

Baltic Science Network Brings the Baltic Sea Region Towards an Enhanced Functional Proximity & Inclusive Excellence

**Key Messages of
the Baltic Science Network
Working Papers & Studies
Published During the First Phase
of the Project Implementation**



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In Place of a Foreword

The first implementation phase of the Baltic Science Network has resulted in a wealth of findings which shed more light on the research cooperation dynamics across the Baltic Sea Region. This concise overview of the Baltic Science Network conclusions and recommendations is prepared to offer a condensed glimpse into the Working Papers and Studies presented to the wider audiences so far.

Readers interested in such topics as the Council of the Baltic Sea States' Science, Research & Innovation Agenda, Nordic Research & Innovation Area, Policy Area Education of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, European Research Area, EU Framework Programmes, Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence measures of the EU Framework Programmes, Cohesion Policy support measures for research and innovation are invited to continue following the Baltic Science Network's second phase of implementation.

Working Paper (O 3.1)

Challenges and Barriers to Research Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region



The Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is characterised by increasing research cooperation, and the region is relatively successful in terms of obtaining funding for transnational projects from the EU Framework Programmes.

However, several challenges hamper further enhancement of research cooperation and acquisition of a more considerable support from the EU Framework Programmes, e.g.:

- considerable levels of administrative burden stemming from the project management requirements;
- lack of a concise overview of various (national, transnational, European etc.) funding programmes;
- lack of strategic coordination on a national and macro-regional level.

A more general, cross-cutting conclusion is that these challenges are not only relevant in a macro-regional context but in a broader EU context as well.



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Working Paper (O 4.1)

Challenges to Researchers' Mobility in the Baltic Sea Region

& Working Paper (O 6.1)

Overview of the Best Practices of Researchers' Mobility Programmes

In view of the existing spectrum of mobility schemes offered to the researchers from the BSR and the BSR not being a priority for the researchers, it is worth raising a question whether additional support measures designed to facilitate researchers' mobility within the macro-region are necessary. Thus, continued joint reflections are facilitated by the Baltic Science Network in order to evaluate whether there is a need for modifications in the existing mobility schemes or rather for new solutions in order to tackle the challenges currently faced.

Identified challenges in the national and institutional settings (faced by the researchers):

- Relocation (related to temporary visits to peer research centres) as a complex, time consuming and costly process;
- Low level of initiatives launched by research institutions with an aim to attract researchers from other countries;
- Unfavourable employment regulation at home institutions, e.g. absence of sabbatical leave schemes, difficulties related to the employment breaks, challenges for further career advancement as well as intense teaching workload, administrative and other duties which offer limited options for long-term research visits to other peer institutions;
- Cultural or family related challenges connected to integration into different cultural environment and language barriers.

All in all, the challenges to the researchers' mobility are multi-faceted. Therefore, an Action Plan would help to define how, when and who should solve the most pending challenges.



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Study (O 5.1)

Study on Research Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region: Existing Networks, Obstacles and Ways Forward

The findings testify to an intensive cooperation between the Nordic countries, where the Nordic Research and Innovation Area (NORIA) has been established with supportive transnational governance structures such as NordForsk.

The three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) have more intense cooperation ties with the leading research centres based in the Western Europe. Due to the lack of mutual interest in intensifying ties, there is less collaboration established between the three Baltic States and other countries of the macro-region.

The general pattern is to structure cooperation with a focus on specific projects. A joint long-term perspective on collaborative activities is less pronounced.

With the exception of Estonia, institutions based in the EU-13 experience a limited participation in the EU Framework Programmes. The existing obstacles or reasons for low levels of participation in the EU Framework Programmes and cooperation among researchers or research institutions based in the BSR are multifaceted:

- Low number of successful applications for the EU Framework Programme funding due to the insufficient quality of project proposals;
- Limited funds offered due allocating the role of a coordinator seldomly, applications submitted for low budget calls and low remuneration in comparison to the institutions based in the EU-15;
- Limited access to networks.



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Study (O 5.2)

Participation in ERA and Baltic Sea RDI Initiatives and Activities: Analysis and Policy Implications for Widening Participation of Strong and Moderate Innovators

Functional proximity should be a common rationale for the research, development and innovation (RDI) cooperation. The European Commission is invited to:

- support more bottom-up innovative initiatives which would contribute to the harmonisation of rules;
- allocate more investments to adjust the imbalanced success rates;
- pay more attention to the lagging thematic areas;
- address the communication with researchers, universities and enterprises on systemic basis.

The BSR on its part should:

- agree on joint research themes to be implemented in a multilateral fashion during the upcoming years, thus increasing the research cooperation in the macro-region;
- jointly promote the interests of the macro-region at the EU level;
- tailor and propose to the relevant decision-makers novel instruments for putting on speed the bottom-up cooperation, e.g.:
 - award BSN research prizes;
 - provide 2nd best funding grants for good quality applications which have a considerable importance to the macro-regional research advancement but were not granted the funding of the European Research Council or the EU Framework Programme;
 - virtual service-centres and shared service-centres.
- Support the creation of an image of the BSR as a European macro-region characterised by an outstanding innovation track record and resilience.



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Further details on the publication

Name of the project	Baltic Science Network
Affiliation of the project	Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme funded project Baltic Science Network Brings the Baltic Sea Region
Title of the publication	Towards Enhanced Functional Proximity and Inclusive Excellence
Affiliation to the Project Work Package	no adherence to a specific Work Package, Activity or Output
Month & year of the publication	January 2018

All Baltic Science Network Working Papers and Studies stated in this overview are available in a PDF format online on the project's website:

<http://www.baltic-science.org/index.php/publications>



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Project in brief

Baltic Science Network (BSN) serves as a forum for higher education, science and research cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR).

BSN is a policy network gathering relevant transnational, national and regional policy actors from the BSR countries. The Network is a springboard for targeted multilateral activities in the frame of research and innovation excellence, mobility of scientists and expanded participation. These joint activities are modelled with an overall aim to ensure that the BSR remains a hub of cutting-edge scientific solutions with the capacity to exploit the region's full innovation and scientific potential. The activities are modelled as examples of best practice which form basis of the policy recommendations drafted by the Network.

The platform is tailored to provide advice on how to enhance a macro-regional dimension in higher education, science and research cooperation. Recommendations jointly formulated by the Network members address the European, national and regional policy-making levels.

BSN is a flagship of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region under the Policy Area Education, Research and Employability, as well as one of two cornerstones of the Science, Research and Innovation Agenda of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

Disclaimer: This publication is based on input from stakeholders and BSN partners and does not necessarily reflect the views of all participating Member States and organisations.



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Since Baltic Science Network is keen on continuing to facilitate the public debate on macro-regional research cooperation and its contribution to the advancement of the European Research Area, readers are encouraged to familiarize with and engage in the upcoming events announced on the Baltic Science Network website: www.baltic-science.org

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Front cover: Photo by [JJ Ying](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Graphic design on page 2: Visual Facilitators, Katrin Faensen