



Annex 3 – Findings of Pre-departure Services in Shanghai and Seoul

Inger Christoferson

City of Uppsala

Emils Rode

Riga Planning Region

September 2012

Project Number CB55
Project Title Expat-project: Innovate Services for International Talents – Easier Access to the Central Baltic Sea Region
Title of Deliverable Shanghai and Seoul Field Study Research Report
Work-package contributing to the Deliverable WP 3 Soft Departure
Author(s) Inger Christoferson
Abstract The topic of soft departure is fairly new in the issue of talent attraction and retention. However, from the existing research material, it indicates that the immigration process already starts before the immigrants depart for the new country. From the field study in Shanghai and Seoul, the Expat-project identified that the common challenges for further developing welcoming service for potential immigrants are better information delivery to the target group and cooperation among the Central Baltic Sea Region in the sourcing country.
Keywords Soft departure, pre-departure, Shanghai, Seoul



Table of Contents

Conduct of Field study Shanghai and Seoul.....	4
Information.....	5
Co-operation	6
The Central Baltic Sea Region as foundation for cooperation abroad	8
Potential for exchange between Latvia and Korea	9
Summary and comments	10
About the Expat-project.....	12

Conduct of Field study Shanghai and Seoul

The field studies are limited to investigation of the official bodies at place in Shanghai and Seoul. The information and support an assigned foreign employee gets from his employer and from relocation firms is not inquired into in the field studies, nor have we for obvious reasons looked into the migrants' personal opportunity, skills and motivation to prepare himself for the migration. Although important for a successful migration, these are factors that lay beyond the scope of this work package, focussing on information and cooperation.

The general questions for the two studies were to find out if enough and sufficient information was available to the immigrants before their departure, who the information providers were and if those information providers could co-operate in order to better utilise the resources.

In addition to that, the Korean study also had the aim of establishing a potential for exchange of students and professionals between Latvia and Korea in the near future. To that end, the Korean study has identified already existing exchange of people and knowledge between the Nordic/Baltic region and Korea, and the opportunities for developing them in the future. Since there already exists a lot of formal contacts with China, the same has not been investigated in the Shanghai study. For instance, there are more than 1000 twin projects between Swedish and Chinese actors, as well as a great number of University exchange or cooperation agreements. More than 20 Swedish municipalities have Twin City Agreements with Chinese counterparts.

In *Shanghai* interviews were made with the official Swedish, Finnish and Estonian organisations present there. That means the Consul Generals, representatives from the Investment Agencies and the Trade Councils (or corresponding) of Sweden, Finland and Estonia were interviewed, as well as representatives of the Chambers of Commerce or corresponding organisation from Sweden and Finland, and also a representative for the Swedish Institute at place in Shanghai. As for Latvia an interview was made with a representative for the Latvian Investment Agency in Beijing, since Latvia does not have any official representation in Shanghai.

In contrast to Finland and Sweden, who both have embassies in *Seoul*, neither Estonia nor Latvia is represented on the ground in Korea (except by the nominal institution of Honorary Consul General). Even Finland and Sweden, however, are still in the process of building their full presence: e.g. the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Korea was established as recently as January 2012, and there is no equivalent association of Finnish businesses. In summary, the main information providers on the part of CBSR in Korea are the two aforementioned embassies. Invest in Sweden is present in Korea on a small scale; is in the process of merging with Swedish Trade Council, and adding more staff to its Seoul office. However, it was not possible to get an interview with the newly appointed Trade Commissioner. In addition to the interviews with the two ambassadors and Honorary Consul General, interviews were made with representatives for altogether 16 Korean institutions, above all universities and research institutes, but also two business organisations; Korea Small Business Institute and Korea Importers Association.

Information

Knowledge in China about the CBSR is more or less non-existent. Also the concept of the entire CBR is practically unknown. If any region at all would be recognised, it would be the Nordic countries or may be the Scandinavia. The knowledge about the individual countries of Sweden and Finland is however slightly better. The reason for the familiarity with Sweden and Finland is above all the connection to well-known brands, like IKEA, Ericsson and Nokia.

Interviewees in South Korea indicate the same – in general there is not much awareness or knowledge of the CBSR. Some of these interviewees who were involved in one or another kind of collaboration with any CBSR country, and who had visited the region, also indicated their own forehand beliefs that Baltic States were influenced by Russia – a widespread belief in Korea might be that the Baltic states more are parts of the Russian empire than part of a Baltic Sea Region.

As for Sweden, there is good awareness and knowledge of Sweden in Korea. Sweden has since long a genuine interest in Korean affairs, manifested among other things in an embassy in Pyongyang and Swedish observers in the Demilitarised Zone between North and South Korea. The state visit of the Swedish Royal Couple to Korea in May 2012 also led to some positive PR.

In *Korea* information on Finland and Sweden is available on their Embassies' web sites, which have full versions in the Korean language. Judging from their English versions, both sites provide extensive general information and Korea-specific news highlights, as well as addressing more specific pre-departure interests. Estonian Embassy in Beijing, which also covers Korea, has a well-designed website available in Estonian, English and Chinese, but no specific information targeted at Korea. Latvian Embassy in Tokyo, which also covers Korea, has a recently updated web site available in Latvian, English and Japanese (although the Japanese version is rather limited). It has no reference to Korea either.

There exist the official websites estonia.eu (well-designed and in English) and the recently launched latvia.eu (in English, with some features in other languages including Chinese). Both provide general information and news updates on Estonia and Latvia, respectively, as well as links to websites of government agencies providing more specific information on travel, investment, and studying in either country (in English and other languages, but not in Korean).

As for *Shanghai*, there are information providers also besides the consulates. All the organisations that were interviewed bring out their own information, at least in English but often also in Chinese. The information originates from other national agencies or institutes, but is often formatted by the organisation itself, in order to suit a special target group. In general the interviewees all found it easy to get enough of sufficient information for their own purposes.

A summing up of the interviews in Shanghai would suggest that supply of information in general is not a problem. However, the interviewees gave their opinion on information for the individual organisations' purposes, directed towards the target groups these organisations have identified as

important. Most often this target group is companies, almost never is the target group the individual who is a potential migrant. But here, too, we find an exception. Information targeted to students is aiming at getting through to the individual who is considering studies abroad. This is done mainly by maintaining a web site adjusted to students' interests with short informative sections alternated with video clips, and supported by Sina Weibo (the Chinese Twitter) and Ren Ren (the Chinese Face Book). Even if on line activities makes up the major part of the work directed towards students, there is also a lot of off line work, like participation in Education Expos, Alumni support and other kinds of contact creating.

Individual migrants get the bulk of their information from internet. From a questionnaire to immigrants to the CBSR we know that embassies, official internet sites and sites like blogs and discussion forums along with service desks and friends all are major sources of information to the migrant. But we also know from a work shop with Chinese students in Uppsala that the individual migrant has to be very active himself in search of information. From the same workshop we also know that for this special group of exchange students the major information provider was the University. This suggests that co-operation agreements and exchange programmes for students could be a great source to attract talents to the CBSR.

In short, it can be stated that general information about all the CBSR countries should be quite easy to find for the active migrant – that is if you know English. Also the one who only speaks Chinese could find sufficient information, but for the one who only speaks Korean it is a lot more problematic. That information is easily accessible is however true only for information about the separate countries; information about the entire CBSR is very scarce. But again, this information is very little asked for; the official organisations do inform more or less solely about their own country. The exception from this is the Invest Sweden (ISA), who always presents Sweden as part of the entire Baltic Sea Region and informs about the whole region in order to make it more attractive to the investors. General data about BSR is not so difficult to get, but specialised information on for instance different industries or clusters throughout the countries needs special investigations. For this kind of information the ISA has to do their own research, do separate investigations and hire consultants. So they form their own research about these specified data, which is specific for individual countries.

Co-operation

From the interviews we can see that co-operation as such is considered very useful. The different organisations co-operate with each other to a great extent. That cooperation between organisations is considered sincerely fruitful may be clearly illustrated by the fact that a decision was made to merge the Investment Agency with the Trade Council in Sweden as well as in Finland. This decision was made after the field study period, and the mergers were to take place further on, so in the field studies the organisations are accounted for as separate ones. A view expressed by several of the interviewees was that our country – whether the country was Finland or Sweden – is too small for individual players to work in isolation; there is more credibility when presenting the organisation as part of a bigger team.

Although cooperation among different organisations is fairly common, this cooperation takes place mainly between organisations of the same nationality. Co-operation between organisations from different countries is quite rare, in Shanghai as well as in Seoul. But also here we find an exception. The Chambers of Commerce in Shanghai work in order to offer a network platform to their member companies and to serve them with reliable information. This is done to a great extent by organising seminars and lectures and by offering possibilities to establish connections. When organising these events the Chambers of Commerce from Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark cooperate on a regular basis, and have done so for a number of years. The representatives are very pleased with this arrangement, and relate only good experiences. The cooperation among the Nordic countries is resting upon rooted spirit of community and a long tradition of Nordic cooperation involving a broad scope of activeness both at home and internationally.

Sweden and Finland have a long story of presence, with well-established organisations representing a broad field of activities, which is not the case for Estonia and Latvia. This is particularly obvious in the Korean case, but also evident in Shanghai. It would be logical to suggest that Estonian and Latvian organisations should utilise the existing networks and cooperation platforms established by their Nordic colleagues. This kind of cooperation has been difficult to find in the field studies, although there are examples in a broader context, like the Nordic Innovation Fund project ‘Nordic innovation representations’ which is open to partners from Baltic countries, not to mention the Nordic Ministers’ meetings in Brussels to which the Baltic States Ministers. These examples could serve as inspiration, and stimulate more close contacts between the Nordic and the Baltic States in the future also on the ground in Shanghai and Seoul.

The *attitudes* to cooperation vary considerable, from the opinion that cooperation between the countries is absolute essential in order to get through, to a negative attitude of “we will lose, the others will gain”. The positive attitudes are, however, by far the most common. The general observation is that the Swedish organisations are the most positive ones to cooperation while the Estonian ones are most negative. We can also see that those who are freer to form their own activities are more positive than those who are ruled by a governing body. For the Consulate Generals there are obvious restrictions on how they can act, and they can take own initiatives of cooperation only within limited fields of action.

A few quotas:

- “Of course we should co-operate – together we will be more powerful”
- “Even though there may be competition, there will always be a room for co-operation”
- “A great idea, we haven’t just thought of it”
- “May be good, but too complicated”
- “We have not seen any success stories yet”
- “Only the others will gain, we are too small”
- “Topic may be watered out”

Also some *actual obstacles* for cooperation, or apprehensions about the success of cooperation, are listed by the interviewees. That could be for instance that the topic might be watered out by too many

compromises, the project coordination could be too complicated with many partners, or that the companies or other stakeholders could lose their trust in a specific organisation if they cooperate with others. There is also a competition between the countries which all interviewees agree upon, but the opinions differ when it comes to whether or not competition should prevent from cooperation. There might also be a tension between the different levels, so as if local organisations are under order to cooperate from the national level the organisations at place may oppose. The interviews showed there may be a risk that they feel run over and feel apprehensive that their competence and insight in the local conditions would not be fully considered.

The Central Baltic Sea Region as foundation for cooperation abroad

The Central Baltic Sea Region, as officially defined from the EU, is made up of regions from four Baltic Sea nations: parts of Sweden and Finland, entire Estonia, and almost all of Latvia.

The Expat-project includes partners from all these nations, and the CBSR is for obvious reasons the focus of the field studies. When seen from abroad, however, this region does not seem very homogeneous – exceedingly fruitful in many ways, but when it comes to cooperation it may be a disadvantage.

From the interviews we find that the sparse co-operation over national borders happens in other constellations than between the CBSR countries. The examples of cross-country cooperation that are to be found involve the Nordic countries, or the entire Baltic Sea Region, while the limited CBSR is not a recognised region. From the interviewees there are, with one exception, no objections against cooperation within CBSR, only it does not seem very natural and the thought does not occur spontaneously. More specific, if the interviewees from Finland and Sweden in Shanghai should consider cooperation, they would in the first place turn to one another, to Denmark and to Norway, but once they are asked, they are positive to also include Estonia and Latvia. To start new cooperation projects exclusively with the CBSR nations, without the rest of the Nordic countries would not be of immediate interest. Also from the Latvian side the trade association had not thought about cooperating with Nordic representations for activities in Korea, but was positive to contacts with the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in the future. In the case of Estonia, however, the interviewees object to the idea, expressing the view that it would be more natural to cooperate with Poland than with the other CBSR countries.

Although brought together by geography and history, even the CBSR countries themselves may not recognise the CBSR as the obvious platform for cooperation. The Nordic countries as well as the greater Baltic Sea Region, or parts of the Baltic Sea Region, are obviously considered more relevant platforms. Extensive cooperation abroad could only happen and be sustained if the CBSR as such would be enforced and clearly recognised as a functional and natural region. Should that happen the belonging to the region has to be emphasised on a high political level in each country. While all Nordic representatives both in Korea and Shanghai welcomed dialogue with their Baltic counterparts, the need for a 'political-level' agreement was acknowledged. Even so, much will depend on individual organisations' initiative and ambition for involvement in the cooperation processes.

An example of an emerging work to foster a common image of the region can be found in the Baltic Sea Programme "ONE BSR", an umbrella project for branding the Baltic Sea Region. This project is however for the entire BSR, and is not only restricted to the Central BSR. Although its focus may be broad, ONE BSR aims to include Baltic and Nordic capitals in the same story, which would help to increase their recognition as part of a global region.

Potential for exchange between Latvia and South Korea

One of the clearest conclusions from this field study is that building international relationships is a long-term project. Swedish and Finnish relationships in Korea date back many decades, so Estonia and Latvia should not expect quick results. Estonian and Latvian organisations would have a lot to gain should they utilise already existing platforms established by the Swedish and Finnish organisations.

With the cost and effort involved, the movement of people between both regions must be planned and managed so as to maximise its value. The best cases of Korean-Nordic cooperation show that this can be achieved by establishing permanent 'platforms': rooted in the local academic, scientific, economic, and political context, yet speaking the same language with their international partners.

This is a role for which universities and colleges are naturally suited. Focusing international cooperation on university students, professors and researcher will produce multiple "spill-over" effects into economic and cultural relations. Traditional university cooperation, when partner universities visit each other once a year, is however not sufficient. The role of companies and governments that the universities are working with is important. Instead of small, separate trips by individual university rectors, it makes sense to visit together as a delegation.

Summary and comments

- Even though there is no lack of pre-departure information as such, there is much to be done should the information reach the individual migrant. It is important how the information is “packaged” and “tailored” as well as the information channels that are used. Examples of best practice are the website Sweden.cn, run by the Shanghai Consulate General/Swedish Institute, the Alumni network, also run by the Shanghai Consulate General, and the Road Shows conducted by Danish Universities together with Danish companies.
- Even though there are voices against more cooperation, there is a strong and dominant awareness of the benefits. Cooperation in general is considered fruitful, but when it comes to cooperation among different nations the attitudes differ. Good examples and evaluation of results could change attitudes to cooperation and increase the motivation, as also bringing out the common interests that do exist would do.
- Even though there are obvious advantages with co-operation, there are also many difficulties and obstacles.
- Even though cooperation has to be accomplished locally by the organisations at place, it is also an issue for the high political level in the CBSR-countries. Cooperation has to be legitimated and sustained from the national level, while the cooperation projects in practice will have to be defined from the local level, taking into account the experiences and knowledge about the local conditions that the local organisations are holding.
- Even though the CBSR is a defined region, it is not obvious that the potential cooperation partners would be the CBSR-countries specifically and exclusively. There is no CBSR story, and the region is not recognised. Propagating the concept of CBSR as an obvious, evident and appropriate region would be of advantage to cooperation. While the Nordic countries already have a since long established cooperation, the Baltic States are not part of that. There is, however, openness to cooperation, and there are already examples of existing frameworks.
- The lack of a common CBSR story is reflected in the scarcity of information and PR about the region as a whole, a fact that hampers the possibilities of joint marketing of the region. Steps are taken towards common promotional services for the entire BSR, which may also lead to marketing cooperation for the CBSR.

Policy recommendations

Migrants are actively seeking information about their new country; the Internet is one major source of information

Policy recommendation

All the main web sites from official organisations operating in China or Korea should be published not only in English but also in Chinese and Korean

Another major source of information is friends or words of mouth

Policy recommendation

Alumni networks should be established for migrants to the CBSR who have moved back to their home country. The Shanghai Alumni network sustained by the Swedish General Consulate in Shanghai could be the raw model.

An important group of international talents in the CBSR is students, getting their information directly from the University.

Policy recommendation

Universities should be encouraged to seeking cooperation agreements with Chinese and Korean counterparts.

Universities should be encouraged to cooperate with other universities and with companies from the entire CBSR and conduct road shows in China and Korea. The organisations at place should help to organise on the ground.

Cooperation between organisations from the different countries does exist, but is not as common as one would expect, given the long tradition of Nordic kinship.

Policy recommendation

Organisations on the ground in **Shanghai and Korea** should, from a high political level in each CBSR country, be encouraged to identify areas and carry out projects where cooperation would maximise the value of spent resources

Latvia and Estonia are not included in the existing cooperation projects or thought of as cooperation partners.

Policy recommendation

Nordic organisations on the ground in **China and Korea** should be encouraged to invite the Baltic States into their cooperation projects. Also the other way around, the Baltic States representatives should approach their Nordic colleagues. This ambition should be clearly outspoken from a high political level in all the CBSR countries.

About the Expat-project

Expat-project (2012-2013) was co-financed by EU Central Baltic Interreg IVA Programme 2007-2013. Its ultimate aim is to make the Central Baltic Sea Region a more attractive destination, a more welcoming region to settle in, and a home to stay for international talents.

Human capital is one of the decisive factors that contribute to the high competitiveness of the Central Baltic Sea Region. In an interdependency world economy today, the regions and cities need to cultivate its human capital and to best retain the international professionals available at place in order to maintain and to increase its global competitiveness.

While Europe is a relatively attractive destination for highly skill immigrants, the Central Baltic Sea regions are not benefit fully from the international talents moving in and living here – nor are the internationals benefit from the opportunities the region should have on offer. The Expat-project addresses the factors that hinder the expats' smooth arrival and good quality of life in the Central Baltic Sea Region and developed methods and solution to improve the identified challenges, serving this way the interests of both the expats and the region as a whole.

The Expat-project conducted various research activities, includes best practice of soft-landing service models in Hague, Amsterdam, Stockholm and Toronto; three field studies on soft-departure services available in sourcing country in Shanghai, Seoul and Tbilisi; an online questionnaire on the internationals' opinion of their quality of life and a pilot development of a virtual service platform for internationals. The project results are presented in a series of reports providing aforementioned benchmarking results, analysis and policy recommendations.

Expat-project partners:

- Uusimaa Regional Council, Finland (Lead Partner)
- Culminatium Innovation Ltd, Finland
- Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland
- Turku Science Park Oy LTD, Finland
- Regional Council of Southwest Finland, Finland
- City of Uppsala, Sweden
- Riga Planning Region, Latvia
- University of Latvia, Latvia
- Institute of Baltic Studies, Estonia
- eGovernance Academy, Estonia

More information:

www.expatproject.info

Terminology:

Expats refers to international knowledge workers, students and their families and spouses.

Contact	Inger Christoferson
Organisation	International Affairs Executive Office
Address	City of Uppsala
Phone	+46 (0)18 727 1309
Email	inger.christoferson@uppsala.se
Website	www.uppsala.se

This report reflects the author's views and managing Authority of Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2007-2013 cannot be held liable for the information published by the project partners.