

**BONUS**

SCIENCE FOR A BETTER FUTURE OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Review 2017



# About BONUS

- 2017 was the fifth full year of implementation of BONUS, the joint Baltic Sea research and development programme [www.bonusportal.org](http://www.bonusportal.org).
- BONUS improves the effectiveness of the Baltic Sea environmental research programming and approach by integrating the research activities in the Baltic Sea system into a durable, cooperative, interdisciplinary well-integrated and focused multi-national programme.
- BONUS enhances region's research capacity and underpin the development and implementation of 'fit-for-purpose' regulations and management practices. This is done in order to respond effectively to the major environmental and key societal challenges which the region faces, and will face, in the coming years.



# BONUS projects cover now all strategic research themes set jointly with the end-users of knowledge

➤ BONUS has launched four calls (2012, 2014, 2015 and 2017), and selected 40 projects for funding. 13 innovation projects and four research projects have finished; 23 research or innovation projects are ongoing, and a few more projects are planned to start in autumn 2018.

**Today, all 19 themes of the BONUS strategic research agenda are satisfactorily covered.**

**“In the beginning BONUS was only a vision of better and more effective research to solve the common problems that the Baltic Sea is facing. It is satisfying to see that after 15 years this vision has now become the reality.”**

*Kaisa Kononen,  
Executive Director, BONUS*

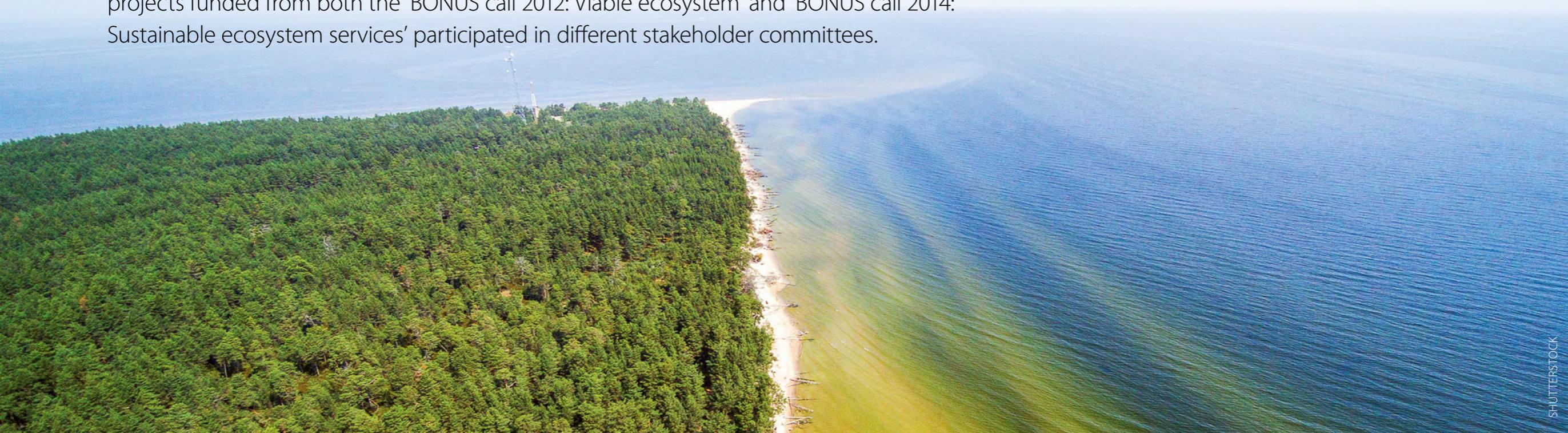


## In 2017, BONUS launched its last call – BONUS call 2017: Synthesis

➤ This sets to synthesise the research outputs that address the challenges for sustainable use of the Baltic Sea ecosystem services. Topics selected for this call extend across the strategic objectives and themes of the BONUS strategic research agenda. Projects are expected to start their implementation in autumn 2018 and analyse a broad body of research outputs as necessary for robust and unbiased review and credible gap analysis, including, but not limited to, the outputs of research done within BONUS.

## Seven 'BONUS call 2012: Viable ecosystem' projects completed their third year of implementation

➤ The summary statistics collected about the projects' performance revealed that the BONUS projects are contributing significantly to the aims of the programme: Alone the seven projects funded from the 'BONUS call 2012: Viable ecosystem' had made by the end of the reporting period 63 suggestions for designing, implementing and evaluating the efficacy of relevant public policies and governance on international, European, the Baltic Sea region or national level. Also, more than 1250 scientists from the projects funded from both the 'BONUS call 2012: Viable ecosystem' and 'BONUS call 2014: Sustainable ecosystem services' participated in different stakeholder committees.



## Final eight 'BONUS call 2012: Innovation' projects completed their implementation

➤ The BONUS briefing issued in October 2017 on the now completed 'BONUS call 2012: Innovation' projects captured how these 13 projects have demonstrated that collaboration between industrial and academic partners can produce tangible results that are readily applicable to the current challenges of improving the marine environment and maritime safety on the sea. These projects' experiences can be applied also in other sea basins.

## Eight 'BONUS call 2014: Sustainable ecosystem services' projects completed their second year of implementation

➤ In 2017, ample active contributions by sustainable ecosystem services projects were made to improve relevant policies and management actions. All projects were particularly active in organising stakeholder events and involving stakeholders from the very beginning of their projects' implementation. Altogether projects organised 38 different events during the reporting period.



## Twelve 'BONUS call 2015: Blue Baltic' projects started their implementation between 1 April and 1 September 2017

➤ The theme on sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea was opened for the first time in this call and received a good response with three of the funded projects addressing different aspects of it. Also, this call has broadened the geographical scope of projects as besides eight BONUS participating countries, researchers from five other countries – Belgium, Canada, Norway, UK and USA – are partners. Also participation of SMEs in BONUS projects is increasing with 19 new industrial partners in these projects.

## Synthesising outcomes of BONUS research adds value to addressing the challenges for sustainable use of the Baltic Sea ecosystem services

➤ The projects' clustering and collaboration activities for 2017/18 included among other three BONUS symposia – the first held in September by BONUS INSPIRE and BIO-C3 in Tallinn, the second in October by BONUS SHEBA in Gothenburg on the topic of shipping and environment, and the third in March 2018 by BONUS BALTICAPP, GO4BALTIC, MIRACLE and SOILS2SEA projects in the framework of sustainable ecosystem governance under changing climate and land use in the Baltic Sea region.

➤ The BONUS clustering activities have resulted in production of larger knowledge synthesis publications: a team led by BONUS BIO-C3 and involving eight BONUS projects submitted a manuscript "The Baltic Sea as time machine for the global coastal ocean" and another team involving authors of six projects produced a manuscript on the issues of standardising climate and socio-political scenarios for the Baltic Sea region. Also a special issue of AMBIO in early 2019 will synthesise the results of the 3rd BONUS Symposium.



**BONUS CLEANAQ participants studying aquaculture sludge treatment at a commercial farm during the project kick-off meeting.**

# BONUS and society: positive impact assessments, active stakeholder engagement and successful final evaluation steer the way for BONUS continuation

## **BONUS has had a strong, positive impact on the application of science to policy development**

➤ Two BONUS impact studies (one about impact on scientific excellence and the other on policies) were completed and reported, among other, on practical use of BONUS-funded research in support of relevant policies: The findings showed that BONUS has had a strong, positive impact on the application of science to policy development. In other words, it has been responsible for wide-ranging improvements such as the extent to which science-based thinking and argument is used in policy-making; this underlines the notion that in today's society having policy informing science and science informing policy is paramount.



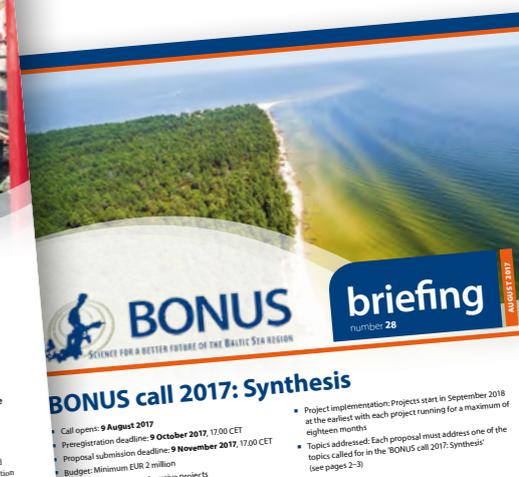
## BONUS and society: wide array of activities directed to the broad spectrum of stakeholder communities

➤ During 2017, the BONUS Secretariat alone attended over 50 different seminars, policy forums and conferences as invited keynote speaker, participant, observer, member of steering committee, exhibitor or organiser, including also the 6th BONUS Young Scientist Club [www.bonusportal.org/ys](http://www.bonusportal.org/ys) under the topic 'Turbo-charge your writing and communicate the impact of your research!'

Also, the communications and dissemination...

- The BONUS website [www.bonusportal.org](http://www.bonusportal.org) – 35 000 visits, over 20 000 unique visitors and 100 000 pageviews, over 60 news items etc., and the BONUS projects' website [www.bonusprojects.org](http://www.bonusprojects.org) managed by the projects' themselves – close to 20 000 visits
- Twitter @BONUSBaltic – 500+ followers, many thousands of impressions over the top weekly recordings
- The BONUS e-bulletin – 19 issues, 3000 subscribers

...activities and events of BONUS continued as a cross-cutting element in BONUS stakeholder activities and as an integral part of the BONUS programme delivery, and involving the wider BONUS community i.e. policy makers, funders, researchers and others with an interest to BONUS information and results.



## 10-year jubilee celebrations together with BONUS stakeholder community took place in May 2017 in Helsinki

- One major highlight was the 6th BONUS Forum: Dimensions of BONUS impact on 4 May 2017

**“BONUS has reduced fragmentation of research and made it more integrated and interdisciplinary than before” – an independent evaluation panel in spring 2017 appointed by the European Commission**

- Research results based on a jointly agreed strategic research agenda are making major contributions to development and implementation of the Baltic Sea related policy action plans. Resulting from efficient activities and communications towards stakeholders, BONUS has established itself firmly in the broad landscape of key networks crossing over a variety of sectors in the Baltic Sea region.



BONUS 10 year jubilee celebration, 4 May 2017

# Funds for implementing the BONUS programme have been used effectively

➤ The funding for the projects of the BONUS calls 2012, 2014 and 2015 (including in kind, free of charge infrastructure contributions) constitute 90 % of the total funding of EUR 98,4 million reserved for implementing the BONUS programme. With the EUR 4,736 million still available from the total cash committed to fund BONUS projects, the Steering Committee opened one more, smaller 'BONUS call 2017: Synthesis' with minimum total funding of EUR 2 million. From the total EUR 5 million contribution reserved for the running costs of the BONUS programme, a total of EUR 4,4 million was consumed by the end of 2017.

By the end of 2017, BONUS had signed also bilateral agreements with 17 national providers of 'in kind, free of charge' research infrastructures from seven BONUS countries. By completing the Blue Baltic projects' co-financing agreements in the first half of 2017, the well-functioning practise of national funding institutions will continue to ensure the use of common rules for EU and national funding.



# Looking forward

## Towards sustainable blue growth and a new joint northern European regional seas research and innovation programme

➤ A dedicated planning group, supported by the Secretariat, steered the preparation of the plan for BONUS continuation with the aim of expanding the geographic scope to the North Sea. In October 2017, the European Commission launched a call for Coordination and Support Action (CSA) H2020-BG-2018-2020 in Horizon 2020 work programme 2018–2020 in order to facilitate the process of engaging with the North Sea stakeholders. In response to this call, and with the lead by the BONUS Secretariat, 15 research and innovation funding organisations representing 13 states submitted a proposal in February 2018 of a preparatory project for the future joint Baltic Sea and the North Sea research and innovation programme.

### In autumn 2018:

- A joint HELCOM-BONUS stakeholder conference will take place on 6 November 2018 in Copenhagen – this together with other key strategic actors invited from the northern European regional seas, including ICES, OSPAR, JPIO etc. This builds well on the long-term science-policy and BONUS-HELCOM collaboration: in 2017, especially topics of biodiversity protection and marine protected areas, nutrients, social and economic analysis, and climate change were on the agenda.
- Future projects to be funded from the ‘BONUS call 2017: Synthesis’ will be kicked off with a view of last projects finishing their work in September 2020.
- Provided that the CSA proposal is successful, the planning of the new programme with the broadened scope to form a joint northern European regional seas programme will start.

All efforts’ undercurrent lies in support of related environmental policy and sustainable development of the northern European regional seas and enhanced synergies across the region, Europe and wider.

**“Cooperation and common vision have been our (BONUS’s) strengths and so it should remain – just with wider institutional and geographical scope.”**

*Maria Habicht,  
Chair of the BONUS Steering Committee,  
Estonian Research Council*



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## BONUS members



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