



## The Baltic Island Network Lobbies Brussels for Future Islands Cooperation

In a series of meetings in Brussels in March the B7 brought home a small victory. It is now clear that the European Parliament supports the Baltic Sea Islands in the struggle concerning EU's new long-term budget.

The newly formed Baltic Sea Intergroup composed by 60-70 Members of the European Parliament from countries surrounding the Baltic Sea area met with the B7 representatives. The Intergroup works towards strengthening the Baltic Sea regions and to specifically observe these questions in the Parliament.

– We need to cooperate and we want to hear your opinions, said the Estonian Member of Parliament Mr. Tunne Kelam to the B7 delegation.

The key issue for the discussion was the EU's next long term budget for the years 2007 – 2013. How shall the common budget be handled and distributed in forms of structural funds during the new period? It is a small sum and the needs are unfortunately much larger.

How can the EU support growth and development for all regions of the Union with a limited budget? This is a tough high-level political balancing act and there is a need to make ourselves heard to let decisionmakers know how things are working out at the local and regional level. A small region is nowadays part of something bigger. This is why our islands must speak up when the over all politics do not fit our regions. We are competing for

the attention with regions that have far more citizens and political influence.

Today regional cooperation between Baltic Sea regions is being blocked by incoherent rules. The Baltic Sea is the only inner sea of the European Union, yet there are rules that stop islanders to cooperate with other regions in the same area.

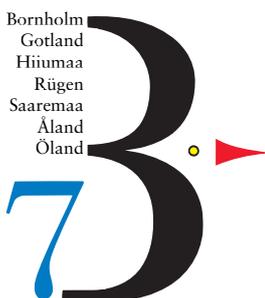
– These are rules that must be modified says Jan Lundgren and the representatives in the European Parliament agrees.

The meetings in Brussels were successful. The B7 obtained new personal contacts and a direct link to the European Parliament. A large amount of lobby work lies ahead and if the B7 succeeds the new politics of the union will stand for improved island policies.

Mr. Tunne Kelam concluded the meeting reassuring future collaboration by saying,

– Think of the Baltic Sea Intergroup as an island within the European Parliament.

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B7 Secretariat



**Baltic Islands  
Network**



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