



# from the facilitator

March 2012



## B7 facilitator

# What's happening this year?

*Dear B7 colleague and friend,*

At the excellent B7 Annual Conference held on Rügen, I promised to send out an update in January on what was happening in the B7. Well, I thought; well, I mean I hoped, that there would be plenty of time in January. (Someone told me that the way to hell was paved with good intentions.)

In January I suddenly found the opportunity to get involved in a project about governance in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. I have visited father Christmas's home in

Rovaniemi in Finland where the BSSSC held their Board meeting. And here on Bornholm there have been lots of discussions about gathering the administration in one new building in Rønne.

In this issue of #from the facilitator, I have focused on:

- the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
- Pan Baltic Organisations
- Visit to Åland

Good reading

## EU Strategy Baltic Sea Region: what's happening?

What's happening with the EUSBSR? Well quite a lot is happening and much of it on issues where the B7 has had questions.

First: this years **Annual Forum** will take place 18-19 June in Copenhagen.

Second DG Regio expects to issue a **communication around Easter** on the EUSBSR. What is this likely to include? Well.

The main objectives of the strategy will be made more vivid. Instead of 4 Pillars we expect to have **3 Objectives**:

- Save the sea
- Connecting the Baltic Sea region
- Increasing prosperity.

This will require a reorganization and perhaps reduction in number of the 15 priority areas.

Currently the annual **Action Plan** is the main document for managing the strategy. This will be reorganized.

- **Targets and indicators** at strategy level, at priority level and at horizontal action level will be added
- Priority area coordinators (**PACs**) and horizontal action leaders (**HALs**) will design their own targets and indicators.

*More EU acronyms, more jargon. :-)*

Just to add here that you may think that PACs are not just ordinary public officials lost in various ministries - in terms of the

EUSBSR, it's they, that make the whole implementation process work.

To continue:

- The **governance** process for the implementation of the action plan is also on the list to be improved.
- And of course clarification about what is a **flagship projects**.
- The **EU 2020 strategy** is not mentioned in EUSBSR so far.
- **Other Directorates-General (DGs)** need to be brought into the strategy such as DG ENV and DG ENTR.
- Better involvement of different **stakeholders** is needed.
- **Communication** needs to be improved, especially regions that are territorially involved need to be heard.

Beside this work is being done to define the **tasks and roles of the key actors**:

- Tasks of the EU Commission
- Tasks of Members States
- Tasks of National Contact Points
- Role of PACs
- Function of Flagship projects

This is not to drive you away. Just to give you a taste of what is happening. We will present more in the **Islands & People** document that will distributed before the Brussels meeting.



## DATES 2012

### February

07 02:  
B7 Board decides to work on developing the Involve project application on multi-level governance

23-24 02:  
BSSSC Board meeting Rovaniemi, Finland

### March

06 03:  
B7 Board E-meeting

26-28 03:  
Brussels pilgrimage

### April

10 04  
B7 Board E meeting

16-18 04:  
Ferry Transportation Conference

23-24 04  
BSSSC Board meeting Berlin.

24-25 04  
Baltic Sea Days in Berlin

### On the web

[www.Nordregio.se](http://www.Nordregio.se)  
Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

[www.regeringen.ax](http://www.regeringen.ax)  
See who is who in the government

[www.lagting.ax](http://www.lagting.ax)  
See who is who in the Åland Parliament

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## Working with Pan Baltic Partners



B7 is a Board member of **BSSSC**. Why? Because BSSSC offers B7 a platform to work together with other organisations such as: **CPMR-BSC** (Baltic Sea Commission), **UBC** (Union of Baltic Cities), **ERB** (EuroRegion Baltic), and **CBSS** (Council of the Baltic Sea States) with whom we are a strategic partner.

The current B7 President or an alternative plus the facilitator usually attend these meetings.

BSSSC is at the moment renewing its working agreement with the Committee of the Regions (CoR). It also focuses on

**Governance** (that is government via networks). It is a core feature of northern European democracy. Now the new buzz acronym is "MLG" or "Multi-Level Governance".

**MLG** is a core principle for the effective realisation of the EUSBSR. Well we can sit back and let things be directed and decided at the state level.

However B7 has worked hard to ensure that we have a EUSBSR, now we must ensure that regions have influence over the strategy and that MLG works in practice.

## Visit to Åland

On the 27 January this year, the Gotland Chairmanship decided that it would travel to Åland to meet the new Premier, **Camilla Gunell** and the minister working with international activities, **Gun-Mari Lindholm**.

As the Sweden Social Democrats decided to elect a new leader that day, Åke Svensson, Mayor of Gotland, had to stay in Stockholm. Tommy Eliasson, together with Ulla Pettersson and David Hunt travelled to Åland.

Being semi-autonomous, Åland operates as a government with a parliament. While this gives them greater freedom to control over their own future, it also puts huge demands on the bureaucracy.

Åland, of all the B7 islands, puts the greatest restrictions on owning property and yet it is the only island with a growing population. (ok, Öland, I know the population around Färjestaden is increasing, but this is due to it becoming a suburb of Kalmar.)

Åland is keen to have a Baltic Sea part to its international strategy. They want to learn from the other islands where appropriate - such as green technology and policies, but they must budget their time and focus on what gives results.

This is not a new theme for B7. We have to remember it was the fall of the Berlin in 1989 wall that threw the spotlight (and opportunities) on Baltic Sea politics. This continued until around 2004, when all the Baltic Sea countries except Russia became

members of the EU. B7 and many other Baltic Sea organisations have their roots in cold war politics.

New politicians are being elected, whose backgrounds and ambitions are not cold war based. Whose horizons are not just Baltic Sea. Did you know that more than half the guests to Rovaniemi in Finland come from far east destinations such as Japan, Thailand?

Now many islands are looking at other areas of political interest. There are greater pressures on island budgets and job creation. The B7 has 2 female leaders with young families that need to make tough decisions in managing their time.

In B7 we have spoken many times that we have to use our time together smarter. Reducing the time for internal meetings, when we travel and ensuring an attractive programme.

Do we understand the needs of the newer politicians? From Bornholm, Saaremaa, Åland and soon Hiiumaa. Did we hear from the new Landrat Mecklenburg-Vorpommern what his wishes were?

What we can say is that for many, adapting to change is not enough, many islands are facing much bigger decisions. Although we have a Baltic Sea identity, this can no longer be seen in just a cold war perspective.

I hope we have a chance to discuss this more when we meet in Brussels.

Keep smiling, david