

# POLICY ON COOPERATION IN THE BALTIC SEA, BARENTS AND ARCTIC REGIONS

27.11.2019

## The Foreign Ministry's Policy on funding for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions in 2020–2023

Measures aimed to strengthen cooperation in the Arctic and Baltic regions are recorded in the Programme of Prime Minister Marin's Government under the heading **Globally influential Finland**. The importance of the Arctic region has grown due to climate change, increasing economic activity, new transport connections, and the region's growing geopolitical significance. All activities in the Arctic must be tied in with the carrying capacity of the environment, the need to protect climate, the importance of sustainable development principles, and respect for the rights of indigenous peoples. Finland's vision is a clean Baltic Sea with a viable marine environment that is used sustainably. The aim is that the Baltic Sea region will be at the leading edge in sustainable development as well as in the bioeconomy and circular economy. Finland strengthens international environmental cooperation in the Arctic and in the Baltic Sea region. Fighting climate change and adapting to it are among the key themes in this regional cooperation. Project coordinators encourage civil society representatives to engage in project cooperation. The appropriations allocated for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions under the Foreign Ministry's main title of expenditure are used to support the practical implementation of Finland's policy objectives in this area.

The policy sets out the general principles of funding for the cooperation in 2020–2023. The funding is directed mainly to multilateral regional cooperation, which supports the objectives of the Government Programme. The key mechanisms for Finland include the regional councils (Arctic Council, Barents Euro-Arctic Council and Council of the Baltic Sea States) and the Northern Dimension partnerships. In addition, the funding is used to support the implementation of the Government's policy on Russia. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE. Cooperation with Russia has been suspended for the most part following Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which is a violation of international law.





## **1. Objectives of funding for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions**

### **1.1 Multilateral regional cooperation**

**The appropriations allocated for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions are used to implement Finland's national objectives in these regions.**

The funding is used to the following target areas:

- Projects that promote the implementation of Finland's strategy on Arctic policy and the EU policy for the Arctic as well as regional cooperation especially in the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC).
- Projects that promote the implementation of Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region as well as regional cooperation especially in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS).
- Projects that support the Northern Dimension policy, especially within the framework of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP), Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing (NDPHS), Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL) and the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC).

Regional cooperation promotes stability, security, sustainable development and business opportunities in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions. The regional cooperation is based on co-financing, which means that funding is obtained from different sources. Both individual countries, the EU, international financial institutions and the private sector participate in the provision of funding. The funding allocated for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions enables Finland to invest in important regional cooperation projects.

In the selection of projects to be financed, Finland's national interests are emphasised, including the utilisation of Finnish expertise and know-how in the implementation of projects. Projects that are carried out using the funding for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions support Finland when it is chairing different regional cooperation forums. National instruments help to obtain funding



from the EU and other international sources for such multilateral projects in Finland's neighbouring areas that are important to the country.

## **1.2 Implementation of the Government's Russia policy**

### **Funding for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions promotes the implementation of the Government policy on Russia.**

The objectives of the Government's Russia policy are supported by carrying out projects in sectors that are central for handling the relations with Russia. The cooperation is conducted in the framework of the guiding principles of the EU's policy on Russia. Central themes include the environment, climate, mobility and efficient cross-border operations, economic cooperation and increasing contacts between representatives of civil society and experts in various areas.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Use of funding for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions: preparation and decision-making**

The funding for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions falls under the Foreign Ministry's main title of expenditure.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs prepares a plan guiding the implementation of the strategic policy objectives set out in this policy annually. The plan consists of initiatives identified to belong to the framework of regional cooperation and cooperation with Russia, which have been submitted by different ministries. Ministries responsible for matters under the sectoral themes and possible other parties are consulted in the course of the preparative phase.

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The provisions of the Act on Public Procurement and Concession Contracts are observed in the use of the appropriation. Contracts are granted by the ministries. The decisions on projects to be funded are made by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The use of the appropriation for cooperation in the Baltic Sea, Barents and Arctic regions is guided by the administrative procedures applying to the funding in 2020–2023.