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Nordic Council of Ministers

SEMINAR SUMMARY REPORT

BEN Seminar on EU Structural Policy 2007-2013 (CBSS Secretariat and Regeringskansliet, Stockholm, 5 October 2006)

More than 50 representatives of the BEN-project partners participated in the BEN Seminar on EU Structural Policy 2007-2013 organised by the CBSS Secretariat on 4 October 2006 in Stockholm.¹ The aim of the seminar was to provide the BEN-partners with useful information on the possibilities for the future territorial co-operation in the Baltic Sea region – a co-operation hopefully resulting in many successful projects emanating from the BEN co-operation.

The six presentations were divided into a more theoretical session giving a general overview on the territorial co-operation 2007-2013 and a more practical session focusing on the day-to-day project work. These presentations dealt with:

- Territorial Co-operation 2007-2013 – An Overview
- The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument – CBC Strategy 2007-2013
- The Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013
- The New Regulations – Key Points for Projects for 2007-2013
- Private Partners as Project Partners – Experiences in the Past and Recommendations for PPP in 2007-2013
- Project Management in the BSR INTERREG III B NP – Experiences, recommendations, overview of future tools (only in written)

The presentations were followed by lively discussions mainly focusing on:

1) Future relation between transnational and cross-border co-operation:

By enlarging the geographical areas of CBC programmes in the programming period 2007-2013, transnational co-operation and CBC seem to converge eventually causing problems to clearly distinguish between transnational and cross-border co-operation in the future – even more, if the Lead Partner Principle used so far in transnational projects will be used also for CBC-projects. What are the consequences, challenges and opportunity for the classical CBC? The (geographically) enlarged CBC programmes might counteract the aim to achieve tangible results, might even create the risk to loose tangible results as it gets more difficult to explain to the inhabitants of Euro/Cross-border regions what CBC in reality means.

¹ Before the seminar, the participants paid a technical visit to the premises of the CBSS Secretariat to get a more insight view into the work of the CBSS (Secretariat), the BEN partner no. 2.

2) New partnership between national/transnational and regional/local authorities and organisations:

For BSR INTERREG III B-projects developing recommendations and strategies, it could often be noted that the project results did not always reach their addressee, the trans-/national level. The “new partnership” between the national/transnational and the regional/local level will be a new element especially for transnational projects in the programming period 2007-2013 (cf. draft programme document for the BSR Programme 2007-2013 of 3 July 2006, page 23). Hereby, the trans-/national level is more actively involved not least in ensuring the implementation and sustainability of (strategic) project results. In this context, it was noted that the BEN-project actually already implements this new partnership approach by having project partners from both the trans-/national as well as the regional/local level, but especially by the national roundtables in Work Package 3.

3) Despite similarities, the different objectives, strands and programmes offer a wide range of opportunities for co-operation in the Baltic Sea region:

When preparing projects for the programming period 2007-2013, it is important to reflect on all and not to disregard any of the possibilities for co-operation under the different Objectives (1: Convergence; 2: Competitiveness; 3: Territorial co-operation) as well as the different strands (A: cross-border; B: transnational; C: interregional co-operation) – e.g. the support of investments might be (easier) feasible under Objective 1 or 2 than Objective 3. In addition, one should take into account that some transnational programmes also geographically overlap and that this overlap provides additional opportunities. Further, multilateral cross-border projects might be more suitable for people-to-people contacts.

In addition, the BEN-partners discussed during the seminar i.a. the topic of PPP and the practical involvement of SMEs into projects; opportunities for strengthening cross-border trade or projects in the field of culture, cultural heritage preservation or youth affairs; the co-operation with partners from Belarus; and indicators to measure the success for projects.

A definite asset was the combination of speakers/moderators and presentations from the different levels, the European (Commission’s, DG Regional Policy, Territorial Co-operation Unit and EC Representation in Sweden), the pan-Baltic/regional (CBSS; Steering Committee of the BSR Interreg III B NP-Programme; Drafting Team for the BSR Programme 2007-2013; BSR Interreg III B Joint Secretariat; INTERACT Qualification & Transfer), the national (Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, Division for Regional Development, Sweden), and the project level (East West Transport Corridor Project).

All presentations and other documents related to the seminar are available on the BEN web site at http://www.benproject.org/en/main/outputs/wp1/wp1_1.