



# The Baltic Sea Network - European Social Fund

Transnational cooperation  
for a stronger social dimension  
in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region



# The Baltic Sea Network - European Social Fund, BSN-ESF

The Baltic Sea Network-ESF was initiated by the Swedish ESF-Council in 2011 in order to strengthen the transnational cooperation between Managing Authorities of the European Social Fund (ESF), intermediate / implementing bodies and projects in the Baltic Sea Region. It also aimed at strengthening the link between the ESF and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

The members of the network come from Sweden, the Åland Islands, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Land of Hamburg. The cooperation has resulted in a number of joint activities such as:

## ■ Objectives

The objectives of the network are to:

- Develop a common understanding of the role of ESF in relation to the EUSBSR among ESF actors and stakeholders.
- Develop and consolidate the network between the Managing Authorities and other actors in the ESF community in the region, in order to further increase cooperation, identify policy gaps as well as exchanging good practices.
- Facilitate and strengthen the transnational cooperation between project promoters / projects in the ESF in the Baltic Sea Region.
- Enhance the cooperation between the Member State in the Baltic Sea Region in relation to the ESF and its role in implementing the EUSBSR.
- Help implementing the social dimension in the EUSBSR in relevant priority areas and to identify relevant priorities for the future.
- Integration of the network into the Common Framework and by doing so strengthening the social dimension in the EUSBSR.

regular meetings, conferences, partner search forums and learning seminars. A number of themes have been identified by the partners as relevant, with a main focus on youth employment and inclusion.

The network will actively take part in the Common Framework, the support structure for transnational cooperation provided by the European Commission according to Article 10 of the ESF-regulation 1304/2013. The themes identified by the network are also corresponding well with the themes proposed within the Common Framework.

## ■ Partners

In order to carry out the objectives the network works closely together with the following partners:

- The European Commission (EC): Representatives of DG EMPL attend the BSN-ESF meetings regularly and support the integration of the network into the Common Framework.
- The Policy Area Coordinators Education – Close cooperation with the PAC at Norden Association of Sweden and at the Hamburg Institute for Vocational Education and Training.
- The Flagship leaders – BSN-ESF is represented in the steering group of “School 2 Work (S2W)” and also in the workgroups. Project coordinators of S2W give regularly updates at BSN-ESF-meetings.
- Project networks – BSN-ESF initiated the network “Mission Possible” which consists of projects from Sweden, Hamburg, Poland and France dealing with NEETS
- Projects

## ■ Activities

The following activities have been or will be carried out:

- A survey of projects and Operational programmes in the ESF in order to identify where links to the EUSBSR can be found.
- Researching links to other policies and programmes (e.g. the Life Long Learning Programmes and Youth for Europe) related to the network’s objectives.
- Assuring that when appropriate references and links to the EUSBSR were included in the regional or national Operational Programmes for the ESF-programming period 2014-2020.
- Formal contact points have been established within the network for safeguarding the information and communication flows.
- Establishing a solid partnership with EUSBSR-Policy Area coordinators and BSN-ESF as well as with the EC.
- Member States participating in the network will organize meetings and project visits focusing on the links between ESF and the EUSBSR.
- Actions will be taken in order to ensure better follow up and evaluation of the projects where the Baltic Sea Region perspective is present.
- Active participation in the Common Framework. Common positions, statements or recommendations could be formulated.
- Develop a common communication platform to be used for information and dissemination.
- Dissemination of best practice examples will be carried out.

## ■ Results

- Establishing the Baltic Sea Network-ESF where ESF-Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies from Sweden, Åland-Islands, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Land of Hamburg are present
- Up to three regular meetings has been held within the network each year since 2011.
- A number of information and mobilization seminars on transnational cooperation in the ESF, linked to the Baltic Sea Region Strategy for project promoters has been carried out.
- Partner search forums for project promoters in the ESF have been arranged.
- A number of project visits and participation in events in different Member States in the region has been carried out.
- Co-organization of three conferences in 2011, 2012 and 2013 focusing the role of the ESF in relation to the EUSBSR and the transnational cooperation.
- Launch of joint recommendations from the BSN-ESF in June 2012, focusing on three main areas: A stronger social dimension in the EUSBSR; Increased and improved transnational cooperation in the ESF; More efficient alignment of funding, linked to the EUSBSR.
- Creation and start up of a Flagship project in the policy area Education, managed by the Swedish Association for Local and Regional Authorities, focusing early school leaving and so called NEETS (young people not being in employment, education or training). – School 2 Work
- Coordination of themes/priorities for calls for proposals in the ESF in the Member States focusing the social dimension in the EUSBSR.
- Agreement on Common themes for TNC under the Common Framework (Youth Employment, Active Inclusion).

## ■ Members of the Network

The following organizations are participating in the Baltic Sea Network ESF:

- Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, Estonia;
- Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY-centre) for Southwest Finland, responsible for ESF-funding in the area of Western Finland
- Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY-centre) for Central Finland, responsible for ESF-funding in the area of Southern Finland
- Government of Åland, Åland Islands;
- Ministry of Labour, Social and Family Affairs and Integration, Land of Hamburg, Germany;
- Ministry of Finance, Latvia;
- Ministry of Social Security and Labour, European Social Fund Agency, Lithuania;
- Ministry of Development, Center for European Projects, Poland;
- The Swedish ESF Council, Sweden.



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