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MARKETING AND BRANDING STRATEGY FOR THE BLUE GROWTH IN THE SOUTH BALTIC SEA REGION IN THE AGE OF TRANSFORMATION

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This marketing and branding strategy serves as a strategic roadmap for regional SMEs, public bodies, regional managers and all interested in the future of the South Baltic Region. It was developed in the frame of the “InterMarE South Baltic project”, part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Businesses and actors can use this strategy for their marketing and branding activities and join the InterMarE brand – Made in South Baltic. The views expressed in this strategic roadmap as well as information included in it do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the funding institutions (South Baltic Programme 2014-2020) and respective Managing and Monitoring Bodies, nor the opinion of the European Commission and thus the European Union.

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LEAD PARTNER



PROJECT PARTNERS



On the Way Towards Better SBSR: Promising Approaches and Regional Account

The present paper is intended to support the ongoing policy incentives on the macro-regional and European level aiming at strengthening regional development, by increasing regional innovation capacity and providing regional ecosystems with methods and tools that facilitate competitiveness and open new growth perspectives. This is especially crucial for remote regions that are not listed as the most innovative or competitive ones. In this light, “InterMarE South Baltic” – part-financed EU INTERREG project in the frame of the South Baltic Programme 2014-2020 (July 2017 – June 2021) sets out to contribute towards innovation strengthening in the South Baltic Sea Region (SBSR) by increasing human capital and networking resources, strengthening capacity building in marketing and branding activities of the SBSR – mainly, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) sector, which is the backbone of the regional and EU economy. Since the SBSR represents a marine coastal region, the so-called “Blue Growth” and “Blue Economy”, are at the heart of the project. Respectively, the present “InterMarE South Baltic” Marketing Strategy, which serves as a guide with specific regionally

tailor-made actions designed in light of new policy regulations, changes in social, economic, environmental and technological dimensions and a rapid pace of transformation, both in digital and physical worlds.

Motivation Drivers and Strategy Journey

The present strategy goes beyond just export oriented place-based marketing incentives and showcases ways and scenarios on how smaller regions can benefit from engaging into specific knowledge and business clusters, thus enabling better performance in innovation, gaining access to new markets or improving current positioning.

“Success is 20% skills and 80% strategy. You might know how to succeed, but more importantly, what’s your plan to succeed?” (Jim Rohn)

The access to the Baltic Sea and marine resources brings more potential to be fertilised. Yet, within the macro-region ecosystem (Baltic Sea Region) and without specific place-based marketing and branding, the SBSR is not capable to differentiate itself from the macro-region, which already has done work in place branding. Against this background, the “InterMarE South Baltic” goes a step further and aims at designing the network and cluster-based strategy that promotes the region with its strong Blue Economy performance instead of individual businesses. Furthermore, it is that networks and clusters should put in place not only marketing, but also branding, which is again crucial for the cross-border regional development (Alberti et al., 2016; Knippschild, 2011, Pasquinelli, 2013). For this, building up strong institutional framework, involving stakeholders, formulating shared goals and thus delivering the value is at the core of the concerned initiative and the strategy. A shared vision with shared goals is crucial for success in marketing and branding, as one cluster and network organisation such as “InterMarE South Baltic” is a necessity for strategy implementation, brand identity and brand image generation.

Strategy Objectives and its Agenda

To increase internationalisation of the region it is essential to undertake situation analysis, identify target groups, marshal marketing measures, postulate brand creation, its organisation and architecture as well as to stipulate specific actions facilitating regional marketing & branding. Taking this into account, the present Marketing & Branding Strategy sets out the following objectives that cover the displayed target groups representing the key Blue Growth driving economy sectors:

Marketing & Strategy Objective Target Group Anchorage



The overall objective is to provide the SBSR with a macro-regional corporate, sustainable, value-driven and shared marketing & branding strategy reinforcing innovation, growth and competitiveness in the core Blue Economy sectors of the region in the short (up to 2025) and long-term (up to 2030 / 2035)

- Blue Economy SMEs (staff headcount; turnover):
 - Micro-businesses (< 10 / ≤ € 2 m)
 - Small businesses (< 50 / ≤ € 10 m)
 - Medium-sized businesses (< 250 / ≤ € 50 m)
- Freelancers
- Start-ups
- Local / regional authorities
- Regional planners
- Regional managers
- Intermediaries (technology parks, business incubators, Business development agencies)
- Regional trade associations and chambers of commerce)
- Labour market organisations
- Marine spatial planning institutions
- Tourist information centres
- Higher education and research institutions
- Individual customers
- Financial institutions (banks, insurance)
- Real estate developers and agents
- Recreation and retail industries
- Blue economy industries
- Interreg South Baltic community
- Media



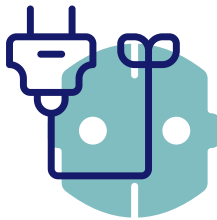
1st specific objective is to enhance and facilitate the promotion of top-quality and sustainable SBSR innovations.

- Blue Economy SMEs
- Consumers (residents and visitors)
- Customers
- Suppliers
- Investors
- Tourists and travellers
- Exhibitors
- Networks and clusters



2nd specific objective is to provide actors contributing to Blue Economy of the SBSR with practical tools and recommendations for hands-on work.

- InterMarE South Baltic consortium
- Local and regional authorities
- Macro-regional networks and clusters
- Exhibitors
- Interreg South Baltic community



3rd specific objective is to institutionalise and operationalise “InterMarE South Baltic” network and cluster within the regional SBSR setting through placed-based institutional arrangements on a short-term (2021) as well as regular horizontal and multi-level institutional interactions on the long-run starting from 2021 onwards (yearly SBSR Blue Economy Marketing & Branding events).

- Blue Economy SMEs
- Higher education and research institutions
- Local / regional authorities
- Regional planners
- Regional managers
- Intermediaries (technology parks, business incubators, business development agencies)
- Regional trade associations and chambers of commerce)



4th specific objective is to create new shared value creation and capturing partnerships in the next future via establishing and anchoring “InterMarE South Baltic” network and cluster brand on a long-term as a marketing & branding service, Blue Economy SMEs’ representation as well as geographical and event brand with strong bargaining and penetration power.

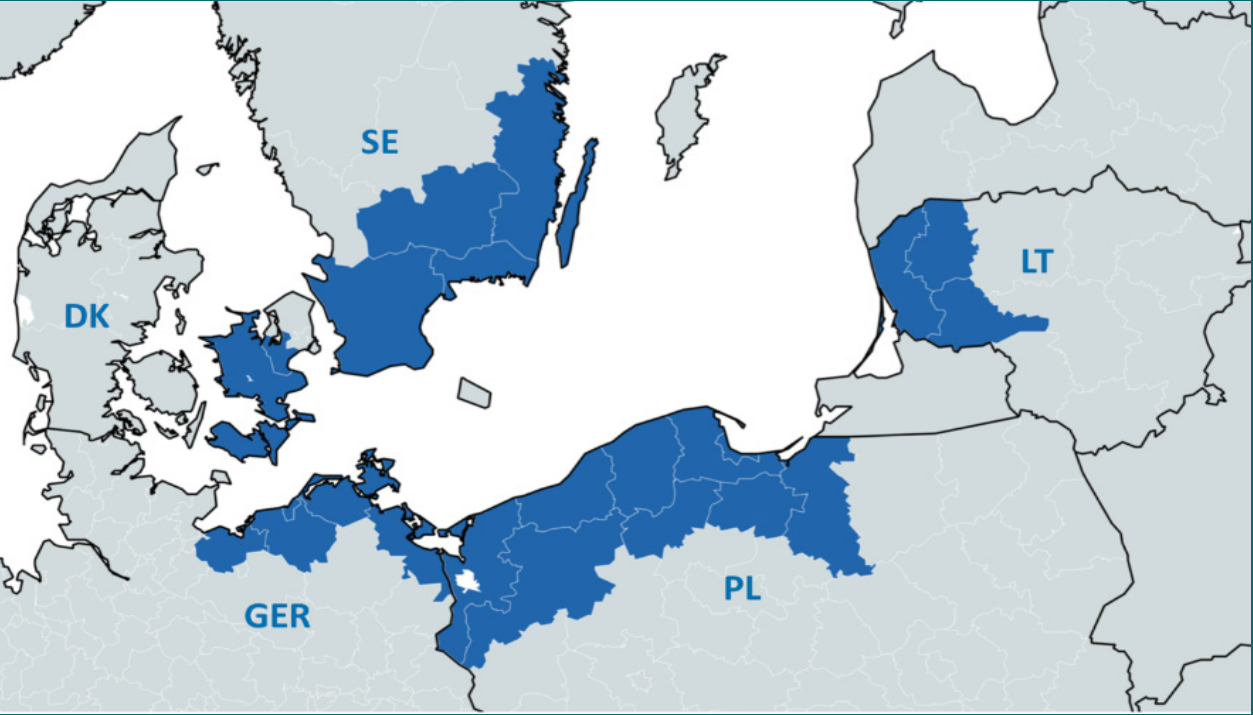
- Blue Economy SMEs
- InterMarE South Baltic consortium
- Inland Blue Economy Markets
- Export markets
- Local / regional authorities
- Regional planners
- Regional managers
- Intermediaries (technology parks, business incubators, business development agencies)
- Regional trade associations and chambers of commerce)
- National policy actors
- Investment agencies

Table 1: Overview of Objectives for SBSR Marketing & Branding Strategy and Target Group Positioning

Marketing & Strategy Objective

Target Group Anchorage

Figure 1: South Baltic Sea Region as A European Cross-Border Region



Source: compiled by the authors from open source map.

When it comes to the geographical place-based positioning, the South Baltic Sea Region (SBSR), is determined via social dimension, maintaining relations between people, nature and society within the scope of regional formation, underpinned by cultural dimension pinpointing region as an identity of cultural relationships. The SBSR stands for a region within the European dimension, a cross-border region, facilitating cohesion and integration of the EU through gathered together administrative territorial units of the Member States of the EU determined on the basis of

NUTS classification as individual NUTS-2 regions, showed in the map above. The SBSR Marketing & Branding Strategy sets out to support and enhance innovation capacity and its internationalisation in the regional Blue Economy, i.e. marine driven activities and interactions, performance, outputs and outcomes. Therefore, the strategy is mainly addressing (yet no limited to) the core Blue Economy sectors, which are divided in the EU into Established and Emerging Sectors Industries.

Table 2: Sectoral Focus of the SBSR Marketing & Branding Strategy for Blue Economy Growth

Established Sectors	Established Sectors	Emerging Sectors	Emerging Sectors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Coastal tourismHotels and accommodationRecreation infrastructure and actorsMobility and transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Offshore oil and gasExtraction of crude petroleumExtraction of natural gasExtraction support activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Blue biotechnologyBiofuels (algae)Pharmaceuticals, chemicalsHealthGenetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Marine research and education
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Marine living resourcesAquacultureProcessing, retail and wholesale of fish, crustaceans and molluscsExtraction of marine living resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Port activitiesCargo handlingWarehousing and storageConstruction of water projectsWater transportation related activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Coastal and environmental protectionCarbon capture and storageCoastal and habitat protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ocean energyOffshore windOcean wave and tidal energySubmarine cables
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Marine transportSea and coastal passenger water transportSea and coastal freight water transportInland passenger water transportInland freight water transportRenting and leasing of water transport equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Shipbuilding and repairBuilding of ships and floating structuresBuilding of pleasure and sporting boatsRepair and maintenance of ships, floating structures and boats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">DesalinationFresh water supplyMarine defence and securityMarine surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Seabed miningAggregatesMarine minerals

Results, Value Generation and Value Capturing

The available Marketing & Branding Strategy aims at fostering Blue Growth in the SBSR by reinforcing innovation capacity in primary target groups – SMEs and other businesses that are intertwined within existing social, cultural, economic, environmental and technological domains of the entire ecosystem. By providing key insights and tools for target groups to act within the increasing pace of transformation und under uncertain, volatile, ambiguous and risky conditions with prevailing overwhelming and dispensable information flows or asymmetric and scarce information availability, the Strategy answers key fundamental questions. In turn, the strategy facilitates and smoothens decision-making process for innovation and growth in Blue Economy of the SBSR in all three decision-making domains (penetration levels):

a) macro-level (SBSR interaction and interplay from the macro-regional perspective, e.g. BSR or beyond, national, global forces, market loci & flows, interactions, transactions);

b) meso-level (SBSR as a network and cluster, governance structure and institutional arrangements, regional scope and scale in social, cultural, economic, environmental, technological dimensions; and

c) micro-level (organisation / firm – internal and external performance, i.e. resource pooling, processes, marketing, organisational performance.

The SBSR Marketing & Branding Strategy has its fundamental genesis in using sound supportive data from preceding topical empirical research and data gathered for the purpose of

a. SBSR Blue Economy cluster benchmarking;

b. demand evaluation for the SBSR Blue Economy;

c. supply assessment of the SBSR Blue Economy.

Figure 2: SBSR Marketing & Branding Strategy Journey and Its Key Building Blocks

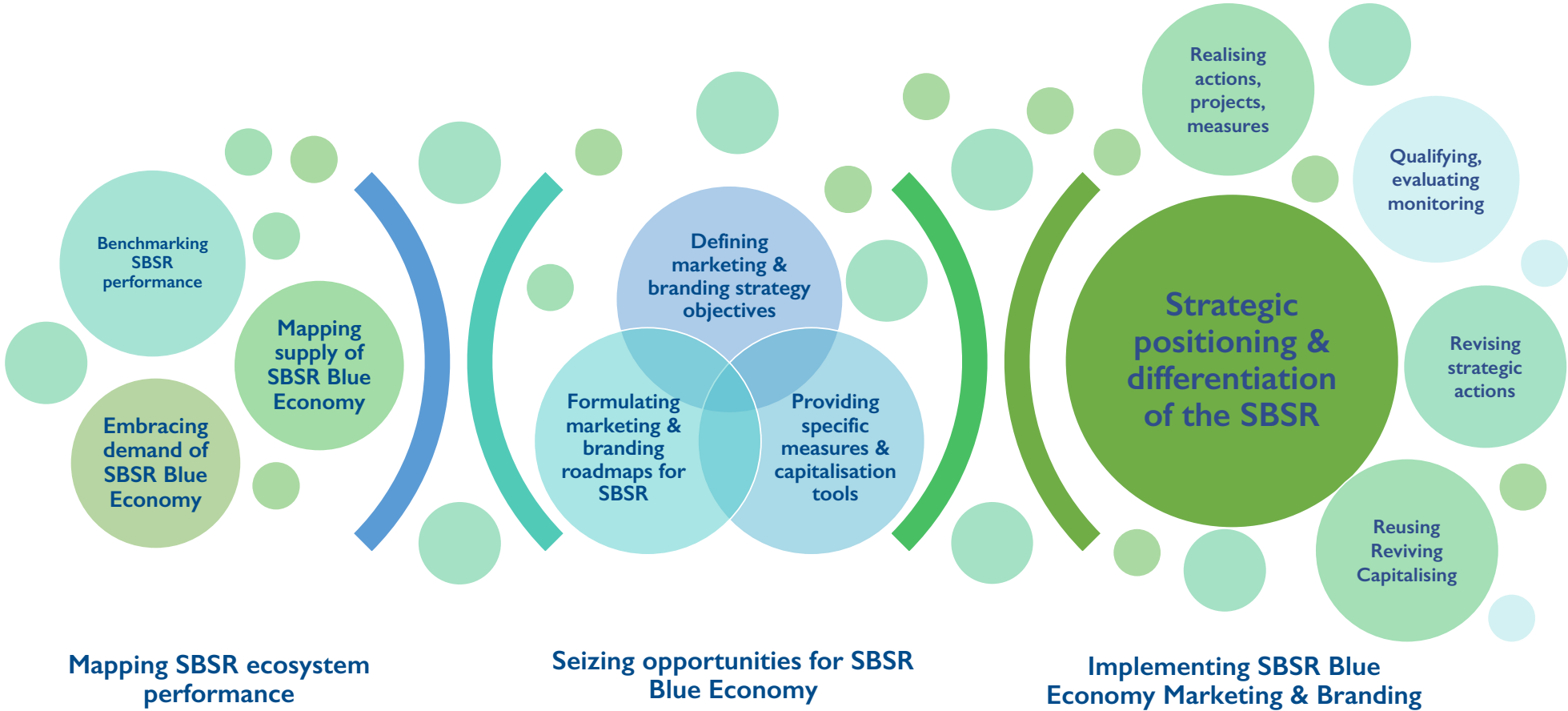


Table 3: Benefits Portfolio of the SBSR Marketing & Branding Strategy

Benefits of SBSR Marketing & Branding Strategy



Providing a common and shared vision for all affected SBSR stakeholders on key building blocks and tools to facilitate joint macro-regional Blue Economy marketing & branding.



Providing ecosystem perspective and key domains of performance that affect innovation generation, its marketing & branding on organisational, interregional and macro-level.



Providing innovation developers (SMEs, businesses, start-ups, etc.) with guidelines and recommendations to utilise innovation generation tools for own business purposes.



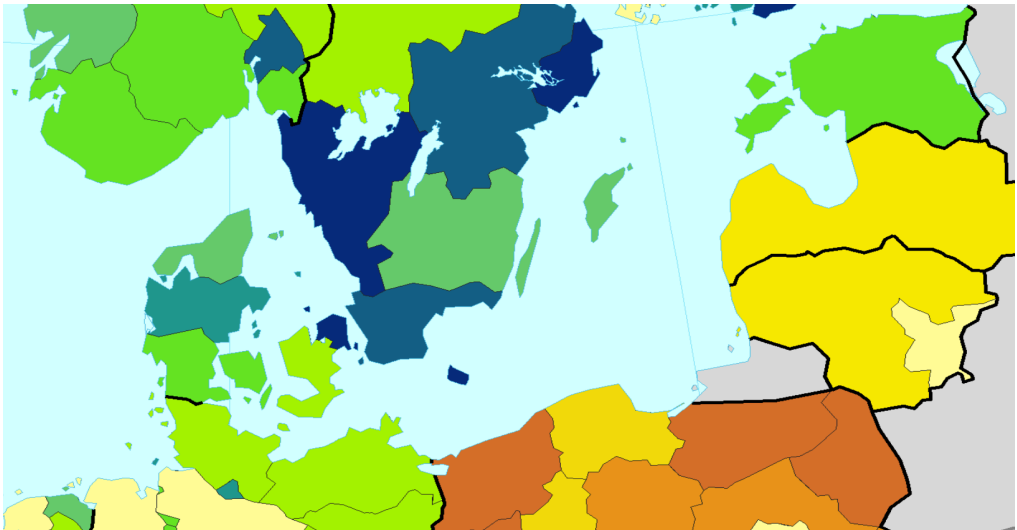
Envisaging methodologies and tools to establish and maintain value creating partnerships across the entire SBSR in different performance domains, thus strengthening supply and value chains of SBSR Blue Economy.



Providing institutional arrangements and action plan for SBSR Blue Economy marketing & branding.

Source: compiled by the authors.

Figure 3: Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2019 Showing SBSR Innovation Performance



Source: compiled by the authors, adopted from the Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2019b, p. 5.

Setting the Scene: Rationale for the SBSR Marketing & Branding Strategy

SBSR Blue Economy successes result from path practices. In order to be ready for the future, it is crucial to parse present challenges prevailing in the SBSR Blue Economy as well as to delineate future needs the region will cope with. The combination of past, present and future dimensions is crucial for both sustainable as well as competitive regional development adopting three tenets of diversification, differentiation and innovation. In addition, path dependency is crucial for social and economic cohesion and ability to tackle future challenges.

What About Today’s SBSR Performance?

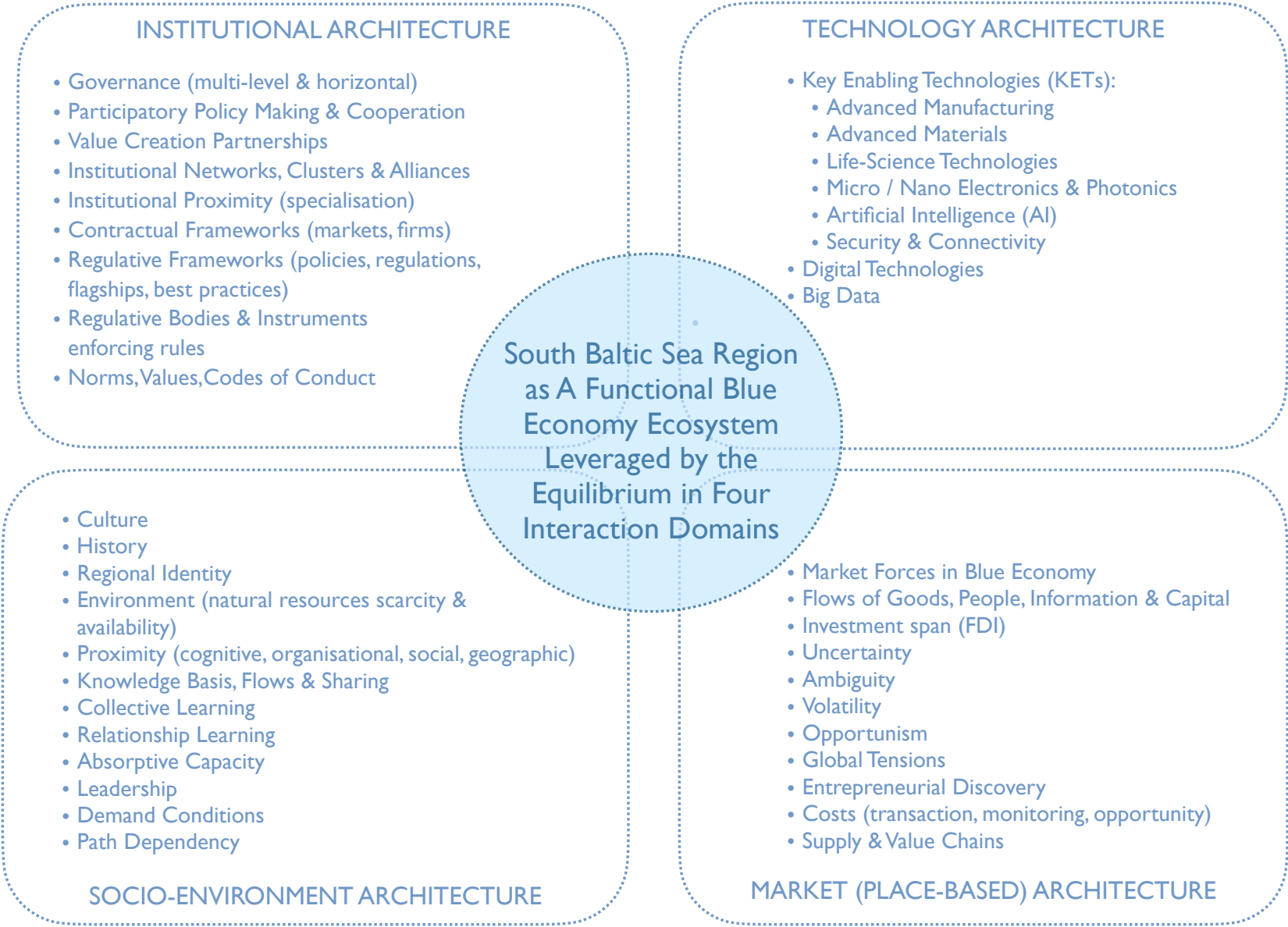
There are crucial disparities prevailing between “old” and “new” Member States when it comes to innovation performance on regional NUTS-2 level, thus leading to asymmetrical development within the SBSR and posing crucial constraints to sustainable regional development driven by innovation as well as macro-regional social, economic and institutional integration. SBSR Swedish regions are performing as Innovation Leaders or Strong Innovators. Strong Innovators are also SBSR regions in Denmark and Germany, whereas the SBSR in the East-South area belong to the group of Moderate (Lithuanian and Polish regions) or even worse – Modest Innovators, like the Polish SBSR regions at the German border. Bearing this situation in mind, it becomes clear that despite good incentives and mechanisms in place, there is much more need to spur and leverage innovation performance in the entire SBSR, by providing region-wide and tailored tools and mechanisms that help out innovation actors in easier deployment and capitalisation.

What Future Are We Talking About?

Against this, through intensifying globalisation and arising global networks, new social and environmental challenges jeopardise innovation and growth opportunities in different markets. Indeed, this is especially true for the SME sector and the performance of individual regions in the EU (Prause et al. 2018). Following the European Commission (2018a), more than 99% of all companies in the EU represent micro enterprises and SMEs. In 2018, nearly 25 million SMEs in the EU-28 generated about 56.4% of value added and 66.6% employment in the Non-Financial Business Sector (NFBS). Therefore, SMEs are regarded as the backbone and driver of regional and national economies. As a result, there is a need to support SMEs and entrepreneurship, since they have a crucial role in generating economic growth, triggering innovations, attracting new investments and businesses, enabling clusters to evolve, ensuring employability and social integration. Hence, SMEs are regarded as accelerators for innovative products and services of high quality. Having analysed SBSR past successes, understood current challenges and projected future bottlenecks and poten-

tials, current challenges and projected future bottle - necks and potentials, for strategists, it is essential to know main players and key performance influencing factors within the SBSR ecosystem and beyond its boundaries. To meet growing requirements to parse volatility, complexity and ambiguity of interactions, the developed SBSR Ecosystem Framework on the next page can help out regional businesses, planners, governance bodies, regional managers and other strategists to facilitate navigation within Blue Economy ecosystem. This can be principally done by addressing and checking main driving factors in each of the ecosystem domains (institutions, society & environment, technology and market) which were mapped and selected by the strategy development team as the most important in the face of increasing globalisation and transformation. Therefore, it can serve as a first step for businesses in developing their future roadmaps and employed for daily businesses as a compass helping to understand the logic behind certain trends and developments and / or canvassing own blue business strategy development drafts.

Figure 4: SBSR Ecosystem and Key Constructs Driving Ecosystem Domain Interactions



Displaying Marketing Strategy and Putting It into Action

“InterMarE South Baltic” Marketing & Branding Strategy follows as a result of thorough analyses and previous empirical research using sound supportive data from the SBSR Blue Economy cluster benchmarking and analysis reports on demand and supply sides for the SBSR Blue Economy. Data was collected from direct beneficiaries SBSR SMEs across the entire region (more than 100 surveyed SMEs), realised expert interviews in the frame of study visits in Busan (South Korea), Valencia (Spain), Rotterdam (The Netherlands) and Oslo (Norway) or individual arrangements on the local and regional level.

The authors of the Marketing & Branding Strategy believe that in order to be competitive on the market (would it be domestically, regionally or macro-regionally), it is essential to adopt innovation-driven transformation concept and to perceive SBSR Marketing & Branding as an on-going continuous and holistic process. It is because:

- Innovation approach and its processual meaning embraces the idea of marketing & branding, as from the processual perspective innovation results from thorough customer and user-engagement (who, where and how), step-by-step approaches (processual perspective) and sound perception of a product / service, organisational process or marketing model (depending on the innovation goal itself) delivering shared monetary and social value for both customers / users and owners (innovators).
- In this, in its nature, innovation concept already includes key elements of the 7 Ps concept (7 elements starting with “P”), i.e. Product, Place, Price, Promotion, People, Processes and Physical Evidence (tangible and intangible features of the innovation, like, shape, design, experience, usability, etc.).

- As a result, with this approach, beneficiaries of this Marketing & Branding Strategy do not need explicitly to focus on 7 Ps, as during the process of innovation, all these 7 aspects are consciously covered – please refer also to Figure 5 below, which showcases practical innovation development step by step and how you as beneficiaries can combine and dovetail all these issues into one approach – innovation process.
- Further, innovation-driven approach yields further benefits: innovation approach enables to generate changes in an organisation from an ecosystem and holistic perspective, i.e. inside-out (building up innovation competencies and capacities) and outside-in (improving external performance, competitive edge of an organisation through better tailored-made marketing & branding activities). This paves the way for both development of new managerial competencies (organisational level)

- to meet transformation needs in the next future on the one hand, and smoothens the shift in the paradigm, e.g. system changes on the market, e.g. new technologies emergence (external market level).
- Innovation approach is proved to be a key to growth, competitiveness and differentiation. As a result, combination of marketing & branding activities for the SBSR and the creation of “InterMarE South Baltic” Brand is a first essential step for the region and regional players to set themselves from other counterparts.

Bearing in mind key domains building up ecosystem approach as displayed in Figure 4 above, namely, Institutional Architecture, Socio-Environmental Architecture, Technological Architecture and Market (Placed-Based) Architecture, which enable system-level analysis and system changes, the SBSR Marketing & Branding is driven by providing strategic actions through the following:

- a. Establishing tools for resource pooling, allocation and (re)combination leading to knowledge excellence and, in turn, innovation development, arriving at sustainable organisational (regional) ecosystem;
- b. Providing key entrepreneurial and creative discovery related tools; and
- c. Transforming the SBSR into a Brand with shared future vision.

As a result, the project proposes the “InterMarE South Baltic” Marketing & Branding Strategy, which follows the rational incentive in, first, utilising existing and or building up new resources, competencies and capacities that will be in high demand in the next future. Second, having built up resources and by enabling competence and capacity capabilities, SMEs and other actors can engage into entrepreneurial discovery and innovation development meeting future market needs and future expectations. Finally, equipped with tools to absorb, transfer knowledge and having engaged into future tailored business activities and / or changing existing approaches into innovative ones, thus enabling to meet future expectations in transformation through innovative products, services, organisational processes or new marketing and business offerings, a new strategic and competitive step can be achieved – developing shared value and enabling its capturing in all ecosystem levels – society, ecology (environment), governance, technology and market – the region. In turn, this spurs cohesion across the individual regions belonging to the SBSR and facilitates social and economic integration.

InterMarE South Baltic as A Strong Blue Resource and Competence Cluster

First, the “InterMarE South Baltic” brand stands for a networking cluster for Blue Economy providing room for businesses to grow and adjust their individual activities to recent innovation policies. The cluster aims at supporting individual blue SMEs by offering knowledge, experiences, contacts and consultancy to strategically match daily business with European, national and regional policies with focus on the Blue Economy. Hence, it is not the objective to tell companies how to further develop their business in detail, but rather to provide several insights and specific practical roadmaps compliant with the EU, national and regional Growth and Innovation Strategies which should be adapted according to individual company demands. The following matrix (Table 4) introduces key demands in future knowledge and competence portfolio and pinpoints fundamental trends affecting SBSR blue SMEs’ performance when considering Blue Economy development based on resources, knowledge and competence building in daily business. Furthermore, the matrix provides some key facts and insights which represent each category and should be reflected in business strategies or at least be discussed and analysed internally, e.g. the branding activities on company level to create and establish “InterMarE South Baltic” Brand as A Resource and Competence Cluster. In addition, a differentiation of short- and long-term is offered on a holistic level at this stage. The short-term recommendations mainly refer to identification of own potentials for future development as well as analysis of the state of the art for the own business. In the long-run, new technologies and sustainable mechanisms have to be incorporated to the company ecosystem.



Table 4: SBSR Marketing & Branding through Resource Pooling, Knowledge Excellence and Innovation

Table 4: SBSR Marketing & Branding through Resource Pooling, Knowledge Excellence and Innovation				
1. Build up Your Resources & Capabilities for Smart and Sustainable Blue Economy		2. Engage into Blue Economy Innovation & Strategy Exploitation	3. Capitalise on Blue Economy from Branding & Engagement in Sustainable Organisation Ecosystem	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mobilise your Competitive Resources and Core Competences essential in meeting growing demands for sustainable and smart Blue Economy in the following areas:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Human Capital – increase interactions and collaboration, since SBSR is peripheral and rural areas’ comprising region, thus making joint action as a strength.- Social Capital – improve your empathy and understanding of an ecosystem and systematic cognition – ecological, economical, financial, institutional; remember that customers / users play crucial role for your success and / or failure through trust, positive experience, shared values.- Knowledge Capital – develop future skills in analytics, innovation, problem solving, Big Data, IoT, micro-electronics, batteries, cyber-security, STEM subjects, critical thinking and creativity; invest in resilience for uncertain futures; know Sustainable Development Gaols (SDGs) and tools that you can apply on your institutional level.- Cultural Capital – deploy shared leadership principles enabling shared value creation; build upon Baltic Sea Region cultural and historical identity.- Technological Capital – increase availability and deployment of digital footprint, IT, AI tools, cloud computing, automation, producer - user interaction interfaces.• Utilise available competitive resources and increase share of sustainable resources’ use, e.g. marine bioresources; offshore / solar energy; aquaculture; ocean energy.• Adopt smart and innovative concepts, e.g. waste as a resource and similar business models.• Know applicable legal frameworks and applicable roadmaps, e.g. European Green Deal, SDGs, Davos Agenda 2030, European Skills Panorama.• Deploy tools for making your tailored-made analysis: SWOT, PESTLE, STEEP, DPSIR; Life Cycle Approach, Scenario Development, Customer Journey, Persona Method, Shadowing, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop your one marketing concept with the steps:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use regional identity (water, health, environment, history) for your marketing purposes.- Analyse your products or services in terms of societal, environmental and economic sustainability principles, resource efficiency, circular economy aesthetics, desirability (appealing) and durability.- Analyse your target groups on local, regional and international level or plan specific tailor-made marketing measures – communication and distribution.- Use collaborative and branding platforms– InterMarE South Baltic, topical exhibitions and fair trades.- Ensure institutional, financial sustainability of your marketing strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know and consider key future trends & emerging markets:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Clean Technologies in production, transport & logistics, consumption (food, textiles, clothing), tourism, space and automotive.- Resource efficiency related technologies, eco-design production, re-use and recycle (waste-to-energy).- Digital Transformation (hardware, software, e-commerce, wireless services, online banking, Blockchain).- Mobility technologies (waterborne freight transportation and passenger mobility).- Environmental Industries.• Utilise strength of industry cluster within and beyond the region and engage into them – EU Cluster Mapping Tool, EU Regional Ecosystem Scoreboard.• Innovate through learning – benchmark yourself against others in terms of productivity, innovativeness, social, economic and environmental sustainability, digitalisation, governance and leadership.• Engage into innovation-driven or accelerating processes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Investments / Funds – use EU, national and local investments and incentives supporting your environmental and digital transition, e.g. EU Innovation Fund, Just Transition Fund, New European Bauhaus Initiative, Horizon Europe Programme, EU Structural and Regional Funds.- Economic efficiency – design sustainable business models benefitting the entire ecosystem.- Capacity Building – remember that EU sets out to support Europe’s twinning lighthouses / leaders – green and digital transition going hand in hand.• Boost and make use of cross-border cooperation:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Exchange knowledge through projects, events and resources that are free of charge, thus saving own resources, but building networking, knowledge capacity.- Learn on and from best practices from innovation leaders in the region (Sweden, Denmark, Finland) through cooperation across borders.- Create synergies that enable boosting your performance and marketing activities – joint market performance and penetration, public awareness raising, solidarity in the region.- Attract EU funds for any projects you need to implement through engagement in topical networks or finding your local contact points, e.g. Enterprise Europe Network (EEN); Interreg, Horizon Europe Contact Points.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build up your Competitive Advantages by means of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Value creation – use the addressed key future funding areas, trends and markets.- Become a game changer through deployment of Smart Specialisation principles and contribution to Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS).- Claim and prove your contribution to the European Green Deal.- Claim your contribution to the SDGs and Agenda 2030• Join InterMarE South Baltic Brand by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Joining the network through the database on intermare-southbaltic.eu.- Join events, exhibitions and trade fairs organised or promoted by the InterMarE South Baltic brand and network.- Get revenues from the joint commercial activities (promotion campaigns) through placement on your logo on the InterMarE South Baltic brand and network.- Reduce your investment costs for marketing and branding activities through InterMarE South Baltic brand and network standing for maritime cluster, as clusters have proven higher productivity.- Increase your visibility and attractiveness by joining the IntermarE brand and network – maritime SMEs are dispersed and bound mainly to periphery of economic interactions.- Improve orientation, facilitate reliability and decision making.
Short-term	Future Resource / Competence Identification & Development	Identification of Future Profitable Performance Areas and Actions Improving Environmental and Digital Transition	Positioning in the Market through Collaborative Brand	
Long-term	Skills, Capacity and Competence Building Meeting Future Demand and Reducing Bottlenecks	Competitive Advantage Sustainable Growth Perspectives	Sustained Competetive Advantage Shared Value Creation Customer / User Binding	

Source: compiled by the authors.

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InterMarE South Baltic as A Learning Region for Entrepreneurial Discovery & Smart Specialisation

In order to capitalise from gathered knowledge, built up competencies and capacities as well as to engage into entrepreneurial discovery process, which, in turn, follows combination and integration of knowledge from different domains and under inclusion of different across academia & research, policy makers, businesses and society at large, SMEs are given sound capabilities to engage into innovation – creation and discovery process. Therefore, actors engaging in business interactions and willing to benefit from better innovation capitalisation shall refer to Smart Specialisation or Regional Innovation on Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) when designing and realising their business plans. It is one of the key pillars of the Europe 2020 Strategy in terms of economy development and growth policy thinking (McCann & Ortega-Argilés, 2011).

To continue sustainable development in Europe, the European Green Deal underpins the New Growth Strategy for the EU, thus paving the way for a more sustainable economic and society (European Commission, 2019). This strategy aims at covering all economic sectors by introducing new growth opportunities and activities. Indeed, Smart Specialisation policy can be regarded as

a key pillar and crucial policy instrument in the European governance transformation to reach the objectives of the European Green Deal until 2050. Thus, a specialisation by the regions using Key Enabling Technologies (KETs), delivering Knowledge Intensive Business Services (KIBs) to particular fields or priorities as well as investing in and engaging into regionally prioritised business sectors is unavoidable.

The strategic matrix on SBSR Marketing & Branding by means of Collective Learning and Entrepreneurial Discovery on individual SME level as shown in Table 5 below proposes key fundamental actions that are necessary across the entire Regional Ecosystem Interaction Domains to enable blue SMEs to build up innovation capacity starting from:

- a. resources pooling and generation,
- b. over deployment of resources for innovation,
- c. towards improving strategic positioning and competitiveness through rare, non-imitable, and non-substitutable as well as valuable resources, competencies and capacities, and
- d. arriving at holistic perception of an organisation and the entire ecosystem as a sustainable and smart one.

Table 5: SBSR Marketing & Branding through Collective Learning and Discovery

	Technology Architecture	Institutional Architecture	Socio- Environment Architecture	Market (Place-based) Architecture
Resources & Competence Portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build-up resources and competences needed for Key Enabling Technologies (KETs):<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Advanced Manufacturing Technologies- Industrial Biotechnology- Nanotechnology- Advanced Materials- Micro- / Nanoelectronics- Photonics• Use Advanced Technologies that will guide future transition:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Internet of Things (IoT) for mobility- Blockchain- Robotics- Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality (VR)- Big Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Align your next years' strategy, business plans and business modelling in line with the key EU priorities on structural and regional levels:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 6 political priorities of the EC for 2019 – 2024: protecting citizens and freedoms; developing a strong and vibrant economic base; building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe; promoting European interests and values on the global stage.- Align your activities on regional level with the EU regional development and cohesion policy: smart Europe, greener and carbon free Europe, connected Europe, social Europe and Europe closer to citizens.• Consider the European Green Deal priorities and targets for 2030 and 2050.• Ensure your business performance and future actions in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on intertwined domains of social interactions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Human Capital.- Cultural Capital (Regional Identity).- Knowledge Capital.• Strengthen interpersonal communication skills in and outside your business.• Focus on multicultural competence building.• Strengthen multilingual competence base• Improve your emotional intelligence, empathy, leadership, shared responsibility, cooperation, stress tolerance.• Be open for new things and engage into learning avenues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know cost structure of your own and your competitors' offers on the market• Consider existing and projected market share of offerings• Strengthen positioning on the market through entire ecosystem integration• Accept customer / user integration into new offering development• Comply with sustainability principles enabling social equity, environmental responsibility and economic efficiency• Focus on Knowledge-Intensive Business Services (KIBS) in your offering portfolio
Innovation (Processes) & Strategic Positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider diversification of your offering portfolio by moving rather from sole product offering towards product-as-a-service offerings, thus enabling entering of niche markets.• Develop your innovative offerings using processual and holistic innovation canvas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make your offerings: products, services, processes or marketing solutions compliant with EU policies and governance.• Utilise innovation driving EU tools and incentives or your business acceleration.• Strengthen your marketing & positioning through customer / user engagement and more interactions• Develop supportive business models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mind sustainability principals once offering something to the market.• Ensure that any of your offerings is in line with the environmental policy and regulations.• Focus on natural resources reduction for your trade offerings.• Think of waste as a resource.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage into Entrepreneurial Discovery Processes• Apply for available Research & Development Funds on local, national and EU level• Utilise Growth Strategies for your own business purposes
Branding & Brand Positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Become a lighthouse in Digital Transformation in Blue Economy.• Differentiate yourself as first-mover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage into Smart Specialisation with areas of energy, bio-diversity, circular economy, maritime tourism, aquaculture and thus ensure public governance support for your business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position yourself as agents in Social and Environmental Compliance.• Use credentials of Circular Economy and promote yourself as care-taker.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider different marketing activities for different markets you are operating in• Uphold sustainable transformation through new learning cycles
Sustainable Competitive Organisation & Ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve and boost your operational and technological capacity.• Established infrastructure that will meet future production or servitisation requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build up your future business around pillars of resource efficiency, differentiation and strategic Flexibility• Capitalise on build up trust and customer satisfaction, thus enabling sustainable growth through customer / user bonding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benefit from state-of-the-art knowledge and competences.• Build up competitive and dynamic capabilities.• Benefit from social mindset, thus increasing your visibility and reliability in public and non-profit sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Become strong partner in sustainable supply chains• Establish yourself as sustainable business offering green products and services

InterMarE South Baltic as A Brand with Shared Vision for the Future

The last strategic matrix of the strategy delivers key strategic actions placed in the time axis. In this, specific short- and long-term actions are proposed that enable regional SMEs and the entire region to smoothly move towards digital transformation, smart specialisation and thus strengthen competitive position and branding of the region and SMEs innovation outputs.

The chosen Future Visions are a selection of currently discussed key challenges for blue companies in the SBSR and can be enlarged on individual basis with further visioning, such as Green Technologies or Sustainable Regional Supply and Value Chains. Nevertheless, following previous argumentation and the character of the Marketing & Branding Strategy on macro-level, the three proposed future visions should be identified by every SME of the SBSR and therefore add value to business.

The proposed actions need to be adapted and further developed into clear actions by each company depending on the individual needs and challenges, which means to transform this Strategy into practical actions in daily business.



Table 6: SBSR Marketing & Branding through Shared Vision and Value Creation

Future Vision	Short-Term (2025)		Long-Term (2030 – 2035)	
	Why	What	Why	What
Digital Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">COVID-19 pandemic in global, national and regional economies, in particular remote peripheral regions like SBSR isModern business requires shared value creation through increased customer / user engagementIncrease of competitivenessMove towards efficiency in enterprises processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Implement continuous and tailor-made competence building in future industry, technology and demanded skills areas» Upgrade your digital infrastructure in due course» Automate your physical infrastructure» Engage into networks and clusters enabling to overcome isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Emergence and intertwining of markets through digitalisationIncrease of security and safety on markets through, e.g. Smart ContractsIncrease in horizontal collaboration and cross-cutting issues (e.g. environment + society + education + smart specialisation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Make a switch to IoT and Blockchain» Increase utilisation of digital tools» Maintain data security» Develop digital products and services» Become a mind changer and focus rather on customer through services and business models of product-as-a-service
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Access to funds on regional level will be bound to compliance to EU cohesion policy and regional development policiesCompetition over EU funds for innovation will increaseEU will guide future industry development through prioritisation of specific highly competitive sectors and areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Check if your business plans are in line with regional, national or EU priorities» Check market structure and market conditions in markets in which you operate» Foster inter- and intra- Entrepreneurial Discovery Processes» Ensure your innovation security through patent applications» Focus on cross-sectoral collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Transition to uncertain future markets with volatile, complex and ambiguous environmentIncrease of Future and Emerging Technologies through dedicated funding (e.g. Horizon Europe Programme)Increases of global competition with new emerging world regionsRegional resource vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Ensure on-time access to global resource & competence pool» Regularly upgrade competitive edge of your business and your smartness» Attract and sustain talents in your business and in the region» Focus on competitive strength's sources – creative tools and design needed for integrative and complex problem solving, (eco) system thinking and acting
Branding & Competitive Edge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Synergy and scale effectsIncrease in intersectoral cooperationCall for knowledge exchangeIncrease in interregional cooperation across world regionsIncrease of intertwined market and moral economies with multicultural offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Enter specialised InterMarE South Baltic network and brand your business together with other – acting together makes you stronger» Participate in growing networks and clusters» Increase utilisation of public-private partnerships and value generation for public / social purposes» Establishing your brand policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Growth of world brands and customer bondingIncrease in emotional and behavioural marketing through more visualised and emotional appealingIncrease in competition about customer / user dataIncrease of focus on servitisation rather on pure product offering on the market, thus making customer / user a central offering element	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Engage in global value chains» Increase your customer / user interactions» Sustain utilisation of InterMarE South Baltic brand for your regular internationalisation activities» Participate in regular branding and strategic positioning events» Benchmark your marketing and branding activities with global leaders and learn from them



"If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes."
Albert Einstein, Theoretical Physicist

What’s Next to the Strategy? Increasing Blue Economy Capacity in Small Steps. A Practical Roadmap for Beneficiaries

Three strategic matrix layers pinpointing to resources, innovation and branding are designed to be implemented on the short-term (2025) and long-term (2030-2035) perspective. Yet, in many cases, SMEs seem to be hampered when it comes to practical implementation. In this regard, the “InterMarE South Baltic” cluster and brand provides a step-by-step tool for delivering innovation – how it comes from idea or problem towards a tangible solution providing value for business and their customers and users. This approach can be applied throughout the entire SBSR Ecosystem, within each of the layers as well as for short- and long-term perspectives.

Figure 5: Creative Audit Tool for Cross-Sectoral Innovation in Blue Economy SMEs

Key Steps	Understand	Analyse, Empathise & Plan	Define & Set out	Conceptualise & Specify	Realise	Test & Control	Document & Ramp up
Main Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Idea mappingProblem / challenge identificationInternal learningMirroring personal experiencePerspective change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Competitive analysisCustomer & user analysisMarket positioningMarket segmentationMarket need analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Data evaluationIdea funnel applicationPrioritisationIdea generationIdentification of goals, essential problems & constrains	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Targeted specificationRisk managementSpecification of compicance with regulatory frameworkIndustrial design, form & material conceptualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">PrototypingConcept selectionModellingManufactureAssemblyServicing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Prototype testing outside (users)Usability testingControl & quality (performance, feature, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ReportingPrototype evaluation on goal attainmentVerification of compliance with sustainability principleMarketing & branding
Main Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Design sprintsExplorationData analysisInternal process reviewMind mappingSpeed datingWorkshopsFeedbacksContext map canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ObservationInterviewsSurveysShadowingPersonasService blue-printsCustomer journeyEmpathy map	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Decision making pathPRiSM, PERT, SWOT, KanbanMagic TriangleCritical Path MethodBusiness value mappingBalanced score-cardFunnel analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">WireframesDrawingsDesign studiosLayoutsSketchingDesign reviewsImpact mappingFunnelValue map	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Physical working toolsMaterial productionICTInnovation technologies (3D, simulation)WorkshopsPilotingAB testingOpen innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Data collectionUser storiesFeedbacksField researchObservationsImpact mapEmpathy mapMarketing pitchesBusiness Model & Team Model Canvas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Software toolsProject documentation toolsDrawingsLists of tools / partsAssembly documentsInfographicsInteractive visualisation

As a result, the tool shown in Figure 5 can help blue SMEs in the following:

- a. To define the source of any particular problem or challenge a Blue Economy SME is facing with – UNDERSTAND, ANALYSE, EMPATHISE & PLAN STEPS, for instance, in complying with environmental regulations; delivering sustainable blue and green innovation solutions; deciding which markets to enter; engaging customers and meeting users’ expectations; finding niches sectors; discovering potentials.

b. To develop any idea from the scratch and mature it by utilising diverse methods and moving step by step – ENTIRE INNOVATION PROCESS: UNDERSTAND, ANALYSE, EMPATHISE & PLAN, DEFINE & SET OUT, CONCEPTUALISE & SPECIFY, REALISE, TEST & CONTROL, AND DOCUMENT / RAMP UP STEPS – gaining feedback by looping the previous experiences, synthesising it and integrating for the next steps.

c. To develop innovation project pitches, by identifying and analysing key goals, target groups, setting up contents and forecasting key steps for marketing and capitalisation – DEFINE & SET OUT AND CONCEPTUALISE & SPECIFY STEPS.
- d. To elaborate own marketing strategy actions for already developed innovations or change / adjust marketing actions by SMEs – ANALYSE, EMPATHISE & PLAN, TEST & CONTROL STEPS – as shown in the Figure above.

e. To attract new investors and / or get access to new funding sources by developing prototypes and testing their feasibility – ENTIRE INNOVATION PROCESS: UNDERSTAND, ANALYSE, EMPATHISE & PLAN, DEFINE & SET OUT, CONCEPTUALISE & SPECIFY, REALISE, TEST & CONTROL, AND DOCUMENT / RAMP UP STEPS, which enable one-stop-shop and development of first prototypes within a short time, e.g. 4-5 days.

f. To improve strategic positioning of SMEs by developing innovations that are desirable, appealing, sustainable and value-driven, thus creating new emotional bonds with the SBSR – ANALYSE, EMPATHISE & PLAN, TEST & CONTROL STEPS that enable deep and holistic focus on customer and user base and utilisation of right resources, contributing to branding and developing of regional innovation brand.
- g. To figure out and / or prioritise future development paths of SMEs – UNDERSTAND, ANALYSE, EMPATHISE & PLAN STEPS, which enable to locate and prioritise key future emerging sectors and branches, build up future skills’ portfolios and human talents in key future businesses, thus meeting growing information, knowledge and excellence demands.

h. To improve competitiveness of regional SMEs by building up regional belonging and togetherness consciousness, developing joint actions and concentrating on macro-regional incentives instead of internal competition – UNDERSTAND, ANALYSE, EMPATHISE & PLAN, DEFINE & SET OUT, CONCEPTUALISE & SPECIFY, REALISE, TEST & CONTROL, AND DOCUMENT / RAMP UP STEPS that enable small actors to understand that all together they are stronger to act than individually.

i. To facilitate SMEs branding and building up brands by joining the “InterMarE South Baltic” cluster and brand, what, in turn, results in lower marketing costs, higher market penetration potentials, stronger perception through cluster and brand driven
- quality, new diversification, differentiation and growth potentials as well as stronger customer and user loyalty and bonding – awareness, identity (shared sense of purpose), relationship, community and advocacy.

j. To contribute to EU, national and regional innovation and sustainability policies requirements – UNDERSTAND, ANALYSE, EMPATHISE & PLAN, DEFINE & SET OUT, CONCEPTUALISE & SPECIFY, REALISE, TEST & CONTROL, AND DOCUMENT / RAMP UP STEPS that enable to achieve sustainable thinking and facilitating sustainable action, in particular, through branding.
- As a result, this tool is associated with several benefits that can be achieved both on the short- and long-term. The essential insight here and recommendation for SMEs remains identification and utilisation of available and feasible tools.





The Marketing & Branding Strategy cannot deliver final answers and solutions which development pathway and avenue SMEs need to choose or take. Yet, the tool can support SMEs in providing framework and practical resources how to start with. This is a creative tool facilitating innovation development designed as auditing process to think out of the box, which can be used and adopted for any product or service development as well as an elaboration of SME (organisational or marketing) strategies. The tool may also serve as a checklist or framework for in-house innovation development.



Recommendation for SMEs – Reducing Current Challenges and Meeting Future Needs

It is in the hands of SMEs to transform the recommended activities into clearly defined actions adjusted to their individual business ecosystem using proposed tools. However, for an easier access to the individual transformation, the following short-term strategic actions need to be operationalised by individual businesses and considered by decision-makers and regional planners as well as all other affected stakeholders:

Competence Building

(short-term for Digital Transformation)

SMEs are characterised by small teams of employees. Thus, responsibilities are widely shared within the team requiring the staff to cover several fields of the business as all-rounder. The smaller the staff, the more this effect is visible and traceable. Therefore, human capital is a key success factor for SMEs. SMEs can hardly afford to engage talents, especially in the remote region the SBSR is. Most of future talents emigrate to metropolitan and most competitive regions. Hence, increasing Human Capital by on-going education / (re)training employees is a crucial recommendation and first step ahead. Next is building up skills that will be crucial in the future (World Economic Forum, 2020, Future of Jobs 2020 Report):

Accordingly, on the one hand, future skills embrace soft skills, like:

- Analytics and innovation
- Complex problem-solving
- Critical thinking and analysis
- Creativity, originality and initiative
- Leadership and social influence
- Technology use, monitoring and control
- Technology design and programming
- Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
- Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation
- Emotional intelligence
- Troubleshooting and user experience
- Service orientation
- System analysis and evaluation
- Persuasion and negotiation
- Active learning
- Empathy (care culture).

On the other hand, knowledge in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) will be crucial for future transformation, e.g. skills in:

- Data analysis
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning
- Automation
- Cloud computing
- E-commerce and digital trade
- Robotics
- Augmented and virtual reality
- Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT, e.g. blockchain)
- 3D and 4D printing
- Power storage and generation
- New materials
- Biotechnology
- Product development
- People and culture
- Sales, Marketing & Content.



Next to the skills, workshops, online courses and trainings are important means to gain, in particular, tacit knowledge and exchange best practices. Most important, the demand for key future skills and knowledge until 2025 clearly supports strategic measures designed and step-by-step actions proposed by this Marketing & Branding Strategy, as this Strategy addresses, first, resource pooling and competence building, second, deployment of creative and innovation-driven approaches, and third, achieving sustainability, customer engagement and loyalty through branding.

Upgrading Infrastructure

(short-term for Digital Transformation)

Digital Transformation is mainly a change of the mindset. However, the infrastructure behind needs to ensure SMEs to follow and foster the transformation. When it comes to marketing activities or campaigns, digital transformation allows easier reach out of target groups, but also needs to compete with campaigns of any other company worldwide requiring a professional and up to date capabilities in the digital area – soft- and hardware besides the people behind (Human Capital). Next to environmental and digital transitions, key concepts such as Open Innovation and Cross-Sectoral Innovation facilitate innovative business activities. Marketing requires new and creative approaches to receive the necessary atten-

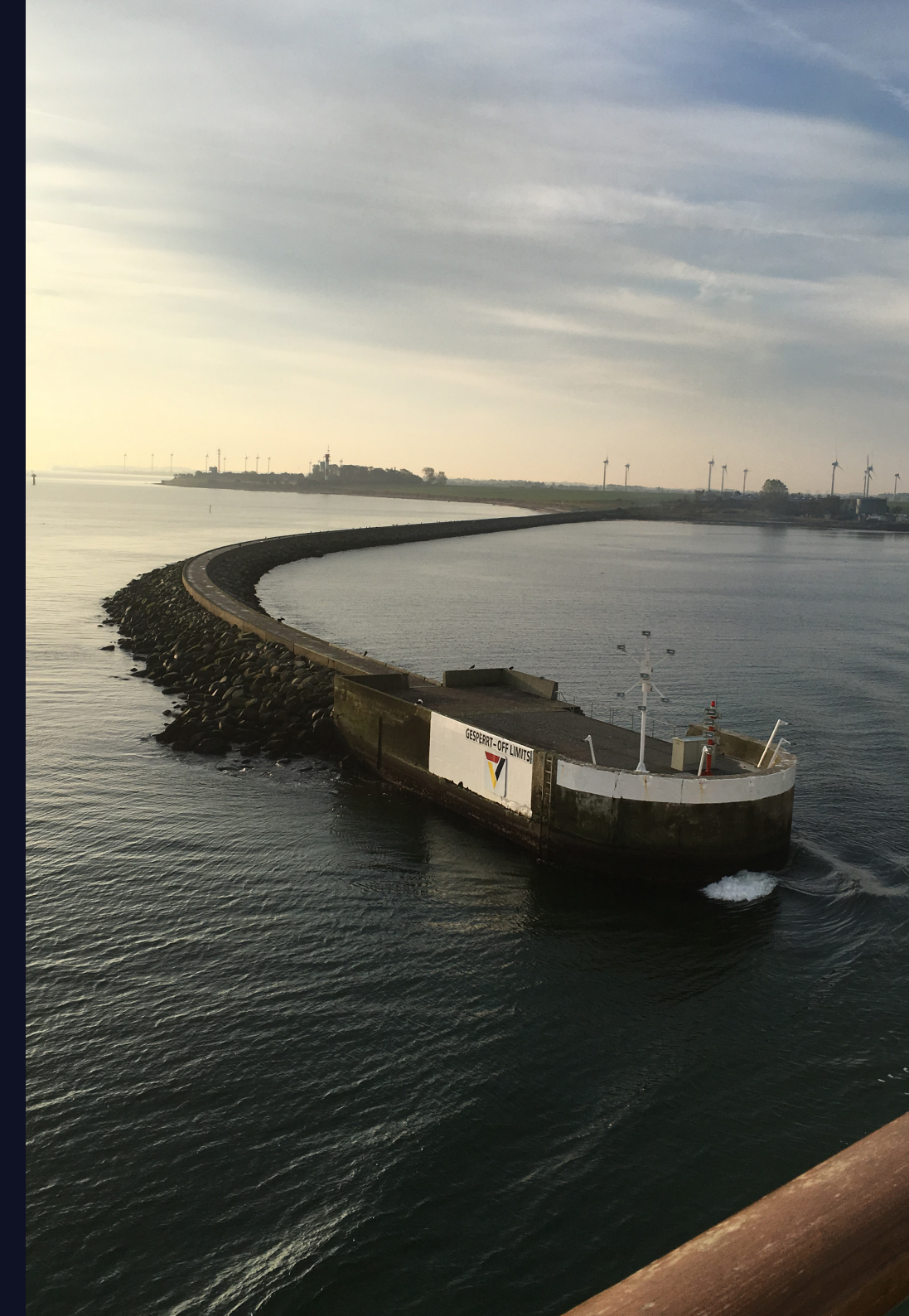
tion of SME's target groups. Therefore, it is high recommended to utilise tools co-developed with Creative Industries or Creative Brokers (refer to Figure 5) and open up new own pathways for creativity-driven innovation on marketing and branding.

In this, the short-term recommendation implies upgrade of physical infrastructure that enables development or utilisation of digital technologies, thus facilitating digital upscaling. In particular, this includes the following:



- Connected and automated vehicles along supply and value chains, e.g. raw materials withdraw or resource reuse, production, transportation, storage and distribution, allowing less resource consumption
- Launch of and access to 5G to 6G networks
- Installation of broadband internet in rural and remote areas
- Deeper reach of fibre and broadband wireless
- Installation and broader use of sensors and other location-based technology
- Installation of working hardware and end-user devices (laptops, tablets, smart phones)
- Software upgrade allowing less resource consumption and better efficiency
- Security software for data storage centres
- Cybersecurity
- Cloud computing development and launch on a company level for platforms, networks and applications
- Development and launch of applications (apps).

Considering growing needs for digitalisation and transformation, upgrade of physical and digital infrastructure is crucial in developing human capital capabilities able to meet future skills' demand as well as underpinning sustainable innovation development in business.



Fostering Entrepreneurial Discovery Processes

(short-term for Smart Specialisation)

SMEs cannot be forced to engage into Entrepreneurial Discovery Process, but the required business environment allows to foster discovery (innovation) process and increase the chance to succeed, in particular, through the applicable innovation and growth policy frameworks, such as New EU Industrial Policy based on circular economy principles and the European Green Deal as the New EU Growth Strategy. Bearing strong potential for the SBSR and policy-driven innovation generation, future business will need to focus on transformation by twinning environmental and digital goals. By doing this, it is believed here, a sustainable socio-economic growth can be grounding, simultaneously benefiting business and society, i.e. providing growth opportunities for businesses and meeting needs and expectations of more environmentally conscious society. Here, following targets and trends residing in environmental and digital domains can serve for SMEs in pursuing their growth strategies and / or adapting to the future needs.

Implementing Sustainability through Branding

(short-term for Branding & Competitive Edge)

Successful branding requires way more than picking up a fancy name and using it for SME products or slogans. As this Strategy proposes, a joint branding strategy for blue SMEs in the SBSR creates positive spill-overs for all participating SMEs through collaborative marketing approaches. Also, the brand needs to be developed incorporating customer and user demands, building upon path-dependencies and synergies. Reaching this goal requires a consequent policy implementation along the criteria of what, when, by whom, how and where marketing & branding activities are implemented and reaching out the target groups. To support branding and thus sustainability, the “InterMarE South Baltic” cluster and brand provides a foundation for SBSR SMEs and other involved stakeholders to engage in and underpin SBSR branding. Simply said, this is done by institutionalisation of the “InterMarE South Baltic” cluster and brand as well as utilising it for future short-term and long-term goal pursuing.

Environmental Transition

- Reduction of greenhouse gas emission to at least 55% below 1990 levels by 2030
- 60% reduction in air pollution by 2030
- Launch of the EU Emission Trading System (ETS) for cap on overall emissions, expansion to maritime, buildings and road transport sectors, enabling annual reductions up to 2.2%
- Launch of renovation wave to improve housing quality in the EU
- Strengthening eco-design standards to ensure access to efficient products
- Renewing target of 32% of renewables in the EU energy mix by 2030
- Strengthening CO₂ standards for cars and vans by 2030 and beyond
- Ensuring reusable or recyclable packaging by 2030
- Launch of business models based on renting goods and services – shift towards shared use
- Launch of Innovation Fund with 10 million EUR for 2020-2030 for commercial innovative low-carbon technologies’ demonstration in energy-intensive industries, carbon capture and utilisation, construction, renewable energy and energy storage
- Installation of about 1 million public recharging and refuelling stations using alternative transport fuels
- Introduction of about 13 million zero- and low-emission vehicles on EU roads
- Introduction of zero-carbon steel making by 2030
- Installation of offshore capacity exceeding onshore – up to 14% of the EU electricity demand

Digital Transition

- Launch of digital technologies for air and water pollution monitoring
- Launch of automated mobility and smart traffic management systems to make transport more efficient and cleaner
- Launch of smart applications and “Mobility as A Service” solutions
- Investment in better connectivity (5G to 6G networks)
- Setting up new public-private partnerships in AI and robotics
- Strengthening and connecting AI research excellence centres
- Establishing at least one digital innovation hub per Member State specialised in AI
- Supercomputing
- Building up a real-data economy
- Increasing cyber resilience
- Providing 100 Mbps connections to all EU households by 2025
- Establishing access for all main socio-economic drivers (schools, universities, research centres, transport hubs, hospitals, public administrations and SMEs) to gigabit connectivity



As a result, “InterMarE South Baltic” is established as an observatory for blue SMEs in the SBSR on a meso-level to meet growing demands in the macro-regional perspective, i.e. in the BSR and beyond the macro-regional boundaries. Consequently, each partner country establishes one institution acting as national and regional Blue Economy Contact Point as it is illustrated in Figure 6 below. National contact points will therefore support interested, open-minded or ailing SMEs in developing and implementing their own business strategies, lend all affected stakeholders support with delivery of the latest and state-of-the-art knowledge and information regarding Blue Economy innovation and growth potentials as well as underpinning SMEs innovation outputs’ promotion via the branding identity – “InterMarE – Blue Economy made in the South Baltic”. The “InterMarE South Baltic” cluster and brand – observatory – acts on the macro-regional level, having three bodies in order to achieve regular, inclusive, active and reactive coordination of innovation incentives in Blue Economy and to foster all marketing activities in the networking cluster, as shown in Figure 6 below. Next to the visual display of the “InterMarE South Baltic” cluster and brand, structurally it is based on shared management, open communication and state-of-the-art expertise.

Management

The Management Committee consists of the representatives from each Blue Economy Contact Point under the observatory. The main task for this body is the administrative management of all actions in relation with the respective joint Blue Economy Marketing & Branding Strategy for the SBSR region. The management body envisages also future development directions regarding the cluster and brand. Each Blue Economy Contact Point is represented by respective Project Partner of the “InterMarE South Baltic” project, namely:

- Gdansk International Fair Co – “InterMarE South Baltic” cluster and brand executive board (Gdansk, Poland) – Poland Blue Economy Contact Point.
- Klaipeda Chamber of Commerce (Klaipeda, Lithuania) – Lithuania Blue Economy Contact Point.
- Rostock Business and Technology Development GmbH (Rostock, Germany) – Germany Blue Economy Contact Point.

In addition, non-represented Blue Economy Contact Points from Denmark and Sweden will be represented via Hochschule Wismar, University of Applied Sciences (Wismar, Germany), Public Institution Strategic Self-Management Institute (Klaipeda, Lithuania), SWP (Gdansk, Poland) as well as through the “InterMarE South

Baltic” Associated Project Partners. The Project Partners agree on yearly rotation of the Lead of the “InterMarE South Baltic” cluster and brand executive board management. The “InterMarE South Baltic” cluster and brand launches its work with the InterMarE Exhibition on 20-22 April 2021, taking place virtually in Gdansk, Poland.

Communication

The second body is mainly responsible for the external communication of results, action plans, marketing activities, events, success stories, etc. This body is the interlink to European level as well as to other macro-regional cluster initiatives and is responsible to exchange all necessary information, trends and results.

Expertise

The involvement of regional stakeholders and thematic experts is an important requirement to develop sophisticated strategies. This includes academics as well to foster regional development and innovation (Risár et. al., 2018). This body could be seen as consulting unit to enhance a joint discussion on the future vision and action implementation of the InterMarE South Baltic cluster and joint marketing strategy.

Figure 6: InterMarE South Baltic Marketing & Branding Institutionalisation

