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Baltic Science Network: Press Release

*How can the macro-regional dimension of science policy help improving the conditions of mobility?
Panel discussion on researcher mobility*



FEHMARNBELT DAYS 2016

HAMBURG
20-22 SEPTEMBER

On 22 September 2016 the Baltic Science Network organised the panel discussion “[Researcher mobility in the Baltic Sea Region](#)” during the Fehmarnbelt Days at the HafenCity University in Hamburg, Germany. Stakeholders from the Baltic Sea Region discussed motivation and benefits, as well as challenges and obstacles related to the mobility of researchers and scientists.

The session started with **Dr. Tom Schumacher**’s (University of Kiel) introduction to the facts and figures stated in the Baltic Science Network’s (BSN) preliminary study on research mobility.

Among other panellists were **Katharina Fegebank**, Minister for Science Research and Equalities, City of Hamburg, **Jan Kercher** representing German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), **Lone Jessen** from NordForsk (the research organisation of the Nordic Council of Ministers) and **Prof. Dr. Robert Blick**, Director of the Center for Hybrid Nanostructures (CHYN) at the University of Hamburg. The discussion was moderated by science and education journalist **Jan-Martin Wiarda**.

Panelists discussed what kind of support and facilitating structures would be needed in addition to the existing ones. Are well funded research systems enough or do we need additional funding for research mobility? [NordPlus](#) was analysed as one of the best practices in order to provide further ideas how to fill the existing transnational gaps in the support structures for research and science cooperation. **Lone Jessen** specifically highlighted the role of Centres of Excellence in advancing Nordic cooperation in science and research.

Minister Fegebank highlighted, that the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is already an excellent science area but more should be done in order to increase the overall visibility of the BSR among scientists and people living on the shores of the Baltic Sea. Although BSR has proven itself as a highly competitive region in the EU, it is characterised by having relatively small countries which due to their size are not fully capable to tackle the so-called Great or Societal Challenges on their own. Such ambitious endeavours demand joint and well organised efforts.

Prof. Dr. Blick confirmed that Hamburg faces great opportunities in terms of advancing its scientific strengths and expertise. Moreover, cooperation with relevant peers in the BSR should run smoothly since they share a number of common interests.

Jan Kercher and **Tom Schumacher** agreed that there are not enough statistics in terms of quantitative as well as qualitative indicators of existing mobility patterns. In order to advance the science and research cooperation, it would be necessary to get a clearer understanding what is the future focus in facilitating researcher mobility. Namely, whether the focus is to increase the exchange of researchers across BSR countries in pure quantitative terms, or the aim is the advance towards qualitatively new level of mobility. These two sides of the coin should be taken into consideration especially bearing in mind that the existing tendency is that the most advanced researchers prefer to increase their cooperation and pay visits to the peers of similar level institutions. The leading researchers and scientists, when looking for new cooperation opportunities, don’t think in pure country terms. In other words, they are not primarily concerned with the country of origin of cooperation partners.



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Jan-Martin Wiarda summarised the discussion with the following remarks:

- More structured and comparable data gathering should take place;
- Not only numbers should be collected but also quality indicators should be developed;
- Additional funding for mobility would be supportive;
- The quality and excellence of the research systems play a big role;
- BSN has a strong political dimension and helps setting the framework;
- BSN can also help identifying common interests and scientific goals;
- NordForsk can serve as a role model for structured mobility in the BSR.

The Baltic Science Network is a political cooperation network of the Science ministries and other relevant stakeholders in the BSR, coordinated by the Hamburg Ministry of Science, Research and Equalities. More information can be found here: www.baltic-science.org

The Fehmarnbelt Days were carried out from 20 to 22 September in Hamburg. The Fehmarnbelt Days aim at regional development and transnational cooperation between the Northern Germany, Denmark and South Sweden in various fields. The whole event programme can be found here: <http://fehmarbeltdays.com/>.

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