

Baltic Area Legal Studies BALEX

STRATEGY 2018-2021

Baltic Area Legal Studies BALEX is a competence cluster established by the University of Turku's Faculty of Law and the Åbo Akademi University's Department of Law at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Business and Economics in 2014. BALEX's aim is to offer high quality legal research, training and events on issues of relevance to multi-layer governance, regulation and cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.

What is BALEX

BALEX is an international legal competence cluster with the aim of filling the previous void in legal research, training and events on the Baltic Sea region issues. BALEX has three main activities:

- 1) To carry out **high quality legal research** in matters that are of relevance for and common to the Baltic Sea region and to encourage young scientists to engage in Baltic Sea research.
- 2) To offer **interdisciplinary and legal academic training** for students and researchers, including tailor-made courses on legislation and governance in the region and, in the long term, possibly summer schools or postgraduate programs in Baltic Sea law.
- 3) To organize **guest-lectures, seminars and workshops** on topical themes in the region and to provide vocational training on Baltic Sea law for lawyers, decision-makers and other interested parties.

BALEX is also able to offer its expertise and do legal consultancy-like work for, in particular, public organizations, when there is an academic interest. BALEX may also offer its expertise as background information papers for the media, as speakers for external topical events and for smaller research projects. BALEX aims at making the threshold between the academia and the business sector & the society smaller by communicating and giving training in legal research, legislation and governance.

Long-term vision

BALEX's long-term vision is to be an internationally leading legal center of excellence and an acknowledged research and teaching environment in a broad range of issues of relevance for the Baltic Sea region. It will be a platform to discuss and debate current questions on e.g. multi-layered governance, and a "hub" for finding colleagues for various collaborations and projects in this field of research. BALEX aims at connecting this expertise

with the concrete needs of the Baltic Sea region (BSR); its countries, regions and cities, students, officials, NGO's and other players. One of its objectives is to invite experts and researchers from the BSR to visit Turku and BALEX. In terms of size, we aim at BALEX staff consisting of 1-2 administrative staff, 3-4 researchers and 1-2 visiting experts from the region. The aim is to grow in terms of competence & size and as a more independent organization but to maintain the flexibility and avoid unnecessary expenses.

BALEX will continue both its research work, educational work and events. Especially the educational work at and in cooperation with the universities will be developed further. A cross-disciplinary course on Baltic Sea governance issues, focusing on law, is conceived even in the medium term, perhaps developing into a Masters' programme in Baltic Sea Law and Governance in the longer term. BALEX aims to be a place where researchers from the whole region come to stay for a while. BALEX also aims at increasing the communication about the research work and the legal issues in the BSR.

In the long term, BALEX's funding will be managed via both long-term funding from the universities and other organizations, and project means (research and more applied projects, also private funding). BALEX should be developed in cooperation between and in control of the two universities with basic funding from the universities, a cost pool of its own and with close cooperation with Centrum Balticum. The profiling around "the sea" of the universities is a fertile ground for BALEX. Also in the medium term, an agreement between the universities about BALEX and its funding is desirable.

In the upcoming years, BALEX will develop its international profile and also seek for both international sources of funding and international research projects with its cooperation partners. BALEX will also develop its cooperation with other organizations throughout the BSR.

The key values of BALEX are competence, multidisciplinary approach, cooperation, curiosity and flexibility: BALEX is open for new suggestions with one foot in the practical and one foot in the academic world.

Substantive interests

The Baltic Sea region is unique in many ways, in terms of its geographical and climatic conditions and environmental challenges, but also in terms of economic and political characteristics and governance structures. It is probably the world's most heavily regulated and administered sea.

The area has undergone significant changes over the past decades, through the changed political landscape and economic development in the region, and through the enlargement and increased activities of the European Union. The security situation in the region is also continuously changing, in addition to environmental challenges to our wellbeing and

competitiveness. All these features give rise to legal issues which are also unique for the region, but which have not been subject to comprehensive academic research.

BALEX seeks to fill this void. Questions relating to multi-layer regulation in the Baltic Sea region deserve proper analysis, not only for their scientific interest, which is significant, but also for their practical relevance for effective governance in the region.

Substantively, there are few limitations as to what research topics could be taken up within the BALEX framework, as long as the questions are of legal relevance and of specific importance for the Baltic Sea region. Research in this field will inevitably highlight the interaction and inter-dependency of different levels of norms (public international law, EU law, national, regional and local laws and regulations) throughout the whole range of legal disciplines from classical private law issues such as contract law, property and tort law, to public law questions such as environment, safety and security. The research will naturally have close links to related academic fields as well, such as political and administrative sciences, economics, logistics etc.

Questions related to institutions and multi-layered governance will be of relevance in any legal research on the Baltic Sea region. As to substantive themes, particularly interesting legal developments are currently taking place in the areas of environmental regulation, fisheries, energy, maritime transport and military security. Comparisons to other marine regions, such as the North Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Arctic will be made where meaningful parallels can be made.

Focus for 2018-2021

In BALEX's start-up phase a particular focus will be given to three substantive fields: **maritime transport, environmental protection and multi-level governance**. Special focus will also be in the themes prioritized in the Baltic Sea Region strategy of Finland and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region: BALEX aims at supporting e.g. sustainable development, blue economy, and circular economy in its work.

This selection of focus areas is based on several considerations, including the richness of examples of multi-layered regulation in these fields, the particular challenges for the region in the years to come, the background and expertise of the persons currently involved in BALEX, and the current academic needs and the shortage of scholars in maritime law in Finland.

Special attention to these substantive focus areas does not mean that other themes are ruled out in this period. It implies that BALEX will not actively seek research projects and tasks in other areas in this period, but it is understood that if suitable research or other projects come across in any other substantive field, BALEX will of course be willing to assume them as well, subject to suitable staffing and funding arrangements.

Cooperation partners

BALEX is based on close co-operation with a series of institutions, such as the City of Turku, the Regional Council of Southwest Finland, the Government of Åland, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, HELCOM, the Baltic University Programme, the Baltic Sea Region University Network, the Union of the Baltic Cities, the Centrum Balticum Foundation, the Baltic Sea Foundation, the Baltic Sea Action Group, the European Foundation and the Schuman Society in Finland. BALEX seeks cooperation also with other cities, regional councils, universities, NGOs, foundations, ministries, the EU, Baltic Sea Region states, BSR organizations and private businesses.

In the medium term, BALEX will operate under the umbrella of Centrum Balticum, and BALEX's existing, and future employees are accommodated at Centrum Balticum in the Baltic Sea House in Turku.

The scientific partners of individual research projects will vary depending on the topic, but some key academic partners who have participated in and supported the initiative since the early setting-up phase include the legal research environments at:

- Walther Schücking Institute for International Law, Kiel University (Germany)
- K.G. Jebsen Centre for the Law of the Sea, University of Tromsø (Norway)
- Scandinavian Institute of Maritime Law, University of Oslo (Norway)
- Admiral Makarov State University of Maritime and Inland Shipping (Russia)
- Free University of Brussels (Belgium)
- CEVIA – Centre for Enterprise Liability, University of Copenhagen (Denmark)
- The Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law, University of Lapland (Finland)
- Axel Ax:son Johnson Institute of Maritime and Transport Law, Stockholm University (Sweden)
- University of Tallinn (Estonia)
- Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad (Russia)
- Mykolas Romeris university (Lithuania)

Decision-making

BALEX operates with the support of a Steering Group, an Advisory Board, and staff. The BALEX Steering Group meets 2-4 times a year to set strategic targets to Baltic Area Legal Studies and to guide its operations. Its members represent the two co-operating universities in Turku, Finland.

The BALEX Advisory Board meets a few times annually to discuss the current targets and emphasis of the network. The Advisory Board's members are prominent jurists and decision-makers from the Baltic Sea region.

BALEX Fellows consists of a group of prominent persons from different backgrounds with whom BALEX is closely associated and whose background and profile could prove particularly beneficial for developing BALEX in the future. The fellowship does not entail any obligations but is hopefully mutually beneficial.

BALEX's research issues are coordinated by the Research Coordinator and general activities by the Coordinator.

Communications

BALEX aims at strengthening the communication to the public about legal issues in the Baltic Sea region. BALEX emphasizes open communication with its partners and stakeholders. It seeks to actively inform and invite partners to share information on current developments within its operations or relevant fields.

A BALEX e-newsletter is published 2-3 times a year to provide an overview of BALEX initiatives and projects, and links for further reading. It is mainly targeted to BALEX partners, but all interested stakeholders can join the mailing list. The newsletters are also published on BALEX's website.

BALEX also actively communicates its work and other issues in its scope through its Twitter account <https://twitter.com/BALEXStudies> and its website www.balex.fi. If deemed appropriate, BALEX may also start using other social media channels.