



Ribe County - Denmark

Ribe County has until recently been a region with one of the highest growth rates in Denmark, but unfortunately this growth has not been focused on sectors within The New Economy.

Ribe county is a typical agricultural area, which has undergone a heavy industrial development. Therefore, many regional initiatives have been taken to create innovative environments for the creation of new SME's.

Nowadays the agricultural sector employs 7 percent of the labour force in Ribe county, together with the transport sector and the construction sector. The three biggest sectors in Ribe county is public service with 30 percent of the labour force, industry and handicraft with 24 percent, and trade and tourism with 17 percent.

One of the challenges facing Ribe County is to attract and maintain the talent in the region. Almost 9 out of 10 people starting on a higher education leave the region, and many of them do not come back. Compared to the national level, Ribe county has a low educational level, though a priority in the region is to promote good training possibilities.

The population of Ribe County has been constantly increasing for a number of years. The increase has been comparable to the surrounding regions at approximately 3 %. Compared to the national average and in particular the areas surrounding the bigger Danish cities (and industrial centres) such as Copenhagen and Århus the increase however have been slightly lower. Generally it can be concluded that the peninsula of Jylland, where Ribe County is located in the southwest part has experienced a dislocation of the population moving towards the eastern parts of the peninsula.

With a population of 224000 persons, which is about 4.4 percent of the Danish population, the County is one of the smallest counties in Denmark. 14,000 enterprises in Ribe County are employing more than 120,000 employees, and there is as such a need for labour force. Many people are therefore commuting from outside the county to work.

Ribe county has no real unemployment, and has since the mid-eighties undergone a dynamic development, and has increased its number of industrial jobs with more than 25 percent, compared to the national growth rate of 2.2 percent.

Only 1 percent of the 14,000 enterprises employ more than 100 people, thus Ribe county has a very strong SME structure, and many regional initiatives are therefore based on improving the conditions for this type of enterprises.

Ribe County has an, albeit relative, number of high standard enterprises and a single locomotive, being LEGO Systems A/S. Approximately 10 % of the workforce is accounted for by the ten largest private companies in Ribe County, meaning that the region is rather dependent on these companies well-being.

Ribe County as a leaning region

Since December 2000, Ribe County in Denmark runs a project, which is based on the ideas within the concept of "A Learning Region", namely learning through networking, co-operation and "hands on" experiences. The main focus of the project is to establish





Regional Key Competencies

- a way to manage structural changes (ATB)

a new kind of regional co-operation, which is based on "Learning Networks" and which consider regional development as a more holistic process, where regional / economic development is seen as a process where industrial policy (including environmental issues) shall go hand in hand with educational policy and employment policy.

As a result of being a Learning Region, a Regional Development Council has been established, which consists of representatives from social partners, politicians, enterprises, schools and employment centres. In this council the main guidelines for the economic development of the region are discussed on the basis of input from the learning networks, and regional strategies and workplans are developed and are subsequently discussed in the learning networks.

During the last two years, Ribe County has established two competence centres within Offshore and Plastics, which are two of the regions key competencies. One of the main challenges for the region is to prove that these centres can assist the region to develop into the "new economy" and be a tool in the economic growth, in terms of establishment of new enterprises, intelligence and employment etc.

It is the intention that the article 6 project will show new regional key competencies for Ribe County to develop further into the new economy.

