

Joint Policy Recommendations

*As adopted by the Policy Representatives of the partner
regions during their Gothenburg Meeting
on 23rd May 2012*

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Introduction

The European Business Support Network (EBSN) has been available online since March 2012. Since 2010, 29 European regions from 12 countries around the North- and Baltic Sea have been closely cooperating within the EU projects North Sea Supply Connect and Baltic Supply to strengthen their regional economies in the area of tendering and procurement. Political representatives from those regions have met in Gothenburg on the 23rd May 2012 for the third Political Advisory Group (PAG). The PAG has discussed the joint Policy Recommendations, which have been prepared on behalf of both projects.

We are directing our recommendations to policy makers in the Baltic and North Sea Region, to the European Parliament, the European Commission (DG Regio, DG Enterprise and DG Research) and to the Interreg programmes.

95% of the regional economies of both the North Sea region and the Baltic region are founded on the entrepreneurial spirit of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Opportunities to strengthen employment and competitiveness lie mainly in the utilization of the innovative capacity of these SMEs. Companies can gain better access to European and international supply chain markets, large manufacturers will also be able to benefit from the economic potential that the SMEs have to offer.



Inter-Programme Cooperation

North Sea Supply Connect and Baltic Supply are European projects co-financed by the respective INTERREG programmes. For the first time in the history of INTERREG there have been two complementing projects working on the same topic. Both contribute to the European Small Business Act and to the Baltic Sea Region strategy. This cooperation tries to facilitate access for SMEs to international markets and to tendering and procurement measures.

The main goal of these European projects is:

Creating new business opportunities for North-eastern European SME's by advancing transparency and accessibility to procurement processes.

Business clusters in these regions are manifold: they cover the opportunities for example offered in the food, maritime and renewable energy industry.

The on- and offline services offered by EBSN on **www.eubizz.net** are active support tools promoting a stronger international orientation of SMEs. Via the access to new markets, business opportunities are created through:

- securing European cross border and transnational competitiveness;
- extending knowledge for better SME performance on European SME supply markets;
- enhancing the integration of SMEs into North European supply chain logistics;
- holding joint matchmaking events for companies.



Policy Recommendations

On strengthening SMEs in tendering with regional programs and in national schemes, partners within both projects have worked, since autumn 2012, in close liaison with local business development organisations (BDOs) and the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN). The goal was to identify which services could benefit SMEs and larger companies in transnational tendering processes. The form of a portal was chosen to advertise these supporting services: **www.eubizz.net**.

Based on accompanying research and lessons learned from the projects, the following recommendations are proposed by the PAG members to policy makers and administrations at regional, national and European level.

1. **Cooperation and integration of SME support services shall lead the way.** Action is needed to avoid duplication. One example can be seeking cooperation with the local EEN contact points and similar organisations. Another example is using the existing eubizz.net platform in future Interreg projects.

2. *Seek European and national funding for the continuous operation of EBSN, and its eventual cooperation with EEN, with the aim to ensure and extend the service portfolio of EBSN.*
3. *Create and support local or regional one-stop-shops where SMEs will be supported when applying for European, national and local grants and establish coaching and mentoring services.*
4. *Encourage dialogue and exchange of experience between SMEs and/or with large buyers (OEM) on the topic of international supply chains. Promote direct matchmaking events. This could have the form of branch/industrial sector conferences accompanied by small workshops.*
5. *Promote the European cross-programme exchange in like started with these two projects between the North and Baltic Sea Region; and to and support and facilitate cooperation between projects funded by different EU programs, e.g. Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) funded by CIP and European Business Support Network funded by the European Regional Development Fund.*
6. *Seek to maintain a stronghold for SME internationalisation in the Baltic Sea Region Strategy Action Plan.*

The Political Advisory Group represents eight European regions:



From left to right: Dick Michel (The Netherlands), Zane Zeibote (Latvia), Esa Kokkonen (Finland), Berit Mattson (Sweden), Dirk Kühling (Germany), Eva Kjer Hansen (Denmark), Jan de Kock (Flanders), Piret Treiberg (Estonia).

**The Interreg IVB
North Sea Region
Programme**



Baltic Sea Region
Programme 2007–2013



Caroline Privat
Project Manager
Caroline.Privat@wuh.bremen.de

Allan Nordby Ottesen
Communication Manager
ano@southdenmark.be



Caroline Couperus
Project Manager
c.couperus@provinciegroningen.nl

Ilse Schoemaker
Communication Manager
schoemaker@snn.eu



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Partnership Instrument)

The ESBN Partners



BUSINESS KOLDING



South Denmark European Office
Det Syddanske Bruxelles-Kontor



Ministry of Economics,
Labour and Ports





Latvijas Tirdzniecības
un rūpniecības
kāmera





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