



EUROPEAN STRAITS INITIATIVE

**Report of activities
of the European Straits Initiative (ESI)
2016**

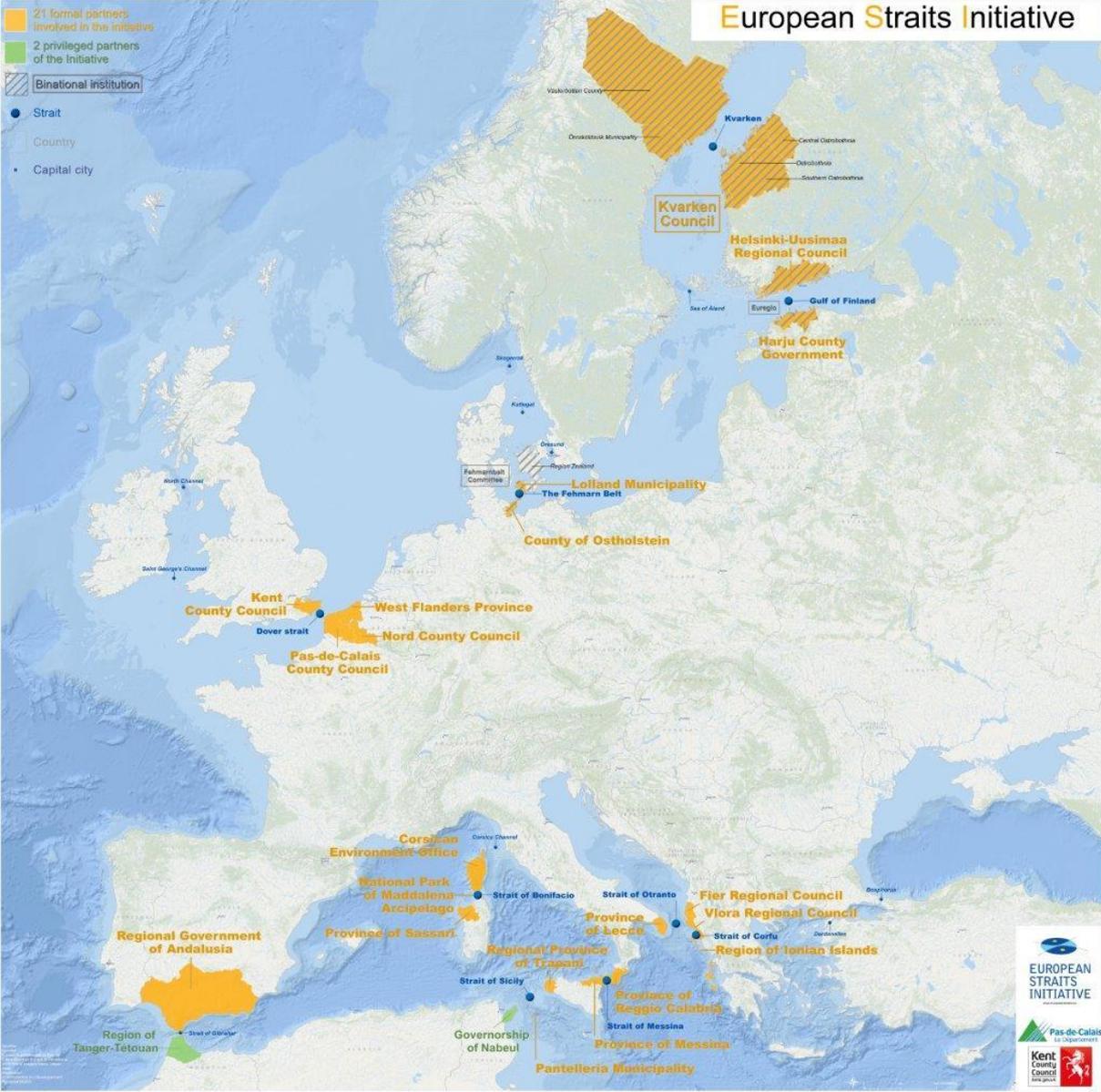
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www.europeanstraits.eu

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European Straits Initiative



Introduction

The year 2016 was marked by the approval and launch of PASSAGE project and the official entry of 2 new partners in the European Straits Initiative. Other major activities have been the submission and approval of Mob'inclus project (that will start in 2017) as well as the preparation of a project on cultural heritage of straits to be submitted under Horizon 2020 call for projects early 2017. Several lobbying actions have also been implemented.

1. Further developing the exchange of experiences

• **PASSAGE project**

PASSAGE project (*Public Authorities Supporting low-carbon Growth in European maritime border regions*) was submitted to the Interreg Europe programme authorities at the first call for projects, in July 2015. It was approved **on 9 February 2016** and officially started **on 1st April 2016**.

PASSAGE project is based on the fact that, by their geography, the straits of Europe stand at the very centre of the maritime border regions. As important passage points, they concentrate flows and activities that generate significant carbon pressure. Not only do the inland areas of straits not always benefit from the international maritime flows in terms of local economic development, but their populations are also directly impacted by carbon emissions of these flows and by the traffic and activities they generate in the hinterlands, over which local authorities have little control. The maritime border is identified as a direct obstacle to the development of effective and integrated low-carbon strategies for limiting pollution in straits. The Interreg A cross-border cooperation programmes are the main instruments capable of encouraging the development of integrated approaches on maritime borders, but low-carbon economy, which should be the cross-cutting objective, is often underestimated. The objective of the PASSAGE project is therefore to address the low-carbon challenge in the five maritime cross-border regions, impacting five Interreg VA European territorial cooperation programmes.

Most of the partners of the PASSAGE project are also members of the European Straits Initiative. However, in order to maximise exchanges, the partnership has been enlarged to include new straits. In total, the project includes 11 partners from eight countries straddling five straits.

Dover Strait	
Pas-de-Calais County Council	France – <i>lead partner</i>
Kent County Council	United Kingdom
Corsican Channel	
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bastia Haute-Corse	France
Chamber of Commerce of Livorno	Italy
Straits of Otranto/Corfu	
Province of Lecce	Italy
InnoPolis: Centre for innovation and culture	Greece
Region of Ionian Islands	Greece
Regional Council of Vlora	Albania
Gulf of Finland	
Regional Council of Helsinki-Uusimaa	Finland
Harju County	Estonia
Fehmarnbelt	
Femern Belt Development	Denmark

NB: project partners who were not members of the European Straits Initiative when project was submitted are marked in blue

The launching conference of the project was organised **on 12 May 2016** in Boulogne-sur-Mer (Pas-de-Calais) with guest speakers among whom:

- Jean-Christophe Victor, French geopolitician founder of the LEPAC institute and famous for its geopolitical TV show “Le dessous des cartes”, who highlighted the main stakes of European straits in a changing world
- Philippe Vasseur, President of the regional chamber of commerce of Northern France, who introduced the participants with the concept of “Third industrial revolution” (J. Rifkin) developed in Nord – Pas-de-Calais
- Kaarin Taipale, elected representative of Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, who insisted on the importance of such projects in the global context of the Paris agreement and Objectives for sustainable development of the United Nations.



PASSAGE project partners at the launching conference

A first technical seminar was organised in the Fehmarnbelt **from 6 to 8 September 2016**, at the invitation of Femern Belt Development. It was the opportunity for the 11 partners to share the main issues linked with carbon emissions in their region and discuss the possibilities of funding low-carbon initiatives through INTERREG V A programmes covering their maritime border regions. Field visit included a sugar beet factory and Femern A/S, the company in charge of developing the tunnel project between Denmark and Germany.

The first thematic seminar of the project was organised in Helsinki from 22 to 24 November 2016 and focused on the topic of low-carbon transportation. It was the opportunity for the project partners to learn more about Tallinn-Helsinki fixed link project and its impact on carbon emissions. Each strait presented one or several good practices and two “best practices” were selected:

- LNG port operations in Livorno (Corsica Channel)
- Fehmarnbelt ticket (Fehmarnbelt)

More information on PASSAGE project:

- www.interregeurope.eu/passage
- www.linkedin.com/groups/8525182
- ESI website private area: "PASSAGE" drop-down menu

In the framework of the project, 6 "local stakeholder groups" have been launched on the 6 straits of the partnership with the objective of involving a maximum of stakeholders in the project, to come out with strong cross-border action plans. The local stakeholder group meetings will be organised at least every semester, at cross-border level. They will help project partners to select the best practices of their territory, to be presented to all partners during interregional seminars.

- **Mob'inclus project**

Proposal to build a project around international youth mobility was made by Pas-de-Calais County Council to ESI project partners in August 2016, considering the opportunity of a call for project of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Mob'inclus* project was submitted in September.

The project aims to demonstrate, thanks to two complementary actions, that international youth mobility is an efficient tool for inclusion, adaptable to each youngster profile. The project was built around two sub-topics:

- Learning mobility

The first action of the project is a 5-month training in hostelry and catering of a dozen of youngsters from Pas-de-Calais in 2017. For 10 weeks, on the Opal Coast (Pas-de-Calais), the youngsters will follow theoretical and practical training in the training center F2C, alternating with professional training in restaurants and prepared for mobility (language, culture, autonomy etc.). In April, they will leave in group for a professional training of 6 weeks in the restaurants of the Province of Lecce in partnership with the hostelry school Istituto Aldo Moro de Santa Cesarea Terme.

In parallel of the learning mobility of the youngsters, the project includes mobility of several professionals involved in youth, inclusion and training policies to enhance exchange of good practices. In the long term, the project might lead to the co-construction of a professional training in catering including French-Italian mobilities between Pas-de-Calais and the province of Lecce.

Pas-de-Calais County Council and the Province of Lecce are the two partners of the European Straits Initiative that will implement this action together with their local partners. Results of the project will be shared with all partners of the Initiative.

- Engagement mobility

A second action of the project is ten youngsters of Pas-de-Calais that will travel to partner territories of the European Straits Initiative: Vlora region (Albania), province of Reggio Calabria (Italy), region of Ionian islands (Greece) and the province of West Flanders (Belgium).

The youngsters will be identified and followed by the department in charge of insertion within Pas-de-Calais County Council, together with the hosting territories. They will be entrusted with missions of general interest in the fields of culture and leisure, the environment, memory and citizenship.

The project was approved **on 26 October 2016** and will receive a financial support of 51,216 € from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project will also benefit from a financial support of the French agency for national volunteer service and the Erasmus + programme.

- **Horizon 2020 project on cultural heritage of straits**

In June 2016, the University of Reggio Calabria proposed to ESI partners to join a project idea on cultural heritage of straits to be submitted under the Horizon 2020 call for projects on “cultural heritage of European maritime and coastal regions” in February 2017.

Several ESI partners got involved in the preparation of the project, together with researchers of different European universities. The University of Reggio Calabria is the coordinator in the project.

The project will be submitted (Phase 1) on 2 February 2017.

- **Thematic commissions**

2016 has been a very intense year for projects linked with the European Straits Initiative. Unfortunately, it resulted in an important delay for activity of the 4 thematic commissions: no technical meeting was organised and the work plans adopted in October 2015 were not fulfilled.

2. Lobbying activities

The European Straits Initiative has undertaken lobbying actions at various levels:

- Contribution of Pas-de-Calais County Council to the Climate Chance forum; the proposal of presentation of our partnership and our actions in favour of climate (in particular, PASSAGE project) was not approved but the contribution was published on the website: <http://www.climatechance2016.com/en/>
- Presentation of ESI in the framework of a presentation of the Fehmarnbelt Committee at the occasion of *Border Regions In Transition* (BRIT) international conference. The presentation was performed by Region Zealand, former partner of the European Straits Initiative, in Hamburg **in May 2016**.
- Presentation of ESI in the framework of *Borders In Globalization* (BIG) policy forum, in Paris **in July 2016**. BIG is a Canadian research project on borders and the French *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière* invited Jean-Louis Cottigny, Vice-president of Pas-de-Calais County Council for Europe and international, to speak to the round table dedicated to “innovation in the management of the borders and border regions”.



Speech of Jean-Louis Cottigny at BIG policy forum

- Presentation of ESI by the coordinator at the occasion of a study day on “new challenges of maritime borders” at the University of Artois (Arras, France), **on 28 September 2016**.
- Contribution of Pas-de-Calais County Council to the consultation on French national strategy for sea and coastal areas, **in October 2016**. Mention of specificities of the straits of Bonifacio and Dover, arguments in favour of developing cross-border governance of these areas.
- Mention of ESI partnership and contribution to the consultation on French national strategy for sea and coastal areas in the opening speech of Blandine Drain, Vice-president of Pas-de-Calais County Council, at the occasion of the congress of the *National association of elected representatives of the coastal areas* in Le Touquet-Paris-Plage (Pas-de-Calais, France), **in November 2016**. This speech was performed in presence of the French Minister of for territorial planning, rurality and local authorities, Mr Jean-Michel Baylet.



Blandine Drain and Jean-Michel Baylet at the congress of the National association of elected representatives of the coastal areas

3. Life of the network

No political or technical conference has been organised in 2016, but new partners have integrated the network.

The new partners are:

- Region of Tangiers-Tetouan-Al Hoceima (Morocco - Strait of Gibraltar)

- Chamber of commerce of Maremma and Tirreno (Italy – Corsica Channel)

Two partners are also in the process of adhesion to the European Straits Initiative:

- Chamber of commerce of Bastia and Haute-Corse (France – Corsica Channel)
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (UK – Northern Channel)

New technical exchanges have been established with the Marmara Municipalities Union (Straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles, Turkey).

The website www.europeanstraits.eu was consulted by 3,989 visitors between 1 January and 31 December 2016 (3,259 in 2014; 6,631 in 2015). Three newsletters were published and sent to almost 1,500 subscribers in French and English.

PART 2: 2016 REPORT OF THE ESI PARTNERS

STRAIT	For improved consideration of straits (lobbying, communication, life of the network)	For the emergence of cooperation projects at straits level (projects, exchanges of experience)
<p>1. Dover Strait</p>	<p>A certain number of actions by Pas-de-Calais County Council were carried out for ESI (see Part 1).</p> <p>17 May: Technical meeting of the 4 partners of ESI on Dover Strait, in Wimille (Pas-de-Calais)</p> <p>13 July: Presentation of PASSAGE project and straits' issues to the Monitoring Committee of INTERREG VA 2 Seas programme</p> <p>September:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of ESI and PASSAGE project to the "Campus de la Mer" administration (Pas-de-Calais, France) - Presentation of ESI and PASSAGE project to several Pas-de-Calais stakeholders in Wimille <p>26 September: Trilateral technical meeting of Nord County Council, Province of West- Flanders and Pas-de-Calais County Council – ESI at the agenda (Brugges, West-Flanders)</p> <p>November:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Straits Initiative and specificities of straits highlighted to Pas-de-Calais County Council 7,000 employees at the occasion of the "Week of international solidarity". - ESI and PASSAGE project presented to Pas-de-Calais and Kent stakeholders (first local stakeholder group meeting of PASSAGE project) <p>Articles on the ESI website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green light for the inclusion and international youth mobility project within ESI partner regions 	<p>Pas-de-Calais County Council lead partner and Kent County Council partner of PASSAGE project.</p> <p>9 March: Bilateral technical meeting of Nord County Council and Pas-de-Calais County Council about ESI</p> <p>12 May: launching conference of PASSAGE project in Boulogne-sur-Mer (Pas-de-Calais)</p> <p>September:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation of Pas-de-Calais County Council and Kent County Council to PASSAGE seminar in Maribo (Denmark). Organization of a local stakeholder group meeting about PASSAGE project on each side of the strait. - Submission of Mob'inclus project to the French Ministry of Foreign affairs by Pas-de-Calais County Council, with involvement of the Province of West Flanders. <p>November:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation of Pas-de-Calais County Council and Kent County Council to PASSAGE seminar in Helsinki (Finland). Organization of a joint cross-border stakeholder group meeting about PASSAGE project in Wimille (Pas-de-Calais). - Exchanges between Pas-de-Calais County Council and Kent County Council on possible cooperation on isolated children in migration through a project coordinated by the NGO ECPAT France; finally, only Pas-de-Calais County Council is partner of the project. <p>Pas-de-Calais County Council and Kent County Council have also been involved in the preparation of a Horizon 2020 project on cultural heritage of straits, to be submitted early 2017.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dover Strait – "Semaine de la solidarité internationale": travel around straits of the world - ESI presented to French minister and elected representatives of the coastal areas - BIG up for European straits! 	
2. Strait of Bonifacio		<p>The Corsican Environment Office was involved in the preparation of a Horizon 2020 project on cultural heritage of straits.</p> <p>National Park of La Maddalena Arcipelago involved in the preparation of Mob'inclus project.</p>
3. Corsica Channel	<p>Entry of the Chamber of commerce of Maremma and Tirreno in the ESI.</p> <p>Articles on the ESI website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Chamber of commerce of Maremma and Tirreno joins ESI 	<p>The Chamber of commerce of Maremma and Tirreno and the Chamber of commerce of Bastia and Haute-Corse are partners of PASSAGE project.</p> <p>May: participation of both chambers of commerce to PASSAGE launching conference in Boulogne-sur-Mer (France).</p> <p>26 June: Organisation of a cross-border local stakeholder group meeting about PASSAGE project in Livorno (Italy).</p> <p>September: participation of both chambers of commerce to PASSAGE seminar in Maribo (Denmark).</p> <p>November: participation of both chambers of commerce to PASSAGE seminar in Helsinki (Finland). "The LNG operations in the port of Livorno" has been selected as one of the 2 best practices of low-carbon transportation.</p> <p>The Chamber of commerce of Maremma and Tirreno has also been involved in the preparation of a Horizon 2020 project on cultural heritage of straits, to be submitted early 2017.</p>
4. Strait of Sicily		

	<p>Articles on the ESI website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strait of Sicily - A European Maritime Day coloured with blue technologies 	
<p>5. Straits of Otranto/Corfu</p>		<p>Region Vlora, the Province of Lecce, the Region of Ionian Islands and InnoPolis are partners of PASSAGE project.</p> <p>September: participation of the 4 partners to PASSAGE seminar in Maribo (Denmark).</p> <p>November: participation of the 4 partners to PASSAGE seminar in Helsinki (Finland).</p> <p>The Province of Lecce has been involved in the preparation of a Horizon 2020 project on cultural heritage of straits, to be submitted early 2017.</p> <p>The Province of Lecce, Region Vlora and the Region of Ionian Islands have also been involved in the preparation of Mob'inclus project.</p> <p>Region Vlora and the Region of Ionian Islands are involved in several cross-border projects.</p>
<p>6. Strait of Messina</p>	<p>Publication of a book on culture in the Strait of Messina by several academics: highlights some of the specificities of the strait.</p> <p>Articles on the ESI website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strait of Messina - A book devoted to culture around the strait 	<p>The Province of Reggio Calabria has been involved in the preparation of a Horizon 2020 project on cultural heritage of straits, to be submitted early 2017. The University of Reggio Calabria is the coordinator of this research and innovation project.</p>
<p>7. Kvarken Strait</p>	<p>Lobbying and information dissemination: The Kvarken Council is actively lobbying for cross border cohesion in the Kvarken Strait. The Board of the Kvarken Council consists of high-level politicians and civil servants from both sides of the Kvarken Strait. Also local and</p>	<p>Participation of the Kvarken Council to PASSAGE project seminar in Helsinki (Finland).</p> <p>The Kvarken Council organized 4 cross-border territorial meetings for</p>

regional politicians as well as members of national parliaments and MEP:s are informed about cross border issues in the Kvarken Strait, by newsletters, thematic meetings, conferences etc.

Communication:

- Information about ESI can be found on Kvarken Council's webpage: <http://www.kvarken.org/kvarken-council/kvarken/cooperation/>
- The ESI partnership has been mentioned in one of the Kvarken Council's newsletters in 2016, with 285 subscribers. The article can also be found on the webpage <http://www.kvarken.org/news1/catalyst-for-the-kvarken-region> and the same text has been shared on the Kvarken Council's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/kvarkenradet/>, with approximately 1050 followers.
- The ESI partnership was presented in the Kvarken Council's annual report 2015. The annual report has been distributed to all Kvarken Council's cooperation partners in 2016.

Articles on the ESI website

- [Strait of Kvarken - A region's flagship project wins international award](#)
- [Strait of Kvarken - "Cross Border World Heritage" Menu](#)
- [Kvarken - The international KvarkenMoS Conference highlights importance of the Kvarken Transport Route](#)

regional politicians and civil servants during 2016.

A cross-border conference about strait related issues was organized by the Kvarken Council on 9 May in Örnsköldsvik, Sweden.

The Kvarken Council and the project E12 Atlantica Transport hosted the international **Motorways of the Seas conference KvarkenMoS**, on 20-22 April 2016. The MoS Conference on Northern Transport Links gathered around 200 participants to the Kvarken region, from all over the globe. The cross-border conference was held in Umeå in Sweden, Vaasa in Finland, and onboard the Wasa Express ferry between the two countries.

The Kvarken Council helps organisations that wish to establish cross-border cooperations, by providing information, contacts etcetera. In addition to this the Kvarken Council provides travel grants for different interest groups wishing to create contacts across the strait. During 2016 travel grants have been provided for university student bodies, junior sports teams etc.

The Kvarken Council manages four cross-border projects (INTERREG Botnia-Atlantica projects):

- E12 Atlantica Transport** is a transport and infrastructure project, focusing on cross-border transport planning, joint strategies for cross-border transport and infrastructure, and future permanent models (such as EGTC) for the E12 transport strait across Norway, Sweden and Finland.
- Spotlight High-Low Coast** is a world heritage and tourism related project, aiming at increasing sustainable tourism in the cross-border UNESCO world heritage site High Coast-Kvarken Archipelago and surrounding regions.
- Midway Alignment Botnia Atlantica I and II** (MABA I and II) are transport strategy projects, with the aim to facilitate cross-border infrastructure investments in the Kvarken region by producing background materials for the said purpose.

The Kvarken Council is also a Partner in the North Sea Baltic project **NSB CoRe**, which aims to improve the sustainable accessibility of the Eastern Baltic Sea Region (EBSR) for freight and passenger transport.

		<p>The Kvarken Council and TEN-T project Midway Alignment of the Bothnian Corridor was awarded the international Sail of Papenburg Award 2016, which is granted by the Association of European Border Regions AEBR for outstanding programmes, strategies, projects and actions within the scope of cross-border cooperation that can be seen as exemplary. The motivation for the award is "Vital infrastructure is a precondition for sustainable economic development and cross-border cooperation. The link across the Baltic Sea between Finland and Sweden by means of a ferry that is operated throughout the whole year is not only a regional and interregional issue, but also an important part of the European transport network (TEN-T)."</p>
<p>8. Fehmarnbelt</p>	<p>17-20 May: European Straits Initiative mentioned in the framework of an international conference BRIT (Border Regions In Transition), which took place in Hamburg.</p> <p>Articles on the ESI website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fehmarn Belt cross-border cooperation highlighted at global research conference "Border Regions in Transition" 	<p>Femernbelt Development is a partner of PASSAGE project. In the framework of the project, this organization is working closely with the County of Ostholstein.</p> <p>May: participation of Femernbelt Development to PASSAGE launching conference in Boulogne-sur-Mer (France).</p> <p>September: Organization of PASSAGE seminar in Maribo (Denmark) by Femernbelt Development. The County of Ostholstein took an active part to the seminar.</p> <p>November: participation of Femernbelt Development and the County of Ostholstein to PASSAGE seminar in Helsinki (Finland). The "Fehmarnbelt ticket" was selected as one of the 2 best practices of low-carbon transportation.</p>
<p>9. Gulf of Finland</p>	<p>12 October: Rail Baltica Workshop in Brussels at the occasion of the European Week of Cities and Regions.</p> <p>8-9 November: presentation at the occasion of the EUSBSR strategy forum, in Stockholm</p> <p>Two press releases about the signature of the MoU between Finland and Estonia about transport cooperation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press release of Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council (in 	<p>Several cross-border projects are implemented in the Gulf of Finland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FinEst Link - FinEst Smart Mobility - NSB CoRe <p>Several events have been organized in the framework of these projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12 technical meetings in Helsinki and 2 technical meetings in Tallinn for FinEst Link project - Kick-off conference of NSB CoRe in Helsinki (7-8 April)

	<p>Finnish)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press release of the City of Helsinki (in English) <p>Articles on the ESI website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gulf of Finland - Helsinki-Tallinn tunnel feasibility study got EU funding - Gulf of Finland - Estonia and Finland cooperation memorandum gives new impulse to twin-region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FinEst Link secretariat meeting in Helsinki (15 June) - FinEst Link and FinEst Smart Mobility kick-off and FinEst Link workshop in Helsinki (21 November) <p>On 5th January, a Memorandum of Understanding between Estonia and Finland, that sets forth the terms and forms of cooperation towards the implementing improved mobility and interactions of Finnish-Estonian transport has been signed in Helsinki.</p> <p>Harju County Government and Helsinki-Uusima Regional Council are both partners of PASSAGE project.</p> <p>May: participation of Harju County Government and Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council to PASSAGE launching conference in Boulogne-sur-Mer (France).</p> <p>June: Local stakeholder group meeting of PASSAGE project in Helsinki</p> <p>September: participation of Harju County Government and Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council to PASSAGE seminar in Maribo (Denmark).</p> <p>November: organization of PASSAGE seminar in Helsinki (Finland) by Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council. Harju County Government also participated to the seminar, as well as several local stakeholders from the strait.</p>
<p>10. Strait of Gibraltar</p>	<p>Entry of the Region of Tanger-Tétouan-Al Hoceima (Morocco) in the ESI.</p> <p>Articles on the ESI website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima Region commits to ESI 	



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