

ICARUS-Meeting #14, November 2014

Project proposal

Working title: Mare Balticum

Background

In medieval times the Baltic Sea was the key to control over Northern Europe and a center for intense power struggle. All around the coast line royal houses, religious movements, knight orders and trading societies as The Hanseatic League were fighting for territory.

At the same time the Baltic Sea was also the gateway to Europa and the rest of the world. From Europa came political and cultural changes which culminated in the Reformation.

Compared to Central Europe the transition from memory to written record occurred relatively late. In most countries around the Baltic Sea the 11th century seems to be the starting point, and it took time before administration by written documents became common practice.

In The National Archives of Denmark the oldest parchment dates back to 1186 and the collection of documents created until the Reformation is small compared to southern European countries. The same seems to be the case all around the Baltic coast.

Motivation

The medieval collections of the archives in Northern Europe holds unique information and are the main source for Historians and others working with this period. The collections are relatively small, and it is possible to digitize it all. The proposed project could be included in monasterium.net or be a separate portal covering Northern Europe in medieval times.

Work to do

To create a European project within the framework of ICARUS with the mission to:

- Digitize all collections of medieval documents around the Baltic Sea until the Reformation
- Describe all collections of medieval documents around the Baltic Sea with metadata according to international archival standards in a shared database
- Make all collections of medieval documents around the Baltic Sea available on the internet.

Size of collections

To get a glimpse of the amount of work that, are in front of us: The medieval collections of The National Archives of Denmark amounts to 10.700 items.