

# Bridging the past, present and future - Pre-study: Baltic Museums bonding for Baltic branding

## Origin

In 2010 Gotlands Museum initiated a project, using funding from the Swedish Arts Council (KUR), aiming at creating a network for the exchange of knowledge and experience between museums around the Baltic Sea. The network was set up, and includes by December 2012 fifteen museums from all the countries bordering the Baltic Sea (web-site [www.baltmus.net](http://www.baltmus.net)).

One aim of the network is to stimulate interaction, cooperation, circulation of news and benefiting from each other's knowledge and know-how on an institutional level. It covers most disciplines, giving each other help and support in analyzing artifacts, preservation queries and cooperation in museum matters such as producing exhibitions, developing visitors' sites, management, pedagogical programs, marketing and branding etc.

Another aim is to promote museums as platforms for increased cooperation between different sectors of society. A common misunderstanding is that museums are old-fashion storages hosting dusty exhibitions. Nothing could be more wrong! Within the museum-structure all kind of topics are mastered; there are years of experience concerning tourism, visitors services, education, research, pedagogical programs for schools, management of cultural heritage sites and monuments, communication in many forms such as web, facebook, blogs, books and other publications, guides, exhibitions, program-activities, press-contacts etc.

The museums of today are talented on spotting actual trends and to communicate them using a combination of traditional and contemporary methods in exhibitions, programs and events. One reason is the fact that most museums need to earn major parts of their financing themselves, and without having something new to offer the audience won't show up.

The museums are multitasked actors with highly skilled expertise and active public relationships. There is a big potential in developing and using these skills to promote the cultural richness of the BSR. Moreover, the museums have a very solid brand and are used working with long-term projects and initiatives but also with contemporary trends and creative development and innovation.

Still, the challenge for the museums and the region is to discover this broad potential to its full extent benefiting from it when developing and promoting the region. By joining forces museums

around the Baltic Sea can be a long-term and solid resource for regional development. Clustering with other actors, such as tourism-organizations and educational bodies, improves the results creating a sustainable umbrella-organization where multiple aspects of Baltic culture and heritage can be developed and promoted.

One topic to investigate further is the Baltic culture and identity in all its aspects. The museums have been dealing with this issue in a regional context for very long time, and have deep knowledge about it on the local/regional level. The challenge within the network is to get a grip of the whole Baltic region. How does the “Baltic identity” look like? Most probably very diverse, not only in place but also over time. This richness in culture and tradition has many aspects addressing the inhabitants of today. And at the same time: as well as there are diversities, there are also similarities connecting us in relationships of all kinds.

Another aspect is the willingness to share the regional culture and cultural heritage. There is a huge potential in developing the BSR into an attractive and safe tourist-destination. The historical and natural landscapes, the art, the monuments, design and history are all worth travelling to. The BSR need to tell the world about the richness we treasure and that we want to share it with others. And this is best done by cooperating, by building relationships between people and institutions willing to unite in order to develop the Baltic entity.

There is a rich diversity of culture and cultural heritage in the BSR. As mentioned in the Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) it is of vital importance to increase the visibility of BSR culture and creativity and to promote the BSR as a common cultural region. Promoting the cultural and creative industries gives the region a positive and attractive image attracting visitors, entrepreneurs and investors.

## Needs and analysis

Talking to inhabitants around the Baltic Rim, it becomes all too often obvious that the knowledge about the other countries, cultures and people within in the BSR is poor. This fact is particularly sad since we share a common history throughout the millennia. The connections and relations over sea have in previous days in many cases been more intense than today. This lack of contacts and connections prevents the region’s full potential as a place of cultural, historical and natural beauty and richness to be fully understood and promoted.

Creating a bright and peaceful way into the future for the BSR takes that people meet and share their experiences in people-to-people connections and development - projects, starting already at school-age. Long-term actions and networks that promote creative work across the national boundaries, especially west-east, create a region that is vibrant, safe, attractive and prosperous.

For the tourism sector culture and cultural heritage play vital roles. Tourism in its turn plays an important role for creating a prosperous region. The tourism sector is growing and today contributes with five percent of employment and gross domestic product in the EU. Since other sectors, such as service and products, are interlinked with the visitors business, it has an even bigger impact than this on the macro-regional development. There is an increasing demand for high-grade services and products within the areas of culture, cultural heritage, handicraft and events.

There are many actors and networks dealing with cultural and cultural heritage cooperation in the BSR, still a broad-scale and long-term shared platform that deals with the whole BSR is lacking. The region's rich cultural and natural values in combination with a safe and stable province provide vast opportunities creating an attractive place for visitors, investors and inhabitants. Still a "Baltic brand" (like for example the "Mediterranean brand") associated with the positive values of the region is not that easily found and takes broad-scale cooperation and time to define.

A joint effort based on the museums' expertise and knowledge including other actors can form such a solid and long-term platform. The broad and deep understanding and knowledge of the Baltic issues that the museums host can by focused actions form an effective tool to promote the region developing and deepening the common identity. By joining forces with existing networks and disciplines, such as world-heritage clusters, the Hanseatic Towns, tourism agencies and professional marketing actors the potential of forming and communicating a strong Baltic brand attracting visitors from near and far can be worked out. The cooperation needed for this action forms networks focused on different topics that can develop further.

These matters are complex and needs to be handled over a longer period. To do this, an establishment of a bigger EU-project, possibly even a flagship-project, should be worked towards. The idea of the EU-project would be using the network as an umbrella enabling different actors (museums, world-heritage sites etc.) to benefit from and contributing to the promotion of the region.

Formulating this bigger project and work out the application should be dealt with within the pre-study- that is this seed-money project-.

The needs for the pre-study, financed by the seed-funding would be:

- Formulating the future EU-project / flagship project handling the needs above
- Identifying the partners; museums, tourism-organizations on a national level and other actors working with cultural heritage (world-heritage sites etc.) by mapping the sector
- Communicating and promoting the project to gather actors under this long-term umbrella

The needs for the long-term project, shortly pointed out, would be:

- Broad communication and cooperation within the whole BSR to learn to know each other and to formulate a "Baltic identity" – diverse, rich, changing and vivid
- Including children and youths into this matter by pedagogical packages, excursions and exchange programs to increase the understanding for each other's' cultures and conditions
- Establishing a solid, long-term yet dynamic way to promote the richness of the region in a joint way, using the museum-network as an umbrella for different actors from the whole BSR
- Establishing sustainable networks where common Baltic projects can be dealt with over time

## Problems to be addressed

Within the pre-study (that is this Seed-money project):

- Who are the partners and actors interested in a common branding and promotion of the BSR's culture and heritage in order to attract visitors and investors? Mapping of already existing networks and actions
- Which are the actions to be taken to prepare the flagship/ EU project? What kind of projects and actions/working packages should one consider in a joint EU-project?
- Where to find best case practices that can inspire and give way to good solutions concerning joint activities and promotion?

Within the Flagship / EU-project

- Would it be possible to investigate and formulate diverse and common matters forming the Baltic identity, building on common history heading for a common future? The interregional lack of knowledge about the other countries and people in the region seems to be a very important topic to address in the first step.
- How could this work, which certainly is not a short-time project, be carried out and implemented in communication with national and local actors and inhabitants? Which platform could serve this purpose over time and change?
- How could the results be communicated in order to raise the attractiveness of the BSR inside and outside the region?

## Aims

By highlighting the common culture, cultural heritage and history of the BSR in cooperation between different stakeholders such as museums, other cultural – heritage networks, schools, tourism-organizations and SMI's, the BSR as a common reference point in the identity of the region can be worked towards, multiple as it is. This gives way to promote the BSR in a joint and resourceful way, where both shared and disparate phenomena form the picture of the region.

The development of a long-term umbrella-organization based on museums, cultural-heritage networks and tourism-actors in the region is one of the main objectives, a network that can work with different aspects on the Baltic culture due to its broad expertise and experiences. To start with, the museum network shall cluster with tourism-organizations, other cultural-heritage networks, educational organizations and national bodies working with promoting the region in order to create an umbrella where many already existing organizations, networks and initiatives can join.

Choosing the museums in the BSR as a driver of this development is due to their lasting and solid brand, their deep and broad expertise on topics such as culture, history, cultural heritage, science and pedagogics and their multiple contacts on all levels of society. In addition they are all skilled and experienced hostesses when it comes to visitors, events, programs and service, whether local or international. Or, as the National Swedish Museums' board puts it; The museum as engine (*Museet som motor*)!

The aim within the pre-study is to identify actors, previous and ongoing projects and initiatives to formulate the idea of the future Flagship/ EU project more closely. The project might take form as a long-term umbrella-structure where different stakeholders working with cultural and heritage tourism and promotion of the region can cooperate. Close contact with the PAC tourism, SI and other central actors is crucial.

## Objectives

Objectives within the pre-study:

- Work towards establishing an EU/ flagship-project on PA tourism. Close communication with the PAC is to be maintained. Mapping the situation, identifying future stakeholders, funding, objectives and targets are important topics to address. The project-idea should be formulated by April 2014
- Developing an active network and identifying the future EU-project-partners. The partnership shall consist of at least one - two museums, two world-heritage sites and one tourism-organization from each BSR country. This is to be achieved by October 2013
- Developing the existing web-site [www.baltmus.net](http://www.baltmus.net) into an efficient tool promoting the project and for the network to work from. By March 2014 the Communication – forum on the web shall have 100 active members, about as many women as men
- Activating a Facebook-page that shall have 2000 likes by April 2014

Objectives within the coming Flagship/EU-project:

- Creation of a sustainable umbrella-organization clustering stakeholders dealing with Baltic culture and heritage in order to describe and promote the BSR in a long-term, joint way

## Composition of the partnership

The fundament for the partnership already exists by the museum-network *Network of Museums in the Baltic*, which consists of museums with different profiles and sizes. This network needs to be partly renewed, since some of the museums are not active. In addition the Swedish national Museums association *Sveriges Museer* takes active part as well as *The Norden Association*. Partners from the visitors' sector should be identified within the pre-study.

Lead partner: Gotlands Museum

Partners: Riksförbundet Sveriges Museer  
Föreningen Norden (The Norden Association)  
Tourism actors, to be identified within the pre-study  
The Estonian Open Air museum, Director Merike Lang  
Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation, Director Klara Radziņa  
The Archaeological Museum of Gdańsk, Director Henryk Paner  
The Archaeological-Historical Museum in Elbląg, Director Dr Maria Kasprzycka  
National Museum of Lithuania, Director Birute Kulnyte  
Novgorod State Museum, Director Dr. Tatyana Tzarevskaya  
Saaremaa Museum, Director Endel Püüa  
The State Hermitage Museum, Director Mikhail Piotrovsky.  
Ventspils Museum, Vice Director Armands Vijups  
Sigtuna Museum, Director Ted Hesselbom

Associated partners:

Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova, Director Johanna Lehto-Vahtera  
Bornholms Museum, Director Jacob Bjerring-Hansen  
Kulturforum Burgkloster Lübeck, Prof. Hans Wisskirchen  
Museum Lolland-Falster, Director Ulla Schaltz  
Ålands Museum, Director Viveca Löndahl

The aim of the partnership is to create a long-term umbrella based on common interests in regional culture, history, cultural heritage and visitors/public. Integrating the project-activities (branding, promoting, communication, clustering etc.) into the institutions' ordinary activities creates sustainability.

Contacts and clustering with already existing projects and networks is to be done during the pre-study. The Hanseatic towns, the World heritage sites (especially close connection will be maintained with another seed-money funded pre-study concerning World heritage sites around the Baltic Sea, applicant the County Government of Gotland) and other networks and projects dealing with the same matters are of highest interest to interact with.

## Activity schedule

- Start of the pre-study: 14 April 2013
- End of the pre-study: 14 April 2014
- Communication (mainly via web), developing the web-site, Facebook-group and developing the Flagship-project will be done throughout the whole project-period
- First partner meeting in Lolland-Falster: Middle April 2013. At this meeting the final and detailed schedule for the pre-study will be settled
- Presentation of the network and pre-study at the spring-meeting of Sveriges Museer in Stockholm May 2013
- Second partner meeting and seminar in Visby at Almedalsveckan, 2-3 July 2013 (in close cooperation with Sveriges Museer), presentation of the project at a lecture and at posters at Gotlands Museum
- Third partner meeting and conference in Tallinn in September. Welcoming new partners. Starting the concrete formation the flagship-project. Discussing the next step and revising the network's long-time operational guidelines if needed
- Fourth partner meeting and intense work on the Flag-ship application in March-April 2014, place to be decided within the partnership
- In addition the project leader, possibly supported by some of the other partners, will take part in EU and BSR conferences and informations. The project-leader might also need to visit museums within the network and meet other actors throughout the project-period
- Reporting in April 2014

## Expected results

The pre-study shall develop a solid and active network consisting of museums in the BSR with a shared responsibility to maintain it on a long-term basis in an active and fruitful form. The network shall start clustering with tourism actors, educational bodies and other cultural and heritage networks or projects.

Moreover the network shall have agreed on the next step, most likely the formation of a flagship/EU-project within PA Tourism aiming at developing an umbrella for actors to join in order to promote the BSR as a region rich in culture and heritage. Such a project shall to at least half its content be formulated by April 2014. Different sources for project-funding shall be identified and work applying for them be in progress. The EU-project should get started in 2014 or 2015 (depending on the new EU-calls) and be going on for at least three years.

Another result of the pre-study will be that the process investigating the Baltic Identity has been initiated. The question whether there is a common identity to be found and how it might look will still not be answered within this pre-study, though, but will be a topic to further investigate within the EU-project.

## Dissemination

The process and the results of the pre-study will be communicated accordingly to the action plan described above. Within two weeks after each meeting a report will be distributed within the whole network, it will also be published at the web-page and highlighted via Facebook.

In addition the work will continually be described at the web-page, where it will also be possible to comment upon the issues. Facebook will be used telling about the proceedings. Each partner should tell about the project on their web-pages and share a link to the network's web-site.

The press will be informed at least two times during the project – period.

## Risk-analysis

The many different languages spoken in the region could lead to communication problems. However, English is so widespread that it is often possible to communicate without hindrance after all. One advantage of many nationalities involved is that there is usually someone who can interpret from one language to the other, even though the whole party might not have a common language.

Different museum traditions and society structures can lead to different focus and the difficulties in understanding each other's situation. Within the network/ pre-study those issues will be discussed which can enrich all parties.

Very poor economy in some countries / at certain institutions might lead to poor part-taking. Therefore it is essential that the project funds can pay extraordinary costs associated with the project, mainly concerning travelling and accommodation costs. The use of social media gives everyone a common platform, regardless of economic conditions.

## Monitoring

Project and financial reports will be given to the partners in connection to the partner-meetings. The budget will be controlled by the financial department at Gotlands Museum in cooperation with the project leader. A financial report will be given to SI after the first six months; the final report will be delivered in May 2014. The same goes for project-reports.

## Budget (in SEK, 1 SEK = about 0,11 Euro)

		Cost	Own contribution
Salaries	GotMus proj.leader 20% 12 months	120 000:-	
Salaries	GotMus planning, partaking in meetings etc.		90 000:-
Salaries	Other partners according to proj.plan		200 000:-
Travelling	National travels	10 000:-	

Travelling	International partner meetings travels	130 000:-
Visa-costs	Meetings/partners in Russia	5 000:-
Accomodation	4 Partner meetings, conferences	100 000:-
OH	Administration	15 000:-
Meetings	Rents, material, excursions	40 000:-
Communication	Web, material, copies	5 000:-
Translator	Translator at meetings	10 000:-
External speakers		5 000:-