

Statement of B7, BSSSC, UBC regarding the proposal for a European Territorial Cooperation



In a letter to the Chairman of the EU Commission, Mr. José Manuel Barroso, dated October 23, 2004, the four Baltic Sea organizations B7, BSSSC, CPMR-BSC, UBC expressed their joint anxiety about that fact that the proposal of the commission for a border of 150 kilometres for cross border cooperation within the future programme “European Territorial Cooperation” is counter-productive compared to the objective of the programme. Therefore we oppose to the restriction of cooperation possibilities caused by the 150 kilometres border.



In the answer from the Commission dated January 10, 2005 reference is made to the possibilities of cooperation within the transnational part (earlier Interreg IIIB) within the future “European Territorial Cooperation Programme.” This possibility is well known, but our opinion is that this does not satisfy the need of cooperation within essential municipal and regional areas of responsibility within the framework of solidarity politics.



The proposal for cooperation areas within the cross border part of the future “European Territorial Cooperation Programme” is concentrated on essential municipal and regional areas of development and responsibility. Main responsibility of the thematic areas stated in the transnational part of the programme is in the first place on national and in some cases regional level. Therefore, they are to a very small extent useful for municipal and regional cooperation.

The proposed border of 150 kilometres for cooperation within the programme means that it will not be possible to cooperate across the Baltic Sea to jointly find solutions in essential municipal and regional development and responsibility issues within the future “European Territorial Cooperation”

The popular contacts between the politicians and officials of the cities and between NGOs will also in future be very important for the development of a “People’s Europe”. It creates conditions for understanding of different cultures, history and social and economic circumstances, which is very essential for the development in the Baltic Sea area with great differences between the countries.

In the future constitution the subsidiarity is strengthened as being one of the fundamental principles of EU. This means that municipalities and regions will have a more expressed authorisation regarding the development issues within essential municipal and regional areas of responsibility. The transnational cooperation is the instrument that EU has developed for regional solidarity. To not create possibilities for the local and regional levels to participate in this cooperation will make it more difficult to implement the new constitution and to create real solidarity in the Baltic Sea region.

We therefore still oppose the proposed border of 150 kilometres for “crossborder cooperation” within the programme for “European Territorial Cooperation”.

<p>B7 Secretariat The Government of Åland Ålands Landskapsstyrelse PB 60, FIN-22101 Mariehamn Åland Tel. +358 18 25 000 e-mail: Secretariat@B7.org www.b7.org</p>	<p>BSSSC Secretariat c/o Department of International Relations, Region Skåne Stortorget 9, 211 22 Malmö Sweden Tel. +46 40 10 26 83 e-mail: bsssc@bsssc.com www.bsssc.com</p>	<p>UBC Secretariat Waly Jagiellońskie 1 80-853 Gdańsk Poland Tel. +48 58 3010917 Fax +48 58 3017637 e-mail: info@ubc.net www.ubc.net</p>
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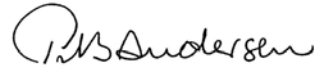
Further, we think that the theme areas within the future programme for “European Territorial Cooperation” within “Transnational Cooperation” should be increased to comprise essential municipal and regional development issues such as: development of entrepreneurship/SME, tourism, culture, environment, transport, energy, water and sewage treatment, solid waste management, urban planning, human resource development (training).



Britt Lundberg
President of B7



Uno Aldegren
Chairman of BSSSC



Per Bødker Andersen
President of UBC

<p>B7 Secretariat The Government of Åland Ålands Landskapsstyrelse PB 60, FIN-22101 Mariehamn Åland Tel. +358 18 25 000 e-mail: Secretariat@B7.org www.b7.org</p>	<p>BSSSC Secretariat c/o Department of International Relations, Region Skåne Stortorget 9, 211 22 Malmö Sweden Tel. +46 40 10 26 83 e-mail: bsssc@bsssc.com www.bsssc.com</p>	<p>UBC Secretariat Waly Jagiellońskie 1 80-853 Gdańsk Poland Tel. +48 58 3010917 Fax +48 58 3017637 e-mail: info@ubc.net www.ubc.net</p>
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