



**EUSBSR**  
EU STRATEGY  
FOR THE BALTIC  
SEA REGION

# **Roles and responsibilities of the implementing stakeholders of the EUSBSR and a flagship project concept**

**Working document**



## Foreword

Recognising strengths and challenges in the implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and following the recommendations in the Report from the Commission on the implementation of the EUSBSR published on 22 June 2011, in the Communication from the Commission of 23 March 2012 and the Council Conclusions adopted on 26 October 2009, 15 November 2011 and 26 June 2012, the task force to setting-up roles and responsibilities of the EUSBSR stakeholders and to clarifying a concept of a flagship project of the EUSBSR was established in June 2011. Representatives of all the implementing stakeholder groups of the EUSBSR were invited to contribute to the work. More specifically, the task force consisted of the representatives of the European Commission, National Contact Points, Priority Area Coordinators, Horizontal Action Leader and funding programmes.

The work of the task force has resulted in the set of roles and responsibilities of the implementing stakeholders of the EUSBSR, the definition of the EUSBSR flagship project concept and the description of the labelling process of the EUSBSR flagship projects. The outcomes of the task force are reflected in the Council Conclusions on the completion of the review of the EUSBSR of 26 June 2012 and the reviewed Action Plan of the EUSBSR of January 2013.

There is a broad consensus that the set of roles and responsibilities should constitute the minimum activity that each implementing stakeholder of the EUSBSR should undertake. Although not specifically highlighted, it is important that stakeholders at local and regional levels are involved in the implementation of the EUSBSR.

In this publication the set of roles and responsibilities of the EUSBSR implementing stakeholders is presented; definition of the EUSBSR flagship project, criteria and description of the EUSBSR flagship project labelling are given as developed by the task force referred above.



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The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is the first macro-regional strategy in Europe. It aims at reinforcing cooperation within this large region in order to face common challenges by working together as well as promoting a more balanced development in the area.

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## The tasks of the European Commission

1. Play a leading role in strategic coordination of the key delivery stages of the EUSBSR.
2. Take the EUSBSR into account in relevant policy initiatives and programmes planning<sup>1</sup>.
3. Promote and facilitate involvement of stakeholders of the entire macro-region and support them in the implementation of the EUSBSR.
4. Encourage dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders from other interested Baltic Sea Region States.
5. Facilitate implementation of the EUSBSR in cooperation with the Member States (i.e. National Contact Points, line ministries, bodies in charge of implementation of programmes/financial instruments, Priority Area Coordinators, Horizontal Action Leaders) by:
  - a. Closely aligning EU, national and regional policies and strategies with the EUSBSR;
  - b. Supporting alignment of programmes/financial instruments with the EUSBSR objectives;
  - c. Identifying and addressing obstacles to the effective implementation of the EUSBSR;
  - d. Disseminating information, best practices and lessons learned in the implementation of the EUSBSR;
  - e. Ensuring adequate internal capacity in order to undertake the implementation of the EUSBSR.
6. Consult on a regular basis with the Member States, inter alia through the High Level Group.
7. Evaluate and report on the progress made in the implementation of the EUSBSR and the results achieved.
8. Whenever appropriate, in dialogue with Priority Area Coordinators, Horizontal Action Leaders and National Contact Points review and update the EUSBSR and Action Plan. Seek endorsement from the Council or respectively the High Level Group on the proposed amendments.

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<sup>1</sup> Encompassing EU Cohesion Policy and sector policies with territorial impact relevant for the EUSBSR (policies such as transport, environment, agriculture, fisheries, maritime, R&D, innovation etc. are relevant for the EUSBSR).



## The tasks of the High Level Group

1. Give advice to the European Commission on the EUSBSR and its implementation.
2. Provide opinion on the review and updates on the EUSBSR and Action Plan.
3. Propose actions to be taken by the European Commission and the Member States to strengthen the EUSBSR implementation:
  - a. Contribute to the implementation of the Council Conclusions on the review of the EUSBSR;
  - b. Identify and address obstacles to the effective implementation of the EUSBSR;
  - c. Propose actions to promote macro-regional approach in developing new policies and in aligning of programmes/financial instruments.



## The tasks of the Member State<sup>1</sup>

1. Ensure the implementation of the EUSBSR with continuous political commitment to it:
  - a. Intensify actions further to enhance existing political support for the implementation of the EUSBSR at all levels (EU, national, regional and local), particularly by making the EUSBSR a reference point for all adequate fora;
  - b. Recognise the need to include the EUSBSR on the agenda of the Council in its different formations as and when appropriate to promote effective involvement of and closer links to relevant EU policies in the implementation EUSBSR.
2. Ensure that the EUSBSR is respected in the national and regional strategic planning, existing policies, programmes and financial instruments:
  - a. Coordinate and integrate relevant policies with the EUSBSR;
  - b. Invite line ministries and other relevant authorities to mobilise programmes/financial instruments to support the implementation of the EUSBSR.
3. Support implementation of the role of National Contact Point in national coordination of the EUSBSR, as well as Priority Area Coordinator(s) and Horizontal Action Leader(s) in thematic and transnational implementation of the EUSBSR:
  - a. Appoint National Contact Point and support it in the implementation of its tasks;
  - b. Set up national coordination body in order to provide increased effectiveness, more synergy and sustainability of results achieved;
  - c. Assume responsibility for the coordination of the Priority Area(s) concerned;
  - d. Appoint Priority Area Coordinator(s) and Horizontal Action Leader(s) and ensure adequate internal capacity in order to undertake the role;
  - e. Appoint Priority Area Focal Points and Horizontal Action Focal Points<sup>2</sup>;
  - f. Continuously ensure own adequate internal capacity in order to undertake the implementation of the EUSBSR.

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<sup>1</sup> By the Member States are meant the national administrations. It is strongly preferred that a national policy coordination is led by the Prime Minister's office or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure coherent development and implementation of the EUSBSR among the involved institutions.

<sup>2</sup> The Member States are appointing Priority Area Focal Points (line ministries, agencies, other national/regional institutions) for each Priority Area of the EUSBSR. See tasks defined for the Priority Area Focal Points/Horizontal Action Focal Points in a separate fiche.



## The tasks of the National Contact Point

1. Seek political support for and contribute to political commitment to the implementation of the EUSBSR in the home country.
2. Cooperate with other National Contact Points of the EUSBSR to secure coherence and exchange the best practices.
3. Ensure overall coordination of and support to the EUSBSR implementation in the home country:
  - a. Ensure information to, consultation with national institutions regarding the EUSBSR and seek their involvement;
  - b. Act in order to facilitate involvement of other relevant stakeholders;
  - c. Maintain an ongoing policy dialogue and work with national coordination body to initiate operational action;
  - d. Encourage dialogue between relevant programmes/financial instruments and national stakeholders for the alignment of resources;
  - e. Identify the Priority Area Focal Points/Horizontal Action Focal Points.
4. Formulate and communicate national positions on the EUSBSR and Action Plan.
5. In close cooperation with the European Commission, Priority Area Coordinators and Horizontal Action Leaders participate in the review and updating of the EUSBSR and Action Plan.
6. Support Priority Area Coordinator(s) and Horizontal Action Leader(s) in the implementation of the EUSBSR.
7. Monitor and on the request of the European Commission report on the coordination activities taken in the implementation of the EUSBSR.
8. Encourage participation of relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region in the implementation of the EUSBSR.
9. Promote the visibility of the EUSBSR.



## The tasks of the Priority Area Focal Point/ Horizontal Action Focal Point

The Priority Area Focal Points serve as a liaison at national level for all matters regarding the Priority Area/Horizontal Action concerned in the Baltic Sea Region states, which do not hold the position as Priority Area Coordinator for the Priority Area or Horizontal Action Leader for the Horizontal Action in question<sup>1</sup>.

1. Function as a Focal Point for the Priority Area/Horizontal Action in the home country:
  - a. Participate in national coordination regarding the EUSBSR;
  - b. Provide information on the Priority Area/Horizontal Action to authorities or the public, whenever requested;
  - c. Identify relevant contact persons in the home country for Priority Area/Horizontal Action activities and flagship projects;
  - d. Assist the Priority Area Coordinator(s) /Horizontal Action Leader(s) to ensure communication and visibility of the Priority Area/Horizontal Action;
  - e. Ensure that decisions regarding the Priority Area/Horizontal Action are communicated to the relevant stakeholders.
  
2. Liaise regularly with the Priority Area Coordinator(s)/Horizontal Action Leader(s) in order to:
  - a. Contribute to a policy discussion within the Priority Area/Horizontal Action concerned;
  - b. Attend relevant activities, e.g. Steering Committees, meetings and conferences, of the Priority Area/Horizontal Action; and ensure continuous EU relevance in areas/actions not exclusively coordinated by the Member States;
  - c. Provide information on activities and projects in the home country of relevance to the Priority Area/Horizontal Action;
  - d. Convey positions to the Priority Area/Horizontal Action and ensure they are nationally consolidated among the authorities and stakeholders concerned.

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<sup>1</sup> If there is a Priority Area Coordinator/Horizontal Action Leader appointed in the Member State for the particular Priority Area/Horizontal Action, no Priority Area Focal Point/Horizontal Action Focal Point is required.





## The tasks of the Priority Area Coordinator

Facilitate involvement of and cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region and in close cooperation with those<sup>1</sup>:

1. Implement and follow-up the Priority Area towards targets and indicators defined. Whenever relevant, review of the indicators and targets set.
2. Review regularly the relevance of the Priority Area as described in the Action Plan. Propose necessary updates including the addition, modification or deletion of actions and flagship projects to the European Commission.
3. Facilitate policy discussions in the Baltic Sea Region regarding the Priority Area concerned.
4. Facilitate development and implementation of actions and flagship projects defined under the Priority Area.
5. Convey relevant results and recommendations of ongoing and completed flagship projects to the policy level.
6. Ensure communication and visibility of the Priority Area.
7. Maintain a dialogue with bodies in charge of implementation of programmes/financial instruments on alignment of funding for implementation of the Priority Area and flagship projects.
8. Liaise and cooperate with other Priority Area Coordinators and Horizontal Action Leaders in order to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of actions in the EUSBSR implementation.
9. Monitor progress within the Priority Area and report on it.

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<sup>1</sup> For this purpose, a steering committee/coordination group should be set-up and chaired by the Priority Area Coordinator(s). A group should be composed of representatives of all Member States and other Baltic Sea Region states, when relevant, as well as experts in the area concerned. A group should meet at least twice a year and support Priority Area Coordinator(s) in implementation of the tasks referred.



## The tasks of the Horizontal Action Leader

Facilitate involvement of and cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region and in close cooperation with those<sup>1</sup>:

1. Implement and follow-up the Horizontal Action towards targets and indicators defined. Whenever relevant, review of the indicators and targets set.
2. Review regularly the relevance of the Horizontal Action as described in the Action Plan. Propose necessary updates of the Horizontal Action to the European Commission.
3. Facilitate policy discussions in the Baltic Sea Region regarding the Horizontal Action concerned.
4. Facilitate development and implementation of the Horizontal Action concerned.
5. When relevant, convey relevant results and recommendations of the Horizontal Action to the policy level.
6. Ensure communication and visibility of the Horizontal Action.
7. Maintain a dialogue with bodies in charge of implementation of programmes/financial instruments on alignment of funding for implementation of the Horizontal Action.
8. Liaise and cooperate with Priority Area Coordinators and other Horizontal Action Leaders in order to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of actions in the EUSBSR implementation.
9. Monitor progress within the Horizontal Action and report on it.

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<sup>1</sup> For this purpose, a steering committee/coordination group should be set-up and chaired by the Horizontal Action Leader(s). A group should be composed of representatives of all Member States and other Baltic Sea Region states, when relevant, as well as experts in the area concerned. A group should meet at least twice a year and support Horizontal Action Leader(s) in implementation of the tasks referred.



## The tasks of a body in charge of implementation of a programme/financial instrument<sup>1</sup>

Bodies in charge of implementation of programmes/financial instruments are encouraged, in all stages of the programme cycle, to closely cooperate with the National Contact Points, Priority Area Coordinators, Priority Area Focal Points, Horizontal Action Leaders, Horizontal Action Focal Points and line ministries in the Member States for the implementation of the EUSBSR.

### In the planning of programme/financial instrument:

1. Contribute to the macro-regional coordination and cooperation in national and regional development strategies (territorial and thematic) by ensuring the alignment between the objectives of the programmes/financial instruments and the objectives of EUSBSR, in order to facilitate coherence and synergies as well as effective use of available resources.
2. Consider positively the creation of measures to support projects that contribute to the EUSBSR objectives.

### In the implementation of the programme/financial instrument:

3. Promote, support and fund the implementation of cooperative and coordinated projects to reach the objectives of the EUSBSR.
4. Participate in and contribute to a continuous dialogue with the main actors of the EUSBSR in order to identify and jointly work in areas of mutual interest and objectives, such as the EU 2020 Strategy etc.
5. Disseminate information to potential project applicants on the opportunities offered by the programme/financial instrument for the implementation of the EUSBSR (c.f. point 2 above).

### In the reporting phase of the programme/financial instrument:

6. Indicate and report on specific projects under actions/measures/priorities of the programme that contribute to the implementation of the EUSBSR objectives.

<sup>1</sup> A body in charge of the implementation of a programme/ financial instrument is the institution or the authority (at international, national, regional or local level) responsible for the management and implementation of the respective programme or financial instrument.



## The tasks of the Flagship Project Leader

1. Ensure implementation of the flagship project.
2. Liaise regularly with the respective Priority Area Coordinator(s)/Horizontal Action Leader(s):
  - a. Take actively part in the activities of the respective Priority Area/Horizontal Action, e.g. relevant meetings and conferences;
  - b. Regularly monitor and report on the progress of the flagship project to the Priority Area Coordinator(s)/Horizontal Action Leader(s).
3. Ensure sustainability and promotion of the flagship project results. Support the Priority Area Coordinator(s)/Horizontal Action Leader(s) in conveying relevant flagship project results and recommendations to the policy discussions and policy development in the Baltic Sea Region.
4. Establish and maintain cooperation with other relevant flagship projects of the EUSBSR, in order to ensure coherence, exchange information and avoid duplication of efforts.
5. Ensure communication and visibility of the flagship project and its results.



## Flagship project: concept and labelling process

The actions of the EUSBSR are implemented by means of flagship projects. Flagship projects demonstrate the progress of the EUSBSR, and may serve as pilot examples for desired action.

A flagship project is frequently the result of a policy discussion within a Priority Area/Horizontal Action.

A flagship project translates the desire and ambition of a Priority Area/Horizontal Action in a specified field of action.

A flagship project may e.g. develop key solutions, new methodology or practices or new forms of cooperation. A flagship project may also concern key investment of regional importance.

Once approved, a flagship project is listed in the Action Plan.

A flagship project by structure is either:

- a. a single project or
- b. a set of projects (a group) operating in the same field. The set of projects may compile single projects; flagship projects and linked projects even if those are implemented under different fields (topics or themes).

The label of a flagship project can be granted to a project, which fulfils the following criteria:

1. A flagship project must fulfil the following key criteria:
  - a. it has a high macro-regional impact;
  - b. it is contributing to fulfilling the objectives of the EUSBSR;
  - c. it is related to the implementation of one or more actions of the Priority Area/Horizontal Action concerned.
2. In general, a flagship project is also expected to:
  - a. have a clear transnational dimension (has cooperation between and/or impact on at least three Baltic Sea Region states or at least two Baltic Sea Region states if the other Baltic Sea Region state (Russia and Norway) is involved!);

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<sup>1</sup> Under exceptional geographical circumstances projects with less than three countries involved could be considered.



b. be mature for implementation:

- can be implemented within a realistic timeframe;
- has a clear financial and activity plan which e.g. encompass setting aside resources for attending relevant activities of the respective Priority Area/Horizontal Action and the EUSBSR;
- a partnership is established and a flagship project Leader is identified.

Priority Area Coordinator(s)/Horizontal Action Leader(s) may decide on specific criteria under respective Priority Area/ Horizontal Action after consultation with National Contact Points and EC Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO).



## Procedure to become a flagship project

Projects or project ideas interested in obtaining the label of flagship project in the EUSBSR are to undertake the following:

1. Identify under which Priority Area/Horizontal Action of the EUSBSR, the proposed flagship project would fit;
2. Establish contact with the Priority Area Coordinator(s) for the Priority Area concerned or Horizontal Action Leader(s) for the Horizontal Action concerned;
3. In order to assess the proposed flagship project, the Priority Area Coordinator/Horizontal Action Leader may invite the proposed project to attend a meeting of the Priority Area/Horizontal Action;
4. If the project proposal is supported, the Priority Area Coordinator(s)/ Horizontal Action Leader(s), after consulting the main stakeholders (National Contact Points, steering committee and/or Priority Area Focal Points/Horizontal Action Focal Points) make a recommendation to DG REGIO regarding the project;
5. DG REGIO considers the proposal and makes a recommendation to the High Level Group;
6. The High Level Group agrees on the flagship projects to be included in the Action Plan.

A project can be listed as a flagship project in one Priority Area/Horizontal Action only. In case a project contributes to more Priority Areas/Horizontal Actions, it may liaise with the other relevant Priority Areas/Horizontal Actions. A flagship project does not have the exclusive right to undertake action in the Priority Area/Horizontal Action under which it is listed. The Priority Area Coordinator(s)/Horizontal Action Leader(s) may at any time accept more flagship projects in the same field.

Further, throughout the implementation of the flagship project, its leader shall fulfil the tasks of the Flagship Project Leader vis-a-vis the EUSBSR as specified in the tasks of the Flagship Project Leader above.



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