

Consultation: EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region

Örebro regional development council welcomes the possibility for regions to submit comments to the Commission in the important issue of the definition and construction of the European strategy for the Baltic Sea region.

Örebro regional development council has actively taken part in the discussion of the strategy through participation in round tables as well as development of growth strategies in the Baltic Sea MEGA regions.

We fully support the Baltic Sea strategy to be constructed on a cross-sectoral approach with basis in the Lisbon strategy and the Gothenburg criteria's. We do believe that the strategy needs to include concrete action plan and a plan for implementation. It is of importance that the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region is constructed in a way that ensures full participation of regions and incorporates regional plans and strategies in the implementation phase in particular. As a cause of a lack of a clear addressee for Baltic Sea actions, Örebro regional development council specially targets the importance of the issue of governance in the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region.

Örebro regional development council regards irresponsible shipping and transport practices, fattening leakage from agricultural activities as well as uncoordinated fragmented urban and costal development planning as the main threats for the development of a sustainable, attractive, competitive and prosperous region. Furthermore, we strongly encourage the Commission to find new forms of closer cooperation with the Russian federation.

The trade within the Baltic Sea region has to further be encouraged in order for the region to achieve increased global competitiveness. The northern axis of the prioritized TEN-T corridor Nordic triangle has to be further focused and prioritized in order to shape a prosperous Baltic Sea region. Promotion of cross-boarder cluster creation in Triple Helix is of importance in order to increase the innovation policy and competitiveness of the Baltic Sea region. Increased east-west trade cooperation and accessibility between as well as to and from metropolitan cities of the Baltic Sea region should be highlighted.

Örebro regional development council states that east-west perspective would generate increased growth and attractiveness for the Baltic Sea region as a whole. The Baltic Sea region has unique competences and complementary resources in order to establish an increased functional region with increased trade.

Örebro regional development council of believes that the most crucial issue for the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region is to promote and increase more intensive of joint cooperation. The responsibility for implementation of the EU legislation should be national, with full regional incorporation, and followed-up through regional indicators in the light of principle of subsidiary and the open method of coordination.



1. General framework of the Baltic Sea strategy

Örebro regional development council strongly believes that the Baltic Sea strategy needs to originate from the jointly developed strategies for EU, especially the Lisbon strategy and the Gothenburg criteria's. All relevant policy fields in the **Lisbon strategy, economical, social and environmental renewal, shall be included**, and adaptable to the Baltic Sea regional circumstances. It is of importance that the Baltic Sea strategy is followed by a concrete action plan and plan for implementation.

The main challenges for the Baltic Sea region are not in particular different than the challenges for EU as a whole. Therefore, the Baltic Sea strategy needs to follow the Lisbon strategy and the Gothenburg criteria's. Environment, safety, economic growth and sustainable development are all relevant policy areas for intervention of the strategy for the Baltic Sea region. Örebro regional development council underlines the importance of improving stakeholder **exchange** in order to facilitate the free movement and establish a functional alliance of actors in the Baltic Sea region. The main objective of the strategy should be to **prevent ignorance and future conflicts within all areas mentioned above, through increased cooperation at all levels in the Baltic Sea region**. This ensures a closer well-functioned Baltic Sea region.

Örebro regional development council believes that the strategy for the Baltic Sea shall have a **global perspective**, but needs to be connected to EU policies in all relevant fields. It is though important that the connection to EU policies don't limit the strategies possibilities for sustainable growth, but that it is created on the specific Baltic Sea territorial pattern. Therefore, it is important that the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region is constructed in a way that **ensures full participation of regions and incorporate regional plans and strategies** in the implementation phase in particular. Örebro regional development council regards the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region as a pilot case for the development of the concept of territorial cohesion.

The Baltic Sea may be regarded as a common resource where EU together with all countries around the Baltic Sea has a common responsibility for the sustainable development, but there is a lack of a clear addressee for the actions provided. Therefore the **issue of governance**, especially within the environmental fields, **needs to be specially targeted** in the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region.

As mentioned above, Örebro regional development council, strongly believes that the Baltic Sea strategy need to be founded on the EU aims of economical, social and environmental renewal. We do though stress the importance of **advanced action regarding water management** that demands fast decisions and implementation as a result of dying areas in the Baltic Sea.



2. Improvement of the environmentally sustainable Baltic Sea region

The Baltic Sea region is one of the youngest functional areas of the world, and one of the most sensible environmentally. Örebro regional development council regards that **the main threats** today for the development of a sustainable, attractive, competitive and prosperous region **are of environmental concerns**, especially irresponsible shipping and transport practices, fattening leakage from agricultural activities as well as uncoordinated fragmented urban and costal development planning.

Örebro regional development council call **for better joint development practices and improved governance**, which is very important to fulfil the environmental aims of the Baltic Sea region, in particular the need of better cooperation between stakeholders. We support the territorial **cooperation program IVB Baltic Sea program** and regard it as success for joint development in multi level stakeholder governance of common aims for the Baltic Sea development process. The territorial cooperation program shall be closer connected to the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region, including an increased amount of finance to be allocated to the territorial cooperation programs. Örebro regional development council believes that the fragmentation in the territorial cooperation program (IVA) counteracts the joint development of the Baltic Sea and calls for increased focus on the B program, where implementation should be available for smaller partnerships with Baltic Sea perspective.

Örebro regional development council fully supports the HELCOM Baltic Sea action plan and stresses the importance of actions promoting revitalisation of the dead parts of the Baltic Sea.

Furthermore, Örebro regional development council strongly encourage the Commission to find **new forms of closer cooperation with the Russian federation**. This is crucial in order to boost environmental change and an important aspect for turning today's challenges into opportunities, environmentally, social and economically.

3. The prosperous Baltic Sea region

The **trade** within the Baltic Sea region has to further be encouraged in order for the region to achieve increased global competitiveness. Örebro regional development council is undertaking actions for an Interreg IVB project based on the ESPON (the European Spatial Planning Observation Network) study of polycentric development, which describes strong potential European integration zones. We believe that this study is a very important tool for building a prosperous Baltic Sea region. The study concludes that only by closer cooperation between Metropolitan areas, interconnected to surrounding regions, the Baltic Sea would be able to establish a growth area with global competitiveness. Regional cooperation is needed in order to fulfil the Lisbon strategy.

The issue of most outstanding importance for the growth and development of the Baltic Sea region is accessibility and transport infrastructure, especially between metropolitan areas of a region. **The northern axis of the prioritized TEN-T corridor Nordic triangle has to be further focused and prioritized** in order to shape a prosperous Baltic Sea region, since this axis interconnect the Metropolitan cities of the Baltic Sea region together with surrounding regions.



Örebro regional development council underlines the importance on building on already existing EU strategies such as the Lisbon strategy and the Gothenburg criteria's.

Integration, entrepreneurship and food production that meets the consumer needs of ecological locally produced food is important areas of intervention in order to overcome problems related to the current financial crisis.

The Baltic Sea region has leading enterprises in a variety of fields as well as dense number of middle sized cities, high number of world competitive Universities and a high number of innovations reaching the global market. Yet further actions have to be made in order to create a functional region concerning trade. The above mentioned ESPON study clearly indicates areas of interventions in order to fulfil the aims of the Lisbon strategy in the Baltic Sea region. **Cross-boarder cluster creation in Triple Helix partnership** (public private partnership) is important to increase the innovation policy and competitiveness of the Baltic Sea region.

Örebro regional development council regards the main barriers for increased trade in the region to be historical trade routes, lack of exchange, accessibility and liberalisation of transport markets. As a cause of differences in creation of trade partners and political systems after World War II, there is a need for stronger **east-west trade cooperation**. The composition of trade routes, including functional transportation axis needs to be changed. Greater **accessibility** between as well as to and from metropolitan cities in the Baltic Sea region is of outermost importance in order to increase the prosperous Baltic Sea region. Transport cartel situations across the Baltic Sea region and not functioning internal markets need to be further evaluated.

In order to achieve increased mobility of labour and ideas in the Baltic Sea region, Örebro regional development council calls for better comparable **statistics**, including Russia as well as **comparable regional based indicators**, in particular connected to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy. We also call for better cross border regulations and cooperation in the field of language, entrepreneurial attitude amongst youngsters, trust and knowledge as well as easier exchange.

4. The Baltic Sea region: accessible and attractive place to live and work

As mentioned above, Örebro regional development council promotes the main idea of developing better integrated and more efficient transport, energy and other communication networks, as well as ensuring a better quality of life right across the region, are key aims for the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region. This has to be done in sustainable way in terms of provision of high quality and sustainable infrastructure and services. An attractive region need as well to provide social renewable incitements to its citizens, why policies and initiatives for **child care, housing, living conditions, education, health care, safety and elderly care** are of outermost importance to include in the strategy.



Örebro regional development council underlines the importance of not focusing the hindrances and challenges as a cause of geographical realities. We call for focused **functional alliances** where the long distances and sparse population may be used as a strength and attractiveness in order to provide the citizens of the Baltic Sea region with incentives to stay and to draw in more investment, tourists and newcomers. The strategy needs to be developed out from the perspective to create a functional region, which uses the opportunities of strong forestry and innovation sector, and creates an internal market. The central Baltic region from St. Petersburg to Oslo has approximately 15 million inhabitants and the Baltic Sea region as a whole consists of approximately 45 million inhabitants. Furthermore, the Baltic Sea region has unique **competences and complementary resources in order to establish an increased functional region** with increased trade. Örebro regional development council states that east-west perspective would generate increased growth and attractiveness for the Baltic Sea region as a whole.

5. Safety and security

Örebro regional development council believes that even if safety and security is an issue that normally not focusing regional dimensions, the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region would gain on identify issues which are of particular importance to the Baltic Sea Region. This is mainly from the perspective of creation of a functional region, where **police cooperation** and **crime prevention** needs to be of transnational nature. Main areas of specific measures to be undertaken in order to effectively respond to the safety and security concerns would be in public health, crime prevention and cooperation between law enforcement officials.

Örebro regional development council is convinced that the main area of actions for safety and security in the Baltic Sea region still needs to be of **social matters**. Crime usually originates from social problems and differences in living conditions. If the strategy aims at creation of a good prosperity in the whole region, Örebro regional development council is convinced of that we will decrease the possibilities of for example trafficking and drug usage. Societies with good social protection are in it selves fighting crime and counteract exclusion. The focus should therefore primarily be prevention in early age as well as the fight against poverty.

6. Better governance

As mentioned above, Örebro regional development council believes that the most crucial issue for the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region is to promote and increase more intensive of **joint cooperation** between Member States, between Member States and Russia, and the cooperation between stakeholders of the same field. We urge that the governance though is created on existing actors, where ministers from respectively countries are responsible for the different issues.



The Baltic Sea is a common responsibility but lacks a concrete responsible addressee for initiatives or joint development. Therefore, Örebro regional development council calls for a council consisting of ministers with global political power that is responsible for the development of the Baltic Sea region. The Baltic Sea strategy should be a predecessor and may work as a best example for the development of the territorial cohesion concept.

Örebro regional development council points out that **the responsibility for implementation of the EU legislation should be national, with full regional incorporation.** The implementation would preferable be followed-up and evaluated through regional indicators in the light of principle of subsidiary and the open method of coordination.

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