

Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) Fund Eligibility criteria for new projects December 2022

1. Introduction

Under the “Baltic Sea Action Plan Fund” (“the Fund”) grant financing can be awarded for project preparation and institutional support aimed at project preparation in the Baltic Sea catchment area, in order to speed up the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (“BSAP”)¹ / updated Baltic Sea Action Plan. As a result of the cross-boundary nature of many challenges facing the Baltic Sea, projects aiming to address these challenges often require early financing to get them off the ground, as well as enabling them to test new potential solutions, including their potential for replicability and up-scaling, as well as the financial viability of such projects.

Financing can be awarded to a commercial or non-commercial partner (public institution and non-profit organisations) to accelerate or implement projects that address key challenges facing the Baltic Sea. Selected proposals may receive grant financing, to cover parts of the project costs, from EUR 30,000 to EUR 200,000.

The Fund offers co-financing of up to 50% of the project budget, with a possibility, on a case-by-case basis, to finance up to 70% of a project budget. In-kind contributions can be included in the financing plan. The Fund is currently financed by the governments of Sweden and Finland, while welcoming contributions to the Fund from other parties. It is administered by NEFCO - the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation and NIB - the Nordic Investment Bank (“BSAP Fund Managers”).

2. Eligibility Criteria

Eligible applicants and partners

The Lead Partner (“Applicant”) should be a legal entity. It is possible to involve in the project one or more partners from the same-, or another country (“Partners”). However, as outlined by the Fund’s Steering Committee, Applicants, or projects where project partners are from Russia or Belarus are not eligible to apply for the grant.

Applicants can be public or private. Eligible Applicants and Partners are both commercial or non-commercial and non-profit organizations such as private companies, NGO’s, regional and municipal authorities and entities, research and educational institutions etc. The Applicants should be legally established entities and should have the necessary technical, financial and institutional capacity to carry out the projects.

¹ <https://helcom.fi/baltic-sea-action-plan/>

Funding opportunities will be open to projects aiming to improve and/or restore the ecological state of the Baltic Sea, in accordance with the objectives and scope of activities of the BSAP. The geographical area for the projects is the catchment area of the Baltic Sea.

Grants received from the Fund fall under the EU de minimis regulations for state aid as applied in each donor country.

Both new applicants, as well as applicants who previously have received a grant from the Fund are eligible to apply.

Eligible project activities and components

Projects financed by the Fund should address key challenges facing the Baltic Sea - as identified in the updated BSAP, while focusing at concrete measures benefitting the ecological status of the Baltic Sea. The final outcomes of the projects should be tangible with measurable results. The main focus is on innovative projects showing additionality.

Grant financing can be awarded for

- Demonstration purposes
- Project development and preparation
- Project implementation
- Institutional support

Eligible project activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Fighting eutrophication
 - o Measures to reduce land-based nutrient inputs
 - o Measures to improve nutrient recycling
 - o Measures to manage internal nutrient reserves (in coastal areas) in line with the precautionary principle² and HELCOM's Ministerial Declaration 2018
- Measures to address pollution by hazardous substances
- Measures to reduce marine litter

All projects are to comply with relevant HELCOM recommendations and guidelines.

The Fund can finance both new initiatives and support activities that build on initiatives previously developed. The Fund does not, however, re-finance already implemented projects. All projects are obliged to present equal opportunities for men and women.

The Fund Managers may accept or refuse any proposal at their discretion. Additionally, the selection of project proposals is subject to individual approval by Sweden and/or Finland, or other potential donors, as donors to the Fund.

² <https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Guidelines-for-Sea-Based-Measures-to-Manage-Internal-Nutrient-Reserves-in-the-Baltic-Sea-Region.pdf>