



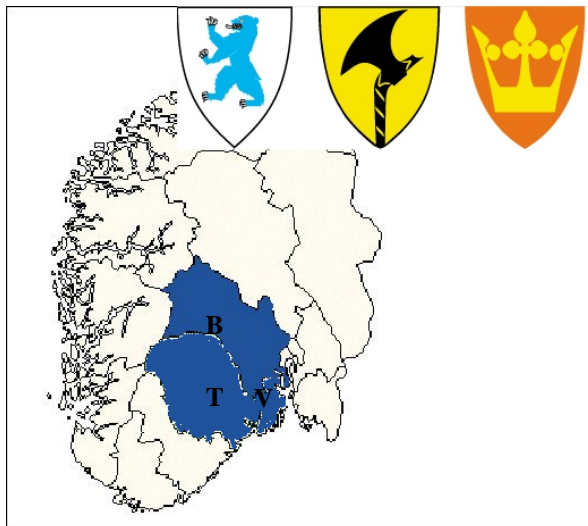
REGIONSAMARBEIDET  
Buskerud Telemark Vestfold

# BTV International News Bulletin

BTV is a Regional Cooperation between the County Municipalities  
of Buskerud, Telemark and Vestfold Counties

Final Issue

[www.btvregion.no/internasjonalt](http://www.btvregion.no/internasjonalt)



[Action Plan](#)

## The BTV Region:

*The BTV region actively participates in the development of national and international regional policy, international development programs and international projects which contribute to a democratic and sustainable development.*

*By 2020, the BTV region aims to be recognized as an attractive and innovative region in Europe.*

*The BTV international team's main areas of focus for international cooperation are towards:*

*BTV Municipalities, Youth, Business Development and Participation in International Meeting Places.*

## The BTV Regional Cooperation comes to a close

### Background

The BTV regional cooperation was a trial project to see how 3 Norwegian counties could combine some focus areas with joint working tasks and form a 'trial' region with political representation – 'a regional council'. The project had a time span from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2007. The cooperation was approved of by the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development in December 2003. The three counties have cooperated successfully on both political and administrative levels.

The aim of the BTV regional cooperation included:

- Providing business and industry with good opportunities for growth
- Encouraging the establishment of new businesses
- Increasing employment
- Savings in procurement and investments

There were 11 representatives from each county, of which a total of 33 representatives formed a Regional Council. The Regional Council was headed by the Chairperson of the County Councils, in turn, each for a period of 16 months. The Regional Council took over several assignments from the State and from the counties.

The areas of responsibility were within:

- Transportation
- Development of Business and Industry
- Regional Planning and Development
- International Cooperation

Close cooperation between the Regional Council and each of the 53 municipalities in the BTV region was a primary focus.



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## International Cooperation - The BTV International Team

The BTV international team concentrated on the following focus areas during the 4 year project period:

**BTV Municipalities** (EU project development),  
**Youth** (youth involvement in European politics),  
**Business Development** (international opportunities) and **Participation in International Meeting Places/ Arenas**.

Some of the results are as follows:

### BTV Municipalities (EU project development)



Interreg IIIB Canal Link partner meeting in Leeds in Feb. 05

The focus of our work towards the 53 municipalities in the BTV region were to promote and develop EU program project participation. We arranged 7 seminars with more than 1000 participants which provided information about EU programs and funding possibilities for projects which municipalities, schools and businesses could apply for. We also assisted these groups with project development. Some of the EU projects which the BTV municipalities participated in during this period are:

### Interreg IIIB – North Sea Region Program

North Sea Rural, BESST, Nordic Transportpolitical Network, Farmers for Nature, ProBioEnergy, Canal Link, Water City International I & II, MoPark, NAVI-The North Sea Coastal Path, VISP-Vitalizing City Centres through Integrated Spatial Planning, Forum Skagerrak, Waterline Economy

### Interreg IIIC – North South East West Program

Euromountains.net, CONNECT BSR, VNE-Inland Waterways of Europe

### Baltic Sea Region program

PIPE, Innovation Circle, SuPortNet II

### Leonardo

GLOCAL, Gateway to Guidance



BTV seminar participants learn more about participation in international projects held on March 14, 2006 in Morgedal.

### Other initiatives:

SME365.com, Cooperation with Galicia (Spain) on Port harbours, Scandinavian Triangle – Maritime Partenariate 04-07, CPMR-Europe of the Sea, Edge Counties Network, Norwegian Mountain Region Cooperation, UNESCO Geo-Park, Norway-Hubei (China) Week



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## Financial Contributions from the BTV international team

A large number of international projects and initiatives received funding from the BTV international team in support and development of these activities which might not otherwise have been realized. Some of these are listed here:

[Projects](#) [Initiatives](#)

## Youth

### (youth involvement in European politics)



Participants at the AER Youth Summer School 2006  
in Baia Mare, Romania

The focus of our work towards the youth in the BTV region was working together with the youth councils and promoting participation in two new European political arenas in Europe:

1. [Assembly of European Regions \(AER\)](#)
2. [Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation \(BSSSC\)](#)

Through the **AER**, a project called “Mainstreaming Youth in the AER” had BTV as a key player. Eva Almhjell, Sr. Advisor and former Vice-Chairman of Vestfold County, Svein Kristian Waale, were key persons in the development of this project in the AER.

In line with national guidelines, it was intended to contribute to develop peace and democracy in Europe, and increase the quality of life for young people across the regions. To obtain this, the following tools were established a) a model of cooperation across generations, regions, ethnicity/religion and culture, i.e. an AER Youth Team, b) a position of a Youth Officer in the AER secretariat and c) a Youth Team Travel Fund.

(quoted from the evaluation report ‘Mainstreaming Youth Initiative’ by Mag. Gerhard Moßhammer)

### The objectives set for the project were:

- to obtain political commitment and increase the number of member regions that are actively involved in the field of youth affairs in the AER
- to develop new working methods in order to ensure that youth perspectives are taken into account in all committees of the AER
- to revitalise the work of the Subcommittee Youth and review its current role with the AER
- To revitalise the AER Summer Schools

The biggest successes and achievements, are:

### In terms of structure:

- the setting up of a structure for the implementation (Youth Team, Youth Officer, Travel Fund)
- the tools “ Youth Summer School”.

In 2006, the AER Youth Ambassador scheme was introduced which turned out to be an inspiring addition to the project “Mainstreaming Youth in the AER”.

In Vestfold, the Youth Ambassadors developed a model of youth participation in the upper secondary schools, applied within the fields of health and environment.



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## In terms of content:

- the awareness-raising of youth issues within the AER and all its committees
- contribution to the region's understanding of the importance of international cooperation
- the commitment of young people to develop peace and democracy in Europe
- the improvement of cooperation between youth and adults and the readiness to learn from each other
- young people have the opportunity to participate in policy-making and to gain experience in operating on regional and international level
- young people have a platform to bring on their innovative ideas
- The AER Youth Summer School has proved to be a big success, and a model for the adult summer school as well.

Marianne Bjerke (Vestfold) was an elected member of the AER Youth Team 2005-07. Andreas Haga Raavand is the current member.



30 youth from 10 countries participate at the 13<sup>th</sup> annual BSSSC conference held in Szczecin, Poland on Oct. 20-22, 2005.

Incorporation of youth policy into the **BSSSC** work plan has also been resulted. «The active participation of young people in decisions and

actions at the local and regional level is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and a more prosperous Baltic Sea region. BSSSC fully recognises and supports the increasing participation of young people in the concrete work of the organisation.»

A “Working Group for Youth Policy” was established in 2005, consisting of 12 youth representatives and 12 officers from the Baltic Sea states. Since 2007, two young representatives from the working group, are taken in as equal members of the BSSSC Board.

The national youth representative from Norway is Frederikke Tonnaer Christensen (Oppland), and the National Coordinator is Sr. Advisor Eva Almhjell, (Vestfold).

Youth from the BTV region youth councils participated at various events in regi of AER and BSSSC throughout Europe where they presented issues which the youth of Europe are concerned about to make the quality of life for youth better.

Some of the issues which were presented to the members of the AER and BSSSC are: Declaration of Youth Integration, participation at the AER youth summer schools, Youth politics in the BSSSC, youth conferences in regi of the Eastern Norway County Network, Including youth in influencing European political decision-making processes through work with the youth teams, Youth motto ‘Nothing about us without us’, Health services at schools, inexpensive public transportation (European youth travel passport), cultural activities for youth, planning work within the AER and BSSSC, youth and mental health, mobility, unemployment, social dimension, democracy and youth participation, informal and formal learning, education, life-long learning, cultural diversity and identity, EU project participation, youth council influence in regional politics, sustainable energy for the future.



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[The Eastern Norway County Network](#) was also an important arena for BTV youth council representatives which held seminars (7 in total from 2004-2007) where the youth reps prepared for participation at the European organizations as well as focusing on issues which were of importance for youth in the BTV region.

## International Business Development



Chinese and Norwegian businesses in dialog under Norway-Hubei Week, June 07, Wuhan (China).

BTVs international team cooperated with the BTV business development team in working towards internationalization in businesses throughout the BTV region. This included cooperation with Innovation Norway and arranging several seminars on themes which promoted international development in BTV companies by linking up actors to relevant organizations, persons, initiatives in focused areas through activities such as: The Annual Scandinavian Triangle Maritime Partenariate, meeting series in cooperation with Innovation Norway, cooperation with Vestfold's Kaunas, Lithuania office, links to EU programs and existing projects with business development opportunities and participation at Norway-Hubei Week in China and visits from Chinese delegations from Hubei to BTV businesses.

## Cooperating Regions



A delegation from Hubei Province in China were hosted by Telemark Mayor Gunn Marit Helgesen and attended the Maritime Partenariat in Uddevalla, Sweden on March 21-22, 2007.

The County Administrations of Buskerud – Telemark - Vestfold have cooperation agreements with the following foreign regions:

Buskerud County has a cooperation agreement with **Pärnu in Estonia** and **Obrenovac in Serbia** .  
Telemark County has a friendship agreement with **Hubei Province in China** and a cooperation agreement with **Novgorod County in Russia**.  
Vestfold County has a cooperation agreement with **Kaunas in Lithuania** - Vestfold Information Centre.

Work between these regions was continued and strengthened during the project period. Telemark can proudly boast a successful Norway-Hubei Week event for Norwegian businesses held in Wuhan, China in June 2007. More info at [www.norway-hubei.net](http://www.norway-hubei.net).



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## International Meeting Places

### North Sea Commission (NSC)



NSC President Gunn Marit Helgesen had the opportunity to meet and discuss North Sea Region issues with the President of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso at the 33<sup>rd</sup> CPMR General Assembly held in Madeira on Nov. 2-4, 2005.

Telemark County Mayor Gunn Marit Helgesen has held the position of President of this organization since 2004. Telemark County Administration also houses the NSC secretariat which is responsible for the general operations of the NSC as well as planning of the annual General Assembly hosted together with the Interreg North Sea Program and host North Sea region. In June 2007, the BTV region was host to more than 500 delegates from the North Sea Region. The 2007 annual event was held at Brunstad Conference Center in Stokke.

The NSC has worked closely with the [Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions \(CPMR\)](#) and the **Baltic Sea Commission** and have influenced EU political issues such as the green paper on Maritime Policy, the shut down of Sellafield as well as project development, close cooperation with the **Interreg North Sea Region Program** and regional development in the North Sea Region.

### Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC)

Work towards establishing a youth council has been high on the agenda for the BTV international team. Read more at Youth – BSSSC.

### (ORE) Oslo Region European Office



Anita Trosdahl, EU Advisor and Vera Selnes, Director ORE

Buskerud, Telemark and Vestfold Counties were the only 3 counties in Norway not represented in Brussels. Through active lobbying towards BTV regional politicians, the BTV international team had a positive influence on the decision to become members of the ORE. The BTV international team has worked collaboratively with ORE in sending delegations to Brussels to learn more about EU/EEA organizations, programs, project development and so on. ORE has become an important regional development partner for the counties of BTV.



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## Euromontana



Norwegian Minister for Regional Development and Local Affairs Erna Solberg studies the leaflet 'Mountain Region Cooperation in Norway'.

BTV mountain regions have benefitted from being members in this organization as more emphasis has been placed regionally, nationally and at an EU level on regional development issues in mountain regions. Attendance at the annual general assembly by BTV politicians and bureaucrats, and project development such as participation in the Interreg IIC Euromountains.net project, a national initiative Mountain Region Cooperation and influence on the EU to develop a green paper for mountain regions, and for national governments to put more focus on mountain regions has been an active goal of participation in this organization.

### Baltic Development Forum (BDF)

This is another high level platform where politicians and other representatives from the BTV region attended the annual general assembly and established contacts with business development actors in the Baltic Sea region with a focus on competitiveness and innovation.

### Assembly of European Regions (AER)

The BTV international team was a major contributor to the establishment of a youth team in the AER where the AER youth have influence in decision-making processes in European issues/policies which affect European youth. BTV

region youth council members have actively participated in this work. Go to the section Youth – AER for more info.

### **Region reform 2010**

#### **BTV comes to a close. What happens now?**

On December 8, 2006, the Norwegian government put forth a parliamentary statement no. 12 'Regional priority – regional future' about a complete examination of the assignment resolution for the public sector. Responsibility and assignment distribution shall be clarified and the regional state administration shall be examined. There will be 3 administrative levels, and today's county councils will be replaced with new, larger and elected regions. The reform shall be carried out from January 1, 2010.

The reform has the objective to improve management and coordination within the following sectors: transport, business development, environment and cultural monument preservation, administration of natural resource, culture, higher education and research, upper secondary education, specialist health service, public health work, international regional cooperation, and regional planning.

So, until the region reform 2010, the County Councils of BTV – Buskerud – Telemark – Vestfold will work independently on their assignments. Both Buskerud and Telemark county council politicians voted in favor of continuing the BTV regional cooperation. Vestfold county politicians voted negatively to continuing the cooperation and therefore as of January 1, 2008, the BTV regional cooperation will close its 4 year cooperation trial project as a region and we in the BTV international team wish to say 'Takk for oss'.



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## Thanks from the BTV International Team

Thank you for the 4 years and we look forward to exciting assignments in the years to come with the new region reform in 2010. We thank our partners for 4 years of good cooperation on all of the activities, projects and initiatives that have resulted.

**Wishing you all the best from the BTV international team for 2008 and happy holidays from,**

*Bjørn Reisz, Bjarne Stabæk, HildeBallière,  
Oddbjørn Øygard, Eva Almhjell,  
Ivar Haug, Thrond Kjellevold, Dawn Syvertsen,  
Lars Haukvik and Vibeke Jakobsen.*



## International Cooperation Contacts from 2008

Further contacts/information for international cooperation activities in Buskerud – Telemark – Vestfold from January 1, 2008 can be found at:

**Buskerud** – [www.bfk.no](http://www.bfk.no) (go to internasjonalt arbeid)

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**Telemark** – [www.telemark-fk/international](http://www.telemark-fk/international)

*(Please note that Telemark's international web pages are under development and will be available in January 2008)*

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