

International island cooperation, the Baltic Seven - Baltic

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Improving competitiveness

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Ecosystems based approach

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

The organisation, structure and working methods of a group of international islands co-operating for their mutual benefit.

4. Overview of the case

The B7 is a cooperation of the 7 largest islands in the Baltic Sea from 5 different countries that started in 1989. They are co-operating as a unit to influence developments for their common good.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The seven largest islands in the Baltic Sea began their co-operation in 1989. They are called the B7 and have developed an organisation which enables them to have greater value by acting collectively than by operating individually. The benefits and opportunities were deemed to be a better promotion of island issues at national and international level through more effective lobbying; improved exchange of experiences and ideas; enhanced abilities to develop interregional programs, projects and focus groups; and as an organization that works at the political, public official and grassroots levels.

The Members are:

Bornholm (Denmark): East of Denmark, south of Sweden, and north of Poland. Area: 587 km², Population: 43,000. The main industries include fishing, dairy farming and arts & crafts like glass making and pottery using locally worked clay. Summer tourism is important.

Gotland (Sweden): Eastern Sweden. Area: 3,140 km², Population: 57,300. The economy is agriculture and forestry and the public sector. However, the largest individual sector today is the engineering industry. Tourism is vitally important.

Hiiumaa (Estonia): Separated from the mainland by a 22 km wide strait. Area: 1019 km², Population: 10,000. The economy is agriculture and tourism with some small industry e.g. plastics and medical instruments. IT based jobs for offering new possibilities for young people to remain on the island.

Rügen (Germany): Eastern Germany. Area: 976 km², Population: 72,260. The island has 2 national parks, 1 biosphere preserve, 32 nature reserves and 3 nature conservation areas (527 km²). The island's growing number of visitors reached 1,300,000 in 2002.

Saaremaa (Estonia): Western coast of the mainland. Area: 2,922 km², Population: 36,600. It has 1,200 sp. of vascular plants of which about 120 are rare ones. The best-known botanical reserve is Viidumäe Nature Reserve. Economy is agriculture but

tourism has an increasingly important role.

Öland (Sweden): Eastern Sweden. Area: 1,342 km², Population: 24,500. Has developed attractive residential areas for large numbers of mainland commuters. Economy based on agriculture with related processing industries and fishing. The tourist industry is important.

Åland Isles (Finland): A group of islands with an extensive archipelago situated between Finland and Sweden. Area: 1,527 km², Population: 26,923. There are 6,500 named islands with 65 inhabited. Shipping, agriculture and fishing are Åland's basic industries although tourism is expanding.

b) Objectives

The B7 aims to use its strengths to promote the strategic goals of the islands and serve the interests of its islanders. Their objectives are: to develop the Islands through projects; to lobby to achieve their vision of the islands; and to learn through exchange of experiences and ideas. Their priorities are: 1. Transport, 2. Education, 3. Tourism, 4. Environment and Energy, 5. Business Development, 6. ICT (Information & Communication Technologies), 7. Democracy, inter-regional understanding, networking, 8. Rural and Agro-business Development, 9. Healthcare, 10. Public Service Effectiveness and 11. Common History

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

The B7 has two decision making bodies, a Steering Committee and a Board.

b) ICZM tools

Although the B7 has no legal status, it has a Charter which governs the operations of the cooperation. This Charter can be modified by the approval of the B7 Steering Committee. The two management bodies are supported by an Annual Conference, a Chairmanship, a Secretariat, Work groups, Focus Groups, a Facilitator and a Brussels Representation. In 2000, a rotating chairmanship and secretariat, which moves from island to island, was introduced: the current Chair is Öland (SE, 2009).

The B7 has a Steering Committee which is made up of leading politicians from the islands, normally the mayor or governor. It is the political body of the B7 and provides the framework and direction of the B7 co-operation. It reviews and approves the B7 Strategy, policies, annual programme and annual budget of the B7 and meets at least twice per year as agreed in the annual programme. The Board is the management body and comprises senior executives from the public administrations. It plans, leads, organises, monitors, controls and evaluates the work of the B7 with the representatives from the other member islands. It reports on the activities of the B7 to the Steering Committee on a quarterly basis, including an executive summary and statement of accounts, meeting as agreed. Representation from four islands is needed to make a quorum for both bodies.

The B7 works closely with a number of Baltic Sea organisations including Baltic Sea State Sub-regional Cooperation, Union of Baltic Cities, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, Baltic Sea Commission, Euro-Region Baltic, Baltic Development Fund.

The Annual Conference is a forum with the purpose to convene all the members of the B7 once a year to review the past year and agree the plans for the coming year within the framework of a B7 Strategy. The Annual Conference consists of, as a minimum, a Steering Committee meeting, Board Meeting and open plenary sessions for debate and discussion.

7. Cost and resources

Activities are financed by membership fees and from projects.

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

The organisation enables high level meetings with the Prime Ministers of the island representative countries. As the Chair can be rotated, it can coincide with the country hosting the EU Presidency. This is true in 2009. By having a Brussels

representative, it can also meet with officials from the EU/EC, particularly targeting the policies aimed at territorial cohesion. Each year the chair organises a programme in Brussels for the B7 politicians and senior officials to meet with key actors from EU institutions to discuss EU policy and actions relating to islands. Thus, the B7 can influence e.g. the EU Strategy for the Baltic Region (2009) which is to determine regional post-2013 funding.

Many cooperation projects have been implemented between islands of the B7 in the areas of culture, EU accession, environment, energy, public service effectiveness, project management, health and welfare, tourism and education. It has successfully completed two Interreg IIC/Phare projects viz. SUSWAT and BEST (1998-2001). It is currently working with Sardinia in the Transplan project concerning energy and carbon neutrality funded by the EU Intelligent Energy Fund. From these projects Åland, Bornholm and Gotland have developed long-term energy strategies to 2025.

The island tourism industries which have competed with each other for centuries are now working together to looking at new markets and customers. They are analysing trends and market segmentation to produce winning strategies for all the islands.

9. Success and Fail factors

The Brussels office is a key link to the institutions of the EU.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

The agriculture and fishing industries are facing new challenges among other things as a result of EU membership and policy reforms.

11. Prepared by












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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case..

13. Sources

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