



European
Commission



HOW THE EU HELPS ISLANDS

Europe's island communities face a series of challenges, including limited access to resources and services, environmental threats, and ageing populations. With EU support, these can be transformed into opportunities that create jobs, boost local economies and improve lives. The EU-funded STEP project is one such example.

Cleaner sewage sludge to help limit Baltic Sea pollution

An EU-funded project is helping to cut contaminants in sewage sludge produced by wastewater treatment plants in the Baltic Sea region. The aim is to reduce pollution and promote the reuse of this nutrient-rich substance that can help enrich soils.

Sludge is generated as a by-product during the treatment of wastewater. While it contains nutrients and organic matter that can be used as fertiliser for agricultural land, it also harbours harmful heavy metals and even viruses and bacteria.

The protection of the fragile ecosystems in the Baltic Sea and surrounding areas depend on proper wastewater management with a focus on making sludge – and its reuse – as environmentally friendly as possible, in line with EU policy.

The **STEP** project – a collaborative effort between partners from Denmark (including the island of Bornholm), Lithuania, Poland and Sweden – seeks to do just that.

STEP targets small and medium-sized local wastewater treatment plants, as well as municipalities and businesses. The project aims to develop technology and ways to clean sludge more thoroughly, which is good for the health of local communities and the environment. The cleaner sludge can then be reused in a number of innovative ways – even as a renewable energy source.



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'Targeting small and medium-sized local wastewater treatment plants, as well as municipalities and businesses, STEP aims to develop technology and ways to create cleaner sludge that is better for both people and the planet.'

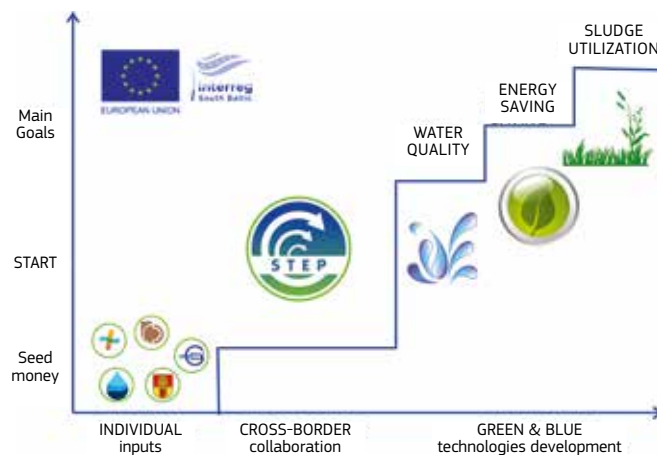
Best practices book

STEP activities focus on several areas, including the pre-treating sludge, making the handling of sludge as energy efficient as possible, and ensuring nutrients are reused to the fullest extent – all with the goal of reducing pollution.

In addition, STEP hopes to form a network of innovators with scientific and technical expertise to develop solutions to achieve cleaner sludge. The team also hope to foster an exchange of good practices between both countries and municipalities in the region, as well as raise public awareness about the challenges of cleaning waste water.

STEP has developed two pilot plants. One focuses on optimising sludge composting and reducing odours. The second focuses on handling external sludge, including its reuse.

The project plans to present its findings and conclusions by 2020 – including on energy efficiency, sludge quality factors, optimised nutrient content and odour elimination techniques – in a publication on best practices by 2020.



STEP

Project full name: Sludge Technological Ecological Progress (STEP)

Sectors: Environment/Green technologies

Project website: <https://www.step-interreg.eu/>

Total cost: EUR 1 159 655

EU CONTRIBUTION: EUR 945 024

Fund: European Regional Development Fund

PROGRAMME: 2014-2020 Interreg V-A Poland-Denmark-Germany-Lithuania-Sweden (South Baltic)

Project start/end: 2018 to 2020