

Future Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme: Much greater attention needs to be given to funding for cultural projects

The background in brief:

In the current funding period, cultural projects are not eligible under the Interreg BSR programme. At the same time there is no centrally managed EU programme providing adequate funding opportunities. “Creative Europe” is a very small programme with highly specialized calls.

Currently the topics of Interreg BSR VI, stating the funding of 2021-2027, are discussed and designed by the Joint Programming Committee (JPC). PA Culture Coordinators promote a strong support for better funding opportunities for projects that strengthen

- the awareness of common cultural heritage
- culture as a driver for sustainable development and prosperous social cohabitation.

Legal frame and current situation:

The future Interreg BSR Programme has to concentrate its funding on max. three of the following five Policy Objectives (PO) laid down in the ERDF regulation: (1) A smarter Europe, (2) A greener, low-carbon Europe, (3) A more connected Europe, (4) A more social Europe (5) A Europe closer to citizens.

As things stand at the moment, the programme will focus only on PO 1 and 2. But there are considerations to include specific objectives also of PO 3 and 5 in the future programme topics – we think that these considerations need strong support.

As regards culture, possible basis to strengthening cultural aspects in the future programme could be the programme topic 1 “More innovative and resilient economies and societies”, which will be one point of discussion in the upcoming JPC meeting. In the referring project examples “strengthening common identity of the BSR”, “societal resilience through cultural changes” and “mobilizing creativity” offer good starting points for the eligibility of cultural projects.

PA Culture works for further strengthening eligibility criteria for cultural projects in the future Interreg BSR programme. In the current situation we strongly suggest that projects suitable to strengthen European values, a common identity and the cultural heritage of the BSR as well as projects promoting culture as a driver for sustainable development are taken into account when discussing a possible programme Topic 1 “More innovative and resilient economies and societies”.

What will also be important later in this process:

The topics of the forthcoming Interreg BSR programme funding are important for the implementation of cultural cooperation in the Baltic sea region. In addition, the funding instruments have to fit the needs of several kinds of cultural actors. People-to-people contacts in small-scale initiatives can bring important surplus to common BSR cultural activities. The bureaucratic burden for Interreg funding is yet very high. A funding instrument that gives institutions an opportunity to act as an umbrella for micro-scale projects should be enabled within the Interreg VI funding system. The discussion and decisions in the JPC about the funding instruments in the forthcoming programme will probably proceed later this year. The commitment of cultural stakeholders is needed here as well. PA Culture coordinators are planning a workshop on this, defining this more closely (likely Oct. 2020, in context with EUSBSR Annual Forum). We will keep you informed.