

## FOCUS ON FOOD

### The project goes along

Food Hygiene and Food Safety in the Baltic region – Focus on Food is a joint EU project between German, Polish and Swedish control authorities in the food sector. The project's idea is to harmonize the way in which we interpret our common food legislation. We also want to raise competence among control staff and increase interest in food hygiene and food related issues among food businesses and consumers.

### Conference in Greifswald, Germany

We have just finished our third conference and a lot has happened since last conference a year ago in Szczecin, Poland. Two days filled with presentations and workshops. We started with a presentation of Mr David Tribo, who talked about an outbreak of gastroenteritis in schools in Germany September 2012. The food came from a public caterer. He explained how they handled the investigation and finally traced the cause to infected frozen strawberries from China.

We continued with workshops about RASFF ( Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed in EU), handling with outbreak of foodborne illness event. The results showed pretty much that we handled it the same way in Poland, Germany and Sweden.

In the last workshop we talked about for example charges for the inspections, how

many hours or inspections each company gets and so on. Here are some differences for example Germany and Poland has tax financed inspections and Sweden let the food company pay a fee every year depending on what kinds of risk they are handling and how many portions they serve. All countries charge extra if the company does not follow the law.

### Activities

**1.** The checklist for food control is created and has been used by each partner. So far it looks like our assessments is equivalent. We have created a similar checklist which contains similar control points for auditing food producers. During this summer we will use this checklist for auditing food business in the partaking countries. This will help the control authority to focus on the same risks in the food businesses. It also ensures that the food producer will have an equivalent assessment of their food businesses throughout the whole region.

**2.** Small-scale fish smokeries are common in our region and we want to harmonize the way in which we audit fish smokeries. In this activity the group has put together a guideline which will be a help for control staff in the Baltic Sea Region. A leaflet for the entrepreneurs who is handling with smoked fish will also be formulated

**3.** The Question bank has been expanded during the past year. All together we have 21 different issues such as labeling,

RASFF, food supplement and so on. On every issue we have started with the common EU legislation and below every country have been contributing with national legislation. The purpose is to create an essential guide book for inspectors of official food control.

**4.** We will carry out a work exchange between inspectors in participating countries in order to raise competence and experience. Five out of six work exchanges has been taken place. The inspectors involved are very pleased with the outcome. *This is a very productive activity and I wish that all of the participants could take part in a work exchange,* says Caroline.

**6.** In order to raise interest and knowledge about food legislation and food hygiene, we have plotted different award systems within the Baltic Sea Region which aims to make knowledge about hygiene at producer level available to consumers. The work with mapping different award system in Europe is progressing. So far has 15 countries been tested and two thirds of them has some kind of award system, voluntary or national system.

**7.** The work with the website focus-on-food.eu has progressed. The website is updated with information on all of the activities. The group translates the material to English, Polish, German and Swedish.

**8.** An information leaflet is developed for cross border traders and after final design we will print it and hand it out to traders and hopefully this will ease for traders who is traveling between different EU countries.



*All participants in the harbor of Wieck, Germany*

*All activities have come a long way and on the final conference in Sweden in November we will see the final result which is very exciting for me as lead beneficiary.*

*Caroline Elmstedt, project leader, Malmö*



*Project leader Caroline Elmstedt (former Nilsson) speaking at the conference in May 2013*