

*Dear reader,*

We are the Smart Marina project team, working across Åland, Finland, Sweden, and Estonia to show how cross-border cooperation can turn shared coastal challenges into lasting opportunities. Together with 32 small harbors, we have shown that sustainability, competitiveness and local development go hand in hand – even in the most remote archipelago environments.

Our project has been extremely important for small guest harbors, which are vital connectors and local lifelines in the Central Baltic region. They support mobility, tourism, local services, and community life, yet often lack the resources to invest in modern functionalities on their own. By cooperating across borders, we raised service standards, safety, and environmental performance, while simultaneously creating a connected network of visitor-friendly, future-proof harbors instead of isolated local solutions.

Through Smart Marina, we delivered concrete and measurable impact. We invested in renewable energy systems, modern electrical infrastructure, wastewater and blackwater treatment, recycling facilities, safe moorings, and accessible service buildings. More than 70% of participating harbors achieved the internationally recognized Blue Flag certification. As a result, tourist visits increased by up to 80%, seasons were extended, and local businesses and employment benefited across the region.

We also introduced innovation through digitalization. The Smart Marina App provides boaters with real-time information on berth availability, services, weather, and safety conditions, enabling smarter travel decisions throughout the Baltic Sea. This shared digital tool strengthened the network and improved the overall user experience across borders.

None of this would have been possible without the Interreg Central Baltic Programme. EU funding enabled over 8 million euro in direct investments, turning cooperation into action and ensuring that resources reached local communities where they make the greatest difference. The CB programme provided the framework, trust, and ambition needed to work together beyond national borders.

Our results have gained European recognition. Smart Marina was nominated as a finalist in the European Commission's prestigious REGIOSTARS Awards – becoming the first project from Åland to reach the finals and the only finalist representing Finland, Sweden, Estonia, and Åland in its category. This nomination confirms that small-scale local investments, when connected through EU cohesion policy, can deliver excellence at the European level.

From the Central Baltic, we are happy to share our results and our confidence in cooperation that works.

*Sincerely,*

The Smart Marina project team



**From  
Central Baltic,  
with results**