simplified cost option, a Standard scale of Units Cost. Using this simplified cost option is mandatory.

The underlying general principles apply to the staff cost hourly rate:

- Costs must be borne by the partner organisation.
- Staff costs must relate to activities, which the partner organisation undertakes due to a project implementation.
- The following costs are included in the calculation of the staff cost hourly rate:
 - salary payments fixed in the employment document, an appointment decision (in the case of natural persons working for the partner organisation under a contract other than an employment document), or by law;
 - any other costs directly linked to the salary payments, incurred and paid by the employer (e.g., employment taxes and social security including pensions) as long as they are fixed in the employment document, and they are in accordance with the legislation and standard practices in the country and/or organisation;
 - Overtime hours may be reported, provided it is in line with the national legislation and the employment policy of the partner organisation, and it is actually paid to the staff member. The same hourly rate and its reporting requirements apply.

- Overheads and any other office and administrative costs, daily allowances and any other travel and accommodation costs cannot be included under this cost category.
- Costs of staff are eligible if no other EU funds have contributed towards financing of the same expenditure item; i.e., no double financing takes place).

Calculation of staff costs and audit trail

Project partners declare personnel costs on the basis of a Simplified Cost Option Method (Standard Scale of Unit Cost). The staff costs are paid as an hourly rate which has been defined for each country (Table 10 and Table 11). Thus, each employee working for the project - regardless of position - in one country will receive the same hourly rate. The hourly rate is paid only for hours actually worked on project tasks.

The actual salary paid to the person is not relevant for reporting. The actual costs of the project partner and the sums reported and received from the programme will not match. This is a recognised feature of the Simplified Cost Options.

For each country the Programme defined a single hourly rate in national currency/EUR. The hourly rate is standard for each employee regardless of their position. The hourly rate to be used in each country is given in the tables below:

Table 10. Hourly rate to be used in each country for calls 1-3

Country	Hourly rate
Estonia	29 EUR
Finland (including Åland)	36 EUR
Latvia	24 EUR
Sweden	501 SEK*

* Budgets are always made in euro

Table 11. Hourly rate to be used in each country from the 4th round of calls (1.1.2024)

Country	Hourly rate
Estonia	29 EUR
Finland (including Åland)	39 EUR
Latvia	26 EUR
Sweden	534 SEK*

* Budgets are always made in euro

Conditions for reimbursement of the staff cost:

Project partners have to report the staff cost based on the number of working hours that their employees used for project implementation under following conditions:

- Project partner can report hours of an employee working under an employment contract or equivalent.
- A project partner cannot declare more than 1 720 hours per full time employee per calendar year. This maximum number of hours is reduced to a pro- rata of 1,720 hours for employees working part-time. This maximum number of hours is also reduced to a pro-rata of 1 720 hours for reporting periods shorter than 12 months. The check will be done through the Report of hours document per reporting period; for a 6-month period the maximum allowed hours per each project staff member/employee will be 860.
- A project partner can report only actual (productive) working hours dedicated to project related tasks. Non-productive hours related to holidays, sick leave, maternity leave, travelling time outside working time etc. are not eligible.

Project partners that are SMEs can declare staff cost for their owners (who are not receiving salary) based on a unit cost per hour worked for the project under conditions defined above.

Audit trail and payment of costs

The following main documents must be available for control purposes:

- Employment document(s) which show(s) that the person is employed by the partner (lead partner) organisation and is working for the project.
- The “Report of Hours” template which defines that the person is working for the project and includes the times actually worked for the project.

The hourly rate Standard scale of unit cost is eligible based on the verified number of units reported in the Report of Hours.

The sum to be reported is calculated as: number of units x correct unit cost.

4.6.2 Office and administration (simplified cost option)

Definition

Office and administrative costs cover expenditures related indirectly to the project. Those activities are not directly needed for the content of the project, but the project could not happen without them.

The programme uses a flat rate for office and administration costs. The flat rate is counted as 15% of the eligible staff costs. Using this simplified cost option is mandatory. The calculation is done automatically in the Application Form and reports by Jems.

General principles

An all-inclusive list of cost categories covered by the flat rate is defined below. The below list of office and administrative expenditure is also limiting so that these cost items cannot be reported under any other cost category.

Office and administrative expenditure shall be limited to the following elements:

- Office rent;
- insurance and taxes related to the buildings where the staff is located and to the equipment of the office (such as fire or theft insurance);
- utilities (such as electricity, heating, water);
- office supplies, including coffee and snacks for meetings inside the partner organisation);
- accounting (in-house);
- archives;
- maintenance, cleaning and repairs;
- security;
- IT systems (including IT system support of an administrative nature and related to the project organisation);
- communication (such as telephone (including the phone itself), fax, internet, postal services, business cards);
- bank charges for opening and administering the account or accounts where the implementation of an operation requires a separate account to be opened;
- charges for transnational financial transactions.

The above list is exhaustive.

The flat rate is directly linked to the staff cost and is always counted from the final eligible staff costs. If staff costs would be reduced by the national control or other programme bodies, also the office and administration costs would be proportionally reduced.

Audit trail and payment of costs

By applying the 15% flat rate, partners do not need to document that the expenditure on office and administration costs has been incurred and paid, or that the flat rate corresponds to the reality.

The checks will consist of checking that the flat rate has been calculated correctly and that no costs are claimed twice. The sum to be reported is calculated automatically by Jems.

4.6.3 Travel and accommodation costs (simplified cost option)

Definition

Travel and accommodation costs cover travel costs, accommodation costs, costs of meals, visa costs, and daily allowances of staff of the partner organisation that are assigned to work for the project.

CO2 compensation or carbon footprint offset related to project travel is promoted.

The programme uses a flat rate for travel and accommodation. The flat rate is counted as 15% of the eligible staff costs. Using this simplified cost option is mandatory. The calculation is done automatically in the Application Form and reports by Jems.

General principles

The flat rate is directly linked to the staff cost and is always counted from the final eligible staff costs. If staff costs would be reduced by the national control or other programme bodies, also the travel and accommodation costs would be proportionally reduced.

Specifically:

- Costs must be borne by the partner organisation.
- Travel and accommodation costs of staff of the project partnership is covered with this cost category.
- Travel and accommodation costs must be clearly linked to the project and be essential for the effective delivery of the project activities.
- As for all other costs, as well, the principles of sound financial management and cost-efficiency of the entire business trip should be applied to the choice of transport and accommodation.
- Travel and accommodation costs are eligible if no other EU funds have contributed towards financing of the same expenditure item; i.e., no double financing is permissible.

Audit trail and payment of costs

By applying the 15% flat rate, partners do not need to document that the expenditure on travel costs has been incurred and paid, or that the flat rate corresponds to the reality.

The sum to be reported is calculated automatically by Jems.

The checks will consist of checking that the flat rate has been calculated correctly and that no costs are claimed twice.

4.6.4 External expertise and services costs (real costs and simplified cost option)

Definition

External expertise and services costs cover expenditures paid by the partner organisation for the support in the project implementation provided by a public or private body, or a natural person outside of the partner organisation. These costs should be based on contracts or written agreements concluded with external experts and service providers and paid based on invoices or equivalent requests for reimbursement.

Under this cost category there can be real costs and one Simplified Cost Option, the Face-to-face events unit cost. Note that partners cannot report costs covered by the unit cost under any other cost category. Thus, catering service and room rent, including regular conference room equipment is only covered as part of the unit cost. Fringe benefits, where relevant, are also covered only as part of the unit cost.

Travel and accommodation costs of external experts and service providers (e.g., speakers, target group, stakeholders, steering group members), when they are crucial for reaching the project's results, are included in this cost category.

Materials, and similar, which will be used during the project implementation but will not remain in the use of project partners or target group after the project end are also included in this cost category.

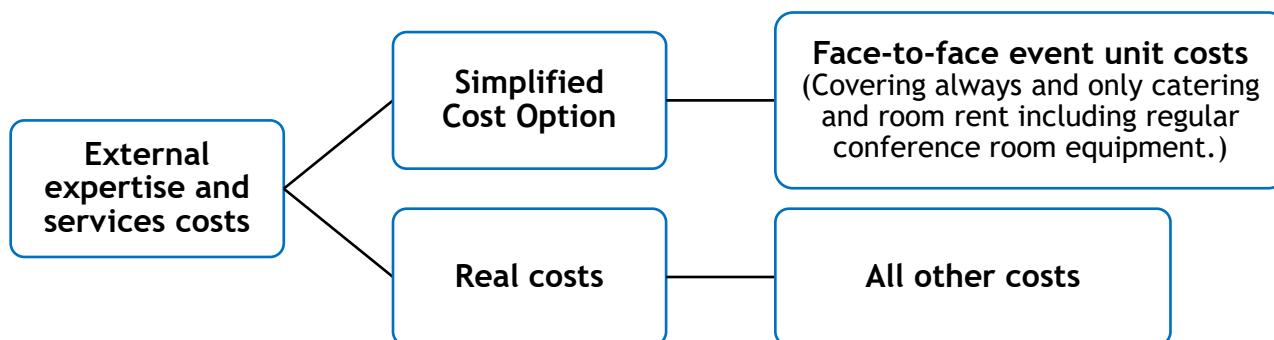


Figure 7. Simplified Cost Option and Real Costs for external expertise and services costs

Real costs

List of eligible costs

Expenditure for external expertise and service costs are limited to the following:

- studies or surveys (such as evaluations, strategies, concept notes, design plans, handbooks);
- training;
- translations (NB! Translations of project documents are not accepted);
- development, modifications and updates to IT systems and website;
- promotion, communication, publicity, promotional items and activities or information linked to an operation or to a programme as such;
- financial management;
- interpretation services related to the organisation and implementation of events or meetings;
- participation in events (such as registration fees);
- legal consultancy and notarial services, technical and financial expertise, other consultancy and accountancy services;
- intellectual property rights;
- the provision of guarantees by a bank or other financial institution where required by Union or national law or in a programming document adopted by the monitoring committee;
- travel and accommodation for external experts, speakers, chairpersons of meetings and service providers as well as target group where justified;
- other specific expertise and services needed for operations.

The following principles must be applied:

- Costs must be borne by the partner organisation.
- Principles of sound financial management and cost-efficiency should be applied. Effectiveness should be the leading principle.
- The work by external experts and service providers must be essential to the project.
- All costs are subject to public procurement procedures. EU and national, regional, or programme thresholds have to be considered to determine the applicable public procurement procedure⁴ and that all contracts comply with the basic principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment⁵.

⁴ For more information on the public procurement procedures, check [Roadmap for public procurement](#), August 2019.

⁵ EU procurement and concession rules were introduced on 18 April 2016: <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/rules-implementation/>

- Costs of external expertise and services are eligible if no other EU funds have contributed towards financing of the same expenditure item, i.e., no double financing is permissible.
- All costs must comply with other applicable EU and programme information and publicity rules.
- Sub-contracting between project partners is not allowed.

Audit trail and payment of real costs

The following main documents must be available for control purposes:

- evidence of the procurement process (announcement, selection, award) in line with the legal status/organisational/regional/national procurement rules or the EU procurement rules depending on the amount of the contract and programme specific rules;
- a document laying down the services to be provided with a clear reference to the project and the programme. For experts paid on the basis of a daily fee, the daily rate together with the number of days contracted and the total amount of the contract must be included in the contract. Any changes to the contract must comply with the public procurement rules and must be documented;
- an invoice or a request for reimbursement providing all relevant information in line with the applicable accounting rules;
- outputs of the work of external experts or service deliverables;
- proof of payment.

Simplified cost option

Face-to-face events unit cost (Simplified Cost Option)

The face-to-face event unit cost is relevant for the events which include participants outside one partner organisation. It includes catering service and room rent, including regular conference room equipment. These costs cannot be paid as real costs.

The face-to-face unit cost is paid per day per participant. The unit cost is defined according to the country where the event is organised (Table 12).

Table 11 Face-to-face events unit cost

	Estonia	Latvia	Finland (including Åland)	Sweden
Face-to-face event unit cost per participant per one day	55 EUR	51 EUR	81 EUR	87 EUR

Audit trail and payment of the Simplified Cost Option

Using the **face-to-face event** unit cost is mandatory for all projects for events that fall under the criteria described below. It is not possible to claim real costs for any costs falling under the unit cost (catering and room rent including regular conference room equipment).

The face-to-face event unit cost per participant is claimed:

- When the partner arranges a face-to-face event within the programme region which includes participants outside the partner organisation. (Note that outside contracted experts, and representatives of programme bodies are not considered as participants outside the partner organisation in this context);
- For each event day which is necessary for achieving project results;

The face-to-face event unit cost is claimed per participant per event day for which the event agenda exists. Proof of participation is signed participant list. Each participant must sign the participant list for each event day they participate.

The face-to-face event unit cost is calculated based on the location where the event takes place. For example, if the event is organised in Sweden, the unit cost for Sweden is used (87€ per participant per day).

The face-to-face event unit cost per participant cannot be claimed for:

- an event consisting of only evening programme with a dinner or similar get-together
- an evening programme with a dinner or similar get-together which is followed by an actual event on the next day
- working meetings with contracted external experts when meeting only with a partner organisation, for example external project management, book-keeping, content expert
- working meetings with programme bodies (National Controllers, Joint Secretariat, Managing Authority, national Contact Points), when meeting only with a partner organisation.

Partners cannot report costs covered by the unit cost under any other cost category. Thus, catering service and room rent, including regular conference room equipment is only covered as part of the unit cost. Fringe benefits, where relevant, are also covered only as part of the unit cost.

Partners may report real costs for: expert costs for example moderator, external speaker, training provider; marketing; specific event equipment and materials.

The sum to be reported is calculated as: number of units x correct unit cost.

NB! The number of signatures on the participant list equals to the number of units to be reported.

4.6.5 Equipment (real costs and simplified cost option)

Definitions

Under this cost category all projects will have one Simplified Cost Option, Project management unit cost, and may in some cases have real costs.

Equipment costs cover the eligible expenditure for expenditures paid by the partner organisation for equipment purchased as necessary to achieve objectives of the project. In the case of investment activities, 'equipment' covers costs of fixed investments in equipment, and costs of equipment that forms part of an investment in infrastructure (Figure 7.)

Fixed investments in equipment refer to outputs or results of the project, which remain in use by the partners and/or target groups after completion of the project.

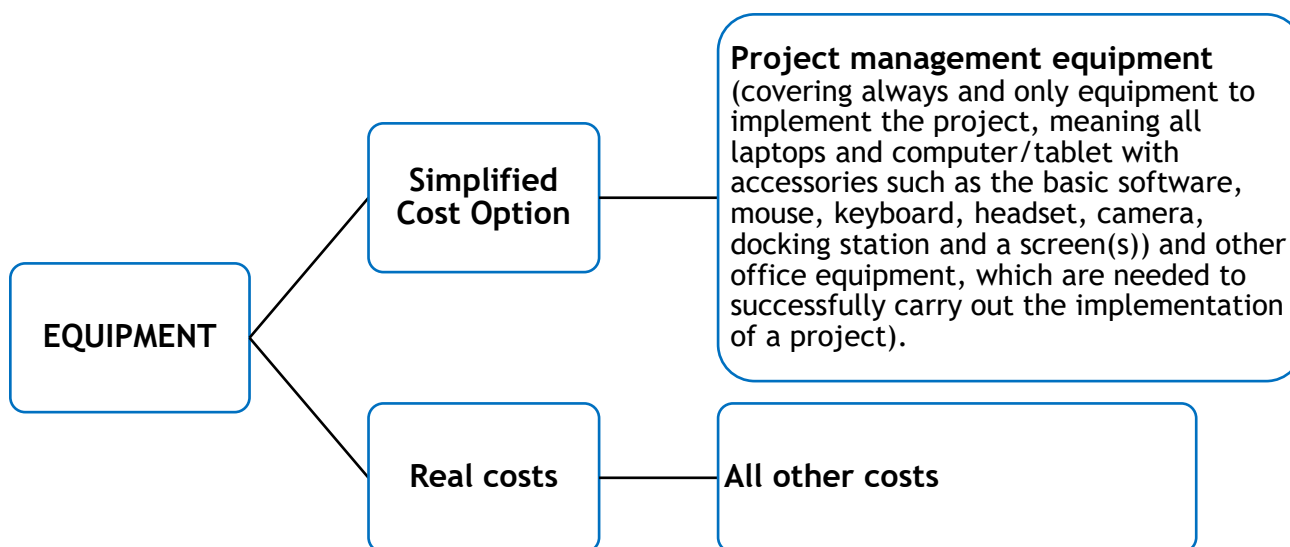


Figure 8. Equipment (real costs and simplified cost option)

List of eligible costs

Expenditure for equipment is limited to the following:

- a) office equipment;
- b) IT hardware and software (where it links to content activities of the project and the maintenance/repair service is provided by external parties outside the partner organisation);
- c) furniture and fittings;
- d) laboratory equipment;
- e) machines and instruments,
- f) tools or devices;
- g) vehicles;
- h) other specific equipment needed for operations.

Real costs

The only real costs that will be allowed are fixed investments in equipment and investments in infrastructure refer to outputs of the project, which remain in use by the partners and/or target groups after completion of the project. These must be directly identified in the Application Form to be eligible.

For these items the full cost will be eligible.

General principles for real costs

- Only investment type of equipment, or equipment used solely to reach the results of the project (or IT hardware and software directly related to those), can be included here. Office equipment of project staff is covered as a Simplified Cost Option (see below) and laptops always go under the Simplified Cost Option.
- Costs must be borne by the partner organisation.
- Principles of sound financial management and cost-efficiency should be applied. Effectiveness should be the leading principle.
- All costs are subject to public procurement procedures. EU and national, regional, or programme thresholds have to be considered to determine the applicable public procurement procedure and that all contracts comply with the basic principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment.
- All costs must comply with other applicable EU and programme information and publicity rules.
- Costs of equipment are eligible if no other EU funds have contributed towards financing of the same expenditure item; i.e., no double funding is permissible.

Audit trail and payment of real costs

The following main documents must be available for control purposes:

- evidence of the procurement process (announcement, selection, award) in line with the legal status/organisational/regional/national procurement rules or the EU procurement rules depending on the amount of the contract and programme specific rules;
- a document laying down the services to be provided with a clear reference to the project and the programme. Any changes to the contract must comply with the public procurement rules and must be documented;
- an invoice or a request for reimbursement providing all relevant information in line with the applicable accounting rules;
- actual equipment purchased, rented or leased;
- consent protocol/certificate (if required or needed by applicable specific rules);
- proof of payment.

Simplified cost option

Project management equipment unit cost (Simplified Cost Option)

A unit cost is used to cover office equipment for project staff. It includes equipment to implement the project, meaning all laptops and/computer/tablet (with accessories such as the basic software, mouse, keyboard, headset, camera, docking station and a screen(s)) and other office equipment, which are needed to successfully carry out the implementation of a project. These costs cannot be paid as real costs. Using this simplified cost option is mandatory.

The project management equipment unit cost is paid based on the hours worked for the project declared for staff costs in each period and for each employee. The unit cost is 0,23 EUR/hour. The maximum hours that can be reported is 860 hours per reporting period and 1 720 hours per year.

Audit trail and payment of the Simplified cost option

The payment of the unit cost is made based on the Report of hours template for the number of certified hours under staff costs in each progress report.

The sum to be reported is calculated as: number of units x correct unit cost.

4.7. Other rules

Value Added Tax (VAT)

Value Added Tax (VAT) is an eligible cost for all partners, despite the partner VAT status.

The exception is project partners to whom the funding is granted under the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) Article 20. For these partners, their VAT status determines the eligibility of VAT. If the partner cannot recover VAT, then it is part of the eligible cost. If the VAT can be recovered by the partner, the VAT is not an eligible cost.

Public procurement

For costs that are estimated to exceed 10 000 EUR (excluding VAT) a price comparison must be made (if national public procurement level will not apply with lower limits). The comparison must be documented. Typically, at least three comparable offers should be requested so that at least two offers can be received. In some cases, information may be available (online, price lists etc.) and in such cases the information may be used and properly documented. If the service represents unique skills or no other options are available elsewhere in the market, it may not be possible to get price comparisons. This must be documented in a detailed way to prove that the service couldn't have been bought from another supplier. These cases are exceptions as usually there are options available.

All material related to tendering must be kept. Note that in case Simplified Cost Options cover procured costs, the procurement documents will not be checked as part of the check of the Simplified Cost Option. Still, the public procurement rules should be followed. Public procurements should always be done **according to national rules or following EU rules, depending on the thresholds**.

Note, that for project expenditure, also not public procurement subjects have to respect the rule of price comparisons from 10 000 EUR and must follow the national public procurement principles act in full when thresholds are reached. In such cases they must prove that the awarded project-related contracts are in compliance with EU principles.

Deriving from the Common Provisions Regulation, Annex XVII, the project partners must collect internally information whether on the beneficial owner or sub-contracts following the data collection fields in Jems Public procurement section also for all procurements that aren't documented in Jems.

Note, that a financial correction of up to 100% of the cost may be applied when the EU/programme or national legislation has not been followed.

GDPR, General Data Protection Regulation

The Central Baltic programme bodies, such as the Joint Secretariat and Managing Authority complemented by the national Contact Points, national controllers and Audit Authority, all carry out tasks that are defined in EU legislation. Thus, a separate consent is not requested from a person submitting their data to the programme.

We only collect information that is required and needed for the programme to function and reach its goals.

Below you will find a detailed listing of what is collected and how long data is expected to be stored.

If you have questions related to the information we collect or are interested in knowing what information is stored about you, please contact: info@centralbaltic.eu

Personal data collected because of tasks defined in laws and regulations

Information about Jems users and applicants

During registration to Jems or filling in the application, some basic details (name, e-mail, position) are asked for. The information is collected only to be able to handle the project application process, or to later communicate with the project applicant/beneficiary about matters related to project selection or implementation. This information must by law be kept until the programme period has been finally closed.

Information related to reporting costs of approved projects

During project implementation, each partner is required to report all activities and costs with supporting documents. Information can cover salaries, participation lists, etc. The information is used only by authorised staff to verify the correctness of costs. Costs selected by the partner as containing personal data will only be shown to the programme bodies who have the legal responsibility to verify the costs. This information must by law be kept until the programme period has been finally closed.

Seminar registrations

When you register for events organised by the programme, we will ask for information such as your name, project or organisation that you represent and potential dietary requirements. The information is used by the programme authorities to select the right participants if needed, to better define the event programme and to inform catering of any food allergies or diets. Information about dietary requirements is only sent to the catering company, and without being personalised (not attached to a name). If the information for some reason needs to be personalised, the programme bodies send the information with a requirement for the catering company to delete the information immediately after the event. Other information about participants must by law be kept until the programme period has been finally closed.

Other personal data during application or project implementation

If any other personal data is collected during project application or implementation, the programme bodies will always make sure that as little information is collected or received as possible; that all data is handled professionally by staff carrying out tasks related to programme implementation; and all data is erased at the earliest possible moment. The programme may, for example, compile statistical databases (Excel) from existing information that are used internally to ensure proper implementation of the Central Baltic programme”.

Personal data collected based on consent

Programme newsletter

If you wish to sign up to the programme newsletter, we need your e-mail address. You are free to leave the newsletter at any point by clicking the respective link. Otherwise the data about newsletter subscribers will be kept until the programme period has been officially closed.

Appearance in pictures and videos

The programme collects pictures or may take videos of project and programme activities. Such data is used to promote the projects, the programme or the benefit of EU funding in general. If you wish to not be depicted in pictures or videos, please refrain from submitting them to the programme or inform the programme staff at the beginning of an event or other activity. Otherwise the material will be kept until the programme period has been officially closed.

Partner Search Platform

Individuals interested in finding project partnerships may create an account on the digital Partner Search Platform. The purpose of the platform is to provide a space for users to find partners. The platform is not intended for commercial or profit-driven marketing purposes. As part of the registration process, the platform collects users' email addresses. These email addresses can be used by the programme to contact users regarding platform-related matters or to inform them about events relevant to individuals seeking partnerships. The programme will however always use the platform's messaging system as the main point of contact. The programme reserves the right to delete user accounts if it is determined that the user is violating the platform's intended purpose. In such cases, the user will be notified about the account removal.

State aid

The Programme Manual provides a general overview of the concept of state aid and what consequences it has in the programme. The full text of the aid scheme set up by the Managing Authority, is on our website⁶.

The concept - which projects are state aid relevant?

State aid refers to financial support that can distort competition and intra-market trade. For those reasons state aid is normally not allowed in projects.

For state aid to take place the recipient of project funding must be an undertaking. The term 'undertaking' is in this context used in a wide sense as any entity has an activity of an economic nature and which offers goods and services on the market, regardless the legal form and the way of financing of this entity. Also, if an entity is not profit-oriented state aid rules will apply as

⁶ The Managing Authority /Joint Secretariat has set up an aid scheme for GBER Article 20: "Central Baltic programme Aid for costs incurred by undertakings participating in European Territorial Cooperation projects 2021-2027 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:02014R0651-20210801>)". The full text of the scheme is available in the State aid section on the Programme website.

long as it competes with companies that are profit-oriented. Therefore, not only private companies are subject to state aid rules but also public authorities or other organisations if they carry out an economic activity on the market.

The next step in establishing state aid is to use the set of four criteria that all have to be fulfilled. Two of those (the existence of aid and selectivity) always apply for Central Baltic programme projects. Thus, state aid exists if the remaining two conditions are also met:

- **Economic advantage:** The project support is an economic advantage that the undertaking would not have received in the normal course of business. Such an economic advantage can be assumed if the undertaking does not provide for any market-driven consideration (e.g. it promises to create jobs in return for state funds received or it buys land from the state for a price lower than the market price).
- **Effect on competition and trade:** This criterion is already fulfilled if an aid has potential effect on competition and trade between Member States. It is sufficient if it can be shown that the beneficiary is involved in an economic activity and that it operates in a market in which there is trade between Member States. As a general rule, no effects on competition and trade are to be expected in case of purely local activities such as taxi drivers, retail sale.

The criteria are described in full detail in the “Commission Notice on the notion of State Aid as referred to in Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union”.

In order to collect relevant data, lead or project partners funded under GBER have to provide their NACE Codes during the application phase. The list of all available NACE codes and a detailed explanation is made available on the programme website.

NACE is the acronym for “Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne”. It is the statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community and is the subject of legislation at the European Union level, which imposes the use of the classification uniformly within all the Member States.

Direct state aid to the project

Where the above conditions are met in project activities or partners, and state aid exists, the programme as a first instance uses the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER), Article 20.

Any requirements coming from GBER have already been integrated into programme rules, wherefore no action is needed from the partnership in implementation or reporting of the project. All required reporting is handled by the programme. Whether the project will fall under GBER, Article 20 will be evaluated and confirmed during the content assessment.

According to the GBER, the maximum aid intensity is 80%. As the Programme ERDF support is 80%, the beneficiary cannot receive any other public funding as a support for implementing the project. I.e. the 20% of own co-financing must be funded from the beneficiary's own budget.

State aid to third parties

In this case the final beneficiary of state aid is not the partner itself but an organisation to whom the project partner targets aid. This principle applies when intermediary organisations (project partners of the projects under programme objectives 1 and 2, for example) are providing services to target group companies. The services can be for example provided as face-to-face consultations by external experts to support the company, paying expenses of companies' representatives for travel and accommodation to take part in events, participation fees of companies, costs related to trade fairs etc.

When preparing the full application, you must consider if such occasions arise. In such a case, each applicant has to ensure compliance with the State aid rules.

In cases of indirect aid to third parties the GBER Article 20a is applied. This means that a project partner can grant aid up to 22 000 EUR ERDF per undertaking per project. The partner has to document the calculation of the amount of aid and report it to the MA/JS.

In case more assistance is needed, please consult with Joint Secretariat or national responsible organisation.

Fraud declaration

The Managing Authority for the Central Baltic programme is committed to maintain high legal, ethical and moral standards, to adhere to the principles of integrity, objectivity and honesty and wishes to be seen as opposed to fraud and corruption in the way that it conducts its business. The programme has a zero-tolerance for fraud policy. The objective of this policy is to promote a culture which deters fraudulent activity and to facilitate the prevention and detection of fraud and the development of procedures which will aid in the investigation of fraud and related offences and which will ensure that such cases are dealt with timely and appropriately.

This goal is shared by the staff of the programme. However, it is important to also see the role of our partners in the process. All potential applicants and project partners should be fully committed to acting in the interest of the public good and to gain benefit for all through cooperation. Although project work always needs to be motivated by some level of own interest, the own gain can never be a driving force in an Interreg and Central Baltic project.

The applicants are asked to read this policy before submitting their application; and submitting their application only if they can commit themselves to this policy.

Each lead partner, in turn, is asked to read this policy and reflect on it with its partnership and Steering Group. Just as the programme, the projects are asked to put in place preventing and detecting tools towards fraud. This is to ensure that our common funds are properly used.

A procedure is in place for the disclosure of situations of conflict of interests.

The term fraud is commonly used to describe a wide range of misconducts including theft, corruption, embezzlement, bribery, forgery, misrepresentation, collusion, money laundering and concealment of material facts. It often involves the use of deception to make a personal gain for oneself, a connected person or a third party, or a loss for another - intention is the key element that distinguishes fraud from irregularity. Fraud does not just have a potential financial impact, but it can cause damage to the reputation of an organisation responsible for managing funds

effectively and efficiently. This is of particular importance for a public organisation responsible for the management of EU funds. Corruption is the abuse of power for private gain. Conflict of interests exists “where the impartial and objective exercise of the official functions of a person are compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other shared interest with e.g. an applicant for or a recipient of EU funds”.

Responsibilities

Within the programme, overall responsibility for managing the risk of fraud and corruption has been delegated to the Head of Managing Authority who has the responsibility for

- Undertaking a regular review, with the help of a risk assessment team, of the fraud risk;
- Establishing an effective anti-fraud policy and fraud response plan;
- Ensuring fraud awareness of staff and training;
- Ensuring that the Managing Authority refers promptly investigations to competent investigation bodies when they occur;

The Audit Authority has a responsibility to act in accordance within professional standards in assessing the risk of fraud and the adequacy of the control framework in place.

Reporting Fraud

The Managing Authority has procedures in place for reporting fraud, both internally and to the European Anti-Fraud Office.

All reports will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence and in accordance with [...insert details of relevant Data Protection/Disclosure Act...]. Staff reporting irregularities or suspected frauds are protected from reprisals.

Anti-fraud measures

The Managing Authority has put in place proportionate anti-fraud measures based on a thorough fraud risk assessment. In particular, it uses an IT tool (ARACHNE) to detect risky operations and ensures that staff is aware of fraud risks and receives anti-fraud training. The Managing Authority carries out a vigorous and prompt review into all cases of suspected and actual fraud which have occurred with a view to improve the internal management and control system where necessary. All cases of suspected fraud will be reported further to the police, to the European Anti-Fraud Office and to the Ministries and regions participating in the programme.

Conclusion

Fraud can manifest itself in many ways. The Managing Authority has a zero-tolerance policy to fraud and corruption and has in place a robust control system that is designed to prevent and detect, as far as is practicable, acts of fraud and correct their impact, should they occur.

4.8. Project communication

Effective communication is very important for the success of any project. It helps you communicate with the project team and stakeholders, ensure uptake of project results as well as raise awareness of EU funding and cross-border cooperation benefits.

Communication is not important for the pure sake of communicating, nor is it a separate element from the rest of the project implementation. Communication is a part of all project activities, and it requires careful planning in order to make the project succeed. Therefore, each project is required to set out the envisaged approach to communication and visibility of the project, based on what you expect your project to achieve to ensure the project is a known success.

Relevant questions in your project communication are:

- What we want to achieve with our communication?
- Who needs to be aware about our project and what we do?
- What is the information and message for each target group?
- Which activities do we need to carry out to reach our target?
- Which channels are effective to communicate with each of the target groups?
- How do we know the message is getting through and how can we adjust our communication where needed?

The answers to these questions are project specific. They need to be considered from the project preparation to the end of the project, throughout the whole project life cycle. This way the project will be more likely to reach its aims and the project outcomes will spread out and become sustainable.

The project communication is planned as part of the project activity plan. One project partner should be **appointed as the main responsible** for coordinating the communication work in the project.

Keep in mind that communication is a common responsibility of all project partners, who together must ensure that active communication efforts are taken throughout the whole project life cycle. It is also important to think and link back to the selected Programme Objective in your communication activities, so that you show the citizens the big picture and how your project contributes to this.

Communication activities vary according to the identified target groups and messages for them, but **all projects are obliged to disseminate information about the project proceedings, results, and outcomes**. It is crucial that the partners use and continuously update their networks for spreading information about project achievements. The public availability of results must be guaranteed also after project closure. Results and outcomes must remain available for at least 5 years after the end date of the project.

Interreg programmes' combined experience in the previous programming period has shown that although websites were useful channels for many projects, there were often situations where projects dedicated resources on maintaining a website to meet the requirement for solely publishing descriptions of their projects, partners, news, materials, and results. Things that would not necessarily have required a separate website. Therefore, the Central Baltic programme has gone for the "Project webspace" option in the new period to save funds and support the projects with online communications, as well with public availability of the results after the projects end.

Central Baltic Project webspace

The Project webspace is a page provided for each funded project under the Central Baltic programme website, which is connected to the electronic monitoring system. Each project page will have information about the project, partners and expected results. The programme will give each project access rights limited to their webspace to update information and upload content themselves (for example news, events, information material). For some projects, the project webspace may be sufficient to share information, so they do not need to create a separate website. Naturally, projects are also free and encouraged to use social media, their partners' channels and networks in addition. However, if the project has a justified need to create a separate website or tool to achieve results, prior approval of the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat would then be required before the project start.

Common message to spread out by all Central Baltic projects

In addition to the required communication about project proceedings, there is one more general message communicated by projects financed by the Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027: the benefits of the funding received from the EU.

This message can be spread out in several ways, e.g., by verbally or visually informing the target groups about the fact that EU financing is a key factor for the project to be implemented. All projects are encouraged to find innovative and inspiring solutions, including different media channels, to deliver the message of the benefits of EU funding.

Harmonised branding of Interreg

All co-funded projects must acknowledge and promote the EU support received in all their communication. In this regard, the approach to harmonised branding across the programme, including all project branding, is a cornerstone of communication in the Central Baltic programme.

The European Territorial Cooperation programmes have joined efforts under a harmonised visual brand mark and a common brand name usable in every language: Interreg. In line with wider EU cohesion policy goals, joining the harmonised branding initiative is expected to reduce spending as well as to increase simplification and recognition.

4.8.1 Regulation requirements concerning project communication

According to the EU regulations the projects are to make sure the following requirements are met in project implementation:

- **Use the Interreg brand (logo) prominently** on all communication material intended for the public or project participants, such as printed or digital products or websites and their mobile versions.
 - The Joint Secretariat provides a custom project logo for each project, which is derived from the programme logo, to help identify your project distinctly.
- **The lead partner and project partners must visibly state the support from the Interreg Central Baltic programme** on documents and communication material that are made for the general public or project participants.
- **The lead partner and project partner** that has a website and social media sites, is obliged to ensure that **at least basic information about the project** (including its aims and results and the financial support from the Interreg Central Baltic programme) is available. Once the project has ended this information must include the main results and outputs available for dissemination.
- **All project partner organisations** must display at a location **clearly visible to the public at least one information poster** (minimum size A3 or equivalent electronic display) informing about the project and highlighting the support from the Interreg Central Baltic programme. Where the beneficiary is a natural person, they shall ensure, to the extent possible, that appropriate information is available, highlighting the EU support from the Interreg Central Baltic programme, at a location visible to the public or through an electronic display.
- A project with a **total budget exceeding 100 000 EUR, must display durable plaque or billboard clearly visible to the public** as soon as the physical implementation of operations involving physical investment start or purchased equipment is installed. Both the durable plaque and billboard have to carry the above-mentioned references to the Interreg Central Baltic programme.
- The Managing Authority notifies the project if it is considered strategically important. Projects of strategic importance must organise a communication event, involve the Commission and the Managing Authority in a timely manner.

The most important EU level regulations and rules regarding communication and visibility are:

- [Regulation 2021/1059](#) referred to as “Interreg Regulation”
- [Regulation 2021/1060](#) referred to as “CPR Regulation”
- [Official website of the European Union, Using the EU emblem](#)

4.8.2 Technical instructions on the use of the logos and references

Making sure the needed logos and references are in place is important (Figure 8.). The cost of any material or information activity, such as a seminar organised by the project, that does not include the required references to EU and the programme, are not considered eligible and thus the project partner will not receive co-financing for these. An internal project meeting is not considered an information activity. As the absence of required references can have some rather severe (financial) consequences, be sure to use them. Remember to always check also the other co-financers' requirements for communication activities and follow the national rules on those issues (can also be called as publicity requirements).

In short, the minimum required reference includes the following:

- The Interreg logo of the Central Baltic Programme and the flag of the EU with the textual reference 'Co-funded by the European Union' (Figure 8.).



Figure 9. The minimum required reference includes the programme's official logo

The different versions of the needed electronic logo files can be downloaded from the programme website at www.centralbaltic.eu. Using the provided files with the EU flag and other references is preferred as they obey to the graphical requirements (colours, fonts) set by the EU Commission.

In case the communication rules aren't respected, and the situation cannot be corrected, up to 2% of the whole partner budget can be considered ineligible.

Project logo

The Interreg **custom logo is your official project logo**. This logo is derived from the programme logo and functions to uniquely identify your project as part of the Interreg framework, co-funded by the European Union. The custom logo includes your project acronym in the corresponding priority colour, which is provided to each project by the Joint Secretariat and can be downloaded from the programme website after contracting.

Using one of these logo versions across your project materials is mandatory, be it the programme's official or project-specific option. Whenever space allows, we recommend using your custom project logo as this helps your project to stand out more clearly from others.

Managing partner organisation logos

In instances where you are including other logos (partner organisations) in your communication materials, it is essential to adhere to the size guidelines by ensuring that logos must not exceed the width or height of the EU emblem present in your communication materials.

This means that the EU flag shall have at least the same size, measured in height or width, as the biggest of any other logos.

If any of those logos are too large in comparison to the largest EU emblem, you have two options for compliance: resize the official Interreg logo or resize the other logos (partner organisations). The aim is to ensure a balanced and harmonious visual representation.

You can find more detailed guidelines on correct use of logos and efficient project communication in the Guide for Project Implementation, which is available on the programme website.

Use of supplementary visual elements

Together with the Interreg logo, you can incorporate visuals and labels to enhance your project's communication if you think these bring added value. These elements should depict and explain your project's goals effectively. Just make sure they don't overshadow the EU emblem (i.e., the EU flag), which is a vital part of the Interreg logo. Keep the official Interreg logo with the EU emblem prominent: it should stand out easily on all communication materials, such as the front page of publications and the top of the website, visible without scrolling.

Simply put, there's **only a single official project logo**. Anything else utilised in your project's visual communication, apart from logos of partner organisations, is considered as diverse visual elements, not additional logos. Thus, it gives you more flexibility to be creative while still making sure the Interreg logo with the EU emblem is prominent and easily distinguishable.

Support from the programme

We have a communication strategy (Central Baltic Programme Communication Strategy) to support successful programme implementation. The main aims of the programme communication strategy include the following:

- To support the projects in all phases of project implementation;
- To support and encourage the projects in their communication activities;
- To make the programme results and benefits widely known in the programme area;

Besides the project's contact person in the Joint Secretariat, also the programme's communication manager and national Contact Points cooperate with the projects in communication matters.

The support will include training seminars, information material as well as support in disseminating project news and outcomes. Projects are encouraged to be active towards the Joint Secretariat concerning their needs in making the project communication efficient.

According to the regulation⁷, the Joint Secretariat will publish at least the following information about each funded project on the programme website:

- Names of all project partners (including lead partner);
- Short description of the project;
- Duration of the project;
- The total cost of the project;
- The ERDF and Programme Objective concerned;
- Union co-financing rate;
- Geographical location of the project;
- Type of intervention for the project;

⁷ The Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (Article 49): [Regulation \(EU\) No 2021/1060](#)

4.9. Audits

Audit trail

The audit trail is of vital importance for the assessment of the Project Reports. It can be described as the records that show how the funding of the project has been spent. The project partners have to retain for audit purposes all official files, documents and data about the project on customary data storage media (in the form of photocopies, microfiches and electronic versions) in a safe and orderly manner for 5 years after the closure of the project by the Managing Authority.

Project invoices must be stored, and they must be traceable in each partner's bookkeeping. The lead partner and the other project partners must ensure that all accounting documentation related to the project is filed separately and that all project related payments have a clearly distinguishable book-keeping code. All supporting materials related to costs as well as examples of project outputs and deliverables shall be kept by the responsible partner. The lead partner is responsible for informing the Joint Secretariat a list of all bodies having project documentation by updating the information into Jems. The documents shall be kept as originals or certified true copies of the originals, or on commonly accepted data carriers including electronic versions of original documents or documents existing in electronic version only.

National Control

National Control means the dedicated control of the project costs, which will be done on the project partner level (incl. lead partner). In practice, it means that at the end of each reporting period each project partner will fill in the Partner Report and submit it with all mandatory annexes through Jems.

In each Member State/Åland an authority has been nominated to carry out the checks. The audits are free of charge for the partners.

The assigned National Control organisations are:

Estonia: The State Shared Service Centre

Finland: Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council

Latvia: Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia

Sweden: Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth

Åland: Åland Government, Department of Trade and Industry

According to EU regulations the National Control has three months to conduct their check of the project costs, calculated from when the report is submitted to National Control. They will check the expenditure entered in the project accounts and the supporting documents (e.g., invoices, contracts, Report of hours, and public procurement documentation) as well as the correct application of Simplified Cost Options.

The controllers check the audit trail of real costs. The audit trail must allow controllers to enter the management system of the respective project partner and to eventually trace back all declared expenditure to the original invoices or other equivalent documents.

The national control has three months to perform its check. The clock stops when the national control sends out questions to the partners and starts again when the answers are received, therefore it is of utmost importance that the partners respect the set deadlines.

After the controller has conducted the check, the documentation (national control Certificate and Report) will be submitted via Jems to the project.

On-the-spot-checks

The national controllers will carry out on-the-spot-checks. On-the-spot-check means that the controller visits the project partner and verifies that certain purchases of services and products of the approved application have actually taken place during the project implementation and that the related processes (e.g., public procurement, archiving and bookkeeping) have been carried out according to rules.

Second Level Audit

The Audit Authority is one of the Central Baltic programme authorities. It carries out audits to ensure the proper functioning individual projects and the programme. The Audit Authority is assisted by the Group of Auditors which are delegated by each member state of the programme.

The projects to be audited will be selected under the appropriate sampling method, which means that one or more project partners can be chosen for second level control. The Audit Authority, assisted by the Group of Auditors, will check all costs and original supporting documents for real costs for the respective period of time.

The audit reporting procedure will have two phases: draft and final audit report. The organisation audited can comment on the results and findings of the draft audit report. The respective national member of the Group of Auditors (auditor) will circulate the final report to the Audit Authority and to the auditee.

Financial corrections

If a cost is found ineligible at any time during or after the project duration, a correction will be made. If the ineligible cost is found by the national control or Joint Secretariat, the correction will be made by deducting the amount from the project payment in the relevant reporting period. In such cases, the project budget will not be affected.

Real costs and different types of Simplified Cost Options have different mechanisms for what costs are ineligible or how to treat ineligibilities. The most important issue to keep in mind is that if the basis cost of a flat rate is found ineligible, it will also affect the flat rate.

If an ineligible cost is found after the project payment has been made and the Managing Authority has reported the cost to the European Commission, the correction will be made by the Managing Authority. The Managing Authority can either launch a modification process to reduce

the project budget with the respective amount, make deductions to next report and payment or send a recovery letter to the lead partner, asking the lead partner to pay the money back to the Managing Authority. If the ineligible cost has been made by another partner, the lead partner will get the money from that partner. In these cases, the total ERDF amount of the project will be reduced, and the same sum may not be used again by the project. More specific details regarding the process is set in the Subsidy Contract.

If the Managing Authority has reason to suspect fraudulent use of project funds, it may also reduce the budget by the value of the questioned cost.

Financial corrections regarding public procurements will be made according the Commission Decision⁸ laying down the guidelines for determining financial corrections to be made to expenditure financed by the Union for non-compliance with the applicable rules on public procurement.

The logic of the guidelines will be extended to other types of deductions, where relevant (Table 12).

Table 12 Financial corrections

Type of mistake	Amount of correction
Requirements have not been fulfilled, but the mistake can be corrected	0-10%
Technical mistakes without a big impact	10%
Substantial errors in following the requirement or defined procedure	25%
No elements of the requirement have been fulfilled, and no corrective measures are possible	50-100%

The rates are applied when it is not possible to quantify the financial impact.

In cases where making a judgment can be difficult and there is not necessarily one correct answer the auditors on all levels (national control, second-level audit and programme bodies) can apply professional judgment. Professional judgment is a process used to reach a well-reasoned conclusion that is based on the relevant facts and circumstances available at the time of the conclusion. A fundamental part of the process is the involvement of individuals with sufficient knowledge and experience. Professional judgment involves the identification, without bias, of reasonable alternatives; therefore, careful and objective consideration of information that may seem contradictory to a conclusion is key to its application. In addition, both professional scepticism and objectivity are essential to the process and to reaching an appropriate conclusion.

⁸ Brussels, 14.5.2019 C(2019) 3452 final

Other controls

Other controls on the projects may also be performed by the European Commission and any other programme body. In addition, the Joint Secretariat, Managing Authority and Audit Authority are entitled to perform needed checks at the project level to ensure that a sound financial management and control system has been implemented in the programme.

4.10. Project closure

You should start preparing for project closure in good time.

The one-month closure period is a time for the lead partner to wrap up the project. During the closure period only costs for project management (salaries and linked flat rates) for the lead partner can occur. All costs incurred during or before the closure period must be paid out before the project end. Meaning that all project costs have to be incurred and paid out (incl. necessary taxes etc.) during the project duration.

You should make realistic plans for the end of the project and the possible risks related to work contracts ending. As activities have ended, some project partners might not anymore be that committed, have taken up new tasks, staff might have left the partner organisation etc. It is therefore very important to start collecting the relevant information in good time. It is the LP's responsibility to ensure that adequate resources and time are reserved for the closure measures prior to the actual ending date indicated in the approved Application Form.

Closing the project is also your last opportunity to meet with all project partners and to evaluate together if your project has been successful. However, this is not just about checking if you did all what you promised in the Application Form, but also an opportunity to identify best practices and lessons learnt, and to discuss how to ensure the sustainability of your project achievements.

One task is to update your project webspace on the centralbaltic.eu website. The information should contain a summary of the project's results, outputs and outcomes with with links if applicable.

Once the accounting year, in which your final payment has been reported to the Commission, has been closed, the Managing Authority will inform the lead partner by letter of the project closure and remaining duties.

The Lead Partner is obliged to ensure that information must on the main results, outputs and achievements remain available for dissemination.

More information on closure can be found in the Guide for Project Implementation.

4.11. Duties after the project ends

Although the project has ended, several duties remain for the partnership. All partners should familiarise themselves with these specific rules and follow them closely. It is the responsibility of the lead partner to ensure that all partners are aware of these rules and follow them.

Reporting results

Projects will be asked to report on their result indicators one year after their end. You must ensure that the data is collected and submitted in due time. The programme will also ask for general information on the durability and sustainability of outputs and results as well as follow-up activities after the project ended.

If the Lead Partner doesn't fulfil this obligation, a financial correction of 5% of the project total ERDF budget will be made as a recovery of funds.

Investments

A project with investments may have to repay the ERDF contribution if the productive activity ceases or is relocated outside the programme area; a change in ownership takes place, giving a firm or a public body an undue advantage; or there is a substantial change affecting its nature, objectives or implementation conditions, undermining the original objectives. This obligation remains for up to 10 years after the final payment has been made to the lead partner. The lead partner must notify the Managing Authority (the Regional Council of Southwest Finland) of such changes beforehand so that the Managing Authority can assess the situation and needed actions.

Availability of documents

The partners must keep available all documents related to the project costs, outputs, and results for 5 years after the closure of the project by the Managing Authority. For projects with state aid the documents must be kept for 10 years from the date such aid was granted. This also applies to investments. Note, that national rules can require you to keep documents for a longer time.

The project may be audited by EU, national or other audit bodies also after its closure. The project is obliged to assist the auditors and provide them with any information and material required. The project should also provide the Managing Authority with a list of contact details for each partner for any contacts after the project has ended. The contacts should usually be for the organisation rather than an individual person so as to ensure that the message can be delivered.

Maintaining project outputs and results

Although the project has come to an end, the aim is that the project outcomes, outputs or results, as applicable, or the cooperation would not come to a stop. The partnership should have

planned for the maintenance and updating of project outputs and results already during the project implementation.

Projects will be asked for information on what has happened after the project one year after the project ended. The partnership must ensure that information can be collected and will be provided upon request.

5. Annexes

ANNEX 1: Applicable regulations

When implementing an EU project, several EU, programme and national level regulations or rules have to be taken into account. Below is a list of the main sources of information, although the list is not exhaustive.

The most important EU level regulations and rules are:

- [Regulation \(EU\) No 2021/1060](#) referred to as “CPR Regulation”;
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 2021/1059](#) referred to as “Interreg Regulation”.
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 2021/1058](#) referred to as “ERDF Regulation”;
- Rules for public procurement and entry into the markets;
- Protection of the environment;
- Equal opportunities between men and women;
- State aid/GBER rules.

In case EU regulations are in place for a certain topic, these take precedence over programme and national rules. The Programme Manual has already been written with this logic in mind, but in case none of the above EU rules has regulated a certain topic, national rules will apply.

ANNEX 2: Indicator Fiches

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	PSR1
2	Indicator name	Companies with achieved sales and contracts to new markets
3	Measurement unit	Enterprise
4	Type of indicator	Programme Specific Result Indicator
5	Baseline	0
6	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	300 (10-15 projects, each achieves ca 15-20 sales)
7	Priority (P)	P 1 Innovative Central Baltic Business development
8	Programme Objective (PO)	PO 1 More exports by Central Baltic SMEs
9	Definition and concepts from Intervention logic	New markets are defined as markets outside EU/EFTA. Contracts (for selling services or products) with international organizations are equal to the new markets: if headquarters of these organisations are outside Central Baltic programme area. Sales should be achieved by target group companies via joint action to the new markets as a direct result of the project activities. The counted company should have written contract, proof of transaction or equal proof with buyer from the targeted market for delivery of goods or services. Sales and contracts are understood as written documents, including the proofs of payments, proofs of shipments sent to the buyers, other equal written (on paper or digital documents). In order to be counted under this indicator, the achieved sales and contracts to new markets should be a direct result of the non-financial support provided via the programme. Sales for tourism sector and other service sectors are counted if foreign buyer uses the service within CB programme area - purchases by tourists from targeted new markets. The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating companies and their achieved sales (name of company, name of contact person, proofs of the sale/contract). Confidentiality rules apply: no information on

		sales and deals will be disclosed without the permission of the concerned company.
10	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS for information 1 year after project ends.
11	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
12	Aggregation issues	Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all project's contributions.
13	Reporting	Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 full year after project has ended).
14		References
15	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
16	Notes	
17		Examples: Central Baltic 2014-21 programme SO 1.3 projects

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO04=RCO01
2	Indicator name	Enterprises with non-financial support
3	Measurement unit	Enterprise
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
6	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	1000 (10-15 projects in each ca 80 target group companies actively participating)
7	Priority	P 1 Innovative Central Baltic Business development
8	Programme Objective	PO 1 More exports by Central Baltic SMEs
9	Definition and concepts	For the purpose of this indicator, enterprises are profit-oriented organisations that produce goods and services to satisfy market needs. Classification of enterprises: - Micro enterprise (≤ 10 employees and annual turnover $\leq$ EUR 2 million, or balance sheet $\leq$ EUR 2 million); - Small enterprise (10-49 employees and annual turnover $>$EUR 2 million - $25 \leq$ EUR 10 million or balance sheet in $>$ EUR 2 million - $\leq$ EUR 10 million); - Medium enterprise (50-249 employees and annual turnover $>$EUR 10 million - $\leq$ EUR 50 million or balance sheet in EUR $>$ EUR 10 million - $\leq$ EUR 43 million); If either of the 2 thresholds (employees and annual turnover/balance sheet) is exceeded the enterprises shall be categorized in the size category above. Size of the enterprise supported is measured at the time of the application. We count the participation from project activities in which the companies' representatives take active part. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive type of activities are counted. 1 company may participate in several project activities - we count 1

		There can be more than 1 representative from 1 company - we count 1 The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating companies. The records should include the companies names, the contact information and in which project activities the participation took place.
10	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS.
11	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
12	Aggregation issues	Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.
13	Reporting	Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.
14	References	
15	Corresponding corporate indicator	
17	Notes	
18	Examples: All Central Baltic 2014-21 programme SO 1.1 and SO 1.3 projects	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCR04
2	Indicator name	SMEs introducing marketing or organisational innovation
3	Measurement unit	Enterprise
4	Type of indicator	ERDF Result Indicator
5	Baseline	0
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	not required
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	200 (10-15 implemented projects achieve ca 15 companies with marketing or organisational innovation)
8	Priority (P)	P 1 Innovative Central Baltic Business development
9	Programme Objective (PO)	PO 1 More exports by Central Baltic SMEs
10	Definition and concepts from Intervention logic	We would use it as output on project level (as the introduced marketing and organisational innovations are to serve the purpose to achieve sales on targeted markets), being the milestone towards targeted results (achieved sales). On programme level we will report it to EC as result for over European aggregation purposes. Marketing innovation is the implementation of a new marketing concept or strategy that differs significantly from the enterprise's existing marketing methods and which has not been used before. It requires significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion or pricing. The indicator does not cover seasonal, regular or other routine changes in marketing methods. Organisational innovation is a new organisational method in the enterprise's business practices (including knowledge management). The organisational innovation must be the result of strategic decisions by the management and implemented with the support of the project. The indicator does not cover mergers or acquisitions. even if for the first time. For enterprise definition - see RCO04/RCO01

		Number of SMEs introducing marketing or organisational innovation due to the support provided. The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating companies and their achieved marketing or organizational innovations. One company may have more than 1 innovation but we count 1. The records should include the companies' names, the contact information and in which project activities the participation took place.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS when relevant.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all project's contributions. An enterprise is counted once regardless how many times it receives support from operations in the same specific objective
14	Reporting	Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.
15		References
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18		

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO87
2	Indicator name	Organisations co-operating across borders
3	Measurement unit	organisations
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	80 (10-15 financed projects, in average with 5-6 partners)
8	Priority	P 1 Innovative Central Baltic Business development
9	Programme Objective	PO 1 More exports by Central Baltic SMEs
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects. The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities, project partners as mentioned in the financing agreement of the application. Organisations cooperating within both types of projects (regular and small) are counted.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	The project partners are counted on programme level. If organization participates in more than 1 project - we count 1.
14	Reporting	Annually (12 months)
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	
17	Notes	
18	Examples:	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	PSR2
2	Indicator name	Number of scaled up companies
3	Measurement unit	Enterprise
4	Type of indicator	Programme Specific Result Indicator
5	Baseline	0
6	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	200 (8-10 projects - each achieves in average 20)
7	Priority	P 1 Innovative Central Baltic Business development
8	Programme Objective	PO 2 More new Central Baltic scaled-up growth companies
9	Definition and concepts	The status as “scaled-up company” should be achieved via joint action by project partners for the participating target group companies as a direct result of the project activities Scaled up company is defined as: company which raised investments, company established presence outside of home market, company developed the business model, company developed the new product/service, company expanded the key team, company merged or acquired, company implemented the IPO. To be counted under this indicator, the scaled-up company should be a direct result of the non-financial support provided via the programme. Partners are responsible for keeping records on participating companies and their achieved scaled up achievement (name of the company, name of the contact person, proofs of the scaled-up status). Confidentiality rules apply: no information will be disclosed without the permission of the concerned company.
10	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Requests by JS.
11	Time measurement	Annually from 2nd full year of implementation After the project ends, 1 full year after the project has ended.
12	Aggregation issues	Will be aggregated on project level over the duration of the project and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.
13	Reporting	Annually from 2 nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 full years after project has ended).
14	References	

15	Corresponding corporate indicator	
16	Notes	
17		Examples: N/a

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO04 = RCO01
2	Indicator name	Enterprises with non-financial support
3	Measurement unit	Enterprise
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	800 (8-12 projects, in each ca 70-80 companies actively participate)
8	Priority	P 1 Innovative Central Baltic Business development
9	Programme Objective	PO 2 More new Central Baltic scaled-up growth companies
10	Definition and concepts	For the purpose of this indicator, enterprises are profit-oriented organisations that produce goods and services to satisfy market needs. Classification of enterprises: - Micro enterprise (≤ 10 employees and annual turnover $\leq$ EUR 2 million, or balance sheet $\leq$ EUR 2 million); - Small enterprise (10-49 employees and annual turnover $>$EUR 2 million - $25 \leq$ EUR 10 million or balance sheet in $>$ EUR 2 million - $\leq$ EUR 10 million); - Medium enterprise (50-249 employees and annual turnover $>$EUR 10 million - $\leq$ EUR 50 million or balance sheet in EUR $>$ EUR 10 million - $\leq$ EUR 43 million); If either of the 2 thresholds (employees and annual turnover/balance sheet) is exceeded the enterprises shall be categorized in the size category above. Size of the enterprise supported is measured at the time of the application. We count the participation from project activities in which the companies' representatives take active part. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive type of activities are counted. 1 company may participate in several project activities - we count 1

		There can be more than 1 representative from 1 company - we count 1 The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating companies. The records should include the companies names, the contact information and in which project activities the participation took place.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by IS when relevant.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.
14	Reporting	Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in Final report.
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18	Examples:	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO87
2	Indicator name	Organisations cooperating across borders
3	Measurement unit	organisations
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	0
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	not required
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	70 (8-12 projects, in average with 5-6 partners)
8	Priority	P 1 Innovative Central Baltic Business development
9	Programme Objective	PO 2 More new Central Baltic scaled-up growth companies
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects. The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities, project partners as mentioned in the financing agreement of the application. Organisations cooperating within both types of projects (regular and small) are counted.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	The project partners are counted on programme level. If organization participates in more than 1 project - we count 1.
14	Reporting	Annually.
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	
17	Notes	
18	Examples:	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	PSR3
2	Indicator name	The number of improved product/service cycles/chains
3	Measurement unit	Cross-border circular economy chain/cycle
4	Type of indicator	Programme Specific Result Indicator
5	Baseline	0
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	not required
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	13 (10-12 projects each achieve 1-2 improved chain/cycle)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme objective	PO 3 Joint circular economy solutions
10	Definition and concepts	Projects should target the improvement of the product/service chains which are in place on cross-border within Central Baltic programme area. The chain is improved if the following impact is achieved: - Reduced amounts of used virgin materials and/or - Amounts of decreased waste and/or - Amounts of reused products and materials. By 1 project 1 or all 3 components of the result indicator can be targeted For each targeted chain for understanding the improvement the baseline is determined by the start of the project activities. And the target is set for what should be achieved. If the set target is achieved, the chain is counted as “improved”. The approach and methodology of the measuring the improvements will be obligatory part of the project’s 1st phase (after the project has started prior to the core implementation activities). The baseline and target for the improvement should be set numerically.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS when relevant.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)

13	Aggregation issues	Different components of the potential improvements are not aggregated. If improvement is achieved in 1 or more components it is counted as “the improved chain” - numerically as 1. There can be more than 1 chain improved by 1 project. Improved chains by all projects are aggregated to single numeric value on programme level.
14	Reporting	Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 full years after project ended).
15		References
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18		Examples

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO87
2	Indicator name	Organisations cooperating across borders (the project partners)
3	Measurement unit	Organization
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	0
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	not required
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	80 (10-12 projects in average with 5-7 partners)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme Objective	PO 3 Joint circular economy solutions
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects. The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities, project partners as mentioned in the financing agreement of the application. Organisations cooperating within both types of projects (regular and small) are counted.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	The project partners are counted on programme level. If organization participates in more than 1 project - we count 1.
14	Reporting	Annually.
15		References
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18		Examples

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO84
2	Indicator name	Pilot actions developed
3	Measurement unit	action
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	35 (10-12 projects contribute in average with 3-4 pilot actions)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme objective	PO 3 Joint circular economy solutions
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the pilot actions developed jointly and implemented by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or the transfer of practices. In order to be counted by this indicator, - the pilot action needs not only to be developed, but also implemented within the project and - the implementation of the pilot action should be finalised by the end of the project. Jointly developed pilot action implies the involvement of organizations from at least two participating countries
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS when relevant.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)
13	Aggregation issues	
14	Reporting	Annually.
15		References

16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18		Examples

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO81
2	Indicator name	Participations in joint actions across borders
3	Measurement unit	Organization
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	500 (10-12 projects each contributing in average 30-40
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme Objective	PO 3 Joint circular economy solutions
10	Definition and concepts	Organizations and individuals' participation in project activities in which the organizations/companies' representatives take active part. That is "unique active participants" (organisations) are counted in each project. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive type of activities are counted. 1 Organization may participate in several project activities - we count 1 When counting the organisations, there can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization/company - we count 1
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS when relevant.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.
14	Reporting	Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18	Examples	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	PSR4
2	Indicator name	The number of improved urban and agricultural runoff/load sources
3	Measurement unit	load sources
4	Type of indicator	Programme Specific Result
5	Baseline	0
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	not required
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	100 (12-16 projects each contributing 4-7 improved sources)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme Objective	PO 4 Improved coastal and marine environment
10	Definition and concepts	The reduction or elimination of the runoffs/loads should be targeted and realistically achievable by the implemented projects. 1 project can target and achieve more than 1 „improved runoff/load source“. The improved runoff/load source is defined as dispersed or spot source where measurable reduction of inflows of nutrients or toxins or hazardous substances is achieved. Potentially improved source can be located on coast or in sea (bottom). For each potentially improved source the baseline is determined by the start of the project activities. And the target is set for what should be achieved. If target is achieved the source is counted as “improved”.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS when relevant.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)
13	Aggregation issues	There can be more than 1 source improved by 1 project. Improved sources by all projects are aggregated to the single numeric value on programme level.
14	Reporting	Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 full years after project ended).
15		References

16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18		Examples : CB 2014-20 SO 2.4 projects

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO87
2	Indicator name	Organisations cooperating across borders (the project partners)
3	Measurement unit	Organization
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	80 (12-16 projects in average with 5-7 partners)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme Objective	PO 4 Improved coastal and marine environment
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects. The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities, project partners as mentioned in the financing agreement of the application. Organisations cooperating within both types of projects (regular and small) are counted.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	The project partners are counted on programme level. If organization participates in more than 1 project - we count 1.
14	Reporting	Annually.
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18	Examples	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO81
2	Indicator name	Participations in joint actions across borders
3	Measurement unit	Organization
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	600 (12-16 projects each including 20-40 actively participating organizations)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme Objective	PO 4 Improved coastal and marine environment
10	Definition and concepts	Participation in project activities which follow to the information event (or other events activities where active participation does not take place) and in which the organizations/companies' representatives take active part. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive type of activities are counted. 1 Organization/company may participate in several project activities - we count 1 When counting the organisations, there can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization/company - we count 1
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)
13	Aggregation issues	Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.
14	Reporting	Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18	Examples	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO84
2	Indicator name	Pilot actions developed
3	Measurement unit	action
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	90 (12-16 projects contribute in average with 4-6 pilot actions)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme objective	PO 4 Improved coastal and marine environment
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the pilot actions developed jointly and implemented by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or the transfer of practices. In order to be counted by this indicator, - the pilot action needs not only to be developed, but also implemented - within the project and - the implementation of the pilot action should be finalised by the end of - the project. Jointly developed pilot action implies the involvement of organizations from at least two participating countries.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS when relevant.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)
13	Aggregation issues	
14	Reporting	Annually.

15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18	Examples	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	PSR5
2	Indicator name	Improved intermodal transport nodes and transport areas with CO2 reductions
3	Measurement unit	The transport nodes, intermodal transport areas/systems
4	Type of indicator	Programme Specific Result Indicator
5	Baseline	0
6	Milestone 2024	not required
7	Target 2029	25 (8-125-10 projects each in average achieving 2-4 improved nodes, transport areas/systems)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme Objective	PO 5 Decreased CO2 emissions
10	Definition and concepts	The reduction of CO2 emissions has to be targeted and realistically achievable within transport node or intermodal transport area to qualify as „reduced CO2 transport node, intermodal transport area “. 1 project can target and achieve more than 1 „intermodal transport nodes and areas with CO2 reductions “. The measurable amount of CO2 decrease should be achieved for counting the node as “improved”. The baseline situation is determined by the start of the project activities. And the target is set for what should be achieved. If the target is achieved, then the transport node/transport area is counted as “improved”. In addition to the CO2 reduction the efficiency of the intermodal transport node/ intermodal transport area should also be achieved. The projects under this Programme objective may last longer (even longer than 4 years +) for being able of achieving targeted results (CO2 reductions). If by the end of the project the realistic action plan is in place and the implementation decided - it can be counted as “improved transport node/transport area”.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS when relevant
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)

13	Aggregation issues	There can be more than 1 node/transport area improved by 1 project. Improved nodes/transport areas by all projects are aggregated to single numeric value on programme level.
14	Reporting	Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 full years after project ended).
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	
17	Notes	
18	Examples	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO87
2	Indicator name	Organizations cooperating across borders (the project partners)
3	Measurement unit	Organization
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	50 (8-12 projects in average with 6-8 partners)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme Objective	PO 5 Decreased CO2 emissions
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects. The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities, project partners as mentioned in the financing agreement of the application. Organisations cooperating within both types of projects (regular and small) are counted.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	The project partners are counted on programme level. If organization participates in more than 1 project - we count 1.
14	Reporting	Annually.
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18	Examples	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO81
2	Indicator name	Participations in joint actions across borders
3	Measurement unit	Organizations (incl companies)
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	70 (8-12 projects with each including the active participation of 5-10 organizations)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme Objective	PO 5 Decreased CO2 emissions
10	Definition and concepts	Participation in project activities which follow to the information event (or other events activities where active participation does not take place) and in which the organizations/companies' representatives take active part in each project. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive type of activities are counted. 1 Organization/company may participate in several project activities - we count 1 When counting the organisations, there can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization/company - we count 1
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.
14	Reporting	Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	

17	Notes	
18		Examples: The current CB programme SO 3.1 projects which achieved CO2 emissions reductions.

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO84
2	Indicator name	Pilot actions developed
3	Measurement unit	action
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	30 (8-12 projects contribute in average with 2-4 pilot actions)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme objective	PO 5 Decreased CO2 emissions
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the pilot actions developed jointly and implemented by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or the transfer of practices. In order to be counted by this indicator, - the pilot action needs not only to be developed, but also implemented - within the project and - the implementation of the pilot action should be finalised by the end of - the project. Jointly developed pilot action implies the involvement of organizations from at least two participating countries.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS when relevant.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)
13	Aggregation issues	Aggregated on PO level and on programme level.
14	Reporting	Annually.

15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18	Examples	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	PSO1
2	Indicator name	The number of projects targeting intermodal transport nodes and areas
3	Measurement unit	Organizations (incl companies)
4	Type of indicator	Programme Specific Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	9 (8-12 financed projects)
8	Priority	P 2 Improved Central Baltic environment and resource use
9	Programme Objective	PO 5 Decreased CO2 emissions
10	Definition and concepts	The outputs are measured as the number of financed and implemented projects
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	All financed projects under PO 5 will be aggregated into one numeric value.
14	Reporting	Annually.
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	
17	Notes	
18	Examples: The current CB programme SO 3.1 projects which achieved CO2 emissions reductions.	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	PSR6, PSR7, PSR8
2	Indicator name	PSR 6: Number of people with increased competitiveness on labor market PSR 7: Number of organisations with applied anti-discriminatory policies PSR 8: Number of people with increased entrepreneurship
3	Measurement unit	PSR 6, PSR 8: People PSR 7: Organisations (incl. companies)
4	Type of indicator	Programme Specific Result Indicators
5	Baseline	0
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	not required
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	1) 1800 (16 projects on average each achieves 112, (rounded)) 2) 90 (6 projects on average each achieves 15) 3) 950 (10 projects on average each achieves 95)
8	Priority	P 3 Improved employment opportunities
9	Programme Objective	PO 6 Improved employment opportunities on labour market
10	Definition and concepts	There are 3 distinct focuses within this Programme Objective and therefore 3 programme specific result indicators are needed. The target values and achievements of the 3 result indicators are aggregated separately. PSR 6 and PSR 8 can be aggregated together. Less competitive groups within society: including young people under 25, people in pre-retirement, retired people, refugees, and people with special needs and other less competitive groups. People with increased competitiveness: work contract achieved; work affiliation achieved; new qualification gained, certificate proving the completion of study programme; actively job-searching. Companies with anti-discriminatory policy applied: policy prepared, approved and applied. People with increased entrepreneurship: successful completion of complex entrepreneurship programme.

		We count unique individuals and companies as the ones which reach required new statuses.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS when relevant.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)
13	Aggregation issues	For all 3 components of the indicator the aggregation is applied separately. Aggregated as 3 separate numeric values on programme level.
14	Reporting	Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends in final report.
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18	Examples:	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO87
2	Indicator name	Organisations cooperating across borders (the project partners)
3	Measurement unit	Organization
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) Output Indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	128 (32 projects in average with 4 partners)
8	Priority	P 3 Improved employment opportunities
9	Programme Objective	PO 6 Improved employment opportunities on labour market
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects. The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities, project partners as mentioned in the financing agreement of the application. Organisations cooperating within both types of projects (regular and small) are counted.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months).
13	Aggregation issues	The project partners are counted on programme level. If organization participates in more than 1 project - we count 1
14	Reporting	Annually as full year achievement.
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18	Examples	

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO81, RCO81*
2	Indicator name	Participations in joint actions across borders (the organisations) *(the individuals)
3	Measurement unit	Organization, people
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) output indicator
5	Baseline	0
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	not required
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	100 (6 projects each involves ca 17 organisations (rounded)) 2920 (16 PSR6 projects with 120 participants each and 10 PSR8 projects with 100 participants)
8	Priority	P 3 Improved employment opportunities
9	Programme Objective	PO 6 Improved employment opportunities on labour market
10	Definition and concepts	Organizations and individuals' participation in project activities in which the organizations/companies' representatives or individuals takes active part. That is "unique active participants" (organisations or individuals) are counted in each project. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive type of activities are counted. 1 Organization/company/individual may participate in several project activities - we count 1 When counting the organisations there can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization/company - we count 1
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system. Separate requests by JS when relevant.
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)
13	Aggregation issues	Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.
14	Reporting	Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.
15	References	

16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18		Examples:

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCR104
2	Indicator name	Solutions taken up or up scaled by organizations
3	Measurement unit	solutions
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) result indicator
5	Baseline	0
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	not required
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	1. 12 (6 regular projects each generating 1- 3 joint service or jointly digitalized service) 2. 50 (20 small projects each generating 1-3 practical solutions/improvements)
8	Priority	P4 Improved public services
9	Programme Objective	PO 7 Improved public services and solutions for citizens
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the number of solutions, other than legal or administrative solutions, that are developed by supported projects and are taken up or upscaled during the implementation of the project or within one year after project completion. “Solutions” include 2 sub-components representing 2 different interventions within Programme Objective: 1) With regular projects with which cross-border public services and digitalization of public services should be targeted and achieved. 2) With small projects where experience exchange and learning from each other should be accompanied with improvement of the public services or practical solution leading to improvement of the public services should be targeted and achieved. Both types of results are counted separately but can be aggregated to single target value. The improvement or new solution is achieved if it is tested/piloted or taken into use by customers (users). The digitalization of public services and creating joint (cross-border) public services by regular projects.

		Joint (cross-border) public service can be created as new or based on the aligned existing services. Digitalization of the existing public service should take place for all participating country locations represented in partnership. The created joint (cross-border) public service and digitalized public service should be tested/piloted by customers (users) or taken to use by customers (users) Practical solution and improvement of the public service - what specifically is improved should be defined in each project work plan. Examples include - increased quality level of the service, adopted improved regulation, adopted policy document or plan, shortened time of the service delivery, expanded target group, improved usability of the service, improved participation (incl feedback) opportunities etc.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system / Data requests by JS
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)
13	Aggregation issues	For 2 components of the indicator the aggregation is applied separately. Aggregated as 2 separate numeric values on programme level.
14	Reporting	Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 full years after project ended).
15		References
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18		Examples: N/a

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO116
2	Indicator name	Jointly developed solutions
3	Measurement unit	solutions
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) output indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	62 (6 regular size projects achieve 1-3 joint public service or digitalized service, and 20 small size projects generate each 1-3 practical improvements and solutions)
8	Priority	P4 Improved public services
9	Programme Objective	PO 7 Improved public services and solutions for citizens
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the number of jointly developed solutions from joint actions implemented by supported projects. In order to be counted in the indicator, an identified solution should include indications of the actions needed for it to be taken up or to be upscaled. A jointly developed solution implies the involvement of organizations from at least two participating countries. “Solutions” include 2 sub-components representing 2 different interventions within Programme Objective: 1) With regular projects with which cross-border public services and digitalization of public services should be targeted and achieved and 2) With small projects where experience exchange and learning from each other should be accompanied with improvement of public services or practical solution leading to the improvement of the public services 1 project may deliver more than 1 solution.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system / Data requests by JS
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)
13	Aggregation issues	Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.

14	Reporting	Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.
15		References
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18		Examples

Row ID	Field	Indicator metadata
1	Indicator code	RCO87
2	Indicator name	Organisations cooperating across borders (the project partners)
3	Measurement unit	organisations
4	Type of indicator	ERDF (Interreg) output indicator
5	Baseline	not required
6	Milestone 2024 (as 31.12.24)	0
7	Target 2029 (as 31.12.29)	150 (up to 6 regular size projects and up to 20 small size projects in average with 3 - 5 partners)
8	Priority	P4 Improved public services
9	Programme Objective	PO 7 Improved public services and solutions for citizens
10	Definition and concepts	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects. The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities, project partners as mentioned in the financing agreement of the application. Organisations cooperating within both types of projects (regular and small) are counted.
11	Data collection	MA monitoring system
12	Time measurement	1 year (12 months)
13	Aggregation issues	The project partners are counted on programme level. If organization participates in more than 1 project - we count 1.
14	Reporting	Annually (12 months)
15	References	
16	Corresponding corporate indicator	Not applicable
17	Notes	
18	Examples	

ANNEX 3: Changes made compared to the previous version of the Programme Manual

Change version table

VERSION	CHANGES	PAGE
Change version 5.0 -> 6.0	Terminology related to outputs, results and other programme achievements has been reviewed across the document to match the Programme 's understanding	4
	Explanations to Programme Objective 6 target groups and additional definitions	30
	The 5 th call is carried out with a 1-step procedure, with related updates made.	Chapter 3
	Clarified when the project is expected to start	54
	Better explaining what all costs are covered by different Cost Categories	88, 91,92
	Explained that GBER Art 20 excludes other public co-financing	98
	Indicator target values updated to Fichés based on Programme Modification	Annex 2