

## BALTIC MEMBER STATES

## Supporting Young Farmers

### Location

Sweden, Finland, Estonia,  
Latvia, Lithuania, Poland

### Programming period

2007 - 2013

### Funding (EUR)

€330 000 (Swedish Institute)

### Duration

2012 – 2015

### Implemented by

National Rural Network  
Support Units

### Contact

[Hans-  
Olof.Stalgren@jordbruksver  
ket.se](mailto:Hans-Olof.Stalgren@jordbruksverket.se)

### Website

n/a

An initiative to promote young farmers participation, entrepreneurship and innovation for sustainable rural areas.

### The challenge

In 2009, during the national Rural Network Support Units meetings in the Baltic Sea Region, discussions started on a new project focusing on rural development. This led to a flagship project for young farmers within the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBR) with Poland and Sweden identified as lead countries.



### Main steps and features

The short term objectives of the project were to connect rural youth organisations and innovation support organisations, in a strong and active partnership to gather best practice and experience in both youth involvement and innovation support from the Baltic Sea states. Through participation in each other's activities within the partnership, good models and methods would be gathered to create joint learning and knowledge transfer. At the end of the project the methods and best practice would be presented and discussed with politicians and decision makers at regional and local level in all the Baltic Sea states.

The long term objectives were to present the Baltic Sea Region as a forerunner for the whole EU and as the best example in youth involvement and innovation support for rural areas through a functioning and active partnership of youth organisations and rural development organisations, with constant cooperation for knowledge exchange and learning.

The main idea of the project was to participate in relevant national and regional conferences arranged by the project partners or other actors. These were the "practical activities" of the project. The aim was to gather good examples of methods and support systems for rural youth around three themes: sustainable rural development through youth participation, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Participation in these activities was mostly through a group consisting of 10-30 participants representing all the partner countries, although for some occasions only a couple of project partners have been represented at these activities.

The aim was not only to present a list of good examples, but also to have an impact on the structures and systems influencing the quality of life for rural youth. The dissemination seminars were arranged in each of the participating countries.

## Results

In total about 180 project participants of the project registered to participate at least in one of the 14 Conferences organised across the partner countries. At the end of the project “dissemination seminars” were arranged in each participating country. The target group for these seminars was decision makers such as politicians, youth organisation leaders, public officers etc.

## Challenges and lessons

- ❑ The methods and support systems found during the project have shown that there are many kinds of support systems and methods for rural youth in the Baltic Sea region. Many of them are similar across the different countries and some are unique for one country or one region. While mapping the support systems for rural youth in the Baltic Sea region it was hard to find individuals in each country who had a knowledge or understanding of the whole support system. Those interviewed had very good knowledge of “their” own part of the system but they were not able to give information outside of their own area of expertise.
- ❑ There are few support systems for rural youth who are not interested in agricultural businesses. The existing support systems are either targeting youth, making rural youth compete with urban youth for support, or they are targeting those in agriculture businesses.
- ❑ The next step for the flagship project is to raise political awareness. To be able to make real impact there is a need for engaged adults at many levels who are cooperating with and between each other, between municipalities, regions and so on.
- ❑ A follow-on programme has been designed entitled ‘Young Ambassadors of Democracy’. As with the previous programme, funding has come from the Swedish Institute, a public agency, although individual initiatives in each country received separate support, mostly at a national level