

Interreg



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TwinReg

TwinReg Project

22.OCTOBER 2026

SAKARI SAARINEN (HURC) AND

TIINA BELDSINSKY (HOL)

Central Baltic Programme project TwinReg

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Project objective

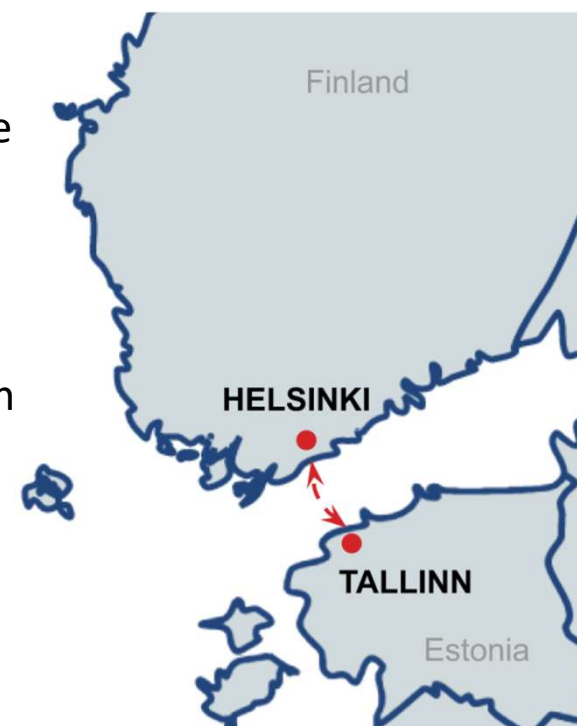
- Establish joint cross-border strategic development planning and stakeholder involvement framework used in the Harju and Helsinki-Uusimaa regions.
- Strengthen strategic cross-border cooperation between Harju County and Helsinki-Uusimaa
- Develop practical tools for continuous cooperation across the Gulf of Finland

Project duration – 18 months

01. June 2025 - **30. November 2026**

Project Partners

Union of Harju County Municipalities and Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council



Three pillars of TwinReg

Strategic Planning

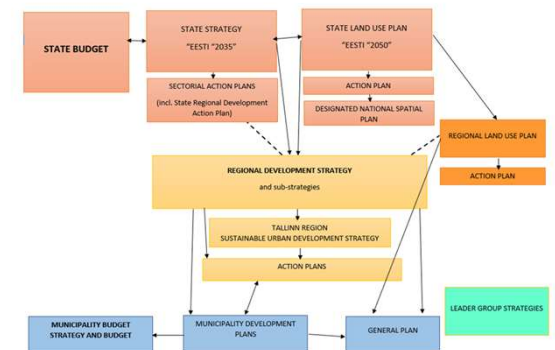
- Comparison of planning systems
- Exchange of planning practices and stakeholder participation methods
- Developing of a cross-border strategic planning framework

Cross-Border Services

- Identification of bottlenecks faced by cross-border citizens
- Stakeholder workshops and interviews

Future Cooperation Model

- Benchmarking successful European cooperation structures
- Assessment of governance options
- Roadmap for future cross-border cooperation



TwinReg paving the way for more structured and permanent Cross-Border Cooperation model

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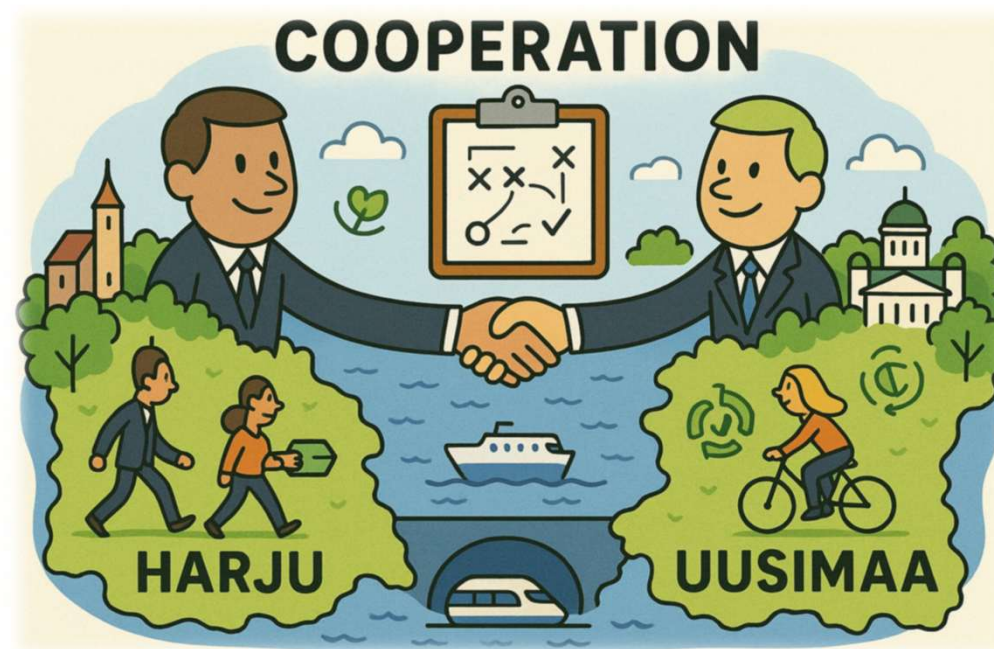
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Helsinki-Tallinn metropolitan region is uniquely positioned for deeper cooperation due to its strong economic integration, common labour market, transport connectivity, long cooperation history and shared ambitions in innovation, green transition and sustainable mobility. These characteristics **require a more structured and permanent collaboration governance model** than the current and traditional cooperation can provide.

Twinreg has:

- Benchmarked and studied co-operation structures from other cross-border regions in the EU.
- Identified relevant institutions and stakeholders.
- Developed recommendations for future cooperation and outlined roadmap towards more structured and permanent collaboration governance model.



Permanent cross-border co-operation model options

TwinReg has benchmarked and studied several different European cross-border co-operation models:

European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC);

- Kvarken Council EGTC (Finland-Sweden)
- Euroregion Baltic EGTC (Poland-Sweden-Denmark)

Euroregion

- Euregio (Netherlands – Germany)

Networks;

- String Megaregion (Norway – Sweden – Denmark – Germany)
- Scandria Alliance (ScanMed TEN-T Corridor from Finland to Italy)

TwinReg suggestions for strengthening the cross-border cooperation

TwinReg recommends a **phased approach to strengthen cross-border cooperation between Helsinki-Uusimaa and Harju Counties**, with the long-term objective of establishing a **European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)**.

While EGTC offers the most effective framework for strategic regional development, EU advocacy and direct access to funding opportunities, a **lighter cooperation network should be established first** to build experience, trust and institutional capacity.

The **cooperation network should serve as the initial platform for strengthening collaboration, but the goal should be the creation of an EGTC**. This model offers the strongest foundation for long-term regional development, sustainable financing, effective governance and enhanced international competitiveness of the cross-border region.

EGTC is considered the most suitable long-term solution because it:

- Enables direct management of EU funding and strategic projects.
- Provides a recognised EU identity, legal framework and clear governance structure.
- Supports integrated planning of innovation, transport, labour mobility, digitalisation, tourism and the green transition.
- Ensures continuity beyond individual projects and political cycles.
- Allows the gradual inclusion of municipalities, universities, business organisations and other stakeholders.

EGTC - An opportunity to anchor cross-Gulf of Finland cooperation within an international framework eligible for EU funding

- Currently there are 92 EGTCs in Europe. In Finland, only the Kvarken Council holds this status and in Estonia there are no EGTCs yet.
- EGTC is a form of regional cooperation recognized by the EU. This cooperation involves the creation of a legal entity that can, for example, participate in EU calls for proposals.
- EGTC enables public entities from different Member States to cooperate within the framework of a new legal entity. Through an EGTC, authorities from Member States can establish a joint structure to implement projects, investments, or policies within the EGTC's area of operation—with or without EU funding.
- Members of an EGTC may be Member States, regional or local authorities, associations, or other public bodies.

Recommended Roadmap

Phase 1: Cooperation Network

- Establish a Gulf of Finland Cooperation Network involving local and regional authorities, cities, ports and universities.
- Develop a joint vision, work programme and pilot projects.
- Organise annual cooperation forum.

Phase 2: EGTC Preparation

- Conduct legal, financial and governance studies.
- Consult national authorities and key stakeholders.
- Establish a permanent secretariat and cooperation mechanisms.

Phase 3: Establish EGTC

- Create an EGTC led by Helsinki and Tallinn with Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council and Union of Harju County Municipalities as other founding partners.
- Enable implementation of joint strategies and EU-funded initiatives.

Phase 4: Expansion

- Extend membership to municipalities, universities, chambers of commerce, transport organisations and innovation actors through a structured accession process.

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Work is just starting!

