

## Start of a new chapter in the wake of BONUS



TUUKKA TROBERG

### EDITORIAL



Dear reader,

BONUS – the joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme - has now made a full circle and is approaching its completion. This In Brief issue brings to you the highlights of the BONUS LEGACY and discusses how to best take it forward to the next chapter: the scale-up of BONUS to a joint Baltic and North Sea Research and Innovation Programme (BANOS) as is planned in the Baltic and North Sea Coordination and Support Action (BANOS CSA). This initiative is associated also to an even larger pan-European research and innovation partnership for climate neutral, sustainable and productive Blue Economy.

The success of BONUS – the first of the EU’s regional sea basin programmes – has been forged by a bold vision, openness to novel approaches, willingness, and ability for learning-by-doing,

and above all, nurturing the spirit of solidarity and collaboration among the participating national funders of research and innovation and the European Commission. This has been evidenced throughout the evolution from the BONUS+ ERA-NET times over 10 years ago to synthesis of knowledge by projects funded from the final BONUS Art. 185 call now soon ending. Today, thanks to BONUS, we are enormously richer in crucial new scientific knowledge needed to preserve the Baltic Sea environment and achieve sustainability in use of its ecosystem services.

There are some key pioneering aspects in managing BONUS that have allowed it to become a **true Programme**.

Let me begin with something that might seem rather technical but – in reality – is much more. The electronic proposal submission system that BONUS used in its early days has now grown into a comprehensive **Electronic Programme Service System (EPSS)** that serves at all stages from submitting and evaluating project proposals to collecting project deliverables and gathering multitude of data on projects’ performance indicators. Thanks

to our EPSS, we have a real-time information pool covering uptake of scientific evidence at different policy levels, joint use of science infrastructures, dissemination and engagement with stakeholders, and involvement of early career professionals. This database has proved to be tremendously instrumental in both assessing impact of each project and BONUS as a whole as well as motivating the consortia of BONUS projects. Now, years later, we see that similarly to the BONUS approach, planning and monitoring the key performance indicators (KPIs), have become an integral part of programming also within the EU R&I framework.

From the early days of its activity, BONUS has encouraged and supported **thematic collaboration and clustering** among its projects. We drew our first ‘BONUS archipelago’ map back in winter of 2009, soon after starting the first BONUS+ projects. Discussing the possibilities and planning joint activities has constantly been the central topic at the annual gatherings of the BONUS Project Coordinators. Several remarkable achievements, such as a series of BONUS

Symposia, many exciting thematic workshops and outstanding joint publications have grown out of this line of activity.

The role and place of critical review of the results of primary research and **knowledge synthesis** has also been a subject of extended discussion within BONUS. Encouraged by our Advisory Board and external evaluators, this process culminated in the Synthesis Call 2017 that resulted in eight knowledge synthesis projects worth over EUR 3,5 million. Once all completed in a few months’ time, the added value of this exercise will be seen.

Closer association between **science and innovation** has been one of the ‘leitmotifs’ shaping European research frameworks of the last decades. Seeking the best ways to boost innovation continued also throughout the BONUS evolution: beginning with the dedicated innovation call in 2012 and encouraging enterprise participation in all other calls. Yet, despite having had several remarkable success stories, we do not have the best formula yet. One lesson learned, however, is clear: the task of creating a genuinely integrated **research and innovation** programme is not a trivial one. The recipes fit to an academic research do not always work for catalyzing innovation. With a specific task addressing the issues of firmly integrating innovation into a joint research programme, the quest for solutions continues in BANOS CSA.

The early years of BONUS coincided with the first attempts to consolidate marine and maritime research in Europe’s regional sea basins. Many perhaps remember the SEASERA ERA-net project. BONUS, an associated partner of SEASERA insisted that the continent-wide cooperation shall be structured according to the regional seas: the ‘elemental units’ for achieving the GES and sustainability of exploiting marine ecosystem services.

Now, years later, we see

regional R&I initiatives evolving from the Black Sea (as the newest addition) to the Baltic Sea. With emergence of the Blue Economy Partnership (BEP), the issue of structuring the cooperation among maritime macro-regions is urgent once again.

I see the optimal future of the BE Partnership as ‘a partnership of partnerships’: capable to consolidate its effort on the **universal solutions** to omnipresent challenges and, at the same time, versatile and flexible enough to be able to find answers to **specific questions** for each of Europe’s regional seas. Only such design will allow us to fully benefit from the achievements of BONUS and secure an uninterrupted advancement of research and innovation necessary to underpin the Blue Economy development in Europe.

I wish to use this opportunity to thank every member of the BONUS Community for your trust, devotion and contribution over the years of our cooperation.

**Let us together in 2021 start a new chapter of collaboration in marine research and innovation!**

**Andris Andrusaitis**  
Acting Executive Director, BONUS Coordinator, BANOS CSA

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Toasting at the end of the founding meeting of BONUS EEIG (2007)

## BONUS alumni (2003–2020)

Numerous people have been instrumental in moving BONUS forward: members of various BONUS groups, politicians/authorities/officials in national ministries/organisations, and in the EU institutions – and in particular, a huge number of officials in DG Research and innovation who have contributed substantially to BONUS progress. These people, not listed here, know who they are. The members of the Steering Committee, Advisory Board, Forum of the Project Coordinators and the Secretariat are listed below (year of departure in brackets), as are the networks from ERA-NET period. Collectively we express our sincerest thanks to everybody out there – on this list – and many beyond it. **THANK YOU.**

## BONUS achievements celebrated

The BONUS community came together for the concluding, 8<sup>th</sup> BONUS Forum on 24 November 2020 online with a total of over 160 participants joining the online webinar celebrations and representing a wide array of stakeholders from policy sector, funders, scientific community, NGOs and others interested in BONUS, its outcomes and future plans.

The day moderated by **Maija Sirola** of the BONUS Secretariat featured a keynote by Head of Healthy Oceans and Seas Unit of DG Research and Innovation, European Commission **Sigi Gruber**, speeches by BONUS Acting Executive Director **Andris Andrusaitis**, former and first Executive

Director **Kaisa Kononen**, presentations representing a total of over 20 BONUS projects. In addition, a stakeholder panel ‘From BONUS to BANOS’ consisted of six key BONUS stakeholders **Don Boesch** of Maryland University USA, **Ivan Conesa-Alcolea** of DG R&I European Commission, **Fritz Köster** of DTU Aqua, Technical University Denmark, **Ann-Katrien Lescauwaet** of Flanders Marine Institute Belgium, **Eeva Rantama** of Interreg Baltic Sea Region and **Rüdiger Stempel** of HELCOM.

Many BONUS Forum presentations, ‘History in pictures’ gallery, BONUS legacy and projects’ videos, briefings and policy briefs can be accessed at [www.bonusportal.org/forum2020](http://www.bonusportal.org/forum2020). ■ /MS

## The 4<sup>th</sup> BONUS Symposium: Food web knowledge synthesis for the Baltic Sea

The Symposium was held online on 21 October 2020, organized jointly by the EU BONUS XWEBS and BLUEWEBS projects with support by the BONUS Secretariat. New insights and conclusions regarding Baltic Sea food web knowledge and the resulting resource management implications from these two BONUS food web projects were shared and discussed with close to 90 participants

representing 49 institutions in 11 countries. The full summary report of the event is available online together with presentations and the Q&A record of the day at [www.bonusportal.org/Symposium\\_foodwebs](http://www.bonusportal.org/Symposium_foodwebs). ■ /MS

More information about the previous three BONUS Symposia: [www.bonusportal.org/symposia](http://www.bonusportal.org/symposia)

## BONUS projects’ outcomes as INSERTS

Four briefing documents are inserted to this In Brief. These summarize the outcomes of the projects funded from four first calls in BONUS



Art.185: the ‘BONUS call 2012: Viable ecosystems’ and ‘Innovation’, the ‘BONUS call 2014: Sustainable ecosystem services’ and the ‘BONUS call 2015: Blue Baltic’. In addition, the fifth final ‘Synthesis’ call was published in 2017 and a total of 12 desk-study projects were funded to synthesize knowledge. The last of these projects will officially end in January 2021. ■ /MS

Read more: [www.bonusportal.org/outcomes](http://www.bonusportal.org/outcomes)

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- Petra Wallberg** FORMAS, Sweden

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- 2008 **Donald Boesch** University of Maryland (2017)
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- 2011 **Valeria Abaza** Black Sea Commission (2014)
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- Marcus Reckermann** Baltic Earth (formerly known as BALTEX) (2017)
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- 2012 **Talis Linkaits** VASAB (2017)
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- 2013 **Eeva Rantama** Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme (2017)
- 2014 **Irina Makarenko** Black Sea Commission (2017)
- 2015 **Darius Campbell** OSPAR Commission (2017)
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- Gilles Lericolais** European Marine Board (2017)
- 2016 **Martin Le Tissier** Future Earth Coasts (2017)
- 2017 **Ottilia Thoreson** WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme (2017)

Pasilanraito 9B  
00240 Helsinki, Finland

[www.bonusportal.org](http://www.bonusportal.org)  
[www.banoscsa.org](http://www.banoscsa.org)

Twitter: [BONUSBaltic](https://twitter.com/BONUSBaltic) | [BANOS\\_CSA](https://twitter.com/BANOS_CSA)  
Tel. +358 40 040 4011

Editor-in-Chief: **Maija Sirola** (MS)  
Editor: **Tiina Launiainen**

### Editorial board:

**Andris Andrusaitis**, **Karoliina Koho**,  
**Meelis Sirendi**, **Minna Ulvila**

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**Oy Graaf Ab**

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**BONUS**, the joint Baltic Sea research and development programme, produces knowledge and eco-technological advances to support

development and implementation of regulations, policies and management practices specifically tailored for the Baltic Sea region. It issues calls for competitive proposals and funds projects of high excellence and relevance based on its strategic research agenda.

**BONUS EEIG** is the legal management organisation of BONUS. It also acts as the coordinator of the project ‘Baltic

and North Sea Coordination and Support Action (BANOS CSA)’ set to build the necessary preconditions for the future, joint Baltic and North Sea Research and Innovation Programme envisaged to start in 2021.

**BONUS** is funded jointly from the national research funding institutions in the eight EU member states around the Baltic Sea and the European Union by a total of EUR

100 million for the years 2011–2020. Russia participates in BONUS through bilateral agreements.

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**SECRETARIAT**

2007	<b>Kaisa Kononen</b> Executive Director (2018)		<b>Minna Ulvila</b> Financial Manager
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	<b>Elise Oukka</b> Financial Manager (2012)		
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	<b>Sanna Alaranta</b> Trainee (2010)	2016	<b>Laura Eskelinen</b> Trainee (2016)
2010	<b>Maija Sirola</b> Communications Manager	2018	<b>Andris Andrusaitis</b> Acting Executive Director
2011	<b>Hanna Aho</b> Trainee (2011)		<b>Minna Frii</b> Assistant (2019)
	<b>Sanna Eirtovaara</b> Trainee (2011)		<b>Meelis Sirendi</b> Deputy Executive Director
2012	<b>Senja Laakso</b> Trainee (2012)	2019	<b>Dana Hellemann</b> Project Assistant (2019)
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**STEERING COMMITTEE OBSERVERS 2011–2020**

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**CALL TASK FORCE, 185 CALLS 2011–2017**

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**Michal Pietras** Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland (2005)  
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**Eva Thörnelöf** Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research (MISTRA), Sweden (2008)  
**Maciej Zylcz** Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland (2005)  
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 2005 **Vladimir B. Lapshin** Russian Foundation of Basic Research (2008)  
**Hans-Ortwin Nalbach** Project Management Organisation Jülich, Germany (2006)  
**Agnieszka Mierzynska** Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland (2008)  
**Wojciech Zielinski** Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland (2005)  
 2006 **Maija Bundule** see BONUS Steering Committee above  
**Gerd Hubold** see BONUS Advisory Board above  
**Klaus Schindel** Project Management Organisation Jülich, Germany (2008)  
**Iwona Zukowska** Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland (2007)  
 2007 **Ritva Dammert** see BONUS Steering Committee above

**COORDINATION at the Academy of Finland 2003-2008**

2003 **Johanna Argillander** (2005)  
**Kaisa Kononen**  
 2005 **Johanna Inkinen** (2007)  
 2007 **Susanna Hyvärinen** (2008)  
**Reetta Koivisto** (2008)

**FORUM OF PROJECT COORDINATORS**

2009 **Jacob Carstensen** National Environmental Research Institute, Aarhus University, Denmark, HYPER (2011)  
**Joachim Dippner** Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde, Germany, AMBER (2011)  
**Lars Förlin** University of Gothenburg, Sweden, BALCOFISH (2011)  
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**Aarno Kotilainen** Geological Survey of Finland, INFLOW (2011)  
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**Kari Lehtonen** Finnish Environment Institute, BEAST (2011)  
**Mats Lindgarth** University of Gothenburg, Sweden, PREHAB (2011)  
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**Anders Omstedt** University of Gothenburg, Sweden, BALTIC-C (2011)  
**Tarmo Soomere** Institute of Cybernetics, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia, BALTICWAY (2011)  
**Tapani Vaahoranta** Finnish Institute of International Affairs, PROBALT (2009)  
**Peter Tiselius** University of Gothenburg, Sweden, BAZOOCA (2011)  
**Fredrik Wulff** Stockholm University, Sweden, RECOCA (2011)  
 2010 **Anna Korppoo** Finnish Institute of International Affairs, PROBALT (2010)  
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 2005 **Ewa Włodarczyk** European Environment Agency (2006)  
 2006 **Kostas Nittis** see BONUS Advisory Board above  
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 Latvian Council of Science: **Andris Andrusaitis, Anda Ikaunieca, Solvita Strake**  
 Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania: **Kristina Babelyte, Agne Pozarskaite, Arturas Razinkovas, Ugne Stadnike**  
 Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland: **Stanislaw Massel**  
 MISTRA, Sweden: **Lotta Liljelund, Ulf Westerlund**  
 Project Management Organisation Jülich, Germany: **Joachim Harms, Andreas Irmisch, Barbara Tanner, Ulrich Wolf**  
 Russian Foundation for Basic Research: **Valeriy Smirnov, Olga Suzdaleva**  
 SEPA, Sweden: **Sif Johansson, Thomas Nilsson**

**BONUS members**

Innovation Fund Denmark

Eesti Teadusagentuur  
Estonian Research CouncilThe National Centre  
for Research and DevelopmentSwedish Agency  
for Marine and  
Water Management

# Next chapter starting: BANOS and Horizon Europe

By Karoliina Koho, Project Officer, BANOS CSA

The European research and innovation landscape is currently in full transit towards the next European Framework Programme, Horizon Europe (HE). Despite the impact of COVID-19 on the political processes, the HE is starting to take shape and final budget negotiations are being carried out among the member states and the European Commission.

All BANOS work packages (see Figure 1) are progressing well, although COVID-19 has left some marks on the implementation of the Baltic and North Sea Coordination and Support Action (BANOS CSA) and the timeline has now been adjusted accordingly. The Consortium has submitted an official amendment request to extend the CSA until end of October 2021 instead

of ending date of April 2021 as originally planned. The request is currently processed by the Commission, however, recent communication with the RTD policy officers indicates that the extension request is likely to be approved in near future.

The ongoing development of European Partnerships, namely the Partnership on Climate Neutral Sustainable Blue Economy (BE) is especially relevant and interesting process for the BANOS CSA as the BE Partnership is likely to be an important element of future implementation of the BANOS Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (BANOS SRIA). The draft proposal of the BE Partnership, published in July this year, highlights the need to coordinate research and innovation

activities among the European regional sea basins. A key step in this process is the alignment of the SRIAs developed by different regional sea initiatives. These include BlueMed Initiative and its supporting Coordination and Support Action (BlueMed CSA), the Blue Growth Initiative for Research and Innovation in the Black Sea, (Black Sea CONNECT CSA) and naturally BANOS CSA. In addition, the R&I needs identified by Atlantic Initiatives, including both Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance Support Action (AORAC-SA CSA) and All AtlaNtic Cooperation for Ocean Research and innovation (AANCHOR CSA) are considered. Earlier in November the regional sea initiatives were also officially invited to take part in the drafting process of

## What is inside BANOS CSA?

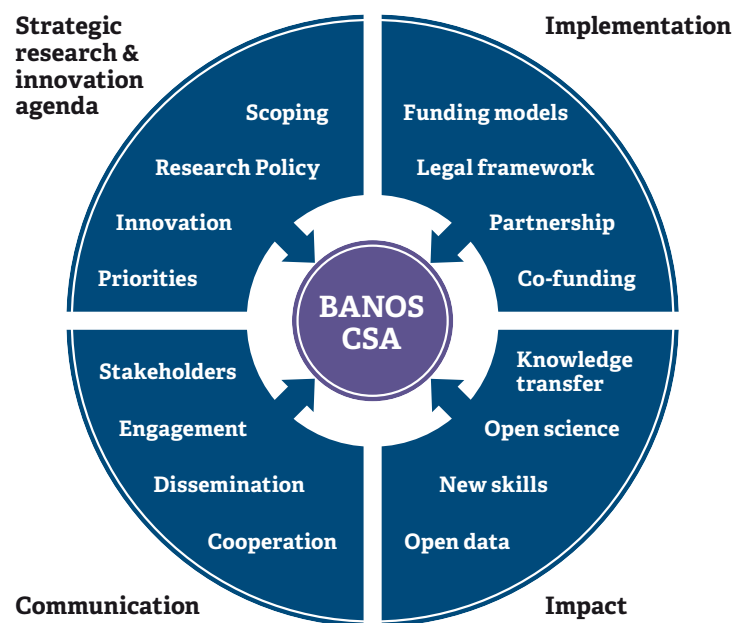


Figure 1.

## Phase III: SRIA roadmap updated

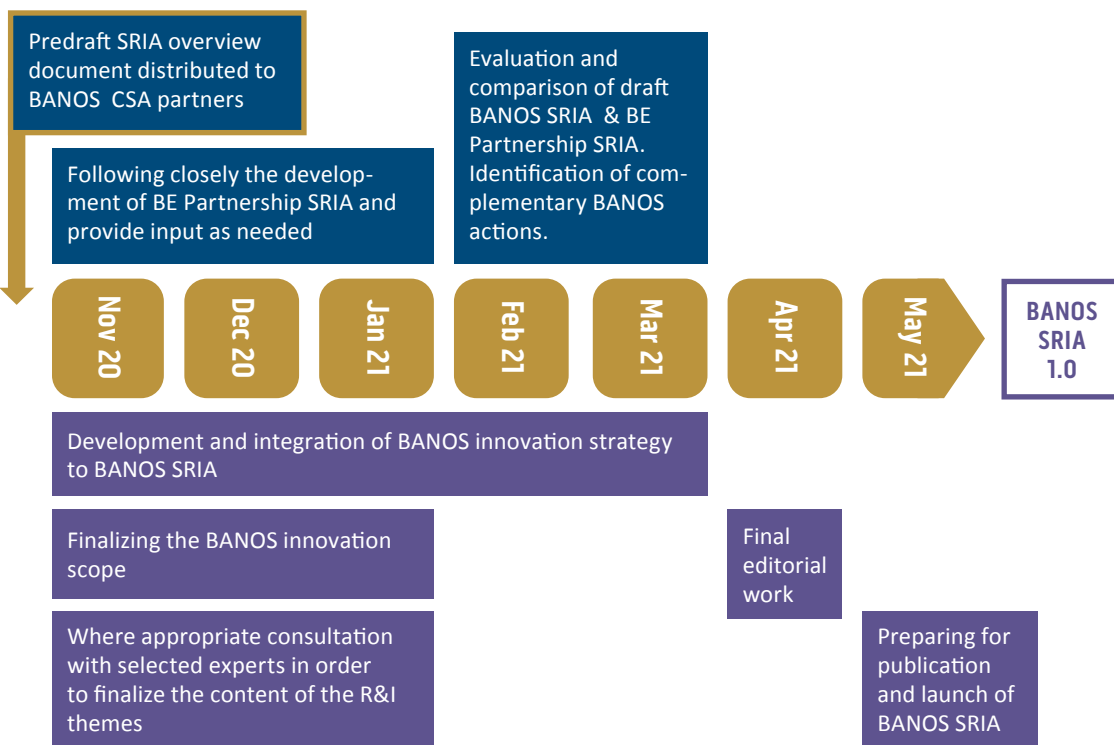


Figure 2.

the BE Partnership SRIA. Subsequently, this work will also feed into the BANOS SRIA process in the coming months (see Figure 2). The deadline for developing the BE SRIA is end of January 2021. This also leaves ample time for BANOS CSA to identify any possible complementary actions important for the European northern regional seas that may fall outside the radar of the BE Partnership. As the BE Partnership SRIA is expected to be a high-level document allowing some space for maneuvering adjustments at later stage, it is still important to have clear borders for the scope and what the Partnership objectives are. The draft BE SRIA is currently open for public consultation and BANOS CSA encourages everyone to submit their remarks and comments by 16 December 2020.

In addition to BANOS SRIA, the CSA has much to offer to

the BE Partnership. In particular relevant are the tasks focusing on delivering impact for the future programme. BANOS, and also the BE Partnership, aim to be more than 'just' calls for research and innovation. Instead they are set to deliver real impact and policy relevant actions while contributing towards ambitious goals of the European Green Deal and beyond. The BANOS CSA strategies focusing on Open science and data, Citizen Science, research synthesis and dissemination, open innovation, impact assessment and capacity building should be developed and finalised by the end of the CSA in a way that benefits greatly both BANOS and the BE Partnership. ■

For more information, email [karoliina.koho@bonuseeig.fi](mailto:karoliina.koho@bonuseeig.fi)



**BANOS**  
Baltic and North Sea Coordination and Support Action

**BANOS CSA consortium members**































**Strategic partners of BANOS CSA**

**Observers of BANOS CSA**











