



Ex-Post Evaluation - INTERREG III 2000-2006

PROGRAMME: INTERREG III A Øresund

Ørestat II (Øresund Statistics II)

Project Good Practice Study

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1. General Information

Keywords: public statistics, functional cross-border region

Region: Great Øresund region

Strand: INTERREG Strand A

Programme: INTERREG III A Øresund

Duration: December 2002 – December 2005

Funding: €818,000 of which €409,000 was ERDF funding.

Lead partner (incl. co-funding): Skåne Regional Authority (€136,000)

Other partners (incl. co-funding): Malmö municipality (€22,000), Regional Administrative Board of Skåne (€16,000), Labour Market Board of Skåne (€57,000), Copenhagen municipality (€68,000), Development Council of Greater Copenhagen (€38,000), Øresund Bridge Consortium (€42,000) and Greater Copenhagen Employment Board (€28,000).

2. Project aim

The objective of the Ørestat project was to increase knowledge about the social and economic conditions in the greater Øresund region by gathering baseline data for the relevant Swedish and Danish cross-border areas. Partner aimed to engage in fact-finding activities, collect information and generate statistics, based on commonly understood criteria and data, that could be used comparatively in future projects by regional authorities and planners.

3. Project Description

The functional integration of the Øresund region requires access to high quality comparative information pertaining to the social and economic conditions on each side of the Swedish-Danish border. The private sector, local, regional and national authorities and individual households all demand comparative and easily accessible statistics that are capable of describing the national sub-regions, as well as the wider Øresund region. Such statistics are a prerequisite for the efficient marketing of the region both domestically and abroad. In addition, regional firms, as well as those looking to invest inwardly, require relevant information in order to identify potential new markets and explore business opportunities.

The project consisted of 10 pilot studies in different thematic fields, which started out by addressing the variations between Denmark and Sweden in how statistical data within specific fields was organised and assessed, gauging in particular whether regional and municipal data sets from each side of the border were directly comparable. Furthermore, 13 primary studies produced comparative thematic data bases at the municipal and regional level, which was subsequently added to the Ørestat Databank. The pilot studies showed that in some thematic areas cross-border statistics could be produced, whereas in others regional data was incomparable and, consequently, a common dataset could not be produced.

The Ørestat II project followed up on the achievements of its predecessor project from the INTERREG IIA programme, whose initial purpose was to construct a partnership between regional actors and the national statistical authorities of Sweden and Denmark, in order to set up a database of regional statistics that would enable regional bodies to keep track of regional development patterns and tendencies in an increasingly integrated cross-border region.

4. Political and Strategic Context

In 1998-2001 Ørestat was managed as an Interreg IIA Øresund project. The lead partners were Statistics Sweden (SCB) and Statistics Denmark (DS). Together with interest groups and co-founders the two National Statistical Offices they began the long task of transforming the Øresund region into a single statistical area. Information obtained from the national statistics of both countries was probed, compared and linked. A collection of basic statistical tables on population, education levels, household income, labour market and economic structure of the Øresund region were produced. A separate database that could be accessed through the Internet was created and named the Øresund Databank. As statistical tables were updated they were added to the databank. A final report on the project was submitted in May, 2001. After Øresund I ended the SCB and DS continued to update all tables developed within the Ørestat I project, and this activity was financed by Statistics Denmark and Statistics Sweden.

There was evidence that the statistics available in the Øresund Databank were already widely used. Nevertheless, it became increasingly evident that there were some serious flaws in the data. The time coverage and general data were limited in their informational content. Several professional users of regional data in the Greater Øresund region therefore joined forces to help widen and deepen the database. The first project was well-known and synonymous with all statistics describing the cross-border region.

The Ørestat II project was far more than a mere extension of previous activities since the project partnership was expanded to include regional and local authorities, and local agencies. A key moment came with the regional structural reform implemented in 2007 in Denmark, which changed the institutional landscape of the country. Subsequently, the project partnership had to be revised to include new regional partners.

5. Project Implementation

Project activities included the collation of statistical material (28% of total funding), pilot studies (22% of total funding), main thematic studies (44% of total funding), and information gathering and marketing activities (5% of total funding). The partnership financed professional services to support the practical work of expanding the database. The joint technical secretariat was organised by SCB and DS, the main project partners of the Ørestat I project (1999-2001). The secretariat cooperated with the project's Steering Group and coordinated activities within and between the two national statistical authorities. In line with the Steering Group's priorities and the findings of the pilot studies, calls were made for a range of primary studies.

During implementation, funding was a concern, especially on the Swedish side. *Ad hoc* funding from local and regional groups had to be provided between 2002 and 2004 because no funds were available from central government. Although, to a certain extent, this endangered the sustainability of the project, paradoxically it strengthened the partnership at regional and local level. Since 2009 the SCB has maintained cross-border

statistics as a part of its regular tasks, receiving funding from the national budget. In the long run, the project partnership proposed that the National Statistical Offices of both Sweden and Denmark provide, produce and distribute basic cross-border regional statistics as a part of their general mandate, this activity being funded from the national budget.

The comparative regional Ørestat database managed to overcome obstacles to data collection to successfully provide statistics in many thematic areas: migration / commuting, household composition, dwellings, professions / socio-economic status, unemployment (municipal level), labour market conditions, economic structure / entrepreneurship, and wages / wage costs. It also produced a trans-regional register on individuals (to enable longitudinal studies on migration / commuting), statistical data on individuals (for GIS analyses), and gauged cooperation between local and regional users of the statistics and national statistics producers.

However, certain themes were not dealt with and are, as yet, unaccounted for on the database, including commuting / student mobility and pricing. The partners did not produce a trans-regional data register of businesses (to compare offshoring / delocation of commercial activities across the Øresund), develop a multilingual database (beyond Danish, Swedish), look into travel and transportation across the Øresund, or investigate the organisation and dissemination of database updates. Lastly, generating statistics on household income and data about consumption patterns for the cross-border region was deemed unattainable. A pilot study showed that it would be too expensive to attempt to produce such comparative regional data and that it was also unclear how such statistics would be regularly updated.

6. Project Results

The main achievements of the project were the database and the studies which generated data that was fed into it. Although the Ørestat Databank only displays data in a simple, tabular format, the main user groups, which are local and regional authorities, regularly consult it as an information source for strategic planning purposes. In total, some 8,100 hits were registered during the period March 2004 - November 2005. The number of hits registered were the highest for those statistical themes unique to the database, such as migration (19,6%) and commuting between municipalities within the Øresund region (17,4%). Comparative statistics on population, economic structures and employment also scored highly (around 15%).

To stimulate the public's interest, the project partners issued a statistical leaflet in the late summer of 2008 presenting much of the information in the Øresund Databank in a graphic format of tables and figures. This publication, *TendensØresund* (Øresund Tendencies), increased public awareness of Ørestat II¹. The fact that it was produced without ERDF co-funding is further evidence of the sustainability of the Ørestat II project.

For the project participants it quickly became evident that ensuring cross-border regional statistics for cross-border regions, as for other national regions, should be a national responsibility. The partners proposed the creation of a nationally guaranteed and co-funded financial basis to gather cross-border statistics on the Øresund region. In addition, they proposed setting up a user council for cross-border statistics to ensure that interaction occurs between the users and the producers of cross-border regional statistics beyond 2005. This user council would include both public and private interests. Additionally, the partnership proposed establishing a regional forum for the coordination

¹ The statistical brochure can be downloaded from www.tendensoresund.org.

of regional statistics, comprising regional and local authorities and with the responsibility of coordination on a rotational basis. While the idea of a regional forum has not been implemented, a user council has been operational since 2005 and continues to meet bi-annually.

Ørestat II enabled local and regional actors in the cross border region to overcome the primary obstacles in the production of a cross-border database, namely, the identification and collection of comparative regional statistics. This is the main added value of the project. Additionally, many of the solutions developed could be applied in other cross-border regional contexts. The exercise has already been reproduced, be it on a smaller scale, in INTERREG IIIA Sweden-Norway projects.

7. Key Success Factors and Lessons Learnt

The Ørestat I project had already illustrated how cooperation in legal and administrative fields could successfully create a basic infrastructure of cross-border importance. Efforts to increase the integration of cross-border functional regions needed to be based on factual information. The Ørestat II project showed that the basic socio-economic statistics available at the national and regional levels in neighbouring countries might not be directly comparable in essential thematic areas. It was felt that issues were best resolved by establishing *task forces* in each thematic area.

Experience showed that maintaining the database benefited from the operation of 'user boards', which also helped strengthen the regional partnership that originally initiated the INTERREG project. Maintaining and updating it depended on the continuous support and equal interest of the national statistical authorities in both countries. Such a balance of interest was felt to be a prerequisite for the continuation of the database as a regional resource.

The partnership learnt about the importance of presenting data in ways that communicate well to different audiences. In order to be accessible and comprehensible to the general public, not merely to regional planners or regional authorities, the cross-border regional data was presented in various presentation formats (graphs as well as tables). It was also felt important to explain the distinction between the compilation of national regional data and that produced, for instance, by EUROSTAT. A proper cross-border regional statistical database provides comparisons at sub-regional levels, when (functional) sub-regions even incorporate parts of two different nations.

For the Øresund region, the focus has been put firmly on the continued development of tools that will allow for analysis of regional development processes, so that the functional integration of the different sub-regions can be better understood and further encouraged.