

Remarks

by

Hella Dunger-Löper,

Permanent Secretary for Building and Housing,

on the occasion of the dinner of the

Final Conference of COMMIN

held in Berlin on 26/27.4.07

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to have the privilege of welcoming all of you on behalf of the Senate of Berlin here in the restaurant Maxwell on the occasion of your final conference of COMMIN. It is a place that those guests from all over the world enjoy frequenting who are active in business and politics, and it is here where many major conferences came to their close.

In the Structural Fund´s period of between 2007 and 2013, transnational cooperation in ongoing INTERREG III B programmes will continue under the *European territorial cooperation objective*. The primary objective set out in the Lisbon strategy in support of the Baltic region is thus brought to the fore of the funding period, namely to strengthen competitiveness, territorial solidarity and sustainable development by combining capabilities beyond administrative bounds. The programme will concentrate primarily on the following priorities:

- Fostering of innovations,
- Internal and external accessibility,

- Baltic Sea as a common resource,
- Attractive and competitive cities and regions.

The Baltic Sea region is of major importance for Berlin,

for transnational cooperation in the Baltic region, and especially in Scandinavia, can still be seen as a rough diamond within the context of economic cooperation pursued by the capital region of Berlin-Brandenburg with European regions.

Since several years now, Berlin and Brandenburg have been closely linked through projects and networks with the Baltic region, and here in particular with Scandinavia and the Öresund region. Scandinavia regards the entire capital region as of highly strategic importance because of its bridgehead function between northern Europe and Central Europe. This phenomenon must not be without significance to Berlin-Brandenburg, all the more so since corridors of development rather pass the capital region more to the west or to the east. In addition, for Scandinavians, the region of Berlin-Brandenburg is one of the most innovative neighbouring regions. That is why cooperation, so far, has been focused on projects of innovation and planning of infrastructure that are dealing with better connections between Scandinavia and the European continent in the field of transport, traffic, and tourism.

When referring to the example of the discussion on the capital region and to the Quadriga process Berlin has shown the way of how public administration is taking an active share in the regional development strategy. The initiative in support of an intertwined economic area of the Oder region can be seen as an attempt at actively shaping regions of economic integration beyond the capital region. Berlin's cooperation in the Baltic Sea region now calls for an effort of extending this regional economic strategy to include a neighbouring innovative region. It will be about to take the lead within Europe. However, it will only be possible by working closely together in efficient networks.

Thanks to various projects of cooperation as regards innovations the capital region is linked with the Baltic Sea area. Let me name some of them in short.

- “Rail Baltica”
The EU project “Baltic Rail” is mainly focusing on railway traffic between Berlin – Posen – Warsaw – Bialystock – Kaunas – Riga/Tallinn with connections to the ferry between Tallinn and Helsinki. It is about improving communication between all partners involved in this project alongside the railway line and enlarging offerings of railway transport.
- BEEN - Baltic Energy Efficiency Network for the Building Stock
In close cooperation with Baltic capitals, Poland and Russian partners, the BEEN project is working on schemes of refurbishments necessary to maintain the building stock. Here, energy efficiency is key for multi-storey buildings made with precast concrete slabs and constructed between 1950 and 1990 under state control.
- COINCO:
COINCO is furthering economic development as well as transport, innovation and clustering alongside the Scandinavian and Central European north-south axis from Oslo to Berlin and Brandenburg. Its core idea is to intensify cooperation between the most innovative regions of the EU (Öresund region) and the largest metropolitan area of Berlin and Brandenburg in Central Europe.

The COMMIN Project

that is holding its final conference here is vitally important. The COMMIN project is intended to provide planners from various European regions with a common language. For that to happen, a sense of common comprehension of planning has been elaborated, and the most important abstract concepts have been harmonised and translated into English. All of the states of the Baltic Sea region have their share in creating a common web-site.

The Interreg project COMMIN is among those undertakings to be most praised for enlarging networks between policy-makers, business and the science community thereby creating innovative possible solutions to issues of transnational cooperation.

I should like to wish you every success for your conference, thought-provoking discussions, and, above all, as many meaningful results as your workshops are able to yield.

Thank you.