

The Ars Baltica Network

Background

The *Ars Baltica* was created in 1989 as a forum for multilateral cultural co-operation with an emphasis on common projects within the Baltic Sea Region. At present there are 10 member countries (Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden). It gives priority to art, culture and cultural history. Its goal is to implement common projects, with the intention that they will facilitate regular networking between individuals and organisations. Co-operation in the field of cultural exchange between the members is carried out through meetings, exchanges of information and joint projects.

The *Ars Baltica* was created on the initiative of the Ministries of Culture of the Baltic Sea Region. Since 1999, according to the Estonian-Finnish proposal, the Secretariat of the *Ars Baltica* moves from one member country to another for a three-year period. Until 2009, the Secretariat will be hosted by the Baltic Sea Cultural Centre in Gdansk (Poland).

How it works

In all the member countries there are *Ars Baltica* National Desks (which together constitute the *Ars Baltica* Organising Committee). They are placed in both cultural and political institutions, such as ministries of culture, arts councils, cultural institutes etc. The *Ars Baltica* Organising Committee consists of representatives of the ten *Ars Baltica* member countries. The Committee is responsible for information exchange between decision makers and cultural operators, decides on the use of the *Ars Baltica* logo in cultural projects, helps to find grants and promotes grant-receiving projects.

Important decisions of the Committee are discussed during the *Ars Baltica* Organising Committee Meetings which take place twice a year, in spring and in the autumn, in one of the member countries. The Committee reports on its work and overall development to the conferences of Ministers of Culture of the Baltic Sea States. In 2008, the Ministerial Conference will take place in Riga (Latvia).

The activities of the *Ars Baltica* Organising Committee are co-ordinated by a Chairperson and supported by the Secretariat. The mandate of the chairperson is for one year.

The *Ars Baltica* Network has the following aims:

- shaping a common Baltic Sea cultural policy;
- supporting project leaders in their search for grants and promoting their projects;
- realisation of projects of European significance;
- collaboration with other regional networks; and
- collaboration with other European cultural organisations.

Cultural projects which gain the support of *Ars Baltica* and can use its logo are realised by at least three partners from the Baltic Sea Region and are to address issues of identity and cultural diversity in the Baltic Sea Region. Small and medium sized projects should also stimulate an exchange of artists and networking activities. Projects are granted permission to use the *Ars Baltica* logo for maximum of 2 years. The AB logo must be placed on all the promotional materials of the project. Project Leaders are asked to send the project's evaluations to the Secretariat and the respective National Desk until 15th October or before the end of the year.

Many public cultural institutions and NGO's are involved in the *Ars Baltica* programmes such as festivals, meetings and symposiums. These events offer workshops, classes, creative research laboratories, seminars and performances with the goal to bring together experts and ideas from the Baltic Sea Region and exchange experience in the fields of:

- music (e.g., the International Festival of Young Musicians "Kaunas 2008");
- performing arts (e.g., the 5th International Baltic Circle Theatre Festival);
- visual arts (e.g., the *Ars Baltica* Triennial of Photographic Art);
- cultural heritage (e.g., the Baltic Culture and Tourism Fortresses' Route – 2005-2006);
- film (e.g., the 8th International Archaeology-Film-Festival); and
- literature (e.g., the International Contemporary Literature Forum "Nordic Summer").

Results

Although the *Ars Baltica* has no budget to fund projects, it provides assistance to cultural professionals and artists to find funding, to promote their projects through its online portal, in a monthly newsletter and through information sent to partner organisations and the media. In order to ensure a Baltic dimension to projects, it provides individuals and groups with assistance to find relevant partners through, for example, access to a large database of cultural institutions and organisations operating within the Region and beyond.

The „Ars Baltica” Network's activity is based on a multilateral regional agreement which is extremely significant for co-operation and mobility itself in the region. In the framework of its intensive cultural collaboration programme, the *Ars Baltica* puts emphasis on close co-operation with cultural operators. It highlights interesting and high-quality projects related to cross-border understanding and acceptance. Its well-managed structure and openness to many fields of art means that it is very effective in supporting regional co-operation, more so than many traditional bilateral agreements.

Once a project has been granted use of the *Ars Baltica* logo its chances of receiving funds from a Ministerial Operational Programme increases. Since 1989, approximately 120 projects have been given permission to use the *Ars Baltica* logo.

Sources

Information about network could be found at: <http://www.ars-baltica.net/>.

The application form can be downloaded from:

http://www.ars-baltica.net/page/en/ars_baltica/how_to_apply_for_ab_logo_1

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