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# Development ideas for communication in the Baltic Sea Network to promote projects

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Loisa, Antti  
Meriluoto, Linda

Laurea University of Applied Sciences  
Laurea Leppävaara

## Development ideas for communication in the Baltic Sea Network to promote projects

Loisa Antti  
Meriluoto Linda  
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Antti Loisa

Linda Meriluoto

**Viestinnän kehittämisideoita Baltic Sea Network -verkostolle hankkeiden aikaansaamisen edistämiseksi**

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Verkostojen toimivuus perustuu pitkälti niiden viestinnän toimivuuteen. Jotta verkostot onnistuvat tehtävässään, on verkoston viestinnän oltava vuorovaikutteista. Tämä opinnäytetyö on toimeksianto verkostolta Baltic Sea Network. Baltic Sea Network on korkeakouluista sekä muista organisaatioista koostuva verkosto jonka tehtävänä on kehittää Itämeren aluetta. Toimeksiannon mukaan verkoston viestinnässä on ongelmia, jotka vaikeuttavan verkoston hankkeiden syntyä. Hankkeet ovat näkyvä osa verkoston toimintaa.

Tässä työssä yhteisöviestintä on jaettu sisäiseen ja ulkoiseen viestintään. Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena antaa ideoita verkoston viestinnän kehittämiseksi, jotta verkostossa pystyttäisiin tuottamaan enemmän hankkeita. Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys perustuu Baltic Sea Networkin jäsenten lausuntoihin sekä teoriaan yhteisöviestinnästä ja suhdetoiminnasta. Verkostosta ja sen nykytilasta on saatu tietoa sekä lausunnoista että verkoston kotisivuilta.

Opinnäytetyö sisältää laadullisen tapaustutkimuksen, joka tutkii verkoston viestinnästä tekijöitä, jotka vaikeuttavat verkoston hankkeiden syntyä. Tutkimuskysymyksenä oli ”Kuinka kehittää viestintää Baltic Sea Networkissa, jotta hankkeita saataisiin syntymään enemmän?”. Tämän tapaustutkimuksen tarkoitus on olla kehitystä ohjaava ja se on rajattu parannusehdotuksien antamiseen. Tutkimusmenetelminä käytettiin kartoittavaa kyselylomaketta sekä teemahaastatteluja. Kysely toteutettiin lokakuussa 2008 ja haastattelut marraskuussa 2008 verkoston partneripäivien yhteydessä.

Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että verkoston viestinnän ongelmana on sen hierarkkinen luonne. Verkoston partneripäivät ovat hankkeiden kehittämisen kannalta potentiaalinen viestintäkanava niiden interaktiivisen luonteen vuoksi. Partneripäiviä tulisi kehittää sekä viestintävastuita jakaa uudella tavalla. Tutkimuksessa selvisi myös, että verkoston hankkeiden syntyyn liittyvät ongelmat eivät johdu pelkästään viestinnästä. Muun muassa verkoston hierarkkinen rakenne vaikuttaa verkoston vuorovaikutteisuuteen. Opinnäytetyö sisältää jatkotutkimusehdotuksen verkoston johtamiseen ja organisointiin liittyen.

Antti Loisa  
Linda Meriluoto

**Development ideas for communication in the Baltic Sea Network to promote projects**

Year	2009	Pages	67
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The functionality of networks is based on the functionality of their communication. To work, interactive communication is required in the network. This thesis is an assignment by the Baltic Sea Network. The Baltic Sea Network is a network of higher educational institutes and other organizations with a purpose to develop the Baltic Sea Region. According to the mandatory there are problems related to the communication in the network which prevent the creation of the projects. Project of the network are a concrete part of the activities of the network.

Organizational communication is divided into internal and external communication. The purpose of this thesis is to give development ideas for communication in the network, that more projects could be created. The theoretical background of this thesis is based on theories of organizational communication and public relation. The analysis of the state of the network is based on the homepages of the network and statements given by the members of the Baltic Sea Network.

This thesis includes a qualitative case study which explores factors in the communication that prevent the creation of the projects in the network. The research question was "How to develop communication in the Baltic Sea Network that more projects could be created?". The purpose of the case study is to be directing and it is limited to development ideas. A questionnaire and theme interviews are used as research methods. The questionnaire was performed in October 2008 and the theme interviews in November 2008 at the Partner Days of the network.

The study found out that the problem in the communication is its hierarchical nature. The Baltic Sea Network Partner Days are an interactive communication channel and therefore potential for development of projects. The Partner Days should be developed and the communication responsibilities shared in a new way. The study also found out that all the problems that prevent the creation of projects are not solely related to the communication. For example, the hierarchical structure of the network affects the interactivity. This thesis includes also a suggestion for a follow-up research focused on the organization and management in the network.

Key words: The Baltic Sea Network, network, organizational communication

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction .....	5
1.1	Purpose of this thesis .....	6
1.2	Research context .....	6
1.3	Division of labour .....	7
1.4	Structure of study .....	7
2	Baltic Sea Network .....	7
2.1	Vision, mission and strategy of the Baltic Sea Network .....	9
2.2	Products of the Baltic Sea Network .....	12
2.3	Organization of the Baltic Sea Network .....	12
2.4	Operational environment of the Baltic Sea Network .....	15
3	Organizational communication .....	16
3.1	Internal communication in the Baltic Sea Network .....	16
3.1.1	The roles of organizational communication .....	17
3.1.2	The planning of the internal communication .....	20
3.1.3	Communication channels .....	22
3.1.4	Communication as a tool of management and leadership .....	25
3.2	External communication and public relationship in the Baltic Sea Network .....	26
3.2.1	Corporate image building .....	28
3.2.2	Reputation and branding .....	29
3.2.3	Communication with external stakeholders .....	30
3.2.4	Media communication .....	32
4	Research process .....	33
4.1	Preliminary study .....	36
4.2	Qualitative part of the research .....	38
4.3	Reliability and validity of the research .....	41
4.4	Research ethics .....	42
5	Results .....	43
5.1	Results of the questionnaire .....	43
5.2	Results of the theme interviews .....	50
6	Conclusion and development ideas .....	53
6.1	Development of the Partner Days .....	54
6.2	The communication responsibilities .....	55
6.3	The purpose of the network .....	56
7	Closing words .....	57
	List of References .....	58
	Figures .....	61
	Appendices .....	62

## 1 Introduction

There are networks everywhere. People create networks among each other and in that way create social networks. Social networks can be utilized in daily life, when searching for a job, for example. After the revolution of technology the term “network” found new dimensions. Today the role of networks is to improve know-how, share information and also improve conformability. Modern technology has given an opportunity to create and maintain contacts to partners who can be located all around the world. Neither the communication nor organizations are restricted to place or time anymore.

Networks are created because cooperation with others is perceived profitable. A single road does not serve its users as well as many roads which are connected together and enable moving all around. Enterprises cooperate to achieve more and save resources. The networks cannot always be seen but they affect people’s daily life as much as concrete things.

Interactivity is required when networking. In networks which consist of people interactive communication is an essential part of the functionality of the network. The term “communication” is derived from the Latin term “communicare”, which means doing together. Interactive cooperation and communication is the base of networks. Communication of an organization can be divided into internal and external communication. In integrated communication the internal and external dimensions are supporting each other while improving interactivity with the environment and inside the organization.

The mandatory of this research, the Baltic Sea Network, is a network of higher education institutions and regional development organizations in the Baltic Sea region. The purpose of the network is to develop the Baltic Sea region in accordance with the EU policy. The development of the Baltic Sea region is done by utilizing contacts and creating different kind of projects, aiming to boost the international competitiveness around the region.

The Baltic Sea Network has faced problems in its communication which have affected the creation of its projects. In other words, there has been a lack of interactivity in the network. The assignment given by the Baltic Sea Network is to develop the communication in the network.

The writers of this thesis chose the subject because they had taken part in an intensive programme, PIM, arranged by the Baltic Sea Network. PIM (Promoting Intercultural Management) is a course arranged by the Baltic Sea Network. The writers find that kind of courses important and want to promote organizations that create those courses. By studying the communication in the framework of the networked organization, the researchers have an

opportunity to apply their previous studies in a real life case, which enables their professional development. This study was made in cooperation with the mandatory organization and the target of the research is to bring value for the network as well as the researchers.

### 1.1 Purpose of this thesis

This thesis discusses organizational communication which is divided into internal and external communication. The main focus of this thesis lies in the internal communication. The theory of organizational communication is supported by the theory of public relations. This thesis discusses the organizational communication in the Baltic Sea Network. The analysis of the current state of the Baltic Sea Network is based on the statements of five members of the Baltic Sea Network. The statements were given during the summer and autumn in 2008.

Networks are built by interactive communication. In the case of the Baltic Sea Network the members of the network are located far away from each other and the communication between them is mainly virtual communication. After finding the problems in communication which prevent the creation of the projects, the purpose of this thesis is to give development ideas for the Baltic Sea Network. The development ideas are based on the results of the study and they are related to the communication of the network. The purpose of the development ideas is to improve the communication in the network so that more projects could be created. The development ideas are ideas on idea stage. This thesis does not present more closely how ideas are put into practice. This thesis does not discuss other problems, which are not related to the communication preventing the creation of the projects.

The value of the study for the Baltic Sea Network is in conveying the problems related to the communication. After that the network can be developed. Development of the communication in the Baltic Sea Network is important because the network is developing the Baltic Sea region. According to the statements of the members of the Baltic Sea Network, by developing the communication in the Baltic Sea Network this thesis affects the competitiveness of the Baltic Sea region. This thesis is the first study made for the Baltic Sea Network. The role of this thesis is to be the first step for the development of the network.

### 1.2 Research context

The research question of this research is “How to develop the communication in the Baltic Sea Network that more projects could be created.” To find the answer for the research question, the factors related to the communication that prevent the creation of the projects in the Baltic Sea Network needed to be found. By researching those factors, development ideas can be given.

The research approach of this thesis is qualitative in its nature. The object of the study is the communication in the Baltic Sea Network. The study is based on this specific case; the solutions are made according to the needs of the Baltic Sea Network. The research question requires the understanding of the communication structure in the network and the finding of the factors that prevent the creation of the projects of the Baltic Sea Network.

The research of this study consists of two parts. The current state of the communication in the network is examined by a questionnaire. The interviews explored more exact the factors that affect the creation of the projects in the Baltic Sea Network. The results of the research are analyzed with qualitative methods. The conclusion of this thesis is based on those results.

### 1.3 Division of labour

This thesis is done by two students of Laurea University of Applied Sciences. One of the students is studying business management and the other hospitality management. This thesis is a result of cooperation. The theoretical framework of this thesis was defined together and the both researchers had a common view of the content of the research. The research strategy and methods were chosen in accordance with the research subject. The questions for the questionnaire and interviews were planned together according to the theory of organizational communication by Juholin (2006).

The results of the study were analyzed in cooperation and the conclusions of this thesis are the findings by two people. The writing part of this thesis was shared. The business student wrote theory of external communication and the hospitality management student the theory of internal communication. The knowledge of the specific subjects was shared during the research process by interactive communication.

### 1.4 Structure of study

The structure of this thesis consists of six sections. The first section is the introduction of the thesis. The second section introduces the Baltic Sea Network. The third section consists of the theoretical background. The fourth section discusses the research process of this thesis. The fifth section represents the results of the results and the sixth section consists of the development ideas.

## 2 Baltic Sea Network

This chapter discusses Baltic Sea Network, its purpose, activities, organizational structure and its operational environment. The term network comes from term “net”, which used to mean a net like a fishing net with its plexus. Today the term network means an integration of



connections between different kind of members, an integration of computers, a network of roads or a network of organizations. Nowadays networks also have characteristics from plexus; members of a network can be located far away from each other but they stay in contact in different ways. Networks have invisible links between people or organizations and they improve interactivity between members. (Koskela, Koskinen & Lankinen 2007, 90 - 91.)

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century networks have become common. People talk about the network society, which considers networks everywhere. As well as improving interactivity, the purpose of a network is to increase the share of knowledge between members who sometimes are located in other countries. Technological development has offered a possibility to communicate around the world and in that way network more and more. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, information can be transferred anytime and almost everywhere. Internet and mobile phones, for example, have given the opportunity to share information or contact people in other ways. (Koskela, Koskinen & Lankinen 2007, 90 - 91.)

As mentioned, networks are everywhere. Roads create a network in the city and computers are connected to the internet. Even in personal life, people create networks between other people and those networks help people in their personal life. Personal networks have always existed, but nowadays it is more common that also companies or other organizations create networks and try to utilize them. Nowadays networks are focused more and the importance of them is understood. Today's network society requires network know-how from everyone, the know-how of networking. The most important thing in network know-how is that members understand the importance of cooperation and try to decrease bureaucracy. (Koskela, Koskinen & Lankinen 2007, 91 - 93.)

Virtual societies have become popular via the Internet. Facebook is one of the virtual organizations of today with 150 million users and it has reached the audience of all ages (Zuckerberg 2009). Mark Zuckerberg (2009), the creator of Facebook, crystallizes the idea of networking and specially the benefit of the virtual networks: "The full potential of the web is to make the world more open, so everyone has a voice and can share what is important to them." Facebook connects people and societies all around the world and on that way increase interactivity (Diak 2008).

The term network became remarkable in organization sciences in 1990's. In those days all the organizations started to create more and more connections and that created networks. (Karlöf & Lövingsson 2006, 19.) By networking the distribution of information became easier.

The Baltic Sea Network is a network, which consists of higher education institutions and regional development organizations in the Baltic Sea region. The Baltic Sea Network is

established in 2004 and it has been expanding ever since. There are members from eight Baltic Sea Region countries; Finland, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. The purpose of the Baltic Sea Network is to develop the Baltic Sea region in accordance with the EU policy. (Actionplan 2006.)

The purpose of the Baltic Sea Network is to boost international competitiveness, promote welfare by networking and by building clusters. By networking it is possible to share knowledge across borders and thus achieve more. The Baltic Sea Network is not meant to be only a network of higher educational institutes; it is also cooperating with institutes from the public and private sectors. The Baltic Sea Network is co-operating with organizations in the business world and with local authorities. The activities of the Baltic Sea Network are to participate in development and educational projects in cooperation with the environment. (Actionplan 2006.)

The Baltic Sea Network is not directly making economic profit. The projects of the Baltic Sea Network can be funded by European Union. Different kind of research and development institutes can also fund projects. Because the Baltic Sea Network is promoting international co-operation on projects between the higher education institutions and other partners, students of member educational institutes are taking an active part in these projects. "The projects are focused on the areas of welfare, business skills and management, tourism as well as information and communication technology. By networking the Baltic Sea Network is creating a virtual Baltic centre of competence in education, research and development through networking, joint studies and projects and enhanced mobility." (Actionplan 2006.)

## 2.1 Vision, mission and strategy of the Baltic Sea Network

The vision of the organization denotes the future goal of an organization, an ideal state which the organization wants to achieve. The vision of the organization answers the question "What do we want to be in the future?". The vision is achieved by carrying out the mission and following the strategy. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 15.) According to Karlöf (1998, 59 - 61) a convincing vision has a great role in the strategy process of an organization because it shows the long term direction for the organization. That is why the vision of the organization should always be advised and well expressed. The vision should also be understood and accepted on all levels of an organization. A well planned, well messaged and accepted vision motivates the members of an organization and helps decision-making.

The vision of the Baltic Sea Network is to be a virtual Baltic centre of competence in education, research and development. In other words, the Baltic Sea Network aims to be a remarkable network in the Baltic Sea area. To achieve its vision, the Baltic Sea Network carries out its mission. (Actionplan 2006.)

Every organization has a mission, which simply defines a reason for being or the purpose of the organization. The term mission answers the question “Why do we exist?” And “What is our main task?” The mission is defining what the organization is doing and why. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 15.)

The mission of Baltic Sea Network is to boost the international competitiveness of the region and thus to promote welfare in the Baltic Sea Area. The Baltic Sea Network is sharing knowledge across the borders. The mission of the Baltic Sea Network serves the members of the network and also external stakeholders. (Actionplan 2006.)

The term “strategy” derives from the Greek word “strategos”. The term “strategos” meant a plan how to overcome the enemy in the war. (Eden & Ackermann 1998, 3.) In the war strategic plans are needed when considering where to attack and when and how to win the whole war. Strategic thinking should be separated from operative and tactical thinking. It is said that strategic thinking is everything what operational, daily, thinking is not. The rule of thumb is that strategic thinking is about how to win the war, and tactical or operational thinking is about how to win a battle. (Peltonen 2007, 65 - 91.)

In business life the term strategy came up in 1960’s, by business students at the University of Cambridge. In business life companies can, for example, choose whether cost leadership or differentiation. Those kinds of decisions are strategic decisions which show the direction for the company. (Peltonen 2007, 65 - 91.)

A traditional understanding of the term strategy in business life is used to denote a long term plan how to achieve the vision and how to carry out the mission of the organization. If the vision is regarded as a goal, the strategy is a plan how to achieve that goal. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 16.)

Mark Daniell, one of the world’s leading corporate strategy advisors, expresses the term strategy as follows: “Strategy is the art and science of informed action to achieve a specific vision, an overarching objective, or a higher purpose for a business enterprise” (Daniell 2006, 1).

As well as enterprises, networks also have strategies. A strategy is often planned beforehand by managers of an organization. A traditional understanding is that the strategy of an organization is a plan by managers, based on their rational decisions. By following that plan the organization should be successful. A strategy can, however, become true by a change. In that case the strategy can be studied only afterwards and see what the members of the

organization really did and whether they had a certain way to act. It is common that the strategy which became true had characters from either a planned plan or characters from things what happened by chance. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 16.)

The strategy of the Baltic Sea Network is to build clusters and to network between regions and across borders in the Baltic Sea Region. Building clusters and networking means creating and utilizing contacts. Building clusters and networking are how Baltic Sea Network is going to achieve its vision, to be a virtual Baltic centre of competence in education, research and development. By creating contacts the Baltic Sea Network is also able to carry out its mission which can be seen in the network's operational activities. (Actionplan 2006.)

Without expected results the strategy would be pointless. The strategy expects results, which are achieving the vision and carrying out the mission. (Eden & Ackerman 1998, 4 - 5.) The strategy of an organization can be seen in an organization's daily activities, in the operational actions. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 144.)

Building clusters and networking themselves are not enough, there has to be a reason why clusters are built and why relationships are created. Expected results for education, research and development focused on the Baltic Sea Network are co-operation in different kind of projects and an active role in the regional innovation system around Baltic Sea Region. (Actionplan 2006.) Projects can be cooperation with business life or like PIM, educational courses for students, which integrates the business life and development of the education as well. Organizing cooperation with business life or creating programs for students are more operational than strategic issues. But because the products of the Baltic Sea Network are carrying out the mission of the network they should also be taken in account of. The rule of thumb is that the strategy should support all the acts of the organization as well as operational actions should follow the strategy (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 144).

Core values mean all the principles and the philosophy in the organization. Core values of an organization give a direction to the organization in its daily actions. Core values give the answer to the question "how should we act?" Core values are supporting the strategy of an organization. (Hämäläinen & Maula 2004, 18.) The core value of the Baltic Sea Network is sustainability. That means that in all of its actions Baltic Sea Network is taking sustainable development into account. (Actionplan 2006.)

## 2.2 Products of the Baltic Sea Network

Currently (2009) Baltic Sea Network is offering an intensive program on intercultural management for the students of its member educational institutes. PIM (Promoting Intercultural Management) is a partially EU-funded intensive program on intercultural management and it was organized for the first time in 2006. PIM2008 took place in Tallinn with 30 students from seven Baltic Sea Countries. For two weeks students were actively learning team building, interpersonal and negotiation skills along with cultural dimensions. PIM is an example of an educational project which is annually arranged by the network in cooperation with environment. (PIM2008 2008.)

Baltic Sea Network is also planning to create the Baltic Sea Open University (BSOU). Baltic Sea Open University is currently (2009) on idea stage. During its existence the Baltic Sea Network also had been planning student exchanges around Baltic Sea region, for example FIRST (Finnish - Russian student exchange). During the existence of the Baltic Sea Networks there have also been ideas for tourist development in the Lake Võrstjärv region in Estonia. (Actionplan 2006.)

According to the statements in the members of the Baltic Sea Network, the network could also create different kind of development projects with companies in business life. When creating projects with business life, contacts around the Baltic Sea Region are required. Currently (2009) PIM has been the only launched project in the Baltic Sea Network. (Member 1.)

## 2.3 Organization of the Baltic Sea Network

The term organization means a human made structure with certain goals (Juuti 2006, 204). According to Lankinen there are three different kinds of organization models in networks. The traditional organization of a network is called hierarchical organization. The structure of a hierarchical organization resembles a pyramid with its narrow top and wide bottom. In a hierarchical organization the coordinator or manager is on the top and the rest of the organization is under the manager's control. A typical characteristic in a hierarchical organization is that the manager makes decisions and others follow the manager's advice. In a well conducted hierarchical organization decision-making is fast and the organization works well as long as the organization is loyal and trust the manager. The disadvantage of a hierarchical organization is that the structure is not innovative. In the point of view of communication hierarchical organization is often slow. Communication in a hierarchical organization goes downwards. The manager of an organization makes decisions and informs the rest. In a hierarchical organization horizontal communication is slight and the members of

an organization communicate only upwards if anywhere. That means that the communication cannot be regarded as interactive but informative.

According to Koskela, Koskinen & Lankinen (2007, 100 - 102) networks can also have a scattered structure. In a scattered organization structure, members of the network create teams and project teams. Members make the organization innovative by sharing information between teams. That is why a scattered network is more interactive and flexible than hierarchical organization. In the viewpoint of communication the scattered model gives an opportunity to communicate either horizontally or vertically. In a scattered network the coordinator is not on the top of the organization anymore. The coordinator of a scattered network is in the middle of the network and communication goes everywhere. Communication in a scattered network can be regarded more interactive than that of a hierarchical network.

Hierarchical and scattered networks are created by decisions. Networks can also be built up by change. When a network just appears it can be seen as an organic network. Organic networks do not have any centers in their organization structure. Similar interests or a common task are connecting members. An organic network is dynamic and interactive. The network is changing all the time and its members communicate with everyone. An organic network can be regarded as a paragon of a network where information goes everywhere with no hierarchy. Organic networks are often created by members who have similar interests and who are motivated to work for an organization. (Koskela, Koskinen & Lankinen 2007, 102 - 103).

The organization structure of the Baltic Sea Network resembles the hierarchical organization structure. The structure of the network is visualized in the figure 1. The Baltic Sea Network consists of the coordinator, steering group and members. In the Baltic Sea Network the coordinator informs members about current situations. According to the statements of the members, the coordinator is responsible for the communication and decision-making in the network. The steering group is selected from member universities and it helps the coordinator in decision making. The projects (PIM) of the Baltic Sea Network are planned by members under supervision of the coordinator. The role of the steering group in communication is to inform others about things with the coordinator. The main responsibility of informing belongs to the coordinator. (Members 1, 2, 4 & 5.)

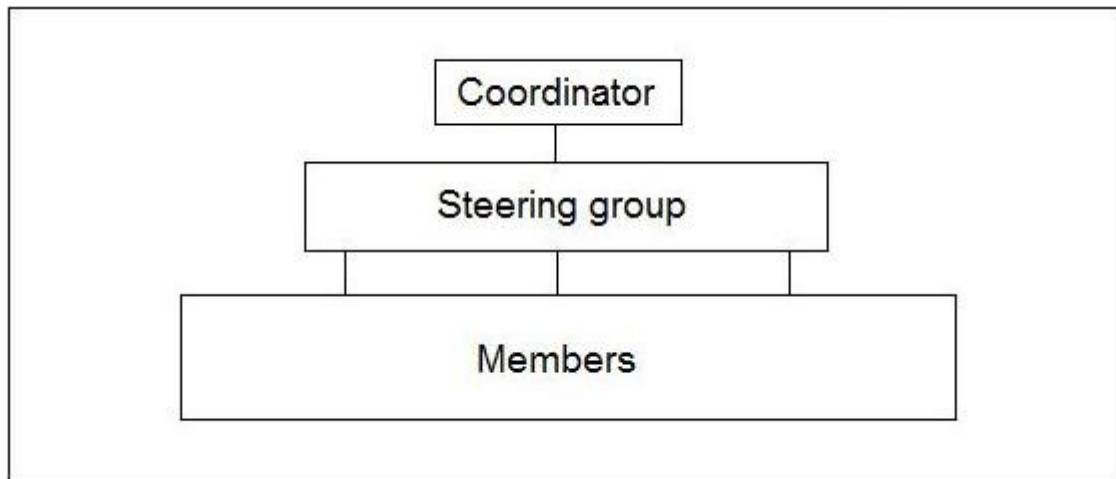


Figure 1: The organization of the Baltic Sea Network

Baltic Sea Network is not purely a hierarchical organization; members create project teams during projects where members are allowed to innovate. During projects the organization structure changes and responsibilities are redistributed. During projects the organization partly resembles a scattered network structure, which is typical in networks that create projects. (Member 1.) In a scattered structure communication is vertical and more interactive (Koskela, Koskinen & Lankinen 2007, 101 - 102).

Scattered structure for the Baltic Sea Network is built by interactivity and innovations. In project teams members are responsible for interactive communication but the role of the coordinator still exists. After the project the organization returns to the normal, hierarchical structure. (Members 1, 2, 4 & 5). That kind of change in organization resembles a so called hypertext organization. The term hypertext organization is used more in business life when discussing about companies. A hypertext organization is an organization where members are normal members of a hierarchical organization but create a project team during a project. After the project the organization recovers. In a hypertext organization members of an organization bring knowledge for the whole organization by projects. In project teams of a hypertext organization all the participants of the project do not have to be members of basic organization, they can come from outside. (Peltonen 2007, 56.)

## 2.4 Operational environment of the Baltic Sea Network

The operational environment consists of the stakeholders of an organization. The term stakeholder means an interest group of an organization. Organizations are not alone in their environment and to succeed in their operations they have to deal with others. (Phillips 2003, 3.) Figure 2 visualizes the operational environment of the Baltic Sea Network. Stakeholders of an organization are all the other groups around, like employees, suppliers, government and customers (Juholin 2006, 203). Depending on the organization, stakeholders can be divided in different ways. In this thesis, the stakeholders of the Baltic Sea Network are divided into internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders mean stakeholders which have an ownership or which work for an organization. In the case of Baltic Sea Network members, including the steering group and the coordinator, are its internal stakeholder. In this thesis external stakeholders are divided into students, cooperation partners and funders. External stakeholders are located outside of the organization.

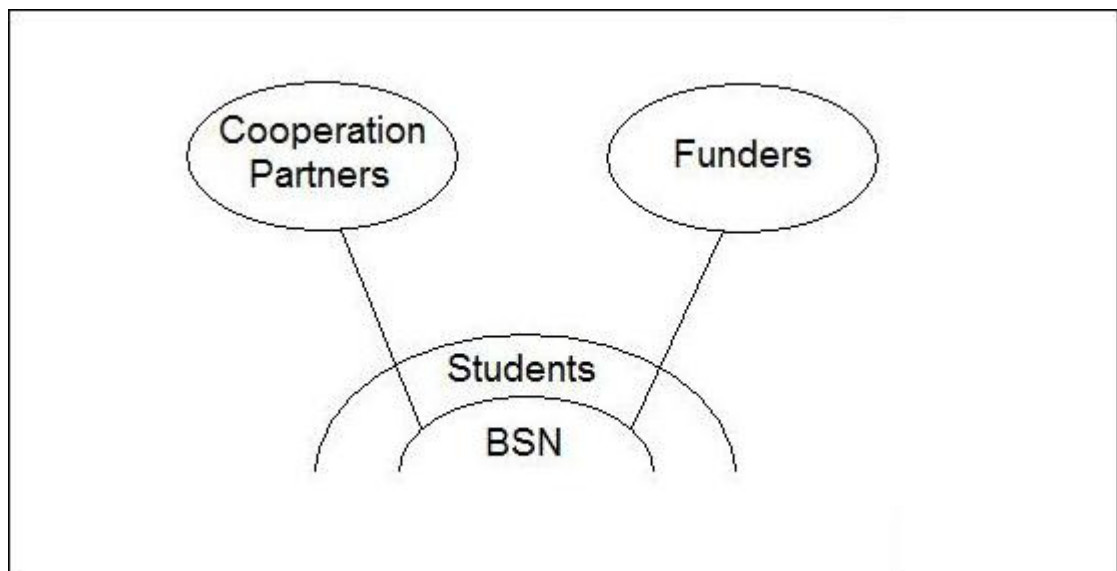


Figure 2: The operational environment of the Baltic Sea Network

The Baltic Sea Network is built by its members who are located in eight different countries around the Baltic Sea. As mentioned before, the members of the Baltic Sea Network are its internal stakeholders. Students of member universities are tightly connected to the network, but they still can be regarded as the network's external stakeholders. Students are participating in projects arranged by the Baltic Sea Network. (Actionplan 2006.) After a project the students are not cooperating with Baltic Sea Network anymore, until the next project.

Cooperation partners are also participating in projects, but they are not necessarily connected to member educational institutes or the network otherwise. Cooperation partners



are, for example, companies that create a project with the Baltic Sea Network. Cooperation partners are also other organizations who cooperate with the network. Cooperation partners can also finance the project, and then they are also funders. (Members 1 & 2.)

Funders finance projects of the nonprofit Baltic Sea Network. When creating projects, all stakeholders are connected together and projects can be created on that way. Funders do not necessarily take part in the project otherwise. A typical funder for the Baltic Sea Network is the European Union. (Member 1.)

### 3 Organizational communication

The communication of the Baltic Sea Network is analyzed according to the theory of organizational communication. The theory was chosen because of the structure and mission of the Baltic Sea Network. Organizational communication can be applied to an organization where members are working together to aim at individual or collective goals. Organizational communication can be divided into internal and external dimensions. (Juholin 2006, 17.) The external dimension of organizational communication is discussed after internal communication (see chapter 3.2). The theory of organizational communication is supported by theory of public relations.

The main purpose of the organizational communication is to support the realization of the mission, the boosting of the competitiveness and the basic functions of the organization (Puro 2004, 105). To put this to a more practical level, this purpose can be divided into three internal communication roles, which reveal the existence of the communication actually in all the functions of the organization. Organizational communication is needed in the Baltic Sea Network to keep the network active (Member 1).

#### 3.1 Internal communication in the Baltic Sea Network

This chapter discusses the structure of the internal communication, communication with internal stakeholders. An internal stakeholder of the Baltic Sea Network is its members. According to Juholin (2006), internal communication consists of three parts; the roles of internal communication, planning of the communication and the means of communication. Communication is regarded as a tool of management. Organizational communication needs the management to fulfill all its purposes. Communication should be tied to all of the functions of the organization. Communication connects the practices with the strategic goals.

Interactive communication is essential in networks. Networks are based on interactive communication which is created by similar interests of the members. Without interactive communication the network does not reach the organic structure which is regarded as an

ideal structure for a network. In other words, the communication creates the structure for a network. (Koskela, Koskinen & Lankinen 2007, 102 - 103.)

The current state of internal communication of the Baltic Sea Network is analyzed in this chapter by applying the theory of internal communication to the Baltic Sea Network. The theory is based on the comprehension of Juholin and it is supported by other sources.

### 3.1.1 The roles of organizational communication

Communication or rather a larger context, communication culture is a part of the organizational culture. The first role of communication is to build the community. For example, the common values are created by communication and therefore this role is significant. This can be regarded as the base for the functional organization. The second role of communication is to create a common satisfaction with the working environment. The satisfaction with the working environment consists of factors that enable reaching the needed information to do the work and also meets the personal motivation factors.

The communication creates the culture in the organization. The culture is a factor which integrates a community. The members of a community represent also a common culture. A typical character among one culture is that members take their own customs, beliefs and values for granted. The organization culture is often subconscious. The members of an organization might not even be able to name the culture before someone comes and disagrees with some matter that actually connects the members, a belief for example. (Edgar & Sedgwick 2007, 82). The organizational culture consists of all the forms of activities in the organization; the organizational culture is not only the main function but also the communication between the different parts of the organizational structure. (Juholin 2006, 142.)

Communication culture consists of the processes of the communication, meaning for example the used channels and other communication practices and the communication climate. Schockley-Zalabak (2009, 48 - 49) explains the communication climate as a reflection on the organization culture. The communication climate highlights how the members of an organization experience the functionality of the communication system. There is continuous evaluation of the interaction among the members. These evaluations create the beliefs, expectations and values of the wholeness what comes to the communication. If the communication climate is negative, it might decrease the work motivation. In proportion a positive communication climate increases work motivation. The communication climate has therefore an even bigger role in the effectiveness of the communication system than operational processes. (Juholin 2006, 142).

The structure of the internal communication in the Baltic Sea Network consists of the individual units scattered around the Baltic Sea Region. The units are mainly educational institutes. (Actionplan 2006.) Every unit has its own nationality and also own organizational culture. All these individual units represent together one organization, the Baltic Sea Network. Though they have their own cultures as individual units, they have to create one common culture also among the Baltic Sea Network members. That means that the organization culture of the Baltic Sea Network is a mix of different organization cultures. The members of the network represent different cultures and different fields of studies having an effect on the organization culture.

The actors of the Baltic Sea Network are primarily members of their own institute units and the Baltic Sea Network brings in fact only extra value to the main functions of the institutes. The extra value is the factor that is supposed to maintain the network. Apilo, Taskinen & Salakari (2007, 49) note that before the organization can function, the partners of the organization have to see the vision of the functions. The compulsive reason to cooperate in the networked organization causes the functionality. The functionality requires that the members appreciate the extra value they get.

The organization culture is required when aiming the goals of an organization. Every organization has its own purpose, which requires that all the organization members to be oriented achieve the common goals. Also the Baltic Sea Network has its own purpose and the network members are committed to accomplish it. To aim at the common goals, the network needs integrated views of its functions. (Juholin 2006, 38, 144.) The common values maintain the organizational functions and the wholeness comprehend the organizational culture. The communication culture can therefore be seen as an attribution of the organizational culture. The communication culture affects the comprehension of the members about the organization. (Schockley-Zalabak 2009, 47 - 48.)

The organization structure of the Baltic Sea Network affects the communication and the communication culture in the network. The hierarchical structure means also hierarchical communication which can be seen in the organizational culture. The satisfaction with the communication climate can be seen in the activity in the network. In hierarchical network members expect the coordinator to inform them about current issues and activities. In hierarchical network structure values are given from the top. The Baltic Sea Network is created by an agreement and the functions are based on that (Actionplan 2006). That means that the values are based on decisions.

The second role of the organizational communication is to affect the satisfaction with the organization. If communication works well, the members are more satisfied with the organization. When there are problems related to the communication, the satisfaction decreases. The communication alone does not create the satisfaction, but it is an essential part of it. The functionality of communication with supervisors or coordinators has a big role in the creation of the satisfaction within the organization. An amount of communication does not directly increase the satisfaction within the organization. In fact, the correlation can also be negative. That means that the addition of the communication activities might decrease the satisfaction. Organizations are supposed to find a right amount of activities of communication with right communication channels. If there is too much information or too many channels in the network, members have problems to get right information. (Juholin 2006, 146 - 147.)

If the members of the Baltic Sea Network are satisfied with the communication and especially with the communication with the coordinator they are more satisfied in general. Communication with the network coordinator represents communication with management in the Baltic Sea Network. The Baltic Sea Network has chosen certain channels for communication. The choice of the channels affects the satisfaction of the members. Members of an organization should be able to transmit the information forward if they find it necessary (Juholin 2006, 147).

As well as an overload of the communication, the lack of communication decreases the satisfaction within the organization. According to Åberg (2000, 100) the organizational communication has also a social dimension. Everyone needs an own network of contacts as well as they have need for social interaction. The social dimension is not straight related to the achievement of the organization, but has a significant role in the organizational communication. Shockley-Zalabak (2009, 155-156) notes also the significance of the social relations in the organization as a social support. There are also loads of information changed this way, also the innovations can be found as a result of communication between the peers. This role is important also in the case of the Baltic Sea Network, where members are scattered in a large area but are still achieving the same goals, creating the projects. The knowledge and skills are on the same level in every partner institute but the content of the knowledge might be different.

The third role of the communication is to transmit information, both basic and precise information. The basic information is about the organization, what it stands for, what its goals are and how the goals can be achieved. The purpose of the precise information is to tell where the organization is going in contrast to its goals. It contains all the information, what the personnel needs at the moment to carry out the functions of the organization. In other

words, the basic information is about the purpose of the organization, the goal why it exists and the precise information is meant to support the fulfilling of the strategy. Transmitting messages is one function of the communication. If the transmitting works well, it is reflected to the satisfaction with the organization. (Juholin 2006, 143 - 144.)

The role of communication as a messenger in the Baltic Sea Network will be discussed in the next chapters of this thesis. The next chapter discusses the basic planning of the communication, concentrates on the content of the messages. The chapter 3.1.3 discusses the channels how the messenger role is carried out in the practical level.

### 3.1.2 The planning of the internal communication

The communication strategy is based on the strategy of the organization. According to the integration principle all the single actions made in the organization have to support the strategy so that the strategy can be implemented. The purposes of the communication define the base for the whole communication. There are two aspects for the communication planning, which are the strategic planning and operative planning. These answers to the questions what is the goal of the organization and which are the communication means needed there. These two link together the tactic planning, where the short term goals are defined. (Juholin 2006, 101 - 102, 153.)

There are different purposes for the communication among the different organizations. The communication can be determined to concern only activities of public relations. Typically in these cases the communication is mainly carried out by a specific press officer. In these cases many functions of the organization are also outsourced and the communication consists of only informing the other parts or reference groups of the organization. The other end is in an organization where communication is only about interaction between the organization members. There are no strict structures in the organization - almost everything can be made by situation based evaluation. The principles used most are something between these two ends. More detailed classification of the target groups is essential. Classifying the target groups has also external dimension. (Juholin 2006, 72 - 73.)

The organizational communication should be planned to support the functions in practice and inform the purpose of the functions (Juholin 2006, 73). One principle of the communication is to inform the personnel of the strategic thinking besides the good flow of information, working management communication, commitment or continuous approbation of the changes. In the Baltic Sea Network, like in organizations in general, the communication should support all the functions simultaneously. The practice is actualizing the strategy. For a short period it can be changed to support only some topical issue. (Juholin 2006, 153.)

The communication activities are a part of the processes of an organization. The communication should be planned in the way that all the communication activities support each other and other processes in the organization. Integrated communication increases synergy and helps to allocate resources. (Juholin 2006, 20, 217.)

Carrying out the strategy in an organization requires that the organization members have to internalize the strategy. The communication is a tool to make the members internalize the strategy. It does not mean that in principle the members are aware of the strategy statements but they should think in a strategic way. The communication should be planned to support the interactivity in the strategy process. By interaction the planned strategy can be carried out. Interactivity in the communication makes the members of an organization to understand the strategy and in that way the strategy can be carried out. Instead of separating the strategy and the practices, the strategy should support the functions. The strategic thinking has to be accomplished by all the organization members. (Apilo, Taskinen & Salakari 2007, 60.)

The communication is related to the strategy of the organization. This requires the communication to be planned to support the strategic thinking among the organization members. All the processes, constructions and routines have to bespeak the strategy. This means that all the components have to support continuity and reformative in the organization. The organizational communication has to be planned to offer places for group discussions where the ideas can be refined together to be in accordance with the strategy of the organization. The understanding of the essential matters of the organization grows when the strategic thinking reaches all the members in the organization. (Santalainen 2005, 340, 344.)

The communication responsibilities are shared according to the goals and principles defined for communication. The final responsibility of communication belongs to management. The responsibilities can be shared among the organization members by tasks or the areas of the operation. There are also the responsibilities between the different positions in the organization; for example, the team leaders and the other directors have as a part of their main assignment the responsibility to inform the members of certain questions. Besides the distribution of the communication responsibilities all the organization members are supposed to transmit and ask for information. In an organization it is vital that all the members are aware where a certain piece of the information can be found. (Juholin 2006, 90 - 92, 130.)

The communication in the Baltic Sea Network is planned to follow the structure of the organization. In hierarchical organizations the responsibilities of the communication belongs

to the management. In the case of the Baltic Sea Network the main responsibility of communication belongs to the coordinator. Communication is decided to be centralized to make sure that information reaches all the members (Statement 5). The coordinator manages the main information channel, the homepages. The network members are expected to inform the network coordinator about the project ideas when there are any. At this point all the members are responsible for communication. Members can contact each other via e-mail or other communication channels presented in the next chapter.

### 3.1.3 Communication channels

The choice of the communication channels is based on the communication plan. The channels represent the operational part of the communication. There are two ways to divide the channels in an organization. Åberg (2000, 174) presents a model where the communication channels are either local or long distance channels. In this sorting model all the messages are transmitted either directly or forwarded. The basic difference between local and long distance channels is who the receivers of the messages are; the local channels reach the members of one unit whereas the long distance channels reach all the members of the organization in every unit. The channels can also be classified according to the type of the method. The channels in this sorting model are divided to face-to-face, printed, oral and virtual channels. (Juholin 2006, 163.)

In project orientated organizations the means of communications are chosen to support the communication of an organization. Communication in an organization supports the functionality of activities. Apilo, Taskinen & Salakari (2007, 49) note that a successfully proceeded project asks for the vision, specific knowledge and the right partners. In the case of the Baltic Sea Network the main question is how to reach the right partners (Member 4).

In a networked organization it is important to communicate on many levels and using several channels. The fact information should be transmitted via the same channels and decided means to guarantee that everyone finds the information. Feelings, thoughts and intuitions get transmitted via informal discussions, which can be proceeded via e-mail or meeting, for example. This kind of communication is important as well to the organization to direct the functions to the right way. The discussions involve silent information and maintain the community in the network. It is essential to update the information continuously, also in the case of transmitting the thoughts. (Apilo, Taskinen & Salakari 2007, 49.)

Local channels and direct messages include contacts with the immediate superior and other superiors, unit meetings and other open forums and the colleagues. The emphasis within the internal communication is on the communication between the personnel and the superior, but

for the operative functions the communication between the personnel members is vital. It contains specific and general information and also many ideas can be found using the occasional communication. The forwarded messages in this near channel group are transmitted via message boards, periodicals, circular letters or virtual channels. The virtual channels will replace the message board and letters in the near future as soon as all the members of the organization are able to use the virtual channels equally. (Åberg 2000, 174 - 175).

The long distance channels, where the messages are transmitted directly, mean briefings, meetings, contacts of the executive and the personnel in the other units. The forwarded messages can be transmitted, for example, via message board, circular letters, bulletins, an own newspaper in the organization, annual and other reports, mass media and data in the Internet. This kind of informing offers only little room for immediate or personal interaction. (Åberg 2000, 174-176.) In the case of the Baltic Sea Network the organization members are scattered to so wide area, basically all the communication belongs to the category of long distance communication.

The face-to-face channels contain all the ways to communicate, where the sender and the receiver are present at the same time (Juholin 2006, 163). The occasions in face-to-face communication can be actualized in the form of formal meetings with different kind of assemblies to informal dinner meetings. The benefit of face-to-face communication is to transmit the information simultaneously to many. The channel provides also the possibility for open discussion and further in finding common understanding of the discussed questions. (Juholin 1999, 139, 141 - 142.) Åberg (2000, 218, 220) supports this view by pointing out the signification of interaction. Face-to-face communication is the way to interpret the consequences and state of the specific things. The benefit of this channel is the immediate possibility to give feedback and the messages also are easier to understand than in other channels because it is possible to read also the nonverbal messages for example.

The Partner Days represent a face-to-face channel in the Baltic Sea Network. In the individual educational units more face-to-face communicating happens between the Baltic Sea Network activities. In the Baltic Sea Network face-to-face meetings are arranged for some specific occasions like planning the intensive program PIM and the Partner Days. (Member 1).

Because of the distance between the units and the networked structure of the organization the face-to-face communicating is slight. Puro (2003, 26 - 27) states that in the organizations, where the distances are significant, the nature of face-to-face meetings is emphasized with special effectiveness.



Oral communication channels mean the channels where the parties speak at the same moment but they do not see each other. The channel is mainly the telephone. The significance of the phone has changed when the virtual channels have developed, for example Skype and e-mails have replaced partly the channel. The channel is considered to be more personal than the virtual channels but it does not replace the face-to-face channels. (Juholin 2006, 163.)

The communication in the Baltic Sea Network has been emphasized with the virtual channels. According to the statements members also use telephone and Skype. The benefit of the Skype compared to telephone is that it is toll-free and it is also possible to have chat discussions by writing the messages. (Skype 2009.) The telephone is still a necessary channel, when a person needs to be reached immediately.

The printed communication channels are represented, for example, by bulletins, minutes and other documents. The character of the printed channels is that the messages are read as delayed (Juholin 2006, 164). The bulletins are nowadays even more replaced by virtual versions and the delivery is carried out via e-mail or the intranet, supposing all the organization members having access to the internet. The bulletins are a fast and cheap way to reach the receivers. (Juholin 1999, 148 - 149.)

The contents of the printed documents are in compacted form, which highlights its role as complementing other communication channels. For example the minutes can be seen in a role to formalize the decisions made in a meeting. (Juholin 1999, 151.) Juholin states also that the released meeting documents can push the content of the meetings to be effective, because all the members have the opportunity to follow the content of the meetings.

Puro (2003) states that together with the development of the common communication culture the significance of the face-to-face channel decreases and the electronic channels replace it. This statement is based on that fact that communication technology develops all the time and the gap between virtuality and reality gets smaller. Also a higher rate of satisfaction with the communication culture can be reached when the members of the organization consider the virtual communication channels equal with the face-to-face channels. This requires that the members of the organization have used the virtual channels so much that communicating feels natural. (Puro 2003, 99 - 100.)

A part of the interactive face-to-face channels can be replaced with virtual channels, for example, videoconferences. The interaction in the virtual environments means that the parties have distance between them. The face-to-face meeting offers the possibility to use also other means to interpret the meanings of the messages. (Puro 2003, 128.)

The intensive program PIM has its own homepages, which focus more on the external reference groups, on the students and the financiers of the program (PIM2008 2008). The Baltic Sea Network had also before a virtual workspace, Optima, but it has been abolished because of the lack of usage. The homepages of the Baltic Sea Network mediate information to the network members and the reference groups. The homepages are public but there is also a restricted area for members only. The members need a username and a password to login the member area. The homepages contain the basic information of the network, the partners and the functions. The homepages are maintained by the network coordinator. For example, the project ideas are transmitted first to the coordinator who releases the documents on the homepages. The member area consists of more detailed information of the network functions, Partner Days and the projects under development. (Member 1.)

#### 3.1.4 Communication as a tool of management and leadership

Communication has a big role in the leadership and management of an organization. The effect on the organization as a whole is proceeded via daily and strategic communication (Juholin 2006, 145). The communication is not only about sending messages but interaction with the organization. Juholin (2006, 177) summarizes that management can influence on the organizational culture, motivation, commitment and how the personnel experiences the working environment by communication. Leadership and management together with communication have an important role also in the case Baltic Sea Network.

Communication is a tool of management and leadership. Without communication the messages from the management could not be transmitted. Salminen (2001, 68) defines even likely the leadership and management to be about communication as far it concerns influencing the members of the organization. This point of view emphasizes the power of communication. Salminen's views are based on the state that leadership and management are just influencing with words and actions (Salminen's 2001, 14). Salminen states that the role of leadership and management is to get the organization to work toward the common organizational goals. Communication transmits all the information that flows through in the organization and its power cannot be understated. Only through that tool can all the changes in the attitudes of the organization members and perceptions of the functions be made if needed.

The Baltic Sea Network is managed by the network coordinator. The communication by coordinator is in this point of view a part of management. The coordinator decides what information is transmitted. The coordinator takes part in the discussions with some network members, where the decisions concerning the network are made. (Member 3). The decisions

of the coordinator define the structure of communication. Depending on the decisions the communication can be interactive or vertical.

### 3.2 External communication and public relations in the Baltic Sea Network

This chapter discusses external communication and public relations (PR) of the Baltic Sea Network. The term external communication of an organization can be defined in different ways. The traditional way to define external communication is to regard it as marketing communication which aims to promote the demand of an organization's products (Juholin 2006, 217). External communication of the Baltic Sea Network consists of contacts of network members and the operational environment. According to Juholin, external communication can be seen in four different points of views; corporate image building, communication with stakeholders, promoting and media communication. Marketing communication is a part of promoting as well as public relations. This thesis does not focus on marketing communication because of its commercial character. Instead of marketing communication, this chapter discusses the promotion of the Baltic Sea Network in point of view of public relations (PR).

External communication is communication with the environment, the external stakeholders that do not belong to the organization but cooperate with it (Juholin 2006, 203). Activities of public relations are activities which aim to create and maintain good contacts with external and also internal stakeholders (Vuokko 2003, 279). This chapter discusses also the internal dimension of the public relations of the Baltic Sea Network.

It is essential to understand that all the dimensions of external communication are integrated together. The communication of an organization consists of internal and external communication integrating an entity, integrated communication of an organization where different activities of the communication are not separated but support each others. (Juholin 2006, 217.) By integrating the whole communication the organization aims to find synergy in its activities and in that way save resources (Vuokko 2003, 323 - 325).

Public relations highlight the principle of the environment consisting of stakeholders and principles of creating goodwill- value by good relationships. (Vuokko 2003, 280 - 283.) Public relations mean activities aiming to achieve the acceptance the stakeholders and in that way success in operations. In other words, public relations mean methods to increase goodwill - value to the organization which means creating and maintaining good contacts with stakeholders. The purpose of public relations is to monitor the environment and share information about activities of the organization. (Kottler 2000, 605 - 606.) Public relations have also an internal dimension, which means activities that aim to improve the corporate image to internal stakeholders. (Vuokko 2003, 280.)

The means of public relations are either words or activities. This thesis is focused on the communicational dimension of public relations. Public relations are often regarded as a part of marketing communication but in this thesis it is separated from that. When regarding public relations as a part of marketing, its internal dimension is ignored (Tikkanen, Aspara, Parviainen 2007, 18). Marketing communication can be defined as a way to make more money, and that is why it is used in business life (Lehtonen 1998, 123). Instead of marketing communication, public relations can be regarded as a part of organizations activities related to informing (Vuokko 2003, 279). Public Relations can be regarded as a way to create and hold good contacts to stakeholders and that is why it is used also in cases of nonprofit organizations, like the Baltic Sea Network. (Juholin 2006, 217.)

Public relations, which has either internal or external dimension, can be divided into Corporate PR and Marketing PR (Vuokko 2003, 280). In the internal dimension the role of PR is to improve corporate image to the staff and the owners, internal stakeholders. The purpose of Corporate PR is to improve corporate image and message what the organization stands for. Internal PR is purely corporate PR, improving internal corporate image and messaging vision, strategy and values of the organization. From the viewpoint of communication, internal corporate PR is to motivate members and to improve the atmosphere of an organization. (Vuokko 2003, 280 - 282).

Corporate PR has also an external dimension. The purpose of external corporate PR is to improve the corporate image outside of an organization. Organizations are willing to convince the environment of responsibility and liquidity, for example. External PR is also marketing PR. Marketing PR is related to products and the segment are all the segments of marketing. Marketing PR supports the organization to take care of customer relationships for example. (Vuokko 1993, 279 - 281.) The difference between marketing communication and marketing PR is that the purpose of marketing communication is to promote demand and make profit on that way. Public relations are activities related to reassert good contacts, and it can be regarded as activities of saving money. (Lehtonen 1998, 123.) All the activities of public relations are not directly related to corporate or market PR. Other activities of public relations are for example management of international communication, public affairs and public issues and media relations. Communication during an organizational crisis is also an activity of public relations. (Schockley-Zalabak 2009, 345.)

### 3.2.1 Corporate image building

Organizations are constantly connected to their stakeholders and their acceptance is necessary for the organization. To achieve the acceptance, organizations communicate with stakeholders all the time. (Phillips 2003, 3.) External stakeholders, which are, for example, funders or cooperation partners, have always a certain image about the organization what affects the stakeholder's activities. That is why organizations are willing to improve the corporate image which can be described as a notion about the organization. A good corporate image helps the organization to achieve its goals and cooperate with their environment. (Vuokko 2003, 105.) In case when the organization has a bad corporate image, stakeholders may not trust the organization and for example funding can be difficult (Juholin 2006, 188).

The term image became common in the 1950s in business life. In vernacular the term is used when discussing about a received image about something or someone, meaning that the image is a sum of notions. Image is a common term when discussing about impressions without personal experiences. For example, politicians have a certain image. People have heard or seen what politicians have been doing, but the audience does not know them better. That means that politicians have a certain image which is in peoples mind. The image about the organization belongs to the audience. (Vuokko 2003, 103.) The image does not, however, give the right notion about the object. When improving corporate image, organizations are often giving an image what they want others to think about them. (Juholin 2006, 187.)

The term profiling is also used nowadays when discussing corporate image building. Profiling as a term became known by Åberg in the 1980s. Profiling is directly related to an organization's vision related to the target profile. The term "image" is used more often when talking about people and it does not have to be based on the object's actual attributes. The term profiling is more common in business life because companies are not able to hold an untrue image of them (Juholin 2006, 187-190.) Unlike traditional image management, profiling contains acts and expressions. According to Åberg corporate image is built by words, acts and expressions. Words are everything what an organization says and acts are things the organization is doing. Expressions mean concrete messages given in publicity. Those kinds of messages are logos, names, the quality of service and the look of the building of an organization. (Åberg 1989, 87 - 91.)

No matter which term is used, the main task is the same, to improve the corporate image of an organization in certain way. The corporate image which is wanted to generate in publicity should be well planned and it has to be in integral to other communication. (Juholin 2006, 41 - 42.) It is necessary for companies to improve their corporate image. Companies have to convince their customers, suppliers, funders and other stakeholders to succeed in their

activities. (Vuokko 2003, 105.) The Baltic Sea Network is also reliant on its stakeholders, funders and cooperation partners, for example. In case of the Baltic Sea Network, the network has to convince cooperation partners about being a good cooperation partner which brings value by cooperating. Funders need to be convinced that the Baltic Sea Network is a trustworthy network, whose projects are profitable to fund.

For its stakeholders the Baltic Sea Network can create an image of a network that has connections in the Baltic Sea Region and knowhow in research, development and education. By creating a good image, the Baltic Sea Network is able to find suitable partners for projects. The Baltic Sea Network has homepages where the network is introduced. The members of the Baltic Sea Network also create contacts with different institutions.

In viewpoint of Public Relations corporate image building is also an internal activity. Organizations create a certain image for their internal stakeholders, staff and owners. Organizations are willing to give an image about themselves as good employer, for example (Vuokko 2003, 281). In the Baltic Sea Network the internal image management means activities, thus the network sends messages about its vision, mission and the strategy to its members. To its members the Baltic Sea Network creates an image about a network which offers the opportunity to work together and on that way achieve more. (Actionplan 2006.)

### 3.2.2 Reputation and branding

Corporate image is also built by reputation. A reputation of an organization is based on things that the organization has been doing or saying. The importance of reputation was understood in the 1990s, and thereafter reputation started to be regarded as capital of an organization. A good reputation improves the trust of environment and it cannot be created only by communication like images. Behind reputation there are always real activities, not only rhetoric like in pure image. (Juholin 2006, 187 - 190.)

The Baltic Sea Network has arranged an intensive program, PIM, for students since 2006. The network has been planning the Baltic Sea Open University, at an on idea stage yet. The first and second PIM was arranged without funding, but for the third PIM funding could be organized. That is an example how reputation helped the Baltic Sea Network to get funding from EU. PIM2006 and PIM2007 were successful and that convinced the funders. (Baltic Sea Network Member 1.)

According to Juholin, a good reputation increases the motivation of members of an organization and in that way it is profitable (Juholin 2006, 190). That means that reputation has also an internal dimension. A good reputation is essential also for networks.

People's minds are also affected by brand management. Branding is a part of an organization's marketing communication. The term brand means a product which has special features making the product reputable. Brand is capital of the company and it can be sold or bought. (Juholin 2006, 188). Brand image can be seen as property of the segment which can be managed by an organization. (Vuokko 2003, 122.)

Branding is an essential part of external communication in commercial organizations which aim to make economic profit. The Baltic Sea Network is a non-profit organization which aims to increase welfare and competitiveness in the Baltic Sea Region. Baltic Sea Network does not have any brands, so it has to improve its organizational image other ways. That is why branding is not discussed more closely in this thesis.

### 3.2.3 Communication with external stakeholders

Communication with stakeholders means interactivity with environment. When planning communication with stakeholders, an organization has to know its environment. Organizations have to analyze which stakeholders are important and how the communication with them should be arranged. That means that the organizations need to analyze stakeholders continuously. The analysis of stakeholders should be more of a process than a single project done once. The importance of certain stakeholder can change. As well as the others are stakeholders to the organization, the organization is a stakeholder to others. Stakeholders can be defined in many ways. In this thesis the Baltic Sea Network's stakeholders are divided into internal and external stakeholders. (Juholin 2006, 205 - 209.)

When the organization plans the communication with stakeholders, the situation also has to be analyzed. When analyzed stakeholders, and their importance, the organization has to find out the attitudes of the stakeholders about the organization. Organizations are finding out what the stakeholders think about them and what they expect to happen to the organization in the future. (Juholin 2006, 208 - 209.)

There are three things that an organization has to analyze when planning communication to the stakeholders. First, the organization has to know why it has to communicate with a stakeholder and why the stakeholder wants to communicate with the organization; what is the reason for the communication. When the organization knows the reason for communication, it has to decide what information it wants to give and what it wants to receive. After specifying why and what to communicate, the organization decides how it communicates. That means a choice of communication channels and the way how it expresses itself. The analysis of stakeholders is important because different stakeholders have different

needs. For example, customers want information about products and suppliers information about the needs of the organization. (Juholin 2006, 208 - 209.)

In this thesis the term external stakeholder means a stakeholder which does not belong to the organization. External stakeholders do not have ownership in the organization but they are cooperating with it. This chapter discusses the current (2008) state of the communication of the Baltic Sea Network with its external stakeholders and external PR. The analysis of communication is based on the statements of members of the Baltic Sea Network. Important external stakeholders of the Baltic Sea Network are students of member educational institutes, funders and cooperation partners. (Member 3.) In the analysis of external stakeholders the reason for communication, the content of messages and chosen communication channels are analyzed.

The reason why the Baltic Sea Network communicates with students is that it wants them to take part in projects. The communication with students is corporate PR and marketing PR. When communicating with students, the Baltic Sea Network is creating an image about itself. The Baltic Sea Network wants to improve their image of a network that offers possibilities to become international by participating multicultural courses for example. The Baltic Sea Network markets its projects to students. When marketing projects, the communication is also a part of the marketing PR of the Baltic Sea Network.

Students get the information about projects via e-mail. About the intensive program PIM there have also been advertisements on the walls and the homepages of the educational institutes. When advertising the projects of the network the communication is vertical. The Baltic Sea Network also uses verbal communication with students. When students take a part in a project, the communication is interactive. Students are, for example, able to give feedback about the project to the network.

The reason why the Baltic Sea Network communicates with funders is because it wants to get funding for projects or other financial support. Funders are interested in the content of a project and why it should be funded. The communication with funders is interactive. First the Baltic Sea Network applies for funding and after that the funder makes its decision. When applying for funding, the Baltic Sea Network is all the time creating an image to the funder, in other words marketing the corporation. The Baltic Sea Network markets its projects to funder. Funders are not customers for those projects, but they are interested in them when making decisions. That means that the Baltic Sea Network has to market the product and that is related to product marketing. A typical funder for the Baltic Sea Network is the European Union. Reputation management is also a part of corporate marketing of the Baltic Sea Network. The reputation is built from the success of the network. The Baltic Sea Network



managed to get funding for the third PIM also by good experiences from first and second PIM. (Member 1).

Cooperation partners create projects with the Baltic Sea Network and that is why communication is needed. Communication with cooperation partners is interactive because all the partners are able to introduce ideas. Companies from business life are an example of cooperation partners. The Baltic Sea Network has not, however, been cooperating with business life actively. Projects with other organizations, for example the regional development organizations, have not been created so far.

Communication with cooperation partners is a part of the corporation PR but it can also be product marketing. When the Baltic Sea Network communicates with a company, the company gets an impression about the network. If the Baltic Sea Network had a project that would be marketed to a company, the communication would be also product and service marketing, Marketing PR.

#### 3.2.4 Media communication

Media communication can be utilized as a part of external organizational communication. Media communication gives the organization an opportunity to get publicity and that way improve its corporate image. Media communication is a way to discuss issues and market an organization's products. Organizations want media publicity because it is regarded as faster, more economic and creditable as advertising. An example about utilizing the media is to be seen on TV or discussed in newspapers. (Juholin 2006, 230.)

Media communication is not regarded as an organization's own communication channel because organizations cannot control the messages which are communicated in the media. The media make decisions on their own and do not let the environment to affect the decisions. Companies which aim to increase the demand of their products can utilize the media which are often regarded more trustworthy than the company's own marketing communication. Media publicity is also more affordable than the organization's own marketing communication. (Juholin 2006, 230) The role of the media in marketing is to stimulate the customer. That stimulation can lead into transaction and in that way supports an organization's marketing communication. (Vuokko 2003, 227.) The media can also be used in other activities of public relations. The media can be utilized to send messages about the values and the strategy of an organization to environment. (Egan 2007, 253.) The media can also be utilized in an organization's crisis communication (Egan 2007, 260).

If the Baltic Sea Network is, for example, cooperating in a notable project in the Baltic Sea region and that is seen in the media, the media affects the network's corporate image. The Baltic Sea Network can get publicity that way. If the network's corporate image is improved, network opportunities to get funding or find cooperation partner might become easier. The Baltic Sea Network has to take part in a remarkable project or do something other remarkable before it achieves the interest of the media.

The media are also a risk for the organization. Things what the media informs about are not necessarily positive for an organization's image. Messages seen in the media are also received by different receivers. Different receivers have different expectations and they also understand messages in different ways. (Juholin 2006, 230 - 232.)

#### 4 Research process

This chapter discusses the research context of this thesis. When making a research all the parties taking part in the research must be taken into account. In this study the researchers were connected to their supervisors, the Baltic Sea Network as client and research subject. For example, the interviewees were members of the network and that is why the results were analyzed in accordance to the research ethics.

The research question in this thesis is "How to develop the communication in the Baltic Sea Network that more projects could be created?" The research explores the factor in the communication that affect the creation of the projects in the Baltic Sea Network. Figure 3 visualizes the subject matter of the research. The research examines factors in organizational communication of the Baltic Sea Network that prevent the creation of the projects in the network. In the figure 3 the researched area is the intersection of the areas of the organizational communication and the factors related to the creation of the projects. The researched area is approached from the perspective of communication.

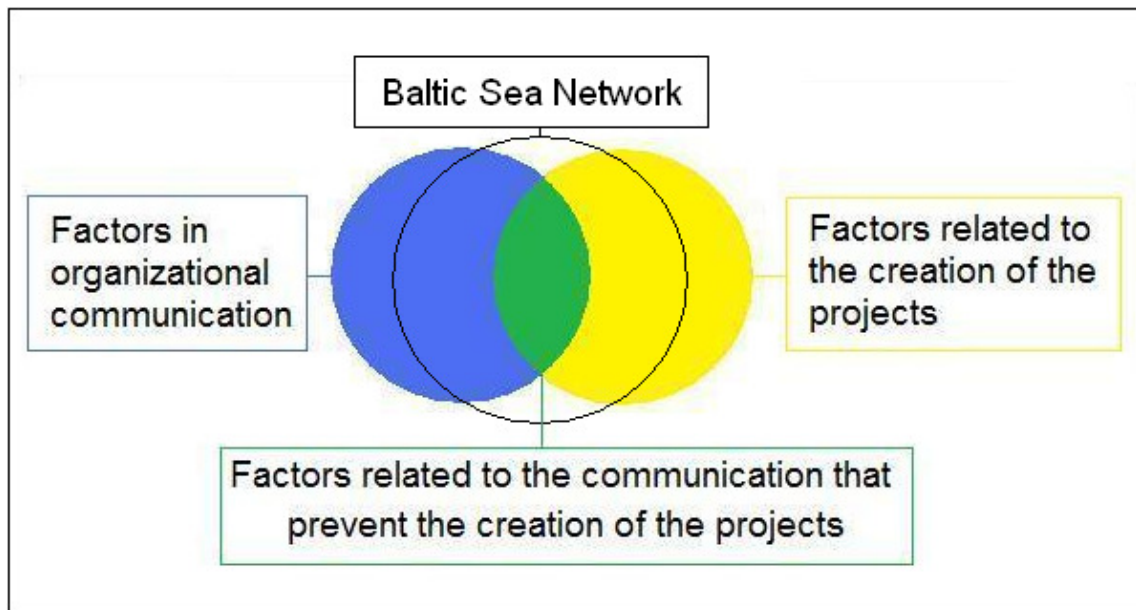


Figure 3: The subject matter of this thesis

The research strategy is a case study, which directs the development of the researched phenomenon. In this kind of cases there is often a need for the development, but the exact direction is not clear. The research is made of a specific subject matter. (Virtuaaliopisto 2008.) The research can be continued to the development project, where the founded development ideas are tested. In this case, the research is limited to finding the development ideas.

The research of this thesis is qualitative in its nature. The qualitative research is for understanding the target of the research. The research material is collected from real life situations and the evaluating is made of the entity where the researched subject appears. The qualitative research is based on the fact that there is not only one relation between the researched subjects. The research stands for revealing the facts more than proving the facts that already exist. A qualitative research is always somehow related to the current situation because the researcher has own values that inevitably effect the results. The values are always bounded somehow to the current moment. The explored cases are unique. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 152, 170.)

The qualitative research requires research methods that support the character of the qualitative research. The viewpoints of the examinees must be able to be expressed in the research. Suitable methods for the qualitative researches are, for example, theme and open interviews and analyses of different kind of documents. The sampling requires justification to guarantee the reliability of the research. Also quantitative methods can be used in qualitative research. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 155.)

The research process was divided into two sections; a surveying questionnaire and theme interviews. Both methods studied the area between the communication and factors related to the projects. The questionnaire was quantitative in its nature and its purpose was to survey the current state of the communication and interest in the different kind of functions of the Baltic Sea Network. The questionnaire surveyed the activeness and satisfaction with the communication among the network members (Appendix 2). Theme interviews represent a qualitative research method. The purpose of theme interviews was to deepen the knowledge about the factors related to the researched area (Appendix 3). The results of the questionnaire gave the direction for the theme interviews. The themes were organizational communication, public relations and the creation of the projects. The questions of interviews were planned according to the results of the questionnaire. The purpose of the interviews was to research closely the matters found out by the questionnaire.

In a qualitative research the sample is usually relatively small, but the singular occurrences are scrutinized. The theoretical basis and the purposes of the research direct the acquisition of the research material. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 18.) All (N=54) the research participants were asked to reply to the same questions (Appendix 2). This kind of procedure in the research allows finding the differences and uniting subjects among the individuals or groups. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2004, 58.)

The sample consisted of all the members of the Baltic Sea Network. The questionnaire was sent to the members on the Baltic Sea Network posting list. The mailing list of the network is a list of all the network members and their contact information. The posting list was received from the coordinator of the network. The amount of the receivers was 54 (N=54). In addition, there was the opportunity for the members to forward the questionnaire to other members in their educational units, who might have been working with the Baltic Sea Network. This opportunity was meant to complete the research. There might have been active members in the institutes, who were not yet on the official mailing list of the network.

The interviewees were chosen according to the participation list of the Baltic Sea Network Partner Days, preferentially the members who replied to the questionnaire. Members who took part to the occasion represent the most active members in the network. The sample of the interviews was made to follow the objectivity and reliability of the research. The sample was chosen to represent different kind of members of the Baltic Sea Network. Interviewees were chosen from different member countries and with different background. There were members having longer - and shorter -time membership in the Baltic Sea Network. The longer- time membership considered here membership of two years or more. The sample was nine interviewees together from six member countries, representing seven member

educational institutes of the network. The Partner Days participated by members from 12 member educational institutes.

#### 4.1 Preliminary study

The preliminary study of the qualitative research was made via questionnaire. The questionnaire can be sent via mail or virtually. There is always a covering letter with the questionnaire, which tells the purpose and the importance of the research. A questionnaire is a quick way to collect information from a wide sample. The disadvantage is the number of the unreturned questionnaire forms. The questionnaire can be resent, usually on the third time the percentage of the returned questionnaires rises to 70-80 when after the first round the number might be 40 percent according to the theme of the questionnaire. If the receivers find the theme personally important it is possible to expect a better percentage of the replies. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 185, 193.)

The questionnaire surveys the background of the respondents, which include, for example, the education information, profession, gender and age. The questions in the questionnaire are possible to be set as open questions, multiple choices or scales, for example Likert scale. In the open questions the answer is given by writing it into the free space after the question. The multiple choices concern the questions where the answer is chosen from the given alternatives. There can also be an open alternative if the researcher expects that there might appear an unpredictable viewpoint. The third alternative to formulate the questions is the scale. There the questions are in a form of statements and the respondent evaluates how strongly he/she agrees with the statement. The scale consists usually of five to seven phases; from strongly agree to strongly disagree. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 185 - 189.)

The questionnaire of this thesis was based on the theory of the communication according to Juholin (2006). The roles, responsibilities and means of the communication had been taken into account with regard to the questionnaire. The questionnaire surveyed also the background of the members, their position, roles and experiences of the network functions. These questions were vital for understanding the structure of the network better. The questionnaire can be found as an appendix in the end of the thesis (Appendix 2).

The questionnaire was created on the e-form platform of Laurea. The virtual form of the questionnaire set some specific requirements for the questionnaire. The questionnaire had to be easy to comprehend on the computer screen and it had to be user friendly. The questions were divided into five sections; background questions, contact information, networking, communication and the Partner Days. This division had been made so that the questionnaire would have been logical to fill in. In the questionnaire the compulsory questions were bolded and marked with \*-sign. The questionnaire was pre-tested by two Baltic Sea Network

members before releasing it to the other members of the network. The duration of filling the in questionnaire was discovered to be under 15 minutes.

The questionnaire for the Baltic Sea Network members consisted of multiple choice-questions. The respondents were given also the opportunity to give an open answer just in case there would not be a suitable answer already. In the questionnaire there was a group of questions, where the answers were asked to be given by choosing the most descriptive alternative on the Likert scale. Because of the variety of the language and technical skills of the respondents there were no compulsory open questions. A free space was given for other ideas according to the communication and networking theme if the respondents had any.

The questions from one to eight were for the background and contact information. These questions supported the researchers to get the picture of the bonds between the different members in the organization structure. Question number nine was about how the respondent finds the educational networks in general.

The questions from ten to twelve were about networking and communication in the Baltic Sea Network, how the respondent has been participating to them. Question number ten researched the interest toward the Baltic Sea Network. The purpose of the questions numbered eleven and twelve were to find out the nature of the communication in Baltic Sea Network.

The questions from thirteen to seventeen were about communication channels in the Baltic Sea Network. The purpose of those questions was to find out how satisfied the members are with different communication channels in the Baltic Sea Network. Questions number eighteen and nineteen were about the Baltic Sea Network Partner Days. The question number eighteen revealed the participation activity of the replier. According to the statements the Partner Days had been the most important occasion in the network (Member 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5). This question also supported the selection of the interviewees; the interviews needed members with more and less experience. An experienced member in this case is a member who has been an active in the network for two years or more.

The questionnaire was sent via e-mail on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2008. The sample was 54 (N=54) Baltic Sea Network members on the mailing list of the network. The last date to reply was 8<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

The actual e-mail contained a covering letter (Appendix 1), where the receiver was asked to open the attachment and continue to the questionnaire related to development of the Baltic Sea Network. The attachment included the main covering letter and there was a link to the

questionnaire. The e-mail also told that there would be a prize to be won among them who replies. The prize was there to attract more the members to participate the research. The attached letter was more detailed about the research and its purpose. Also the reliability matters of handling the answers were defined in the letter.

Until 8<sup>th</sup> October eight replies were given. The sample was send a reminder e-mail on 8<sup>th</sup> October, there was the direct link to the questionnaire already in the e-mail. On 9<sup>th</sup> October the e-mail was sent to all of the 54 (N=54) members and they were given four more day for responding, until 13<sup>th</sup> October.

The purpose of the qualitative research is to find the factors that cause the researched phenomenon (Alasuutari 2007, 203). The singular respondents are seen in this qualitative research as individual observational units and together they are the research material. The questionnaire was analyzed in quantitative methods. The results were tabulated to visualize the division of the replies. The replies were analyzed to give an overview of the communication and the interests for the different functions of the Baltic Sea Network.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to survey the current state of the communication in the Baltic Sea Network and therefore the emphasis of the research was to find the different dimensions of the structure of the network communication. This means examining the results of the individual factors point of view. In the qualitative research it is possible to make the analysis of the research material by concerning the singular mentions of the matters instead of counting the incidences. Every qualitative research must be evaluated as individual when it uses quantitative material if it is possible to draw a generalization of the results. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 166.)

#### 4.2 Qualitative part of the research

In the research, theme interviews were used as a survey method besides the questionnaire. According to Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara (2004), a theme interview is in-between the structured questionnaire interview and an open interview. In the theme interview the questions are based on a specific theme and the questions are based on these themes. Usually the researcher has a question list for the interview but the order of the questions as well as the form of them will be formed according the given answers. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 197.)

Interviews are a common research method in qualitative researches. The interview offers the opportunity to the interviewee to tell about the particular theme actively and unbounded. The interview is beneficial when the area being researched is unknown and the direction of the answers is difficult to predict. It is also possible to get more detailed definitions for the

answers by asking. The disadvantage of the interviews is also the social dimension; the interviewee can experience the situation unpleasant and the answers can therefore be not current. Also for some reason the interviewee can give answers that he/she assumes to be desirable. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 194 - 196.)

The interviews were carried out at the Baltic Sea Network Partner Days in Copenhagen, Denmark, during 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008 and at the evaluation meeting -occasion of the intensive program PIM. The evaluation meeting was linked to the Partner Days. The meeting concerning the intensive program was held at the Copenhagen Technical Academy and the actual Partner Days at the Ingeniørhøjskolen i København. The interviews were made at the educational institutes during the four days, emphasizing the two middle days. Two of the interviews were carried out at the restaurant where an official dinner of the Partner Days was arranged. The interviews were estimated to last approximately 20 minutes each.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> November all the participants of the Partner Days were informed of the purpose of the research. The researchers did not reveal any results or information of the research that could have influenced to the rest of the interviews. Before the info session three members were interviewed. The info session consisted of the schedule of the research besides the base and purpose of the research. Neither the exact theoretical context was told because it could have directed the thoughts of the interviewees to give a certain answer.

The interviewees were guided to the theme by the researchers before the actual interview. The instruction consisted of the bases of the research and also the information of the themes of the interview. Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2004, 90) recommend having a little casual discussion before the actual interview to build the trust between the interviewee and the researcher. This discussion can consist of some practical matters related to the situation. It is also beneficial to get to know each party participating the interview. The interviews with the Partner Day participants began by introducing the researchers and their roles relating to the particular interview. Also the interviewee was asked to tell about his/her history relating to the network and the position and role in the educational institute he/she represented.

Because of the variety of the English language skills among the interviewees the question list of the interview was held in sight of the interviewee besides interviewing. The questions were divided under two themes, organizational communication and the creation of the projects in the Baltic Sea Network. Despite the existing question list, the order and the form of the questions varied in the interviews according to the replies of the interviewee. Both researchers had the right to make additional questions for the interviewee.



The interviews were made one at a time in a place, where the other participants of the Partner Days would not have had any possibility to hear the interview nor to interrupt it. To guarantee as open and informative answers as possible, the interviewee sessions tried to avoid all the components that would have affected negatively to the interview situation. The interviewee and interviewers were seated near to each other at a table that hearing and observing the expressions were easy. The distance was beneficial for building the confidence between the parts, which is vital for getting reliable replies.

According to Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2004, 92) to get the best results of the theme interview, it is beneficial to continue the interview continuously like a discussion. For example the interviewer making the notes in between the interview would cut a flowing interview. In this case there were two researchers. The other took care of the interviewing while the other made the notes with the laptop. The notes were made by the subject matters, picking up the essential content of the respondents. Because of the wish from the side of the Baltic Sea Network to keep the interviews comfortable, no Dictaphone was used a in the interviews.

It was vital that the notes written down during the interview were detailed and unexceptionally in accordance with the interviewee. This highlights the role of the researcher in a qualitative research understanding the dimensions of the researched phenomenon. The attitudes or expectations of the researcher cannot come over in any phase in the research.

After the interview the whole interview was evaluated. This was done to guarantee that the researchers had the same view of the content of the interview as a whole. Also the observations related to the interview situation and the answers were summarized after the interview.

The analysis of the interviews can be carried out in many ways; there are no absolutely right or wrong alternatives for it. The analysis phase can be begun simultaneously with the interviewing, which makes it possible to ask for more detailed definitions of some answers. The research material of the interview might be also after the analyses process literally in the same form than the given answer. The deduction was made in a deductive way. The theory created the frames for the research; the consideration of the communication was based on the theory and the results of the interviews were analyzed comparing them to this theory base. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2004, 136.)

At together nine theme interviews were made in this research. Deductions and analysis right after the interviews were not possible because of the relative large amount of the interview material. The interviews were in written forms already after the interviews and therefore the transcription of the interviews was a natural choice. The responses were completed after the

interview by both researchers. Also some notices related to the interview situation were made.

After having transcribed the interviews into writing, the meanings of the material were interpreted. The interviews were lettered by writing down the main points made by the interviewees and the content was analyzed as wholeness. The characters that will be found do not appear in the written material directly but issues can be seen to be related to each other. The material was classified according to the communication theory, like the questions were. The interview question list can be found at the end of this thesis (Appendix 3). The communication concerned the following: roles, planning, channels and public relations. Matters related to external communication were also searched from the material. The theory of the organizational communication is based here on Juholin (2006). The factors related to the creation of the projects were analyzed in the perspective of the communication. From the factors related to the creation of the projects were analyzed their relation to the communication. Only factors which could be affected by developing communication were focused. Factors preventing the creation of the projects were ignored if they were not related to communication.

The content of the theme interviews were analysed by classifying the interview material by the fields of the communication as mentioned before. The classification meant coding the lettered interview material with different colours; all the communication fields, public relations and factors related to the creation of the projects had its own colour. For example, the factors related to the communication channels, were coloured with red colour and matters related to public relations with green colour. The factors of the same communication fields from all of the interviews were analyzed together. Also the rallying points between the different fields were analyzed. The material was examined for findings and conclusions which supported the finding a valid solution for the research question.

#### 4.3 Reliability and validity of the research

The concepts of reliability and validity consist of three factors; credibility, generalization and confirmation. When evaluating the reliability of a qualitative research the whole research process must be taken into account, because the researcher is the main tool of the research. The evaluation of the reliability and the research process go hand in hand in practice. The researcher makes the conclusions subjectively where in the quantitative research the focus is on the validity of the measurements. The conception of the researcher and the examinee must be synchronized; the researcher has to interpret the meanings of the examinee. The generalization leans on the hypothesis that the same findings can be repeated in some other place or time also by some other researcher. The confirmation realizes when there are some

other findings confirming the findings from the survey or research of the research subject. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 208, 210 - 212.)

Validity contains the theoretic logic between the chosen theories, research methods and the research question. Also the conclusion made of the research subject must be described exactly as it is to make the research transparent and examinable. The conclusions and interpretations made of the research subject must have a logic connection to the actual research subject. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 213.)

Reliability requires that the same findings that the researcher makes can be made also by some other researcher. The reliability of the research allows no incongruities. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 214.) The research can be confirmed to be reliable if the findings are the same when two parallel research methods are used for the same research subject. When making a qualitative research the repeatability of the findings must be evaluated also by paying attention to the variability of the state when the research has been made. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2004, 186). The state of the Baltic Sea Network will be developed and if the research would be made again later, the results would be different. The different results can support the findings that were made in this research. The results of the study might be different in the future depending on the development of subject matter.

In the research concerning the Baltic Sea Network the starting point for the research was the research question. The methods and theory line were chosen to be accordant with the purpose of the research. Reliability and validity of this research can be evaluated through the research methods, questionnaire and interview and the content of them. The validity of the questionnaire is based on the amount of the replies, the validity of the theory, informing the repliers, clearness of the questionnaire and the response time. The validity of theme interviews is based on the quality of the sample, the cognizance of the interviewee, the duration of interviews, interview language and the situation of the interviews. The validity is based also on the repliers' motive to be honest.

#### 4.4 Research ethics

Ethics are about the intellectual ability to evaluate the matters of right and wrong in view of the own and society values (Kuula 2006, 21). This chapter discusses the ethical conceptions at getting the research material, informing the research participants, anonymity and storing the research materials. The conception of research ethic bases in this research on Kuula (2006).

This research is based on theory which, consists of published sources. The sources are named in this report properly using the source references. The sources are also construed and used in the way the researcher in the original source has considered the question. The knowledge

concerning the Baltic Sea Network is based on to the information on the homepages of the Baltic Sea Network, the statements and the interviews.

The research participants were informed of the purpose of the research. It was also assured that the participants had an authentic view of the research. There were no misunderstandings during the interviews.

The participants answered with their name and contact information to the questionnaire. Because the nature of the questionnaire was to survey the current state of the network, it was beneficial to identify the participants. The names were also needed for raffling the prize promised among the questionnaire participants. The results of the questionnaire as well as of the interviews were used only for this research. The results were analyzed as wholeness and no individual research participant neither of the questionnaire nor the interviews can be identified in this research.

The questionnaire was in electronic enabled by Laurea's E-form -virtual questionnaire form database. The replies were returned automatically to the system database, where the questionnaire was created. Only the researchers have the access to the questionnaire and to see the replies. The replies will be stored for five years in the database. The system does not allow any changes to the questionnaire after one reply has been returned. It does not allow any modification of the answers.

## 5 Results

This chapter discusses the results of the research. The results of the questionnaire are analyzed first and after that the results of theme interviews.

### 5.1 Results of the questionnaire

This chapter discusses the results of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is analyzed question by question following the order of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was filled in by 13 (n=13) of 54 (N=54) receivers. All the replies came from the members on the Baltic Sea Network mailing list. This was proved by comparing the respondents to the members on the mailing list. The questions from one to eight are not analyzed here because they were background questions. All of the compulsory questions were given 13 replies (n=13). The last question, number 20 was an open, voluntary question. The question number 20 was answered by two (n=2) respondents.

Question number nine (Figure 4) was a question about the satisfaction with the educational networks. The respondents were given the alternatives from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. The alternative “no experiences” was also given an to choose.

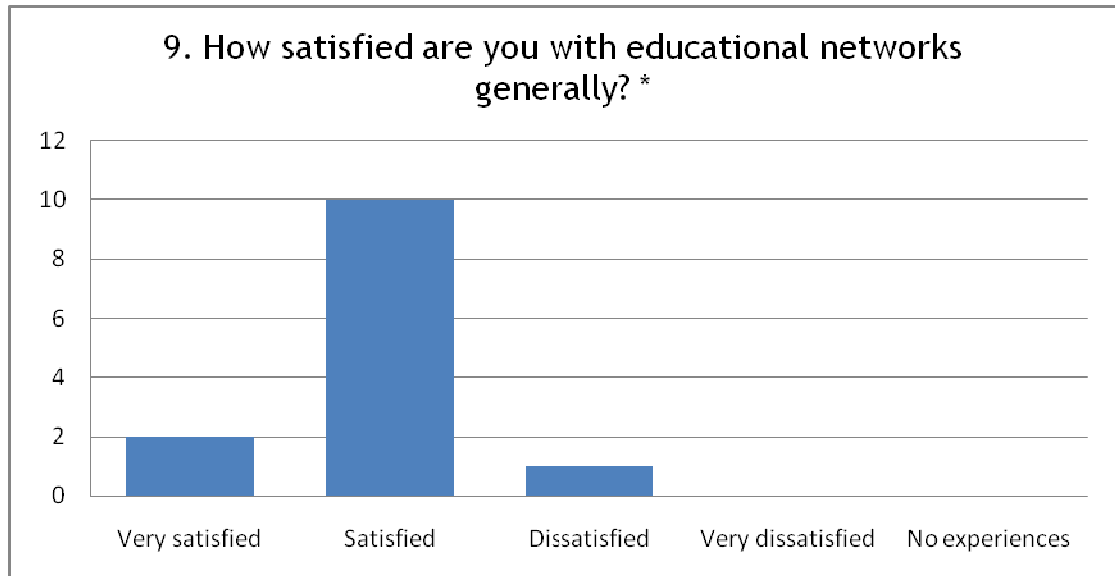


Figure 4: Satisfaction with educational networks (N=13)

According to result of question number nine, most of the respondents (n=12) were whether very satisfied or satisfied with the educational networks generally. One (n=1) reply was for the dissatisfaction toward the networks but no (n=0) respondent was very dissatisfied.

Question number ten (Figure 5) researched which function interests the respondents most in the Baltic Sea Network. The question was set as a multiple-choice question and the respondents were asked to choose the best one of the given answers. According to the replies three (n=3) of the respondents were interested in the functions of the Baltic Sea Open University. Three (n=3) of the respondents were interested in the student or teacher exchanges. Two alternatives were related to educational development. Five (n=5) expressed their interest toward cooperating with the intensive programs or creating projects in cooperation with students and non-educational organizations. The respondents were given an opportunity to give also the answer “other”, which they should define if selected. Two (n=2) replied to be interested in the general development of the network.

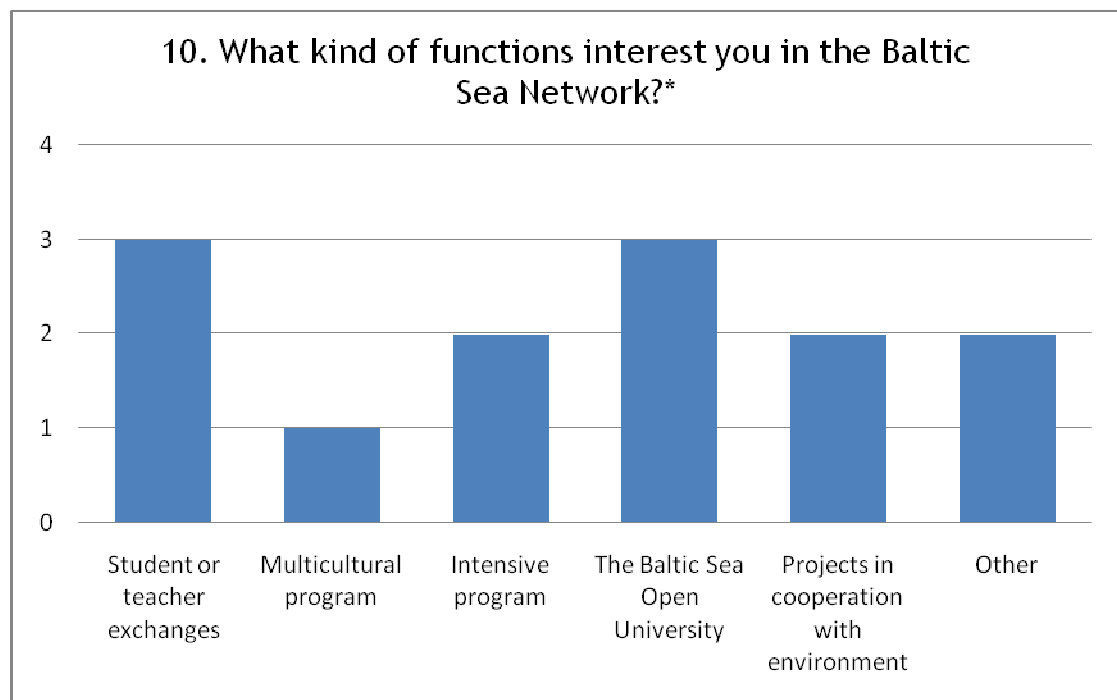


Figure 5: Interests in the Baltic Sea Network (N=13)

Question 11a studied the communication activity in the Baltic Sea Network. Six (n=6) the respondents communicate weekly or monthly with another member of Baltic Sea Network. Seven (n=7) of the respondents communicate every few months or rarely.

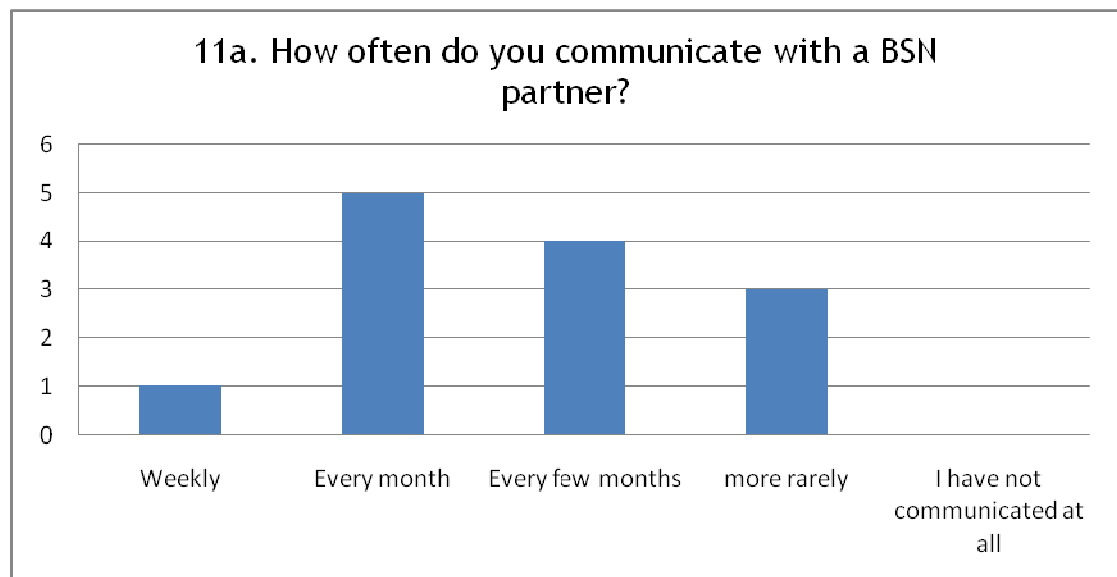


Figure 6: The regularity of the communication in the Baltic Sea Network (N=13)

Question number 11b studied the tightness of the network. There was asked the amount of the members the respondent communicates with. The majority, 12 (n=12) communicate with from one to three network members. One (n=1) member represented the most active partners

by communicating with seven or more members frequently. This result reveals that the communication in the network is centralized to some active members. The question did not define the quality of the communication; it can also consist of only receiving information from some member or members instead of being interactive communication.

Question number 11c (Figure 7) was a question about the communication partners, with whom the members communicate the most. Four (n=4) respondents communicate with the coordinator or a steering group member. Nine (n=9) communicate with other members of the network.

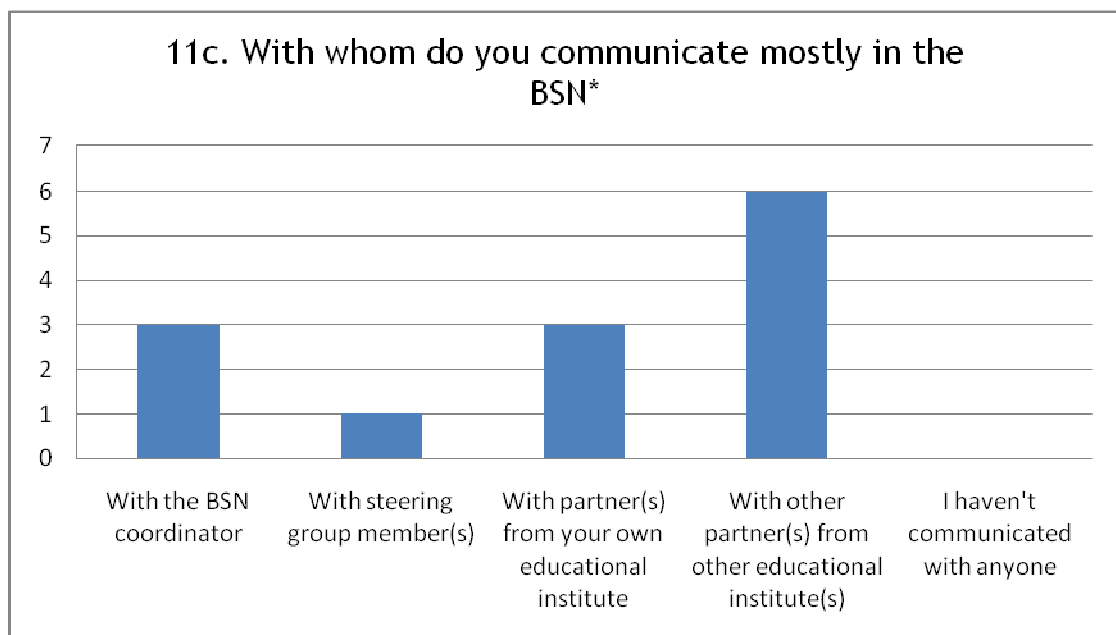


Figure 7: The direction if the communication in the Baltic sea Network (N=13)

Question number 12 researched how often the respondent wishes to receive information about the activities in the Baltic Sea Network. The question was a multiple choice where the respondent was asked to choose the best alternative. The alternatives were “weekly”, “a couple of times a month”, “once a month”, “every second month and more rarely”. Ten (n=10) of respondents said to be interested to get information about the activities of the Baltic Sea Network once a month. Three (n=3) respondents were willing to get information about activities every second month or rarely.

Questions 13 - 17 handled the communication channels of Baltic Sea Network. The questions surveyed the satisfaction with the communication channels. The communication channels were the homepages of the network, e-mail, the Partner Days, other face-to-face communication, Skype and telephone communication. Also any possible problems related to the communication were surveyed in this part of the questionnaire.

Question number 13 (Figure 8) surveyed the members' satisfaction with the communication channels in the Baltic Sea Network. The respondents were given the answers as multiple choices and they were asked to choose the best one. The scale of the alternatives was "very satisfied", "satisfied", "dissatisfied" and "very dissatisfied". There was the possibility to answer "no experiences" as well to each communication channel.

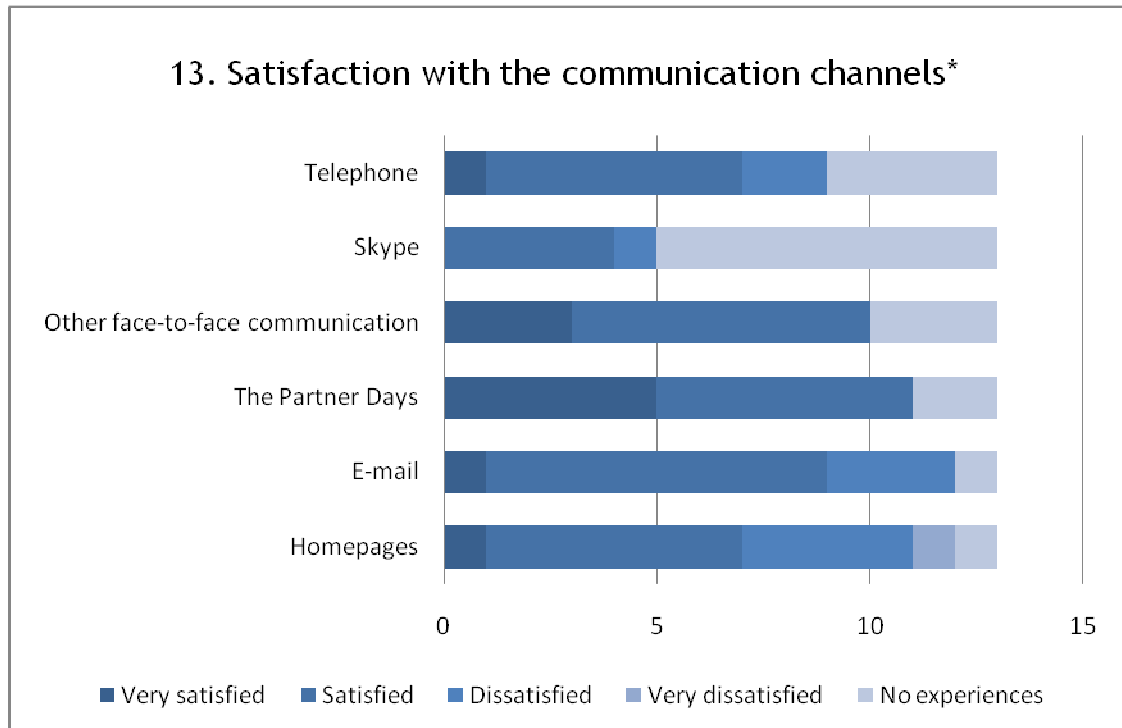


Figure 8: Satisfaction with the communication channels\* (N=13)

**Question 13 a. Homepages:**

Seven (n=7) of the respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the Baltic Sea Network homepages. Five (n=5) of the respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with homepages. One (n=1) replied not having experiences of them.

**Question 13 b. E-mail:**

Nine (n=9) of the respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with e-mail as communication channel. The result was supported by the interviewees; e-mail has been the most common communication channel. Three (n=3) of respondents were dissatisfied and one (n=1) had no experiences of e-mail communication in the Baltic Sea Network.

**Question 13 c. Face-to-face communication at the Partner Days:**

Altogether 11 (n=11) of the respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with face-to-face communication in the Partner Days. Two (n=2) of the answerers had no experiences of face-to-face communication at the Partner Days.



Question 13 d. Other face-to-face communication:

Ten (n=10) of the respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the other face-to-face communication in the network. Three (n=3) of the respondents had no experiences them.

Question 13 e. Skype:

Eight (n=8) of the questionnaire respondents had no experiences of using Skype in communication of Baltic Sea Network. Four (n=4) of answerers were satisfied with it and one (n=1) was dissatisfied.

Question 13 f. Telephone:

Seven (n=7) of the respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with telephone communication in the Baltic Sea Network. Two (n=2) respondents were dissatisfied with it and four (n=4) did not have experiences of it.

In question number 14 the respondents were asked to choose the communication channel, which they found the best communication channel in the Baltic Sea Network. Seven (n=7) of the 13 respondents chose e-mail as the best communication channel. Three (n=3) of the respondents were in favour of Skype. Two (n=2) of the respondents prefer the face-to-face communication at the Partner Days to the other channels. One (n=1) of the answerers chose more rarely used videoconferences as the best communication channel for the communication in the Baltic Sea Network.

Question number 15 (Figure 8) surveyed the problems of communication in the Baltic Sea Network. The respondents were asked what kind of problems they have faced in the Baltic Sea Network related to the communication.

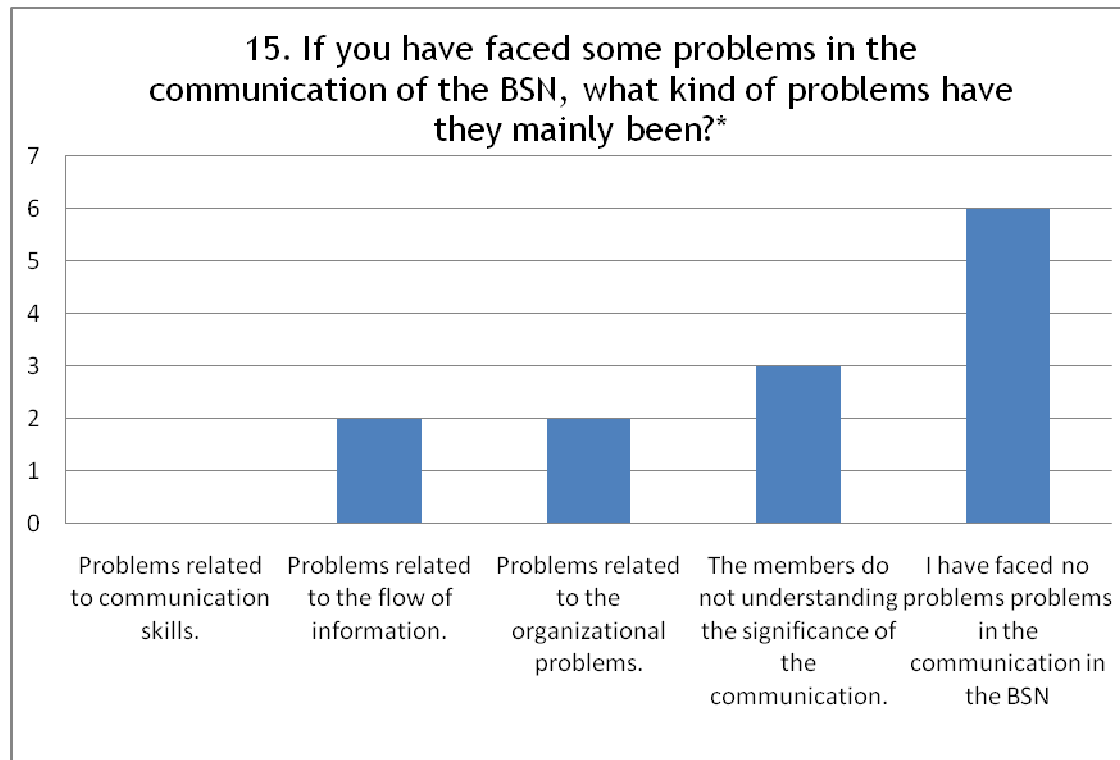


Figure 9: The problems related to communication of the Baltic Sea Network (N=13)

Six (n=6) of the respondents have not faced any problems in the communication in the Baltic Sea Network. Three (n=3) of respondents answered that the members do not understand the significance of communication. Two (n=2) of answerers answered that there are problems related to the flow of information. Two (n=2) of respondents answered that there are problems related to organizational problems.

Question 16 surveyed what is the best communication channel for sharing information about the activities of the Baltic Sea Network. Eight (n=8) of the respondents would like to have a bulletin to e-mail and five (n=5) of respondents prefer the news feeds in the homepages of Baltic Sea Network.

Question 17 surveyed the views, how the members see the virtual workspaces as communication channels. Most of the respondents (n=10) found the virtual workspaces practical. One (n=1) of the answerers found virtual workspaces very unpractical and two (n=2) of the answerers had no experiences of them.

Question 18 asked how many times the respondents have been participating the Baltic Sea Network Partner Days. Seven (n=7) of the respondents had been participating the Partner Days three times or more. Four (n=4) of the respondents had been participating once or twice. Two (n=2) of the respondents had never participated in Partner Days.

Question 19 asked about participation in Baltic Sea Network Partner Days in autumn 2008. The question was answered by thirteen members (N=13) and nine (n=9) of the answerers were going to take part in them.

Respondents were given an opportunity to add a comment about Baltic Sea Network and networking or communication. Six (N=6) of the answerers added a comment considering Baltic Sea Network. All the six (n=6) respondents wanted Baltic Sea Network to create more projects or to be more active in general.

The amount of the replies was relatively small and the results can therefore, be seen as directional. When repeating the survey, the results might probably be different. The questionnaire was based on theory of organizational communication, which guaranteed that right questions were asked connected to the surveyed matter. The respondents were also informed about the purpose of the research by the covering letter, which mean that they had the right understanding. The questionnaire was also tested beforehand and identified to be clear and user friendly. The repliers were given enough response time; the response time was even extended. There is no reason to suspect the respondents giving false information. The results of the questionnaire gave the direction for the theme interviews. Because the clincher of the research question was not found out by the questionnaire, theme interviews focused equitably on all the dimensions of themes.

## 5.2 Results of the theme interviews

This chapter discusses the results of the theme interviews which are analyzed via content analysis. According to the interviews the flow of information in the Baltic Sea Network seems to be slow. For example, members have faced problems with getting necessary information in time. Interviewees said that for example some basic information about Partner Days has not reached members. The results indicated that there is only one person who is responsible for communication and that makes communication slow and hierarchical. The hierarchy in communication is regarded as a problem which prevents interactivity in the network. Hierarchy is also seen as a factor which makes communication slow. The members do not find it necessary to communicate if there are no events in the network. If there is no content for communication no need for interactivity is needed.

The interviewees were asked to describe the team spirit in the network. The members found team spirit to exist mainly at the Partner Days; it is the only occasion where the members get-together. The interviewees found that there is a good team spirit among the members taking part in the intensive program PIM. The members did not experience it necessary to have a team spirit in the whole network. When they are working on some specific project, the team spirit is beneficial and supportive in realizing the project.

The spirit was described to be friendly but passive what comes to the whole network. There is a good atmosphere but it does not reach any results. According the interviews, the Partner Days especially has become more like a social network event for some members. This has been seen as a result for the lack of opportunities to create the projects. The members taking part in the Partner Days do not have common interests regarding the themes of the projects. There is neither time for discussing and developing the ideas at the Partner Days because of the intensive schedule. According to the members the sessions do not enable interaction. The themes of the lectures do not interest all the participants because of their different background.

The members were asked about the purpose of the Baltic Sea Network, if it was easy to comprehend. The question measures the success of the corporate PR in the Baltic Sea Network. According to the interviews, the purpose of the Baltic Sea Network is not clear. The members have a picture about the purpose of the network, but the content of comprehension differs. The multidisciplinary existence of the network is seen as a problem to enable the members to understand what the network is for. This can be seen as one of the reasons for the ineffectiveness in the Baltic Sea Network. The opportunity of working and creating projects together should be emphasized more in the network by increasing interactivity in the network.

The interviewees were asked about the communication channels in the Baltic Sea Network. The main challenge according to the network members was the difficulty to get the needed information. The interviewees considered that there are too many communication channels in the Baltic Sea Network. The uncertainty about the used communication channels caused also confusion among the members; the members do not exactly know which channels are used and for which purpose. One of the interviewees called it a waste of time to search information from several channels. For example there is a conception that the virtual workspace Optima still exists for the network actively and this conception confuses the members.

According to the interviewees partner days should be developed as an interactive communication channel. The members prefer face-to-face channels for interacting to the virtual channels. When the members meet face-to-face it is easier to contact persons they do not know previously. Also agreements and plans how to continue, for example, with a project are usually made in these occasions. The members found that they do not have time besides their other tasks in their educational institutes to follow the different virtual channels. The interviewees found e-mail a practical channel for informing, because they use it daily otherwise and it does not require any extra efforts to get information. According to the

interviews the Partner Days could be an opportunity to create projects and plan activities of the Baltic Sea Network. According to the interviewees, the Partner Days should be developed.

The interviewees were asked how more projects could be created in the Baltic Sea Network. According to the interviewees the main problem in creation of projects is that Baltic Sea Network is multidisciplinary and members with similar interest are not reached. Members do not have enough opportunities to plan projects together and projects cannot be created. That kind of problems are related to management of the Baltic Sea Network, and they cannot be solved by developing only communication of the network.

The interviewees were asked what has prevented the creation of projects. On behalf of objectivity, the interviewees were given an opportunity to tell free about problems that prevent the creation of projects. According to the interviewees there are motivated members in the network with similar interests but they do not have time and opportunity to plan together. That is a problem related to the management of the network. The whole network is organized in the way that does not support interactivity. In the viewpoint of communication the problem could be solved by developing Partner Days as a channel of interactivity and sharing responsibilities of communication. In the multidisciplinary Baltic Sea Network different meetings should be arranged for the members with similar interests.

The results indicated that the Baltic Sea Network should also market itself as an opportunity to work together and that way motivate members. Members should also get resources to work more in the Baltic Sea network. The support should come from their home educational institute. The interviewees were asked how easy it is to create a project in the Baltic Sea Network and what kind of problems can be faced in the creation of a project. According to the interviewees, it is easy to create a project in the Baltic Sea Network if ideas are created. The challenge is to find the right partners from the network.

The results of the interviews can be regarded as valid. All the planned interviews were carried out and the representativeness of the sample was qualified. The interviewees were informed about the purpose of the research and the content of the theme interviews before the actual interview. The interviewees had also the opportunity to ask the researchers if something was unclear. The interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes each. The time was enough for discussion and the interviews were not carried out in a hurry. The interview language, English, was a foreign language for all the interviewees, but no language problems were discovered. Because of the foreign language, the interviewees stated their points clearly and the researchers did not have any problems to understand them. The interview situation was taken part only by the researchers without any interruptions. There is no reason to suspect the interviewees to give false information.

## 6 Conclusion and development ideas

This chapter gives an answer for the research question, “How to develop the communication of the Baltic Sea Network that more projects could be created?” The study found out that members of the Baltic Sea Network do not know the purpose of the network which is one of the reasons that prevent the creation of projects. The Baltic Sea Network is seen as a social network instead of a network which is developing the Baltic Sea area and cooperating with environment. The Baltic Sea Network should emphasize that the network stands for active creation of projects.

Interviewed members who had been members less than two years were in general more satisfied with the Baltic Sea Network. Members who had been members two years or more had faced more problems and were more dissatisfied with the network. Members who had been members less than two years had faced similar problems.

The problems preventing the creation of the projects are not always related to the communication. There are problems in the management of the network. The multidisciplinary of the network is strength of the network, but it also causes challenges in management. There are members with different interests and the network has not managed to find themes that interest everyone. All the members of the network regardless of their different interests get same information and they are all together at the Partner Days. Members with similar interests do not have the possibility to work with each other and cannot plan projects. That kind of problem cannot be solved only by developing communication.

The main challenge in the network seems to be the nature of the communication. The verticality of the communication prevents the creation of the projects and decreases interactivity. The communication in the network is currently mainly informing and it goes between the coordinator and the members. The coordinator of the network is alone responsible for the communication and that was found as a problem. Vertical communication in the Baltic Sea Network is a result of its organizational, hierarchical structure and can be fixed best by reforming the organization structure or sharing responsibilities. Interactivity in the communication can be increased by developing face-to-face channels; in the case Baltic Sea Network this concerns mainly the Partner Days being the main get together event in the network.

## 6.1 Development of the Partner Days

The contents of the Partner Days should be reformed to resemble an event of cooperation and innovating. The members of the Baltic Sea Network are willing to plan projects and cooperate at the Partner Days. Partner Days have been meetings arranged every year, with lectures about different subjects and on that way resemble a conference. At the Partner Days there is no room for an interactive discussion among the lectures about different subjects. This causes that there is no opportunity to create more projects or innovate together. Members of the multidisciplinary Baltic Sea Network have different interests and it has been problematic to create content for the Partner Days which would interest every one.

Because the purpose of the Baltic Sea Network on the operational level is to create projects and cooperate with environment, the meetings focus on that. Members who are not interested in creating any projects participate the Partner Days. That means that Partner Days do not reach the right people. Instead of the members who work actively on projects, there have been members only representing their educational institutes. Development idea for that is that program of the Partner Days should be planned on the way that only right members participate. The Partner Days should consist of interactive activities, which could be workshops or other activities which focus on creating the projects or other cooperation. The members who are willing to create projects should be given an opportunity to innovate together at the Partner Days. A conference with full of lectures do not give that opportunity. Partner Days have been just a social event for its members instead of a chance to work together.

Projects are not created because members do not have any opportunities to work together. The Partner Days are considered as the main event where the members meet and that should be utilized. If no ideas for projects are created, the Partner Days need not to be arranged. The purpose of the Baltic Sea Network is to develop the Baltic Sea Region, and that should be visible in the activities of the network.

Workshops should be well planned and members should be informed about them already before the Partner Days. The main idea is that there should be a certain reason to participate in the Partner Days, like an interest to work on a project idea or to bring new ideas to other members. More interactive communication in the network would give members an opportunity to share ideas already before the Partner Days and work on them when meeting the person at the Days. It is important to keep the planned schedule at the Partner Days.

Workshops are not supposed to be arranged only because of having the workshops. Workshops should be based on the ideas developed already in advantage and those should be the reason

to participate the Partner Days. The ideas should be transmitted to the members before the event. The other members would therefore be prepared to discuss these topics and develop the ideas further at the workshops.

#### Development of the Partner Days

- Increase the interactivity
- Decrease the lectures
- Support for launching projects
- Enable the cooperation
- Clarifying the purpose of the network

### 6.2 Sharing the communication responsibilities

The organization structure of the Baltic Sea Network is hierarchical, which is not the best possible structure for a network it stands for the development of the Baltic Sea region by creating projects and cooperating with the operational environment. Slow and vertical communication prevents the creation of the projects and that is why it should be developed. Responsibilities of the communication in the Baltic Sea Network should be shared to support the functions of the network more. Members of the Baltic Sea Network do not have contact information of all the members and if they want to contact them, the communication goes via the coordinator.

The communication should be arranged so that the contact information of all the members is available and they could contact other members directly. The purpose of the contact information list is to ensure that right members are easily reached. The members of the Baltic Sea Network should be divided in different domains according to their field of studies for example. The contact information lists could be created according to these divisions. The contact information lists could be found on the homepages of the network. If the contact information of the members were available for all the members, they could share their information and bring ideas for the Baltic Sea Network. By giving members of the network an opportunity to contact other members the communication would become interactive.

By changing the responsibilities of the communication the organization structure of Baltic Sea Network turns from a hierarchical organization into a scattered organization which is more innovative and where the communication is also horizontal. In a scattered network model the members are responsible for communication. That increases interactivity between the members.



The communication is interactive only between members who are active in the network and have been members for a longer time. Members who have been members for longer time know each other and have participated in activities of the network. Members who have not been members of the Baltic Sea Network very long and have not taken part in activities of the network do not know members with similar interests and cannot contact them because they do not have any contact information. That kind of members might have lots of ideas for the network, but they cannot express them if interactivity will not be improved.

Sharing the communication responsibilities

- Open contact lists for the network members
  - Increase the interactivity
  - Networking among the network members
  - Decrease the hierarchy

### 6.3 Clarifying the purpose of the network

The result indicated that all the members do not understand the purpose of the network. The Baltic Sea Network has not managed to meditate to the member what the network really stands for. The Baltic Sea Network is a social network to some members instead of a network which stands for improving welfare and competence around the Baltic Sea region by creating projects and cooperating with environment. That kind of problems is related to the failure of corporate PR. The purpose of the corporate PR is to build and improve the corporate image and in that way meditate what the organization stands for. The Baltic Sea Network should emphasize its vision, mission and strategy and that way clarify its purpose.

Corporate PR is words and actions. By increasing interactive communication and activities that support the strategy of the Baltic Sea Network, the picture about the network would become clear to its members. Informing about organizational issues is a mean of corporate PR. The homepages of the Baltic Sea Network could be a channel of informing. Homepages should be updated and they should provide an exact image what the network stands for. Updated homepages which improve the image of the network support either internal or external dimensions of corporate PR.

Clarifying the purpose of the network

- Activities of corporate PR at the Partner Days
- Development of the homepages
- Improvement of the flow of information

## 7 Closing words

This thesis is a result of cooperation. Working on an international project in a foreign language was challenging but rewarding. The writers of this thesis learned to carry out a more wide-ranged study. Also the theory related to the communication and public relations became more familiar. The researchers learned to apply it to a real life case. The research was made as an assignment from an organization, the Baltic Sea Network, which set a challenge to find a solution for the organization. Carrying out the research was challenging because the researchers could not decide all the timetables. Also the cooperation skills developed during the research process.

The research was made by two students in cooperation with the Baltic Sea Network. The researchers are satisfied with the research and the accomplished results. The writers hope that the Baltic Sea Network considers the development ideas introduced above and in that way make this thesis useful. The writers of this thesis suggest a follow-up study to focus on organization and management in the network.

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## Figures

Figure 1. The organization of the Baltic Sea Network.....	14
Figure 2. The operational environment of the Baltic Sea Network .....	15
Figure 3. The subject matter of this thesis. ....	34
Figure 4. Satisfaction with educational networks (N=13).....	44
Figure 5. Interests in the Baltic Sea Network (N=13).....	45
Figure 6. The regularity of the communication in the Baltic Sea Network (N=13).....	45
Figure 7. The direction if the communication in the Baltic sea Network (N=13).....	46
Figure 8: Satisfaction with the communication channels* (N=13).....	47
Figure 9. The problems related to communication of the Baltic Sea Network (N=13). ....	49

## Appendices

Appendix 1: Cover letter .....	63
Appendix 2: The questionnaire form .....	64
Appendix 3: Theme interview questions.....	67



## Appendix 1: Cover letter

Questionnaire form for Baltic Sea Network members 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2008

Dear Baltic Sea Network member,

This letter/e-mail is part of the project "Developing BSN Activities", with support of BSN & Laurea. We are second- and third-year Hospitality and Business Management students from Laurea University of Applied Sciences. We are developing as a part of our studies a Communication Strategy of the Baltic Sea Network. The result will be a communication plan, which meets the partners' needs and the network's targets better. For this project we get a mandate from the coordinator of BSN, Helmut Dispert.

Now you have a great opportunity to influence, how you wish communication should function in the network. The development covers the contents of the Internet sites and the information services as well as the arrangements of the Partner Days.

The answers will be collected into digital form on our e-form platform and only we have the rights to login there and to explore the answers. The answers will be stored for five years. The research material will be used only for developing the communication of the network and for the planning of the Partner Days.

To answer the questionnaire might take about 15 min. Please answer the questions not later than 8<sup>th</sup> October!

There is a prize to win among those who have participated in the survey. The name of the winner will be released at the Partner Days in Copenhagen.

Here is a link to the questionnaire:

<https://elomake.laurea.fi/v2/lomakkeet/3342/lomake.html>

Thank you in advance for cooperation.

Best regards

Linda Meriluoto & Antti Loisa  
Students at Laurea University of Applied Sciences



## Appendix 2: The questionnaire form

### Questionnaire concerning the Baltic Sea Network (BSN)

[www.balticseanetwork.org](http://www.balticseanetwork.org)

#### Background Information

1. Your educational institution \*

2. Name \*

3. Position \*

#### Contact information

4. E-mail \*

5. Postal address \*

6. Telephone number \*

7. Mobile phone number \*

8. Skype

#### Network

9. How satisfied are you with educational networks generally? \*
- ☐ Very satisfied
  - ☐ Satisfied
  - ☐ Dissatisfied
  - ☐ Very dissatisfied
  - ☐ I have no experiences of them

10. What kind of functions interest you in the BSN? Choose the best alternative. \*
- ☐ Student or teacher exchanges
  - ☐ To organize or teach in an intensive multicultural program
  - ☐ To take part in some intensive program if there if there were suitable alternatives in the network
  - ☐ The functions of the Baltic Sea Open University, which is yet at an idea stage
  - ☐ Projects in cooperation with the students and non-educational organizations
  - ☐ Other, please define

If you answered "other", please define your answer here

- 11 a. How often do you communicate with a BSN partner? \*
- ☐ Weekly
  - ☐ Every month
  - ☐ Every few months
  - ☐ More rarely
  - ☐ I have not communicated at all

11 b. With how many BSN partners do you communicate frequently? \*

--Select--

11 c. With whom do you communicate mostly in the BSN? Choose the best alternative \*

- ☐ With the BSN coordinator
- ☐ With steering group member(s)
- ☐ With partner(s) from your own educational institute
- ☐ With other partner(s) from other educational institute(s)
- ☐ I haven't communicated with anyone

12. How often would you like to get information about the Baltic Sea Network/BSN-partners' actions? Choose the best alternative. \*

--Select--

#### Communication channels in the Baltic Sea Network (BSN)

13. How satisfied are you with the following communication channels in the BSN? \*

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	I have no experiences
a. BSN homepages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. E-mail communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Face-to-face communication at Partner Days	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Other face-to-face communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Skype	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Telephone communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Which channels do you prefer when you communicate with the BSN-partners? Choose the best alternative. \*

--Select--

15. If you have faced some problems in the communication of the BSN, what kind of problems have they mainly been? Choose only one of the alternatives. \*

- ☐ Problems related to communication skills.
- ☐ Problems related to the flow of information.
- ☐ Problems related to the organizational problems.
- ☐ The members do not understand the significance of the communication.
- ☐ I have not faced any problems in the communication in the BSN.

16. Which of the following alternatives do you find the most convenient one to get information about the activities of partners? \*

- ☐ Bulletin to e-mail
- ☐ News feeds in the Baltic Sea Network's homepages
- ☐ Virtual workspaces, e.g. Moodle or Optima
- ☐ Other, please define

If you answered "other", please define your answer here

17. How do you find virtual workspaces in the Internet, such as Optima, if you have used some of them

- ☐ Very practical
- ☐ Practical
- ☐ Unpractical
- ☐ Very unpractical
- ☐ I have no experiences of them

**BSN Partner Days**

18. How many times have you taken part in the BSN Partner Days? \*

--Select-- ▼

19. Are you participating in the BSN Partner Days in Copenhagen this autumn?

--Select-- ▼

20. If you have some other ideas or comments concerning BSN and networking or communication, please write them here:

Proceed

Submit

Reset

Thank you for your time!

### **Appendix 3: Theme interview questions**

Theme interview questions:

#### **Basic information**

1. How long have you been a member in the Baltic Sea Network?
2. What is your role in the Baltic Sea Network?
3. What kind of activities you have taken part in the network?

#### **Organizational communication in the Baltic Sea Network**

4. How does the information flow work?
5. How would you describe the team spirit in the network?
6. How could team spirit be improved?
7. How well do the members consider the purpose of the Baltic Sea Network in your point of view?
8. How easy is it to understand the mission of the network?
9. How do the communication channels work?
10. How could communication channels be improved?
11. How the communication responsibilities are shared in the Baltic Sea Network?
12. What kind of problems related to communication you have faced in the Baltic Sea Network?
13. What should be developed in the communication of the Baltic Sea Network?

#### **The creation of the projects in the Baltic Sea Network**

14. How could more projects be created?
15. Why have the projects not been created?
16. What could motivate the members of the Baltic Sea Network that they would be more active?
17. How easy it is to create a new project?
18. What kind of problems can be faced when creating a project?
19. Do you have something else to add concerning the communication in the Baltic Sea Network?