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Head of the Joint Programming Committee (JPC)
Baltic Sea Region INTERREG programme 2007-2013

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Recommendations for the Baltic Sea Region Interreg Programme 2007-2013

Dear Dr. Görmar

First of all we would like to thank you for the possibility to comment on the programme. We believe that the Baltic Sea Region Interreg Programme 2007-2013 will be an important tool to strengthen BSR and fully agree to the overarching strategic objective of the programme.

Below you will find the ScanBalt recommendations which we hope can be of use in your continued work.

(a) Life Science Metaregional Contact Point

ScanBalt recommends that the BSR Interreg programme aims to get into closer qualified dialogue with the potential users to enhance impact of the programme for the benefit of the region and its citizens. Life Science is one of the leading BSR competences and an area with huge potentials as a driver of a knowledge based economy.

Life science actors in the Baltic Sea Region have joined and are operating under the brand name of ScanBalt BioRegion. ScanBalt BioRegion has reached a degree of organisational maturity and societal impact where the BSR will be able to gain substantial benefits from the establishment of a single Life Science BSR Interreg Contact Point for the entire region.

ScanBalt proposes that Interreg and ScanBalt collaborate on establishing such a contact point, which ideally can be co-localized with the ScanBalt secretariat in Copenhagen, utilizing the unique knowledge and communication platform ScanBalt provides. ScanBalt offers to manage the contact point. However it may also be established or organized otherwise and ScanBalt is very open to further discuss the issue.

Such a model could be an example for other sectors and would be a very strong signal of integration in the Baltic Sea Region.

(b) SME participation and partners requirement

ScanBalt recommends that SME´s become full project partners generating ERDF funds and that their in-time financing are included as a value in the project budget. We are aware that ERDF legal requirements may complicate this intention, but strongly advocate that a solution for equal private sector participation are found. The ambition of triple helix partnerships can simply not be fulfilled without private sector participation as full partners.

In order to promote SME participation it is crucial that SME´s can be pre-paid since R&D intensive SME´s do not have the possibility to participate otherwise.

Concerning programme requirements and consortia set up ScanBalt recommends to raise the minimum number of partners to be from not less than 5 BSR-countries, and that at least 2 must be from the East-BSR, which will promote BSR-integration. SME inclusion ought to be required in all projects, either directly or represented through triple helix partners. This will enhance the innovation potentials.

(c) Visibility, easy access and marketing

ScanBalt recommends that more attention is given to: (1) increase visibility of BSR; (2) promote one-stop-entries to competencies; (3) marketing those competencies.

The aim is to strengthen the attraction of human, financial and industrial resources. In particular ScanBalt recommends that projects where national marketing or "invest-in"-agencies can agree to jointly promote BSR competencies have their own action line or otherwise are prioritized. Joint BSR marketing should also be included in priority 1.

(d) The BSR SWOT analysis:

The present SWOT scheme presents valuable information and ScanBalt recommends the SWOT scheme to be rearranged according to the 4 priorities.

Concerning the SWOT analysis itself ScanBalt recommends the following:

Strengths, please add:

- ScanBalt BioRegion, Europe's first metaregion and a model case
- BSR possesses critical mass in Life Science

Weaknesses, please add:

- Lack of entrepreneurship
- Lack of commercial knowledge and management skills

- Lack of joint marketing of regional competencies and capacities
- Lack of critical mass in individual countries within education, research and innovation

Opportunities, please add:

- ScanBalt BioRegion as a driver to creating a knowledge based bio economy
- Attract human, industrial and financial resources through collaboration between national and regional agencies to marketing spearhead competencies as a supplement to national or regional marketing

Threats

- Brain drain due to lack of attractive infrastructure for education, research and innovation.

(e) Relation to the Lisbon agenda

ScanBalt believes it should be clear throughout the programme text that the programme aims to support the objectives of the Lisbon agenda and that the following key areas of the agenda are essential for developing the Baltic Sea Region:

- Investing in Research & Development
- Boosting innovation
- Creating a strong industrial base
- More and better jobs
- Adaptable workforce
- Better education and skills

(f) Other comments

Instead of the terms "diffusion" and "spreading of innovation" we suggest to use "commercialize innovation".

BSR Interreg application forms should be in a format supported by Word. The present Excell format complicates the matter unnecessarily and is very time consuming for applicants. The Excell format should be limited to the budget section.

Budget reports should be annual; for larger projects it demands many resources to report once every 6th month. Public institutions should be able to counter sign the reports themselves and we recommend to look into the guidelines for projects from the Nordic Innovation Center, NIC'e, www.nordicinnovation.net

There should be much greater flexibility between budget lines – the best projects are those which develop in the project period and therefore require changes.

(g) Page specific recommendations

"Issues of Common concern" (Page 9), please add as an additional point: BSR presents a inhomogeneous and insufficient adaptation to a knowledge based competitive economy. The Baltic Sea Region will have to compete on knowledge in a global economy. This requires that existing competencies are much more efficiently connected and coordinated to create competitive critical mass in the entire value chain and are constantly upgraded. In addition it is necessary to enhance the attractiveness of the Baltic Sea Region for human, financial and industrial resources. In particular there is a need to attract highly qualified expatriates and prevent brain drain.

"The Challenges" (Page 12-14), please add:
"The Baltic Sea Region needs to effectively market its competencies and capacities where one-stop-entries and brand names have been created, in order to attract human, industrial and financial resources. In addition it is necessary to develop indicators of how effective the Baltic Sea Region is communicated both in and out of the region".

"Universities in the Baltic Sea Region are drivers for innovation but need to be modernized to be competitive and attractive. Therefore attention will be given to initiatives which ensure critical competitive mass less encumbered by current rigidities and barriers to enable the institutions more quickly to match demand and supply and adapt swiftly to changes".

"Thematic focus" (Page 17). ScanBalt recommends that the following sentence be inserted to the introduction:

"The programme will when possible develop the innovation potential in existing projects initiated under the Interreg III programme i.e. by prioritizing second round co-financing for innovative aspects within Interreg III projects".

"Priority 1" (Page 17), please add:
"The priority will enhance knowledge about intellectual property rights and increase entrepreneurial spirit in general and specifically strengthen management skills in SME's in order to promote innovation.

"Third priority" (Page 18),
The "Aquaculture" sector has a strong potential as a BSR source. At the moment the BSR Aquaculture actors are fragmented and ScanBalt recommends to include Aquaculture and Marine Biotech as a target sector under the 3rd priority.

ScanBalt hopes that the comments may serve as inspiration for the continued work on the BSR Interreg programme 2007-13. We are always available for more information on any of the issues mentioned above.

Yours sincerely

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