

COMMISSION ON BUSINESS COOPERATION

ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 2009 – MAY 2010

Oct 2009 Merger of BizCom & ISCom

Since October 2009, an open and constructive discussion about a possible merger between the Commission on Information Society and the Commission on Business Cooperation has been held. For a basis of decision-making for the political leaders, particularly in Kiel and St. Petersburg, to negotiate, a personal meeting in St. Petersburg would have been necessary. The travel expenses funding is not possible in the BizCom 2010 budget.

Jan 2010 Concept „Cooperation and Partnership“

In the Strategy of UBC for the years 2010 – 2015 it reads in point 7 “Systematic cooperation with partners in BSR, on European level and internationally”, that “The Baltic Sea Region has an abundance of organizations representing various participants and interest groups. Sometimes their mandates and fields of action overlap, creating a waste of resources or confusion. Therefore, it is important to achieve better structures and methods of cooperation within the region and vis-à-vis other participants.” Following this recommendation, a concept, titled „Cooperation and Partnership – for a strong voice in Europe” was created.

This concept

- gives a review of the existing situation in the Baltic Sea Region, Europe and internationally,
- identifies key partner organizations and networks, with which UBC should work out concrete plans of joint action and designing protocols for cooperation,
- makes a proposal, regarding the achievement of operational steps required.

The Executive Board has approved the application to implement the concept to a limited extent. The Board instructed BizCom to gain contact with organizations in the field of business within the Baltic Sea Region.

Feb 2010 BizCom Meeting

The main focus of the Commission’s work shall be on the topics Marketing BSR, Science Parks and reactivation of the Commission.

Mar 2010 Baltic Sea Identity

BizCom has become a partner of the planned EU Funding Project “Baltic Sea Identity. A description of the project is stated below.

Mar 2010 BaltMet Promo

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Apr 2010 Round Table –Subsidised Jobs in Europe

The UBC Member City Tallinn and the UBC Commission on Business Cooperation organised a joint roundtable on “Subsidised jobs in Europe – ideology, legislation and practise” on April

29th in Tallinn. The purpose of this meeting was to collect expertise about emergency measures to fight unemployment in different European cities.

The seminar started with an introduction by the Mayor of Tallin, Edgar Savisaar and the Chairman of the UBC Commission on Business Cooperation, Wolfgang Schmidt. Additionally, a presentation was given by Mihails Hazans from the University of Latvia and IZA, an expert on this field. Truman Packard, Lead Economist of the World Bank presented the international perspective of the topic. The EU perspective was commented on by Franz Pointner, Deputy Head of Unit, ESF Monitoring of Corresponding National Policies in the United Kingdom, Ireland and Latvia. The roundtable gave the chance to learn from the experience of different European cities. In detail, presentations were given by the Cities of London, Berlin, Riga, Malmö, Bilbao, Kemi, Vaasa, Vantaa and Narva. In the evening, the participants had the opportunity to follow up the discussion and broaden new contacts during a reception by the City of Tallinn and the UBC Commission on Business Cooperation in the historical Town Hall of Tallinn.

The roundtable “Subsidised jobs in Europe – ideology, legislation and practise” showed once again, that the Union of the Baltic Cities is an Alliance that brings direct benefit to its members. Sharing experiences and collecting new ideas is an important measure to answer the challenges of the current crisis and the ongoing globalisation.

May 2010 Kick-Off Promote young entrepreneurs

Upon the recommendation of the President of the UBC, BizCom is working with the Flagship Project “Promote with young entrepreneurs”. The Chairman of the Committee will participate in the kick-off meeting on May 20th, 2010 in Copenhagen.

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ACTION PLAN 2010

The main focus of the Commission's work will be on the topics Marketing BSR, Science Parks and reactivating the Commission. The Baltic Sea Region is a consolidated Region in Europe. In particular, with the help of two EU Funding Projects "Baltic Sea Identity" and "BaltMet Promo", the BSR's Unique Selling Propositions should be worked out and ways to make marketing in the entire region and the individual UBC member cities useful will be searched for. The majority of the UBC member cities already have a Science / Technology Park, or are preparing to implement one. BizCom has started a survey among UBC member cities to get a detailed overview of existing science/ technology parks to publish. In addition, a collaboration with the oldest and largest science park in Europe, Sophia Antipolis (France), was set up.

Baltic Sea Identity

Although most of the states of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) are EU-members, the region is characterised by national perspectives, a lack of common identity and a weakness in the field of collaboration and joint action. This is caused by historically difficult relations, individual misunderstandings and a lack of mutual understanding between the different individuals and actors in the BSR. These problems originate in history, the age of nationalism, two World Wars and the division by the Iron Curtain. Additionally, there is no common awareness of the region as an entity on an individual level: Citizens know little about their neighbours, the region's shared history and culture and the century-old exchange within the region. This hinders cooperation, working mobility and cohesion. Regional identity, the awareness of common strengths and a unifying core idea communicated by a regional brand can be a powerful competitive advantage for the BSR on the global market. It has the potential to create a climate for investments and a positive attitude towards products and services from the region as well as to attract skilled labour and tourists. Such a brand does not exist yet. The project will lay ground to build a regional identity based on a common vision and create a regional brand. This aim is in line with the EU's Baltic Sea Region Strategy and Action Plan and will strengthen territorial cohesion and cooperation.

How will Baltic Sea Identity address the problem?

A twofold approach – On the one hand, BaltSeaIdent addresses individuals and strengthens their understanding of the culture and history in the BSR. This understanding is a key for developing a greater capacity for transnational cooperation and increased working mobility. On the other hand, BaltSeaIdent gives cities, regions and other organisations in the BSR assistance with developing the potential of common identity and strength in their regional development efforts.

Facilitating Regional Development through awareness building on common Baltic Sea Regional Identity and historical and cultural barriers – A science-based Intercultural Baltic Sea History Book comprehensively explains relevant historical and cultural differences and characteristics in history, culture and societies within the BSR. Together with the Intercultural

Baltic Sea History Book, an Intercultural Baltic Sea Region Management Guide helps deal with the problems and uncertainties in today's regional intercultural cooperation. With the help of case studies and concrete examples it gives advice in problematic situations in the field of transnational cooperation. Both History Book and Management Guide strengthen the mutual understanding in the BSR and leads to improved transnational cooperation and working mobility. To guarantee the quality of these Information and Learning Tools, existing tools, guides & handbooks in regional cooperation are identified and analysed in advance and the best practises and lessons learned are taken into account.

Enabling Individuals for Transnational Cooperation & Mobility in the BSR – In parallel, Intercultural Training Courses are developed and conducted. They give participants a deeper understanding of differences and commonalities of BSR identity, qualify them to live and work in the BSR's intercultural environment, facilitate working mobility and strengthen the development of a regional identity as a whole by addressing multipliers. Target groups are youth, professionals working on a transnational level and further multipliers in the region, e.g. teachers. The Intercultural Baltic Sea History Book and Intercultural Baltic Sea Region Management Guide will serve as teaching material within the Intercultural Training Courses.

Capitalizing Baltic Sea Identity for Regional Development: Opportunities for Cities, Regions and further organisations to benefit from a Common BSR Identity in fields of common strengths – On the basis of an analysis of existing initiatives and branding activities in the BSR, the impact of regional identity on regional development is examined to highlight common strengths and potential in the BSR in past and present. A Branding and Identity Dialogue with relevant actors and experts accompanies this process. Based on the results, a model for a Baltic Sea Region Brand has been developed and tested as a pilot in BSR Cities and Regions. This pilot exemplifies opportunities and recommendations for the application of a Baltic Sea Brand and gives insights to the further development of common BSR identity and a Baltic Sea Brand. The results are available for organisations and actors in the region via a Baltic Sea Identity and Branding Internet Platform and Handbook.

BalMet Promo

BaltMet Promo pilots joint marketing of the Baltic Sea Region in 2010-2012 with a budget of 2,8 MEUR, co-financed by the EU Baltic Sea Region Programme. The project is coordinated by the City of Helsinki. The project aligns horizontal activities of the EU Strategy for the BSR related to the identity building and marketing of the region.

BaltMet Promo promotes the entire Baltic Sea Region globally and strengthens the BSR identity both at home and abroad by:

- jointly designing and selling BSR services and products for tourists, talents and investors
- mapping branding initiatives and encouraging policy dialogue on BSR branding
- testing a method on how to do collaborative place promotion for a macroregion and
- transferring the working method during the next project phase to other target markets and subject matters.

By joining together both public and private actors, the project brings forth **Region's** strengths as a tourist, talent and investment destination. The development of concrete pilot products will be founded on solid research of the relevant markets.

Science Parks



One of the topical issues of the UBC Commission on Business Cooperation in 2010 is the implementation and management of Science Parks. Sophia Antipolis, situated at the French Riviera near the city of Nice, has served as a model for Science Parks worldwide. It has developed at a constant rate for more than 30 years. Today there are more than 1.414 companies, around 30.000 jobs, 5.000 students and 4.000 researchers. In cooperation with Sophia Antipolis Science Park and back to back with an international cluster conference, BizCom will hold its annual meeting in November 2010 in Sophia Antipolis.

Perspective Themes

The revival of the Commission and increased efforts on the participation of representatives from member cities is a major goal. The possibilities of a merger with the Commission on Information Society should be further negotiated. For the future design and the seat of the Secretariat, the Commission should find a solution in close consultation with the city of Kaunas and the Executive Board.

Wolfgang Schmidt
Chairman Commission on Business Cooperation
City of Kiel