

# Evaluation and Background Report: The 7th Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region Stockholm 8-9 November 2016

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Photo: Melker Dahlstrand

## Organisers and supporters



Government Offices of Sweden



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## Evaluation & Background Report

The 7th Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), entitled 'One Region, One Future - Vision 2030 for the Baltic Sea Region', was organised in Stockholm on 8-9 November 2016. The main objective of the Forum was to promote policy discussion with a view to the future of the Baltic Sea Region, and promote results already achieved.

The first Inspiration Session was opened by Prime Minister of Sweden Stefan Löfven, followed by Prime Minister of Finland Juha Sipilä and the European Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu.

### Foresight study on the future of the Baltic Sea Region

With a thematic focus on the future of the Baltic Sea Region, all seminars and events at the Strategy Forum were encouraged to look ahead, within the framework of the three agreed EUSBSR objectives: 'Save the Sea', 'Connect the Region' and 'Increase Prosperity'.

The Forum's strategic focus was underpinned by a foresight study, commissioned by the organisers, on the challenges facing the Baltic Sea Region up to 2030. The report '[Looking towards 2030: Preparing the Baltic Sea Region for the future](#)' was produced jointly by researchers at Spatial Foresight GmbH and MDI, and was sent out for advance consideration to all seminar organisers as food for thought and served as a basis for the opening plenary session and several seminars.

The aim of the report was to stimulate discussion on challenges and opportunities arising from major global trends to help prepare the region for the future. The 2030 perspective facilitates links to major international policy debates such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

### New concept attracted many proposals

A decentralised model was chosen for the Strategy Forum, inspired by [Almedalen Week in Sweden](#)<sup>1</sup>. The model paved the way for any organisation or key stakeholder, with a topic relevant to the EUSBSR and its objectives, to apply for a seminar slot. In this way the Forum became an integral part of the implementation of the EUSBSR for numerous organisations in the region. The bottom-up model also contributed to a broader sense of ownership of the Forum and a wide variety of seminar themes.

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<sup>1</sup> Almedalen Week, considered one of Sweden's most important political forums, is an annual political event in Visby, Sweden, that includes speeches, seminars and other political activities.



A total of 44 seminars and 7 other events, selected from over 70 proposals, covered all three objectives of the EUSBSR. The seminars were assessed by a programming committee on a set of clear criteria, such as the requirement that seminars should support the overall future-oriented theme of the conference and be based on clear added value of macro-regional cooperation for the Baltic Sea Region. Seminar organisers were given priority if they e.g. covered cross-cutting issues, gender or youth perspectives, or introduced new thinking.

The Forum's multitude of activities was impressive, offering participants access to a wide selection of parallel activities.

Policy seminars were summed up in reports with the help of grants from the [Swedish Institute Alumni Network](#). In addition, a selection of seminars and all plenary sessions were filmed and made available on the [EUSBSR YouTube channel](#) after the Forum.

### **Continuous interaction with the target group**

Digital communication was deemed central and a new [website](#) was established that corresponded to communications needs. This website was linked to the main EUSBSR website but was independent and easily managed by Forum organisers. In order to effectively reach the different target groups, a network of information multipliers was established at an early stage. A newsletter, linking to news on the website, was sent regularly to these multipliers. Interviews with stakeholders in the region were published regularly to highlight the commitment to the strategy and underpin a sense of joint ownership of the Forum.

For the first time, a digital app of the Strategy Forum was made available to all participants, offering the latest programme, practical information and a live polling function to generate interaction between the moderator and audience during the inspirational sessions.

### **Media coverage**

With support of the European Commission, 14 journalists from 7 EU Member States in the Baltic Sea Region covered the Strategy Forum. In total, more than 30 journalists participated in Forum events. A two-day media programme was available, including a background briefing on the first day, press briefings with Corina Crețu, European Commissioner for Regional Policy and Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä, as well as a demonstration of the DiveSMART Baltic project close to the Forum venue. At least 37 reports were published or broadcast in media with a regional, national or international scope from 8 EU and non-EU countries. In addition to traditional media, the hashtag #EUSBSR was widely used by participants and attending media.



## **Networking space generated inspiring stories**

This year, the organisers offered a new approach to the networking village - a Creative Lounge, which offered a relaxed and innovative networking space, while also inspiring participants through interesting demonstrations, exhibits, small seminars and digital displays of project results. The Lounge was open throughout the Strategy Forum.

## **Youth representation at all plenary sessions**

Through the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) and with financial support from Nordic Council of Ministers and the European Regional Development Fund, representatives of youth organisations from all 8 EU Member States in the Baltic Sea Region were invited as speakers at the Forum's plenary sessions. This youth perspective enabled organisers to engage a new generation of actors and stakeholders in discussing the future of the Baltic Sea Region.

## **“Everyone was there”**

A record number of 1 494 participants were registered and 1 347 attended, putting the no-show level at less than 10 per cent, following the introduction of a no-show fee for the first time. Participants came from around 40 countries from around the world. Swedes comprised 36 per cent of those registered, followed by participants from Finland, Poland and Germany. More than 60 per cent were newcomers, which was higher than expected.

## **Internal organisational set up**

The Swedish National Coordinator of the EUSBSR led regular meetings of a coordination group consisting of: representatives from different line ministries, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, the Swedish Institute, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the European Commission. Coordination meetings with other key stakeholders, such as INTERACT, the Baltic Development Forum and the 'Let's Communicate!' project were also held on several occasions. The coordination group dealt with all practical arrangements, contributions to the strategic focus and the actual content and planning of the sessions.

Information and guidance at the venue was of the utmost importance. The Norden Association Youth League Sweden (FNUF) offered voluntary guides and hosts, which proved important and highly appreciated.





Corina Crețu, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Juha Sipilä, Prime Minister of Finland, Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden, and Dagfinn Høybråten, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers enjoying organic coffee in the Creative Lounge.

Photo: Ninni Andersson, Government Offices of Sweden

### Basic information about the event

The 7<sup>th</sup> Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region was hosted by the Swedish Government together with the Nordic Council of Ministers, in close cooperation with the European Commission. The event was held on 8-9 November 2016 at the Brewery Conference Centre in Stockholm, Sweden. The Strategy Forum offered 3 inspirational plenary sessions, 7 early-arrival seminars, and 31 main sessions and seminars. Several interactive activities and exhibitions were also available in a Creative Lounge. A dinner reception for all participants was hosted by the City of Stockholm at City Hall, with musical entertainment by students from Adolf Fredrik's Music School and a welcoming speech by the City Council President. The Strategy Forum was organised in conjunction with the 18<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Baltic Development Forum on 8 November in the same venue as the Strategy Forum.

[www.strategyforum2016.eu](http://www.strategyforum2016.eu)

[www.bdforum.org/18BDFsummit2016](http://www.bdforum.org/18BDFsummit2016)

## Summary of the evaluation survey

### Participation

A total of 1 347 participants, with a survey response rate of around 30 %.

### Top 10 countries (participants)

1. Sweden
2. Finland
3. Poland
4. Germany
5. Denmark
6. Latvia
7. Lithuania
8. Estonia
9. Belgium
10. Norway

### Sector representation

Government institution (29%)

Academia (12%)

International institution/organisation (11%)

### Newcomers vs frequent participants

Newcomer (62%)

Previous participant (36%)



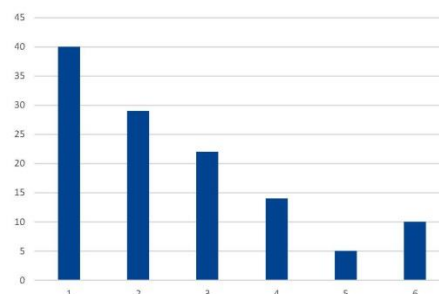
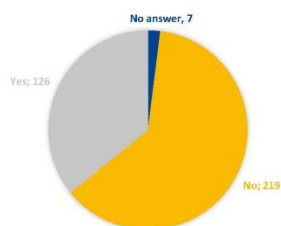
The main stage, 'Mässhallen', for inspirational sessions.

Photo: Melker Dahlstrand

## Newcomers combined with frequent participants



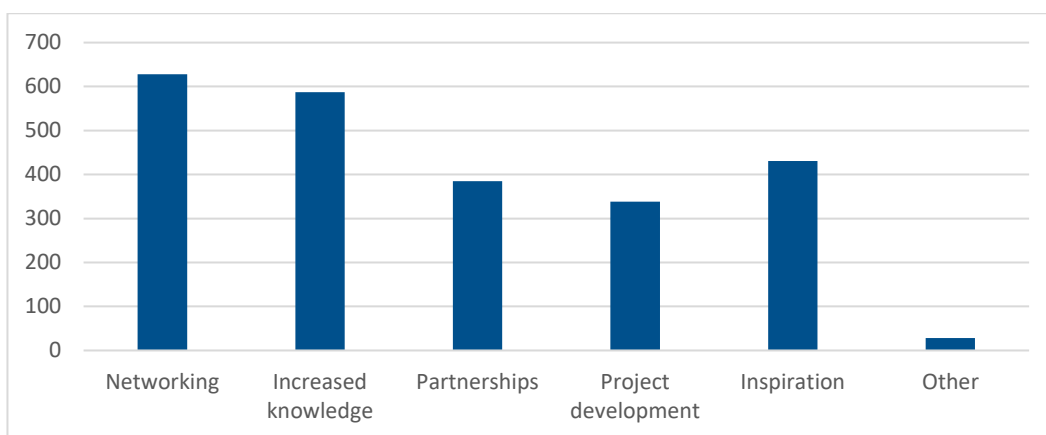
- A majority of the respondents had not attended the Strategy Forum before.



4. Have you participated in the Annual/Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR before? How many have you attended before?

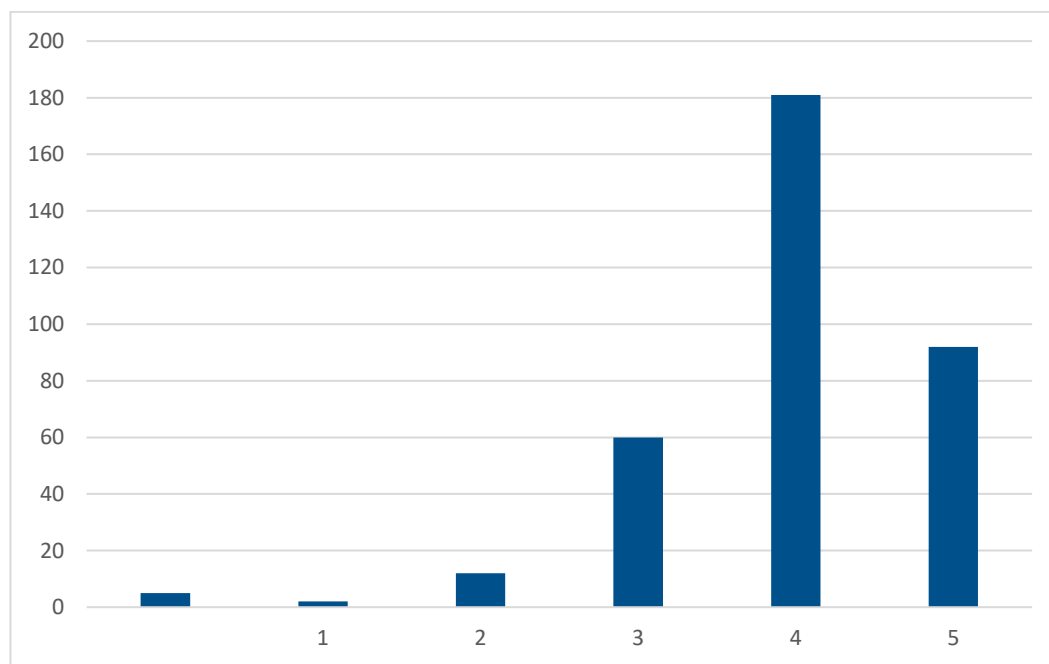


## Participants' expectations of the Strategy Forum



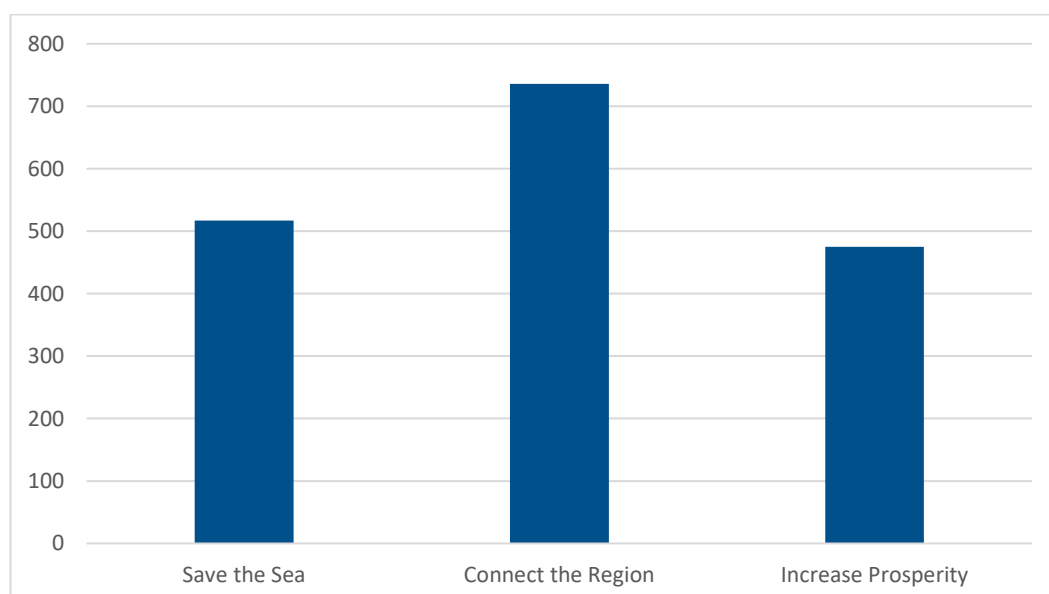
Networking (628), Increased knowledge (587), Partnerships (385), Project development (338), Inspiration (431), Other (28).

## Overall satisfaction with the content of the Strategy Forum (78.7%)



(1=not satisfied; 5=very satisfied)

## Most relevant EUSBSR objective for participants



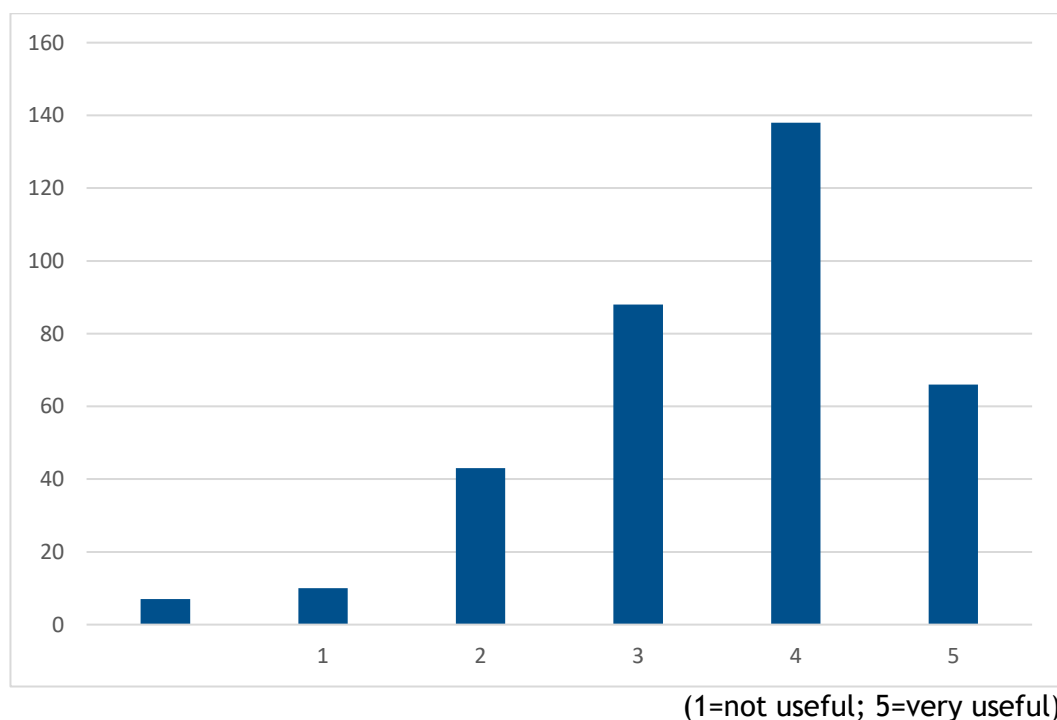
Save the Sea (517), Connect the Region (736), Increase Prosperity (475)



## Characterise the Strategy Forum in one sentence

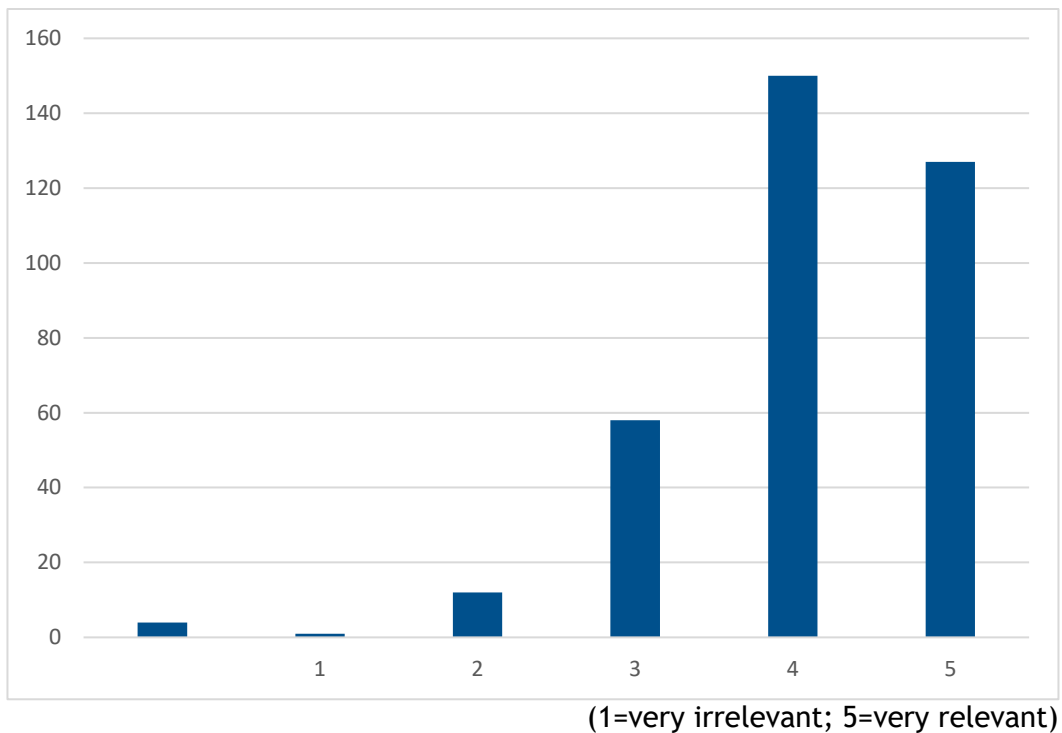
Positive	Neutral	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiring</li> <li>• Well organised</li> <li>• Open-minded</li> <li>• Enthusiastic atmosphere</li> <li>• Vibrant</li> <li>• Forward-looking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informative</li> <li>• Interesting</li> <li>• Meeting place</li> <li>• Modern</li> <li>• Engaging</li> <li>• Useful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complicated venue</li> <li>• Crowded</li> <li>• Too scattered</li> </ul>

## Creative Lounge useful for networking activities?





## Relevance of the overall theme 'One Region, One Future - Vision 2030 for the Baltic Sea Region'



## Respondent suggestions regarding future themes/issues/organisation of EUSBSR Strategy Forums

Themes	Networking	Design	Participants	Organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not forget the EUSBSR implementation, added value, results, PACs/HACs, flagship projects</li> <li>• Many topics mentioned, from trafficking to the environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space for PACs/HACs and projects</li> <li>• More mingle spaces</li> <li>• More and longer breaks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real workshops</li> <li>• More debates</li> <li>• More interaction</li> <li>• Fewer seminars</li> <li>• Good moderators</li> <li>• Mobile app that works</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizens</li> <li>• Grass-roots</li> <li>• NGOs</li> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• Scientists</li> <li>• Local and regional level</li> <li>• Missing countries (Russia, other EU Member States)</li> <li>• Better regional representation among speakers</li> <li>• Limit the number of participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suitable venue</li> <li>• Enough coffee and food</li> <li>• Smoother security checks</li> <li>• Make logistics work</li> </ul>

## Conclusions: Evaluation

<p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atmosphere</li> <li>• Organisation and planning</li> <li>• Programme, including open calls for seminars</li> <li>• Speakers, such as Alan Atkisson</li> </ul>
<p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too little interaction with participants</li> <li>• Programme too ambitious in relation to time given</li> <li>• App is not sufficient - paper versions of programme, venue map and participant lists still needed</li> <li>• More food and coffee</li> </ul>



Alan Atkisson, Inspirational Session II 'UN Agenda 2030 and the Global Sustainability Goals from a Baltic Sea Region Perspective'.  
Photo: Melker Dahlstrand

## Ten dos and don'ts for future organisers of the EUSBSR Strategy Forum:

- 1. Keep the programme light to leave time for networking.**
  - Remember that networking is the number one reason for attending.
- 2. If arranging parallel seminars with an open call ('Almedalen concept'), make sure to communicate the idea behind it.**
  - Allow key stakeholders to organise their own activities: decentralised ownership.
  - Make sure to have clear templates for seminar calls; inform and advise seminar organisers well in advance.
  - Make sure to have diverse representation among speakers and moderators, e.g. in gender and country representation, by setting clear criteria.
- 3. Ensure variety in seminars.**
  - Coach seminar organisers ahead of the Forum to ensure variety in speakers, activity design, etc.
  - Cover a broad variety of topics; offer something for everyone.
- 4. Engage inspiring speakers.**
  - Quality over quantity; speeches should not be too long.
  - Use the dynamics of outside perspective: e.g. invite speakers from other regions.
- 5. Plenaries should be inclusive, with political involvement on a high level.**
  - Emphasise the breadth of the EUSBSR; avoid themes specific to only one policy area.





- Avoid too many panellists.
- The choice of moderator(s) is important; advisable to have more than one to facilitate interaction.
- 6. Have a networking lounge/meeting place in a central location of the venue.**
  - The venue is important and should facilitate networking activities.
  - Use innovative and creative meeting places instead of more traditional exhibitions.
  - Coffee, including takeaway, should be widely available.
- 7. Plan the Forum in an inclusive way.**
  - Ensure that different voices are heard during the planning phase.
- 8. Decisions must be made within the planning organisation.**
  - Clear leadership and a clear mandate to enable quick decisions.
  - Advantageous when leadership is closely linked to political ownership.
- 9. Regular and inclusive communication with participants.**
  - Prepare participants on theme, scope and overall idea of the Forum.
  - Use multipliers when communicating, i.e. more people helping to spread information in their respective networks and in different languages.
  - Use the event to communicate the work of the EUSBSR. Link the programme to the strategy in every way possible to make it more relevant.
  - Use interactive tools in a planned and strategic way, e.g. website for interviews and films, and other digital tools such as an app.
- 10. Don't underestimate the time and effort needed.**
  - Everything will take twice the amount of time allocated.