



WE ARE PROUD OF WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED

Transnational Innovation Brokerage System (TIBS) supports small and medium-sized entrepreneurs in the extension of their business activity on foreign markets. As a part of the GoSmart&Excel BSR project, we have developed a set of specialised tools, which help Innovation Brokers to identify potential and needs of entrepreneurs from seven Baltic Sea Regions, and then support them in looking for appropriate partners abroad.

To provide benefits for as many companies as possible, the system should be constantly developed. We invited and recruited Brokers from the EEN network to establish cooperation in other regions. Moreover, we are constantly working on improving the implementation methods and tools, especially on a new online support system – a digital application dedicated to TIBS services. The application will facilitate the exchange of information between Innovation Brokers and enable monitoring and flexible development of the network.

As a support for organisations initiating TIBS services serve developed **3 different training packages**:

1st

The first induction package was in the form of introductory training for newly appointed Innovation Brokers from new project's partners.

2nd

The second induction package was the specialised training course on innovation and internationalisation support and consultancy induction organised for Innovation Brokers from the TIBS network, including newly recruited members.

3rd

The third induction package is intended as an open-use Capacity Building package available for all organisations interested to take up TIBS services in the future. It consists of simple implementation guide, short training (standardised) e-course and direct assistance allowance.



click here

We're still searching for new members of our network. If you are interested in developing advanced Innovation Brokerage services for SMEs using the Transnational Innovation Brokerage System approach, fill out this survey.

All these improvements and expansions give the result, that **the TIBS offer is more attractive and more accessible for all new partners, also from outside the Baltic Sea Region.**

Learn more about TIBS:



INSPIRING EXPERIENCES FROM TRANSNATIONAL INNOVATION BROKERAGE SYSTEM - TIBS

Brokers are hosted by organisations that are partners of GoSmart & Excel BSR project. The brokers are professional business coaches with a solid background of working with companies. During the project, they are trained to gain good knowledge on strategic sectors and business, research & innovation cooperation needs of TIBS regions, build trust and long-term network with other brokers, support internationalisation process of SMEs and initiate collaboration between SMEs and other innovation actors using specific TIBS methodology.

About GoSmart & Excel BSR and TIBS

The "GoSmart BSR" project (2018-2020) with its extension "GoSmart & Excel BSR" (2021) aims to identify the joint strategic innovation fields with internationalisation potential in the Baltic Sea region and improve the access of companies to international markets. In practice, the project has developed a methodology to identify the joint economic priorities of various regions set in the regional Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3s). Based on the knowledge on priorities, competitive strengths and business cooperation needs of the partner regions, the project has created a "Transnational Innovation Brokerage System - TIBS".

TIBS is a network of trained innovation brokers in the Baltic Sea region that provide personal and practical help for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to support innovations, strengthen their international efforts and guide their transnational cooperation offers.

This article describes the experiences, added value and challenges of TIBS. The article is based on interviews with the following brokers from Estonia, Germany and Finland:

- Laura Gredzens, Valga Municipality Government, Estonia (located on the Estonian-Latvian border)
- Steven Dehlan, Artificial Intelligence Centre, Hamburg, Germany
- Jukka Anttila & Marina Sorokina, Kouvola Innovation Ltd., Finland

The main project outcomes are documents:

“Technical Report – Smart Specialisation and Interregional Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region: Regional Specialisation, Trends and Internationalisation Potential”, and “The Comparative Study on Application of Trans-S3 Methodology”.



click here

“Technical Report – Smart Specialisation and Interregional Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region: Regional Specialisation, Trends and Internationalisation Potential”



The main objective: to reset the smart specialisation priority areas and domains in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) as an example of EU macro-regions.



The main purpose: to develop a Joint Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) for the Baltic Sea macro-region and other EU regions.

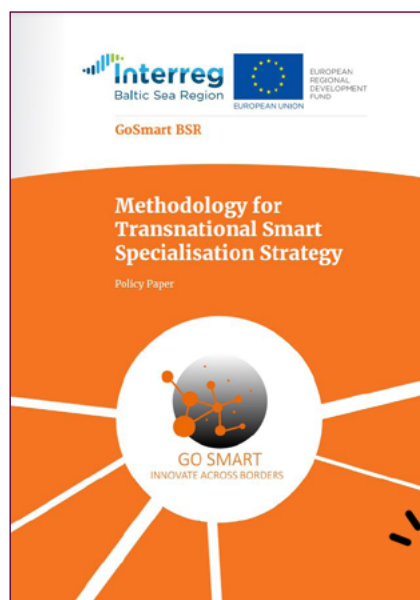
This has been achieved by comparing existing S3 frameworks, identifying common priorities and domains by applying an analysis of labour market concentration, foresight studies and industrial development, as well as by identifying megatrends (market and technology for Europe to 2030) and practical priorities that result from these trends.

“The comparative study on application of Trans-S3 methodology”



This study is based on experiences of regular (GoSmart BSR) and extension project (GoSmart&Excel BSR). This document compares the process carried out for a limited number of dispersed regions (regular project situation) and for the whole BSR, one of the EU macro-regions composed of clustered regions.

The developed Transnational Smart Specialisation Strategy (Trans-S3) methodology is widely consulted by all project partners.



The current application of the Trans-S3 methodology will increase the innovation management capacity of the entire BSR and increase cooperation on innovation and internationalisation based on the S3 approach. The documents support policy makers (the supranational, the national and regional authorities) and other stakeholders in formulating, implementing and evaluating their approaches in strategic vision of key directions of smart specialisation in regions.

PREPARED BY ŁUKASZ DRAGUN & THE BIALYSTOK UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY TEAM





IMPROVING OUR SKILLS AND DEEPENING THE KNOWLEDGE – WE’RE GOING DIGITAL

A good innovation consultant is not the one who just randomly comes up with ideas or thoughts, but the one who understands the company, its context, needs and opportunities and, together with the company, can solve the challenges business faces.

However, for an innovation consultant to understand a company, its advantages or disadvantages, its aspirations or fears, good wishes alone are not enough.

The consultant needs:



A systematic thinking of innovation creation and development;



An ability to understand where the company is, where it is going and where it could go;



Skills and expertise together with the company to select the optimal route for going forward and the means achieve it in a timely manner.

The GoSmart&Excel BSR project under the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme organised training in the EU capital, Brussels, for international innovation consultants, where both project consultants and European consultants improved their skills and deepened their knowledge on innovation consultancy. During the training, international innovation consultants were also introduced to TIBS e-tool. They got the chance to test TIBS beta version and provide feedback on how the newly developed tool would provide a better understanding of companies and how it would contribute to the development of innovation partnerships in the region. The discussion that followed the presentation revealed that most innovation consultants see the great potential of this tool, however, the companies might need some convincing to devote time to TIBS and start using it.

PREPARED BY VITALIJA KOLISOVA
PUBLIC INSTITUTION LITHUANIAN INNOVATION CENTRE



“Experience has proved that if an Innovation Broker manages to build trust-based relationships, this cooperation will last for a long time. It means that the role of Innovation Broker could also be compared to the role of a psychologist, and it is a big value for companies.”

Laura Gredzens
Innovation Broker in Valga Municipality Government



STRENGTHEN YOUR BUSINESS WITH COOPERATION IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Take a look at a few examples of different case studies already taking place with the help of our Innovation Brokers all over the Baltic Sea Region.



PRESS PLAY TO WATCH



VIDEO PREPARED BY
RISE RESEARCH INSTITUTES OF SWEDEN





IN THE FRAMEWORK OF “GOSMART BSR”, THE FIRST INNOVATION CO-CREATION LABORATORY WAS ORGANISED IN VIDZEME WITH ITS COURSE AND EXPERIENCES LATER REFLECTED IN GUIDELINES

To further facilitate cooperation between business and research, the Vidzeme Planning Region (VPR) together with Riga Technical University's Design Factory implemented an experimental event: the Innovation Co-Creation Laboratory (ICL).

The structure of the planning and organisation process, ready-made materials as well as lessons learnt, and solutions generated serve as a particularly important resource for anyone working to strengthen cooperation between researchers and entrepreneurs. To transfer the already tested set of methods and tools to other co-creation organisers, Guidelines for Organising an Innovation Co-Creation Laboratory Online was prepared.

“The recent research carried to evaluate the innovation environment in Vidzeme provided unequivocal confirmation that the strengthening of the dialogue between entrepreneurs and researchers is essential to foster innovation generation – to add value to the existing products and promote the creation of new products and the commercialisation of ideas. ICL as a method is a very successful solution that encourages both parties to listen to each other, understand and get to know each other, talk, and eventually also cooperate. Only by going through this process with actual participants and working on real challenges, it is possible to understand what works and what needs to be improved. Therefore, may our experience and lessons learnt from the experiment serve as inspiration and guidance for others whose agenda is compatible with ours!”

Santa Vitola
ICL Idea Promoter and Project Manager



The concept of “innovation co-creation” can increasingly be found in policy documents of various levels, project calls and action plans. In Latvia, however, we are just beginning to get to know it. Thus far, there had been no described prerequisites, methods or practical advice on how co-creation should be organised by public sector organisations, which have a mediating role in promoting business and scientific cooperation, let alone in the current conditions of remote working when cooperation becomes even more challenging.

PREPARED BY MARTA RIEKSTIŅA
VIDZEME PLANNING REGION



AN IMPORTANT ENHANCEMENT OF THE GOSMART&EXCEL BSR TRANS-S₃ IS THE IMPROVED METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

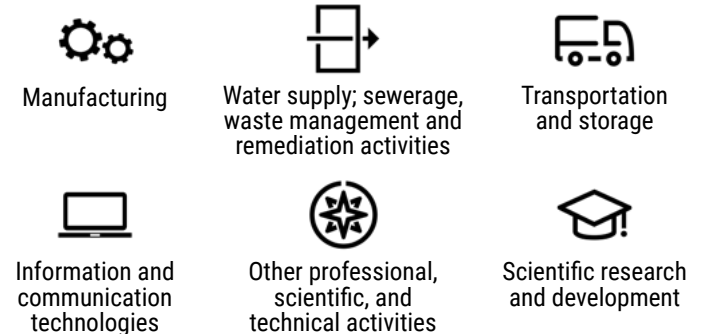
Due to the new approach, especially sequence 4, which deals with the openness of regions, can henceforth be determined by means of quantitative data analysis. This enhancement allows independent updates of the considered region based on the used data, as well as the transferability of the analysis levels to other macro-regions.

The results of the analysis indicate that the regions under consideration have common and complementary S3 priorities. These points had to be considered in the development of Trans-S3 priorities and existing synergies, as well as potentials in cooperation on a transnational level had to be identified. Challenges in the development of the Trans-S3 arose on the one hand due to data availability in the BSR. For example, for the analysis of the policy S3 priorities of the regions under consideration, the retrieved data were available in an inconsistent form. This was especially true for the age of the data and the different update times e.g., of the entries on the Eye@RIS3 Platform or from the Worldwide Input-Output database. Other difficulties include the fast-moving nature of market and technology trends, which the qualitative structure of sequence 3 entails due to the high degree of complexity of its effects on the regions under consideration.



To define common denominators as a basis for further discussion of Trans-S3 priorities in the BSR, the outcome of the Trans-S3 development represents economic sectors on a broad level. Specifically, sectors

that can be defined as a basis for common S3 priorities include:


















Against the background of further regional specifics, political implications and market and technology trends, more specific synergies and cooperation potentials can be determined via further workshop discussions among relevant stakeholders.

This discussion was held on regional workshops in the partner regions of the BSR-project. The aim was – to leverage the regional promotion of the capacities of the innovation actors (Innovation Brokers, authorities, research institutions, companies) around the approach of intelligent specialisation and thus to tube the capabilities of the regions. The stakeholder workshops helped to support the results of the technical report (Kruse, M.; Mesloh, M.; Wedemeier, J., 2021, Technical Report – Smart Specialisation and interregional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region: Regional specialisation, trends, and internationalisation potential, Hamburg).

The consultation of regional stakeholders in the project's partner regions revealed, among other things, that especially the areas are of interest for the cooperation of economic, political, and scientific actors in the GoSmart & Excel BSR project.

Furthermore, obstacles in the implementation of a Trans-S3 were discussed by the stakeholders, which should be considered in the further work with Trans-S3. These include language barriers, scarce entrepreneurial resources, lack of networks, regional administrative and legal frameworks, lack of funding, cultural differences, lack of visibility of companies, the risk associated with internationalization projects for companies, and the general openness of companies to involve other stakeholders. In this context, the TIBS system offers to potentially bridge this gap by presenting a visible Innovation Broker who can do the analysis of potential cooperation partners in a more targeted way. By doing so, search costs are minimized.

Nonetheless, the identification of S3 synergies with international cooperation potential can be identified as a particular benefit of the creation of a Trans-S3. The analysis carried out identifies areas that can establish new value chains by means of international cooperation and thus strengthen and secure BSR's innovation and competitiveness in the long term. Based on these findings, further discussions will be held in the future and the results will be presented, among others, to the PA Innovation of the EUBSR as a policy recommendation.

 Circular economy	 Resource efficiency	 Resource rehabilitation	 Sustainable water management
 Sustainable production	 Pharmaceuticals based on natural raw materials	 Production of medical devices	 Smart health
 Improved agricultural and food production	 Innovative transport and storage	 Construction	 IT and ICT sector
 Digitalization and cybersecurity	 Education	 Advanced clean manufacturing and services	

PREPARED BY MIRKO KRUSE, MELANIE MESLOH, JAN WEDEMEIER
HAMBURG INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS





PROACTIVE WORK AND JOINT SOLUTIONS ARE A KEY TO RESILIENCE

Stakeholders from the Baltic Sea Region have joined forces to develop practical actions to support innovation for industry in the macro-region. This is key to building a competitive and resilient Europe.

We were proud to be a part of the European Week of Regions and Cities 2021 where we organised a session “Building a Resilient Innovation Ecosystem for the Baltic Sea Region”.



#EURegionsWeek



It provided insights on how to build a resilient innovation ecosystem and the Transnational Smart Specialisation Strategy for the BSR and practical actions to implement joint innovation – such as the Transnational Innovation Brokerage System – was presented, as well as the opportunities for organisations to adopt this approach and join the network, and the benefits involved.

SMART COLLABORATION IN A TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT – INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TRANSNATIONAL SMART SPECIALISATION FOR EU MACRO-REGIONS

Recently, the digital conference “Smart collaboration in a transnational context – International conference on Transnational Smart Specialisation for EU macro-regions” gathered more than 50 participants to focus on the role of Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) and how they can play a role in innovation development in a transnational context.



[click here](#)

Experts in smart specialisation shared knowledge and experience from the field, how different countries and projects work with smart specialisation in and between their regions, and a concept for business advisors supporting SMEs. The event was aimed at those who are interested in the field of smart specialization, cross-border collaboration, and innovation development.

“Currently we are in the process of developing the Trans-S3 strategy for the whole EUSBSR and a technical report towards, that was published recently, on the smart specialisation strategy for the Baltic Sea region that is still under making. And now we are in the process of regional and national consultations and feedback, trying to sort of discover in an entrepreneur real discovery process what should be the priorities and domains.”

Robert Girejko
Innovation and internationalisation expert
Bialystok University of Technology



EUSBSR POLICY AREA INNOVATION PROMOTES THE TRANS-S3 METHODOLOGY TO ENHANCE JOINT INTERREGIONAL INNOVATION INVESTMENTS ON SHARED S3 FOCUS AREAS IN THE BSR

The Baltic Institute of Finland as a partner of GoSmart&Excel BSR and coordinator of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Area Innovation (PA INNO) promotes the Trans-S3 methodology and TIBS developed within the GoSmart&Excel project as promising assets in facilitating more strategic business cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.

The Baltic Institute organised a meeting with the EUSBSR PA INNO Steering Committee on 16 December to present and discuss the utilisation of Trans-S3 in the development of transnational cooperation in the BSR. Based on Trans-S3 methodology, the GoSmart&Excel BSR project has identified the shared smart specialisation sectors for cooperation. These include for example advanced clean manufacturing, smart health, and sustainable water management. These core sectors have recently been discussed in workshops with stakeholders in the GoSmart&Excel partner regions.

"PA INNO aims to utilise these identified core focus areas in the development of its action plan with the aim of supporting the BSR cooperation towards joint innovation investments in the strongest smart specialisation areas. The aim is to take the next step towards commercialisation and scaling-up in interregional innovation/S3 cooperation in the BSR by building based on excellent fresh results and experiences of EU 2014-2020 S3 projects such as GoSmart BSR"

Esa Kokkonen
Director of the Baltic Institute of Finland

One of the essential tools to finance joint investments in the S3 focus areas is the new EU financing instrument "Interregional Innovation Investments initiative (I3)" as part of the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF). The new instrument will support interregional innovation projects in their commercialisation and scale-up phases giving them the tools to overcome regulatory and other barriers and bring their project to investment level.

The first I3 call is currently on-going with the deadline of 1 February 2022. The second call will be organised in autumn 2022. **The calls include following two strands:**

1st

Financial and advisory support for investments in interregional innovation projects supporting Innovation Actions (IA) for mature partnerships to connect demand and supply to accelerate interregional innovation investments in Smart Specialisation priority areas.

2nd

Financial and advisory support to the development of value chains in less developed regions supporting simplified Innovation Actions (SIA) for less developed regions to increase the capacity of regional innovation ecosystems to participate in global value chains.



click here

More information on the call is available at European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) website.

"Trans-S3 methodology and the identified strongest S3 shared priorities in the BSR as well as the TIBS can help building long-term strategic innovation cooperation and partnerships that can eventually lead to joint investments. The role of regions in supporting the development of strategic partnerships is essential", says Johanna Leino, Development Manager at the Baltic Institute of Finland. "It requires political will, leadership and good regional innovation governance including continuous interaction with business, research, public and non-governmental sector actors."

The Transnational Innovation Brokerage System is a unique platform and support service to SMEs and their innovation partners in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond.

The TIBS helps SMEs to become more innovative and to internationalise their businesses in a focused and strategic fashion. The service has been carried out by Innovation Brokers from the regions across the Baltic Sea Region, namely Hamburg (DE), Kymenlaakso, West Finland (FI), North Denmark (DK), Podlaskie (PL), South Estonia (ES), Vidzeme (LV), Vilnius (LT), and is set to expand geographically.

The TIBS Broker working according to system scripts assesses the SME and provides individually tailored solutions taking into account company's value chain and help identify areas of innovation and improvements, contributing to the development of the client SME by:



reducing inconsistencies
among main value creation
elements



increasing readiness
to innovate and expand
internationally



providing value generating ideas
and assessing their associated
benefits and costs

Receive the possibility of offering your regional and local SMEs a more tailored individual approach aimed at innovation and internationalisation, widen the service offer with matching business partners based on the value chain/network concept.

