

## Recommendations regarding the promotion of innovation by the Baltic Euregio network

Sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region requires the Baltic communities to adapt to historically dramatic changes generated externally by globalisation and internally by the ageing population of Europe. Innovation policy is a key tool for adapting constructively to the new challenges, ie a tool for maintaining sustainability while world around us is changing.

Euregions can play an important role in promoting innovation in their respective regions. They can do so individually, in their respective regions, and jointly, as a European network institution. The seminar highlighted a number of actions or activities that Euroregions can implement. Below is a summary of recommendations presented by the seminar speakers. The recommendations have been organised into three levels depending on their main target audience: (1) the individual Euroregion, (2) the Baltic Euroregion network and (3) regional and European institutions. However, to become effective, many of the recommendations should be implemented at several levels simultaneously.

The seminar recommendations can be further summarized into a set of strategic projects that would offer structured approach to implementing the recommendations. The project proposals below have the potential to receive EU-funding.

The strategic projects are:

- **Collect and share information about innovation policies, actors and initiatives in the Baltic Sea.**  
To achieve the synergy all parties want, a more concise and consistent innovation environment need to be created for the entire Baltic Sea region. Euroregions can initiate the creation of the environment this by the collection of relevant material and identification of the key actors.
- **Baltic Triple Helix conference**  
The Triple Helix model for cooperation has become very popular in different parts of the Baltic Sea as a way to integrate the strategies of business, academics and public sector. However, the model is not without its problems and a new conference to asses experiences so far, shortcomings and future development options would help in establishing best practice. Especially important is prepare the model for cooperation with non-European partners from Asia and America.
- **Present academic resources in the new member states to European or global companies**  
The European Union has created the concept of European Research Area. However, the new member states do not always have the institutions to participate or the networks to promote themselves. Many Baltic companies

do not even consider to use Baltic knowledge resources even if they are in principle available. Yet the Baltic Sea has the potential to be a global knowledge hub in the world economy. For long-term sustainability, a closer integration of Baltic knowledge industry and global companies is critically important.

- **Conference to present and analyse the needs of European Twin-Cities**  
The Baltic Sea happens to have several twin-city communities. They have been very active and successful, but further progress urgently requires changes in legislation and financial procedures. The unique needs of twin-cities goes beyond the Baltic Sea and this initiative could generate considerable momentum towards a special status for twin-cities in Europe.

### ***Recommendations for individual Euroregions***

- Involve political leaders in discussions about the need for and potential of innovation in the region. The role of the public sector in innovation is essential because it shapes the innovation system
- Organise seminars focusing on innovation for Entrepreneurs as they have to be involved in innovation discussions as it can be finally implemented especially by them
- Improve the local awareness of the institutional basis and policies in the neighbouring region as a way to identify opportunities and resources and to reach scale benefits that the region may not be able to achieve alone
- Identify the needs for regional innovation support structures and lobby for their creation together with business or universities.
- Introduce foresight activities as a way to identify future challenges and opportunities that help setting the priorities for innovative actions and to identify areas of regional strengths and then to upgrade them with special EU programs and mechanisms for RTDI activities
- Be an advocate for very good educational opportunities and demonstrate that good education will be fuel for innovation in the region
- Identify actors or sectors in the region which are already competitive and help them strengthen their knowledge further to network with other actors in the Baltic Sea, Europe or globally.
- Help the region to create or strengthen their triple helix cooperation, i.e. identify potential partners, assist in networking, promote the concept internationally etc.

***Recommendations for strengthening the Euroregion network to exchange information and promote innovation jointly***

- Document and analyse different triple helix models to help local actors to develop their own cooperation concept and overcome cultural and behavioural differences between industries and universities.
- Collect information about national innovation policies in neighbouring regions and identify potential areas of cooperation as for example cross-border cooperation in the use of national testbeds, business incubators, student research facilities etc.
- Baltic Euroregions should create a joint virtual office to distribute and share information about relevant national innovation plans and projects
- Euroregion as a networking facilitator is important – selling arguments: we need triple-helix model to be coordinated by euregios due to the need for economic growth, more jobs to the region and branding; Companies will get easier access to university people via euroregions if they have a research plan; cooperation would allow entrepreneurs to be good citizens and act on a global arena
- While many synergies are possible through cooperation in the Baltic Sea context, the Euroregions must also make strategic alliances partners in Asia as a way to help local actors to integrate into the global economy.
- Cross-border cooperation is still made difficult by unnecessary legal and other practical obstacles. Euroregions should actively try to identify such obstacles and make relevant national and European actors aware of them to initiate the removal on such obstacles remaining from pre-EU times.
- Geographical, historical and political barriers still exist between citizens in the Baltic Sea Region. This slows down progress and is a serious threat to long-term sustainability. Euroregions should cooperate to encourage direct contacts between citizens in innovative ways. The so called “ubiquitous” information society can be used to facilitate everyday contacts in a manner that will strengthen regional identity and cohesion.
- Euroregions can jointly take initiatives to strengthen or create new innovation support structures for their regional SMEs (cross-border incubators, educational programmes etc.)
- Despite a large number of partly functioning Baltic networks, we still do not know enough about the availability and shortages of academic capacity in the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Euregio network should make efforts to collect and quantify such data in a pragmatic way to provide practical background data for Triple Helix and other cooperation efforts where academic input can play an important part.

- Local and regional innovation initiatives must be integrated into national innovation strategies to become fully effective. Euroregions can be instrumental in organising policy dialogs to link local, regional and national levels of innovation policy in border areas

***Recommendations regarding innovation related topics that the Euroregion network can promote in international cooperation***

- Twin-cities/regions have special needs and unique developmental circumstances not shared by other municipalities or towns. The Euroregions should take the initiative to lobby for special recognition of European twin-cities in European legislation and financing instruments.
- While Euroregions already promote their individual regions, there is still room for joint promotion of the Baltic Sea as an attractive and dynamical knowledge hub in the North of Europe. The Euroregions should consider branding of the concept "Baltic Euroregion" i.e. by creating a regional brand, attracting firms, capital and talent to the region
- *Co-operate locally, win regionally. Co-operate regionally, win globally*