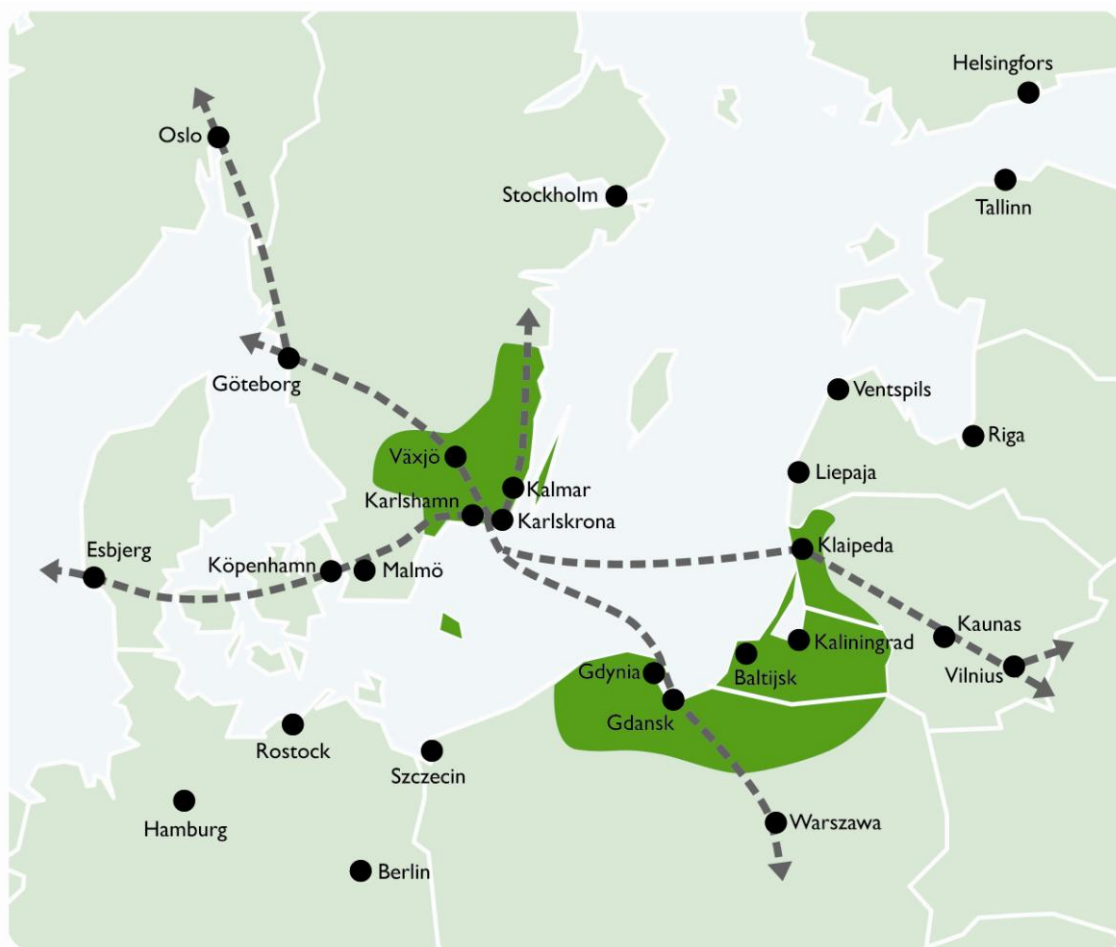


Marie Fridh  
Lova Necksten  
PG Lindencrona  
31 March 2010



**Region Blekinge's action plan for the  
implementation of the EU Strategy for  
the Baltic Sea Region 2010-2013**

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# Introduction



“In the Swedish Budget Bill for 2010, the government emphasises that regional growth must be placed more and more in a broader geographic context. There is considerable potential for regions to pursue enlarged cross-border and functional cooperation both within and outside Sweden’s borders. This strategy is one method of promoting business opportunities and improving the domestic market’s way of functioning from a macro-regional perspective. The Baltic Sea Strategy also provides the opportunity to augment the region’s prominence and attractiveness within global competition with regard to trade, investments and tourism flows.”

The above is an extract from the Swedish government decision of 3 December 2009 entitled “Mission to participate in the realisation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and related plan of action” that the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications has distributed to all government authorities and agencies concerned. The decision also states that the authorities shall “contribute to developing effective forms of joint-action in the Baltic Sea Region that strengthen long-term international cooperation among public authorities and with other local and regional actors, and that contribute to the successful realisation of the Baltic Sea Strategy”.

The terms and conditions for 2010 presented by the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications to regional cooperation agencies state that: “Regarding their tasks within the realisation of the regional growth process [...], regional autonomous bodies and cooperation agencies shall provide a summary of activities within regional growth [...], and special action within the Baltic Sea Strategy for the prioritisation of strategic cross-border cooperation shall be reported [...].”

## Background

- The EU Baltic Sea Strategy is a pilot project for the development of macro-regions
- The EU Baltic Sea Strategy will steer substantial resource flows
- Region Blekinge was successful in its lobbying activities in 2008-2009

### The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region was adopted by the European Council on 30 October 2009 under the Swedish Presidency of the European Union. The strategy is the EU’s joint strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and is unique since it is the first time that the EU has produced a strategy that does not primarily concern all member states. The strategy is perceived as a pilot project for the development of macro-regions. In the Presidency Conclusions: “The European Council calls upon all relevant actors to act speedily and ensure full implementation of the Strategy, which could constitute an example of a macro-regional strategy.”

The EU Baltic Sea Strategy is comprised of a short and general strategy with an associated action plan that describes a number of different measures. The action plan is divided into four thematic pillars:

- an environmentally sustainable region
- an economically prosperous region
- an accessible and attractive region
- a safe and secure region

The four thematic pillars are in turn divided into 15 priority areas as well as one chapter with horizontal actions. Each priority area is composed of a background, a number of measures and a number of flagship projects. A High Level Working Group comprised of national coordinators, under the leadership of the Commission, shall coordinate the realisation of the strategy. The official discussion among the member states shall take place within the group with regard to the realisation of the strategy.

### **Financing sources**

Existing resources in the region shall be coordinated in order to implement the Baltic Sea Strategy. A large part of these resources will come from the EU Cohesion policy and the structural funds. For Blekinge, this implies that resources from the Skåne-Blekinge Regional and Social Fund, the South Baltic Program and the Baltic Sea Region Program will be steered towards the realisation of the strategy. In addition to these EU funds, a number of national resources, the European Investment Bank's loans as well as local and regional resources will be directed towards the measures set forth in the action plan.

### **Region Blekinge's lobbying process**

The lobbying process was initiated during the visit of the former EU minister Cecilia Malmström in March 2008. In June 2008, the Regional Executive Board adopted Region Blekinge's position paper towards the EU Baltic Sea Strategy. Since then, Region Blekinge has actively endeavoured to influence the final contents of the Baltic Sea Strategy's action plan by participating in various conferences and seminars, via member organisations and projects, as well as through a number of informal contacts with officials of various Swedish national departments and directorates-general of the Commission.

The proposed action plan presented by the European Commission in June 2009 contains clear and positive results achieved by Region Blekinge's lobbying process, particularly with regard to maritime safety, transport and the new generations. Measures were taken in the spring and autumn of 2009 for the north-south transport corridor between Sweden and Poland to be included in the action plan. As far as can be judged, this transport corridor will be included in the action plan as the application for "Motorways of the Sea Karlskrona-Gdynia" has been approved by the European Commission.

### **Analysis process - Blekinge's role in the EU Baltic Sea Strategy**

In April 2009, the Regional Executive Board allocated SEK 300,000 from the regional development funds to continue its work with the EU Baltic Sea Strategy. One part of the project was to carry through an analysis process of Blekinge's role in the realisation of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy, composed of an open seminar and a number of external analyses on the theme "Blekinge's role in the EU Baltic Sea Strategy". This was followed by an internal analysis by Region Blekinge.

The analysis process resulted in a proposal composed of seven focus areas and a number of suggested measures. The action plan of the Baltic Sea Strategy contains approximately 160 actions and flagships. Region Blekinge has prioritised around 30 flagships and actions, which are described in more detail on page 6 and onwards.

# The EU Baltic Sea Strategy affects Blekinge

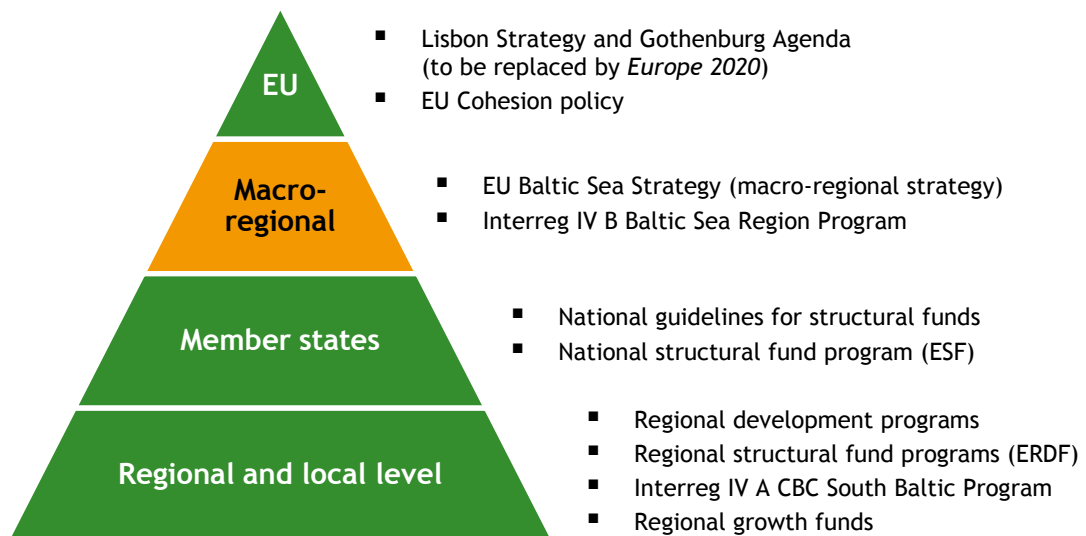
- The EU Baltic Sea Strategy will steer substantial resource flows
- The development of the Baltic Sea Region is moving fast
- Blekinge must be active and take full advantage of the development potential

The EU Baltic Sea Strategy represents a milestone for integration within the Baltic Sea Region. In view of Blekinge's geographic location and active work with Baltic Sea issues, the EU Baltic Sea Strategy will have considerable effects on the region. In order to take full advantage of the development potential prevailing in the Baltic Sea Region, it is important that Blekinge is an active player in the Baltic Sea cooperation process.

Trade in the Baltic Sea Region has changed drastically over time. In the Middle Ages, trade flourished in the region, while in more recent times the iron curtain of the Cold War totally obstructed any preconditions for cooperation across the inland sea. Today, one can witness a steady increase of total trade with our neighbours around the Baltic Sea, and for Swedish export the Baltic Sea Region is a very expansive market. Of Sweden's eight Baltic Sea neighbours, the five largest are among the top 15 with regard to total Swedish trade, and only the three Baltic States are to be found further down the list. The Baltic Sea Strategy is a tool to develop trade relations in the Baltic Sea Region. Based on its strategic location, Blekinge has an important opportunity to benefit from the new markets, particularly in Poland and the Baltic States.

The EU Baltic Sea Strategy will steer substantial resource flows. The EU's programs and funds will be affected by the contents of the action plan both during the current and future program periods. The European Commission has produced guidelines for appraising new projects emanating from the action plan of the Baltic Sea Strategy. This document has been submitted to all managing authorities for EU programs financed by the structural funds in the Baltic Sea Region. Projects developed in the future will therefore need to take the prioritisations of the Baltic Sea Strategy into consideration.

In tandem with the development of an increasing number of macro-regional strategies, e.g. the Danube region, these strategies will influence the EU's policy areas, funds and programs to an even greater degree. The macro-regional strategies will become a new level in the implementation of EU policy, such as the Cohesion policy (see illustration below).



## Region Blekinge's focus areas and measures

- Maritime safety and sustainable development
- Transport and communication
- Political cross-border cooperation
- Youth cooperation
- Kaliningrad region and the Northern Dimension
- Innovation and renewal
- Tourism and culture

### Maritime safety and sustainable development

The volume of shipping traffic in the Baltic Sea is rising, which is why maritime safety is a continuously important topic for Blekinge. Region Blekinge has considerable experience of maritime safety through the Baltic Master I and II projects, and improved maritime safety is given high priority. Baltic Master II is referred to as a flagship project (see Measure 1 below) in the Baltic Sea Strategy action plan with Region Blekinge as Lead Partner. Region Blekinge is thereby one of few Lead Partners for a flagship project at the regional level.

*Linked to Region Blekinge's governing documents:*

- Regional development program - "Sustainable Blekinge"
- Regional growth program - Action Area 4 "Strategic Cross-Border Cooperation"

The following measures are prioritised in the Baltic Sea Strategy's action plan:

Measures in the Baltic Sea Strategy Action Plan	Action by Region Blekinge	Responsible at Region Blekinge	Financing
1. Improve the waste handling on board and in ports (Baltic Master II, Region Blekinge, Lead Partner) (flagship ch. 4)	Covered by Baltic Master II	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Baltic Master II
2. Restrict the introduction of new alien species by ships (flagship ch. 2)	Covered by Baltic Master II	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Baltic Master II
3. Promote measures to collect ship generated waste (flagship ch. 4)	Monitor	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Existing resources
4. Promote measures to reduce emissions from ships (flagship ch. 4)	Monitor	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Existing resources
5. Introduce differentiated port dues depending on the environmental impact of ships (flagship ch. 4)	Monitor	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Existing resources
6. Map existing marine pollution response capacities and make sub-regional plans for cross-border response cooperation (flagship ch. 14)	Monitor	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Existing resources
7. Develop integrated maritime governance structures in the Baltic Sea Region (horizontal action)	Monitor (lobby actions tbc)	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Might demand extra resources
8. Encourage the use of Maritime Spatial Planning in all Member States around the Baltic Sea Region and develop a common approach for cross-border (horizontal action)	Monitor	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Existing resources

## Transport and communication

Blekinge holds a strategic location with regard to transport with two ports, Karlshamn and Karlskrona, which are classified as Motorways of the Sea harbours. From a Baltic Sea perspective, Blekinge has two important transport corridors: the north-south that links Sweden and Poland (via Karlskrona-Gdynia), and the east-west (via Karlshamn-Klaipeda) that links Sweden and Lithuania further to the east. In order to develop transportation in an east-west direction, Region Blekinge is Lead Partner for the project East West Transport Corridor II. For the north-south link, Region Blekinge has a cooperation agreement with the Baltic Link Association. Region Blekinge is a partner in TransBaltic - a strategic transport project for the entire Baltic Sea Region. Region Blekinge gives high priority to transport and communication within the EU Baltic Sea Strategy process.

*Linked to Region Blekinge's governing documents:*

- Regional development program - “Sustainable Blekinge”
- Regional growth program - Action Area 3 “Accessibility”

The following measures are prioritised in the Baltic Sea Strategy's action plan:

Measures in the Baltic Sea Strategy Action Plan	Action by Region Blekinge	Responsible at Region Blekinge	Financing
1. Develop Baltic Transport Outlook (joint transport planning for the Baltic Sea Region) (action ch. 11)	Covered by TransBaltic (extra lobby actions tbc)	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	TransBaltic, might demand extra resources
2. Improve connections with Russia and neighboring countries including connections to Asia and implement parts of "the Northern Axis" (East West connections through the Baltic states) (flagship ch. 11)	Covered by East West TC II and MoS project Karlshamn-Klaipeda	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	East West Transport Corridor II
3. Cooperate for smarter transports (flagship ch. 11)	Covered by East West TC II	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	East West TC II
4. Develop the Baltic Motorways of the Seas network (Karlshamn-Klaipeda and Karlskrona-Gdynia) (flagship ch. 11)	Managed by two existing MoS projects	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Two existing MoS projects
5. Implement the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport Logistics (flagship ch. 11)	Monitor and try to become member	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Demands extra resources
6. Implement European space for maritime transport without borders in the Baltic Sea Region (flagship ch. 6)	Monitor	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Existing resources
7. Complete the agreed priority transport infrastructures e.g. the Nordic Triangle, Rail Baltica, Fehmarnbelt, Gdansk-Wien etc. (flagship ch. 11)	Monitor through EWTC II, Baltic Link Association and TransBaltic	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Existing resources
8. Increase cooperation to develop shorter plane routes (flagship ch. 11)	Monitor	Team Sustainability and Accessibility	Existing resources

## Political cross-border cooperation

Region Blekinge endeavors to develop political cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, particularly within the framework of Euroregion Baltic (ERB) and the Baltic Sea Commission within CPMR. The ERB and CPMR are strategic platforms for lobbying, including issues such as the EU Cohesion policy after 2013. Southern Sweden's new Brussels office will also play an important role within this lobbying process. Region Blekinge prioritises the further development of political cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region.

*Linked to Region Blekinge's governing documents:*

- Regional development program - “Interacting Blekinge”
- Regional growth program - Action Area 4 “Strategic Cross-Border Cooperation”
- Action program for strategic Baltic Sea issues (one of five priorities)

The following measures are prioritised in the Baltic Sea Strategy's action plan:

Measures in the Baltic Sea Strategy Action Plan	Action by Region Blekinge	Responsible at Region Blekinge	Financing
1. Align available funding and policies to the priorities and actions of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. In particular EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 (horizontal action)	Lobby actions	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation	Demands extra resources
2. Network the local youth policy structures (flagship ch. 12)	Monitor	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation	Existing resources

## Youth cooperation

Region Blekinge works actively to stimulate youth cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region within the framework of the Euroregion Baltic Youth Board formed in 2008 and the project Yc<sup>3</sup> (Youth Cross-Border Cooperation and Communication Project) where Region Blekinge is Lead Partner. Development of youth cooperation within the framework of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy is prioritised by Region Blekinge.

*Linked to Region Blekinge's governing documents:*

- Regional growth program - Action Area 4 “Strategic Cross-Border Cooperation”
- Action program for strategic Baltic Sea questions (one of five priorities)

The following measures are prioritised in the Baltic Sea Strategy's action plan:

Measures in the Baltic Sea Strategy Action Plan *	Action by Region Blekinge	Responsible at Region Blekinge	Financing
1. Develop people-to-people actions (action ch. 12)	Monitor	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation	Existing resources

\* For further measures linked to youth cooperation, see “Political cross-Border Cooperation” (youth political structures) and “Innovation and Renewal” (young entrepreneurship).

## Kaliningrad region and the Northern Dimension

Cooperation with the Kaliningrad region is given high priority by Region Blekinge. Region Blekinge works actively with the Kaliningrad cooperation through an agreement between Region Blekinge and the County administration in Kaliningrad. This work is related to the Northern Dimension, which is one of several instruments for EU cooperation with Russia.

*Linked to Region Blekinge's governing documents:*

- Regional growth program - Action Area 4 “Strategic Cross-Border Cooperation”
- Cooperation agreement with the County administration in Kaliningrad

The following measures are prioritised in the Baltic Sea Strategy's action plan:

Measures in the Baltic Sea Strategy Action Plan *	Action by Region Blekinge	Responsible at Region Blekinge	Financing
1. Monitor implementation of the priorities of the EU -Russia Strategy (flagship ch. 6)	Monitor	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation	Existing resources
2. Monitor EU-Russia border situations (flagship ch. 6)	Monitor	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation	Existing resources
3. Develop people-to-people actions (action ch. 12)	Monitor	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation	Existing resources

\* With regard to partnership for transport and logistics within the Northern Dimension, see “Transport and Communication”.

## Innovation and renewal

Region Blekinge works actively to promote entrepreneurship, as well as to support existing and establish new innovative environments to foster innovations with the objective of creating growth and employment. This process is an important part of the implementation of the regional growth program and the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment (to be replaced by Europe 2020). Region Blekinge has identified the need to expand this work to a larger geographic area in order to create new networks and find new partners. Innovation and renewal therefore represent a prioritised area in the implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy.

*Linked to Region Blekinge's governing documents:*

- The regional development program - “Innovative Blekinge”
- The regional growth program - Action Area 1 “Innovation and Renewal”

The following measures are prioritised in the Baltic Sea Strategy's action plan:

Measures in the Baltic Sea Strategy Action Plan	Action by Region Blekinge	Responsible at Region Blekinge	Financing
1. Develop a Baltic Sea Region Program for Innovation, Clusters and SME networks (flagship ch. 7)	Actions needed	Team Business Blekinge	Demands extra resources
2. Promote young entrepreneurs (flagship ch. 8)	Actions needed	Team Business Blekinge	Demands extra resources
3. Chapter 7 - To exploit the full potential of the region in research and innovation	Monitor	Team Business Blekinge	Might demand extra resources
4. Chapter 8 - To promote entrepreneurship and strengthen SMEs	Monitor	Team Business Blekinge	Might demand extra resources

## Tourism and culture

Tourism and culture are important commercial sectors for Blekinge that contribute to the region's growth and attractiveness. Region Blekinge's activities for tourism and culture include cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region with projects such as "Neighbours". The EU Baltic Sea Strategy contains links to these two areas, which are prioritised for Region Blekinge in the implementation of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy.

*Linked to Region Blekinge's governing documents:*

- The regional development program - "Attractive Blekinge"
- The regional growth program - Action Area 5 "Attractiveness and Regional Identity"

The following measures are prioritised in the Baltic Sea Strategy's action plan:

Measures in the Baltic Sea Strategy Action Plan	Action by Region Blekinge	Responsible at Region Blekinge	Financing
1. Attract tourists to rural areas especially the coastal ones (flagship ch. 12)	Monitor	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation	Existing resources
2. Promote the cultural heritage and the unique landscape (flagship ch. 12)	Monitor	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation	Existing resources
3. Develop strategies for a sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism (flagship ch.12)	Monitor	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation	Existing resources
4. Develop people-to-people actions (action ch. 12)	Monitor	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation	Existing resources

## Internal coordination

Responsibility for the implementation of prioritised measures within each respective subject area, as well as applications for funds when external financing is deemed to be required, is spread among Region Blekinge's teams as follows:

Region Blekinge's focus areas	Responsible team
Maritime safety and sustainable development	Team Sustainability and Accessibility
Transport and communication	Team Sustainability and Accessibility
Political cross-border cooperation	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation
Youth cooperation	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation
Kaliningrad region and the Northern Dimension	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation
Innovation and renewal	Team Business Blekinge
Tourism and culture	Team Attractiveness and Cooperation

The Attractiveness and Cooperation team ensures the strategic monitoring of the process for the realisation of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy. The Attractiveness and Cooperation team is also responsible for coordination among the teams and reporting to the management group of Region Blekinge. Potential changes of prioritised measures shall be handled by each respective team in dialogue with the Attractiveness and Cooperation team, and decided by the management group. It is also proposed that Region Blekinge shall lead work concerning the EU Baltic Sea Strategy within the Småland/Blekinge South Sweden office in Brussels. This question will be part of the joint action plan for the region's office in Brussels that is to be produced in 2010.

## Contact details

*Please contact us for more information on our involvement in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region.*

**Anna-Lena Cederström**

*Chief Executive Director*

Region Blekinge

Tel. +46 (0)455-30 50 01

[anna-lena.cederstrom@regionblekinge.se](mailto:anna-lena.cederstrom@regionblekinge.se)

**Sofia M Westerberg**

*Manager for Team Attractiveness and Cooperation*

Region Blekinge

Tel. +46 (0)455 30 50 32

[sofia.m-westerberg@regionblekinge.se](mailto:sofia.m-westerberg@regionblekinge.se)

**Marie Fridh**

*International coordinator*

Region Blekinge

Tel. +46 (0)455 30 50 13

[marie.fridh@regionblekinge.se](mailto:marie.fridh@regionblekinge.se)

Region Blekinge is a regional cooperation authority. The owners are Blekinge County Council, and the five municipalities of Blekinge; Karlshamn, Karlskrona, Olofström, Ronneby and Sölvesborg.

Region Blekinge has the overall political responsibility for regional growth and development issues in Blekinge. These issues include transport and infrastructure, international cooperation, culture, business development, tourism, research and education and project funding.

Our primary objective is to make Blekinge an even better region to live and work in. One important aspect of this is to view Blekinge in a European context, a Europe that is developing rapidly and where Blekinge is strategically located.