# 

Programme Manual

# Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027

# Version 1 (8.9.2021)

Table of Contents

[Programme Manual 0](#_Toc74855215)

[Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027 0](https://varsinaissuomenliitto-my.sharepoint.com/personal/merike_niitepold_centralbaltic_eu/Documents/Launching%202021-2027/Old%20stuff/JPC_8_Programme%20Manual.docx#_Toc74855216)

[Version 1 (16.6.2021) 0](#_Toc74855217)

[1. INTRODUCTION 4](#_Toc74855218)

[2. What is the Central Baltic programme? 5](#_Toc74855219)

[2.1. Basic characteristics of a Central Baltic project 5](#_Toc74855220)

[How to define a project 5](#_Toc74855221)

[Cross-border cooperation is required 6](#_Toc74855222)

[Working together for the common good 8](#_Toc74855223)

[2.2. Suitability of the project idea to the programme 8](#_Toc74855224)

[Programme Objective 1 - More exports by SMEs 8](#_Toc74855225)

[Programme Objective 2 - More new scaled-up growth companies 11](#_Toc74855226)

[Programme Objective 3 – Joint circular economy solutions 13](#_Toc74855227)

[Programme Objective 4 – Improved coastal and marine environment 14](#_Toc74855228)

[Programme Objective 5 – Decreased CO2 emissions 16](#_Toc74855229)

[Programme Objective 6 – Improved employment opportunities on labour market 18](#_Toc74855230)

[Programme Objective 7 – Improved public services and solutions for citizens 21](#_Toc74855231)

[2.3. Other key characteristics of a Central Baltic project 24](#_Toc74855232)

[Sustainable development 24](#_Toc74855233)

[Equal opportunities and non-discrimination 25](#_Toc74855234)

[Equality between men and women 25](#_Toc74855235)

[The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) 25](#_Toc74855236)

[Additionality 27](#_Toc74855237)

[2.4. Different types of projects 27](#_Toc74855238)

[Small projects 28](#_Toc74855239)

[Regular projects 28](#_Toc74855240)

[3. Applying for a project in Central Baltic 29](#_Toc74855241)

[3.1. Who can be a partner 29](#_Toc74855242)

[Relevance of the partnership 30](#_Toc74855243)

[The role of the lead partner 32](#_Toc74855244)

[The role of project partners 32](#_Toc74855245)

[3.2. Activity planning 35](#_Toc74855246)

[Investments in projects 35](#_Toc74855247)

[3.3. Budget planning 37](#_Toc74855248)

[Eligibility of funding 38](#_Toc74855249)

[3.4. Application and assessment procedures 39](#_Toc74855250)

[Application and assessment of regular projects 40](#_Toc74855251)

[Application and assessment of small projects 49](#_Toc74855252)

[3.5. Selection of projects by the Monitoring Committee 54](#_Toc74855253)

[4. Implementing a project 55](#_Toc74855254)

[4.1. Signing the relevant agreements 55](#_Toc74855255)

[4.2. Implementing the project 56](#_Toc74855256)

[Steering Group 57](#_Toc74855257)

[4.3. Reporting and payment procedures 58](#_Toc74855258)

[Reporting periods 59](#_Toc74855259)

[The reporting of the project consists of: 59](#_Toc74855260)

[Assessment of the reports and payment 60](#_Toc74855261)

[Payments to projects 61](#_Toc74855262)

[Use of euro 61](#_Toc74855263)

[4.4. Updating the project plan during implementation 61](#_Toc74855264)

[Modifications having no impact to the Application Form (no formal modification procedure required) 62](#_Toc74855265)

[Modifications having an impact to the Application Form (formal modification procedure required) 62](#_Toc74855266)

[4.5. Eligibility of costs 64](#_Toc74855267)

[Staff costs 65](#_Toc74855268)

[Office and administration 67](#_Toc74855269)

[Travel and accommodation costs 68](#_Toc74855270)

[External expertise and services costs 69](#_Toc74855271)

[Equipment 71](#_Toc74855272)

[4.6. Other rules 74](#_Toc74855273)

[VAT 74](#_Toc74855274)

[Public procurement 74](#_Toc74855275)

[GDPR, General Data Protection Regulation 74](#_Toc74855276)

[State aid 76](#_Toc74855277)

[Fraud declaration 77](#_Toc74855278)

[4.7. Project communication 79](#_Toc74855279)

[Regulation requirements concerning project communication 80](#_Toc74855280)

[Technical instructions on the use of the logos and references 81](#_Toc74855281)

[Cooperation with the JS 82](#_Toc74855282)

[4.8. Audits 82](#_Toc74855283)

[Second Level Control 84](#_Toc74855284)

[Financial corrections 84](#_Toc74855285)

[4.9. Closing the project 85](#_Toc74855286)

[4.10. Duties after the project ends 86](#_Toc74855287)

[Investments 86](#_Toc74855288)

[Availability of documents 86](#_Toc74855289)

[5. Annexes 87](#_Toc74855290)

[Applicable regulations 87](#_Toc74855291)

# 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 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 our 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, it becomes valid from that point onward. The latest version of the Programme Manual should always be used.

# What is the Central Baltic programme?

## Basic characteristics of a Central Baltic project

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. That means that the framework for our cooperation is improving the lives of everyone in our border region and bringing about development and cohesion among our region.

### 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 and tasks. 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. Objectives and tasks 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. Objectives and tasks are to be met within the specified timeframe after which the project is closed.

The **objectives** and tasks 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.

Once the testing period is over, the project should draw conclusions. 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 is 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 durability of the project results 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 set its individual aims, 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 tasks 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 1,5-4 years, depending on the activities. 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 **sustainability** of the project activities 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.

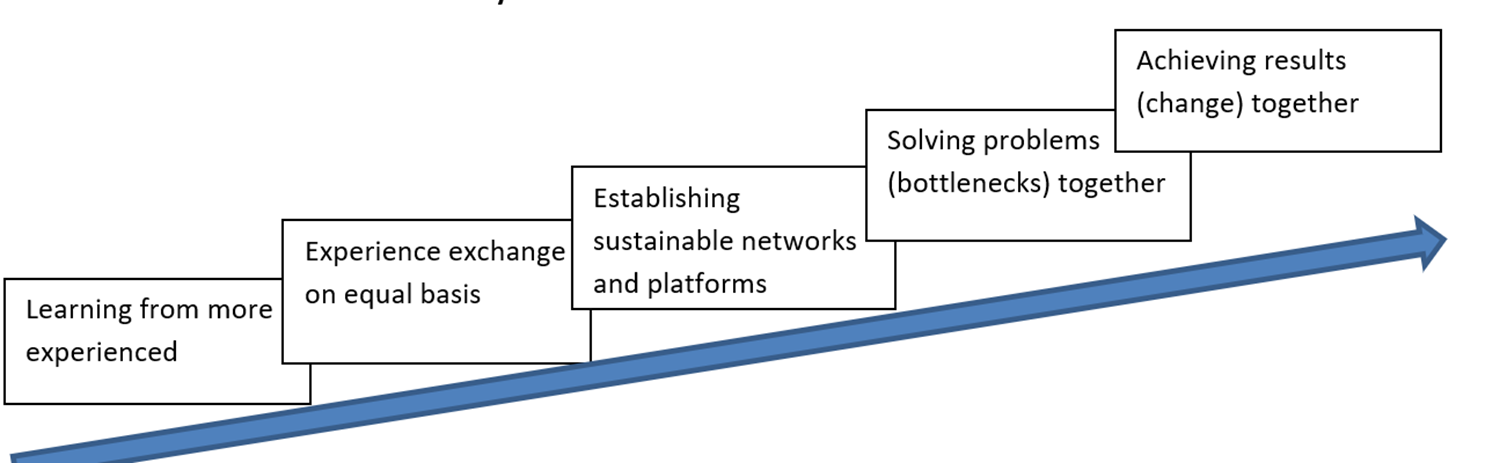
For achieving the set aims, a project must have a realistic and viable **budget**. The budget is defined in the Application Form and confirmed by the project funding decision. The total ERDF funding, the total project budget and the co-financing rate will be set in the Subsidy Contract. These levels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

### Cross-border cooperation is required

The Central Baltic programme is a tool to fund cross-border cooperation within our region. To receive funding from this programme, projects must have a clear cross-border character. Cross-border cooperation should always bring added value to reach the project objectives. In the project application partners are asked to explain why cross-border cooperation is needed for reaching the project objectives. 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 shows the typical development of cooperation. Cooperation usually starts from networking and learning 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**, but networks are assumed to be in place already. This is required 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.

We aim at solving common problems together or working on joint opportunities. Projects that demonstrate this will receive higher scores in the assessment phase. These are the projects that contribute to the achievement of the programme objectives.

The nature of cooperation of a project is reflected through the following criteria:

**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 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. 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 project structure should not duplicate functions. There should be one joint project manager, one joint financial manager etc. for the whole project. Normally, these 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 everyone in our border region. Therefore, whatever you do shall be possibly to copy, transfer, 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 share it as much as possible. Open source data or models or text to be copied for others to use is expected of projects. Simply put: public funding means public results.

A logical consequence of the above is that no money should be taken for what is produced in an Interreg project. What is created in projects should be free 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 this output/result to everyone and should normally be an indication of the service or output 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.

## Suitability of the project idea to the programme

We fund projects in seven programme objectives. These are:

TABLE/LIST

The aims 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.

### 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 EU/EFTA) and to participate with joint offers towards international organisations (sales to an international organisation (for example UN agencies, WHO, ILO, OSCE) is considered equal to entering a new market) will be supported. 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

- Product/service development

- Developing joint offers of products and services

- Process development and digitalisation of processes

- Skills development and quality management

- Market information and research

- Branding and marketing of products and services

- 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.

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.

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

Additional explanations

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

In regard to 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 (Eg. 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 Specific Result Indicator – PSR 1 - Companies with achieved sales and contracts to new markets

Mesurement unit: unique company.

Sales should be achieved by target group companies via joint action to the new markets.

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 are outside the Central Baltic programme area.

The counted company should have written contract, proof of transaction,… with buyer from the targeted market for delivery of goods or services.

Sales and contracts are understood as written documents, incl the proofs of payments, proofs of shipments sent to the buyers, other equal written (on paper or digital documents).

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 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.

Aggregation: Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 or 2 full years after project ended).

Time for measurement: 12 months (1 year).

Common ERDF Result Indicator - RCR 04 - SMEs introducing marketing or organisational innovation

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).

Marketing innovation – new and adopted methods and ways of marketing for particular companies.

Organisational innovation – changes and adoptations within companies organisational structures and/or processes. Including the usage of new software solutions for marketing.

On programme level we will report it to EC as result for over European aggregation purposes.

Common ERDF Output Indicator – RCO 04 - Enterprises with non-financial support

Measurement unit: unique company.

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.

Aggregation: Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

Common Interreg Output Indicator – RCO 87 - Organisations co-operating across borders

Measurement unit: unique company, organisation.

RCO 87 will include the sum of RCO 04 and the number of project partners.

RCO 04 achievements can be aggregated to the RCO 87 as the „enterprises receiving non-financial support“ are the organizations.

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.

Aggregation: The project partners are counted on programme level. RCO 04 component will be aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

### 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

- Product development

- Process development and digitalisation

- Skills development

- Market opportunities research

- Branding and marketing

- Business model development and expansion of operations

- 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.

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.

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

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 (Eg. .joint trainings, events, etc),

Joint scaling-up and product development processes,

The use of joint business development experts,

Jontly developed and used dvelopment methodologies and technics,

...

Main target group:

The main target group is “new companies with ambition to grow 5 years from start of operations and in exceptional cases 7 years from start of operations”.

There can be an exception from the main target group in some cases:

- the project includes sectors where development takes longer time because of science/knowledge intensity

– Eg. deep tech, biomedicine, pharmaceuticals, material technologies etc.

- the project includes comapnies 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 Specific Result Indicator – PSR 2 - Number of scaled up new growth companies

The results: achieved via joint actions the “scaled-up companies”.

Scaled up 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.

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.

Aggregation: 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.

Reporting: Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 or 2 full years after project ended).

Time for measurement: Annually from 2nd full year of implementation. After the project ends; 1 or 2 years after project has ended.

Common ERDF Output Indicator – RCO 04 - Enterprises with non-financial support

Measurement unit: unique company.

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.

Aggregation: Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

Common Interreg Output Indicator – RCO 87 - Organisations co-operating across borders

Measurement unit: unique company, organisation.

RCO 87 will include the sum of RCO 04 and the number of project partners.

RCO 04 achievements can be aggregated to the RCO 87 as the „enterprises receiving non-financial support“ are the organizations.

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.

Aggregation: The project partners are counted on programme level. RCO 04 component will be aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

### 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 CE: 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 CB borders or can be downsized to CB scale.

The key product value chains identified in the EC 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, organisations

- Mapping the cross border product life cycles/chains

- Feasibility studies, plans and designs

- Trainings and skills development

- 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

- Small scale investments to reduce the use of materials, waste and increase the reuse of materials

- 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.

Potential partners

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

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

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 (Eg. joint trainings, events etc);
* Jointly developed or adopted approaches, methodologies and/or technologies;
* Jointly developed and applied solutions;
* ...

Indicators

Programme Specific Result Indicator – PSR 3 - The number of improved product/service cycles/chains.

The reduction of the use of virgin materials, the reduction of waste and the increase in the reuse of products should take place for qualifying as „Improved product/service cycle/chain“.

Focus of Central Baltic intervention is on „Central Baltic scale of circular economy chains/cycles“.

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

Most realistically 1 project can achieve the improvement of the 1 chain/cycle.

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 aspects of the impact (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”.

Defining the approach and methodology of the measuring the improvements will be obligatory part of the project.

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

Measurement unit: cross-border circular economy chain/cycle.

Aggregation: 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. It is assumed in general that 1 project improves 1 chain. Improved chains by all projects are aggregated to single numeric value on programme level.

Reporting: Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 or 2 full years after project ended).

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

Common Interreg Output Indicator – RCO 87 - Organisations co-operating across borders

Measurement unit: unique company, organisation.

RCO 87 will include the sum of PSO 1 and the number of project partners.

PSO 1 achievements will be aggregated to the RCO 87.

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.

There can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization – we count 1.

The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating organizations.

The records should include the organisation’s name, the contact information and in which project activities the participation took place.

Aggregation: The project partners are counted on programme level. RCO 04 component will be aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

### 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

- Information collection, surveys

- Analysis and surveys, plans, drawings, and designs

- Designing, adapting methods

- Planning and investing into digital solutions and processes

- Joint 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.

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.

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

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 (Eg. joint trainings, events, etc.);

Joint and synchronized planning and management processes;

Joint development and use of solutions and technologies;

...

Indicators

Programme specific Result Indicator - PSR 4 - The number of improved urban and agricultural load/runoff sources

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

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

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

Realistically 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”.

Measurement unit: Improved load sources

Aggregation: 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.

Reporting: Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 or 2 full years after project ended).

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months)

Programme Specific Output Indicator – PSO 1 - The number of participating (in project activities) organizations and companies

Participation from 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 Organisation/company may participate in several project activities – we count 1

There can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization/company – we count 1.

Measurement unit: Organisation

Aggregation: Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time measurement: 1 year (12 months).

Common Interreg Output Indicator – RCO 87 - Organisations co-operating across borders

Measurement unit: unique company, organisation.

RCO 87 will include the sum of PSO 1 and the number of project partners.

PSO 1 achievements will be aggregated to the RCO 87.

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

There can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization – we count 1

The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating organizations.

The records should include the organisation’s name, the contact information and in which project activities the participation took place

Aggregation: The project partners are counted on programme level. RCO 04 component will be aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

### 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 and 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

- Analysis and surveys

- Plans, drawings, and designs

- Planning and investing into digital solutions and processes

- Small scale investments leading to lower CO2 emissions

- Piloting new mobility solutions

- Experience exchange activities as joint seminars, study visits, surveys and trainings

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.

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.

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

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 (Eg. joint trainings, awareness raising events);

Joint synchronised planning processes;

Joint solutions and technologies used;

...

Indicators

Programme specific Result Indicator - PSR 5: The number of intermodal transport nodes and intermodal transport areas/systems with CO2 reductions

The reduction of CO2 emissions has to be targeted and realistically achievable within transport node or intermodal transport area/system 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 in 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”.

The projects under this programme objective may last longer (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 is decided – it can be counted as “improved transport node/transport area”.

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

Measurement unit: The transport nodes, intermodal transport areas/systems.

Aggregation: 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.

Reporting: Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 or 2 full years after project ended).

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

Common Interreg Result Indicator - RCR 104 Solutions taken-up or upscaled by organizations

We can use RCR 104. But towards projects as output indicator and report it to EC as result.

Programme Specific Output Indicator – PSO 1 - The number of participating (in project activities) organizations and companies.

Participation from 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 Organisation/company may participate in several project activities – we count 1.

There can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization/company – we count 1.

Measurement unit: organisation, company.

Aggregation: Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time measurement: 1 year (12 months).

Common Interreg Output Indicator – RCO 87 - Organisations co-operating across borders

Measurement unit: organisation.

RCO 87 will include the sum of PSO 1 and the number of project partners.

PSO 1 achievements will be aggregated to the RCO 87.

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

There can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization – we count 1

The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating organizations.

The records should include the organisation’s name, the contact information and in which project activities the participation took place

Aggregation: The project partners are counted on programme level. RCO 04 component will be aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

### 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.

Indicative joint actions supported

- Awareness raising among target groups

- Designing and implementing trainings

- Incentives and services for employers

- Networking and dialogues between counterparts of labour market

- Digital tools for online skills development and working

- Entrepreneurship enhancing simulations and problem-solving exercises

- Mobility of participants

- 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.

Potential partners

Organisations with competence and experience on labour market, organisations representing employees, employers, public authorities, organisations representing disadvantaged groups, and organisations with competence and experience on entrepreneurship.

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

Additional explanations

Less competitive groups within society: includes young people under 25, people in pre-retirement, retired people, refugees, and people with special needs.

People with increased competitiveness: work contract achieved; work affiliation achieved; new qualification gained, certificate proving the completion of study programme; actively job-searching.

Organisations and companies with anti-discriminatory policy applied: by whom policy prepared, approved and applied.

People with increased entrepreneurship: successful completion of complex entrepreneurship programme.

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 (Eg. joint trainings, seminars,...);

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 Specific Result Indicators:

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.

There are 3 distinct focuses within this Programme Objective and therefore 3 programme specific result indicators are proposed.

Less competitive groups within society: including young people under 25, people in pre-retirement, retired people, immigrants, and people with special needs.

People with increased competitiveness: work contract achieved; work affiliation achieved; new qualification gained, certificate proving the completion of study programme; actively job-searcing.

Organisations (incl companies) with anti-discriminatory policy applied: policy prepared, approved and applied.

People with increased entrepreneurship: successful completion of complex entrepreneurship programme.

The target values and achievements of the 3 result indicators are aggragated separately. PSR 6 and PSR 8 can be aggregated together.

Measrument units: PSR 6, PSR 8: People. PSR 7: Organisations (incl. companies)

Aggregation: The target values and achievements of the 3 result indicators are aggregated separately. PSR 6 and PSR 8 can be aggregated together.

Reporting: Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends in final report.

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

Programme Specirfic Output Indicators:

PSO 1: The number of participating (in project activities) organizations and companies

PSO 2: The number of participating (in project activities) people

PSO 3: Organizations (incl companies) actively participating in project activities are counted.

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.

There can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization/company – we count 1

PSO 2: Used together with PSR 6 and PSR 8. Individuals actively participating in project activities are counted. Not recipients of just information (newsletters, emails) and other passive type of activities are counted.

1 individual may participate in several project activities – we count 1.

Measurement unit: PSO 1– organisations. PSO 2 – people.

Aggregation: PSO 1: Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time of measurement: 1 year (12 months).

Common Interreg Output Indicator – RCO 87 - Organisations co-operating across borders

Measurement unit: organisation.

RCO 87 will include the sum of PSO 1 and the number of project partners.

PSO 1 achievements will be aggregated to the RCO 87.

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.

There can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization – we count 1.

The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating organizations.

The records should include the organisation’s name, the contact information and in which project activities the participation took place.

Aggregation: The project partners are counted on programme level. RCO 04 component will be aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

### 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.

Potential partners

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

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.

Additional explanations

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 and and

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 smaller size projects can have a maximum budget of 150 000.- EUR (including the implementation of the solution). The details of small and regular projects are explained in chapter xx.

Projects applying within this prorgamme objective cannot be aimed at programme objectives 1,2,3,4,5 or 6. Yet, they may cover the same thematic field however should be aimed at a differnet objective. To give an example – under programme objective 1 projects are expected to work jointly to boost exports by SMEs in a way SMEs are benefitting form the project. Under programme objective 7 the same partners are encouraged to work jointly to digitalize services they provide to SMEs or to excahnge the experience and to learn leading to an improved srvice they provide. In such cases, two different projects should be applied. Similar examples may be found with other programme objectives as well. This said, it does not exclude that the project idea under programme objective 7 is within different thematic field (not covered by programme objectives 1 to 6).

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 describtion 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 activities;

Improving participatory processes for developing services;

Trainings and networking;

Feasibility studies;

Plans and designs (including strategic and land use planning);

Creating and improving joint cross-border public services;

Digitalising joint public services.

For small size projects - there should be describtion 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:

Common Interreg Result Indicator (narrowed and customised for Central Baltic programme needs) - RCR 104 - Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations

Measurement unit: solution

Including 2 specific sub-components representing 2 different interventions within Programme Objective:

1. New practical solutions leading to improvement to public services (by small size projects)

2. The number of new joint public services and digitalized public services (by regular projects

in both cases attributed as „solutions“ for the purpose of indicators.

There are 2 distinct results to be targeted within this programme objective by 2 types of projects:

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 improvement of public services .

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

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

Practical solution and improvement of the public service – what specifically is improved should 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 (incl feedback) opportunities etc

The digitalization of public services and creating joint public services by regular projects.

Joint public service – can be created as new or based on the aligned existing services.

Digitalization of the service should take place for all participating country locations represented in partnership.

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

Aggregation: For 2 components of the indicator the aggregation is applied separately. Aggregated as 2 separate numeric values on programme level.

Reporting: Annually from 2nd full year of implementation and after the project ends (1 or 2 full years after project ended).

Time of measurement:1 year (12 months)

Common Interreg Output Indicator - RCO 116 Jointly developed solutions

We agree to use RCO116 with potentially modest added administrative burden and allowing the aggregation of outputs on European level.

Programme Specific Output Indicator – PSO 1 - The number of participating (in project activities) organizations and companies

Participation from 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 Organisation/company may participate in several project activities – we count 1

There can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization/company – we count 1.

Aggregation: Will be aggregated on project level over the project duration and aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all the projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time measurement: 1 year (12 months).

Common Interreg Output Indicator – RCO 87 - Organisations co-operating across borders

Measurement unit: organisation.

RCO 87 will include the sum of PSO 1 and the number of project partners.

PSO 1 achievements will be aggregated to the RCO 87.

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.

There can be more than 1 representative from 1 organization – we count 1.

The project partners are responsible for keeping records on participating organizations.

The records should include the organisation’s name, the contact information and in which project activities the participation took place.

Aggregation: The project partners are counted on programme level. RCO 04 component will be aggregated on programme level to include the achievements of all projects contributions.

Reporting: Annually as full year achievement and after the project ends in final report.

Time for measurement: 1 year (12 months).

## 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 horisontal 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.

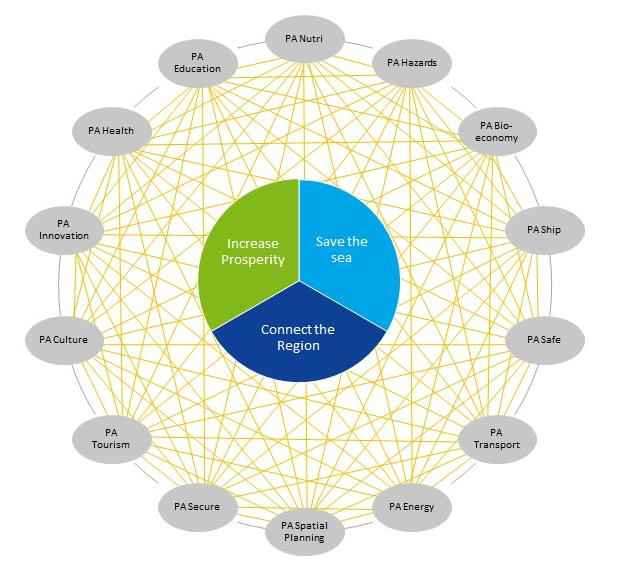
Projects supporting equal opportunities and anti-discrimination directly may be most relevant under programme objective 6 or 7, but relevant actions can also be foreseen under all Programme Objectives. Projects are expected to be positive or neutral on equal opportunities and non-discrimination, none 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 2021-2027is 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.



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. 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](http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu).

The table below describes how the programme priorities contribute to the EUSBSR policy areas .

**Table 2.** 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 projects should not be built around activities that are or should be done by other funds/measures. For example, partner organisations’ regular tasks cannot not be included as project activities or costs.

It also means that each partnership should carefully consider what is the best funding instrument for their idea. There are several national, regional or international funding sources available.

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 CB and 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.

## 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 3.** Comparison of small and regular project characteristics

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Small project | Regular project |
| Budget | max EUR 150.000 ERDF for activities and, in addition, EUR 13 550 total for the preparation cost lump sum | Min EUR 150.000 ERDF |
| Project duration | max 1,5 years | no set limit, but typically 2-3 years |
| Application | only selected parts of the Application Form, less detail required,  1-step application procedure | full Application Form  2-step application procedure |
| Reporting | shorter reporting forms | full reporting form |
| Relevant Programme Objectives | All Programme Objectives, if relevant, but in particular Programme Objective 7 | All Programme Objectives |

### Small projects

The programme allows for small projects to be implemented. The aim is to jointly solve issues on grass-root level without extra bureaucracy. The micro 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 SOs, but they cannot cover the same topics as the other programme objectives.

Small projects may not have a budget of more than EUR 150.000 ERDF for activities and, in addition, EUR 13 550 for the preparation cost lump sum. Small projects cannot last for longer than 1,5 years.

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 budget of a budget of more than 150.000 EUR are understood as regular projects. The only limit of public co-financing/ERDF is 2.000.000 EUR per partner. No technical limits have been set for the duration of regular projects. All aspects of the projects should follow the principles of relevance and be in line with the key characteristics of a project (as presented earlier).

# 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 programme 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 consultations 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. If your project is accepted in the first step, you should continue consultations on the project activities, budget planning or any other question you may have.

## Who can be a partner

Each project must have:

•1 lead partner;

•1 or more project partners;

The minimum requirement for projects is to have partners from at least two of the Member States. 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 4.** Participating (NUTS 3) regions

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

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 some 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 such partners, special agreements are needed between the Managing Authority and the EU Member State in question, wherefore the JS 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.

The size of the partnership should be based on the relevance of each partner for the project. No optimal number of partners can be defined, but 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 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 (NGO’s) 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 JS/MA 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 SME’s. SME’s are technically eligible to act as partners in a few programme objectives (Programme Objective 3 Circular Economy and Programme Objective 5 xx). 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 regular projects should know the core partnership in the 1st step application already. It is, however, accepted that some partners may change or be added for the complete application.

### The role of the lead partner

The project lead partner bears the **overall responsibility for the project** towards the partnership and the MA. Each project is an entity with one project plan, one set of targets and one budget. In all questions related to these topics the JS/MA 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.

The lead partner must understand that it has the overall responsibility for the project implementation and for reaching the set targets. In case the project fails, it also is the lead partner which will be held (financially) responsible by the MA. 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 considered needed as a member of staff under the staff costs budget line.

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 6.** 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 JS/MA 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 projects 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 JS/MA. |  |
| Appoint or sub-contract a full-time 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 management 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 BL, 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. |
| 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 a Final Report at the end of the project 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 MA. 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. |

## Activity planning

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. 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. 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. 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.

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.

Approved projects consist of a contracting phase, implementation and closure phase.

The contracting phase starts **one day after the approval of the project by the Monitoring Committee**. The contracting phase lasts **three months**.

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 this phase. During this time, we will also prepare the Subsidy Contract.

The actual duration of your project will be defined in the contracting phase. The start and end dates will then be fixed in the Subsidy Contract. **Only costs incurred and paid during the duration of the project or within the preparation period are eligible.** The project duration consists of three phases: the contracting, 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 EUR 13 550 (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 investment documentation. 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 and strongly recommended for other partners.

The duration of the project is strongly dependent on the objectives of the project. Based on what you want to achieve you will prepare an activity plan. In projects where new models, databases or similar are being created, time should be reserved for testing these and, based on the testing, the project should come up with a clear view of how the sustainability of the outputs will be ensured. The end users should be involved in the project in relevant ways (participating in the Steering Group, testing and commenting outputs, involved in activities, etc.).

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 personnel is able to finalise the Final Report and submit it to the JS.

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. This is especially the case of questions related to the Final Report. These will in all cases be received by the project after the project has ended. There should always be someone available to settle all open questions with the JS/MA. Changes in contact information must be communicated to the JS/MA until the Managing Authority has closed the project.

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

### Investments in infrastructure and works

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

Investments are understood as construction and works or equipment that are fixed or 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.

## 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 targets 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](http://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. These activities should then be sorted as detailed as possible:

Thematically into WPs;

Time-wise into reporting periods;

According to the division of tasks per partner.

Once you have clarified the project activities adequately, you must identify the required resources to implement these activities. Taking into account 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, by WPs, by BL). 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 enabling the activities of the WPs. 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 spending forecasts from the Application Form are crucial 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](#_Eligibility_of_costs) and** [**4.6. Other rules**](#_Other_rules). These chapters give the needed understanding of what costs are eligible and how to plan the budget.

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 (JS/MA). It is important to understand that the time between paying the costs yourself and receiving the reimbursement may be long. 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 partners’ contribution is at least 20%.

### Eligibility of funding

Each project partner is responsible for its own budget. The partner budgets are based on their individual activity plans and division of tasks. To generate ERDF funding, the partner must provide the needed own contribution. It can come either from its own funding or from other eligible funds. 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 7.** 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 character[[1]](#footnote-2) **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,
4. **or** is a subject to management supervision by those bodies,
5. **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.

## Application and assessment procedures

The programme has a 2-step application procedure. However, a simplified application procedure has been put in place for small projects.

The 2-step application reduces the administrative burden for the applicants (whose idea is rejected). Feedback on the idea is given already on the 1st step application and only the strategically best ideas will be asked to fill in the whole application with all annexes. This helps the programme to focus on the results and the quality of the funded projects. In order to pass the 1st step, the project must be well in line with a programme objective and be strategically relevant.

All projects must fill in an Application Form in the Jems electronic monitoring system. 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 Filling in the Application Form.

The lead applicant fills in the Application Form and 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 Filling in the Application Form. The amount of information required varies for regular and small projects.

We receive applications in calls with an opening and closing date. The applications must be submitted between these dates. More detailed information on the exact opening and closing times (date and time) is made available on the programme website at [www.centralbaltic.eu](http://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.

### Application and assessment of regular projects

Projects will be selected in a 2-step application procedure: where the 1st step consists of the submission of a light version of the Application Form and the 2nd step of the submission of the full Application Form along with the obligatory annexes.

The procedure comprises an assessment of the light version of the application and inviting the pre-selected project ideas to enter 2nd step.

To be eligible, the project must first comply with technical aspects (submission of the application and its annexes, budget, partnership, etc.) of the programme. The admissibility check criteria are:

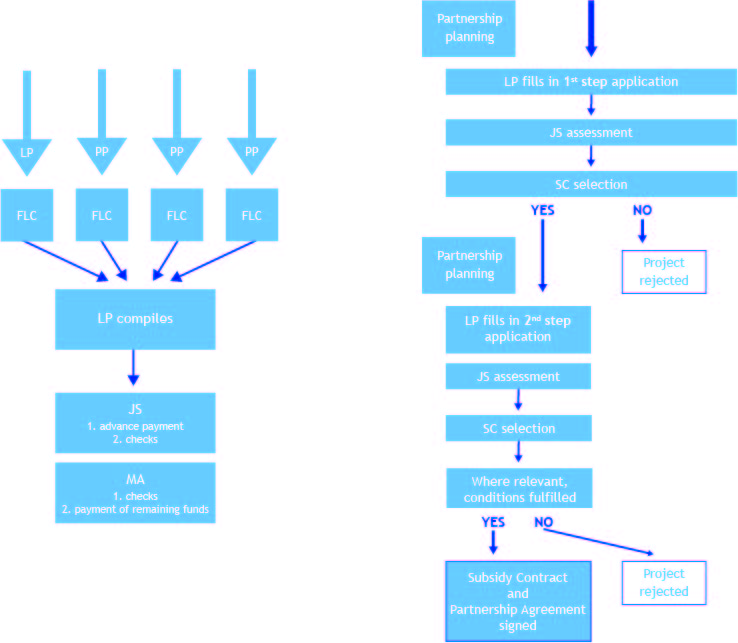
1. Obligatory annexes are attached to the application form where applicable.
2. Supporting documents (e.g. technical investment documentation) are attached where applicable.
3. The application form and its annexes are signed where necessary according to the programme rules.
4. The application package is in the required language(s). If applicable, annexes issued by third parties, in other language than required, are accompanied by their translation.
5. All applicable sections of the application form are correctly filled in. There is no incorrect information, e.g. "to be added later".
6. Information presented in the application form and in annexes is consistent (e.g. co-financing amounts, partner names etc.).
7. The Lead partner is an eligible organisation. Programme to decide the rules, e.g. legal status, territorial eligibility – area. Note: This check is separate from other partners because LP has more requirements than other partners. Some checks can be automatic!
8. All project partners are eligible organisations. Programme to decide the rules, e.g. legal status, territorial eligibility – area. Note: Some checks can be automatic!

Furthermore, 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.)

The programme uses a set of selection criteria, which can be found below. The selection criteria and their sub-criteria each have been given a weight. The maximum score that a project can receive is xx. In order for a project to be suitable for funding, it must meet several thresholds. First of all, the project must receive at least xx of the maximum score. The project must also receive at least 3? For the cross-border cooperation criteria. Finally, the project may not receive the score 1 for any criterion.

In order to underline the focus on results, the assessment is done in two steps: if a project receives the score 1 on at least one strategic assessment criteria, it will not continue to the assessment of the operational criteria.

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.

****

**Figure 5.** The 2-step application process (regular projects)

**Table 8.** Application and assessment of regular projects

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | STEP 1 | | | STEP 2 | | |
|  | **Opening/ closing**  **the call** | **JS assesses the projects and makes a proposal to SC** | **Monitoring Committeeevaluates and selects projects** | **MA informs of the approval and the applicant submits the whole AF** | **JS assesses the projects and makes a proposal to SC** | **Monitoring Committee evaluates and takes its decision** |
| Total approximate number of days per activity | 20 | 120 | Meeting date published on website | 60 | 120 | Meeting date published on website |

Step 1

The call is launched and stays open for a predefined time. During this timeframe, the applicant should submit the light version of the Application Form to the JS through Jems. The 1st step Application Form presents the project´s relevance and strategy reflecting the territorial challenge and cross-border cooperation character and added value, the project’s contribution to the programme’s objectives, including its outputs and results, and the relevance of the partnership of these concrete actors in the frame of the project. 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 JS as early as possible in the planning phase. The JS organises series of project development seminars for each call as well as provides individual consultations. All applicants are expected to make contact with the JS programme managers before the submission of the application.

After the call is closed, the JS assesses the submitted proposals. First, the admissibility assessment is made. If needed, the JS will ask the project to make technical corrections within a set deadline. All projects that are found admissible, will move to the content assessment. The **criteria for the strategic assessment** are as follows and every applicant is encouraged to critically assess the project idea against these criteria:

##### Strategic assessment criteria

Project relevance

How well is a need for the project justified?

* The project addresses common territorial challenges of the programme or a joint asset of the programme area - there is a real need for the project (well justified, reasonable, well explained) and the project matches with programme objective. – AF C.2.1 and C.2.2
* The project clearly contributes to a wider strategy on one or more policy levels (EU / national / regional), including EUSBSR. – AF C.2.5

To what extent will the project contribute to the achievement of programme’s objectives and indicators?

* The project overall objective clearly contributes to the achievement of the programme priority specific objective. – AF C.1
* The project outputs clearly link to programme output indicators and their contribution to programme targets is sufficient. – AF C.4 Output tables in work packages
* Project’s contribution to programme result indicators is realistic and sufficient. – AF C.5

How does the project build on existing practices?

* The project makes use of available knowledge and builds on existing results and practices. – AF C.2.7
* The project tries to avoid overlaps and replications; there is evolution of ideas. – AF C.2.2
* The project demonstrates new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector/programme area/participating countries or adapts and implements already developed solutions. – AF C.2.2

Cooperation character

What added value does the cooperation bring?

* The importance of cooperation beyond borders for the topic addressed is clearly demonstrated. – AF C.2.3
* The results cannot (or only to some extent) be achieved without cooperation. – AF C.2.3
* There is a clear benefit from cooperating for the project partners / target groups / project area / programme area. The target group is well described and relevant for achieving outputs and results.

– AF C.2.3

Project intervention logic

Is the project intervention logic is clearly and logically constructed?

To what extent is project intervention logic plausible?

* Project specific objectives are specific, realistic and achievable; the project approach is suitable for achieving the planned results – AF C.4 Specific objectives in work packages
* Proposed project outputs are needed to achieve project specific objectives. – AF C.4 Output tables in work packages
* Project outputs and results that contribute to programme indicators are realistic (it is possible to achieve them with given resources – i.e. time, partners, budget - and they are realistic based on the quantification provided). – AF C.4, C.5, C.6, D  
  (Project main results contribute to programme objective’s results
* Chosen outputs are relevant for achieving targeted results and the internal logic is in place
  + *The role of ”Project objective” and Project specific objectives?*
  + *Project objective – Project main results*
  + *Project specific objectives – Project outputs)*

To what extent will project outputs have an impact beyond project life time?

* Project outputs are durable (the proposal is expected to provide a significant and durable contribution to solving the challenges targeted) – if not, it is justified. – AF C.8.2
* Project main outputs are applicable and replicable by other organisations/regions/countries outside of the current partnership (transferability) – if not, it is justified. – AF C.8.3

Partnership relevance

To what extent is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project?

* The project involves the relevant actors needed to address the territorial challenge/joint asset and achieve targeted results. – AF C.3
* With respect to the project’s objectives the project partnership: – AF C.3
  + is balanced with respect to the levels, sectors, territory
  + consists of partners that complement each other.
* Partner organisations have proven experience and competence in the thematic field concerned, as well as the necessary capacity to implement the cross-border cooperation project (financial, human resources, etc.) – AF B.1.6
* All partners play a well defined role in the partnership, they are relevant for achieving the project results, and the territory benefits from this cooperation. – AF C.3

Members of the JS 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 assessment will be made in two steps. Each criterion will be evaluated on a scale of 1-5. The scale is:

**5 - Very good** (relevant information has been provided, showing that project is exceptionally well in line with the requirements set by the programme);

**4 – Good** (relevant information has been provided, showing that the project is well in line with the requirements set by the programme);

**3 – Acceptable** (information has been provided, showing that the project meets the requirements set by the programme);

**2 – Poor** (information can be found to prove that the minimum requirements of the programme have been met);

**1 – Unacceptable** (no information has been provided or the information provided is not in line with the requirements set by the programme).

The JS may ask clarifying questions once during the assessment phase. This is not an opportunity to provide new information but to clarify information that was given in the original application. A deadline is set for receiving the reply. The JS assesses the project based on the information provided in the application and as a reply to potential questions.

The Monitoring Committee selection of projects is foreseen within 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 Committeemeeting for each call can be found on the programme website at [www.centralbaltic.eu](http://www.centralbaltic.eu).

If the project proposal is found relevant and in compliance with the programme objectives, the applicant is informed of the approval by an official letter from the MA and guided through to 2nd step. The Monitoring Committee might give further suggestions and/or conditions to the project proposal to be taken into consideration during 2nd step. The fulfilment of the conditions is obligatory and will be assessed. If the project proposal is rejected, the applicant will receive an Administrative Decision on Rejection by the Managing Authority.

Please note that the 1st and 2nd steps are always linked together. Therefore 2nd step only concerns the proposals that were approved by the Monitoring Committee. A project that fails to submit a 2nd step application is rejected and must apply again in the 1st step if they wish to submit a full application later.

Step 2

The applicant should now proceed with filling in the rest of the Application Form and submit the whole document along with the obligatory annexes. The development phase lasts up to 60 days and the applicant is then expected to submit the whole Application Form along with the obligatory annexes.

The Application Form is to be filled in online using Jems. The applicant must elaborate on following aspects of the project proposal: management structures and procedures, communication activities, detailed work plan and budget. The applicant is expected to stay in close contacts with the JS during the step 2. Individual consultations will be provided to the applicants.

Once the project is submitted, the admissibility of all projects will be checked according to the admissibility criteria. If needed, the JS will ask the project to make technical corrections within a set deadline. The project will be declared ineligible if any one eligibility criterion is not met. In this case, the application will be excluded from further assessment.

Any changes to the project idea and strategy should be avoided, but where they are unavoidable they must be indicated to the JS. In such cases the first step assessment will be repeated for these parts. In addition, the assessment of the project context will be deepened as well as the assessment of the project’s contribution to programme objectives, expected results and particularly outputs. These will either build on the assessment of the first phase or complement the assessment when more detailed information is provided in the complete Application Form.

As long as no major changes have taken place and the project idea is evaluated as at least acceptable on all of the above-mentioned strategic assessment criteria, the project is considered to have passed this stage. In that case it moves on to be evaluated against **the** **operational assessment criteria**. In case the project would fail 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.

The strategic assessment criteria are on:

##### Strategic assessment criteria

##### Project relevance

How well is a need for the project justified?

* The project addresses common territorial challenges of the programme or a joint asset of the programme area - there is a real need for the project (well justified, reasonable, well explained) and the project matches with programme objective. – AF C.2.1 and C.2.2
* The project clearly contributes to a wider strategy on one or more policy levels (EU / national / regional), including EUSBSR. – AF C.2.5

To what extent will the project contribute to the achievement of programme’s objectives and indicators?

* The project overall objective clearly contributes to the achievement of the programme priority specific objective. – AF C.1
* The project outputs clearly link to programme output indicators and their contribution to programme targets is sufficient. – AF C.4 Output tables in work packages
* Project’s contribution to programme result indicators is realistic and sufficient. – AF C.5

How does the project build on existing practices?

* The project makes use of available knowledge and builds on existing results and practices. – AF C.2.7
* The project tries to avoid overlaps and replications; there is evolution of ideas. – AF C.2.2
* The project demonstrates new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector/programme area/participating countries or adapts and implements already developed solutions. – AF C.2.2

Cooperation character

What added value does the cooperation bring?

* The importance of cooperation beyond borders for the topic addressed is clearly demonstrated. – AF C.2.3
* The results cannot (or only to some extent) be achieved without cooperation. – AF C.2.3
* There is a clear benefit from cooperating for the project partners / target groups / project area / programme area. The target group is well described and relevant for achieving outputs and results.

– AF C.2.3

Project intervention logic

Is the project intervention logic is clearly and logically constructed?

To what extent is project intervention logic plausible?

* Project specific objectives are specific, realistic and achievable; the project approach is suitable for achieving the planned results – AF C.4 Specific objectives in work packages
* Proposed project outputs are needed to achieve project specific objectives. – AF C.4 Output tables in work packages
* Project outputs and results that contribute to programme indicators are realistic (it is possible to achieve them with given resources – i.e. time, partners, budget - and they are realistic based on the quantification provided). – AF C.4, C.5, C.6, D  
  (Project main results contribute to programme objective’s results
* Chosen outputs are relevant for achieving targeted results and the internal logic is in place
  + *The role of ”Project objective” and Project specific objectives?*
  + *Project objective – Project main results*
  + *Project specific objectives – Project outputs)*

To what extent will project outputs have an impact beyond project life time?

* Project outputs are durable (the proposal is expected to provide a significant and durable contribution to solving the challenges targeted) – if not, it is justified. – AF C.8.2
* Project main outputs are applicable and replicable by other organisations/regions/countries outside of the current partnership (transferability) – if not, it is justified. – AF C.8.3

Partnership relevance

To what extent is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project?

* The project involves the relevant actors needed to address the territorial challenge/joint asset and achieve targeted results. – AF C.3
* With respect to the project’s objectives the project partnership: – AF C.3
  + is balanced with respect to the levels, sectors, territory
  + consists of partners that complement each other.
* Partner organisations have proven experience and competence in the thematic field concerned, as well as the necessary capacity to implement the cross-border cooperation project (financial, human resources, etc.) – AF B.1.6
* All partners play a well defined role in the partnership, they are relevant for achieving the project results, and the territory benefits from this cooperation. – AF C.3

The operational assessment criteria are on:

Work plan

To what extent is the work plan realistic, consistent and coherent?

* Proposed activities and deliverables are relevant and lead to planned outputs and results. – AF C.4, C.5
* Distribution of tasks among partners is appropriate (e.g. sharing of tasks is clear, logical, in line with partners’ role in the project, etc.). – AF C.4 Activities in work packages
* Time plan is realistic. – AF C.6
* Activities, deliverables and outputs are in a logical time-sequence. – AF C.6
* The importance of investments and their transnational/cross-border relevance is demonstrated to reach project objectives (if applicable). Risks related to investments have been analysed. – AF C.4 Investments

Communication

To what extent are communication activities appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders?

* The communication objectives are relevant and are expected to contribute to project specific objectives. – AF C.4 Objectives in work packages
* Communication activities (and deliverables) are appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders. – AF C.4 Activities and deliverables in work packages

Budget

To what extent is the project budget used in accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness?

* The principle of economy concerns minimising the costs of resources. The resources used by the project partnership for its activities should be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality, and at the best price.
* The budget allocated to staff and external expertise is in line with the project content and the costs are realistic. – AF D.2 & E.3
* Sufficient and reasonable resources are planned to ensure project implementation. – AF D.2 & E.3
* The principle of efficiency concerns getting the most from the available resources. It is concerned with the relationship between resources employed and outputs delivered in terms of quantity, quality and timing.
* The need for engaging external expertise is justified and the costs seem realistic. – AF E.3
* Financial allocation per cost category is in line with the work plan. – AF D.2 & E.3
* If applicable, the distribution of the budget per period is in line with the work plan. – AF D.4
* The application of lump sums and unit costs is appropriate and in line with the programme rules. – AF D.2 & E.3
* The principle of effectiveness concerns meeting the objectives and achieving the intended results.
* The available information in the budget is transparent and sufficient. On that basis, the project budget appears proportionate to the proposed work plan, project outputs and project's contribution to programme indicators aimed for. – AF D.2 & E.3
* Sufficient and reasonable resources are planned for investments and equipment purchases (if applicable) and their costs are realistic. – AF D.2 & E.3

The same scoring system (1-5) as for the 1st phase assessment is used for the 2nd phase assessment.

As for the first step, the JS may ask clarifying questions once during the assessment phase. This is not an opportunity to provide new information but to clarify information that was given in the original application. A deadline is set for receiving the reply. The JS assesses the project based on the information provided in the application and as a reply to potential questions.

### 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 JS 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 admissibility check criteria are:

1. Obligatory annexes are attached to the application form where applicable.
2. Supporting documents (e.g. technical investment documentation) are attached where applicable.
3. The application form and its annexes are signed where necessary according to the programme rules.
4. The application package is in the required language(s). If applicable, annexes issued by third parties, in other language than required, are accompanied by their translation.
5. All applicable sections of the application form are correctly filled in. There is no incorrect information, e.g. "to be added later".
6. Information presented in the application form and in annexes is consistent (e.g. co-financing amounts, partner names etc.).
7. The Lead partner is an eligible organisation. Programme to decide the rules, e.g. legal status, territorial eligibility – area. Note: This check is separate from other partners because LP has more requirements than other partners. Some checks can be automatic!
8. All project partners are eligible organisations. Programme to decide the rules, e.g. legal status, territorial eligibility – area. Note: Some checks can be automatic!

The technical criteria for the small projects are further explained in the Guide for Filling in the Application Form. If needed, the JS will ask the project to make technical corrections within a set deadline. All projects that are found eligible, will move to the content assessment.

**Table 9.** Application and assessment of small projects

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Opening/closing  the call | JS assesses the projects and makes a proposal to the Monitoring Committee | Monitoring Committee evaluates and selects projects |
| Total max days  per activity | Approx. 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 JS as early as possible in the planning phase. We organise a series of project development seminars for each call as well as provides individual consultations. All applicants are expected to make contact with the JS (the project manager for the chosen priority or a project coordinator) before the submission of the document.

After the call is closed, the JS assesses the submitted proposals. The project will be assessed against strategic and operational assessment criteria. 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 are:

##### Strategic assessment criteria

Project relevance

How well is a need for the project justified?

* The project addresses common territorial challenges of the programme or a joint asset of the programme area - there is a real need for the project (well justified, reasonable, well explained) and the project matches with programme objective. – AF C.2.1 and C.2.2
* The project clearly contributes to a wider strategy on one or more policy levels (EU / national / regional), including EUSBSR. – AF C.2.5

To what extent will the project contribute to the achievement of programme’s objectives and indicators?

* The project overall objective clearly contributes to the achievement of the programme priority specific objective. – AF C.1
* The project outputs clearly link to programme output indicators and their contribution to programme targets is sufficient. – AF C.4 Output tables in work packages
* Project’s contribution to programme result indicators is realistic and sufficient. – AF C.5

How does the project build on existing practices?

* The project makes use of available knowledge and builds on existing results and practices. – AF C.2.7
* The project tries to avoid overlaps and replications; there is evolution of ideas. – AF C.2.2
* The project demonstrates new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector/programme area/participating countries or adapts and implements already developed solutions. – AF C.2.2

Cooperation character

What added value does the cooperation bring?

* The importance of cooperation beyond borders for the topic addressed is clearly demonstrated. – AF C.2.3
* The results cannot (or only to some extent) be achieved without cooperation. – AF C.2.3
* There is a clear benefit from cooperating for the project partners / target groups / project area / programme area. The target group is well described and relevant for achieving outputs and results.

– AF C.2.3

Project intervention logic

Is the project intervention logic is clearly and logically constructed?

To what extent is project intervention logic plausible?

* Project specific objectives are specific, realistic and achievable; the project approach is suitable for achieving the planned results – AF C.4 Specific objectives in work packages
* Proposed project outputs are needed to achieve project specific objectives. – AF C.4 Output tables in work packages
* Project outputs and results that contribute to programme indicators are realistic (it is possible to achieve them with given resources – i.e. time, partners, budget - and they are realistic based on the quantification provided). – AF C.4, C.5, C.6, D  
  (Project main results contribute to programme objective’s results
* Chosen outputs are relevant for achieving targeted results and the internal logic is in place
  + *The role of ”Project objective” and Project specific objectives?*
  + *Project objective – Project main results*
  + *Project specific objectives – Project outputs)*

To what extent will project outputs have an impact beyond project life time?

* Project outputs are durable (the proposal is expected to provide a significant and durable contribution to solving the challenges targeted) – if not, it is justified. – AF C.8.2
* Project main outputs are applicable and replicable by other organisations/regions/countries outside of the current partnership (transferability) – if not, it is justified. – AF C.8.3

Partnership relevance

To what extent is the partnership composition relevant for the proposed project?

* The project involves the relevant actors needed to address the territorial challenge/joint asset and achieve targeted results. – AF C.3
* With respect to the project’s objectives the project partnership: – AF C.3
  + is balanced with respect to the levels, sectors, territory
  + consists of partners that complement each other.
* Partner organisations have proven experience and competence in the thematic field concerned, as well as the necessary capacity to implement the cross-border cooperation project (financial, human resources, etc.) – AF B.1.6
* All partners play a well defined role in the partnership, they are relevant for achieving the project results, and the territory benefits from this cooperation. – AF C.3

The operational assessment criteria are on:

Work plan

To what extent is the work plan realistic, consistent and coherent?

* Proposed activities and deliverables are relevant and lead to planned outputs and results. – AF C.4, C.5
* Distribution of tasks among partners is appropriate (e.g. sharing of tasks is clear, logical, in line with partners’ role in the project, etc.). – AF C.4 Activities in work packages
* Time plan is realistic. – AF C.6
* Activities, deliverables and outputs are in a logical time-sequence. – AF C.6
* The importance of investments and their transnational/cross-border relevance is demonstrated to reach project objectives (if applicable). Risks related to investments have been analysed. – AF C.4 Investments

Communication

To what extent are communication activities appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders?

* The communication objectives are relevant and are expected to contribute to project specific objectives. – AF C.4 Objectives in work packages
* Communication activities (and deliverables) are appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders. – AF C.4 Activities and deliverables in work packages

Budget

To what extent is the project budget used in accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness?

* The principle of economy concerns minimising the costs of resources. The resources used by the project partnership for its activities should be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality, and at the best price.
* The budget allocated to staff and external expertise is in line with the project content and the costs are realistic. – AF D.2 & E.3
* Sufficient and reasonable resources are planned to ensure project implementation. – AF D.2 & E.3
* The principle of efficiency concerns getting the most from the available resources. It is concerned with the relationship between resources employed and outputs delivered in terms of quantity, quality and timing.
* The need for engaging external expertise is justified and the costs seem realistic. – AF E.3
* Financial allocation per cost category is in line with the work plan. – AF D.2 & E.3
* If applicable, the distribution of the budget per period is in line with the work plan. – AF D.4
* The application of lump sums and unit costs is appropriate and in line with the programme rules. – AF D.2 & E.3
* The principle of effectiveness concerns meeting the objectives and achieving the intended results.
* The available information in the budget is transparent and sufficient. On that basis, the project budget appears proportionate to the proposed work plan, project outputs and project's contribution to programme indicators aimed for. – AF D.2 & E.3
* Sufficient and reasonable resources are planned for investments and equipment purchases (if applicable) and their costs are realistic. – AF D.2 & E.3

Members of the JS 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.

Each criterion will be evaluated on a scale of 1-5. The scale is:

**5 - Very good** (relevant information has been provided, showing that project is exceptionally well in line with the requirements set by the programme);

**4 – Good** (relevant information has been provided, showing that the project is well in line with the requirements set by the programme);

**3 – Acceptable** (information has been provided, showing that the project meets the requirements set by the programme);

**2 – Poor** (information can be found to prove that the minimum requirements of the programme have been met);

**1 – Unacceptable** (no information has been provided or the information provided is not in line with the requirements set by the programme).

If a project receives the score 1 for even one criterion, it will be suggested to be rejected by the Monitoring Committee.

The assessment is done in two steps: if a project receives the score 1 on at least one strategic assessment criteria, it will not continue to the assessment of the operational criteria. Subsequently, the project will be presented to the Monitoring Committee as a project suggested to be rejected.

The JS may ask clarifying questions once during the assessment phase. This is not an opportunity to provide new information but to clarify information that was given in the original application. A deadline is set for receiving the reply. The JS assesses the project based on the information provided in the application and as a reply to potential questions.

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](http://www.centralbaltic.eu).

## Selection of projects by the Monitoring Committee

Based on the evaluation of the projects, the JS will prepare a proposal for the Monitoring Committee. Projects which did not pass the JS 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 JS 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 JS 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 instructions for the lead partner on how to appeal against this Managing Authority’s administrative decision.

# Implementing a project

## Signing the relevant agreements

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. For project activities that have been identified already in the application and where permits are required, these are required before the contract can be signed. 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. A standard Subsidy Contract template is available on the programme website at [www.centralbaltic.eu](http://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 MA 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 MA 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 MA on the programme website at [www.centralbaltic.eu](http://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 MA or JS 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 JS 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.

## 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 JS 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 JS 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.

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.

The lead partner is obliged to set up a Steering Group and arrange its first meeting **immediately after signing** the Subsidy Contract but not later that one month after signing the contract. The JS should be informed about the set up and the first meeting arranged so that the project’s contact person can participate in it.

### Steering Group

The Steering Group should **consist of representatives of project partners and especially key stakeholders 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 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, project staff cannot be official members of the Steering Group.

The Steering Group should:

Monitor and steer the project in order to meet the targets/objectives set in the project application. 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 JS;

Handle project modifications and approve them before the lead partner submits the material to the JS/MA;

Approve the Final Report before it is submitted by the lead partner to the JS;

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.

No fees or remuneration for Steering Group members are eligible.

## Reporting and payment procedures

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

**Table 10.** The reporting and payment procedures

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | End of the 6-month reporting period | LP+PPs submit Partner Reports to the National controllers | LP compiles and submits the Project Report to the JS | JS assesses the report | Final payment of the remaining part of the reported costs to the LP |
| Deadline |  | 15 days from the end of RP | 4 months from the end of RP (including 3  months for national control) | 90 days + needed days for clarifications from the LP |  |
| Total time passed since the  end of the reporting period (indicative) |  | 15 days | 4 months | Approx. 7 months | Approx. 7 months |

Anyone checking your project can request you to clarify or provide additional information. The deadlines for processing the project claims 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 JS/MA 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 partners. Therefore, partners must have sufficient liquidity to carry out the project even in unforeseen events.

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 forms the basis of the monitoring and assessment of a project’s progress. It 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 JS.

**Figure 6.** The reporting procedure

TO BE ADDED BASED ON JEMS

### Reporting periods

All projects must submit Project Reports to the JS 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 each reporting period each project partner will finalise the Partner Report and submit to the for the national control trough Jems. Lead partner will compile and prepare Project Report and submit it to the JS 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](file:///\\virasto2\CB%202014\Programme%20documents\Programme%20Manual\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 (consisting of an Activity report, List of expenditure, Contribution and Forecast and attachments) and send that with all mandatory annexes 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](#_Audits).

The national control verifies the real cost expenditure 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. Only costs verified by the national control can be included in the Project Report. The lead partner checks the costs of each partner against these criteria and includes only the relevant costs in the Project Report. This report is then submitted to the JS for assessment.

In case a project partner has not managed to get its report 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 MA but will be borne by the project partner.

**The project report** provides a description of project activities and the outcomes achieved 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) as snapshots of the reporting periods. 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 (expenditure 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 and payment

The assessment of the Project Reports by the JS 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 JS 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 JS has 90 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 JS request during 2 weeks without a solid reason, the JS proceeds with the processing of the report based on the incomplete information. This might lead to the deduction of the questionable costs or actions.

An assessment report, including an updated spending profile and assessment of project implementation and spending will be sent to the lead partner of each project. This information should be communicated to all project partners by the lead partner.

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 JS 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 SCO’s 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 implementation time.

After receipt of funds from the MA, 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 MA 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 MA 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 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 conversion method applies to only non-euro partners, meaning in practice Swedish partners. Possible costs for euro country partners will always be reported in euro, even if they have incurred in a non-euro zone. The costs of fluctuation of foreign exchange rates are not eligible.

## Updating the project plan during implementation

The activity plan and the budget should be planned as thoroughly as possible. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into consideration that the development of the project can sometimes take place years before the actual implementation. Therefore, whenever the project partnership foresees the need to modify the project, the contact person of the JS should be contacted.

There are different types of project modifications that a project might face: partnership, budget, activities and outputs, 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 BL. Therefore, costs per cost items are not binding during project implementation.

Project modifications are in force from the date of the decision (by the JS, MA 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 XX.

### Modifications having no impact to the Application Form (no formal modification procedure required)

**Minor changes**

Minor adjustment like change of timetable for activities or deliverables, 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 (NB! not the LP) name, legal status, change of hosting organisation, change of contact person etc.) are made based on need. These changes are typically made in the Supplementary information section in Jems and the lead partner should notify JS should of these types of modifications as soon as possible.

Flexibility rule

There is flexibility between the Budget Lines. This flexibility can be used when planned activities cost more than originally expected. Minor modifications to the individual BLs are not monitored by the JS: projects are allowed to overspend by a maximum of 20% or 40 000 eur (whichever is higher) of the individual BLs 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 project partner budget needs to be changed then formal modification procedure is necessary.
* The flexibility rule does not apply to lump sums.
* Due to the large number of SCO’s used by the programme, the real flexibility between remaining cost categories is rather limited. Still, the option has been kept.

### Modifications having an impact to the Application Form (formal modification procedure required)

Any modifications beyond the scope of the flexibility rule, minor adjustments or technical modifications require a formal approval. The lead partner should inform the JS 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 share 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 subject to the approval of the Member States/Åland locating the partners,

if the objectives of the project or the results are modified so that the provisions of the original project application are considerably changed.

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 JS has been informed, the lead partner must justify and describe the modifications in relevant places in Jems. The JS has 20 days to assess a Modification Request and forward it to the MA/Monitoring Committee for approval.

Please remember that project **modifications come into force on the date of the MA/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 request for modification, 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.

Some technical adjustments do not have the impact to the content of the project (change of the partner’s (NB! not the LP) name, legal status, change of hosting organisation, change of contact person, small adjustment or technical correction on data of personnel cost (correcting a technical mistake, changing workload in the limits of approved budget, etc.) but have to be included in the Application Form in order to have up to date information. The JS contact person should be informed about need for such modifications as soon as possible, approval received, if relevant. Such changes are entered mostly when formal modification procedure is initiated, and Application Form is opened for modifications. These can be done upon need.

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

Once the MA has signed a Subsidy Contract with the lead partner, no separate amendments will be prepared for modifications. As stated in the preamble and in §15 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 MA confirms these changes in Jems, upon which the new version is valid.

## 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.

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.

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.

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 budget line as real costs. This would be double financing and is never eligible.

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, providing pay slips 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;

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;

During the closure period costs other than project management costs (salaries, office and rent, etc.) for the lead partner;

In kind 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](#_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.

#### 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 so-called Simplified Cost Options.

Simplified Cost Options (SCO’s) are a way of reporting project costs. When using SCO’s costs are not based on real costs (supported by invoices and other supporting documentation) but based on a pre-defined methodology. There are three types of SCO’s, 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 (for staff hourly rate, events and project management equipment)

The benefits of SCO’s are many. As SCO’s 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, SCO’s helps 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 SCO’s 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 SCO’s are always defined in advance and cannot be modified later.

### Staff costs

Definition

Expenditure on costs of staff members employed by the partner organisation, who are formally engaged to work on the project.

BL Staff costs includes staff costs of employees in line with the employment/work contract, and costs of natural persons working for the partner organisation under a contract other than an employment/work contract and receiving salary payments.

Note: 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’.

General principles

Staff costs must relate to activities which the partner organisation would not carry out if the project was not undertaken.

Overheads and any other office and administration costs cannot be included under this BL.

Daily allowances and any other travel and accommodation costs cannot be included under this BL.

Staff costs must be clearly separated from external expertise and the same cost cannot be covered from both BL.

The programme reimburses staff costs only as a pre-defined hourly rate. This is a simplified cost option.

**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 by country. 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. However, the hourly rate has been calculated to cover all side costs as well.

The actual salary paid to the person is not relevant. 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 table below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Country | Hourly rate |
| Estonia | 29 |
| Finland (including Åland) | 36 |
| Latvia | 24 |
| Sweden | 501 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 need 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.

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, etc. are not eligible.

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

**Audit trail**

The following main documents must be available for control purposes:

• The “Report of hours” template which defines that the person is working for the project and included the times actually worked for the project.

### Office and administration

Definition

The BL for office and administration costs covers operating and administrative expenses of the partner organisation that support delivery of project activities.

The programme uses a flat rate for office and administration costs. The flat rate is counted as 15% of the eligible staff costs.

Note, that 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.

General principles

The programme uses a flat rate for calculating and reporting office and administrative expenditure. The calculation is done automatically in the Application Form and reports by Jems. Eligible costs under the office and administration BL are calculated as a flat rate of 15% of eligible direct staff costs. 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 BL.

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 (e.g. fire, theft insurances);

Utilities (e.g. electricity, heating, water);

Office supplies (this includes also coffee and snacks for meetings);

Accounting;

Archives;

Maintenance, cleaning and repairs;

Security;

IT systems;

Communication (e.g. telephone, 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 flat rate covers all office and administration costs, i.e. there is no distinction between direct and indirect costs.

In case coffee and snacks for internal project meetings are purchased as groceries they fall under office and administration costs.

Audit trail

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.

### Travel and accommodation costs

Definition

Expenditure on travel and accommodation costs that relate to delivery of the project and related to project staff as well as target groups, where relevant. Only travel costs, accommodation costs, visa costs, and/or daily allowances can be included under this BL.

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.

Note, that 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.

The programme uses a flat rate for travel costs. The flat rate is counted as 15% of the eligible staff costs.

General principles

No cost item can be taken into account twice, i.e. no double funding is permissible;

Travel and accommodation costs must clearly link to the project and be essential for effective delivery of the project activities;

Travel and accommodation costs of stakeholders, external experts and service providers cannot be included under this BL; they must be reported as external expertise and services costs;

.

Audit trail

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.

### External expertise and services costs

Definition

Under this line projects may include expenditure for the financing of external expertise and services provided by a public or private body or a natural person **outside[[2]](#footnote-3)** of the partner organisation. External expertise and services cover costs paid on the basis of contracts or written agreements and against invoices or requests for reimbursement to external experts and service providers that are acquired to carry out certain tasks or activities, linked to the delivery of the project.

Under this budget line there can be real costs and one SCO, the unit cost for events.

General principles for real costs

The work by external experts and service providers must be essential to the project.

Each partner organisation (including private partners) is responsible for ensuring that EU and national public procurement rules are respected and that all contracts (including framework contracts) comply with the basic principles of transparency,

Non-discrimination and equal treatment as defined in the EC Treaty and the Commission Interpretative Communication on the Community law applicable to contract awards below the EU thresholds. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52006XC0801%2801%29>

No sub-contracting between project partners is allowed.

BL specific rules

All additional costs related to external experts (e.g. travel and accommodation expenses for external experts) must be foreseen in the service contract and recorded under this BL.

External expertise and services purchased for the purpose of the project control, audit, and communication must be included under this BL.

All costs of external expertise and services that are linked to an investment in infrastructure must be included under this BL, e.g. feasibility studies, notarial fees.

Audit trail

The following main documents must be available for control purposes:

Evidence of the selection process, in line with national procurement rules or the EU public procurement rules depending on the amount contracted.

A contract or a written agreement laying down the services to be provided with a clear reference to the project. 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 provided. 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 accountancy rules.

Outputs of the work of external experts or service deliverables.

Proof of payment.

List of eligible costs

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

Studies or surveys (e.g. evaluations, strategies, concept notes, design plans, handbooks);

Training;

Translations;

IT systems and website development, modifications and updates;

promotion, communication, publicity or information linked to the project

Financial management;

Services related to the organisation and implementation of events or meetings and not covered by the event unit cost ;

Participation in events (e.g. registration fees);

Legal consultancy and notarial services, technical and financial expertise, other consultancy and accountancy services;

Intellectual property rights;

The provisions of guarantees by a bank or other financial institution where required (by EU or national law or the Programme Manual);

Travel and accommodation for external experts, speakers, chairpersons of meetings and service providers;

Other specific expertise and services needed for the project.

Events unit cost (SCO)

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

The unit cost are paid per day per participant. The unit cost is defined according to the country where the event is organised.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Estonia** | **Latvia** | **Finland** | **Sweden** |
| **Event unit cost per participant per one day** | **55€** | **48€** | **75€** | **73€** |

Audit trail

The unit cost is paid out when the activity has taken place. The following documents are needed as evidence:

•List of participants

•Meeting agenda

### Equipment

Definitions

Expenditure for the financing of equipment purchased, rented or leased by a partner, necessary to achieve objectives of the project. This includes costs of equipment already in possession by the partner organisation and used to carry out project activities. In case of investment activities, ‘equipment’ covers costs of fixed investments in equipment, and costs of equipment that forms part of an investment in infrastructure.

Low-value asset - an accounting term that essentially means low value equipment. There is no single euro limit, but it depends on the size of the partner organisation. This is something you need to check with your accounting personnel.

Depreciation - an accounting term that means that the cost of an equipment is divided for several years instead of recording the cost as full cost.

Pro rata - a Latin term used to describe a proportionate allocation. It essentially translates to "in proportion," which means a calculation where the price of an equipment is distributed in equal amounts. This calculation takes into account the degree of use and can be calculated on the basis of either the full cost or the depreciation amount.

General principles for real costs

Only investment type of equipment, or equipment used solely to reach the results of the project, can be included here. Office equipment of project staff is covered as a Simplified Cost Option (see below)

Costs of equipment are eligible if they have been approved by the programme.

All costs are subject to applicable public procurement rules and each partner organisation is responsible for ensuring that these rules have been respected.

BL specific rules

Full purchase cost of equipment is eligible, if it is used solely for the purpose of the project or the target group in line with objectives of the project and incurred and paid within the eligible period.

For equipment that has been purchased before the project approval but used solely for the project, only a pro rata cost related to the project (duration, degree of use) is eligible; for equipment that has been purchased before the project approval or during the project lifetime but used partially for the project, only a pro rata cost related to the project (duration, degree of use) is eligible. Pro rata is also applied if equipment are bought late in the project implementation period. This share has to be calculated according to a justified and equitable method in line with the legislation or general accounting policy of the partner organisation.

Depreciation applies if the economic life-time of equipment exceeds the duration of the project (ref: Art. 69.2 Common Provisions Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013). The cost has to be calculated in accordance with the legislation and general accounting policy of the partner organisation. Only the value of depreciation is marked to the project budget and later reported.

Full purchase cost of equipment that is not depreciable (e.g. low-value asset) is eligible.

Purchase cost of second-hand equipment is eligible, provided the equipment complies with applicable norms and standards and its price does not exceed the generally accepted price on the market.

In the case of fixed investments in equipment and when equipment forms part of an investment in infrastructure, full cost of equipment as approved by the programme is eligible, i.e. no depreciation is eligible.

Equipment cannot be purchased, rented or leased from another partner.

Audit trail

The following main documents must be available for control purposes:

Evidence of the procurement process (announcement, selection, award) in line with the national procurement rules or the EU procurement rules depending on the amount of the contract;

Invoice (or a supporting document having equivalent probative value to invoices, in case of depreciation) providing all relevant information in line with the applicable accountancy rules;

Calculation scheme of depreciation;

Proof of payment.

List of eligible costs

Expenditure for equipment is limited to the following:

IT hardware and software;

Furniture and fittings;

Laboratory equipment;

Machines and instruments;

Tools or devices;

Vehicles;

Other specific equipment needed for the project.

Project management equipment unit cost (SCO)

The unit cost is used to cover office equipment for project staff. It includes equipment to implement the project, meaning laptop/computer/tablet (with accessories such as the basic software, mouse, keyboard, headset, 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.

The unit cost is paid for each 1720 hours that is approved in the Application Form to be worked for the project. The unit cost for 1720 full hours planned is 379 EUR.

Audit trail

The unit cost is paid out based on the approval of the project, for which the indicator is the signed Subsidy Contract.

## Other rules

### VAT

VAT is an eligible cost for projects with a budget of less than 5.000.000 euros (including VAT).

### Public procurement

For costs that are estimated to exceed EUR 10.000 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.

Public procurements should 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 EUR 10.000 and have to 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.

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, First Level 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 the eMonitoring System 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.

**Partner search tools**

If you wish to use our online partner search tool, you are asked to provide basic information about your organisation and its contact person. The information is used by programme bodies to match potential partners with each other. The information will be deleted after 2 years.

**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 concent

**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.

### State aid

The Programme Manual provides a general overview of the concept of state aid and what consequences it has in the programme.

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 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, each Lead or project partners has to provide their NACE Codes during the application phase. The list of all available NACE codes and a detailed explanation is available on the Programme website.

NACE is the acronyme 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**[[3]](#footnote-4)**.

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.

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 EUR 20,000 per undertaking per project. The partner has to document the calculation of the amount of aid.

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

### Fraud declaration

The Managing Authority (MA) for the Central Baltic programme has from the start been 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 MA, overall responsibility for managing the risk of fraud and corruption has been delegated to the Head of MA who has the responsibility for

o Undertaking a regular review, with the help of a risk assessment team, of the fraud risk;

o Establishing an effective anti-fraud policy and fraud response plan;

o Ensuring fraud awareness of staff and training;

o Ensuring that the MA 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 MA 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 MA has put in place proportionate anti-fraud measures based on a thorough fraud risk assessment (cf. the Commission's guidance on the implementation of Article 125.4 c)). 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 MA 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 MA 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.

## 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 **agree on a communication strategy**, 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 have to ensure that active communication efforts are taken regarding the launch, progress and results of the project. 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.

The ways of doing this 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 very useful channels for many projects, many projects also published project websites solely for publishing simple descriptions of their projects, their partners, project news, materials and results. Things that would not necessarily have required a separate website. In order to save funds and support the projects with online communications, as well with public availability of the results after the projects end, the Central Baltic Programme has gone for the “Project webspace” option.

### Central Baltic Project webspace

The webspace is a page provided for each funded project under the Central Baltic Programme website. A project page will have basic information of a project and the programme shall give each project access rights limited to their webspace to update the information and upload materials themselves (for example news, events, photos, files). A project may have both, a webspace and a separate project website depending on the need.

### 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

In order to help raise awareness on activities and results reached with the EU support, facilitate branding, and reduce costs, the Central Baltic Programme branding has been harmonised across the programme, including all funded projects.

In this matter, the projects are not encouraged to develop their own project logo. A specific logo or project branding templates might however be considered for a result with a lifetime going beyond the project duration. Prior approval of the MA/JS would then be required before the project start.

The funded projects are obliged to follow the programme’s branding when developing their project communication. The project logos (templates) based on the harmonised Interreg branding and requirements set out in the regulation will be provided to the projects shortly after their approval.

### Regulation requirements concerning project communication

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

* The **EU flag** must be prominently featured on all communication materials (printed and digital products, websites and their mobile views) used for the public or for participants together **with textual reference** **'Funded by the European Union**' or **'Co-funded by the European Union**' always spelled out in full and placed next to the flag. It should be translated into local languages, where appropriate.
  + - The typeface to be used in conjunction with the EU emblem must stay simple and easily readable. The typeface to be used with the flag may be any of the following fontsArial, Auto, Calibri, Garamond, Tahoma, Trebuchet, Tahoma, Ubuntu and Verdana.
    - The font size used shall be proportionate to the size of the emblem.
    - The colour of the font shall be reflex blue, black or white depending on the background.
    - The flag shall have at least the same size, measured in height or width, as the biggest of the other logos.
* 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) is available. Once the project has ended this information must include the main results and outputs available for dissemination. A short general description about the project should be added to the basic information mentioned above and updated accordingly once the project has ended.
* All project partner organizations 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 highlighting the support from the EU funding. Where the beneficiary is a natural person, they shall ensure, to the extent possible, that appropriate information is available, highlighting the support from the EU, at a location visible to the public or through an electronic display.
* A project with a budget exceeding EUR 500.000 of ERDF, 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 EU and to the Central Baltic Programme 2021-2027.

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

* [Regulation 2021/1059](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2021.231.01.0094.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2021%3A231%3ATOC) **referred to as “Interreg Regulation”**
* [Regulation 2021/1060](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2021.231.01.0159.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2021%3A231%3ATOC) referred to as “**CPR Regulation”**
* [Official website of the European Union](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/flag_en)**, Description and using the EU emblem**

### Technical instructions on the use of the logos and references

Making sure the needed logos and references are in place is important. 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’ publicity requirements and follow the national rules on publicity issues.

**The needed references are the following:**

* The flag of the EU together with the textual reference 'Funded by the European Union' or 'Co-funded by the European Union'
* The Interreg logo of the Central Baltic Programme

For very **small materials** such as pens, where space for printing is limited and the logo would be too small to be readable, the following references have to be used:

* The flag of the EU together with the textual reference 'Funded by the European Union' or 'Co-funded by the European Union'
* Either the Interreg logo of the Central Baltic Programme OR
* The project’s acronym / own logo

The different versions of the needed electronic logo files can be downloaded from the programme website at [www.centralbaltic.eu](http://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 project budget can be considered ineligible.

More detailed information on the use of logos and references are to be included in the Guide for communication, which is to be made available on the programme website.

### Cooperation with the JS

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 JS, also the programme’s communication manager and will 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 JS concerning their needs in making the project communication efficient.

According to the regulation[[4]](#footnote-5), the JS 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

## 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 MA.

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 JS 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 Service Centre

**Finland:** Uusimaa Regional Council

**Latvia:** Ministry of Environmental Protection 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. They will check the expenditure entered in the project accounts and the supporting documents (e.g. invoices, contracts, timesheets, and public procurement documentation).

The controllers will look at the documents in the audit trail to make sure that the costs claimed are real costs, the activities have taken place and that rules have been followed. 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 and/or JS.

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 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 Control

The AA is one of the Central Baltic programme authorities. It carries out audits to ensure the proper functioning individual projects and the programme. The AA 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 AA will check all costs and original supporting documents 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 AA 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 JS, 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.

If an ineligible cost is found after the project payment has been made and the MA has reported the cost to the European Commission, the correction will be made by the MA. The MA 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 so-called recovery letter to the lead partner, asking the lead partner to pay the money back to the MA. 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 MA 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 Decision of 19.12.2013 on the setting out and approval of the guidelines for determining financial corrections to be made by the Commission to expenditure financed by the Union under shared management, for non-compliance with the rules on public procurement*’.

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

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.

#### Other controls

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

## Closing the project

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. Factors connected to project closure - work contracts ending and especially the collection of all relevant information for the final report - should be planned for. 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 closure 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 – also in view of the general public.

One task is to update your project webspace on the centralbaltic.eu website. The information should contain a summary of the project’s results and links to all outputs and results produced.

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 final closure and remaining duties.

The LP is obliged to ensure that at least basic information about the project (aims, partners, amount of funding and source, description of activities) is available on the Internet during project implementation. Once the project has ended this information must include the main results and outputs available for dissemination.

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

## 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.

### Investments

A project with investments in infrastructure or productive investment 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 MA (the Regional Council of Southwest Finland) of such changes beforehand so that the MA can assess the situation and needed actions.

A project without investments in infrastructure or productive investments shall repay the ERDF contribution if they are subject to an obligation for the maintenance of an investment under the applicable State Aid rules and they undergo a cessation or relocation of a productive activity within the period laid down in those rules.

### Availability of documents

The partners must keep available all documents related to the project costs for 5 years after the closure of the project by the MA. For projects with state aid the documents must be kept for 10 years from the date such aid was granted. 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 MA 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.

Although the project has come to an end, the aim is that the project outputs or results 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.

# Annexes

## 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 referred to as “CPR Regulation”;

• Regulation (EU) No referred to as “ERDF Regulation”;

• Regulation (EU) No referred to as “Interreg 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.

1. 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 JS 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! [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Different departments of the project partner organization are not considered to be outside, wherefore internal invoicing is ineligible. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The MA/JS 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 (Reference No. SA.XXXX)”. The full text of the scheme is available in the State aid section on the Programme website. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (Article 49): https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L\_.2021.231.01.0159.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2021%3A231%3ATOC [↑](#footnote-ref-5)