



Sweco Eurofutures
FIRST DRAFT
2013-07-31

B7 2020

WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

PREAMBLE

When, more than 20 years ago, the B7 islands found themselves once again free to communicate across borders, we decided to work together towards a better future for our islands and their inhabitants. Our commitment was carried by a strong leadership, carried by a vision of a bright future and a conviction that more could be achieved through cooperation. Our vision was strong and our hopes were high.

Twenty three years later, we can look back at many common achievements. On political level, B7 is recognized as a player when Baltic Sea issues are discussed. On strategic level, a number of positions have been elaborated, adopted and communicated – in some cases followed by recognition on national and/or EU level. On practical level, the B7 cooperation has connected hundreds of people from the islands. Professionals in different fields have been enabled to work and learn together on common issues, culture and knowledge been exchanged and young people have met and sometimes also competed with each other. People that have been connected by the sea through centuries have once again been reconnected.

But, future success cannot be built on old victories. Today, we see a need to recharge the B7 cooperation. Getting old together is simply not enough to sustain a fruitful cooperation. Many of the common challenges and opportunities identified in our three previous B7 strategies remain to be explored.¹ In order to achieve more together and to revitalise our cooperation we need to enhance our focus, join hands with developments on global, Baltic Sea and national levels. We believe that building on our previous experiences and taking better advantage of available financing possibilities we can achieve more for less.

We also need to continue to see the B7 islands as part of a larger whole. The European Union has set its targets for 2020 and so have our five countries. We believe that B7 should do its share to achieve those goals. Some things we need to do on each island and sometimes with other partners. Some things we will benefit from doing together.

This strategy aims at 2020. Our aim is to move forward, identify areas where B7 cooperation can add value to us and set our common priorities for the next seven years. The journey towards a sustainable future for our islands starts here and now. The future doesn't wait.

Mariehamn in November 2013

Gun-Mari Lindholm
Minster of Åland Government

Kaido Kaasik
Saaremaa County Governor

Åke Svensson
County Mayor Region Gotland

Riho Rahuoja
Hiiumaa County Governor

Uwe Ahlers
Member of Council Vorpommern-Rügen

Tommy Eliasson
Ölands kommunalförbund

Winni Grosbøll
Mayor of Bornholm

¹ "B7 strategy" (1996), "A strategy for the future" (2002 – 2006) and "B7 Strategy for a Changing World" (2007 – 2013)

B7 COOPERATION – WHY?

Sometimes – and nowadays more often than 20 years ago – the benefits from international cooperation are questioned. Local or regional budgets seem to be more strained and own co-financing to work with partners outside the islands is requested to a higher extent today than 20 years ago. However, while the general demand for external financing of international projects has always been high, recent surveys have shown that there is no lack of financing instruments in the Baltic Sea Region. B7 islands, as well as other Baltic Sea actors, have more and much larger sources of external co-financing at their disposal today than in 1989. Still, there is a more questioning attitude towards international cooperation today. Among the main reasons are;

- **Regions look at cooperation more in terms of explicit own interest.** “What’s in it for me” is a relevant question when the elements of curiosity or aid are gone
- **There is an increased inward perspective.** Short term rather than long term rules the political agenda and there is a lack of visions and visionaries
- **A reversed principle of additionality.** The EU-enlargement in 2004 has, to some extent, resulted in that EU Structural Funds are regarded as a replacement of the national or equivalent expenditures by Member States for co-financing of Baltic Sea cooperation on regional or local level
- **Lack of good projects.** Demands on projects to deliver quick and visible results and at the same time results that last are increasing in the wake of many projects that have hardly survived their project time. When projects need to address a specific need, then ad hoc projects aren’t good enough.
- **Project fatigue.** A project proletariat has started to develop, where projects are a form of employment opportunity rather than creating sustainable employment or as a tool for organisational learning.
- **Lack of human resources.** Running multimillion Euro projects takes very skilled and experienced project managers and cannot be done as an extra task “on the side”. In the islands’ own organisations there is a lack of such people, and if they are available a lack of resources to pay for a replacement for those managers during projects)
- **Lack of leadership that looks beyond its own territory.** When challenges become more and more global and when cooperation across borders and sectors is more needed than ever, then it seems that more people believe that the solutions are found locally.

Similar arguments can now and then be heard on the B7 islands. Questioning is in itself not necessarily bad – on the contrary it is generally wise to now and then take a critical look on a region’s or a municipality’s activities, whether or not they are international. So why continued B7 cooperation? First, there are some cases where benefits from cross border cooperation between regions are likely to occur and where B7 is no exception;

- More efficient– deal with common challenges
- More effective - helps the participants to solve similar problems and avoid “double work”
- Contribute to decreased isolation - bring in new ideas and connections to peripheral areas
- Contribute to integration – support exchange of people and cultures
- Increased organisational learning – learning by doing or from how others do.

Second, cooperation needs to be put into a holistic context and it needs to provide added value to the partners. In the case of B7, added value is value that cannot be achieved by an island on its own. Furthermore, international cooperation is not “good enough” as a singular activity “on its own”. It should only be financed and implemented when it contributes to at least two of the benefits described above. Third, while a B7 vision without action is a daydream, then action without vision can easily become a nightmare. Hence, B7 activities need to be connected to and support a joint vision of what the islands want to achieve through their cooperation.

VISION 2020

The B7 islands offer an attractive living environment with a sustainable development. Connecting their people, professionals and businesses across borders, the B7 cooperation has contributed to put the islands more in control of their own destiny. Through exchange of experience, lobby and projects B7 cooperation has helped make the islands' more resilient and their population richer, smarter and happier.

B7 MISSION STATEMENT 2020

The mission of the B7 co-operation is to contribute to the development of its member islands and to the achievement of both their own and common goals.

The B7:

- Works as a partnership of equals and encourages open communication
- Is based on respect for common and individual values
- Has a mutual commitment to enshrine the B7 trade mark
- Aims at promoting a sustainable development that includes economic, social and environmental dimensions
- Focuses on Baltic Islands' issues, bringing together the island dimension and a Baltic Sea Region perspective
- Works for results that can better be achieved through co-operation with other islands and organisations
- Values cooperation opportunities where more can be achieved for less
- Is a flexible, visible and professional organisation, that is outward looking and serves the interests of the islands

By accepting this mission, the B7 islands have made a commitment between themselves and to their inhabitants, to cooperate whenever added value from B7 cooperation can be foreseen. The main tools of B7 cooperation are:

- Projects
- Exchange of experiences and ideas
- Events
- Lobbying and networking



B7 SWOT 2013

An overview of the B7 islands common weaknesses, strengths, challenges and opportunities, as described in each island's strategies can work as a guide for areas where cooperation could be expected to add value to the islands' development efforts. However, the picture that appears is not entirely as clear as one might expect and that makes it difficult to make a comprehensive B7-SWOT.² Looking closer at each island's vision and development strategy, as well as some indicators of sustainable development, it is obvious that the B7 islands do not have a perfect match of weaknesses and strengths. For instance, while accessibility is a strength for Öland, Rügen or Åland it is a weakness for the other four islands. The economic development³ is positive on Gotland, Öland, Saaremaa and Åland and not so positive on Hiiumaa and Rügen. And while the population is decreasing at a very high rate on Hiiumaa, Saaremaa, Bornholm and Rügen, the number of inhabitants is constant on Gotland and slowly increasing on Åland.

At the same time, the islands share many similar challenges and opportunities. Some of them need to be dealt with by each island itself – in a local, regional or national context. This strategy focuses on ten challenges and opportunities where B7 cooperation most probably could give added value to its members (in alphabetical order);

Ageing population – The share of older inhabitants on the B7 islands is increasing. Young people move out to find education or work and at the same time retired people – often with a summer house on the island – move in. So far we have seen this trend coming, but haven't had to do much about it. That will change. How to supply the local economy with a competent workforce, how to make the islands more attractive to young families or how to deliver high quality public services are common islands' issues. Other issues connected to an ageing population are how to take advantage of the elders' competencies and how to increase the effectiveness in social services to make local budgets meet future demand.

Benchmarking. Leaders on B7 islands often come back to that islands are different. In many cases this is also true and exchange of facts and figures concerning "how do we do" in different areas is an ideal topic for cooperation. B7 benchmarking could be a very valuable source of information and inspiration for politicians and civil servants on the islands when developing their policies or public services. Concentrating on one theme per year, B7 can manage to deal with seven different benchmarking themes during 2014 -2020 – for instance on the educational system, the waste management system, the social services for elderly, health care, population, energy or mobility.

Destinations. Being islands in the Baltic Sea, with a unique environment, cultural heritage and apart from the city's stress and polluted air, makes the islands attractive and exotic destinations for domestic and foreign visitors. While the tourism industry is already well developed in many of the islands, there is still much room for improvement. How to support the development of the culture and creative industries, how to find new ideas for old places and how to turn existing facilities into new possibilities, is on the agenda on each island. A good example is how "Almedalsvekan" on Gotland inspired Bornholm to develop "Folkemødet".

Energy. All the B7 islands have very good preconditions for development and production of renewable energy. But their abundance of biomass, sunshine, waves and wind cannot be utilised without reliable and smart grids, entrepreneurs, investors and a skilled workforce. Since the cheapest and most reliable energy is energy not used, energy efficiency is a priority for the European Union as well as the B7 islands during the years to come. And it is a must to tackle higher demands for energy and climate change. The main challenge is how to move from good ideas to good practice. Small scale solutions will play an increased role in the future and the islands can work as national or even European test beds and showcases for such solutions.

² References: Vision Gotland 2025, ØRUS – Øresund Regional UtvecklingsStrategi, Saare Maakonna Arengustrateegia 2020, En vision av Öland 2015, Regionales Entwicklungskonzept Rügen, Hiiumaa 2020+, Omställning Åland, Bright Green Island Bornholm, South Baltic Four Corners etc.

³ Development of GDP/inhabitant compared to the national average (2006 –)

Environment. While most regions try to claim that they are unique, the B7 islands really are. All the B7 islands have nature, landscapes and built environments with very high international qualities – in some locations so unique that they are regarded by the United Nations as a World Heritage. How to preserve those unique values, while at the same time make it possible for the inhabitants and the local economy to benefit from them, is a common challenge. Here, all the islands would benefit from exchange of experience and know how.

Equal opportunities. While the limited labour markets on the islands are a restraint for employment it is even more important to make it possible for the working age population to be included in the local economy – as employers or employees. Especially women and young people seem to have lesser opportunities, but also men that have worked in the primary industries and with low education will find it increasingly hard to find a suitable job on the islands. Lifelong learning is one key and the limited access to tertiary education and training opportunities demands new and innovative solutions on all the B7 islands. Another key is entrepreneurship – where women and young people often have higher hurdles to jump on islands than men, in a society with traditional values and a large and male primary sector.

Maritime safety & security. B7 has already participated in projects aimed at increasing the maritime safety and security. With their long coastlines and their high nature values make them especially vulnerable to accidents and/or oil spills at sea. Even though there are both national and international resources available at such events, experience shows that it is the local community that has to take the hardest blow. How to plan for and manage environmental risks is a common challenge with specific island dimensions.

Mobility – Living on an island means that there are sometimes mobility restraints. Those restraints are not only caused by the need to cross water to leave the island but they are also found within the island. An island that wants a sustainable development needs to develop its public and private infrastructure including ICT-solutions and public transport. The islands could also benefit from an increased immigration of people from abroad – especially white collar people with high education and knowledge based jobs – that can do some of their work in a location remote from the city. Such people and their families, would bring much needed new energy and ideas to the islands, but they have special needs when it comes to mobility.

Participation and local democracy. Islands are small communities with old traditions. On one hand that is very positive since it creates a secure and safe environment. On the other hand there is sometimes a tendency to regard new influences with scepticism and collaboration can sometimes be hard due to previous experiences or even old family feuds. Paradoxically a small and historically isolated society doesn't automatically create trust. When the tensions on the traditional society increase, then participation and local democracy is very important factors for development and to fight stagnation and indifference. How to involve the local population in the island's development, how to adapt to the spread of social media and how to revitalise local democracy is a challenge shared by the B7 islands. Here meetings, people to people and culture to culture across borders, can help tear down old barriers.

Peripherality. The B7 islands cannot take advantage of the regional dynamics typical for growing urban regions on the mainland. That means that special efforts are needed to increase the islands' economic resilience through increased diversification, smarter specialisation, increased entrepreneurship and other measures that reduce the vulnerability of the local economies. To develop an island's economy is different from developing a fast growing capital region and requires other solutions.

B7 Objectives 2014 – 2020

A more effective cooperation – achieving more for less

A more visible cooperation – increasing transparency and improving communication

A revitalised cooperation – giving more people opportunities to develop through B7

A strengthened platform – offering island politicians more opportunities to share ideas on daily and future issues

A learning organisation – inspiring improved work and results at home

B7 Strategies 2014 - 2020

The ten areas above can all benefit from cooperation and exchange between islands. The goals for the B7 cooperation concerning during the period 2014 – 2020 are:

1. **Increased focus.** Making priorities is hard but necessary. B7 shall focus on issues of relevance to the future of the islands and their populations. Projects should only be run if are in line with the islands' own development ambitions and when they add an extra value through cooperation across borders. Prioritising projects that support island priorities will help enable more B7 output with less B7 budget.
2. **Increased learning.** More civil servants should be able to exchanges experiences and “good practice” with their peers on other islands. Sharing success stories and discussing failures is a smart way to develop. More politicians should met more often to discuss important future challenges. Exchange of ideas with peers beyond every day meetings is a smart way to restart the political interest in B7.
3. **Increased transparency.** Communication is key to the perceived success of B7 activities, both by islanders, partner and international actors. B7 cooperation can only be successful if there is an open communication with the islands' inhabitants. While the B7 trademark is well known outside the islands, in general B7 is not well known to the islanders.
4. **Island benchmark.** By a structured and thematic benchmarking between the islands learning and constant improvements are encouraged – both on administrative and political level. This will be a focus area during 2014 – 2020.
5. **Increased commitment.** Expected results from the B7 cooperation have to be clear and possible to follow up. The political committee and the board will take a larger responsibility for the initiation and endorsement of projects, to identify and involve stakeholders and for the follow up and learning from projects and other cooperation efforts.

B7 expected results

The annual programme of B7 shall contain a list of proposed activities including measurable and realistic results expressed in quantitative and/or qualitative terms. All activities will be evaluated and measures will be taken to ensure organisational learning. The Steering Committee is responsible to the Annual Conference for the annual results of B7.

B7 organisation and resources

Annual conference

- meets once a year
- has 21 representatives (three politicians from each island)
- makes a quorum when all seven islands are represented
- approves the B7 strategy and follows its implementation
- approves the B7 budget
- approves the B7 programme for the coming year
- reviews the B7 activities during the last year

B7 Steering Committee

- meets at least twice per year
- consists of one politician from each of the member islands
- makes a quorum when at least four islands are represented
- is chaired by the representative of the island holding the annual rotating chairmanship
- provides direction
- elaborates and reviews the B7 Strategy, policies, annual programme and annual budget
- decides on the formation of work groups or focus groups
- decides on projects to be run under the B7 name
- lobby for the islands in areas of common interest
- ensures that a civil servant at executive level is appointed from each island to participate as a member of the B7 Board
- safeguards the B7 trademark and its symbols
- can delegate responsibilities to the B7 Board

B7 Board

- meets as agreed in the annual programme
- consists of senior civil servants at executive level from each of the member islands
- makes a quorum when at least four islands are represented
- is chaired by the representative of the island holding the annual rotating chairmanship
- manages – plans, leads, organises, monitors, controls, evaluates - the work of the B7 with the representatives from the other member islands
- reports on the activities of the B7 to the B7 Steering Committee on a quarterly basis, including an executive summary and statement of accounts
- ensures representatives from their islands are appointed to work in other B7 bodies and works to implement the B7 Strategy and annual programmes of the B7 within the agreed budget
- develops and approves the guidelines for the B7 Board, Chairmanship and other bodies or representatives of the B7

B7 Chairmanship and secretariat

- Administers the daily affairs of the B7 cooperation
- Is responsible for the implementation of the annual programme
- Actively develops communication and information services through the B7 website
- Prepares the annual programme for the B7 cooperation
- Prepares reviews and initiatives for the Steering Committee and the Board.

Appendix 1

B7 Checklist 2014 - 2020

This checklist could be used when the political committee and the board make decisions on B7 joint efforts.

TYPE OF COOPERATION	YES	NO
<i>PROJECTS</i>		
Is the project in line with B7 priorities?		
Does the project support the development on at least four islands?		
Are the expected results concrete and credible?		
Could the project be funded by EU or other external funding?		
Is there reason to believe that the project will live on its own merits after the project period?		
<i>EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND IDEAS</i>		
Is the exchange in line with B7 priorities?		
Is it feasible that the exchange will support the development on at least four islands?		
Could the exchange be funded by EU or other external funding?		
Does the exchange involve new people into the B7 cooperation?		
<i>EVENTS</i>		
Is the event in line with B7 priorities?		
Is clear that the event should be run under the B7 trademark?		
Does the event involve new groups of people or strengthen already involved groups participation in B7 cooperation?		
<i>LOBBYING AND NETWORKING</i>		
Is the activity in line with B7 priorities?		
Does the activity support the development on all B7 islands?		