

# The Baltic Sea Region Smart Specialisation Strategy ecosystem (BSR S3 ecosystem)

In the current 2014-2020 EU programming period, the BSR has embraced the Smart Specialisation policy agenda to support our collective innovation ambitions across the macro-region. This builds on our own domestic / regional efforts with S3 and has opened up an interregional approach across the BSR.

Through our combined efforts, we are creating new innovation opportunities of scale which we could not achieve in isolation. Our joint efforts are helping to better define our industrial strengths (existing and emerging), accelerate our innovation ambitions, develop a BSR-wide value chain orientation and enhance the profile of the BSR as an innovation partner of choice within and beyond the EU.

Following the announcement of the European Commission's draft proposals for post-2020 Cohesion Policy, it is widely expected that the EU will commit to a stronger S3 policy agenda, through innovation-focused interregional collaborations and investments. This reinforces the BSR's S3 approach and ambition. By building on our previous work and successes we have a strategic opportunity to strengthen our S3 approach with enforcing pan-baltic value chains, and to create an innovation ecosystem with strong and sustainable foundations

Our BSR S3 ecosystem is emerging out of a design thinking, where we are positioned to tap into other opportunities. The European Commission has recently introduced thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms (in areas such as industrial Modernisation and Energy) and has set up a pilot action to support interregional partnerships. Our history of working together across the BSR will allow us to take full advantage of this emerging policy landscape. Furthermore, a strong investment orientation will underpin the new S3 agenda. This could significantly accelerate our innovation investment efforts and deliver new opportunities for our industry-base, especially our SMEs.

Much of the BSR's existing S3 interregional efforts are project-focused, with significant efforts attached to timebound activities. We have not always had the opportunity to reflect on how to better align these efforts to create a more sustainable footing for our innovation partners – industry, the research community, the social economy sector and our public investment frameworks.

This requires a collective reflection on how best to mobilise the resources at our disposal. For example, our recently developed Network of Regional Directors is ideally positioned to inject the political leadership and commitment which would underpin this ambition. Much of the architecture is already in place but requires new mobilisation and orchestration in order to maximise the value we can generate from our BSR S3 ecosystem.

Importantly, our ecosystem should be built from domestic level upwards – taking into account the needs, structures, assets and ambitions in the various territories across the BSR.

A strong voluntary 'core' will be required to take the next step. For this reason, we propose to organise a preliminary meeting for regional directors in September to review the early steps and efforts required to create the foundations for our S3 ecosystem. An outline discussion paper has been drafted to support this first discussion.

As the EU embraces a new interregional approach to S3, the BSR can respond to this opportunity and can play a pioneering role in creating a macro-regional response which will deliver new benefits for our regions and our macro-region.

