

Why is Öresund Committee/Öresund Region engaged in the BEN initiative?

- what can we add and how can we benefit from BEN?

Brief summary of key points in speech by Mr Torben Aaberg, Deputy Director, Öresund Committee.

The Danish-Swedish cross-border region of Öresund

- in geographic and geopolitical terms connecting continental Europe, Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea Area
- is the most densely populated region in Scandinavia
- is dominated by a metropolitan core but has a diversity of subregions
- is characterised by a high level of knowledge and human resources
- is characterised by formal and informal cross-border networks among organisations and authorities covering a wide spectrum of issues and competences
- sees cross-border integration as a tool for common economic growth
- utilises complementarity btw the two parts of the region to strengthen the international competitiveness and preconditions for growth in the region

Öresund Committee is a cross border cooperation body with a board of local and regional politicians from both parts of the region. ÖC is established 1993 to promote the cross border cooperation at all level and to promote cross border interest towards the two government and European institutions. ÖC works in close cooperations with business, universities, labour market actors, local authorities and the two governments. Among prioritised ÖC issues are developing the cross border labour market, developing a common economic environment with business cooperations, enhancing compatibility btw Denmark and Sweden as to rules, legislation and structures, analysing and enhancing cross border commuting and migration etc

ÖC is strongly engaged in the international cooperation, at the Nordic, Baltic and European level, including active participation in the Nordic Council of Ministers' network of Nordic cross border regions, and the exchange of experience with other Metropolitan regions and cross border regions.

Among the prioritised areas of ÖC action are to contribute to the growth conditions and international competitiveness of the Öresund region. One important tool in this direction is to investigate and build strategic alliances with other regions of the Baltic Sea Area, within the framework of a “Baltic Sea Strategy for the Öresund Region”.

This initiative is based on accepting a situation of “co-opetition” (combining cooperation and competition) where the spectrum of competences in the various regions and cities through complementarity can strengthen the joint competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Area. The initiative is also inspired by OECD who has identified Öresund Region as “a strategic centre for economic growth and a gateway to the Baltic Sea”. Our Baltic Sea Strategy involves authorities, business and universities in a joint effort, adding new potentials to the already established contacts and cooperation projects btw Öresund and partners in the other parts of Baltic Sea Area.

In this sense Öresund Region can

- contribute to the development of Baltic Sea Area being a model region with valuable experiences from how cross border cooperation can enhance economic growth and welfare
- benefit from experiences made in other ambitious regions in the Baltic Sea Area and from the strong economic processes and europolitical focus on the Baltic Sea Area

Seen from Öresund BEN can become an important part of the developing and implementation of our Baltic Sea Strategy. ÖC participated in the former NCM/Baltic network initiative and welcomes BEN as a natural strengthening and further development of this initiative. BEN can provide new potential for strategic contacts and alliances. First step is to exchange knowledge and build networks among cross border regions, next step could include a wider range of public and private key actors of strategic importance in the Baltic Sea Area, thus adding important contributions to continued growth and development around the Baltic Sea.