Iceland Liechtenstein Norway grants

Norway grants

Evaluation of the Baltic Research Programme under the 2014-2021 EEA and Norway Grants

Final Report

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Abbreviations

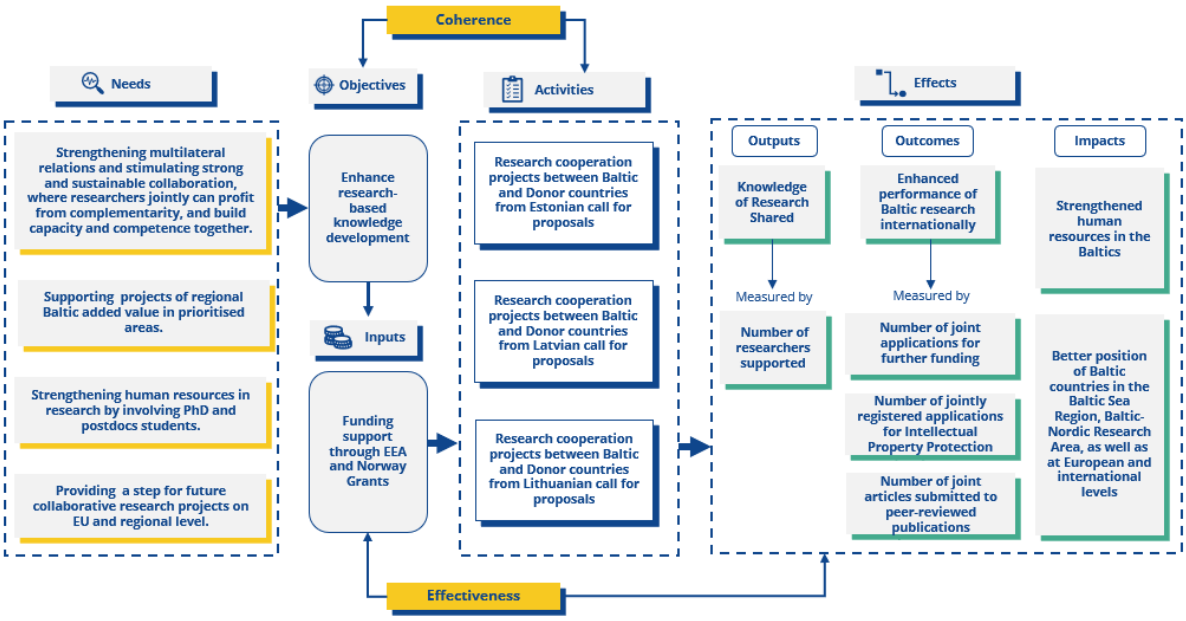
ARP	Applied Research Programme
BPO	Baltic Programme Operator
BRP	Baltic Research Programme
DPP	Donor Programme Partner
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Economic Area
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
FAR	Fundamental and Applied Research
FM	Financial Mechanism
FMO	Financial Mechanism Office
HE	Higher Education
IA	Implementing Agency
MS	Member States
NB8	Nord-Baltic Eight
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRP	National Research Programme
PO	Programme Operator
PRS	Postdoctoral Research Support

Country codes

EE	Estonia
IS	Iceland
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LI	Liechtenstein
NO	Norway

Executive summary

This final report presents findings from the evaluation of the **Baltic Research Programme (BRP)** under the 2014-2021 EEA and Norway Grants.[1] The EEA and Norway Grants are financial mechanisms through which Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway work closely with 15 beneficiary countries that joined the European Economic Area (EEA) after 2004.[2] From 2014 to 2021, the EEA and Norway Grants allocated EUR 2.8 billion through approximately 100 programmes implemented in beneficiary countries.[3] One such programme is the BRP which is a joint research programme of the three Baltic States with a budgetary framework of EUR 25 million. The programme was established in response to common societal and research challenges in **Estonia, Latvia** and **Lithuania** and is expected to position the Baltic countries better in the Baltic Sea Region, in the Baltic-Nordic Research Area, as well as at European and international levels. The intervention logic of the programme is illustrated in the figure below.



During the programme period, **three open calls** for research proposals were announced – one in each Baltic State. The research projects within the framework of the BRP are based on the multilateral collaboration of research institutions from two or three Baltic States and at least one Donor State (Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein). All the projects are expected to be implemented through such collaboration with an eligible duration of 36 to 48 months, and the date for the final eligibility of expenditure in the projects is April 30, 2024. The grant amount for an individual project ranges from EUR 300 000 to EUR 1 000 000.

The evaluation of the BRP was carried out between March 2023 and December 2023. Its purpose was to answer eight evaluation questions covering two evaluation criteria:

- **Effectiveness:** the extent to which the programme is on track to achieving the expected results (outputs and outcomes).
- **Coherence**: the extent to which the programme works as one programme and how compatible the programme's one open call in one Baltic country is with the other two open calls in the other Baltic countries, and with the programme as a whole.

[1] EE-RESEARCH and LV-RESEARCH programmes include both, the Baltic Research Programme (BRP) element and scholarship and Higher Education projects. The scope of the evaluation is only a research element, i.e. the BRP programme, while scholarship and pre-defined project activities were only touched upon under the coherence part, EQ 6.
[2] Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.
[3] EEA and Norway Grants, available at: https://eeagrants.org/countries.

The table below overviews eight evaluation questions addressed in the evaluation.

	Evaluation questions
Effectiveness	**EQ 1:** At this stage, to what extent have results been achieved in line with the results framework? Which factors or reasons influenced or may influence, the achievement of the results (outputs and outcomes) by the end of the programme?
	EQ 2: At this stage, to what extent is there evidence of results (at output and outcome level) beyond those listed in the results framework, including results linked to the multilateral and administrative set-up?
	EQ 3: What are the circumstances (such as bottlenecks, potential delays, or others) which could prevent or reduce effective implementation of the Baltic Research programme, including at the project level?
Internal coherence	**EQ 4:** To what extent did the Baltic research programme work as one programme in terms of complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination (both at the administrative and project level, among the three Baltic countries and the DPP)?
	EQ 5: What were the synergies and linkages between interventions (open calls) carried out by the three Baltic Programme Operators together with Implementing Agencies and Donor Programme Partners?
	EQ 6: For the two national components where it is applicable (EE-RESEARCH, LV-RESEARCH), what is the level of coherence of the scholarship and higher education elements of the programmes with the Baltic Research Programme element?
External coherence	**EQ 7**: What were the synergies and linkages with other interventions by the three Programme Operators and the DPP, namely initiatives funded by national sources?
	EQ 9[4]: Does the Programme add value, while avoiding duplication, with other similar programmes: Horizon2020, Horizon Europe, the Structural Funds, and INTERREG Baltic Sea Region? If so, how?

The methodology deployed for this evaluation included:

- **Desk research**, which served as a base for interviews and online survey questionnaire development as well as for answering evaluation questions.
- **Online survey** with BRP participants (project promoters, project partners and donor project partners) supporting findings for effectiveness and coherence evaluation. A total of **74 responses** were received to the survey (out of 119 identified representatives of project teams)
- **Interviews** with various BRP stakeholders (Programme Operators, Implementing Agencies, National Focal Points, Donor Programme Partner, FMO, Programme Committee, and programme beneficiaries) in the three Baltic States and Norway, deepening insights into the coherence and effectiveness of the programme. In total, **21 interviews** were conducted with 24 interviewees.
- **Network analysis** helped to map the participating research institutions and understand how they are distributed and connected throughout the Baltic States and Donor countries.

The **key findings** based on the two evaluation criteria are presented below:

Effectiveness

In terms of the BRP output "**Knowledge of Research Shared**", the target values for the indicator: number of researchers supported have been largely **exceeded**: Estonia by 508%, Latvia by 284%, and Lithuania by 235%. This is mainly due to changes of researchers in the project teams (e.g., due to completed PhD studies, parental leave or changed workplace) and an underestimation of the target value in the programme planning phase.

As for the BRP outcome "**Enhanced performance of Baltic research internationally**", the target values of the three indicators[5] in all Baltic States **have not yet been achieved**. The main reasons for this are the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, strict definitions of indicators, and the fact that many of the BRP projects are not yet finished. In addition, specifics of selected projects limited the number of jointly registered applications for Intellectual Property Protection (IPP), while time limitations affected the number of joint applications for further funding (incl. availability of relevant calls for proposals, and the busy schedule of project teams).

[4] EQ8 was removed as it duplicated EQ5 and was included in Terms of Reference by a mistake. Initial numbering of evaluation questions (as per ToR) remained in the table.
[5] The number of joint peer-reviewed scientific publications submitted, the number of joint applications for further funding, and the number of jointly registered applications for Intellectual Property Protection.

The main detected **positive factors** which influence the achievement of results are motivated and skilled partners; sharing of data, knowledge, experience, facilities or equipment; involvement of young researchers; various project team meetings and seminars; and adaptability to external shocks (i.e., COVID-19). Whereas the general **negative factors** include COVID-19 restrictions; administrative burden; limited time and funding; and uneven competencies or level of involvement between project partners. The main **challenge** to the successful implementation of the BRP at the programme level is the differences in national administrative set-ups, which cause additional administrative burdens for national managing authorities.

Overall, it is evident that the BRP had a great **impact on the human resources** of the Baltic states. The multilateral collaboration in the programme enabled the sharing of research experience and resources. The programme has also increased the competencies of researchers, their research productivity and visibility.

Moreover, the BRP supported new international research collaborations (especially in the Baltic and Baltic-Nordic areas) and strengthened the existing links between research organisations. The most notable result is the further collaborations with other research programmes, such as Horizon Europe. Looking from a broader perspective, the BRP contributes to the **better position of the Baltic States** in the region, as well as internationally (e.g., enabled new research collaborations, increased visibility of research). This is due to the expanded networks of research institutions, especially thanks to the opened up networks of donor project partners.

Coherence

Despite the administrative challenges of a multilateral programme, the **BRP works as one programme,** making it internally coherent. It has a common vision, design and implementation procedures. The main factors influencing internal coherence are the well-set structure of the programme, Research Guidelines, an active joint Programme Committee and experienced administration.

The **calls** carried out by the three Baltic countries were **harmonised and complemented each other**. The priorities and thematic areas were similar. Separate calls were necessary due to differences in administrative set-up. However, the programme should have avoided starting with a one-year gap between announcing calls in different countries, as this resulted in the implementation of the programme progressing at different speeds in each country.

On the other hand, the **coherence of the scholarship and higher education elements** of the programmes (namely in EE-Research and LV-Research programmes) with the BRP element is **vague**. These elements are coherent with the BRP in a way, as it aims to strengthen human capital. However, it proved to be difficult to integrate education elements of the programmes with research elements and the Baltic collaboration aspect is missing.

As for **external coherence**, there are no built-in synergies or linkages between the BRP and initiatives funded by national sources in the Baltic States. **The BRP adds value** from its multilateral collaboration aspect between more than two countries. In addition, the BRP may add value to the national programmes if implemented sequentially as a follow up to a previously implemented research. Overall, the BRP allows for the continuation of an ongoing line of research linking it to the work of other international researchers, to find new and expanded applications, or to gain more visibility through joint publications and follow-up projects.

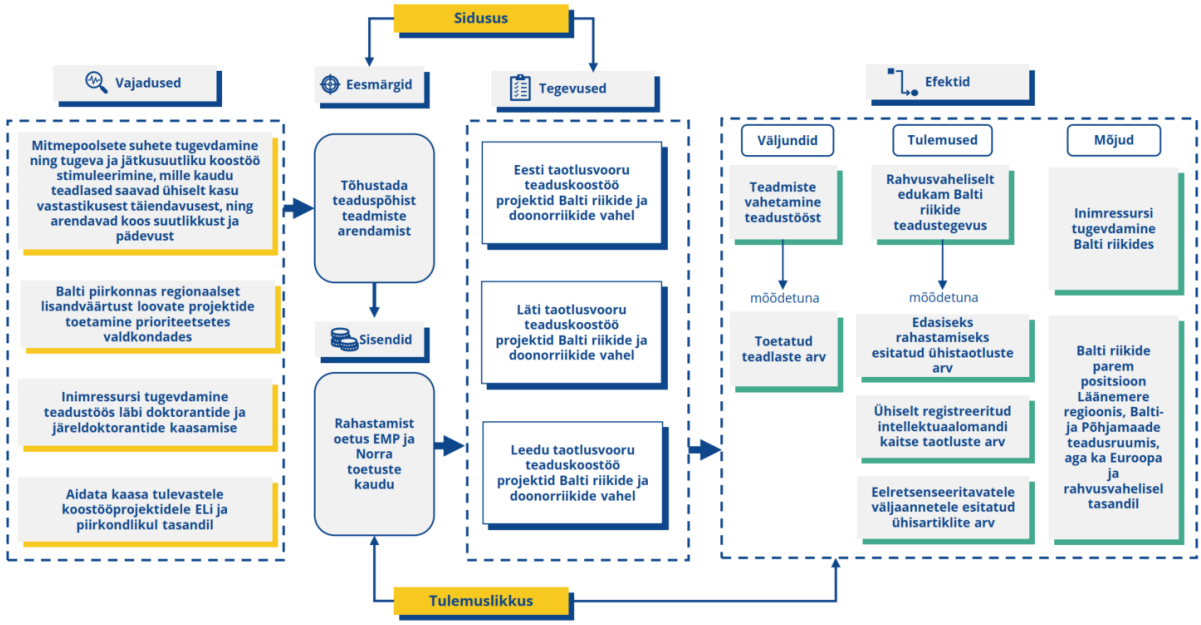
From a regional and international perspective, there are several other programmes targeted towards excellence in science (e.g., Horizon Europe, Interreg Baltic Sea Region). Although topics are similar, the BRP stands as an **important programme for regional cooperation**, **especially for the Baltic States**. It covers Baltic countries' priorities and opens a way for multilateral collaboration to solve regional challenges. In general, the BRP project teams are encouraged to apply for further funding together. This is consequently reflected in the outcome indicator “number of joint applications for further funding”: as of 1 December, 2023, 15 such applications in total were recorded and more are expected to come after the end of the programme.

Based on the findings the report provides the following **key recommendations**:

- R1: Clearly communicate to programme participants the specific methodologies for calculating the achievements under each indicator.
- R2: It is recommended to calculate programme outcome indicators at least a year after the end of the projects.
- R3: Consider rethinking the indicator of “Number of joint peer-reviewed scientific publications submitted” to also capture the publications submitted without the donor project partner.
- R4: It is recommended to continue organising conferences (such as the mid-term conference in Riga) facilitating stakeholder interactions. It is important to highlight to the participants to foresee funding for travel in project expenses.
- R5: It is recommended to reduce the frequency of project reporting for instance, instead of (semi-)annual reporting, having one interim and one final report. Alternatively - If (semi-)annual reports are to be kept – it is recommended to streamline the reporting process. For instance, organising annual reporting in a manner where the work conducted in subsequent years can be easily appended to the relevant sections of the report.
- R6: It is recommended to organise seminars on project reports, and administrative or financial tasks in English rather than national languages where relevant.
- R7: It is recommended to clarify and communicate to the Programme Committee their role and accountability during the implementation period, as well as provide a clear definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest.
- R8: It is recommended to consider different alternatives for calls: keep three separate calls in the three Baltic States, ensuring that the calls will be launched more or less at the same time or merge into one call across all Baltic States.
- R9: It is recommended to thoroughly rethink how thematic areas are approached for the next period and define uniform selection criteria for all Baltic States.
- R10: In the next programming period it is recommended to not have additional components (pre-defined and Higher Education projects) besides the research element in the respective Research programmes. Alternatively, if the elements are left, it is recommended to design one call/activity which includes both - research and additional elements.
- R11: It is recommended to consider the possibility of funding well-assessed but not funded projects through national programmes.

Kokkuvõte

Käesolev lõpparuande esitab 2014.–2021. aasta EMP ja Norra toetuste raames rahastatud **Balti teadusprogrammi (BRP)**[6] **hindamise tulemused.** EMP ja Norra toetused on finantsmehhanismid, mille kaudu Island, Liechtenstein ja Norra teevad tihedat koostööd 15 abisaajariigiga, kes ühinesid Euroopa Majanduspiirkonnaga (EMP) pärast 2004. aastat. Aastatel 2014–2021[7] eraldasid EMP ja Norra toetused 2,8 miljardit eurot läbi ligikaudu 100 programmi, mis viidi ellu abisaajariikides.[8] Üks neist programmidest on BRP, mis on kolme Balti riigi ühine teadusprogramm eelarvega 25 miljonit eurot. Programm loodi vastusena **Eesti, Läti** ja **Leedu ühistele ühiskondlikele ja teadusalastele väljakutsetele**, ning see peaks aitama Balti riike paremini positsioneerima nii Läänemere regioonis, Balti- ja Põhjamaade teadusruumis kui ka Euroopa ja rahvusvahelisel tasandil. Programmi sekkumisloogika on illustreeritud alloleval joonisel.



Programmiperioodil kuulutati välja **kolm avatud** taotlusvooru teadusprojektide esitamiseks – üks igas Balti riigis. BRP uurimisprojektid põhinevad kahe või kolme Balti riigi ja vähemalt ühe doonorriigi (Norra, Island või Liechtenstein) teadusasutuste mitmepoolsel koostööl. Kõik projektid peaks ellu viidama taolises koostöös, mille abikõlblikkuse perioodi kestus on 36–48 kuud ja projektikulude viimane abikõlblikkuse kuupäev on 30. aprill 2024. Projektide toetussumma ulatub 300 000 eurost kuni 1 000 000 euroni.

BRP hindamine viidi läbi ajavahemikus märtsist 2023 kuni detsembrini 2023. Selle eesmärk oli vastata kaheksale hindamisküsimusele, mis hõlmavad kahte hindamiskriteeriumi:

- **Tulemuslikkus:** kuivõrd on programm liikumas oodatud tulemuste saavutamise suunas (väljundid ja tulemused).
- **Sidusus**: mil määral töötab programm ühtse programmina, ja kuivõrd ühildub programmi ühe Balti riigi avatud taotlusvoor kahe ülejäänud avatud taotlusvooruga teistes Balti riikides ning programmiga tervikuna.

[6] Programmid EE-RESEARCH ja LV-RESEARCH sisaldavad nii Balti teadusprogrammi (BRP) kui ka stipendiumi- ja kõrgharidusprojekte. Hindamise ulatus on ainult teaduse rahastamine, st BRP programm, ning stipendiumi- ja eelnevalt määratletud projektide tegevusi puudutati vaid sidususe käsitlemisel, (hindamisküsimus EQ 6).
[7] Bulgaaria, Horvaatia, Küpros, Tšehhi Vabariik, Eesti, Kreeka, Ungari, Läti, Leedu, Malta, Poola, Portugal, Rumeenia, Slovakkia ja Sloveenia.
[8] EMP ja Norra toetused, saadaval aadressil: https://eeagrants.org/countries.

Allolev tabel annab ülevaate kaheksast hindamisel käsitletud hindamisküsimusest.

	Hindamisküsimused
Tulemuslikkus	**EQ 1:** Mil määral on seni saavutatud tulemused kooskõlas tulemuste raamistikuga? Millised tegurid või põhjused mõjutasid või võivad mõjutada tulemuste (väljundid ja tulemused) saavutamist programmi lõpuks?
	EQ 2: Mil määral on praeguses etapis tõendeid tulemuste kohta (väljundite ja tulemuste tasandil), mis ei kajastu tulemuste raamistikus, sealhulgas mitmepoolse koostöö ja haldusstruktuuriga seotud tulemused?
	EQ 3: Millised asjaolud (nagu kitsaskohad, võimalikud viivitused vms) võivad takistada või raskendada Balti teadusprogrammi tulemuslikku rakendamist, sealhulgas projektitasandil?
Sisemine sidusus	**EQ 4:** Mil määral toimis Balti teadusprogramm ühtse programmina vastastikuse täiendavuse, tegevuse ühtlustamise ja koordineerimise osas (nii haldus- kui projektitasandil, kolme Balti riigi ja DPP vahel)?
	EQ 5 : Millised olid sünergia ja seosed sekkumiste (avatud taotlusvoorude) vahel, mille viisid läbi kolm Balti programmioperaatorit koostöös rakendusasutuste ja doonorprogrammi partneritega?
	EQ 6: Milline on programmi stipendiumi- ja kõrgharidusprojektide ning Balti teadusprogrammi sidususe tase nende kahe riikliku programmi puhul, kus neid rahastati (EE-RESEARCH, LV-RESEARCH)?
Väline sidusus	**EQ 7**: Millised olid sünergia ja seosed kolme programmioperaatori ja DPP muude sekkumistega, st esmajoones riiklikest allikatest rahastatud algatustega?
	EQ 9[9]: Kas programm pakub lisaväärtust, vältides samal ajal dubleerimist teiste sarnaste programmidega: Horisont 2020, Euroopa Horisont, struktuurifondid ja Interreg Läänemere piirkonna programm? Kui jah, siis kuidas?

Hindamise metoodika hõlmas järgmisi tegevusi:

- **Dokumendianalüüs**, mis oli aluseks intervjuudele ja veebiküsitluse küsimustike koostamisel, ning hindamisküsimustele vastamisel
- **Veebiküsitlus** BRP osalejatega (projektide elluviijad, projektipartnerid ja doonorriikide projektipartnerid), et koguda lisateavet tulemuslikkuse ja sidususe hindamistulemuste toetuseks. Küsitlusele laekus kokku **74 vastust** (119 tuvastatud projektimeeskondade esindaja seast)
- **Intervjuud** erinevate BRP sidusrühmadega (programmioperaatorid, rakendusasutused, riiklikud kontaktpunktid, doonorprogrammi partner, FMO, programmikomitee ja programmi kasusaajad) kolmes Balti riigis ja Norras, et saada täpsem ülevaade programmi sidususest ja tulemuslikkusest. Kokku viidi läbi **21 intervjuud** 24 intervjueeritavaga.
- **Võrgustikuanalüüs** aitas kaardistada osalevad teadusasutused ning mõista, kuidas need on Balti riikides ja doonorriikides jaotunud ning omavahel ühendatud.

Peamised järeldused kahe hindamiskriteeriumi osas on esitatud allpool.

Tulemuslikkus

BRP väljundi "**teadmiste vahetamine teadustööst**" osas on näitaja sihtväärtused: toetatud teadlaste arv mitmekordselt ületatud: Eesti 508%, Läti 284% ja Leedu 235% võrra. Selle põhjuseks on peamiselt muutused projektimeeskondade teadlaste koosseisus (nt doktoriõppe lõpetamise, lapsehoolduspuhkuse või töökoha vahetuse tõttu) ja sihtväärtuse alahindamine programmi planeerimise etapis.

Mis puudutab BRP tulemust "**rahvusvaheliselt edukam Balti riikide teadustegevus**", siis kolme näitaja sihtväärtusi[10] **ei ole** kõigis Balti riikides **veel saavutatud**. Selle peamised põhjused on COVID-19 pandeemia mõju, näitajate karmid määratlused ja asjaolu, et paljud BRP projektid ei ole veel lõppenud. Lisaks piiras rahastatud projektide eripära ühiselt registreeritud intellektuaalomandi kaitse (IPP) taotluste arvu, samas kui ajapiirangud mõjutasid edasise rahastamise ühistaotluste arvu (sh toimunud asjakohaste projektikonkursside arv ja projektimeeskondade tihe ajakava).

Peamised tuvastatud tulemuste saavutamist mõjutavad **positiivsed tegurid** on motiveeritud ja pädevad partnerid; andmete, teadmiste, kogemuste, rajatiste või seadmete jagamine; noorte teadlaste kaasamine; erinevad projektimeeskonna koosolekud ja seminarid; ning võime kohaneda väliste šokkidega (st COVID-19). Üldiste **negatiivsete tegurite** hulka kuuluvad seevastu COVID-19 piirangud; halduskoormus; piiratud aeg ja rahastamine; ning projektipartnerite ebaühtlane pädevus või kaasatuse

[9] Hindamisküsimus EQ8 eemaldati, kuna see dubleeris küsimust EQ5 ja lisati hanke lähtetingimustesse ekslikult. Tabelis säilitati hindamisküsimuste algne numeratsioon (vastavalt lähtetingimustele).
[10] Eelretsenseeritavatele väljaannetele esitatud ühisartiklite arv, edasiseks rahastamiseks esitatud ühistaotluste arv ja ühiselt registreeritud intellektuaalomandi kaitse taotluste arv.

tase. Peamiseks **väljakutseks** BRP edukaks rakendamiseks programmitasandil on erinevused riiklikes haldusstruktuurides, mis toovad riiklikele korraldusasutustele kaasa täiendava halduskoormuse.

Kokkuvõttes on ilmne, et BRP-l oli suur **mõju Balti** riikide **inimressurssidele.** Mitmepoolne koostöö programmi raames võimaldas jagada teadustöö kogemusi ja ressursse. Samuti on programm tõstnud teadlaste pädevusi, nende teadustöö produktiivsust ja nähtavust.

Lisaks toetas BRP uusi rahvusvahelisi teaduskoostöid (eriti Balti ja Balti-Põhjamaade piirkondades) ning tugevdas olemasolevaid sidemeid teadusorganisatsioonide vahel. Kõige silmapaistvam tulemus on edasine koostöö teiste teadusprogrammide raames, näiteks Horisont Euroopa kaudu. Laiemalt vaadatuna aitab BRP kaasa **Balti riikide paremale positsioonile** nii regioonis kui ka rahvusvaheliselt (nt võimaldas uusi teaduskoostöid, suurendas teadustöö nähtavust). Selle mõju taga on teadusasutuste laienenud võrgustikud ja eelkõige just doonor projektipartnerite võrgustike avanemine.

Sidusus

Hoolimata mitmepoolse programmiga kaasnevatest halduslikest probleemidest **töötab BRP nagu üks programm** ja see tagab programmi sisemise sidususe. Programmil on ühine visioon, disain ja rakendusprotseduurid. Peamised sisemist sidusust mõjutavad tegurid on programmi hea struktuur, teadusprojektide suunised (*Research Guidelines*), aktiivne ühine programmikomitee ja pikaaegse kogemusega administratsioon.

Kolme Balti riigi läbiviidud taotlusvoorud olid **ühtlustatud ja täiendasid üksteist**. Prioriteedid ja teemavaldkonnad olid sarnased. Eraldi taotlusvoorud olid vajalikud halduskorralduse erinevuste tõttu. Programm oleks aga pidanud vältima aastast vahet taotlusvoorude väljakuulutamise vahel erinevates riikides, kuna selle tagajärjel edenes programmi rakendamine igas riigis erineva kiirusega.

Teisest küljest on programmide (EE-Research ja LV-Research) **stipendiumi- ja kõrgharidusprojekti komponentide sidusus** BRP teadusrahastusega **ebaselge**. Teatud mõttes on nendel projektidel BRP-ga sidusus, kuna viimase eesmärk on tugevdada inimkapitali. Siiski osutus programmide hariduskomponendi integreerimine teaduspoolega keeruliseks ning Balti koostöö aspekt siin puudub.

Mis puudutab **välist sidusust**, siis BRP ja Balti riikide riiklikest allikatest rahastatavate algatuste vahel puuduvad sisseehitatud sünergia ja seosed. **BRP lisab väärtust** enam kui kahe riigi vahelise mitmepoolse koostöö aspektist. Lisaks võib BRP luua riiklikele programmidele lisandväärtust nende järjestikulisel rakendamisel, kui rahastatakse varem läbiviidud teadusprojektide järeltegevusi. Üldiselt võimaldab BRP käimasoleva teadustegevuse suuna jätkamist, sidudes selle teiste rahvusvaheliste teadlaste tööga, avastamaks uusi ja laiema valdkonna rakendusi või tõstmaks ühispublikatsioonide ja jätkuprojektide kaudu nähtavust.

Piirkondlikul ja rahvusvahelisel tasandil on ka mitmeid teisi tipptaseme teadusele suunatud programme (nt Euroopa Horisont, Interreg Läänemere piirkonna programm). Kuigi nende toetatavad teemad on sarnased, on BRP oluline **programm piirkondliku koostöö seisukohalt, seda eriti Balti riikide jaoks**. Programm hõlmab Balti riikide prioriteete ja annab võimaluse mitmepoolseks koostööks piirkondlike väljakutsete lahendamisel. Üldiselt julgustatakse BRP projektimeeskondi koos uut rahastamist taotlema. See kajastub ka tulemusnäitajas „edasiseks rahastamiseks esitatud ühistaotluste arv“: 2023. aasta 1. detsembri seisuga oli selliseid taotlusi registreeritud kokku 15 ja pärast programmi lõppu on selle oodata lisa.

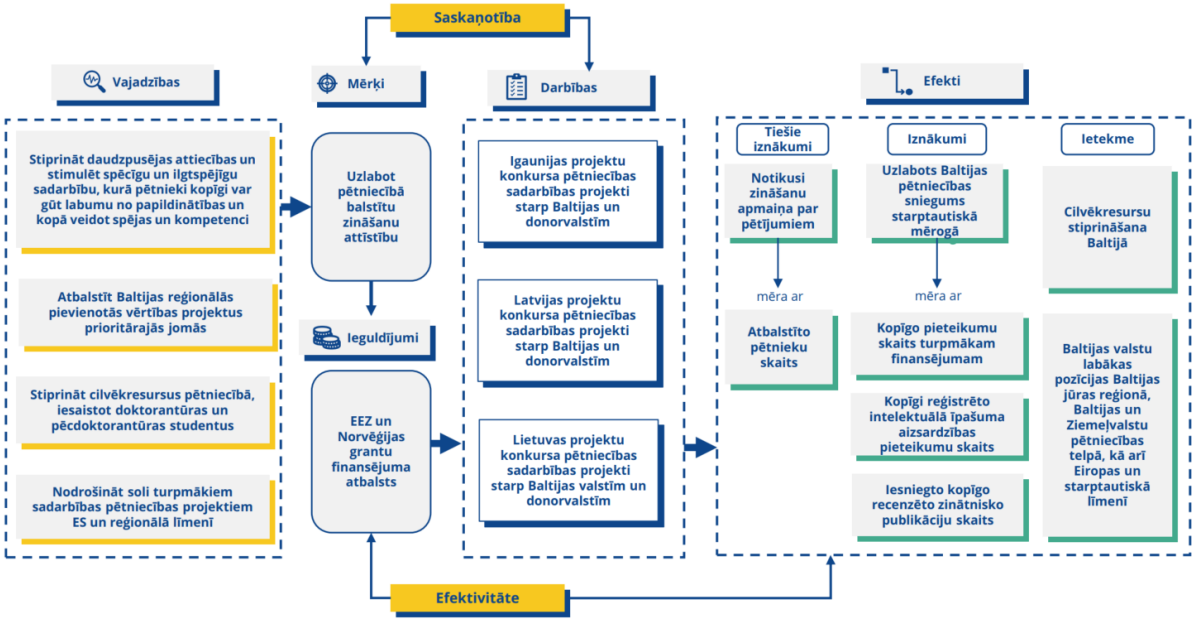
Tulemuste põhjal esitatakse aruandes järgmised **peamised soovitused**:

- R1: Teavitage programmis osalejaid selgelt sellest, millist konkreetset metoodikat kasutatakse iga näitaja puhul tulemuste arvutamisel.
- R2: Soovitatav on arvutada programmi tulemusnäitajad siis, kui on möödunud vähemalt aasta projektide lõppemisest.
- R3: Kaaluge näitaja „eelretsenseeritavatele väljaannetele esitatud ühisartiklite arv” muutmist, et hõlmata ka ilma doonori projektipartnerita esitatud publikatsioone.
- R4: Soovitatav on jätkata konverentside korraldamist (näiteks vahekonverents Riias), mis hõlbustavad sidusrühmadega suhtlemist. Osalejate jaoks on oluline rõhutada, et taotlusprojektides arvestataks reisikulude rahastamisega.

- R5: Soovitatav on vähendada projektide aruandluse sagedust, näiteks asendades (pool)aastaaruandluse ühe vahe- ja ühe lõpparuandega. Teise võimalusena - (pool)aastaaruannete säilitamise korral – on soovitatav muuta aruandlusprotsess sujuvamaks. Näiteks aastaaruandluse korraldamine nii, et järgnevatel aastatel tehtud tööd saaks hõlpsasti aruande vastavatesse osadesse lisada.
- R6: Soovitatav on korraldada projektiaruandeid ja haldus- või finantskohustusi tutvustavaid seminare inglise keeles, mitte riigikeeltes, kui see on asjakohane.
- R7: Soovitatav on täpsustada ja selgitada programmikomiteele nende rolli ja vastutust programmi elluviimise perioodil. Samuti määratleda selgelt, mis olukorrad kujutavad endast huvide konflikti.
- R8: Soovitatav on kaaluda erinevaid taotlusvoorude alternatiive: jätkata kolme eraldi vooruga kolmes Balti riigis, tagades nende käivitumise enam-vähem samal ajal, või liita need kokku üheks ühiseks Balti riikide üleseks taotlusvooruks.
- R9: Soovitatav on põhjalikult ümber mõelda, kuidas teemavaldkondadele järgmisel perioodil lähenetakse, ning määratleda ühtsed valikukriteeriumid kõikides Balti riikides.
- R10: Järgmisel programmiperioodil on soovitatav mitte lisada vastavatesse teadusprogrammidesse lisaks teadusrahastusele ka muid komponente (stipendiumi- ja kõrgharidusprojektid). Juhul, kui need komponendid jäetakse alles, on soovitatav kavandada üks taotlusvoor/tegevus, mis sisaldab nii teadusprojekte kui ka lisakomponente.
- R11: Soovitatav on kaaluda võimalust rahastada taotlusvoorudes kõrge hinde saanud, kuid rahastuseta jäänud projekte riiklike algatuste raames.

Kopsavilkums

Šajā gala ziņojuma ir sniegti secinājumi, kas gūti, izvērtējot 2014.–2021. gada EEZ un Norvēģijas grantu **Baltijas pētniecības programmu (BRP)**[11]. EEZ un Norvēģijas granti ir finanšu mehānismi, ar kuru palīdzību Islande, Lihtenšteina un Norvēģija cieši sadarbojas ar 15 saņēmējvalstīm, kas pievienojās Eiropas Ekonomikas zonai (EEZ) pēc 2004. gada[12]. No 2014. līdz 2021. gadam EEZ un Norvēģijas granti piešķīra 2,8 miljardus eiro aptuveni 100 programmām, kas īstenotas saņēmējvalstīs[13]. Viena no šādām programmām ir BRP, kas ir trīs Baltijas valstu kopīga pētniecības programma 25 miljonu eiro apmērā. Programma tika izveidota, reaģējot uz kopīgiem sabiedrības un pētniecības izaicinājumiem **Igaunijā, Latvijā** un **Lietuvā**. Sagaidāms, ka tā labāk pozicionēs Baltijas valstis Baltijas jūras reģionā, Baltijas un Ziemeļvalstu pētniecības telpā, kā arī Eiropas un starptautiskā līmenī. Programmas intervences loģika ir parādīta attēlā zemāk.



Programmas gaitā tika izsludināti **trīs atklāti** projektu pieteikumu konkursi – pa vienam katrā Baltijas valstī. BRP programmā pētniecības projekti ir balstīti uz divu vai trīs Baltijas valstu un vismaz vienas donorvalsts (Norvēģijas, Islandes vai Lihtenšteinas) pētniecības institūciju daudzpusēju sadarbību. Paredzams, ka visi projekti tiks īstenoti šādā sadarbībā 36 līdz 48 mēnešu garumā, un galīgais projektu izdevumu attiecināmības datums ir 2024. gada 30. aprīlis. Granta summa individuālajam projektam ir no 300 000 eiro līdz 1 000 000 eiro.

BRP izvērtējums tika veikts laikā no 2023. gada marta līdz 2023. gada decembrim. Tā mērķis bija atbildēt uz astoņiem izvērtējuma jautājumiem, kas aptver divus izvērtēšanas kritērijus:

- **Efektivitāte:** pakāpe, kādā programma virzās uz paredzēto rezultātu (tiešo iznākumu un iznākumu) sasniegšanu.
- **Saskaņotība**: cik lielā mērā programma darbojas kā viens veselums, un cik saderīgs ir katrā Baltijas valstī īstenotais atklātais konkurss ar pārējiem diviem atklātajiem konkursiem pārējās Baltijas valstīs un ar programmu kopumā.

[11]EE-RESEARCH un LV-RESEARCH programmās ietilpst gan Baltijas pētniecības programma (BRP) elements, gan stipendiju un augstākās izglītības projekti. Izvērtējuma fokuss ir tikai pētniecības sadaļa, t.i., BRP programma, savukārt stipendijas un iepriekš noteiktā projekta aktivitātes tika skatītas tikai saskaņotības jautājumos EQ 6.
[12] Bulgārija, Horvātija, Kipra, Čehija, Igaunija, Grieķija, Ungārija, Latvija, Lietuva, Malta, Polija, Portugāle, Rumānija, Slovākija un Slovēnija.
[13]EEZ un Norvēģijas granti, kas pieejami: https://eeagrants.org/countries .

Zemāk esošajā tabulā ir uzskaitīti astoņi izvērtēšanas jautājumi.

	Izvērtēšanas jautājumi
Efektivitāte	**EQ 1:** Cik lielā mērā šajā posmā ir sasniegti rezultāti saskaņā ar rezultātu ietvaru? Kādi faktori vai iemesli ietekmēja vai var ietekmēt rezultātu (tiešo iznākumu un iznākumu) sasniegšanu līdz programmas beigām?
	EQ 2: Cik lielā mērā šajā posmā ir atrodami pierādījumi par rezultātiem (tiešo iznākumu un iznākumu līmenī), kas pārsniedz rezultātu ietvarā minētos, tostarp rezultātus, kas saistīti ar daudzpusējo un administratīvo ietvaru?
	EQ 3: Kādi ir apstākļi (piemēram, vājās vietas, iespējamie kavējumi vai citi), kas varētu kavēt vai samazināt Baltijas pētniecības programmas efektīvu īstenošanu, tostarp projektu līmenī?
Iekšējā saskaņotība	**EQ 4:** Cik lielā mērā Baltijas pētniecības programma darbojās kā viens veselums papildinātības, saskaņošanas un koordinācijas ziņā (gan administratīvā, gan projektu līmenī, starp trim Baltijas valstīm un donoru programmas partneriem)?
	EQ 5: Kādas bija sinerģijas un saiknes starp intervencēm (atklātajiem projektu konkursiem), ko veica trīs Baltijas valstu programmu operatori kopā ar ieviešanas aģentūrām un donoru programmas partneriem?
	6. EQ: Attiecībā uz diviem nacionālajiem komponentiem, kur tas ir piemērojams (EE-RESEARCH, LV-RESEARCH), kāds ir stipendiju un augstākās izglītības elementu saskaņotības līmenis ar Baltijas pētniecības programmas elementu?
Ārējā saskaņotība	**EQ 7**: Kādas bija sinerģijas un saiknes ar citiem trīs programmu operatoru un DPP intervences pasākumiem, proti, iniciatīvām, ko finansēja no valsts avotiem?
	EQ 9 [14]: Vai programma rada pievienoto vērtību, vienlaikus izvairoties no dublēšanās ar citām līdzīgām programmām: Apvārsnis2020, Apvārsnis Eiropa, struktūrfondi un INTERREG Baltijas jūras reģiona programma? Ja jā, tad kā?

Šim izvērtējumam izmantotā metodoloģija ietvēra:

- **Dokumentu izpēti**, kas kalpoja par pamatu intervijām un tiešsaistes aptauju anketu izstrādei, kā arī atbildēm uz izvērtējuma jautājumiem.
- **Tiešsaistes aptauju** ar BRP dalībniekiem (projektu iesniedzējiem, projektu partneriem un donoru projektu partneriem), kas atbalstīja konstatējumus efektivitātes un saskaņotības novērtēšanai. Aptaujā kopumā tika saņemtas **74 atbildes (no 119 identificētajiem projektu komandu pārstāvjiem).**
- **Intervijas** ar dažādām BRP ieinteresētajām pusēm (programmu operatoriem, ieviešanas aģentūrām, nacionālajiem kontaktpunktiem, donoru programmas partneri, FMO, programmas komiteju un programmas atbalsta saņēmējiem) trijās Baltijas valstīs un Norvēģijā, padziļinot ieskatu programmas saskaņotībā un efektivitātē. Kopumā veikta **21 intervija ar 24 intervētajiem.**
- **Tīkla analīzi**, kas palīdzēja kartēt iesaistītās pētniecības institūcijas un saprast, kā tās ir izplatītas un savienotas visās Baltijas valstīs un donorvalstīs.

Tālāk ir sniegti galvenie **secinājumi**, kas balstīti uz diviem izvērtēšanas kritērijiem:

Efektivitāte

Runājot par BRP iznākumu "**Notikusi zināšanu apmaiņa par pētījumiem", ir lielā mērā pārsniegtas** rādītāja"atbalstīto pētnieku skaits" mērķa vērtības: Igaunijā par 508%, Latvijā par 284%, Lietuvā par 235%. Tas galvenokārt ir saistīts ar pētnieku mainību projektu komandās (piemēram, sakarā ar pabeigtām doktorantūras studijām, bērna kopšanas atvaļinājumu vai mainītu darba vietu) un mērķa vērtības nepietiekamu novērtēšanu programmas plānošanas posmā.

Runājot par BRP iznākumu "**Uzlabots Baltijas pētniecības sniegums starptautiskā mērogā**", triju rādītāju[15] mērķa vērtības nevienā no Baltijas valstīm **vēl nav sasniegtas**. Galvenie iemesli tam ir COVID-19 pandēmijas ietekme, stingras rādītāju definīcijas un tas, ka daudzi BRP projekti vēl nav pabeigti. Turklāt, atlasīto projektu specifika ierobežoja kopīgi reģistrēto pieteikumu skaitu intelektuālā īpašuma aizsardzībai (IPP), savukārt laika ierobežojumi ietekmēja kopīgo pieteikumu skaitu turpmāka finansējuma saņemšanai (t.sk. attiecīgu projektu konkursu pieejamība un projektu komandu saspringtais laika grafiks).

[14]EQ8 tika noņemts, jo tas dublē EQ5 un kļūdas dēļ tika iekļauts darba uzdevumā. Tabulā saglabāta sākotnējā izvērtēšanas jautājumu numerācija (saskaņā ar darba uzdevumu).
[15]Iesniegto kopīgo recenzēto zinātnisko publikāciju skaits, kopīgo pieteikumu skaits turpmākam finansējumam un kopīgi reģistrēto pieteikumu skaits intelektuālā īpašuma aizsardzībai.

Galvenie konstatētie **pozitīvie faktori**, kas ietekmē rezultātu sasniegšanu, ir motivēti un prasmīgi partneri; dalīšanās ar datiem, zināšanām, pieredzi, iekārtām vai aprīkojumu; jauno pētnieku iesaistīšana; dažādas projekta komandu tikšanās un semināri; un spēja pielāgoties ārējiem satricinājumiem (piemēram, Covid-19). Galvenie **negatīvie faktori** ir Covid-19 ierobežojumi; administratīvais slogs; ierobežots laiks un finansējums; un nevienmērīgas kompetences vai iesaistes līmenis starp projekta partneriem. Galvenais **izaicinājums** veiksmīgai BRP īstenošanai programmas līmenī ir valstu administratīvo nosacījumu atšķirības, kas rada papildu administratīvo slogu valstu vadošajām iestādēm.

Kopumā ir redzams, ka BRP bija liela **ietekme uz** Baltijas valstu **cilvēkresursiem.** Daudzpusējā sadarbība programmā ļāva dalīties pētniecības pieredzē un resursos. Programma ir palielinājusi arī pētnieku kompetences, viņu pētniecības produktivitāti un atpazīstamību.

Turklāt, BRP atbalstīja jaunu starptautisku pētniecības sadarbību veidošanos (īpaši Baltijas un Baltijas un Ziemeļvalstu mērogā), un nostiprināja esošās saiknes starp pētniecības organizācijām. Ievērojamākais rezultāts ir turpmākā sadarbība ar citām pētniecības programmām, piemēram, Apvārsnis Eiropa. Skatoties no plašākas perspektīvas, BRP veicina **Baltijas valstu labāku pozīciju** reģionā, kā arī starptautiskā mērogā (piemēram, iespējotas jaunas pētniecības sadarbības iespējas, palielināta pētniecības atpazīstamība). Tas ir saistīts ar paplašinātajiem pētniecības institūciju tīkliem, īpaši pateicoties atvērtajiem donoru projektu partneru tīkliem.

Saskaņotība

Neskatoties uz daudzpusējas programmas administratīvajiem izaicinājumiem, **BRP darbojas kā viena, iekšēji saskaņota programma**. Tai ir kopīgs redzējums, uzbūve un īstenošanas procedūras. Galvenie faktori, kas ietekmē iekšējo saskaņotību, ir labi izveidota programmas struktūra, Pētniecības pamatnostādnes, aktīva Apvienotā programmas komiteja un pieredzējusi administrācija.

Valstu veiktie **projektu konkursi tika saskaņoti un viens otru papildināja**. Prioritātes un tematiskās jomas bija līdzīgas. Atsevišķi projektu konkursi bija nepieciešami administratīvo nosacījumu atšķirību dēļ. Tomēr programmai vajadzēja izvairīties no viena gada pārtraukuma starp projektu konkursu izsludināšanu dažādās valstīs, jo tā rezultātā programmas īstenošana katrā valstī noritēja dažādos ātrumos.

No otras puses, **stipendiju un augstākās izglītības elementu saskaņotība ar BRP elementu** programmās (proti, EE-Research un LV-Research) **ir neskaidra**. Šie elementi savā ziņā ir saskaņoti ar BRP, jo tās mērķis ir stiprināt cilvēkkapitālu. Tomēr izrādījās sarežģīti integrēt programmu izglītības elementus ar pētniecības elementiem, un iztrūkst Baltijas sadarbības aspekta.

Attiecībā uz **ārējo saskaņotību,** nav iestrādātas sinerģijas vai saiknes starp BRP un iniciatīvām, ko finansē no nacionāliem avotiem Baltijas valstīs, . **BRP sniedz pievienoto vērtību** pateicoties daudzpusējai sadarbībai starp vairāk nekā divām valstīm. Turklāt BRP var pievienot vērtību nacionālajām programmām, ja to īsteno secīgi kā turpinājumu iepriekš īstenotam pētījumam. Kopumā BRP ļauj turpināt pastāvīgu pētījumu virzienu, sasaistot to ar citu starptautisku pētnieku darbu, lai atrastu jaunus un paplašinātus pielietojumus vai iegūtu lielāku atpazīstamību, pateicoties kopīgām publikācijām un turpmākiem projektiem.

No reģionālā un starptautiskā viedokļa ir vairākas citas programmas, kas vērstas uz izcilību zinātnē (piemēram, Apvārsnis Eiropa, Interreg Baltijas jūras reģiona programma). Lai gan tēmas ir līdzīgas, BRP ir **svarīga reģionālās sadarbības programma**, **jo īpaši Baltijas valstīm**. Tā aptver Baltijas valstu prioritātes un paver ceļu daudzpusējai sadarbībai reģionālo izaicinājumu risināšanā. Kopumā BRP projekta komandas tiek mudinātas kopā pieteikties tālākam finansējumam. Līdz ar to tas atspoguļojas iznākuma rādītājā “kopīgo pieteikumu skaits turpmākam finansējumam”: 2023. gada 1. decembrī kopumā tika reģistrēti 15 šādi pieteikumi, un pēc programmas beigām tiek sagaidīti vēl vairāk.

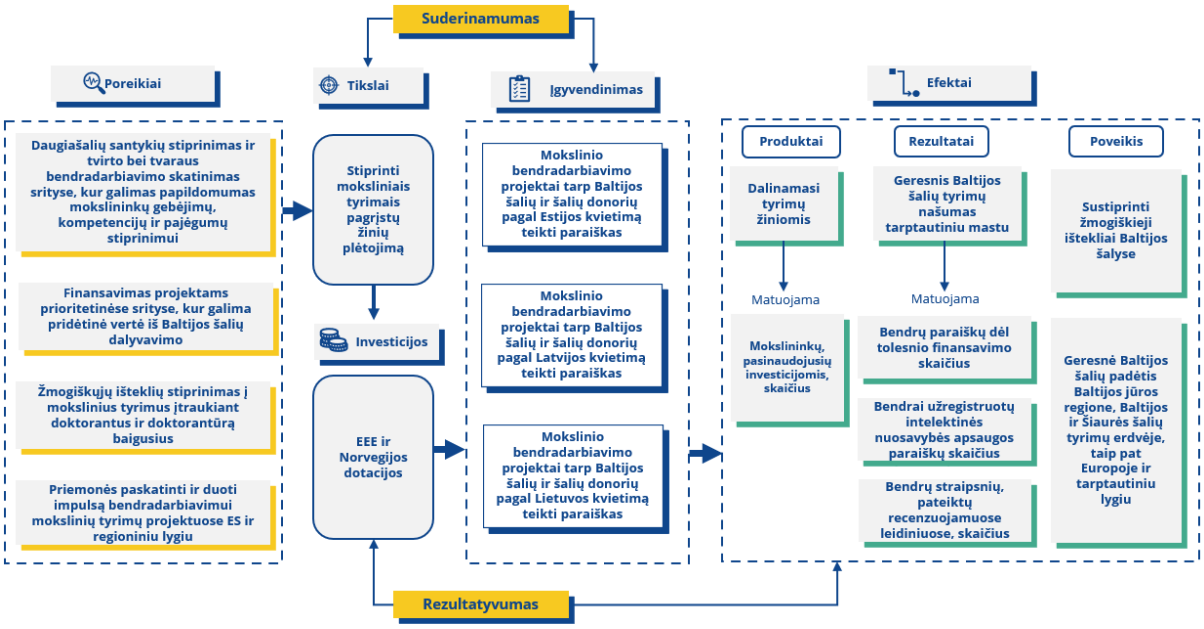
Pamatojoties uz konstatējumiem, ziņojumā ir sniegti šādi **galvenie ieteikumi**:

- R1: Skaidri izskaidrot programmas dalībniekiem specifiskās metodoloģijas sasniegumu aprēķināšanai par katru rādītāju.
- R2: Programmas iznākuma rādītājus ieteicams aprēķināt vismaz gadu pēc projektu beigām.

- R3: Apsveriet iespēju pārskatīt rādītāju “Iesniegto kopīgo recenzēto zinātnisko publikāciju skaits”, lai ietvertu arī publikācijas, kas iesniegtas bez donora projekta partnera.
- R4: Ieteicams turpināt organizēt konferences (piemēram, kā vidusposma konferenci Rīgā), kas veicina ieinteresēto pušu mijiedarbību. Ir svarīgi norādīt dalībniekiem, lai tie paredz finansējumu ceļa izdevumiem projekta izdevumos.
- R5: Ieteicams samazināt projektu atskaišu biežumu, piemēram, (pus)gada pārskatu vietā sniegt vienu starpposma un vienu noslēguma pārskatu. Alternatīvi - ja ir jāsaglabā (pus)gada pārskati - ir ieteicams racionalizēt pārskatu sniegšanas procesu. Piemēram, organizēt gada pārskatus tā, lai turpmākajos gados veikto darbu varētu viegli pievienot attiecīgajām pārskata sadaļām.
- R6: Seminārus par projektu ziņojumiem un administratīvajiem vai finanšu uzdevumiem ieteicams organizēt angļu valodā, nevis attiecīgās valsts valodā.
- R7: Ieteicams precizēt un izskaidrot Programmas komitejai viņu lomu un atbildību īstenošanas periodā, kā arī sniegt skaidru definīciju, kas ir interešu konflikts.
- R8: Ieteicams apsvērt dažādas projektu konkursu alternatīvas: saglabāt trīs atsevišķus projektu konkursus trijās Baltijas valstīs, nodrošinot, ka projektu konkursi tiks uzsākti vairāk vai mazāk vienlaikus vai apvienoti vienā projektu konkursā visām Baltijas valstīm.
- R9: Ieteicams rūpīgi pārdomāt, kā tiek risinātas tematiskās jomas nākamajam periodam, un noteikt vienotus atlases kritērijus visām Baltijas valstīm.
- R10: Nākamajā plānošanas periodā attiecīgajās Pētniecības programmās papildus pētniecības elementam nav ieteicams iekļaut citus komponentus (iepriekš definētus un augstākās izglītības projektus). Alternatīvi, ja šādi elementi ir atstāti, ieteicams izveidot vienu projektu konkursu/aktivitāti, kas ietver gan izpēti, gan papildu elementus.
- R11: Ieteicams apsvērt iespēju finansēt labi novērtētus, bet nefinansētus projektus caur nacionālajām programmām.

Santrauka

Šioje ataskaitoje pateikiamos **Baltijos mokslinių tyrimų programos (angl. Baltic Research Programme - BRP)**, finansuotos 2014-2021 m. EEA ir Norvegijos fondais, vertinimo išvados[16]. EEE ir Norvegijos dotacijos yra finansiniai mechanizmai, pagal kuriuos Islandija, Lichtenšteinas ir Norvegija glaudžiai bendradarbiauja su 15 paramą gaunančių šalių prisijungusių prie Europos ekonominės erdvės (EEE) po 2004 m[17]. 2014–2021 m. pagal EEE ir Norvegijos finansines priemones skirta 2,8 mlrd. eurų, kurie paskirstyti maždaug 100 programų, įgyvendinamų paramą gaunančiose šalyse[18]. Viena iš tokių programų yra BRP, kuri yra bendra trijų Baltijos valstybių mokslinių tyrimų programa. Programos biudžetas yra 25 mln. eurų. Programa buvo sukurta atsižvelgiant į bendrus **Estijos, Latvijos** ir **Lietuvos** visuomenės ir mokslinių tyrimų iššūkius. Tikimasi, kad programa padės Baltijos šalims geriau įsitvirtinti Baltijos jūros regione, Baltijos ir Šiaurės šalių tyrimų erdvėje, taip pat Europos ir tarptautiniu lygmenimis. Programos intervencijos logika pavaizduota žemiau pateiktame paveikslėlyje.



Programos laikotarpiu buvo paskelbti **trys atviri kvietimai** teikti mokslinių tyrimų paraiškas – po vieną kiekvienoje Baltijos valstybėje. BRP mokslinių tyrimų projektai yra grindžiami dviejų ar trijų Baltijos valstybių ir bent vienos valstybės donorės (Norvegijos, Islandijos ar Lichtenšteino) mokslinių tyrimų institucijų bendradarbiavimu. Numatoma, kad visi projektai bus įgyvendinti tokio bendradarbiavimo būdu, o jų tinkama finansuoti trukmė nuo 36 iki 48 mėnesių. Dotacijos suma individualiam projektui svyruoja nuo 300 tūkst. iki 1 milijono eurų.

BRP vertinimas buvo atliktas 2023 m. kovo - gruodžio mėnesiais. Jo tikslas buvo atsakyti į aštuonis vertinimo klausimus, apimančius du vertinimo kriterijus:

- **Rezultatyvumas:** kokiu mastu programa pasiekia laukiamų produktų ir rezultatų.
- **Suderinamumas**: kiek programa veikia kaip viena programa ir kiek vienas atviras kvietimas teikti paraiškas vienoje Baltijos šalyje yra suderinamas su kitais dviem atvirais kvietimais kitose Baltijos šalyse (bei su visa programa).

Toliau pateiktoje lentelėje apžvelgiami aštuoni vertinimo klausimai, į kuriuos atsakyta atliekant vertinimą.

[16]EE-RESEARCH ir LV-RESEARCH programos apima tiek Baltijos tyrimų programos (BRP) elementą, tiek stipendijų ir aukštojo mokslo projektus. Vertinimo apimtis yra tik tyrimo elementas, ty BRP programa, o stipendijų ir aukštojo mokslo veiklos buvo paliečiamos tik suderinamumo dalyje, EQ 6.
[17] Bulgarija, Kroatija, Kipras, Čekija, Estija, Graikija, Vengrija, Latvija, Lietuva, Malta, Lenkija, Portugalija, Rumunija, Slovakija ir Slovėnija.
[18]EEE ir Norvegijos dotacijos, prieinamos adresu https://eeagrants.org/countries .

	Vertinimo klausimai
Efektyvumas	**1 EQ:** Kokiu mastu šiame etape buvo pasiekti rezultatai pagal stebėsenos sistemą? Kokie veiksniai ar priežastys turėjo ar gali turėti įtakos tam, kad iki programos pabaigos būtų pasiekti produktai ir rezultatai?
	2 EQ: Kokiu mastu šiame etape yra įrodymų, kad produktai ir rezultatai yra didesni nei išvardyti programos tiksluose, įskaitant rezultatus, susijusius su daugiašale ir administracine struktūra?
	3 EQ: Kokios aplinkybės (pvz., kliūtys) gali sutrukdyti arba sumažinti veiksmingą Baltijos mokslinių tyrimų programos įgyvendinimą, įskaitant įgyvendinimą projektų lygmeniu?
Vidinis suderinamumas	**4 EQ:** Kokiu mastu Baltijos šalių mokslinių tyrimų programa veikė kaip viena programa papildomumo, derinimo ir koordinavimo (tiek administraciniu, tiek projektų lygmeniu, tarp trijų Baltijos šalių ir DPP) požiūriu?
	5 EQ: Kokios buvo trijų Baltijos šalių programos operatorių kartu su įgyvendinančiomis agentūromis ir donorų programos partneriais vykdomų intervencijų (atvirų kvietimų) sinergijos ir sąsajos?
	6 EQ: Koks yra dviejų nacionalinių komponentų (EE-RESEARCH, LV-RESEARCH), stipendijų ir aukštojo mokslo programų elementų suderinamumo lygis su Baltijos mokslinių tyrimų programos elementu?
Išorinis suderinamumas	**7 EQ**: Kokios buvo sinergijos ir sąsajos su kitomis trijų programų vykdytojų ir DPP intervencijomis, t.y. iniciatyvomis, finansuotomis iš nacionalinių šaltinių?
	9 EQ[19]: Ar programa suteikia pridėtinę vertę ir ar ji nesidubliuoja su kitomis panašiomis programomis: „Horizontas 2020“, „Europos horizontas“, struktūriniai fondai ir INTERREG Baltijos jūros regionas? Jei taip, kaip?

Šiam vertinimui naudojama metodika:

- **Pirminių ir antrinių šaltinių analizė**, kuria remiantis buvo rengiami interviu ir internetinės apklausos klausimynai, taip pat atsakoma į vertinimo klausimus.
- **Internetinė** BRP dalyvių (projektų vykdytojų partnerių ir donorų projektų partnerių) **apklausa**, patvirtinanti rezultatyvumo ir suderinamumo vertinimo išvadas. Iš viso į apklausą gauti **74 atsakymai** (viso apklausą pildyta pakviesta 119 projektų grupių atstovų)
- **Interviu** su įvairiomis BRP suinteresuotosiomis šalimis (programų operatoriais, įgyvendinančiomis agentūromis, nacionaliniais koordinavimo centrais, donorų programos partneriais, finansinių mechanizmų ofisu, programos komitetu ir programos naudos gavėjais) trijose Baltijos šalyse ir Norvegijoje, padedantys geriau suprasti programos rezultatyvumą ir suderinamumą. Iš viso atliktas **21 interviu su 24 pašnekovais.**
- **Socialinių tinklų analizė** padėjo sudaryti mokslo ir tyrimų institucijų, dalyvaujančių BRP, žemėlapį ir suprasti, kaip jos yra pasiskirsčiusios ir susijusios Baltijos ir donorų šalyse.

Toliau pateikiamos **pagrindinės vertinimo išvados,** struktūruojant jas pagal du vertinimo kriterijus.

Rezultatyvumas

Analizuojant BRP siekiamą produktą „**Dalinamasi tyrimų žiniomis“** *(ang. Knowledge of Research Shared)* rodiklio *„mokslininkų, pasinaudojusių investicijomis, skaičius“* siektinos rodiklio reikšmės buvo gerokai **viršytos**: Estijoje – 508%, Latvijoje – 284%, Lietuvoje – 235%. Tai daugiausia lėmė tyrėjų kaita projekto komandose (pvz., dėl baigtų doktorantūros studijų, vaiko priežiūros atostogų ar pasikeitusios darbo vietos) ir nepakankamo siektinos reikšmės įvertinimo programos planavimo etape.

Analizuojant BRP siekiamą rezultatą „**Geresnis Baltijos šalių mokslinių tyrimų našumas tarptautiniu mastu**“, trijų rodiklių siektinos vertės visose Baltijos šalyse **dar nepasiektos**[20]. Pagrindinės to priežastys – COVID-19 pandemijos poveikis, griežti rodiklių apibrėžimai ir tai, kad daugelis BRP projektų dar nebaigti. Be to, atrinktų projektų specifika ribojo bendrai registruojamų paraiškų intelektinės nuosavybės apsaugai skaičių, o laiko apribojimai turėjo įtakos bendrų paraiškų dėl tolesnio finansavimo skaičiui.

Pagrindiniai nustatyti **teigiami veiksniai**, turintys įtakos rezultatų pasiekimui, yra motyvuoti ir kvalifikuoti partneriai; dalijimasis duomenimis, žiniomis, patirtimi, priemonėmis ar įranga; jaunųjų mokslininkų

[19]EQ8 buvo pašalintas, nes dubliavo EQ5 ir buvo įtrauktas į techninę užduotį per klaidą. Lentelėje liko pradinė vertinimo klausimų numeracija.
[20]Bendrų straipsnių, pateiktų recenzuojamuose leidiniuose, skaičius; bendrų paraiškų skaičius tolesniam finansavimui gauti ir bendrai užregistruotų intelektinės nuosavybės apsaugos paraiškų skaičius.

įtraukimas; įvairūs projekto komandos susitikimai ir seminarai; prisitaikymas prie išorės veiksnių (pvz., COVID-19). Tuo tarpu **neigiami veiksniai** – COVID-19 apribojimai; administracinė našta; ribotas laikas ir finansavimas; ir nevienodos projekto partnerių kompetencijos ar įsitraukimo lygis. Pagrindinis **iššūkis** sėkmingam BRP įgyvendinimui programos lygmeniu yra nacionalinės administracinės struktūros skirtumai, dėl kurių nacionalinėms vadovaujančioms institucijoms tenka papildoma administracinė našta.

Apibendrinant, galima teigti, kad BRP turėjo didelį **poveikį** Baltijos šalių **žmogiškiesiems ištekliams.** Daugiašalis bendradarbiavimas vykdant programą sudarė sąlygas dalintis mokslinių tyrimų patirtimi ir ištekliais. Programa taip pat padidino tyrėjų kompetencijas, jų tyrimų produktyvumą ir matomumą.

Be to, BRP skatino tolesnį tarptautinį bendradarbiavimą moksliniuose tyrimuose (ypač Baltijos ir Baltijos bei Šiaurės šalių regionuose) ir sustiprino esamus ryšius tarp mokslinių tyrimų organizacijų. Ryškiausias rezultatas – tolesnis bendradarbiavimas kitose mokslinių tyrimų programose, tokiomis kaip „Europos horizontas“. Žvelgiant iš platesnės perspektyvos, BRP prisideda prie **geresnės Baltijos šalių padėties** regione ir tarptautiniu mastu (pvz., sudarytos sąlygos naujam bendradarbiavimui mokslinių tyrimų srityje, padidintas mokslinių tyrimų matomumas). Tai lemia išplėsti mokslinių tyrimų institucijų tinklai, ypač dėl atsivėrusių donorų partnerių tinklų.

Suderinamumas

Nepaisant daugiašalės programos administracinių iššūkių, **BRP veikia kaip viena programa**. Programa turi bendrą viziją, struktūrą ir įgyvendinimo procedūras. Pagrindiniai veiksniai, darantys įtaką vidiniam suderinamumui, yra gerai nustatyta programos struktūra, mokslinių tyrimų gairės, aktyvus programos komitetas ir patyrusi administracija.

Trijų Baltijos šalių vykdomi **kvietimai** buvo **suderinti ir papildė vienas kitą**. Prioritetai ir teminės sritys buvo panašios. Atskiri kvietimai buvo vykdomi dėl administracinės struktūros skirtumų. Pastebėtina, kad programa turėtų prasidėti panašiu metu visose šalyse, vengiant vienerių metų pertraukos tarp kvietimų skirtingose Baltijos šalyse.

Kita vertus, programų (būtent EE-Research ir LV-Research programų) **stipendijų ir aukštojo mokslo elementų suderinamumas** su BRP elementu yra **ribotas**. Šie elementai tam tikra prasme dera su BRP, nes jais siekiama stiprinti žmogiškąjį kapitalą. Tačiau paaiškėjo, kad buvo sunku integruoti programų švietimo elementus su tyrimų elementu, be to, švietimo elementuose trūksta Baltijos šalių bendradarbiavimo aspekto.

Kalbant apie **išorinį suderinamumą**, nėra integruotos sinergijos ar sąsajų tarp BRP ir iniciatyvų, finansuojamų iš nacionalinių šaltinių Baltijos šalyse. **BRP sukuria pridėtinę vertę** dėl savo daugiašalio bendradarbiavimo tarp daugiau nei dviejų šalių aspekto. Be to, BRP gali suteikti pridėtinės vertės nacionalinėms programoms, jei ji įgyvendinama nuosekliai kaip anksčiau atlikto tyrimo tęsinys.

Žvelgiant iš regioninės ir tarptautinės perspektyvos, yra keletas kitų programų, skirtų moksliniams tyrimams (pvz., „Horizontas Europa“, „Interreg Baltijos jūros regionas“). Nors temos yra panašios, BRP yra **svarbi regioninio bendradarbiavimo programa**, **ypač Baltijos šalims**. Ji apima Baltijos šalių prioritetus ir atveria galimybes daugiašaliam bendradarbiavimui sprendžiant regioninius iššūkius. Apskritai BRP projekto komandos raginamos kartu teikti paraiškas tolesniam finansavimui gauti. Tai atitinkamai atsispindi rezultato rodiklyje „Bendrų paraiškų dėl tolesnio finansavimo skaičius“: 2023 m. gruodžio 1 d. iš viso buvo užfiksuota 15 tokių paraiškų ir tikimasi, kad pasibaigus programai jų bus pasiekta dar daugiau.

Remiantis išvadomis, ataskaitoje pateikiamos šios **pagrindinės rekomendacijos**:

- R1: Aiškiai informuoti programos dalyvius apie konkrečias kiekvieno rodiklio pasiekimų apskaičiavimo metodikas.
- R2: Programos rezultatų rodiklius rekomenduojama apskaičiuoti praėjus ne mažiau kaip metams po projektų pabaigos.

- R3: Rekomenduojama apsvarstyti galimybę pergalvoti rodiklį „Bendrų straipsnių, pateiktų recenzuojamose leidiniuose, skaičius“, kad jis apimtų ir publikacijas, pateiktas be projekto donoro partnerio.
- R4: Rekomenduojama ir toliau organizuoti konferencijas (pvz., vidurio laikotarpio konferenciją), palengvinančias suinteresuotųjų šalių bendradarbiavimą. Svarbu pabrėžti dalyviams, kad projekto išlaidose būtų numatytas finansavimas kelionėms.
- R5: Rekomenduojama sumažinti projektų ataskaitų teikimo dažnumą, pavyzdžiui, vietoj (pus)metinių ataskaitų teikimo, teikti vieną tarpinę ir vieną galutinę ataskaitą. Alternatyviai galima supaprastinti (pus)metinių ataskaitų teikimo procesą. Pavyzdžiui, organizuoti metines ataskaitas taip, kad vėlesniais metais atliktą vertinimą būtų galima lengvai pridėti prie atitinkamų ataskaitos dalių.
- R6: Seminarus apie projektų ataskaitas ir administracines ar finansines užduotis rekomenduojama rengti anglų kalba, o ne valstybinėmis kalbomis (kur tinkama).
- R7: Rekomenduojama paaiškinti ir informuoti programos komitetą apie jo vaidmenį ir atskaitomybę įgyvendinimo laikotarpiu, taip pat aiškiai apibrėžti, kas yra interesų konfliktas.
- R8: Rekomenduojama apsvarstyti įvairias kvietimų alternatyvas: išlaikyti tris atskirus kvietimus trijose Baltijos šalyse (užtikrinant, kad kvietimai bus pradėti daugiau ar mažiau tuo pačiu metu), arba sujungti į vieną kvietimą visose Baltijos šalyse.
- R9: Rekomenduojama persvarstyti, kaip ateinančiu laikotarpiu bus vertinamos teminės sritys, ir nustatyti vienodus atrankos kriterijus visoms Baltijos šalims.
- R10: Kitu programavimo laikotarpiu rekomenduojama, kad BRP be mokslinių tyrimų elemento nebūtų papildomų komponentų (aukštojo mokslo projektų). Alternatyviai, paliekant šiuos elementus, rekomenduojama parengti vieną kvietimą, kuris apimtų ir mokslinių tyrimų ir aukštojo mokslo elementus.
- R11: Rekomenduojama apsvarstyti galimybę per nacionalines programas finansuoti gerai įvertintus, bet nefinansuotus BRP projektus.

1. Introduction

This document is the Final Report of the Evaluation of the Baltic Research Programme under the 2014-2021 EEA and Norway Grants. The evaluation was contracted by the Financial Mechanism Office (FMO).

The general **objective** of the report is to evaluate the effectiveness and coherence of the Baltic Research Programme (BRP)[21] under the 2014-2021 EEA and Norway Grants. The evaluation is being conducted according to the Grants' Results Guideline and addresses the **two evaluation criteria:**

- **Effectiveness:** to what extent the Baltic Research Programme is on track to achieving the expected results (outputs and outcomes)?
- **Coherence**: to what extent does the programme work as one programme and how well compatible is the BRP one open call in one Baltic country with the other two open calls in the other Baltic countries and with the programme as a whole?

Table 1 below presents eight evaluation questions grouped under two evaluation criteria: effectiveness and coherence (internal and external). Answers to the evaluation questions can be found in the chapters presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Evaluation questions

	Evaluation questions	Sub-chapter
Effectiveness	**EQ 1:** At this stage, to what extent have results been achieved in line with the results framework? Which factors or reasons influenced or may influence, the achievement of the results (outputs and outcomes) by the end of the programme?	3.1.1
	EQ 2: At this stage, to what extent is there evidence of results (at output and outcome level) beyond those listed in the results framework, including results linked to the multilateral and administrative set-up?	3.1.2
	EQ 3: What are the circumstances (such as bottlenecks, potential delays, or others) which could prevent or reduce effective implementation of the Baltic Research programme, including at the project level?	3.1.3
Internal coherence	**EQ 4:** To what extent did the Baltic research programme work as one programme in terms of complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination (both at the administrative and project level, among the three Baltic countries and the DPP)?	3.2.1
	EQ 5: What were the synergies and linkages between interventions (open calls) carried out by the three Baltic Programme Operators together with Implementing Agencies and Donor Programme Partners?	3.2.2
	EQ 6: For the two national components where it is applicable (EE-RESEARCH, LV-RESEARCH), what is the level of coherence of the scholarship and higher education elements of the programmes with the Baltic Research Programme element?	3.2.3
External coherence	**EQ 7**: What were the synergies and linkages with other interventions by the three Programme Operators and the DPP, namely initiatives funded by national sources?	3.3.1
	EQ 9[22]: Does the Programme add value, while avoiding duplication, with other similar programmes: Horizon2020, Horizon Europe, the Structural Funds, and INTERREG Baltic Sea Region? If so, how?	3.3.2

Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024

This report consists of the following chapters:

- Chapter 2 presents the subject and methodology used for the evaluation;
- Chapter 3 of the report presents key findings grouped under two evaluation criteria: effectiveness (sub-chapter 3.1) and coherence (sub-chapters 3.2 and 3.3);
- Chapter 4 provides conclusions and recommendations;
- Annexes contain more detailed network analysis, survey questionnaire, survey results and evaluation matrix.

[21]EE-RESEARCH and LV-RESEARCH programmes include both, Baltic Research Programme (BRP) element and scholarship and Higher Education projects. The scope of the evaluation is only a research element, i.e. BRP programme, while scholarship and pre-defined projects activities were only touched upon under the coherence part, EQ 6.

[22] EQ8 was removed as it duplicated EQ5 and was included in Terms of Reference by a mistake. Initial numbering of evaluation questions (as per ToR) remained in the table.

2. Subject and methodology

2.1. Subject and scope

The **EEA and Norway Grants** are financial mechanisms through which Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway work closely with 15 beneficiary countries that joined the European Economic Area (EEA) after 2004.[23] From 2014 to 2021, the EEA and Norway Grants allocated EUR 2.8 billion (incl. EUR 1,3 of Norway Grants and EUR 1,5 of EEA Grants) through approximately 100 programmes implemented in beneficiary countries.[24]

In general, programmes funded by EEA and Norway Grants aim to reduce economic and social disparities and strengthen relations with all 15 beneficiary countries.[25] The particular programmes are funded and implemented based on beneficiary countries' national priorities, their needs, and the scope for bilateral cooperation. Moreover, all programmes must adhere to standards relating to respect for human rights, dignity, freedom, equality, and the rule of law.

Research programmes are established under the priority sector of Innovation, Research, Education and Competitiveness. The research programmes' main goal is to advance research-based knowledge development. The focus of the research programmes is on strengthening bilateral relations between the donor countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and the beneficiary countries. Bilateral relations are defined as cooperation, joint results, and increased mutual knowledge, which supports the focus of the programme on the exchange of knowledge and expertise through long-term research collaborations, joint publications, and the mobility of personnel.

The Baltic Research Programme (BRP) is a joint research programme of the three Baltic States funded under the 2014–2021 EEA Grants. It has a budgetary framework of EUR 25 million and carried out three calls in the programme period.[26] The Baltic Research Programme was established in response to common societal and research challenges in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and is expected to position the Baltic countries better in the Baltic Sea Region, in the Baltic-Nordic Research Area, as well as at European and international levels. Some of the common challenges in the field of research in the Baltics are characterised by limited investment in research, development, and innovation (RDI) at both the private and public levels, low returns on public RDI investments, inadequate international exposure of research organisations, and insufficient collaboration between the business sector and academia. Project assessment regulations remain complex and participation in Horizon programmes (Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe) is limited. Finally, there is a lack of funds specifically designated for Baltic research cooperation.[27]

All the projects supported within the framework of the BRP are expected to be implemented through the collaboration of research institutions with an eligible duration of 36 to 48 months, and the date for the final eligibility of expenditure in the projects is April 30, 2024. The grant amount for an individual project ranges from EUR 300 000 to EUR 800 000. However, if partners from all the Baltic States are participating in the project, the consortium could apply for a grant of up to EUR 1,000,000.[28]

Five main research areas are covered by the programme:[29]

1. Public health, e-health
2. Migration, social inclusion
3. Cyber security, public security
4. Regional economic development, employment, labour market regulations, social policy
5. Innovative solutions for efficient and sustainable use of resources

[23] Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.
[24] EEA and Norway Grants, available at: https://eeagrants.org/countries.
[25] EEA and Norway Grants (2021). *Status Report*. https://statusreport2021.eeagrants.org/.
[26] Research Council of Norway (2019). *EEA and Norway Grants: the Baltics*. https://www.forskningsradet.no/en/apply-for-funding/international-funding/EEA/baltics/
[27] Programme Concept Note, Latvia, 2018.
[28] EEA and Norway Grants (2020). *Third project call of Baltic Research programme*. https://eeagrants.lv/en/2020/08/19/third-project-call-of-baltic-research-programme/
[29] Research Council of Norway (2019). *EEA and Norway Grants: the Baltics*. https://www.forskningsradet.no/en/apply-for-funding/international-funding/EEA/baltics/

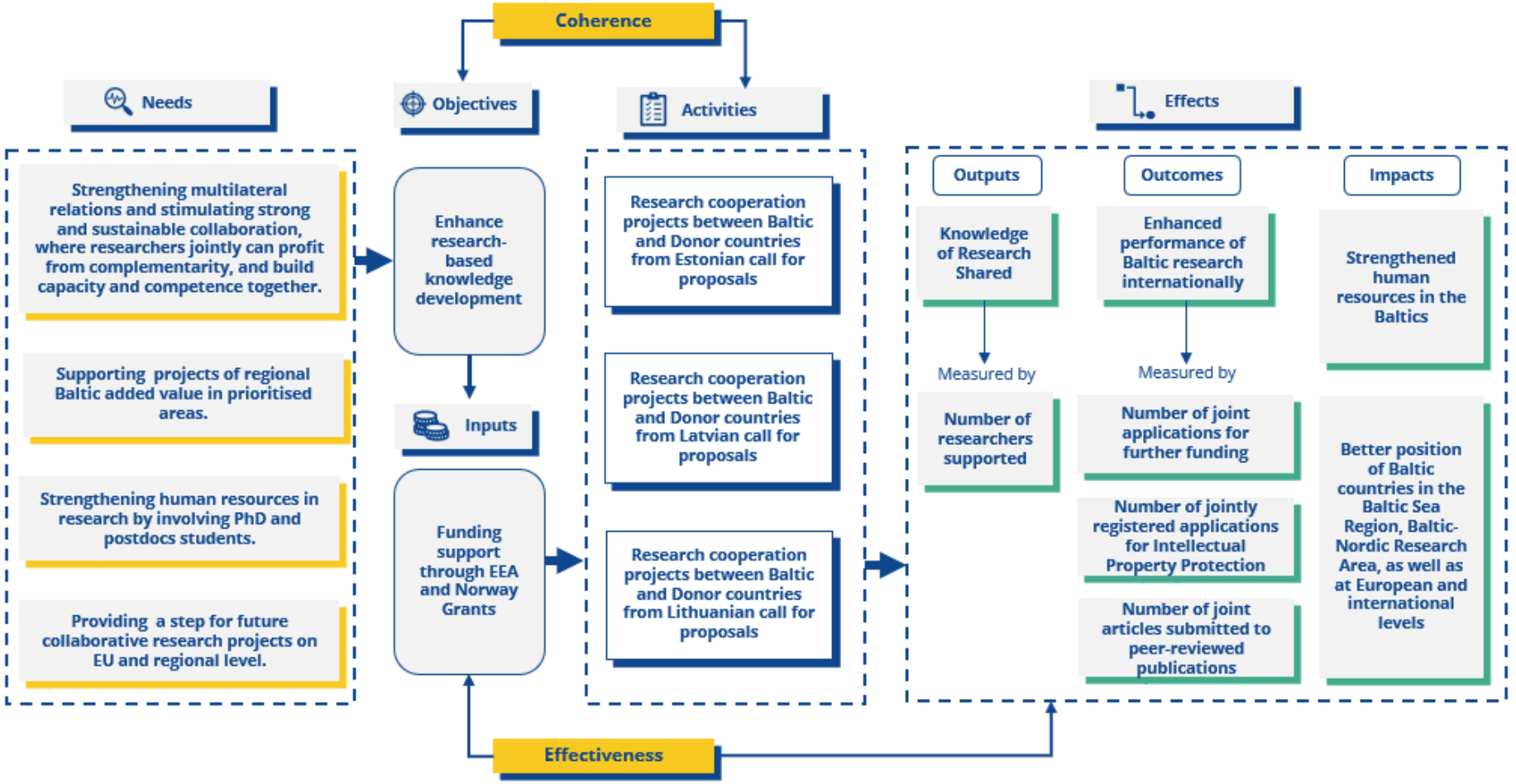
Figure 1 below illustrates the intervention logic of the Baltic Research Programme. It is important to note that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania each implement their own national component of the BRP. Thus **Table 2** and further sub-sections below provide more details on how the BRP is implemented in these three Baltic countries.

Table 2. Summary of the Baltic Research Programme in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

	Estonia (EE-RESEARCH)	Latvia (LV-RESEARCH)	Lithuania (LT_RESEARCH)
Programme Operator (PO)	The Estonian Ministry of Education and Research	The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia	Research Council of Lithuania
Implementing Agency	Estonian Research Council	Latvian Council of Science	Research Council of Lithuania, (The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is a programme partner in Lithuania)
Donor Programme Partner	Research Council of Norway	Research Council of Norway	Research Council of Norway
Participating organisations	• University of Tartu (5) • Tallinn University of Technology (2)	• Riga Technical University (3) • University of Latvia (2) • Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre (1) • Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (1) • Institute of Solid State Physics • University of Latvia (1) • Baltic Studies Centre (1)	• Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (3) • Vilnius University (2) • Vytautas Magnus University (2) • Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (Vilnius Tech) (2) • State research institute Center for Physical Sciences and Technology (1) • Kaunas University of Technology (1) • Lithuanian Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry (1)
Donor project partners	• Norwegian University for Science and Technology (3) • University of Oslo (1), • University Hospital Oslo/Cancer Registry of Norway (1) • University of Tromsø - The Arctic University of Norway (1) • University of Bergen (1)	• University of Oslo (1) • Reykjavik University (1) • Oslo University Hospital (1) • Norwegian School of Economics (1) • Norwegian University of Life Sciences (1) • University of Iceland (1) • Innovation Centre Iceland (1) • University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway (1) • SINTEF AS (1) • Ruralis - Institute for Rural and Regional Research (1)	• University of Oslo (2) • Institute for Energy Technology (1) • University of Stavanger (1) • Norwegian University of Life Sciences (1) • University of Adger (1) • Nofima AS (1) • Østfold University College (1) • Norwegian University for Science and Technology (1) • University of Liechtenstein (1) • Oslo University Hospital (1)Institute of Transport Economics (1) • BI Norwegian Business School (1) • SINTEF AS (1)
Baltic Research Programme funding	EUR 6 000 000	EUR 8 817 538	EUR 11 531 765
EEA Financial Mechanism Grant	EUR 5 100 000	EUR 7 494 907	EUR 9 802 000
National Co-financing	EUR 900 000	EUR 1 322 631	EUR 1 729 765
Call for Proposals' Deadline	January 2019	October 2020	April 2020
Chosen Proposals during the open call	7	9	12

Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024, based on Terms of References (ToR) and information provided by the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science and Research Councils of Estonia (ETAG) and Lithuania (LMT).

Figure 1. Intervention logic of the Baltic Research Programme



Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024

BRP in Estonia

The BRP in Estonia is a part of the Estonian Research and Education programme (EE-Research). The programme also includes higher education and pre-defined projects, which are not the subject of this evaluation but are discussed within coherence evaluation criteria.[30] In the BRP component in Estonia, priority is given to the following research topics: (1) Public health, transnational medicine and health technologies; (2) Migration and social inclusion; (3) Regional cyber security and public security; (4) Environmentally friendly solutions; (5) Regional economic development, employment and labour market regulations, and social policy; and (6) More effective use of resources..

The BRP in Estonia consists of seven high-level research projects with a total funding of EUR 6 million. The projects were selected by the Programme Committee and approved by the Ministry of Education and Research, which is the Programme Operator (PO) in Estonia. The main participating organisations (project promoters of the selected projects) are the University of Tartu and Tallinn University of Technology, with five and two projects respectively.

BRP in Latvia

The research projects within the BRP in Latvia comply with at least one of the following sub-topics: (1) Public health and e-health; (2) Migration and social inclusion; (3) Cyber security and public security; (4) Regional economic development, employment, labour market regulations and social policy; and (5) Innovative solutions for efficient and sustainable use of resources.[31] Besides the BRP research cooperation projects, the Latvian Research and Education programme (LV-Research) also includes scholarship activity and the development of innovation centres, which are not the subject of this evaluation but are discussed within the coherence evaluation criteria.[32]

There are nine research projects in the BRP research element of the Latvian programme (LV-Research) with an overall funding of EUR 8,817,538. The projects were selected by the Programme Committee and approved by the Latvian PO - Ministry of Education and Science. The main participating organisations (project promoters of the selected projects) are Riga Technical University and the University of Latvia, with three and two projects respectively.

BRP in Lithuania

The Lithuanian Baltic Research Programme call addresses the challenges in the following areas: (1) Technologies and innovation development; (2) Cyber security; (3) Preventive and personalised medicine; (4) Culture, migration and inclusive society; and (5) Economic, social challenges and innovative society.[33] The primary and only concern of the EEA Financial Mechanism in the LT-Research programme is sponsoring cooperative research projects chosen through a competitive request as part of the BRP. This is the first time that Lithuania has prioritised research under EEA Grants.

Within the BRP in Lithuania, there are 12 cooperative research initiatives (overall funding EUR 11 531 765) in which all three Baltic States must participate. This criterion differs from the set-up of the BRP in Latvia and Estonia, where research cooperation projects must include at least one other Baltic country as a project partner and at least one Donor partner. The projects were selected by the Programme Committee and approved by the Research Council of Lithuania, which is both the Implementing Agency and PO in Lithuania. The main participating organisations (project promoters of

[30] In higher education, the programme supports institutional cooperation projects and mobility projects between higher education institutions in Estonia and the Donor States. The projects include activities such as curricula development, development and rollout of innovative teaching methods or materials. EE-Research programme includes eleven higher education projects and two pre-defined initiatives. The latter two initiatives are a visiting lectureship of Norwegian language at Tartu University and a project on inclusive education between Estonian and Norwegian partners.

[31] EEA and Norway Grants (2020). *Third project call of Baltic Research programme*. https://eeagrants.lv/en/2020/08/19/third-project-call-of-baltic-research-programme/

[32] Regarding scholarship activity, it encourages exchanges for students, academics, and administrative personnel at higher education institutions in Latvia. Furthermore, funding is granted for the establishment and implementation of four innovation centres in Cesis, Daugavpils, Liepaja, and Ventspils with the goal of engaging young people in STEM-related disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The support was established to encourage students to pursue STEM jobs and to improve instructors' STEM skills. The innovation centres will work with Norwegian partners.

[33] Research Council of Lithuania (2020). *The call for proposals*. https://www.lmt.lt/en/international-collaborations/baltic-research-programme/the-call-for-proposals/3352

the selected projects) are Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (three projects), Vilnius University (two projects), Vytautas Magnus University (two projects) and Vilnius Tech (two projects).

2.2. Methodology

The methodology deployed for this evaluation included desk research, an online survey with BRP participants, interviews with various BRP stakeholders, and network analysis. This section describes these methods in more detail.

2.2.1. Desk research

The desk research contributed to assessing evaluation criteria of effectiveness and coherence as well as providing a base for interviews and online survey questionnaire development.

The analysed sources covered a range of documents, including:

- EEA Grants Documents: Guidelines for the EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021, reports from previous evaluations
- Indicator and contact data from the Grants Administration and Collaboration Environment (GrACE) platform
- Programme-level documentation: Programme Concept note, Programme Agreement, Annual Programme Reports (APRs) for each of the three country components, Results Framework data, Research Guidelines, BRP call documents and templates
- National policy documents: other research programmes funding documents, official Programme Operators websites
- Publicly available information about Horizon2020 and Horizon Europe calls, and the list of all projects and relevant contacts

The desk research was carried out by three national experts (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and data collection assistants, which ensured the opportunity to thoroughly analyse documents and public information in three national languages.

2.2.2. Online survey of Baltic Research Programme participants

The online survey was designed to support findings for the evaluation of effectiveness and coherence from the perspective of the project participants (project promoters, project partners, and donor project partners). The timeline of survey implementation is presented in **Figure 2** below.

During the piloting phase of the survey, besides the inputs of the FMO and evaluation steering group, seven randomly selected respondents tested the survey. The feedback received was considered when making minor corrections to the questionnaire (see the final version in **Annex 2. Survey questionnaire**).

A soft launch of the survey was scheduled, which entailed initially rolling out the survey to a subset of beneficiaries. This approach aimed to identify and resolve any technical issues or misunderstandings in the survey. Once the core team had confirmed that the survey and the process were free of challenges, the full-scale survey was launched. The final survey was launched on 25th of July 2023: in total, 119 invitations were sent via an email campaign in two rounds (due to the soft launch). To encourage participation in the survey, additional invitations were sent by the programme operators (Pos) in the Baltic countries. In total, six reminders about the survey were sent to the projects' participants via email and one via phone call.

Figure 2. Timeline of online survey implementation



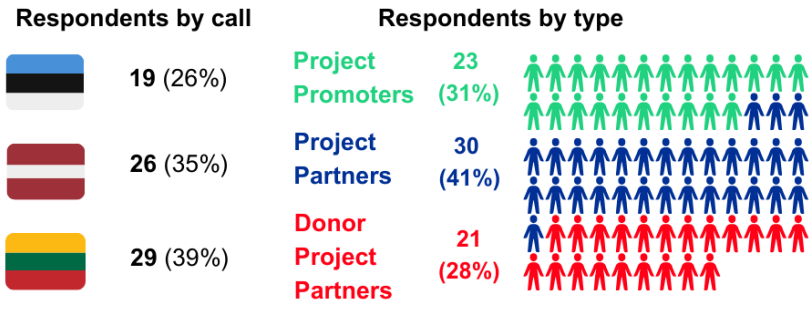
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024

Figure 3 below summarises the profile of the respondents. 74 responses in total (62% of all projects' participants or 74/119) were received. The survey was filled out by:

- 70% (19/27) participants from Estonian call,
- 70% (26/37) participants from Latvian call, and
- 53% (29/55) participants from Lithuanian call.

Almost all BRP projects were covered (a response from only one project is missing).

Figure 3. Profile of survey respondents



Note: Survey conducted in July-December 2023. The share of respondents is counted from the total number of survey respondents (74)
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024

2.2.3. Interviews

Interviews with various BRP stakeholders (Programme Operators, Implementing Agencies, National Focal Points, Donor Programme Partner, FMO, Programme Committee, and programme beneficiaries) in the three Baltic States and Norway deepen insights into the coherence and effectiveness of the programme. In total, 21 interviews were conducted (see **Table 3** for more details about interviewee type):

- 15 interviews with main programme stakeholders (including two joint interviews in Latvia with more than one interviewee), and
- 6 follow-up interviews with programme beneficiaries to collect additional information on their survey responses.

Table 3. Number of interviewees

Type of BRP stakeholder	Number of interviewees
Programme Operator (PO)	3
Implementing Agency (IA)	4
National Focal Point (NFP)	3
Other national Programme Partner	2
Donor Programme Partner (DPP)	1
EEA and Norway Grants Financial Mechanism Office (FMO)	2
Programme Committee	3
Programme beneficiaries (project participants)	6
Total:	**24**

Notes: Research conducted in July-December 2023. A full list of interviewees is not provided as 19 out of 24 interviewees requested to remain anonymous. The number of interviewees (24) is higher than the number of interviews (21) due to joint interviews in Latvia: PO and IA each had two representatives interviewed, while Latvian NFP was interviewed together with PO. In addition, Lithuanian IA is also PO but was counted only in the IA row to avoid duplication in counting.
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024

2.2.4. Network analysis

Network analysis aimed to map participating research institutions and understand how they are distributed and connected throughout the Baltic States and Donor countries. This also included the analysis of detected clusters or organisations – their size, number of common projects and overlapping topics. In addition, network statistics (average degree, path length, diameter, modularity) brought precision to the explanation of the network and allowed clustering. **Annex 1. Network analysis** provides a detailed description of the network analysis and its results (including visualisation in **Figure 15**).

The data necessary for the network analysis were extracted from the BRP projects list from all three calls, which were available in GrACE and other sources identified during desk research. In total, there are 55 unique organisations (with different departments merged under one name) in the network, which are connected by 172 links. All the data analysis, calculations, and visualisation were completed using the open-source Gephi software.

3. Key findings

In this chapter the key findings will be presented. They are structured around the two evaluation criteria.

3.1. Effectiveness

The effectiveness criterion assesses **if the Baltic Research programme is on the right track to achieving what was set out to achieve.** Specifically, it assesses the extent at this stage, to which the Programme is expected to achieve its planned results. “Results” means both outputs and outcomes, as defined by the results frameworks of the Programme, with an emphasis on the outcomes. The preliminary answers to the evaluation questions were drafted based on desk research, interviews, and survey answers.

3.1.1. Current status of results achievement in line with results framework and factors influencing it (EQ1)

Main conclusion

In terms of the BRP output “Knowledge of Research Shared”, the target values for the number of researchers supported have been largely exceeded. This is due to the changes of researchers in the project team and the underestimation of the target values.

Concerning the BRP outcome “Enhanced performance of Baltic research internationally”, the target values of the three indicators in all Baltic States have not been achieved yet. The main reasons for this are the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, specifics of selected projects, strict definitions of indicators, and time limitations (incl. availability of relevant calls for proposals, and the busy schedule of project teams).

Following the results framework, the achievement of the intended output “Knowledge of Research Shared” is measured based on the indicator “Number of researchers supported”. The outcome “Enhanced performance of Baltic research internationally” is measured through the following indicators:

- number of joint applications for further funding
- number of joint scientific articles submitted to peer-reviewed publications
- number of jointly registered applications for Intellectual Property Protection (IPP)

Table 4 below summarises the progress of the three countries in achieving the set targets of the indicators related to the programme (BRP outcome and output). Some country-specific considerations for the results are as follows:

- In the Lithuanian case, indicators were initially designed in anticipation of a larger number of projects, with an expected total of 18. However, these projects turned out to be more

substantial in scale, resulting in fewer projects being delivered (i.e., 12).[34] Consequently, it is possible that some indicators, especially the number of IPPs, may not be attainable as originally envisioned.

- As the projects started at different times in different countries, their progress towards the indicators is uneven. In Latvia, 8 out of 9 projects started on 1 May, 2021 (the last one started on 1 October of the same year), and all are planned to end on 30 April, 2024, which is the final eligibility date for all projects within the BRP. In Lithuania most of the projects started and ended slightly earlier compared to Latvia: 11 out of 12 projects were implemented from 1 January, 2021, to 31 December, 2023, while one project started on 1 December, 2021, and ended on the same day as the other projects. However, as the Estonian call for proposals was the first one, all the projects started earlier compared to Latvia and Lithuania.

Table 4. Status of Programme results achievement

Indicator	Estonia		Latvia		Lithuania	
	Target value	Cumulative number (01/12/2023)	Target value	Cumulative number (01/12/2023)	Target value	Cumulative number (01/12/2022)
Progress in reaching the BRP outcome "Enhanced performance of Baltic research internationally"						
Number of joint peer-reviewed scientific publications submitted	50	37 (74%)	50	18 (36%)	75	61 (81%)
Number of joint applications for further funding	10	2 (20%)	16	8 (50%)	18	5 (28%)
Number of jointly registered applications for Intellectual Property Protection	3	2 (67%)	3	0 (0%)	10	0 (0%)
Progress in reaching the BRP output "Knowledge of Research Shared"						
Number of researchers supported	25	127 (508%)	44	125 (284%)	62	146 (235%)

Note: the cumulative numbers were provided by the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science and Research Councils of Estonia (ETAG) and Lithuania (LMT) and are preliminary to better reflect the up-to-date situation and thus cannot be considered officially approved or final. In Lithuania, the numbers were extracted from the payment requests submitted until 1 December 2023, thus they reflect the available information on that day and not the actual achievement of the results.
Source: Research Councils of Estonia (ETAG), Latvia (LZP), and Lithuania (LMT).

The sub-sections below further discuss each of these indicators and present positive and negative factors which influenced the achievement of the target values.

Knowledge of Research Shared

At this stage, it is evident that all the countries have largely exceeded their target value for the **number of researchers supported**: Estonia by 508% (127/25), Latvia by 284% (125/44), and Lithuania by 235% (146/62) (see **Table 4** above). This suggests that the BRP had a great impact on the human resources of the Baltic countries.

Although the Programme Promoters try to ensure that the number is not wrongly inflated (e.g., by counting temporary support from students), room for uncertainties remain. According to Core Indicators Guidance FM14-21,[35] this indicator is supposed to count researchers (PhD students, post-doctoral researchers or other persons who carry out academic or scientific research) conducting research and receiving support from the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021. This support could be in the form of a scholarship, salary or grant, and should last for a minimum period of 1-month FTE (full-time equivalent). However, this **definition can often be confused**.

[34] Annual Programme Report LT-RESEARCH 2022.
[35] EEA and Norway Grants (2022). *Core indicators 2014-2021*.
https://eeagrants.org/sites/default/files/resources/Core%20Indicators%20Guidance%20FM14-21_November%202022.pdf

For example, one programme beneficiary from Lithuania has noted that only researchers already holding a PhD degree were counted when reporting researchers supported in their project. Whereas the interviewed participants from Latvian and Estonian calls revealed that they also considered the contribution of PhD students (there was a separate slot in the reporting for them along with researchers with PhD and Postdocs). This is also apparent when comparing the Annual Programme Reports between the three Baltic countries. The total values of the indicator in Latvia and Estonia besides PhD and Postdocs also include the category "Not specified" (i.e., PhD students),[36] while the Lithuanian Annual Programme Report[37] leaves the respective category empty and states that PhD students are not counted in this indicator and, thus, are presented in the main text rather as an additionality. To introduce more clarity, there could be two alternatives to the current definition of researchers supported: include all supporting staff and consequently increase target indicator value; or calculate researchers supported in FTE rather than headcount.

Moreover, there are also some discussions over the **necessary involvement level** (hours spent). Some only report the number of main staff who work more or less full-time on the project, while others look at the level of contribution more flexibly. The latter perspective seems to be more common among the researchers considering that they are also usually occupied with other tasks beyond the BRP project (lectures, administrative work, and other projects). In any case, the definition of the indicator allows for counting researchers who work at least 160 hours (1-month FTE) for the project and receive a salary.

Besides some uncertainties in the definition of the indicator, the higher number of researchers supported can be mainly explained by **changes in the project teams** throughout the project implementation period. Many interviewees underlined that as the projects last several years, different personal circumstances lead to the changes of researchers. These circumstances include parental leave, change of job, completed PhD studies and other aspects. Nevertheless, as noted by one project participant, this change of personnel can be seen as a positive aspect as it means a wider involvement of different researchers and a greater programme impact.

Lastly, one PO mentioned that this overachievement of targets could also be related to **the underestimation of the target values** during the planning phase. Although, in the Latvian and Estonian calls it was not mandatory to involve partners from all three Baltic States (different to the Lithuanian call), there are only four projects with only two Baltic States in the project teams (one in Estonia and three in Latvia). On average, the projects have 3-5 partners, each of which involves 2-4 researchers. This sums up to the overall higher number of researchers supported. Moreover, as the definition of the indicator does not require a researcher to be involved in the project throughout its whole implementation, it is natural that the aforementioned changes in the project team inflate the number. Thus, interviewed programme stakeholders suggest that the target for this indicator was set too low.

Enhanced performance of Baltic research internationally

The target values of the other indicators have not been achieved yet (see **Table 4** above). This section discusses this in more detail.

Number of joint peer-reviewed scientific publications submitted

According to the status update on December 1, 2023, Latvia has only reached 36% (or 18/50) of its target value for the number of joint peer-reviewed scientific publications submitted, while Estonia and Lithuania have achieved 74% (37/50) and 81% (61/75) respectively. Overall, it is expected that in Estonia the indicator's target value can/will be achieved by the end of the programme as the project teams are in the process of preparing and submitting joint publications.[38] In Latvia, for example, the number of submitted publications is expected to reach 33 (out of the planned 50), as noted by the Latvian PO.

Besides the requirement for the publication to be peer-reviewed and declare EEA and Norway Grants as a single source of funding, this indicator necessitates the **contribution of a donor project partner**

[36] Annual Programme Reports EE-RESEARCH 2020-2022 and Annual Programme Reports LV-RESEARCH 2020-2022
[37] Annual Programme Report LT-RESEARCH 2022.
[38] Annual Programme Reports EE-RESEARCH 2020-2022 and ETAG.

in the publication. However, quite often researchers submitted publications without a donor project partner but acknowledging the EEA funding, which are therefore not included in the indicator count. For example, in the case of Estonia, 33 peer-reviewed publications were submitted by Project Promoters with the acknowledgement of EEA funding. This includes joint publications in collaboration with researchers from the Baltic countries but without donor project partners.[39] Also, in Lithuania 16 publications were counted under the category "Not specified", meaning that a donor project partner was not involved.[40] Although the Annual Programme Reports of the LV-RESEARCH do not specify such additional information on publications, we could expect similar tendencies in Latvia as well.

This requirement for the donor project partners to be involved causes some challenges as they usually have a lower overall capacity to contribute. Such partners generally have a smaller number of involved researchers in the project and limited hours for the project implementation. The main reason for this is much higher salaries compared to Baltic countries. For example, PhD and Postdocs annual salary in Norway can often reach EUR 50 000 which is a couple of times more than in the Baltic States. In relation to this, some programme beneficiaries expressed the need for more flexibility in this indicator, for example, by allowing 20% of publications to be published together with partners from just the Baltic States.

Nevertheless, some **flexibility in the definition of this indicator** can be seen. It has been noted by the Research Council of Lithuania that in the first year of the BRP implementation, it was required for the publication to be prepared by the project promoter (i.e., Lithuanian partner) and donor project partner. However, since the second year, the PO also counted the publications prepared by project partners (i.e., Estonian or Latvian partners) and donor project partners. Yet, the requirement for the donor project partners has remained mandatory.

Lastly, the **COVID-19 pandemic** is also often named as the main hindering factor to prepare and publish publications: due to delayed logistics, closed laboratories and other restrictions researchers were not able to proceed with planned activities which could be reported in the publications.

Number of joint applications for further funding

For the number of joint applications for further funding (which include donor project partner and project partner/promoter),[41] Latvia has reached 50% of its target value (8/16), while Lithuania and Estonia have reached 28% (5/18) and 20% (2/10) respectively (see **Table 4** above). However, for example, the Research Council of Latvia expects to have a total of 15 such applications (out of the planned 16) by the end of the end of the BRP. The main programmes where project participants applied together were international: Horizon Europe (e.g., M-ERA.NET), Interreg Baltic Sea Region Call, NordPlus and others.

The major hindering factors named by the programme beneficiaries here are the **availability of relevant calls** for proposals and the **busy schedule of researchers**:

- Project participants note that it is hard to find national or international funding relevant to their specific research topic. Also, there is a lack of available smaller-scale international or national programmes where donor project partners can participate, yet it is a requirement for this indicator to include such partners in the proposals (e.g., Iceland was not a participant in M-ERA.NET[42] joint calls in 2020, 2022, and 2023). As for larger-scale international programmes such as Horizon Europe, researchers emphasise that Horizon is often more oriented towards business rather than science. In addition, it requires a much bigger consortium than the ones in BRP projects.
- Furthermore, some interviewees have indicated that the time they can dedicate to actively prepare proposals is limited as they are very occupied with the finalisation of their BRP project and other engagements. However, they note that nothing stands in the way for preparing further

[39] Annual Programme Reports EE-RESEARCH 2020-2022.
[40] Annual Programme Reports LT-RESEARCH 2020-2022.
[41] EEA and Norway Grants (2022). *Core indicators 2014-2021*.
https://eeagrants.org/sites/default/files/resources/Core%20Indicators%20Guidance%20FM14-21_November%202022.pdf
[42] See: https://www.m-era.net/

proposals after the completion of current major tasks. Thus, we should expect to see more joint applications for further funding after the completion of the current projects.

Number of jointly registered applications for Intellectual Property Protection

Lastly, in terms of joint applications for Intellectual Property Protection, Estonia has registered two applications (67%), while Latvia and Lithuania have not registered any applications as of 1 December, 2023 (see **Table 4** above). However, later in December 2023, one IPP application was registered within the Lithuanian call with the involvement of a donor project partner.[43] Nevertheless, it is expected that the targets for this indicator will not be achieved. The main reason for this is the **specifics of the selected BRP projects** as only some of them included the plan to develop a new technology which could be patented, while the majority used existing tools and instruments in their research activities. Another reason could be that the registration of IPP can often take longer than the project lasts, which adds additional administrative issues. As suggested by the Latvian PO, due to such reasons no IPP was planned in project application within the Latvian call.

In addition, in one case, when conducting their research, a project team identified a novel process which could be potentially patented. However, as no patent was initially foreseen in the project, additional **needed funding** could not be dedicated (a Europe-wide patent costs more than EUR 20,000). Moreover, as the project teams are international, there might be difficulties in protecting intellectual rights. It was not fully clear for the project teams in which institutions joint registration should be done if intellectual property is owned by partners from different countries. In addition, some programme stakeholders and beneficiaries raise concerns about how IPPs would affect the non-economic nature of the projects. For example, one may worry that IPPs would limit the dissemination and sharing of the research results or create barriers for further collaboration or innovation. Whereas the BRP aims to promote open science.

The added value of the multilateral collaboration in the programme

Besides the discussed three indicators, the progress towards the BRP outcome “Enhanced performance of Baltic research internationally” can be illustrated by the overall benefits of the multilateral collaboration in the programme. These benefits were mentioned by both programme beneficiaries and managing authorities. As seen in **Figure 4** below**,** most beneficiaries completely agree with the statement that BRP projects **enabled new research collaboration** in the Baltics (73%), as well as in the Baltic-Nordic area (76%).

However, survey respondents are more careful about increased collaborations in their country (51% completely agree) or in Europe and internationally beyond the Baltic-Nordic area (45% completely agree). This is understandable since the BRP involves collaboration between the Baltic and Donor States. Nevertheless, for example, one survey respondent mentioned that they have established a new Erasmus partnership in Germany, which resulted from the network of donor project partners.

In addition, **Figure 4** shows that respondents are also positive about the additional competencies brought to the project because of the multilateral collaboration between Baltic countries or in cooperation with Donor States. The multilateral composition of the project team enables the **share of data, knowledge, and unique facilities or equipment for research**. For example, the ICONDE project participant illustrates that multilateral collaboration allowed the share of practical experience of Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (LEI, Lithuania), fiberconcrete mechanics (RTU, Latvia), OSA properties and radiation protection modelling (Tartu University, Estonia), and concrete mechanics in extremal situations (AU, Norway).

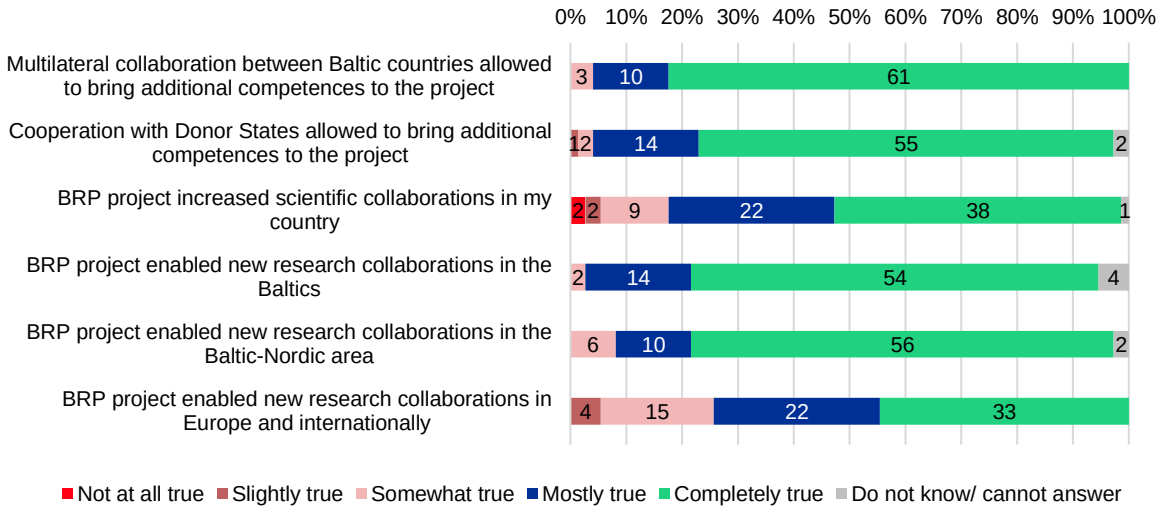
Some participants additionally mentioned that multilateral collaboration **allowed them to meet researchers and plan additional projects** or activities to extend the project. As the project team is

[43] This is not reflected in the cumulative number of the indicator in Table 4 as the IPP application was made after the set cut-off date (1 December, 2023).

diverse, this allows researchers to share experiences and build strong relationships for future collaborations. One of the most common examples is the collaboration on Horizon Europe proposals. This is consequently reflected in the outcome indicator "**Number of joint applications for further funding**" (see above).

Moreover, programme beneficiaries bring out that the newly established partners allow further cooperation between PhD students and provide new student exchange opportunities. This helps to increase the level of knowledge shared. This is further elaborated in the following section **Evidence of the results beyond the results framework (EQ2)**.

Figure 4. Project's impact on new collaborations

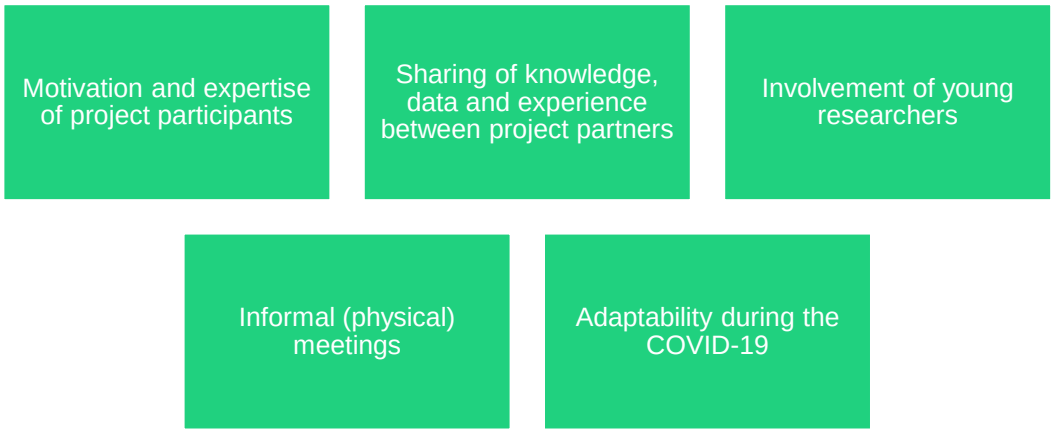


Note: N= 74
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 – December 2023.

Factors influencing the achievement of the results

Figure 5 indicates the detected **positive factors** which influence the achievement of the results. These factors are further discussed in more detail below.

Figure 5. Positive factors influencing the achievement of the results



Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024

The first and most evident positive influencing factor is the **expertise and capacity of project participants**, which is agreed upon unanimously by programme beneficiaries (see **Figure 6** below). To some extent, this is thanks to the high competition in the calls for proposals. For example, in Estonia,

out of the 130 received applications, only 7 of them received funding, which suggests that only the best proposals written by the most experienced researchers succeeded.

Some additional related factors expressed by the programme's stakeholders are the **motivation of project partners** and the **involvement of young researchers**. As suggested by interviewees, a reason influencing the commitment of the project partners to deliver results is their willingness to fully absorb available funding together. High trust between scientists also contributes to their commitment to the project. Moreover, the project allowed for the involvement of young researchers (postdocs, PhD and master's students), which increased the capacity of project teams.

Another positive factor likewise indicated by all survey respondents is **research collaboration and partnerships as part of the project**. The multilateral design of the programme allowed for and promoted the **sharing of data, knowledge, and unique facilities or equipment for research** between project partners. Due to the differences in the level of competencies and sphere of expertise, all partners significantly developed their knowledge and capacity within the project's research topic, which helped to achieve the project results.

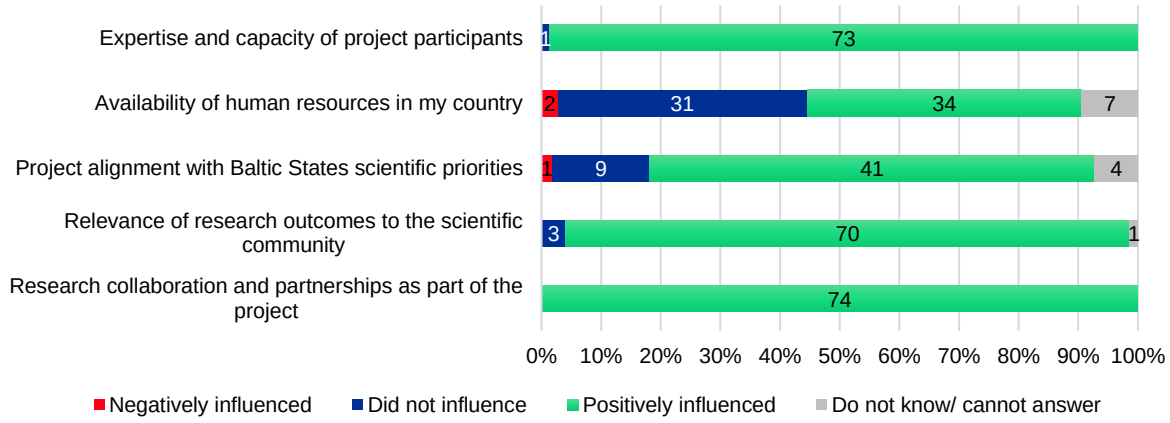
Furthermore, various **meetings, conferences and other events** have also contributed to the achievement of the results, as suggested by the programme's stakeholders. This enables efficient collaboration between partners and fruitful discussions leading to results. Despite the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical meetings, the **quick adaptation to remote work** helped to handle the encountered challenges. Beneficiaries suggest that such physical meetings contribute to productivity, for example, when conducting collective activities for research and preparing research articles. It is explained that in-person visitations allow the project team to dedicate all of their time and focus on the production of research outputs without the distraction of other engagements.

The **professional programme team** and received **administrative support** are also among the positive influencing factors expressed in interview and survey responses, such as:

> *"Support and guidance on project implementation from the local implementing agency as well as the organisation of accounting were perfect; timely and with all necessary details and help whenever asked." – BRP beneficiary.*

In addition, the majority (70 of 74) of surveyed beneficiaries agree that **research outcomes are relevant to the scientific community**. Whereas the availability of human resources in the Baltic States was less frequently selected as a positive influencing factor (46% of responses) (see **Figure 6**). This can be explained by some indicated challenges in the project teams (see negative factors below).

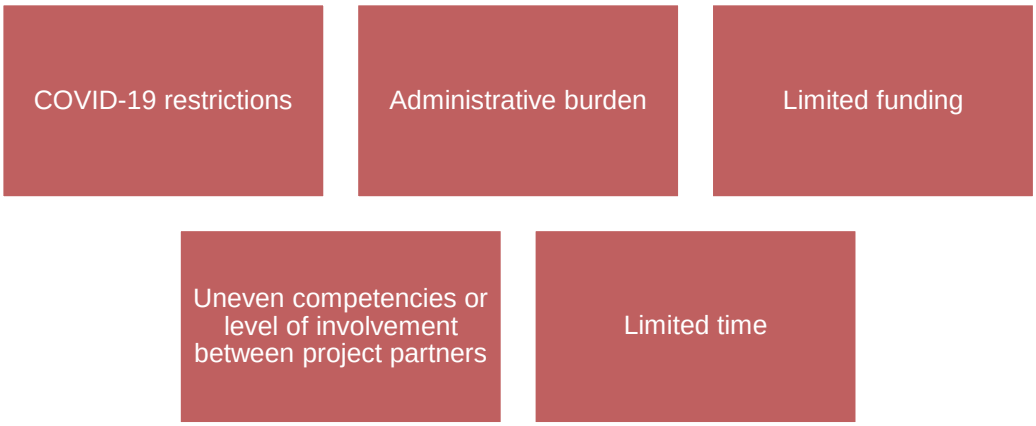
Figure 6. Factors influencing the achievement of the results



Note: Total N= 74. N "Project alignment…" = 55 as this option was not visible for donor project partners.
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 – December 2023.

Besides many positive factors, the project participants have also faced several **negative factors** which hindered the achievement of the results. **Figure 7** below indicates such factors, and they are further elaborated below.

Figure 7. Negative factors influencing the achievement of the results



Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024

The most prominent external negative factor**,** mentioned by many surveyed BRP beneficiaries, was the **COVID-19 pandemic**. The restrictions on personal meetings hindered the implementation of workshops and in-depth interviews and resulted in delays in the project delivery. Also, the investigation and experimentation process were disrupted due to pandemic-related difficulties such as complications in the supply chain and long logistics.

Another main negative factor highlighted by programme beneficiaries is the **administrative burden**. Only 22% of surveyed beneficiaries selected that it does not hinder the project implementation at all, while around 26% said that it mostly or completely hinders (see **Figure 8** below). One problem here is that while the projects are international, the administration is mainly done in the project promoter's language (Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian). Although Implementing Agencies provide all the necessary help, if the project partners from other countries have questions, then the project promoter becomes the intermediator despite the lack of knowledge in financial and administrative aspects at the programme level. Therefore, one interviewee suggested that it would be useful to have more English seminars organised by Implementing Agencies or other programme coordinators (at least once a year). Such seminars could cover topics such as the preparation of technical reports and financial data.

Another related issue is the high requirements for the journals where the research is published, which can create a burden for the project teams. Moreover, one beneficiary mentioned that they faced administrative difficulties in obtaining ethical approvals for research. Another highlighted aspect is the timetables of the hours each researcher spent on the project – according to some beneficiaries such detailed administrative reporting is not necessary. A further time-consuming administrative task concerns situations when **project team composition changes** (e.g., due to paternal leave, change of workplace, and other reasons). In such cases, respective project partners need to provide information like the competencies the project team is losing or gaining and attach CVs, all of which can take quite a lot of time. It is noted by some BRP beneficiaries that in other projects (e.g., funded by the Research Council of Norway) this kind of reporting is not required as long as the promised results are delivered. Nevertheless, interviewed stakeholders still highlight in the end that the **administrative burden is not as big compared to other programmes** like Horizon Europe and Interreg Baltic Sea Region.

Moreover, **lack of funding** is also noted as a negative factor. Only 36% of surveyed programme beneficiaries indicate that this does not hinder the project at all, while the majority (roughly 44%) say that it either slightly hinders or somewhat hinders (see **Figure 8**). For example, some participants mentioned that a more flexible budget could benefit the programme if new opportunities (e.g., discovered unplanned potential for IPP, researchers' mobility activities) were detected during the

implementation of the project. Some survey respondents suggested that additional funding could be foreseen for face-to-face meetings which contribute to increased productivity in producing research outputs. Moreover, due to differences in costs in Norway and the three Baltic States, it can be too expensive to involve more researchers from Norway, which, to some extent, could also hinder the achievement of results. In addition, a relatively small grant size for a BRP project makes it more challenging to attract the interest of research institutes in Donor States to participate in the programme. However, even if Norwegian partners received a larger budget, their capabilities to commit to carrying out research would be lower compared to partners in the Baltic Countries due to these differences in costs. In addition, increasing the budgets for donor project partners would mean that a larger part of support would go back to the Donor country.

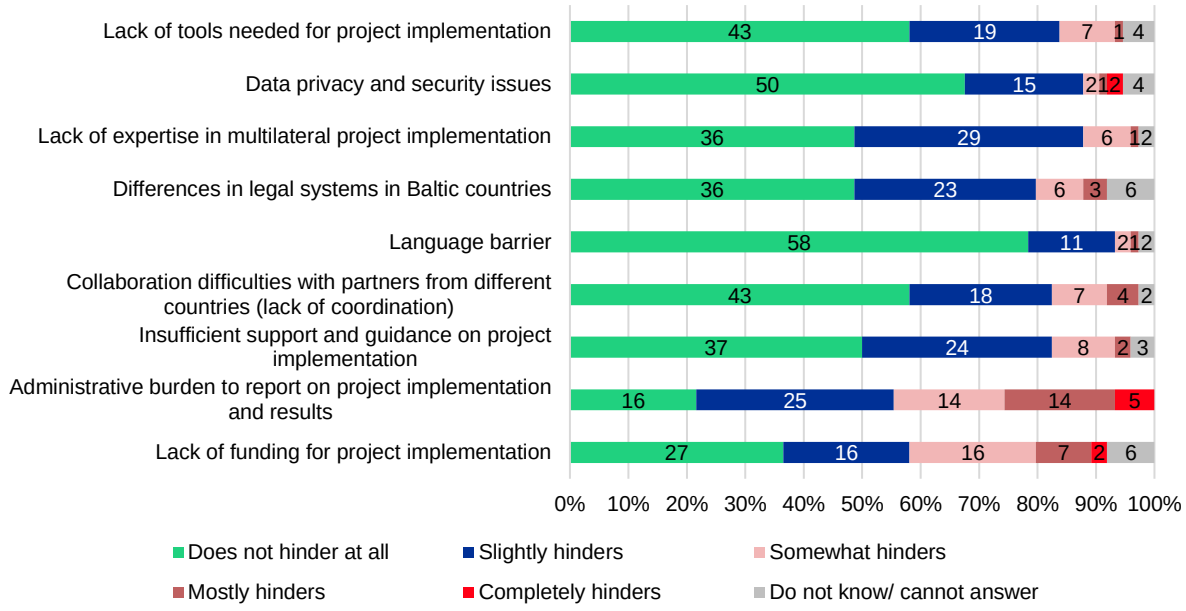
Another limitation concerns **time**, i.e., project duration. As noted by some beneficiaries, the project duration of three years is too short for a PhD project, which usually lasts four to five years. Thus, the involvement of young scientists can become more complicated. Moreover, concerning the BRP outcome indicator "Number of joint applications for further funding", as researchers often have various other engagements (e.g., other projects, administrative tasks, lectures) besides the workload within a BRP project, their availability to actively search and apply to other funding programmes is constrained. Therefore, this to some extent can help explain the underachievement of the indicator's target value.

Regarding further challenging factors, some beneficiaries and stakeholders noted the impact of the **inactivity of some project partners**. For example, in some cases, there were problems with the timely delivery of results from the project partners' side, which disrupted the planned activities. Also, while the requirement to have four or more partners has positive aspects (see section **"**The added value of the multilateral collaboration in the programme**"**), it adds complexity to the practical implementation of projects. All of this relates to collaboration issues (lack of coordination): according to around 24% of survey respondents, this factor slightly hinders the implementation of the project. One solution to this would be to set the structure for the project steering group to have regular meetings (e.g., monthly online meetings on platforms like MS Teams).

In addition, according to one interviewee, **uneven research competencies** of the project partners (e.g., different levels of experience in international projects) can create extra work and slow down the progress in the beginning phase of the project. However, most of the survey respondents (49%) say that lack of expertise does not hinder the implementation of the project at all and 39% say that it only slightly hinders (see **Figure 8** below). Thus, such instances of a lack of international research competencies are rather rare. As mentioned above, different competencies in the project team also have a positive side due to knowledge sharing and learning, which strengthen human resources.

Other aspects, such as language barriers, data privacy issues, or lack of tools needed for project implementation for the majority of survey respondents (80% or more), do not hinder or only slightly hinder the effective implementation of the programme (see **Figure 8**). Challenges to communicate the project results to the population, authorities and scientific environments and challenges attracting more applications from social sciences were mentioned as well. However, these challenges are more related to planning/communication and influence the achievement of the results less.

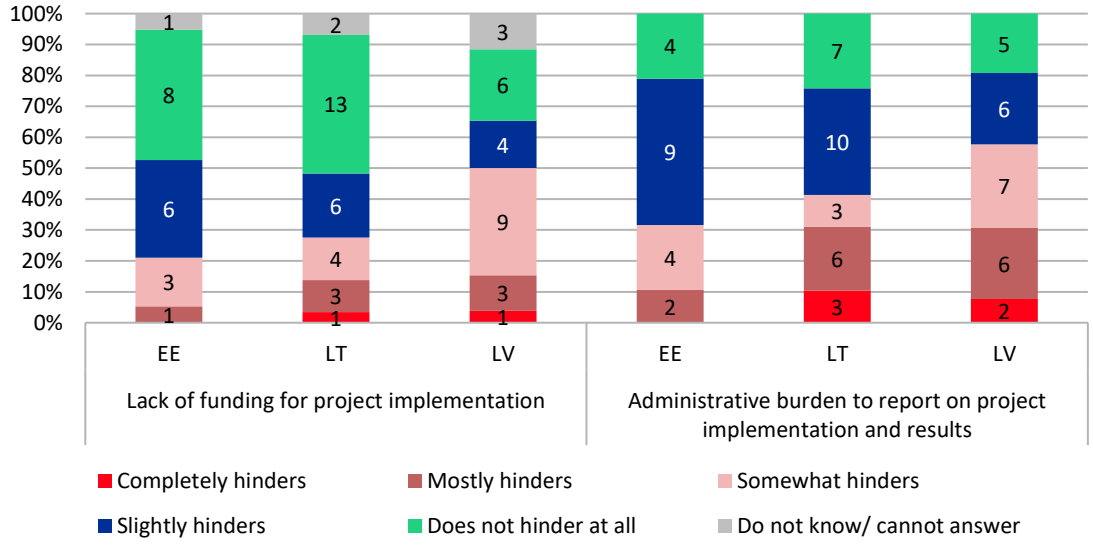
Figure 8. Challenges at the project level



Note: N= 74
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 - December 2023.

Looking deeper into the two main challenges visible in **Figure 8** – administrative burden and lack of funding – based on respondents' represented projects we can also compare the answers between the three BRP calls in the Baltic States. As can be observed in **Figure 9** below, several BRP beneficiaries from Lithuanian and Latvian calls indicate that these challenges completely hinder the implementation of the project, while in the case of the Estonian call none of such answers were recorded. Therefore, to some extent this suggests that project participants from the Estonian call might face less administrative and financing challenges. More on the differences between countries bureaucratic systems is discussed in 3.1.3. belowCircumstances preventing or reducing effective implementation of the BRP (EQ3).

Figure 9. Administrative burden and lack of funding disaggregated by BRP calls



Note: N (total)= 74. N (EE)= 19, N (LT)= 29, N (LV)= 26.
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 - December 2023.

3.1.2. Evidence of the results beyond the results framework (EQ2)

Main conclusion

The programme has increased the competencies of researchers, their research productivity and visibility. Moreover, it enabled new international research collaborations (especially in the Baltic and Baltic-Nordic area) and strengthened the existing links between research organisations.

In addition to the results listed in the results framework (see above) some further results could be mentioned as well. That is **strengthened human resources** in the Baltics and **better position of the Baltic countries** in the Baltic Sea Region, in the Baltic-Nordic Research Area, as well as at the European and International levels (e.g., enabled new research collaborations, increased visibility of research).

Strengthened human resources in the Baltics

At the programme level, a **platform was created for discussions** between four Research Councils from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Norway. The BRP allowed them to develop their competencies in international collaboration and learn from each other's experiences. This helped to **improve the administrative competencies** of Baltic countries to coordinate international research through different calls in all three Baltic countries. The BRP has also strengthened cooperation between research policy units at the ministry level in the Baltic States.

At the project level, although some projects are still ongoing and impact could be measured after some time, **Figure 10** reveals that most of the surveyed beneficiaries agree that projects under the BRP **strengthened the competencies of researchers** involved in the project: 85% (63/74) completely agree with this statement. Beneficiaries elaborated, that due to the high competition in the calls, the projects brought together highly competent people from different countries, which led to more learning opportunities. Additionally, the BRP enables the development of international project-leading skills and strengthens researchers' CVs with respective experience. This allows them to be competitive in further applications as a project leader (and not simply a participant).

Moreover, as the competencies and spheres of expertise differ between the project partners (see EQ1), the multilateral project allows **knowledge sharing**, which strengthens the research competencies and provides knowledge on new topics. Additionally, one survey respondent added that the project "has broadened our **understanding of the cultural differences and similarities**, from social, educational and economic perspectives, on the context of our research topic".[44] In relation to this, one interviewee suggests that the Programme increases the **trust between organisations** participating in the projects, which is necessary for collaboration in further projects.

More **training opportunities for PhD students and Postdocs** can be noted as well because the BRP provided an opportunity to recruit talented young researchers and allow them to publish with established scholars internationally. According to one interviewee, young researchers are more flexible and receptive to international cooperation, and their involvement is a key element in the improvement of human resources.

Furthermore, 62% (46/72) of respondents completely agree that the **BRP increased research productivity**. It is suggested by one beneficiary that the tight schedule of the BRP project (despite some negative aspects presented in the previous section) gives strong incentives to complete research products on time, which helps to increase productivity. When asked to elaborate on the effect of the BRP project, another beneficiary also highlights the **improvement of the quality of publications**:

> *"An equally important outcome is an improvement of the quality of publications, from the <…> level of conference proceedings to good papers in reputable Q1 journals (top 25%), as well as from one-line comments to media to full-scale opinion papers." – BRP beneficiary.*

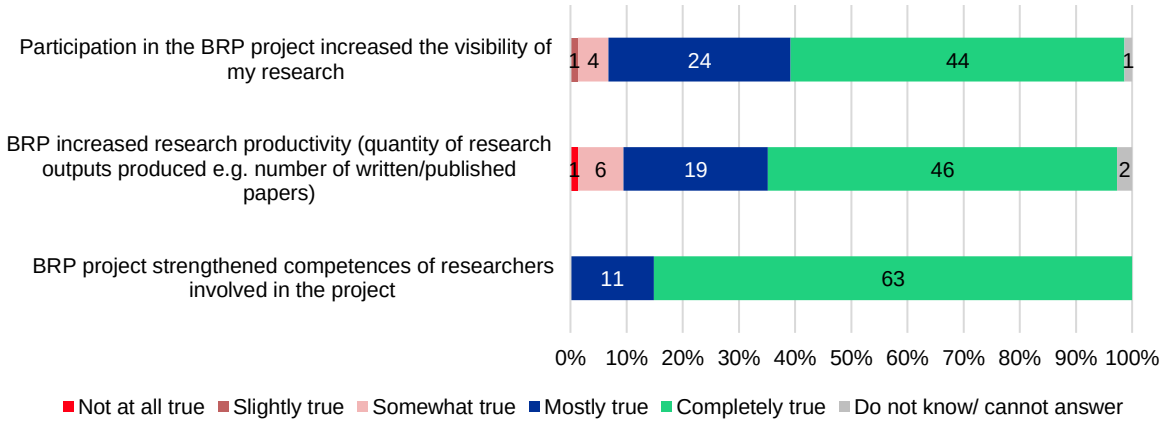
In addition, participation in the BRP project **increased the visibility of one's research** (59%, or 44, completely agree, and 32%, or 24, mostly agree) (see **Figure 10** below). The latter effect is due to the

[44] Survey respondent answer to open question, „Please elaborate on the effect you see of your BRP project".

involved partners and their circles and also due to chosen tools (e.g. ResearchGate[45]), required publishing features (Open Access), and chosen venues with publication types (conferences, target audience, etc). Some researchers add that they observe an increased interest in their research on the ResearchGate platform and statistical measurements (citations, reads) on various research tools.[46] Also, cooperation and co-authoring within the BRP have allowed researchers to publish in high-standard English-language academic journals, which further increases visibility, and, for some, opens new possibilities in academia. Furthermore, beneficiaries highlight efforts to engage in collaborative research tackling regional issues:

> *"Active involvement in the Baltic Research Programme (BRP) enhances our visibility among stakeholders, demonstrating our commitment to addressing shared challenges within the Baltic States and other Nordic countries. By engaging in collaborative research efforts, we establish ourselves as proactive contributors to the regional discourse, promoting cooperation and knowledge exchange among diverse stakeholders. Through this platform, we showcase our dedication to seeking collective solutions and forging valuable partnerships, thus reinforcing our position as a key participant in regional initiatives aimed at fostering growth, innovation, and sustainable development." – BRP beneficiary.*

Figure 10. Project's impact on human resources in the Baltics



Note: N= 74
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted in July 2023 - December 2023.

Baltic countries are better positioned in the Baltic Sea Region, in the Baltic-Nordic Research Area, as well as at the European and International levels

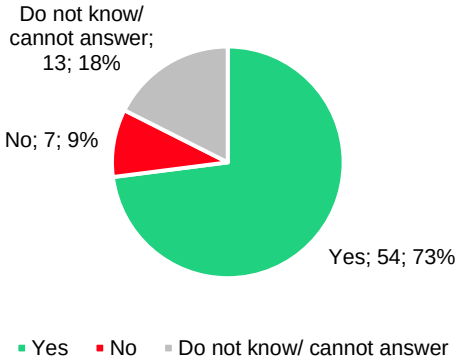
Overall, programme stakeholders stress that the BRP has undoubtedly contributed to international cooperation and visibility: there is **no other similar mechanism for the research collaboration of the Baltic countries**. The BRP connects the three countries with the Donor States which further strengthens the research cooperation in the region. According to some beneficiaries, the project also strengthened **collaboration beyond research** (e.g., co-taught university courses between Estonia and Norway). Furthermore, as was mentioned earlier, BRP beneficiaries say that the programme has also enabled **new research collaborations beyond the Baltic States**, although, to a smaller extent (see **Figure 4** in section 3.1.1.).

Looking at programme beneficiaries survey results, the majority (73%) of the respondents (or 54 of 74) noted that their organisation **established new partnerships** with organisations in the Baltic-Nordic area during the BRP project (see **Figure 11** below). For instance, some researchers, who worked on BRP projects together, prepared proposals for Horizon Europe or other international projects, which involve more countries, and the partnership is larger than the Baltic-Nordic area (see section 3.1.1. for

[45] See: https://www.researchgate.net/
[46] Research tools were not specified in a survey response.

more details). The project partnership has led to collaboration with teams in other institutions and people, not only those involved in the project. In addition, the interinstitutional network is being expanded not only by partnerships with project partners – the networks of project partners open up as well. Beneficiaries noted that the BRP facilitated new contracts, such as Erasmus+ agreements.

Figure 11. New partnerships with organisations in the Baltic-Nordic area were established during the BRP project



Note: N= 74. Question: Did your organisation establish new partnerships with organisations in the Baltic-Nordic area during the BRP project?
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted in July 2023 - December 2023.

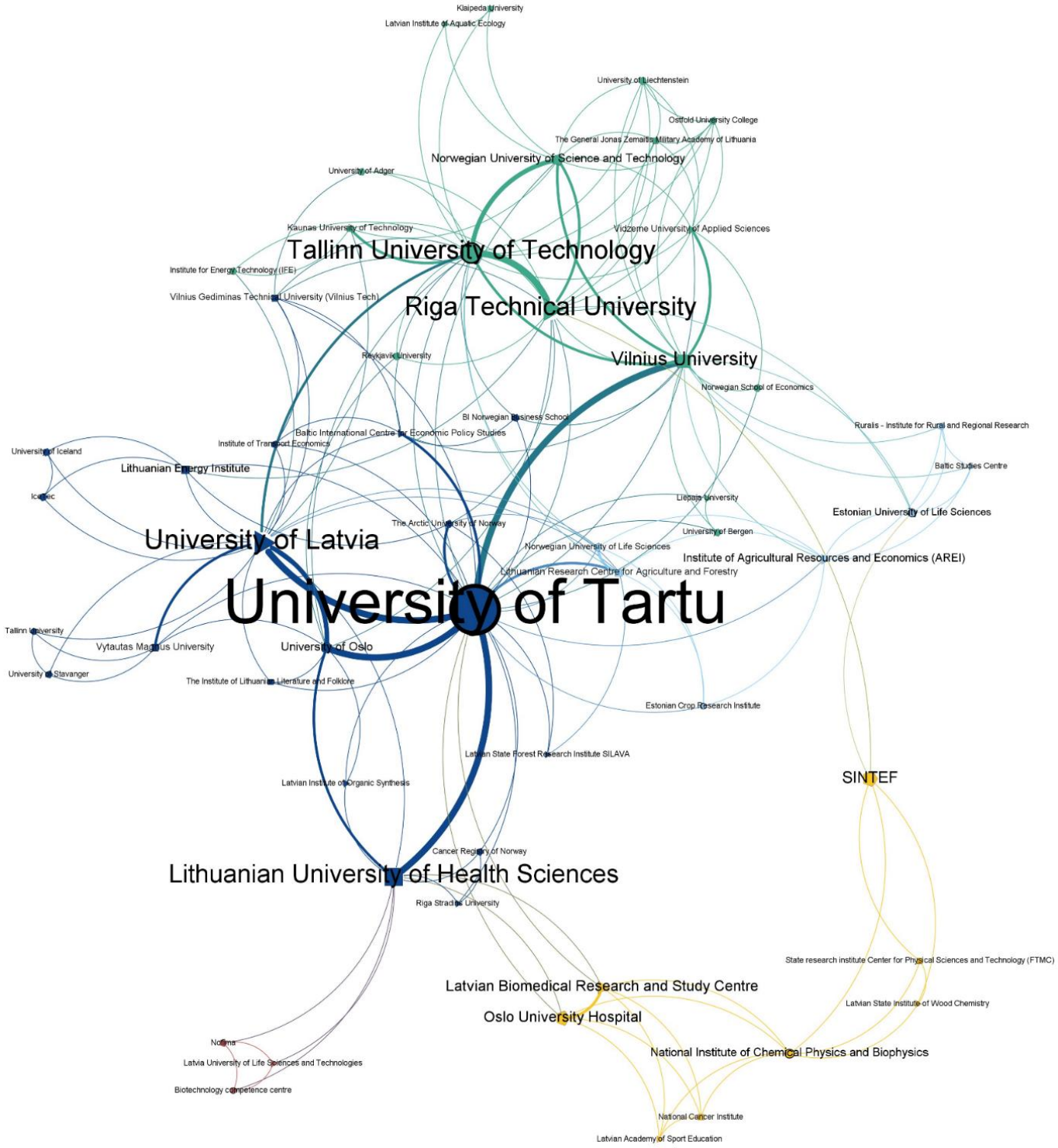
On the other hand, some survey respondents specify that contact with the project's organisations was established before the BRP project. However, it is stressed that a closer collaboration in the BRP project helped to **develop stronger links with already known organisations**, which even led to some formal partnerships (e.g., new Erasmus+ agreements) and more extensive contacts within the partner organisation (e.g., new individual researchers met). Moreover, the organisations in the project team are often gathered thanks to the contacts of Project Promoters. Therefore, project partners are usually the ones who establish the most new connections (with other project partners). This can be illustrated with the help of network analysis (see **Figure 12** below): in many cases, one organisation (project promoter) is the central link between the project partners.

The network analysis has also allowed the detection of different clusters of organisations within the programme. In total, five such clusters were detected using the algorithm. For more details, please see **Annex 1. Network analysis**.

In general, the network analysis revealed that numerous organisations in the Baltic countries have **widely collaborated** with organisations from other Baltic countries and Donor States. University of Tartu was the most involved organisation within the programme as its different departments participate in 14 projects: five as a Project Promoter and nine as a project partner. Tallinn University and the University of Latvia come second with 8 projects each.[47] Whereas the participation of Lithuanian organisations is less concentrated – although Vilnius University (6 projects) and Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (5 projects) are the leaders, numerous other organisations participate in 2-3 projects. To some extent, this can be explained by the different number and sizes of research organisations in the countries. Another reason for the different concentration of participating research organisations in the Baltic countries could be longer participation in research programmes funded by EEA and Norway grants (i.e., in the case of Estonia). Such organisations might have more familiarity and confidence with the application and implementation requirements of the BRP, which are similar to other EEA and Norway Grants' programmes. In addition, thanks to previous experience they may have more established connections with research organisations from Donor countries, which aids in forming a project team.

[47] Tallinn University: 2 projects as a Promoter and 6 as a Partner (2 in Latvia and 4 in Lithuania); University of Latvia: 3 projects as a Promoter and 5 as a Partner (1 in Estonia and 4 in Lithuania).

Figure 12. Network analysis visualisation



Notes: five different colours represent detected clusters; the size of the nodes and names correspond to the frequency of participation in the projects. If organisations from different clusters are connected, the colour of the edge between them is mixed accordingly. The shapes of the nodes correspond to different countries: EE – circle, LV – triangle, LT – square, NO – pentagon, IS – hexagon, LI – heptagon. The thickness of the edges between nodes corresponds to the number of common projects.
Source: Visionary Analytics using Gephi software, 2023.

3.1.3. Circumstances preventing or reducing effective implementation of the BRP (EQ3)

Main conclusion

The main challenge to the successful implementation of the BRP at the programme level is differences in national administrative set-ups, which cause additional administrative burdens for managing authorities.

The administrative burden is likewise indicated as the main hindering factor at the project level. Other challenges within projects include funding and time limitations, COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and difficulties in multilateral collaboration.

Challenges for successful implementation of the BRP at the programme level

Figure 13 below maps different circumstances that hinder or could potentially hinder the successful implementation of the BRP. The most prominent challenge mentioned by interviewees was **administrative set-up** (the level of bureaucracy). Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have different administrative requirements at both programme and project levels. Moreover, as the programme has several documents for regulation (Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Grants 2014-2021, BRP Research Guidelines) it can be **challenging to ensure compliance with different national regulations** (e.g., MAFT[48] – national rules on administration and financing in Lithuania).

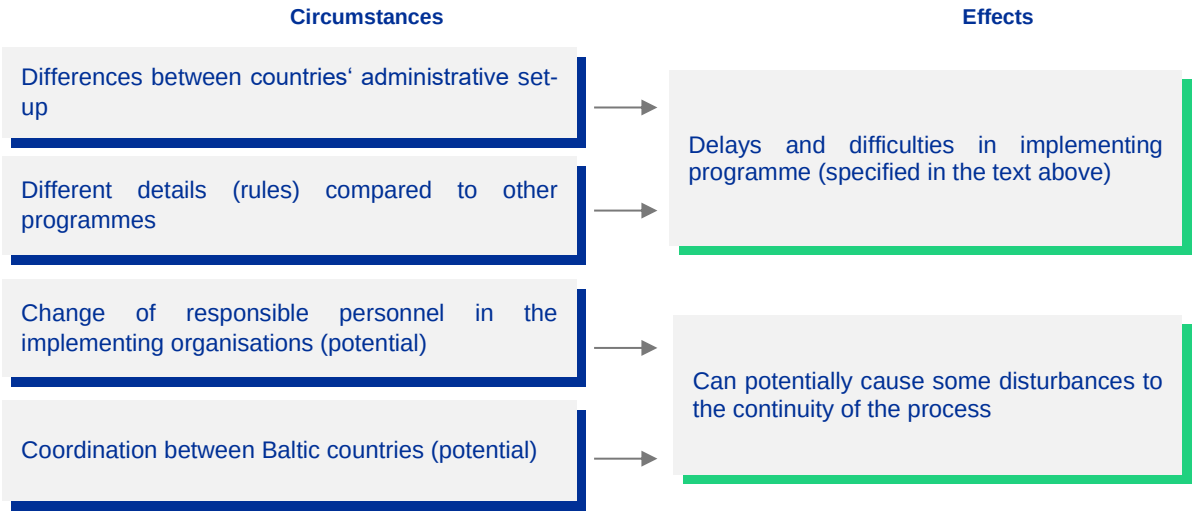
In general, programme stakeholders suggest that in Latvia and Lithuania, the programming, planning, and implementation are slower than in Estonia. Some country-specific details are provided below:

- Certain **Estonian** interviewees have pointed out that the administrative processes at the national level in Estonia can be cumbersome due to various audits, accounting/reporting deadlines, and oversight from the Ministry of Finance. Furthermore, Estonia adheres to the financial rules of structural funds, which are notably rigid and contribute to the complexity of implementation.[49] Nonetheless, there are positive aspects as well. According to interviewees, Estonia boasts a significantly lighter bureaucratic burden compared to the other two Baltic countries. For example, Estonia fully complies with the principle that the EEA and Norway Grants Guideline for Research Programmes allows for less frequent requests for expenditure documents from project participants, resulting in a reduced administrative workload.[50]
- In **Latvia,** numerous stages involve seeking government approval, a process known for its time-consuming nature. The administrative structure in Latvia stands apart due to the presence of Cabinet of Ministers regulations.[51] Additionally, the country has detailed management and control systems, as well as internal rules, in accordance with the requirements of the Latvian audit authority. Although the requirements of the audit authority do not affect the final result, they do result in more resources and working hours for the institutions involved. However, on a positive note, the cooperation of all authorities has succeeded in simplifying the requirements for project partners. Experience sharing, remote, regular meetings with POs in other EEA and Norway Grantee countries, with FMO and Research Council of Norway help to make the process smoother.
- In **Lithuania,** many stages require approval from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania. The ministry follows strict national administration and financing rules which can slow down the process. In addition, the Research Council of Lithuania has to provide the same information for both the ministry and the Central Project Management Agency as these two institutions are not coordinated with each other. Furthermore, besides the regular semi-annual financial audits, in the last year of the BRP implementation, there were two additional national audits, which further creates administrative burden. Interviewees suggest that reducing the level of detail, like conducting audits on minor aspects and reporting to multiple departments

[48] Translation in Lithuanian: nacionalinės administravimo ir finansavimo taisyklės.
[49] Similar situation in Latvia and Lithuania.
[50] No need to attach an invoice as the list of expenditures with explanations (in Excel) is enough.
[51] For Latvia, the first step is to prepare a programme concept, which is a brief summary of what will be in the programme. This is taken to the Cabinet of Ministers for approval and then FMO prepare the Programme Agreement. After the programme agreement is signed, other countries have a programme implementation agreement. For Latvia - it is replaced at the national level by the programme Cabinet Regulations. This means that if there are six programmes in Latvia, then each programme has at least one Cabinet Regulation.

within the ministry, could speed things up. However, the ministry is open to making changes and exceptions for the BRP and controls the administration or forwards the notifications received from the FMO on specific issues, which helps to smooth the process. Nevertheless, some additional clarification of the information in such notifications by the ministry could provide more clarity in the interpretation of the issues.

Figure 13. Circumstances hindering effective implementation of the BRP at the programme level



Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024

Challenges for successful implementation of the BRP at the project level

The main hindering factors at the project level are discussed in more detail in the previous sub-section "**Factors influencing the achievement of the** ". It is shown that administrative burden is likewise indicated as the main hindering factor at the project level. Other challenges within projects include funding and time limitations, COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and difficulties in multilateral collaboration.

3.2. Internal coherence

The coherence criterion assesses **how well the intervention fits**, meaning the degree of compatibility of one open call of the Baltic Research Programme launched in one Baltic country with the other two open calls launched in other Baltic countries, as well as in the programme as a whole. As such, it analyses synergies and linkages between the interventions (open calls) carried out by the three Baltic Programme Operators together with Implementing Agencies and Donor Programme Partners and implemented by research organisations in the participating countries. Coherence also implies mutual complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination (both at the administrative and project level).

3.2.1. Extent to which BRP work as one programme (EQ4)

Main conclusion

The Baltic Research Programme works as one programme. It has a common vision, design and implementation procedures. The main factors influencing internal coherence are the well-set structure of the programme, Research Guidelines, active joint Programme Committee and experienced administration.

For the future, the role of the Programme Committee and a better definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest in the Programme Committee is needed.

The internal coherence of the BRP activities

The **programme** has a common vision, goals, design, project application assessment criteria, and implementation procedures for all the participating countries. General objectives are well translated into the calls. The programme has a good balance between coordination and flexibility. Looking at the portfolio, projects appear balanced, as well: it addresses environmental issues, health, and e-health services, but also includes research in humanities. Although the research projects in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) are dominant over humanities.

The common principles of the programme for all national components are in accord with the EEA and Norway Grants **Guideline for Research Programmes.**[52] The **Guideline for Applicants** and **Guideline for Evaluators,** likewise, provide coherence within the BRP, as they assure the common criteria for the national calls.[53]

In addition, the programme is implemented in each country in cooperation with the Norwegian Research Council as the Donor Programme Partner, which provides advice and assistance to ensure coherence. As was noted by one of the interviewees, each country's programme has some specific characteristics (e.g. Lithuania has only a research cooperation component in their programme, while Latvia has higher education, research, and innovation). These differences do not pose obstacles to the overall BRP. Instead, they enable countries to align with their individual preferences and political priorities.

The Joint **Programme Committee**, comprising of eight appointed experts from all Baltic and Donor States,[54] plays a vital role in ensuring the internal coherence of the programme. An equal number of representatives from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway participate in the committee (two from each country). It is also ensured that representatives cover all scientific disciplines. The interviewed members of the Programme Committee noted that the number of eight members in the committee is sufficient and helps to maintain fruitful discussions. When there is a lack of expertise in certain issues, external experts are hired.

The Programme Committee is a decision-making body for the Baltic Research Programme. Among the responsibilities, the Programme Committee:

- Coordinates the **implementation of calls for proposals**. There were three calls and the main task of the Committee was to form priorities. When forming them, efforts were made to take into account the national context and priorities of each state as well as the international context. As a result, it was decided to narrow down the number of scientific fields in the programme call, so that the participants could better shape their fields more clearly.
    - All priorities included at least one health topic related to modern, translational medical research (application of fundamental research in clinical practice). Such research is also encouraged in Horizon, which suggests that this might lead to the continuation of partnerships for Horizon calls.
    - Almost all the calls included topics related to the issue of cyber security (incl. society's resilience). Indeed, efforts were made to maintain a balance between humanitarian-social projects and natural-technical projects. However, the applications from natural-technical fields were of a better quality.
    - In Estonia, the assessment was based on experts' judgement, but the Programme Committee had the right to give additional points based on certain criteria, and therefore more proposals were discussed. Thus, instead of relying only on formal evaluations, twice as many projects were selected and then it was discussed which are more relevant for the society and cover the participation of all three countries.
    - On the contrary, the assessment in Latvia and Lithuanian mostly relied on international experts' assessment. This was adopted by a general consensus decision and taking into account the national contexts.

[52] EEA and Norway Grants (2018). Guideline for Research Programmes. https://eeagrants.org/sites/default/files/resources/2014-2021%20Guideline%20for%20research%20programmes.pdf
[53] Research Council of Lithuania (2020). *Baltic Research Programme Call launching and Matchmaking event presentation*. https://www.lmt.lt/data/public/uploads/2020/02/d1_lt_jurate_programmes-implementation-in-lithuania.pdf
[54] Research Council of Lithuania (n.d.). *EEA Grants 2014-2021 Baltic Research Programme - Programme Committee*. https://www.lmt.lt/en/doclib/cmp9jcw8j8ezbfz1kffdj5vtah9z19qg

- Carries **out the follow-up of the programme** (visiting projects in their countries). Every year, the members of the committee went to the institutions implementing the projects and monitored the laboratories and employees. The project promoters were visited at least once at the locations.
- Carries out the assessment of external foreign experts, who had to assess specific Latvian and Lithuanian project proposals.
- Supports and advises the POs in matters concerning scientific quality and relevance of funded project activities. The Programme Committee met each year.

Throughout the discussions, the Programme Committee helped to reach a unanimous decision and supervised the programme's activities. For example, when one of the countries expressed a desire to alter the direction of a call, the Programme Committee uniformly opposed this idea, recognising that it would disrupt the consistency of calls in the Baltic region. The Committee is integral to various aspects of the programme, including decisions on funding and contributions to the topics for the calls.[55]

Beyond the main aspects mentioned above, several additional factors are presented in **Table 5** below.

On a **project** level, topics are similar between countries, but there are no deliberate synergies between the projects. Indeed, it was not the intention for the projects to complement each other. As was mentioned earlier, the cooperation of three Baltic countries on a project level brought some positive results. However, cooperation with donor project partners is seen unevenly: some beneficiaries are thankful for the cooperation because it brought a lot of learning opportunities, publicity, and positive benefits, while others lacked the involvement of donor project partners, and saw it as a burden.

Table 5 below illustrates the main factors influencing the coherence of the BRP at the programme level and the project level.

Table 5. Factors influencing the internal coherence of the programme

Programme level	
Experience	• **Estonian launch of the programme.** As the Estonian call was launched first, the Programme Operator, Implementing Agencies, and NFP were very open to share their learning with Latvia and Lithuania (often joint meetings worked as good learning spaces). Estonia actively participated in the coordination. • **Previous experience** of similar programmes under EEA and Norway Grants (Latvian and Estonian case), or the general experience in administrating international projects (Lithuanian case).
Structure of the programme	• **The well-set structure of the programme** provided coordination: the clear formulation of the calls, and necessary reporting provided a level of control while still leaving some freedom for implementation in different countries. Without this, structure it would be difficult to coordinate the programme. • **Research Guidelines** were an extremely important element in harmonising the programme and administration. In addition, templates for the different outputs to be produced by the Programme (e.g. reporting) were created. It helps with one of the greatest challenges of operating under different legislations (in different countries) and reporting cultures. Guidelines help to streamline work between the three Baltic States and in that way brings more coherence.
Administration	• An **active joint Programme Committee** plays an important part in the structuring of the programme and coordination. The Committee consists of experts representing different research organisations, disciplines and genders– that was a success as the Committee members were active throughout the implementation process. As was noted by interviewees, the communication in the Programme Committee is good. Discussions and disagreements arose more over details than over central issues.

[55] Research Council of Estonia (2020). *EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 Baltic Research Programme Guide for Evaluators*. https://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Guidelines-for-Evaluators_LV.pdf

	• **Communication** contributed to the internal coherence of the programme of the solution to the coordination challenges. Programme Operators had weekly meetings within themselves to discuss challenges.
Project level	
Experience	• **Similar level of selected research institutions** (and the level of their scientific competencies). As the competition was high, the best research proposals were selected, which means that top research institutions and researchers implement projects.
Communication	• **Stakeholder conferences and matchmaking events** help to communicate/ exchange experience with researchers from other projects as well as for the project team to meet in person. Programme beneficiaries noted that they were able to achieve results faster and more efficiently during live meetings than when meeting and discussing it online.
Administration	• **Support and guidance from the local Implementing Agency** aids in project implementation. Beneficiaries highlight that all the faced issues were solved timely and with all necessary details. Also, organised seminars about the preparation of final reports and other aspects provide clarity for the project teams.

Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024

Interviewees also highlighted some room for improvement for better internal coherence. These are as follows:

- **The role of the Programme Committee needs to be clarified**: where the responsibility of the Committee lies in the implementation period. In some cases, Committee members have felt the need for clearer mandate and guidelines from FMO on their roles and responsibilities. In addition, the role of the Programme Committee is perceived differently by different Baltic countries. For example, Lithuania has had all project reports assessed by external experts every year and then sent this assessment to the Programme Committee, which has then acknowledged it and formally approved it. In Estonia, only the final report will be assessed by external experts and the interim reports are approved by the Programme Committee, as they are considered the top researchers in their field.
- **A better definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest in the Programme Committee is needed.** As was mentioned earlier, the Programme Committee sets particular requirements for each call and (with the help of experts) makes the final decision on which projects to fund. Thus, there might be a conflict of interest if the group of researchers who submitted the proposal are from the same institution as the Programme Committee member. The usual practice is to not participate in the discussion if there is a conflict of interest. In this particular case, as the universities are very big, it was decided that unless it is the same faculty/institute – there is no conflict of interest. However, it must be stated more clearly in which cases there is a conflict of interest to avoid such issues raised in the future.

3.2.2. Synergies and linkages between interventions (open calls) carried out by the three Baltic countries (EQ5)

Main conclusion

The calls carried out by the three Baltic countries were harmonised and complemented each other. The priorities and thematic areas were similar. Separate calls were necessary due to differences in administrative set-up. However, the programme should avoid starting with a one-year gap between countries, as this would result in different programme implementation progress at different points in time in each country.

There were three separate calls for proposals in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Separate calls were necessary, due to differences in administrative set-ups of the countries (different pace of political negotiations and bureaucratic system). Generally, the calls implemented by the three Baltic countries are harmonised and complement each other. There is a great overlap between priority areas of research and objectives. The objectives of the BRP open calls in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are practically

identical: to strengthen research cooperation, present regional Baltic added value, and enhance human resources in research, by facilitating international relations and involving PhD students and postdocs. As for the thematic focus, all three calls focused on socioeconomic challenges, and technological development, including in cyber security and health. Yet, the Lithuanian call differed, to an extent, as it did not highlight environmental sustainability in its priority areas.[56] Lastly, and most importantly, the calls were harmonised by the common Research Guidelines, which provided common general principles, objectives, areas and topics, eligibility criteria, budget rules, application, and evaluation procedures, and expected results of the programme for all three Baltic States.

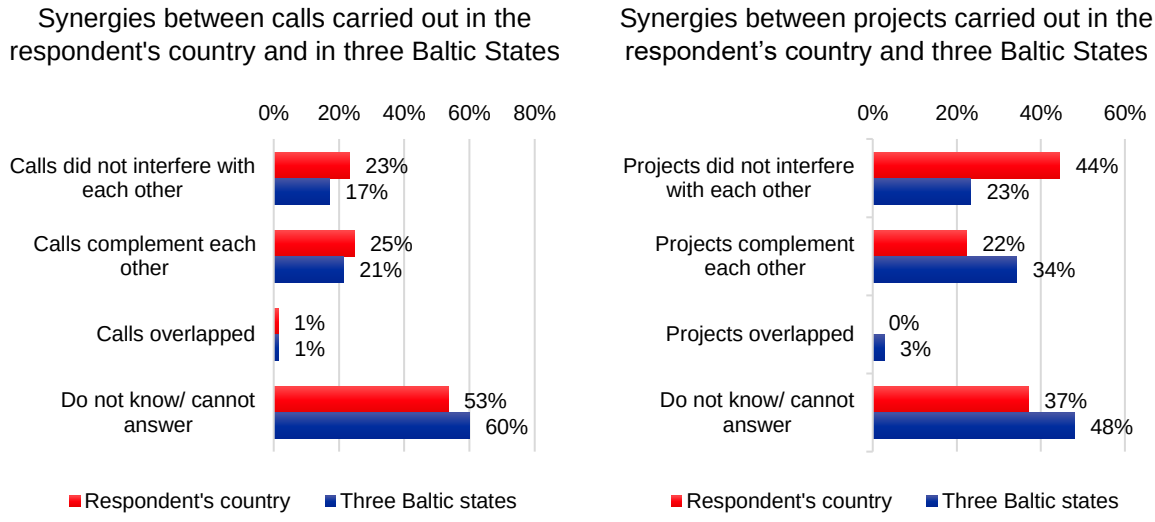
Some interviewees noted that one call for all countries could be considered in the future. However, this proposition comes with both advantages and disadvantages:

- On a positive note (for participants), individuals could modify and reapply their proposals. Numerous project proposals that were initially unsuccessful in the Estonian call were subsequently resubmitted under Lithuanian and Latvian calls (with only the project leader changing based on the country) and secured funding later.
- On the other hand, there could be an increase in administrative costs compared to the current scenario. The administrative systems in the three Baltic States differ, and implementing a uniform approach, as seen in Interreg Baltic Sea Region, would pose challenges. This could result in a complex and challenging system. In addition, it would be difficult to ensure the budget allocations between different countries.

Interviewees unanimously agreed that regardless of the chosen administrative system, the programme should avoid starting with a one-year gap between countries, because then the implementation of the programme is at different points in different countries. For example, the Estonian projects that started earlier had the opportunity to prolong the implementation of the project and in that way had more time to achieve intended outcomes.

BRP beneficiaries are mostly unaware if the calls or projects overlap/complement each other (see **Figure 14**). Some researchers elaborated, that calls complemented each other, as the Estonian call was launched earlier than the Lithuanian and Latvian ones, and organisations could participate as partners in later calls with new ideas, or improved proposals, that did not get funding through the Estonian call. Indeed, there was no intention for projects and calls to complement each other. It was also checked that there were no duplications between applications in different calls.

Figure 14. Synergies between projects and calls carried out in three Baltic countries



N respondent's country =73, N Baltic States =70 N respondent's country =54, N Baltic States =73

Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 - December 2023.

[56] The Latvian call included "Innovative solutions for efficient and sustainable use of resources" as a priority area, whereas in Estonia the corresponding priority areas were "Environmentally friendly solutions", and "More effective use of resources".

3.2.3. Coherence of the scholarship and higher education elements of the programmes with the BRP element (EQ6)

Main conclusion

In Latvia, the scholarship and innovation centres elements are coherent only in a way of their end goal – to strengthen human capital in the research field in Latvia. However, apart from that there is no direct link between the BRP research component, scholarship and higher education elements. The intention was there - the call for proposals for the Research Programme attempted to promote the link with the scholarship activity, by giving an advantage to projects if they also applied for scholarships. Unfortunately, this offer did not interest universities.

In Estonia, as well as in Latvia, pre-defined and Higher Education projects are coherent with the BRP research element in a way that they aim to strengthen human capital. However Baltic cooperation element is missing. The BRP research element and additional components work more as separate activities.

In Estonia and Latvia, there are two national components related to scholarships and higher education activities. The activities are briefly described in Box 1 and Box 2 below. As some interviewees pointed out, both countries were resolute in their political negotiations, insisting on the importance of these activities, and Donor Partners had to go along with this. Nevertheless, the integration of scholarship and higher education activities into the BRP posed challenges for several reasons:

- Numerous discussions arose due to the necessity for distinct qualifications for education calls compared to research calls. There is an ambition to incorporate education components alongside research, but this aspiration has yet to be realised.
- Additionally, various stakeholders come into play, making it more challenging to sustain a smooth operating mechanism. Despite the complexities, such grants are crucial for the beneficiary countries, enabling the financing of initiatives beyond the reach of the national budget.

Innovation centres and scholarship activities in LV-RESEARCH

Box 1. Description of additional LV-RESEARCH elements

The Latvian programme (referred to as LV-RESEARCH) includes not only the Baltic Research Programme and its joint research programmes, but also an extra six scholarship projects and the creation of innovation centres in four Latvian municipalities (Liepaja, Daugavpils, Cesis, and Ventspils). Both financing programmes aim to create new infrastructure or opportunities for the future success of the Latvian research sector.

- The **six scholarship projects** are intended to support the mobility of Latvian students, and academic and administrative staff of higher education institutions to education and research institutions in Donor States (Norway, Liechtenstein, and Iceland), therefore, **further promoting cross-country cooperation**. There were two calls for scholarship projects: the first call (four projects selected), and the second call (two projects selected). The Scholarships programme focuses on individual mobility of students, academic staff, and researchers, while the BRP supports collaborative research projects between institutions.
- The main objective of the **four innovation centres** is to promote engagement in STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). In the innovation centres, new kinds of educational activities for children and teachers are designed to facilitate cooperation between the local communities (that is, schools, higher education institutions, and research institutions), as well as create stronger links with the labour market.

Sources are provided in the footnote.[57]

[57] Information on the scholarship projects available at: EEA and Norway Grants (2021). Project Call of Scholarships programme. https://eeagrants.lv/en/2021/02/10/project-call-of-scholarships-programme/ and EEA and Norway Grants (2022). *2nd Call of the Scholarships activity*. https://eeagrants.lv/en/2022/02/15/2nd-call-of-scholarships-activity/

In the development stages of the programme, the synergies between the BRP and the **Scholarship activities** were planned to be promoted in order to increase the scope of impact of research projects. Projects funded by the BRP were advised to integrate research and scholarship activities, engaging both PhD students and students pursuing master's and bachelor's degrees in collaborative research initiatives.[58]

The call for proposals for the Research Programme attempted to promote the link with the scholarship activity, by giving an advantage to projects if they also applied for scholarships. Unfortunately, this offer did not interest universities, and no one applied. According to the survey carried out by the State Education Development Agency of the Republic of Latvia, the reasons behind it varied: a majority could not find project partners (30.8%), others noted that project submission deadline was too short (15.4%) or regulations and procedures of the call were too complicated (11.5%). The rest also noted that the BRP call overlapped with other project tenders (research programmes, Erasmus+), too low rates, too detailed reporting or compilated administration as well as too busy staff.[59]

The lack of interest in the scholarship programme led to a surplus of funding, which was redirected to the research programme. EUR 1 000 000 was used to finance additional BRP restricted call projects.[60] These additional leftovers in LV-RESEARCH programme were invested in:

- The BRP programme, where existing large projects could apply for additional activities, new outputs, or to involve Ukrainian researchers. Five projects took up the opportunity, of which three involved Ukrainian researchers, and two introduced additional activities with new outputs, most often the development of a new research proposal or publication.
- Project applicants from the BRP programme Latvian open call reserve list were invited to submit an application in the BRP restricted call to strengthen their cooperation to further develop a joint research application in an international programme. In this call, five projects applied, all of which have been approved.

Regarding the **innovation centres**, besides enhancing knowledge in STEM for teachers, students and pupils, it aims to foster collaboration and partnerships among institutions in education, research, and the workforce within regions of Latvia, with a particular focus on strengthening bilateral relations between Norway and Latvia. The programme is segmented into four distinct pre-defined projects.[61]

Currently, **there is no direct link between the BRP research element, the scholarship activity, and the Innovation Centres**. The activities are coherent thematically and in a way that their end goal is to strengthen research capabilities in Latvia. This obtains aspects from educating researchers from an early age and engaging in STEM (Innovation centres) to providing an opportunity to obtain more experience in other countries (scholarship programmes) and doing research having an impact on society (BRP research component). Moreover, additional components lack Baltic collaboration aspects. If the elements will be kept in the next programming period, one call for proposals including both, scholarship activities and research elements could be considered in the future for better coherence.

Higher education and pre-defined projects in EE-RESEARCH

Box 2. Description of additional EE-RESEARCH elements

The Estonian programme (EE-RESEARCH) also includes an extra 11 higher education projects and two pre-defined projects.

- **Two pre-defined projects** concern the financing of visiting lectureship of Norwegian language and literature specialists at the University of Tartu, and the financing for the development of an education curriculum, which should improve teaching quality and inclusivity. Like the Latvian scholarship programme, the international mobility of research staff is promoted.[62]

[58] Programme Concept Note: Latvia, 2018.
[59] State Education Development Agency of the Republic of Latvia (2022.06.20) Presentation: Scholarships programme in Latvia – results and challenges
[60] In addition to EUR 1 000 000, there were EUR 32 5000, which were dedicated to scholarship programme.
[61] Programme Concept Note: Latvia, 2018
[62] Annual Programme Report EE-RESEARCH 2022

  - *The predefined project for the Norwegian language and literature study programme* has garnered significant popularity among students. Consequently, the Cooperation Committee has extended its deadline until the conclusion of the 2022/23 academic year.
  - *The financing for the development of an education curriculum, which should improve teaching quality and inclusivity.* The originally scheduled completion date for the predefined project aimed at developing curricula for special educational needs (SEN) students was set for January 31, 2023. However, to effectively carry out all project actions and maximise its impact, an extension of the project activities' implementation was deemed necessary. The project's objective is to provide both current and prospective educators with the essential knowledge, skills, and competencies to foster inclusivity and diminish the separation of SEN students. The primary focus group comprises existing and future teachers. Additionally, the project will also target PhD and master's students, along with teaching staff and researchers from universities.
- **11 higher education projects** fund different activities related to Higher Education. For instance: simulation-based Learning in Aviation or the Estonian Business School project's 'Creative Industries Learning Module' (CCILM). The HE projects support international cooperation, as it was mandatory to involve at least one higher education institution from a Donor country in cooperation projects (activity one), and optionally involve them as partners in learning mobility projects (activity two).[63] [64] There were three calls for proposals in 2019,[65] 2020[66] and 2021.[67] The Programme Operator and implementation deadline are the same as in the BRP research element. The Implementing Agency and Donor Programme Partners differ from the ones in the BRP research element.

Source: compiled by authors

The main aim of the **pre-defined projects** is to strengthen human resources, which is in line with BRP objectives. For instance, the project for Norwegian language and literature aims to promote the development of research-based knowledge in the Baltic States through research cooperation with Norway, as the Norwegian language courses are organised in cooperation with the Norwegian authorities. However, this is a bilateral initiative, including Estonian researchers and Norwegian authorities, thus there is no direct link with the BRP research element and Baltic cooperation.

One goal of the BRP is to create and strengthen the ties between the beneficiary and Donor countries. In this sense, the **Higher Education (HE)** component contributes to the BRP goals. However, it does not contribute to the collaboration between the Baltic States. In that sense, there is room for development and there could be more synergies between the education and research components of the programme. As was noted by interviewees, there is no cooperation with the research element when it comes to everyday activities.

Looking into the lists of participating research institutions in HE and BRP projects, some overlaps are visible. The two universities which are the only project promoters in Estonian BRP projects are likewise the two major participants in the HE projects: Tartu University and Tallinn University of Technology account for respectively four and two HE projects (out of the total 11). In addition, Tallinn University, which participates in the BRP as a project partner in a Lithuanian project, is also coordinating one HE project. The remaining four[68] institutions in HE projects are not involved in the BRP. Furthermore, in the case of Tartu University and Tallinn University, all HE Donor project partners from Iceland or Norway

[63] See: Harno (2022). *EEA/Norway grant for cooperation in higher education*. https://www.harno.ee/en/node/124 and Harno (2021). *EEA/Norway Grants Cooperation Programme in Higher Education*. https://harno.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2021-10/Call_for_proposals_2021.pdf
[64] Information on HE calls: Ministry of Education and Science of Estonia (2019). 2019. CALL FOR APPLICATIONS. http://haridus.archimedes.ee/sites/default/files/Baltic%20research%20programme_call%20for%20proposals.pdf; Ministry of Education and Science of Estonia (2020). 2020. CALL FOR APPLICATIONS. http://haridus.archimedes.ee/sites/default/files/Call%20for%20proposals%202020.pdf; Ministry of Education and Science of Estonia (2021). 2021 Call for proposals. https://harno.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2021-10/Call_for_proposals_2021.pdf.
[65] Ministry of Education and Science of Estonia (2019). 2019. CALL FOR APPLICATIONS. http://haridus.archimedes.ee/sites/default/files/Baltic%20research%20programme_call%20for%20proposals.pdf
[66] Ministry of Education and Science of Estonia (2020). 2020. CALL FOR APPLICATIONS. http://haridus.archimedes.ee/sites/default/files/Call%20for%20proposals%202020.pdf
[67] Ministry of Education and Science of Estonia (2021). 2021 Call for proposals. https://harno.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2021-10/Call_for_proposals_2021.pdf
[68] Estonian Business School, Tallinn University of Applied Sciences, Estonian Aviation Academy, and Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary.

are different to the ones in their BRP projects, while Tallinn University of Technology partners with the same Norwegian university only in its first HE project. This shows that despite the participation of the same institutions in the BRP and HE projects the partners are mostly different, allowing them to establish new or stronger connections and better position Estonia in the Baltic-Nordic research area. However, this proves that there is no direct link between HE projects and BRP elements.

Currently, **there is no direct link between the BRP element, pre-defined projects and HE projects.** As in Latvia, the activities are coherent in a way that they strengthen human resources. However, the Baltic cooperation element is missing. The BRP element and additional components work more as separate activities.

3.3. External coherence

The external coherence chapter seeks to see the linkages and synergies the BRP has with national initiatives and other similar programmes. In the following sub-chapters the main programmes are presented. However, as this was not the main focus of the evaluation – the list is not exhaustive.

3.3.1. BRP synergies and linkages with initiatives funded by national sources (EQ7)

Main conclusion

There are no built-in synergies or linkages between the BRP and initiatives funded by Baltic States national sources. The BRP adds value from its multilateral collaboration aspect between more than two countries. In addition, the BRP may add value to the national programmes if implemented sequentially continuing an ongoing line of research linking it to the work of other international researchers, finding new and expanded applications, or gaining more visibility through joint publications and follow-up projects.

Programmes developed and implemented at a national level often lack the depth and scope necessary to have a substantial impact on societal challenges. Additionally, allocating national funding for collaborative Baltic research initiatives and utilising EU Structural Funds to support research activities in specific areas is not always a straightforward undertaking.[69] However, it is worth noting some national programmes with a focus on the research element. The Baltic Research Programme has some synergies and linkages with other interventions funded by other sources, which will be mentioned below.

BRP coherence with initiatives funded by Estonian national sources

The main national research financing instruments are baseline financing for research institutions from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Research, and various grants and programmes managed by the Estonian Research Council.[70] The purpose of baseline funding is to finance research and development to attain the development objectives of a research institution (incl. co-financing national and foreign projects). Research grants cover the funding of high-level research and development projects or programmes.

During the BRP period, Estonian research funding has undergone several shifts, both in terms of funding instruments and the allocation of funds. First, the major change was the redesigning of the grant system from 2018.[71] This led to a drop in the proportion of competitive grants to baseline funding from 80/20% to 50/50%.[72] During the gradual transition to the new system, funding of new grant projects halved in size and acceptance rates fell sharply, making new initiatives like EEA grants a vital funding source for high-level research to offset the setback. Second, the share of foreign financing (mainly EU Structural funds which are part of the state budget in Estonia) for funding R&D activities has decreased

[69] Programme Concept Note, Latvia, 2018.
[70] Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia (2014). *Estonian Research and Development and Innovation Strategy 2014-2020. Knowledge based Estonia.* https://vana.hm.ee/sites/default/files/estonian_rdi_strategy_2014-2020.pdf. In addition to those listed, there are other activities like funding to establish a research infrastructure of national importance.
[71] Research Council of Estonia (2016). *A New Framework of Research Grants and Baseline Funding in the Estonian Research and Development Funding System*. http://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Uurimistoetuste_ja_tegevustoetuse_uus_süsteem_ETAg_2016.pdf
[72] The proportion 50/50 between grants and baseline funding was a goal set in the new framework.

from 48% to 33% and so has the relative importance of investments compared to labour costs during 2014-2021.[73]

Competitive research grants administered by the Estonian Research Council are aimed at supporting high-quality R&D projects and the accompanying research activities. The core of these grants comprises three types of grants for researchers corresponding to the different stages of a research career:[74]

- **Postdoctoral research grant** - aimed at supporting the launch of a research career of the people with a doctoral degree obtained from an Estonian university at a foreign research institution or among highly qualified research groups.
- **Starting grant** - aimed at supporting the researchers with initial research experience to launch their independent research career at an Estonian R&D institution, to set up their research group, and to contribute to educating the next generation of researchers.
- **Team grant** - aimed at supporting researchers in continuing their research career at an Estonian R&D institution, ensuring high-quality research, leading a strong research group, and educating the next generation of researchers.

The respective funding shares have been 4%, 15% and 81%.[75] In 2019, a new **proof-of-concept grant** was initiated. It is aimed at supporting the implementation of experimental development projects at Estonian R&D institutions.

In addition to the personal grants, other notable initiatives include:

- Promoting high-level scientific research and international cooperation (e.g. Centres of Excellence, Mobilitas+[76]). The **Research Centre of Excellence** programme provides long-term funding (7 years) to scientific consortiums aiming to develop the cooperation and joint activities of internationally recognised, exceptionally high-level Estonian research groups. The measure focuses on solving high-risk, high-reward research questions based on the needs of Estonia. There are currently 9 centres.[77]
- Funding of applied research in smart specialisation growth areas and support increased cooperation between research institutes and businesses. Two such new measures were initiated in 2000 – "Support for R&D Activities of Resource Valorisation" (**ResTA**)[78] and "Inter-sectoral Mobility Support" (**SekMO**).[79] ResTA supports business-oriented applied research projects in the timber, food, and mineral resources sectors. It aims to foster the competence of research teams, the growth of sectoral specialists and the development cooperation between firms and research institutions. SekMo provides an opportunity for public authorities to employ researchers with a doctoral degree.

The linkages and synergies between various funding initiatives can arise at different levels – researcher, research field, institution etc. Several researchers and projects funded by BRP grants have linkages with national initiatives. One basis for this is a good alignment with national research priorities. For example, the BRP project "Optimised Residential Battery Energy Storage Systems" falls under a priority field of "Smart and sustainable energy solutions" in "R&D, Innovation and Entrepreneurship plan 2021-2035"[80] and smart energy solutions (incl. storage) are among prioritised thematic fields for research funding[81] which opens funding opportunities for related projects. The project's implementer (PI) himself participates in other projects financed by the Estonian Research Council's national grants.[82] In addition, there is a thematic link with other research groups working in the same general field in the framework

[73] Research Council of Estonia (2022). *Estonian Research 2022.* https://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Estonian_Research_2022.pdf
[74] Research Council of Estonia (n.d.). *Personal research funding.* https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/research-funding/personal-research-funding/
[75] Research Council of Estonia (2023). *Ülevaade riiklikest uurimistoetustest 2018–2023.* https://etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Ulevaade-riiklikest-uurimistoetustest-2018-2023.pdf
[76] Mobilitas+ has been discontinued.
[77] Research Council of Estonia (2022). *Estonian Research 2022.* p.32. https://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Estonian_Research_2022.pdf
[78] Research Council of Estonia (n.d.). ResTA – support for research and development in the field of resource valorisation. https://www.etag.ee/en/funding/programmes/resta-support-for-rd-activities-of-resource-valorisation/
[79] Research Council of Estonia (2022). *Estonian Research 2022.* https://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Estonian_Research_2022.pdf
[80] Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia (2021). *Teadus- ja arendustegevuse, innovatsiooni ning ettevõtluse arengukava (TAIE) 2021–2035.* https://www.hm.ee/korgharidus-ja-teadus/teadus-ja-arendustegevus/taie-arengukava-2021-2035
[81] Research Council of Estonia (n.d.). *TemTA – temaatilised teadus- ja arendusprogrammid*. https://etag.ee/rahastamine/programmid/temta-temaatilised-teadus-ja-arendusprogrammid/
[82] For example: Estonian Research Information System (n.d.). *Future-Proof Power Electronic Systems for Residential Microgrids*. https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Projects/Display/9c9cda20-2179-4a46-902c-93510b213888

of the Centre of Excellence “Advanced materials and high-technology devices for energy recuperation systems”.[83] Similarly, the PI of another BRP grant "Solutions to current and future problems on natural and constructed shorelines, eastern Baltic Sea" has received funding (team grant) for a related project “Wave dynamics for coastal engineering and management: the advantages and challenge of the Lagrangian perspective”.[84] Another group of researchers working on a related project “Coastal processes and coastal management in a changing climate”[85] has received a mobility grant from Estonian Research Council. Also, the PI in the project “Novel high-performance polymers from lignocellulosic feedstock” has received parallel funding from the ResTA programme for the related applied research project “Conversion of lignocellulose into monomers and polymerization into high-performance polymers”.[86] Again, a mobility grant supported a related project (including a visiting top researcher) “Bio-based chemicals and plastics from ligno-cellulosic feedstocks”[87] had started a few years earlier and continued during the BRP project.

Based on these three examples, there is a potential for both person- and theme-level synergies, or micro- and macro-level synergies. For particular researchers, the combination of funding from the BRP and national initiatives provides opportunities to tackle the research topic from different perspectives and cooperate with different teams. At a research topic level, the increased number of research projects provides opportunities to pursue different approaches, cooperate in different teams etc. which can enrich and boost the national research environment of this topic. In small countries with limited resources, achieving a critical mass of resources committed to a topic can be decisive in making a jump in research quality and supporting the development of a long-term research agenda.

BRP coherence with initiatives funded by Latvian national sources

There are four different types of research programmes in Latvia, financed by national/EU funding:[88]

- Fundamental and Applied Research Programme (national)
- National Research Programmes (national)
- Applied research programme (EU)
- Postdoctoral research grants (EU).

The Fundamental and Applied Research Programme (FAR) aims to create new knowledge and technological know-how in all Fields of Science. The FAR programme has defined nine priority areas and project application must be in at least one of these. The FAR Programme corresponds to all BRP research areas. There are no built-in synergies or linkages between the BRP and the FAR Programme. However, some synergies may happen if a scientist working on a BRP project is also involved in some projects funded by the Fundamental and Applied Research Programme. No specific regulation was identified on the involvement of scientists in both the BRP and the FAR Programme. Researchers can work simultaneously part-time in both the FAR Programme and in National Research Programmes ensuring non-overlap and avoiding the risk of double funding.

The FAR Programme project is usually implemented by one scientific institution; it may involve up to three cooperation partners, but regulation does not specify if they can be international. The FAR project should involve university students and PhD candidates as a mandatory condition. There are no formal regulations on the complementarity of the BRP and the FAR Programme. The BRP may add value to the FAR Programme if implemented sequentially continuing an ongoing line of research linking it to the work of other international researchers, finding new and expanded applications, or gaining more visibility through joint publications and follow-up projects.

[83] University of Tartu (n.d.). *Centre of Excellence*. https://sisu.ut.ee/hitechdevices/centre-excellence?lang=en
[84] Estonian Research Information System (n.d.). *Wave dynamics for coastal engineering and management: the advantages and challenge of the Lagrangian perspective*. https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Projects/Display/753a6d34-0e4f-48e7-b22c-348cd7b36b98
[85] Estonian Research Information System (n.d.). *Coastal processes and coastal management in a changing climate*. https://www.etis.ee/portal/projects/display/58c8d964-2222-4c9b-a6af-5cfe4d27fd57
[86] Estonian Research Information System (n.d.). *Conversion of lignocellulose into monomers and polymerization into high-performance polymers*. https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Projects/Display/509b756c-044c-41d7-9827-9193cf79d5f6
[87] Estonian Research Information System (n.d.). *Bio-based chemicals and plastics from ligno-cellulosic feedstocks*. https://www.etis.ee/portal/projects/display/ca56a364-3a42-456b-a145-7a155d98d1c8
[88] Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia (2021). *Research programmes*. https://www.izm.gov.lv/en/research-programmes?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

National Research Programmes (NRPs) are public contracts for scientific research in national priority sectors. NRPs aim to generate new knowledge, skills and innovations and develop new products, processes and services, thereby contributing to the development of that sector and the achievement of national strategic objectives. From 2018, a total of 20 different NRPs have been implemented. The majority of these programmes (11) are implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science, which is also the Programme Operator of the BRP programme. NRPs are funded from the state budget. Half of the NRPs do not correspond to any of the BRP research areas, while 10 programmes[89] correspond at least partially to one of the BRP research areas.

There are no built-in synergies or linkages between the BRP and the NRPs. According to interviews there is one project wishing to continue its research in more depth which has applied to the NRP. Such linkage may happen if there is a thematic coherence. Similarly, as with the FAR Programme, the BRP may add value to the NRP if implemented as the next phase, where the research is linked to the work of other international researchers, finding new and expanded applications, or gaining more visibility through joint publications and follow-up projects. There are no formal regulations on the complementarity of the BRP and NRPs.

The Applied Research Programme (ARP) is a research programme for the implementation of commercialisation-oriented research projects to achieve the objectives of the Latvian Smart Specialisation Strategy. The ARP programme corresponds to several BRP research areas. The BRP and the ARP have no built-in synergies or linkages. There may be links if the research supported by the BRP has a commercialisation-oriented potential and research corresponds both to the BRP research areas and Smart Specialisation Strategy priorities.

The Postdoctoral Research Support (PRS) programme is a research programme to develop the research capacity and careers of young scientists (postdocs), intending to contribute to the implementation of Latvia's Smart Specialisation Strategy. The Postdoctoral Research Support programme is the only programme with specific rules for complementarity and synergies with other research programmes. Complementarity of postdoctoral research with the BRP is supported if the postdoctoral researcher works within a research group, and their supervisor is funded from other programmes (BRP). The objectives of these projects should be complementary, either sequentially or horizontally, but with clearly identifiable research activities carried out within each research project and clearly identifiable deliverables. Complementarity is possible either by sequentially continuing an ongoing line of research or by horizontally implementing a strand of research under the BRP. Postdoctoral research activities may be carried out in synergy with other projects. Synergies are defined as activities where the synergistic result is greater than the sum of the results of the individual projects taken separately.

BRP coherence with initiatives funded by Lithuanian national sources

There are several national programmes in Lithuania funded by national/European funds. The programmes are briefly described below.

National Research Programmes (NRPs) seek to initiate the necessary scientific research to solve the defined problem, mobilising the scientific potential and financial resources of Lithuania. Each NRP is a set of scientific research, methods and tools on a certain topic, creating conditions for the state and society to solve a strategically important problem.[90] The BRP and the National Research Programmes that have been active during the BRP have no built-in synergies or linkages. Although there are some overlapping topics.

[89] "Energy" (2018) (Ministry of Economy); "Reducing the Shadow Economy for the Sustainable Development of the Country" (2020) (Ministry of Finance); "Covid-19 mitigation" (2020) (Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Health); "Sustainable spatial development and rational use of land resources" (2020) (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development); "Defence Innovation Research Programme" (2021) (Ministry of Defence); "Letonika for the development of a Latvian and European society" (2021) (Ministry of Education and Science); "Innovation Fund - Sectoral Research Programme" (2022) (Ministry of Education and Science); "Research and Sustainable Use of Local Resources for the Development of Latvia 2023-2025" (2023) (Ministry of Agriculture); "Development of a cohesive and civically active society" (2023) (Ministry of Culture); "Public health" (2023) (Ministry of Health).

[90] Research Council of Lithuania (n.d.). *Nacionalinės mokslo programos*. https://www.lmt.lt/lt/mokslo-politika/moksliniu-tyrimu-konkursinio-finansavimo-instrumentai/nacionalines-mokslo-programos/260

R&D Implementation scheme (SMART).[91] This activity aims to implement research projects aimed at generating outcomes aligned with R&D relevant to economic sectors that could be subsequently commercialised. As in NRPs, there are no built-in linkages and synergies with the BRP. Both programmes cover topics relevant for Lithuanian smart specialisation. In this case, the BRP adds value from multilateral cooperation with other countries, as the SMART programme is for Lithuanian research and study organisations.

Parallel Laboratories is another national project funded through EU Structural funds. As the programme thematically targets R&D in Health Technologies and Biotechnology[92] – it has some synergies with the BRP topic related to health. However, no built-in linkages are present. Since the programme purely funds Lithuanian organisations, the BRP adds value due to its thematic range and multilateral collaboration.

In addition, there are several international cooperation programmes, however, they are mostly bilateral cooperation programmes and lack the multilateral collaboration aspect that the BRP brings:

- Lithuanian-French Programme "Gilibert" for Bilateral Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science, Technology and Technique. It aims to strengthen ties between countries and encourage cooperation in the areas of scientific research and experimental development.[93]
- Joint Lithuanian-Latvian-Chinese (Taiwanese) Tripartite Cooperation Programme in the Fields of Science and Technologies[94] provides funding for the research teams in Lithuania, Latvia, and Taiwan, to collaborate on joint research projects. Just like the BRP, it supports international cooperation of the Baltic countries (Latvia and Lithuania) in the area of science and technology, and, thus, contributes to the scientific excellence. However, unlike the BRP, the EEA countries and Estonia are not included in this programme.
- Lithuanian-Ukrainian Cooperation Programme (not active at the moment)
- Lithuanian-Polish bilateral cooperation
- Lithuanian-Japan bilateral cooperation

3.3.2. BRP added value to other similar programmes (EQ9)

Main conclusion

There are several other programmes which are targeted towards excellence in science. Although topics are similar, BRP stands as an important programme for regional cooperation, especially for the Baltic States. It covers Baltic countries' priorities and opens a way for multilateral collaboration to solve regional challenges.

The interviewees noted that the Baltic Research Programme was created in a way to make it a bridge to Horizon. Meetings with representatives from different countries at the EU level were held in order to follow the same system. It was sought that researchers continue collaboration outside the BRP in the other programmes at the EU or regional levels. This is already seen - for instance, the implementation of the BRP project EditGrass4Food[95] facilitates collaboration between Norwegian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian partners, thus, contributing towards the BRP objectives and reducing social and economic disparities in Baltic and EEA region through advancing research collaboration between Norway and the Baltic States. Project EditGrass4Food aims to develop a joint project proposal to be submitted to the Horizon Europe framework programme.[96]

That being said, the BRP has many synergies with EU research advancement projects, when it comes to providing resources to research personnel for further collaboration and to fund new innovative

[91] Research Council of Lithuania (n.d.). *R&D Implementation scheme (SMART)*. https://www.lmt.lt/en/research-funding/national-programmes/rd-implementation-scheme-smart/3138
[92] Research Council of Lithuania (n.d.). *Parallel Laboratories*. https://www.lmt.lt/en/research-funding/national-programmes/parallel-laboratories/3341
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[94] Research Council of Lithuania (n.d.). *Lithuania-Latvia-China (Taiwan)*. https://www.lmt.lt/en/research-funding/international-collaborations/lithuania-latvia-china-taiwan/816
[95] For more information see: University of Latvia (n.d.). *Project information*. https://www.editgrass4food.lu.lv/en/about-project/project-information/
[96] Annual Programme Report LV-RESEARCH 2022

projects (i.e., Horizon Europe Excellent science pillar). There is a linkage with **Horizon Europe** - it is encouraged for BRP project teams to apply for further funding via Horizon calls. This is one of the aims of the programme.

There are also synergies with **structural funds**, which also finance research cooperation. However, these are mostly absorbed through national programmes mentioned in previous section 3.3.1.

Additionally, the **Baltic Sea Interreg Region Programme**[97] has some similarities to the BRP, such as the region of focus and thematic priorities concerning the goals of a green and resilient Europe. Yet the BRP is not only limited to the latter themes but also welcomes projects working with cyber security, public health advancements, wider societal and economic goals, with migration and social inclusion.

Other EU programmes do not focus specifically on the Baltic countries but on European Union-wide goals, in general. An important platform for transnational research collaboration in Europe is ERA-NET. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are involved in numerous initiatives (i.e., BiodivERsA+,[98] M-ERA.NET,[99] and NORFACE[100]) that cover various research topics, such as materials science, biodiversity, climate change, health, energy, and social sciences.[101] For example, similarly to the BRP, BiodivERsA+ has a requirement for the research teams to consist of at least three different countries.[102]

Lastly, **NordForsk**, the Nordic Council of Ministers' research funding organisation, brings together research and innovation funding bodies from Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Sweden.[103] NordForsk also aims to consolidate and expand cooperation with the Baltic countries to create a strong Baltic Sea Region based on shared values.[104] NordForsk has launched several joint programmes in cooperation with the Baltic countries, such as Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change,[105] and Green Transition[106] with Estonia and Lithuania, Future Working Life with Lithuania[107] or Nordic Health Data Research Projects on COVID-19,[108] and Research and Innovation Programme on Digitalisation of the Public Sector[109] with Estonia and Latvia. In addition, partners from the Baltic countries are welcome in the NordForsk call for proposals. Therefore, NordForsk and the BRP are complementary programmes that offer different opportunities for researchers in the Baltic and Nordic regions to collaborate and conduct high-quality research. This allows for further expansion of the research network, strengthening of human resources, and better positioning of the Baltic countries in the region.

Similar programmes for education in Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8)[110] countries (related to other Estonian and Latvian national elements):

- **Nordplus** is a Nordic and Baltic programme on educational cooperation that is owned by the Nordic Council of Ministers and funded jointly by the Nordic and Baltic States.[111] It aims to strengthen and develop Nordic educational cooperation and contribute to the establishment of a Nordic-Baltic educational region. This programme is complementary to the BRP, as it promotes collaboration between Nordic and Baltic institutions and strengthens human resources in the education area (similar to education projects in Latvia and Estonia).
- **The Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Public Administration** offers financial support for civil servants and other staff in the public sector to carry out study visits, internships, training,

[97] Interreg Baltic Sea Region. See: https://interreg-baltic.eu/
[98] https://www.biodiversa.eu/
[99] https://www.m-era.net/
[100] https://www.norface.net/
[101] Research Council of Lithuania (n.d.). *ERA-NET and COST Programme*s. https://www.lmt.lt/en/research-funding/era-net-and-cost-programmes/842
[102] Biodiversa+ (2022). *2022 – 2023 BiodivMon*. https://www.biodiversa.eu/2022/10/07/2022-2023-joint-call/
[103] NordForsk, see: https://www.nordforsk.org/
[104] Minge, Marianne Aastebøl (2015). *NordForsk and Nordic-Baltic research cooperation*. https://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Presentation-NordForsk.pdf
[105] NordForsk (n.d.). *Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change*. https://www.nordforsk.org/programs/sustainable-agriculture-and-climate-change
[106] NordForsk (2023). *Call for research proposals: Green Transition*. https://www.nordforsk.org/calls/call-research-proposals-green-transition
[107] NordForsk (n.d.). *Future Working Life*. https://www.nordforsk.org/research-areas/future-working-life
[108] NordForsk (2020) *Nordic Health Data Research Projects on COVID-19*. https://www.nordforsk.org/calls/nordic-health-data-research-projects-covid-19
[109] NordForsk (n.d.). *Research and Innovation initiative on Digitalisation of the Public Sector*. https://www.nordforsk.org/programs/research-and-innovation-initiative-digitalisation-public-sector
[110] Nordic-Baltic Eight: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden
[111] Nordplus, see: https://www.nordplusonline.org/about/nordplus/

or network activities in another Nordic or Baltic country.[112] The annual budget of the mobility programme (approx. EUR 200 000) is financed by all NB8 countries. The programme aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experience, and best practices among the NB8 countries.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations, structured around evaluation criteria and evaluation questions, are presented in the table below. The organisations responsible for the recommendation implementation are also indicated in the table.

EQ	Conclusions	Recommendations	Responsible body
Effectiveness			
EQ1	In terms of the BRP output "Knowledge of Research Shared", the target values for the number of researchers supported have been largely exceeded (Estonia by 508%, Latvia – 241%, and Lithuania – 235%). This is due to the changes of researchers in the project team and the underestimation of the target value. Concerning the BRP outcome "Enhanced performance of Baltic research internationally", the target values of the three indicators in all Baltic States have not been achieved yet. The main reasons for this are the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, specifics of selected projects, strict definitions of indicators, and time limitations (incl. availability of relevant calls for proposals, and the busy schedule of project teams).	***R1: Clearly communicate to programme participants the specific methodologies for calculating the achievements under each indicator.*** Despite the existence of core indicator guidelines, participants find it challenging to interpret the "Researchers supported" indicator consistently. This discrepancy results in varying reporting practices, such as counting support of PhD students or co-publications. Programme Operators/ FMO should also decide what exactly they want to measure with indicator "Researchers supported". There could be three alternatives: 1. Keep the existing calculation, where the number of researchers who at least slightly (should work on a project at least 1 FTE for 1 month) contribute to the project are calculated. 2. Calculate only key project personnel by increasing the minimum necessary involvement level. 3. Calculate the intensity of how project personnel contributed to the project by calculating researchers supported in FTE rather than headcount.	Programme Operators, FMO
		R2: It is recommended to calculate programme outcome indicators at least a year after the end of the projects. The majority of outcome indicators' (applications for further funding, co-publications, IPPs) are submitted towards the end of the projects. The results could be measured at least a year after the end of the projects to see more accurate results of the programme as some applications might be submitted after the end of the projects. To implement this practically the inspiration could be taken from the indicators monitoring in European Structural and Investment Funds (e.g. in European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)). In the case of the ERDF fund, the project implementers submit reports after the end of the project (such a requirement is established in the contract) and thus account for the indicators. The project administration and financing rules stipulate that the project implementer reports on the	FMO, Programme Operators

[112] NB8-Grants, see: https://www.nb8grants.org/

		achievement of the monitoring indicators set in the project contract by submitting payment requests and/or reports after the end of project financing. If the project promoter fails to submit a report on time after the end of project financing, the implementing institution must remind them of this (in writing or by e-mail if necessary) and set a deadline by which the report must be submitted after the end of project financing. If the project implementer does not submit the report on time after a reminder and/or the report contains misleading data, the implementing authority initiates an investigation of the violation in accordance with the established procedure, and after detecting the violation and making a decision on the return of the funds, initiates the disbursed project financing funds or part of them recovery.	
		R3: Consider rethinking the indicator of "Number of joint peer-reviewed scientific publications submitted" to also capture the publications submitted without the donor project partner. There are differences between countries in how this indicator is treated. As many publications could not have been added to the indicator since there was no donor country in them, we would recommend adjusting the indicator so that it is not necessary for all publications to have a donor partner.	FMO, Programme Operators
EQ2	Strengthened human resources and better positioned Baltic States in the Baltic Sea region and the Baltic-Nordic Research Area, are seen as additional results.	***R4: It is recommended to continue organising conferences (such as the mid-term conference in Riga) facilitating stakeholder interactions. It is important to highlight to the participants to foresee funding for travel in project expenses.*** Project beneficiaries emphasised that in-person meetings significantly enhanced the efficiency of achieving project results. Furthermore, conferences provided a platform for all participants to meet, enabling the sharing of experiences among those encountering similar challenges and fostering increased multilateral cooperation.	Programme Operators
EQ3	The main challenge to the successful implementation of the BRP at the programme level is differences in national administrative set-ups, which cause additional administrative burdens for managing authorities. The administrative burden is likewise indicated as the main hindering factor at the project level. Other challenges within projects include funding and time limitations, COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and difficulties in multilateral collaboration.	***R5: It is recommended to reduce the frequency of project reporting, for instance, instead of (semi-)annual reporting, having one interim and one final report. Alternatively - If (semi-)annual reports are to be kept – it is recommended to streamline the reporting process. For instance, organising annual reporting in a manner where the work conducted in subsequent years can be easily appended to the relevant sections of the report.*** Programme Committee notes that current annual reports create an unnecessary time burden for researchers, as well as require more administrative work for the evaluators who check the progress. Due to the high competition in the BRP calls, the project teams are made up of experienced experts, who require less control. Alternative solution will cause the document to expand, yet it will offer immediate insight into the continuity or heterogeneity of progress.	FMO, Programme Operators

		R6: It is recommended to organise seminars on project reports, and administrative or financial tasks in English rather than national languages, where relevant. Although Implementing Agencies provide all the necessary help and organise special seminars related to various project-related tasks, they are usually directed to project promoters and held in national languages. Consequently, if project partners have any administrative or financial questions, the project promoter becomes the intermediator which increases the administrative burden. Therefore, it would be useful to have more English seminars to include all project partners.	Implementing Agencies
Coherence			
EQ4	There is good internal coherence in the BRP. The programme has a common vision, goals, design, project application assessment criteria, and implementation procedures for all the participating countries. For the future, the role of the Programme Committee and a better definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest in the Programme Committee is needed.	***R7: It is recommended to clarify and communicate to the Programme Committee their role and accountability during the implementation period, as well as provide a clear definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest.*** In some cases, Committee members have felt the need for clearer mandates and guidelines on their roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the perception of the Programme Committee varies among different Baltic countries. Given that the Programme Committee establishes specific requirements for each call and ultimately decides which projects to fund, there is a potential conflict of interest if the group of researchers submitting a proposal is from the same institution as a Programme Committee member.	FMO, Programme Operators
EQ5	The calls carried out by the three Baltic countries were harmonised and complemented each other. The priorities and theme were similar. Separate calls were necessary due to differences in administrative set-up. However, the programme should avoid starting with a one-year gap between countries, as this would result in the implementation of the programme progressing at different points in each country.	***R8: It is recommended to consider different alternatives for calls: keep three separate calls in the three Baltic States, ensuring that the calls will be launched more or less at the same time or merge to one call across all Baltic States.*** One call under all three countries could solve challenges related to different start dates and the same applicant reapplying. However, one call, not necessarily, would be a more efficient way due to different administrative and legislative systems. The programme should avoid starting with a one-year gap between countries, as this would result in the implementation of the programme progressing at different points in each country. At this point, the current model looks the most suitable for the Baltic States administrative setting.	Programme Operators
		R9: It is recommended to thoroughly rethink how thematic areas are approached for the next period and define uniform selection criteria for all Baltic States. In this period, the approach to selecting projects differed between countries. Some purely relied on evaluation, others selected double the amount and then discussed which projects would be the most beneficial for the country and region. In that way,	Programme Operators

		e.g. in Latvia, there is a high concentration of projects related to health and other topics are less covered. Finally, STEM projects dominated over Humanities. It is recommended to think whether this is an issue.	
EQ6	The scholarship and innovation centres elements in Latvian, and pre-defined and HE projects in Estonia, are coherent with the research element of the BRP only by way of their end goal – to strengthen human capital in the research field in the country. However, apart from that there is no direct link between the BRP research component and additional elements.	***R10: In the next programming period it is recommended to not have additional components (pre-defined and Higher Education projects) besides the research element in the respective Research programmes. Alternatively, if the elements are left, it is recommended to design one call/activity which includes both - research and additional elements.*** Additional elements do not have a research component. Apart from the aim to strengthen human capital, there are no synergies with the BRP research element. The additional components are bilateral and do not involve other Baltic States (missing Baltic cooperation). Alternatively, if the additional elements will be left, joining them with the research element for the calls should bring more synergies.	Programme Operators in Latvia and Estonia
EQ7	There are no built-in synergies or linkages between the BRP and initiatives funded by Baltic States national sources. The BRP adds value from its multilateral collaboration aspect between more than two countries. In addition, the BRP may add value to the national programmes if implemented sequentially continuing an ongoing line of research linking it to the work of other international researchers, finding new and expanded applications, or gaining more visibility through joint publications and follow-up projects.	***R11: It is recommended to consider the possibility of funding well-assessed but not funded projects through national programmes.*** The competition for the BRP was high, which left many good projects without funding. Well-assessed projects could be funded from the national sources or a BRP seal of excellence list could be created (as with Horizon projects).	Programme Operators, National Focal Points
EQ9	There are several other programmes which are targeted towards excellence in science. Although topics are similar, the BRP stands as an important programme for regional cooperation, especially for the Baltic States. It covers Baltic countries' priorities and opens a way for multilateral collaboration to solve regional challenges. Beneficiaries prove that the BRP helped to form new partner networks, and successfully submit proposals	No recommendations.	

	for other funding schemes, including Horizon projects.		

Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024

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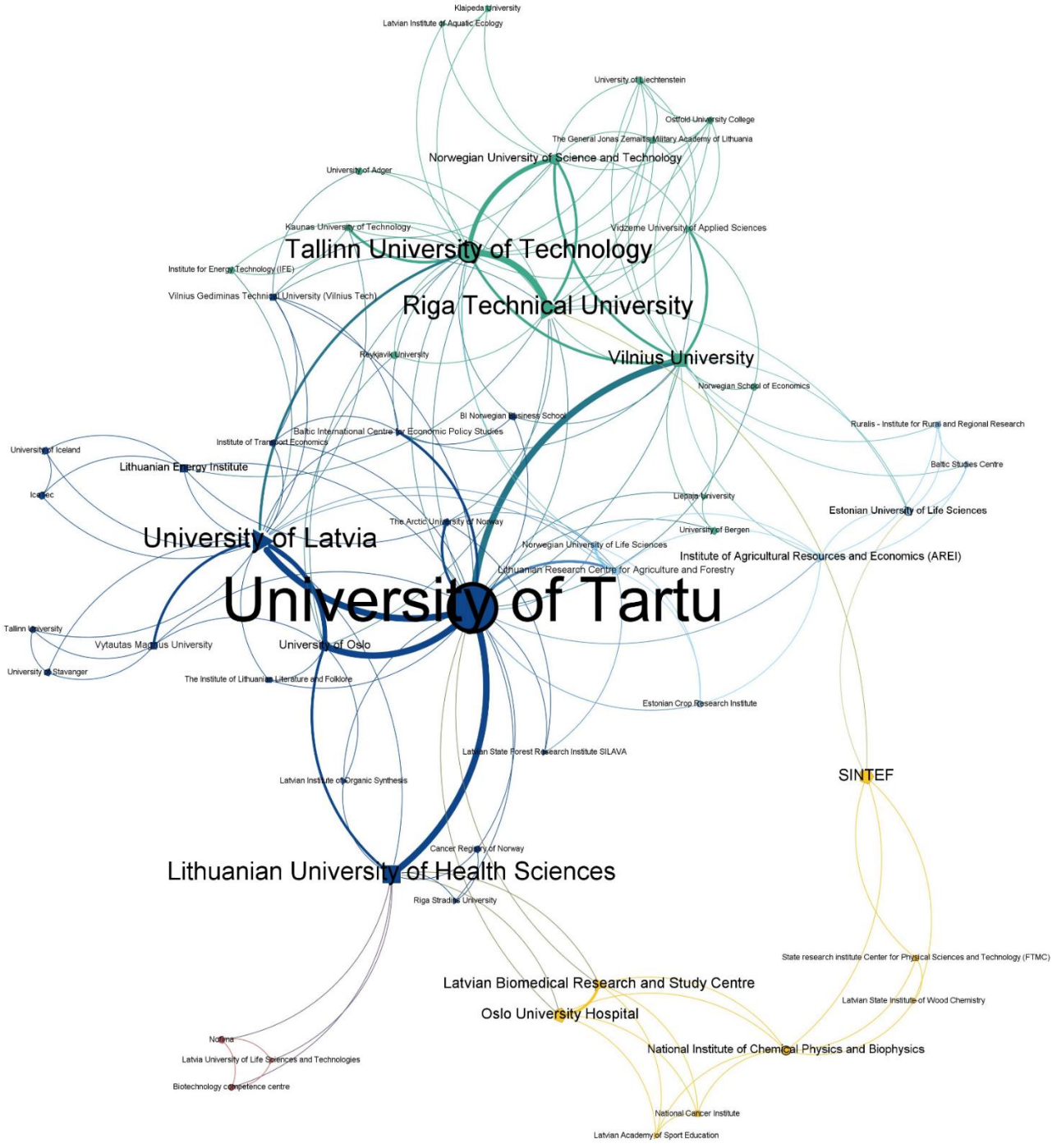
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Annexes

Annex 1. Network analysis

Figure 15. Network analysis visualisation



Notes: five different colours represent detected clusters; the size of the nodes and names correspond to the frequency of participation in the projects. If organisations from different clusters are connected, the colour of the edge between them is mixed accordingly. The shapes of the nodes correspond to different countries: EE – circle, LV – triangle, LT – square, NO – pentagon, IS – hexagon, LI – heptagon. The thickness of the edges between nodes corresponds to the number of common projects.
Source: Visionary Analytics using Gephi software, 2023.

Network analysis helps to map the participating research institutions to understand in what projects which institutions from the three Baltic countries are the project promoters, where they are project partners, with whom they partner from Donor countries, how intensive the cooperation with institutions is, and what the main

networks of institutions are. **Figure 15** above visualises this network (further explanations below). The data for the network analysis were extracted from the Baltic Research Programme (BRP) projects list from all three calls, which indicates the project promoter, project partners and donor project partners in each project. In total, there are **55 organisations**[113] (nodes) in the network, which are connected by **172 links** (edges).

The figure reveals that the University of Tartu, representing the biggest node in the centre of the network, is the most involved organisation within the programme, participating in 14 projects: 5 as a project promoter and 9 as a project partner (3 in Latvia and 6 in Lithuania). Tallinn University and the University of Latvia come second, with 8 projects each.[114] On the other hand, the participation of Lithuanian organisations is less concentrated – although Vilnius University (6 projects) and Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (5 projects) are the leaders, numerous other organisations participate in 2-3 projects.

Regarding network statistics, the **average degree**[115] of the network is 6.255, which means that on average each organisation relates to approximately 6 other organisations. This implies that the BRP indeed creates a platform for interinstitutional collaboration. Looking further into the connectivity of the network, the **average path length** is 2.403, meaning that any two organisations participating in the BRP are usually connected by one or two other organisations between them (making the path of two/three links). Overall, the whole network is connected as we can draw a continuous line between each organisation. Such interconnectivity allows organisations to establish new contacts more easily. The **diameter** of 5 tells us that the longest distance between two organisations consists of five links (four other organisations are in the path).

The network analysis has also allowed the detection of different clusters of organisations within the programme. One approach to measure such clustering is through the application of the **modularity** statistic. The modularity reveals the strength of the division of a network into clusters, meaning that networks with high modularity have dense connections between the organisations within clusters but sparse connections between organisations in different clusters.[116] In total, five such clusters were detected using the algorithm (more details in **Table 6** below).

The first cluster is the biggest and the most central as can be observed in **Figure 15** above. It comprises 20 organisations (36%), which participate in 21 projects combined. The University of Tartu is the most prominent organisation of this cluster (and the whole network), and it participates in more than half (14) of the projects connected to the cluster. The projects cover a wide variety of topics[117] as only seven BRP projects remain not included. Several organisations within this cluster have connections in more than two projects: the University of Tartu with the University of Oslo (4 projects), with the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (4), and with the University of Latvia (4); the University of Latvia with the University of Oslo (3).

The second cluster comes after, with 17 organisations (31%). The 14 projects connected to the organisations in this cluster likewise cover various topics, but a clearer highlight is seen on technical aspects, such as materials science and energy research, as different technical universities are inside this cluster. Regarding the frequency of connections, Tallinn University of Technology partners with other two organisations in more than two projects: with Riga Technical University (4 projects), and with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (3).

The third cluster comprises 8 organisations (15%), which are spread over four projects related to biophysics and medicine. Speaking of more significant connections, the Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre with Oslo University Hospital participate together in two projects.

The fourth cluster includes 7 organisations (13%). The four projects connected to the cluster's organisations fall under the topics of sustainability and agriculture. Similarly to the previous cluster, the Lithuanian Research

[113] If the indicated organisation in the project was a faculty of a university, it was given the common name of the university to provide more simplicity and uniformity for the data and analysis (i.e., Tartu University Institute of Cultural Research was coded as University of Tartu).
[114] Tallin University: 2 projects as a Promoter and 6 as a Partner (2 in Latvia and 4 in Lithuania); University of Latvia: 3 projects as a Promoter and 5 as a Partner (1 in Estonia and 4 in Lithuania).
[115] Here and after the specific terminology related to network statistics calculated in Gephi software is used following the definitions from Cherven, Ken (2015). *Mastering Gephi network visualization*. PACT Publishing Ltd. http://gephi.michalnovak.eu/Mastering%20Gephi%20Network%20Visualization.pdf
[116] Blondel, Vincent D., Jean-Loup Guillaume, Renaud Lambiotte, and Etienne Lefebvre (2008). "Fast unfolding of communities in large networks." *Journal of statistical mechanics: theory and experiment* 2008, no. 10.
[117] I.e., social sciences and humanities, chemistry and materials science, biology, medicine, and engineering.

Centre for Agriculture and Forestry with the Norwegian University of Life Sciences participate together in two projects.

And lastly, the fifth cluster has only 3 (5%) organisations, suggesting that they are not as interconnected in the programme. All three organisations participate solely in the same food science project (BIOCOAT) as partners – they are connected to the rest of the network (via the first cluster) by the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (project promoter of BIOCOAT).

Table 6. Detected clusters of organisations within the programme

Clusters	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Donor States	Projects
1st cluster	• University of Tartu • Tallinn University	• University of Latvia • Riga Stradins University • Latvian State Forest Research Institute SILAVA • Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis • Baltic International Centre for Economic Policy Studies	• The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore • Lithuanian University of Health Sciences • Lithuanian Energy Institute • Vytautas Magnus University • Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (Vilnius Tech)	• University of Oslo • Cancer Registry of Norway • The Arctic University of Norway • University of Stavanger • Institute of Transport Economics • BI Norwegian Business School • University of Iceland • IceTec	21 projects[118] • EE: 5 • LV: 5 • LT: 11
2nd cluster	• Tallinn University of Technology	• Riga Technical University • Liepaja University • Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology • Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences	• Vilnius University • Kaunas University of Technology • Klaipeda University • The General Jonas Zemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania	• Norwegian University of Science and Technology • University of Bergen • Norwegian School of Economics • Institute for Energy Technology (IFE) • University of Adger • Ostfold University College • Reykjavik University • University of Liechtenstein	14 projects[119] • EE: 4 • LV: 6 • LT: 4
3rd cluster	• National Institute of Chemical	• Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre	• National Cancer Institute	• Oslo University Hospital • SINTEF	4 projects[120] • LV: 2

[118] (EE) Re-storied Sites and Routes as Inclusive Spaces and Places: Shared Imaginations and Multi-layered Heritage;
(EE) Sustainable use of soil resources in the changing climate
(EE) Towards elimination of cervical cancer: intelligent and personalised solutions for cancer screening
(EE) Novel high-performance polymers from lignocellulosic feedstock
(EE) Academic Writing in the Baltic States: Rhetorical Structures through culture(s) and languages
(LV) Aluminum in circle economy - from waste through hydrogen energy to alumina" – AliCE-Why
(LV) Improving adaptability and resilience of perennial ryegrass for safe and sustainable food systems through CRISPR-Cas9 technology - EditGrass4Food
(LV) Innovation in concrete design for hazardous waste management applications
(LV) Integrated model for personalized diabetic retinopathy screening and monitoring using riskstratification and automated AI-based fundus image analysis (PerDiRe)
(LV) Quantitative data about societal and economic transformations in the regions of the three Baltic States during the last hundred years for the analysis of historical transformations and the overcoming of future challenges
(LT) Inhibition of AHR signaling in pancreatic cancer to increase susceptibility to PD-1/PDL1 inhibitors and chemotherapy via ELAVL1 pathway
(LT) Industrial Internet methods for electrical energy conversion systems monitoring and diagnostics
(LT) Development of Semi-Transparent Bifacial Thin Film Solar Cells for Innovative Applications
(LT) NOBALwheat – breeding toolbox for sustainable food system of the NOrdic BALtic region
(LT) Religion and Gender Equality: Baltic and Nordic Developments
(LT) The Economic Integration of the Nordic -Baltic Region through Labour, Innovation, Investments and Trade
(LT) Vocational education and workplace training enhancing social inclusion of at-risk young people
(LT) The edible coating formulated with liquid acid whey protein and bioactive compounds, and biopackaging for safety and quality of probiotic cheese (BIOCOAT)
(LT) The Economic Integration of the Nordic -Baltic Region through Labour, Innovation, Investments and Trade
(LT) Micro-level responses to socio-economic challenges in face of global uncertainties
(LT) Gut-blood-liver axis: Circulating microbiome as non-invasive biomarker for Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and Primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC)
[119] (EE) Novel high-performance polymers from lignocellulosic feedstock
(EE) Optimised Residential Battery Energy Storage Systems
(EE) Solutions to current and future problems on natural and constructed shorelines, eastern Baltic Sea
(EE) Academic Writing in the Baltic States: Rhetorical Structures through culture(s) and languages
(LV) Quantitative data about societal and economic transformations in the regions of the three Baltic States during the last hundred years for the analysis of historical transformations and the overcoming of future challenges
(LV) Waste-to-resource: eggshells as a source for next generation biomaterials for bone regeneration
(LV) Novel biorefinery concepts for valorization of lignocellulosic residues
(LV) Improving adaptability and resilience of perennial ryegrass for safe and sustainable food systems through CRISPR-Cas9 technology - EditGrass4Food
(LV) Innovation in concrete design for hazardous waste management applications
(LV) Promoting collaboration for sustainable and circular use of bioresources across agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture (CIRCLE)
(LT) Advancing human performance in cybersecurity
(LT) Development of Semi-Transparent Bifacial Thin Film Solar Cells for Innovative Applications
(LT) Industrial Internet methods for electrical energy conversion systems monitoring and diagnostics
(LT) Micro-level responses to socio-economic challenges in face of global uncertainties
[120] (LT) Sustainably Produced Carbon Nanomaterials for Energy Applications

	Physics and Biophysics	• Latvian Academy of Sport Education • Latvian State Institute of Wood Chemistry	• State research institute Center for Physical Sciences and Technology (FTMC)		• LT: 2
4th cluster	• Estonian University of Life Sciences • Estonian Crop Research Institute	• Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics (AREI) • Baltic Studies Centre	• Lithuanian Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry	• Norwegian University of Life Sciences • Ruralis - Institute for Rural and Regional Research	4 projects[121] • LV: 3 • LT: 1
5th cluster	• Biotechnology competence centre	• Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies	-	• Nofima	1 project (LT)[122]

Source: Visionary Analytics using Gephi software, 2023.

(LT) Gut-blood-liver axis: Circulating microbiome as non-invasive biomarker for Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and Primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC)
(LV) Exploring the molecular mechanisms behind the effects of physical exercise on breast cancer prevention (CancerBeat)
(LV) Novel biorefinery concepts for valorization of lignocellulosic residues
[121] (LV) Promoting collaboration for sustainable and circular use of bioresources across agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture (CIRCLE)
(LV) Improving adaptability and resilience of perennial ryegrass for safe and sustainable food systems through CRISPR-Cas9 technology - EditGrass4Food
(LV) Novel biorefinery concepts for valorization of lignocellulosic residues
(LT) NOBALwheat – breeding toolbox for sustainable food system of the NOrdic BALtic region
[122] (LT) The edible coating formulated with liquid acid whey protein and bioactive compounds, and biopackaging for safety and quality of probiotic cheese (BIOCOAT)

Annex 2. Survey questionnaire

Survey introduction

Thank you for your interest in this survey. This survey is a key part of the evaluation of the Baltic Research Programme (BRP) under the 2014-2021 EEA and Norway Grants. The evaluation is implemented by the private research institute Visionary Analytics (you can see the support letter from the EEA and Norway Grants here).

The survey aims to collect insights from stakeholders involved in the projects under BRP. The other study elements include desk research, interviews, and stakeholder network analysis.

The survey should take approximately 12 minutes. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at aurinta@visionary.lt.

Data Privacy and Informed Consent Information

Your personal data will be processed in line with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons regarding the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data. Your data will only be processed by Visionary Analytics employees entrusted with the implementation of the project.

Your answers will be anonymised, aggregated and published as part of the study report. None of your personal details (e.g. e-mail address) will be published or disclosed. The full information regarding data protection is provided in the privacy statement that can be found here.

Q0-1. Please select:*

- I agree to my data being proceed as outlined in the privacy statement

Q0-2. Please select:

- I agree to be contacted for a follow-up interview if needed. If yes, please enter your email: _____

Part 1: General questions

In this section, we are asking about the project you were involved in as part of the Baltic Research Programme.

Q1-1. Please select your role in the project:*

- Project Promoter
- Project Partner
- Donor Project Partner

Q1-2. Please select the country your entity is from:* *[Project Promoters and Project Partners will only see the Baltic countries, Donor Project Partners will only see Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland]*

- Estonia
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Norway
- Liechtenstein
- Iceland

Q1-3. Please select the projects you are involved in:* *[Project promoters will only see projects from their country]*

- List of projects funded under Baltic Research Programme

[List of projects funded under Baltic Research Programme]:

- (EE) Re-storied Sites and Routes as Inclusive Spaces and Places: Shared Imaginations and Multi-layered Heritage
- (EE) Towards elimination of cervical cancer: intelligent and personalised solutions for cancer screening
- (EE) Novel high-performance polymers from lignocellulosic feedstock

- (EE) Sustainable use of soil resources in the changing climate
- (EE) Optimised Residential Battery Energy Storage Systems
- (EE) Academic Writing in the Baltic States: Rhetorical Structures through culture(s) and languages
- (EE) Solutions to current and future problems on natural and constructed shorelines, eastern Baltic Sea
- (LV) Waste-to-resource: eggshells as a source for next generation biomaterials for bone regeneration
- (LV) Exploring the molecular mechanisms behind the effects of physical exercise on breast cancer prevention (CancerBeat)
- (LV) Quantitative data about societal and economic transformations in the regions of the three Baltic States during the last hundred years for the analysis of historical transformations and the overcoming of future challenges
- (LV) Improving adaptability and resilience of perennial ryegrass for safe and sustainable food systems through CRISPR-Cas9 technology - EditGrass4Food
- (LV) Aluminum in circle economy - from waste through hydrogen energy to alumina – AliCE-Why
- (LV) Innovation in concrete design for hazardous waste management applications
- (LV) Novel biorefinery concepts for valorization of lignocellulosic residues
- (LV) Integrated model for personalized diabetic retinopathy screening and monitoring using risk stratification and automated AI-based fundus image analysis (PerDiRe)
- (LV) Promoting collaboration for sustainable and circular use of bioresources across agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture (CIRCLE)
- (LT) Development of Semi-Transparent Bifacial Thin Film Solar Cells for Innovative Applications
- (LT) Vocational education and workplace training enhancing social inclusion of at-risk young people
- (LT) NOBALwheat – breeding toolbox for sustainable food system of the NOrdic BALtic region
- (LT) Religion and Gender Equality: Baltic and Nordic Developments
- (LT) Industrial Internet methods for electrical energy conversion systems monitoring and diagnostics
- (LT) Inhibition of AHR signaling in pancreatic cancer to increase susceptibility to PD-1/PDL1 inhibitors and chemotherapy via ELAVL1 pathway
- (LT) The edible coating formulated with liquid acid whey protein and bioactive compounds, and biopackaging for safety and quality of probiotic cheese
- (LT) Advancing human performance in cybersecurity
- (LT) Gut-blood-liver axis: Circulating microbiome as non-invasive biomarker for Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and Primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC)
- (LT) The Economic Integration of the Nordic -Baltic Region through Labour, Innovation, Investments and Trade
- (LT) Micro-level responses to socio-economic challenges in face of global uncertainties
- (LT) Sustainably Produced Carbon Nanomaterials for Energy Applications

Part 2: Effectiveness

Q2-1. To what extent do you see the following statements as true?*

Statement	Not at all true	Slightly true	Some what true	Mostly true	Completely true	Do not know/ cannot answer
Multilateral collaboration between Baltic countries allowed to bring additional competences to the project						
Cooperation with Donor States allowed to bring additional competences to the project						
BRP project increased scientific collaborations in my country						
BRP project enabled new research collaborations in the Baltics						
BRP project enabled new research collaborations in the Baltic-Nordic area						
BRP project enabled new research collaborations in Europe and internationally						

Q2-2. Please elaborate on how you see collaboration in BRP:

- Write-in

Q2-3. To what extent do you see the following statements as true?*

Statement	Not at all true	Slightly true	Some what true	Mostly true	Completely true	Do not know/ cannot answer
BRP project strengthened competences of researchers involved in the project						
BRP increased research productivity (quantity of research outputs produced e.g. number of written/published papers)						
Participation in the BRP project increased the visibility of my research						

Q2-4. Please elaborate on the effect you see of your BRP project:

- Write-in

Q2-5. Did your organisation establish new partnerships with organisations in the Baltic-Nordic area during the BRP project?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know/ cannot answer

Q2-6. Please elaborate on any new partnerships, if relevant:

- Write-in

Q2-7. Please rate the influence of the following factors on the achievement of your BRP project results:*

Statement	Negatively influenced	Did not influence	Positively influenced	Do not know/ cannot answer
Research collaboration and partnerships as part of the project				
Relevance of research outcomes to the scientific community				
Project alignment with Baltic States scientific priorities [not shown to DPPs]				
Availability of human resources in my country				
Expertise and capacity of project participants				

Q2-8. What other positive and negative factors influenced the achievement of the results?

- Write-in

Q2-9. To what extent do the following challenges hinder the successful implementation of your BRP project?*

Statement	Does not hinder at all	Slightly hinders	Some what hinders	Mostly hinders	Completely hinders	Do not know/ cannot answer
Lack of funding for project implementation						
Administrative burden to report on project implementation and results						
Insufficient support and guidance on project implementation						
Collaboration difficulties with partners from different countries (lack of coordination)						
Language barrier						
Differences in legal systems in Baltic countries						
Lack of expertise in multilateral project implementation						
Data privacy and security issues						
Lack of tools needed for project implementation						

Q2-10. Are there any additional challenges for your project not mentioned above?

- Write-in

Part 3: Coherence

Q3-1. *[Question is shown only to Project Promoters and Project Partners indicated in Q1-2; multiple answers possible]* **Up to your knowledge, how would you rate synergies (common goals, activities, thematic areas, target groups, etc.) between different BRP projects carried out in your country? Select one of the following options:***

- Projects did not interfere with each other
- Projects complement each other
- Projects overlapped
- Do not know/ cannot answer

Q3-2. *[Question is shown only to respondents who selected one of the first three options in Q3-1]* **Please, elaborate on the reason behind your selection:**

- Write-in

Q3-3. *[multiple answers possible]* **Up to your knowledge, how would you rate synergies (common goals, activities, thematic areas, target groups, etc.) between projects carried out in three Baltic countries? Select one of the following options:***

- Projects did not interfere with each other
- Projects complement each other

- Projects overlapped
- Do not know/ cannot answer

Q3-4. *[Question is shown only to respondents who selected one of the first three options in Q3-3]* **Please, elaborate on the reason behind your selection:**

- Write-in

Q3-5. *[multiple answers possible]* **Up to your knowledge**, **how would you rate synergies (common goals, activities, thematic areas, target groups, etc.) between different BRP funding calls* in the below mentioned countries? You may consider timeline and thematic areas.**

**Estonian project calls in 2018, Latvian and Lithuanian project calls in 2020*

	Calls did not interfere with each other	Calls complement each other	Calls overlapped	Do not know/ cannot answer
Your country				
Three Baltic States				

Q3-6. *[Question is shown only to respondents who selected one of the first three options in Q3-5]* **Please, elaborate on the reason behind your selection:**

- Write-in

Q3-7. Thank you for completing the survey, are there any other comments you would like to share?

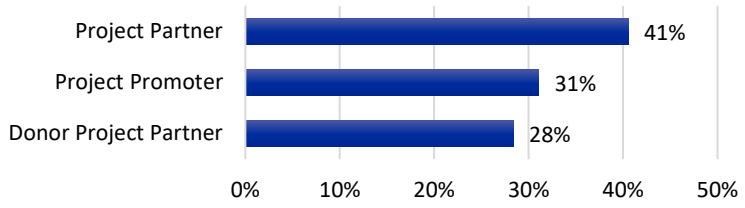
- Write-in

Thank you

Your participation in this survey will provide valuable insights for the evaluation of the Baltic Research Programme. Thank you for your time and answers.

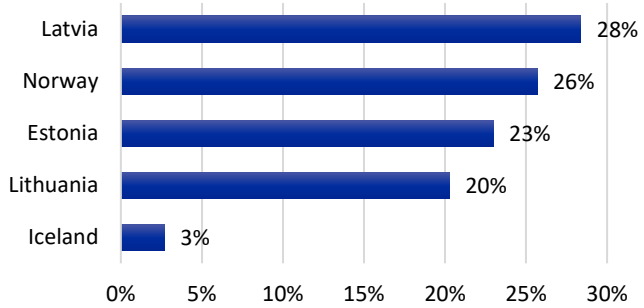
Annex 3. Survey results

Figure 16. Please select your role in the project:



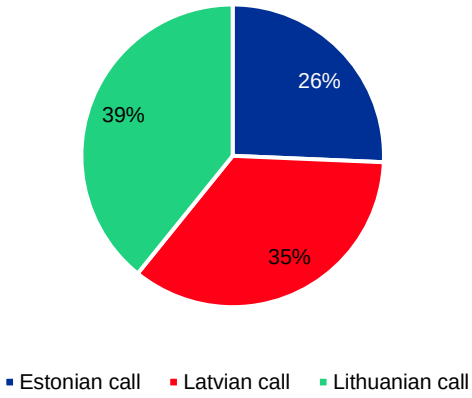
Note: N= 74
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 – December 2023.

Figure 17. Please select the country your entity is from:



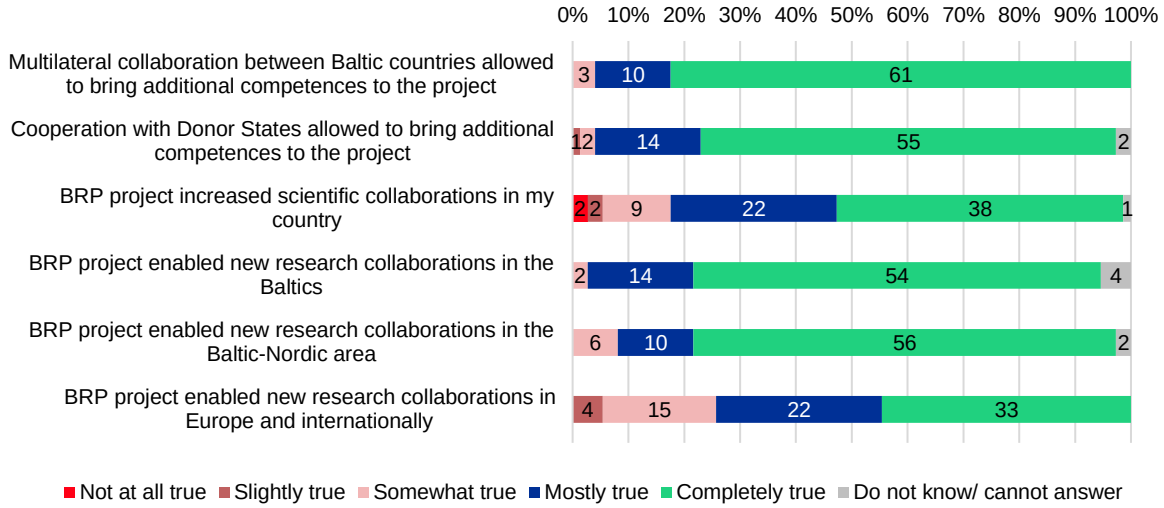
Note: N= 74. No respondents from Liechtenstein
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 – December 2023.

Figure 18. Please select the projects you are involved in:



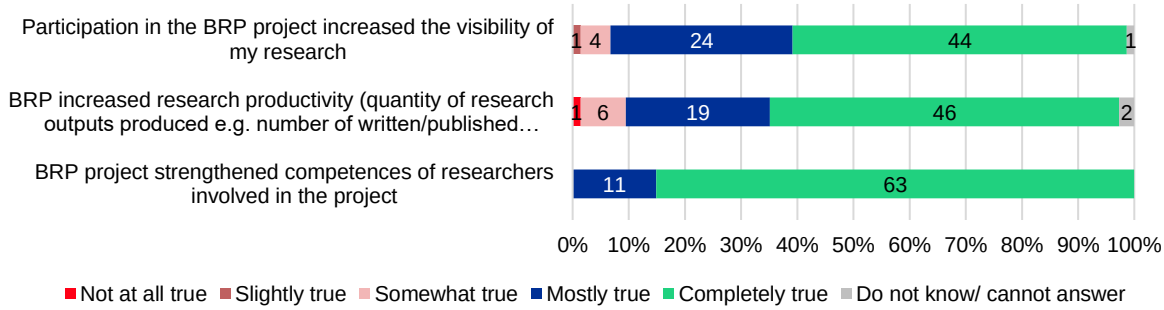
Note: N= 74. This question asked to select a BRP project from a given list. For this figure, the answers were merged based on the call of the project.
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 – December 2023.

Figure 19. To what extent do you see the following statements as true?



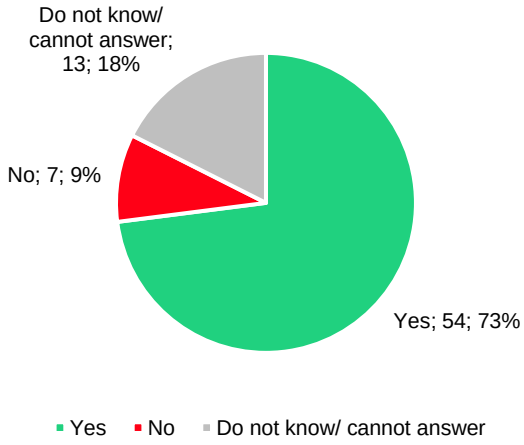
Note: N= 74
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 – December 2023.

Figure 20. To what extent do you see the following statements as true?



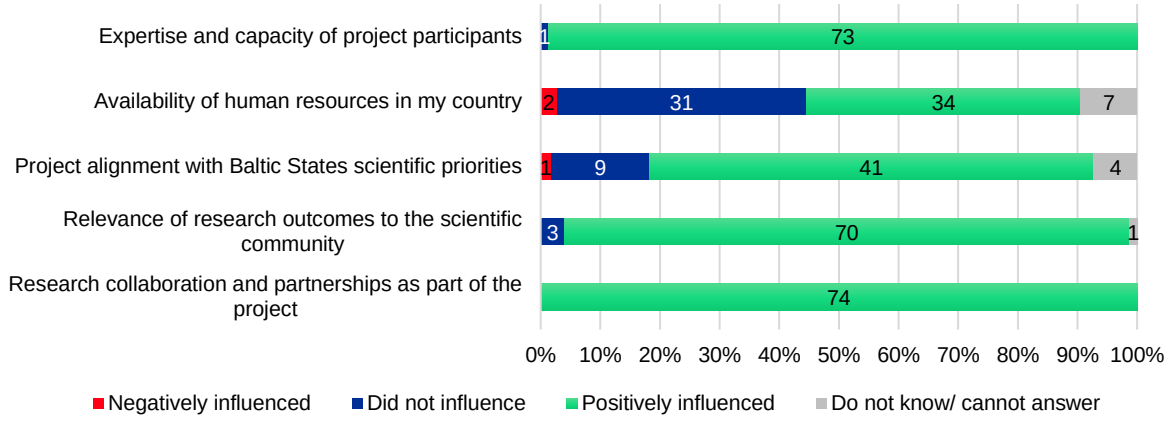
Note: N= 74
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted in July 2023 - December 2023.

Figure 21. Did your organisation establish new partnerships with organisations in the Baltic-Nordic area during the BRP project?



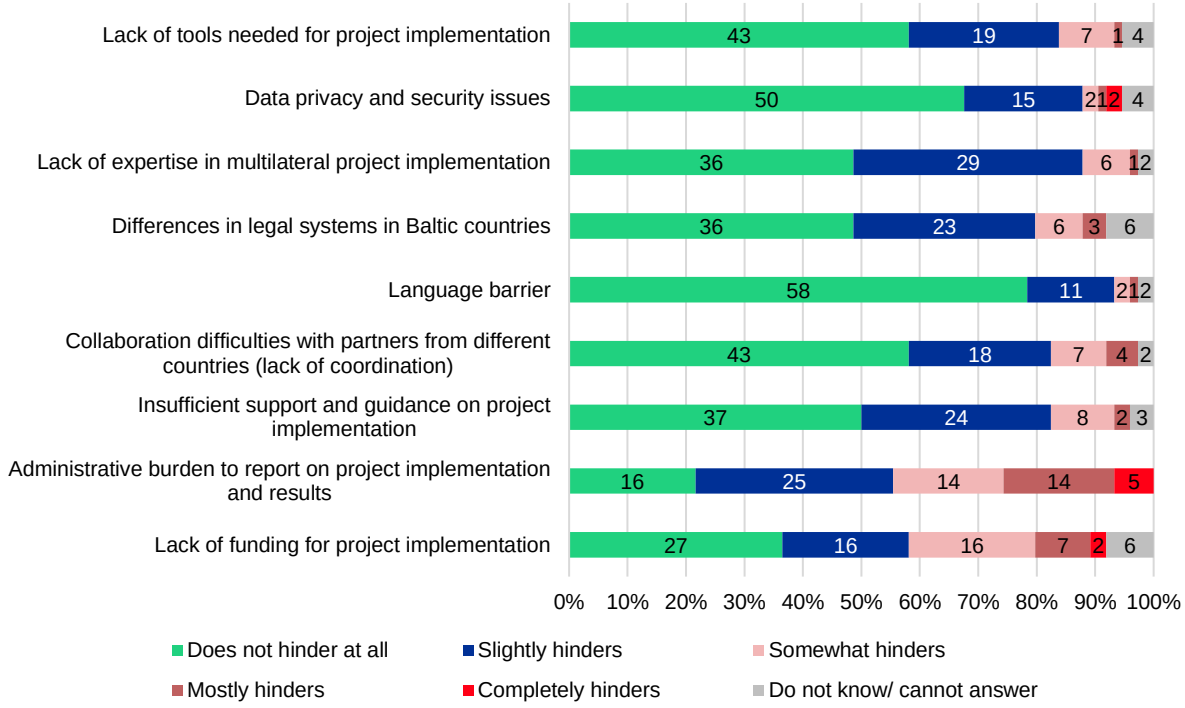
Note: N= 74
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted in July 2023 - December 2023.

Figure 22. Please rate the influence of the following factors on the achievement of your BRP project results:



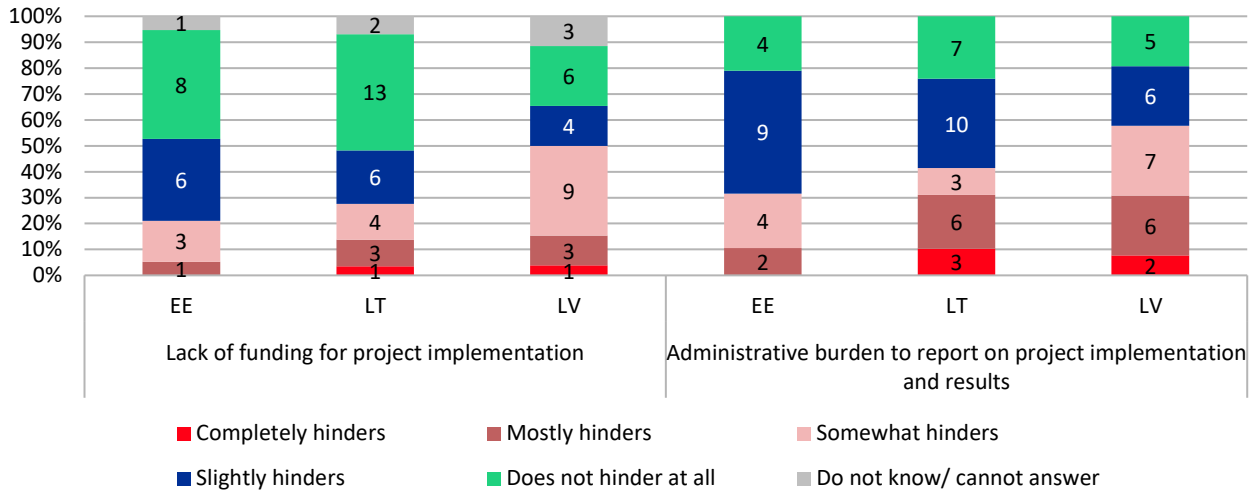
Note: Total N= 74. N "Project alignment…" = 55 as this option was not visible for donor project partners.
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 – December 2023.

Figure 23. To what extent do the following challenges hinder the successful implementation of your BRP project?



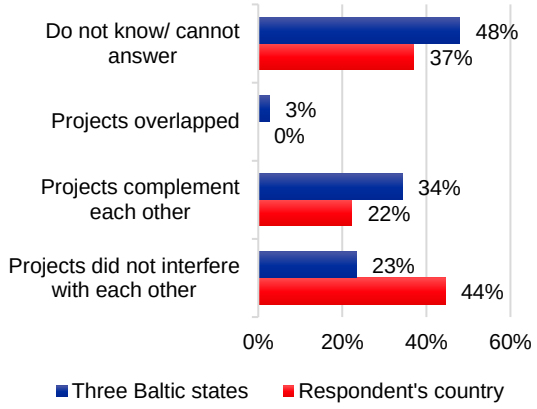
Note: N= 74
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 - December 2023.

Figure 24. Administrative burden and lack of funding disaggregated by BRP calls



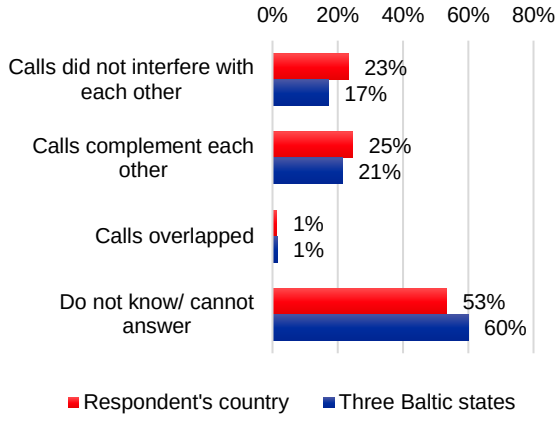
Note: N (total)= 74. N (EE)= 19, N (LT)= 29, N (LV)= 26.
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 - December 2023.

Figure 2525. Up to your knowledge, how would you rate synergies (common goals, activities, thematic areas, target groups, etc.) between different BRP projects carried out in your country and in three Baltic countries? Select one of the following options:



N respondent's country =54, N Baltic States =73
Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 - December 2023.

Figure 2626. Up to your knowledge, how would you rate synergies (common goals, activities, thematic areas, target groups, etc.) between different BRP funding calls in the below-mentioned countries? You may consider timeline and thematic areas.



N respondent's country =73, N Baltic States =70

Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024. Survey conducted July 2023 - December 2023.

Annex 4. Evaluation question mapping

Evaluation question	Sub-question	Examples of indicators	Source
Effectiveness			
EQ 1: At this stage, to what extent have results been achieved in line with the results framework? Which factors or reasons influenced or may influence the achievement of the results (outputs and outcomes) by the end of the programme?	What is the progress in reaching the BRP outcome "Enhanced performance of Baltic research internationally"?	Number of joint applications for further funding Number of joint scientific articles submitted to peer-reviewed publications Number of jointly registered applications for Intellectual Property Protection	Desk research
	What is the progress in reaching out BRP output "Knowledge of Research Shared"?	Number of researchers supported	Desk research
	What factors influence the achievement of the results?	Stakeholders' perception of the influence of the following factors: ▪ Research collaboration and partnerships as part of the project ▪ Relevance of research outcomes to the scientific community ▪ Project alignment with Baltic States scientific priorities ▪ Availability of human resources ▪ Expertise and capacity of project participants	Interviews, survey
	What is the added value of the multilateral collaboration in the programme?	The extent of project participants' agreement that: ▪ Multilateral collaboration between Baltic countries allowed to bring additional competences to the project ▪ Cooperation with Donor States allowed to bring additional competences to the project ▪ BRP project increased scientific collaborations in the country, Baltics, Baltic-Nordic area, Europe and internationally	Survey
EQ 2: At this stage, to what extent is there evidence of results (at output and outcome level) beyond those listed in the results framework, including results linked to the multilateral and administrative set-up?	How has the Baltic Research programme strengthened human resources in the Baltics?	Stakeholders' perception of the following factors: ▪ BRP strengthened competences of researchers involved in the project ▪ BRP increased research productivity (quantity of research outputs produced e.g. number of written/published papers) of project participants ▪ Participation in the BRP project increased the visibility of participants' research	Interviews, survey
	How has the programme better positioned the Baltic countries in the Baltic Sea Region, in the Baltic-Nordic Research Area, as well as at	▪ BRP enabled new research collaborations (in the Baltics, Baltic-Nordic area, in Europe and internationally) ▪ Types of organisational links due to the Baltic Research Programme	Survey, Interviews, network analysis

Evaluation question	Sub-question	Examples of indicators	Source
	the European and International levels?		
EQ 3: What are the circumstances (such as bottlenecks, potential delays, or others) which could prevent or reduce effective implementation of the Baltic Research programme, including at the project level?	What are the challenges, if any, for successful implementation of the programme at the programme level?	Stakeholders' perception of the influence of the following factors: ▪ Administrative barriers ▪ Collaboration issues (lack of coordination) ▪ Political instability (changes in government policies)	Interviews, survey
	What are the challenges, if any, for successful implementation of the programme at the project level?	Stakeholders' perception of the influence of the following factors: Lack of funding for project implementation Administrative burden to report on project implementation and results Insufficient support and guidance on project implementation Collaboration difficulties with partners from different countries (lack of coordination) Language barrier Differences in legal systems in Baltic countries Lack of expertise in multilateral project implementation Data privacy and security issues Lack of tools needed for project implementation	Survey
Coherence (internal)			
EQ 4: To what extent did the Baltic research programme work as one programme in terms of complementarity, harmonisation and coordination (both at the administrative and project level, among the three Baltic countries and the DPP)?	Are activities implemented by different Baltic countries harmonised and complement one another? Are there any overlaps?	▪ BRP objectives and activities at each country level are coherent (complementary, harmonised and well-coordinated) ▪ BRP objectives and activities are coherent among Baltic countries (complementary, harmonised, well-coordinated) ▪ Overlaps between BRP activities	Desk research, interviews
	What factors influence the internal coherence of the programme?	Stakeholders' perception of the following factors: ▪ Communication in the programme committee; ▪ Communication between the different stakeholders (including Donor partners); ▪ Country authorities understanding of the collaboration goals; ▪ Cooperation between different research councils; ▪ The role played by the Research Guideline, in harmonising the three national components of the BRP	Interviews
EQ 5: What were the synergies and linkages between interventions (open calls) carried	What were the internal synergies and linkages between	▪ Identified synergies and overlaps between open calls carried out in the same country/ Baltic States	Desk research

Evaluation question	Sub-question	Examples of indicators	Source
out by the three Baltic Programme Operators (BPO) together with Implementing Agencies (IA) and Donor Programme Partners?	projects/open calls in the same country and the three Baltic States?	Stakeholders' and participants' perceptions of the following factors: ▪ Synergies between projects/ open calls in the same country/ Baltic States ▪ Gaps and cases of overlapping between projects/ open calls carried out in the same country/ Baltic States	Interviews, Survey
EQ 6: For the two national components where it is applicable (EE-RESEARCH, LV-RESEARCH), what is the level of coherence of the scholarship and higher education elements of the programmes with the Baltic Research Programme element?	How coherent are the scholarship and higher education elements with the rest of the BRP?	▪ Scholarship and higher education elements' goals match and contribute to the overall goals of BRP ▪ Scholarship and higher education elements' activities have synergies with other BRP activities	Desk research, interviews
Coherence (external)			
EQ 7: What were the synergies and linkages with other interventions by the three Programme Operators and the DPP, namely initiatives funded by national sources?	To what extent are the initiatives funded by national sources coherent with the BRP?	▪ Complementarity between objectives of BRP and national initiatives funded from national sources ▪ Complementarity between activities of BRP and national initiatives funded from national sources ▪ Synergies and linkages between the BRP and national initiatives funded from national sources ▪ Overlaps between the BRP and national initiatives funded from national sources	Interviews, desk research
	To what extent are the interventions carried out by the DPP coherent with the BRP?	▪ Complementarity between objectives of the BRP and DPPs national initiatives aimed at cooperation with the Baltic countries ▪ Complementarity between activities of the BRP and DPPs national initiatives aimed at cooperation with the Baltic countries ▪ Synergies and linkages between the BRP and DPPs national initiatives aimed at cooperation with the Baltic countries ▪ Overlaps between the BRP and DPPs national initiatives aimed at cooperation with the Baltic countries	Interviews, desk research
EQ 9: Does the Programme add value, while avoiding duplication, with other similar programmes: Horizon2020, Horizon Europe, the Structural Funds, and	To what extent is the Baltic Research Programme coherent with other EU and regional programmes?	▪ Complementarity between the objectives of the BRP and other similar programmes (Horizon2020, Horizon Europe, the Structural Funds, and INTERREG Baltic Sea Region) ▪ Complementarity between the activities of the BRP and other similar programmes (Horizon2020, Horizon Europe, the Structural Funds, and INTERREG Baltic Sea Region)	Interviews, desk research

Evaluation question	Sub-question	Examples of indicators	Source
INTERREG Baltic Sea Region? If so, how?		▪ Synergies and linkages between the BRP and other similar programmes (Horizon2020, Horizon Europe, the Structural Funds, and INTERREG Baltic Sea Region) ▪ Overlaps between the BRP and other similar programmes (Horizon2020, Horizon Europe, the Structural Funds, and INTERREG Baltic Sea Region)	

Source: Visionary Analytics, 2024