

Euroregion Baltic
Executive Board Meeting
Brussels, Belgium
16th June 2015



Title Final Minutes
Submitted by SM, International Permanent Secretariat
Summary / Note This document provides final minutes of the ERB Executive Board meeting in Brussels on 16th June 2015
Requested action Implementation

Participants:

ERB Executive Board:

Mr Wiesław Byczkowski	ERB President, Vice-Chair of the Board of Pomorskie Region
Ms Britt-Louise Berndtsson	Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Board of Region Kronoberg
Mr Lennarth Förberg	Member of ERB Executive Board, Deputy Chair of the Board of Region Blekinge
Ms Akko Karlsson	Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Board of the Regional Council in Kalmar County
Mr Mateusz Kryzba	Chair of ERB Youth Board, Region of Warmińsko-Mazurskie
Ms Christina Mattisson	Member of ERB Executive Board, Chair of the Board of Region Blekinge
Mr Åke Nilsson	Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Board of the Regional Council in Kalmar County
Mr Per Ole Petersen	Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Council of Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Mr Robert Olesen	Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Board of Region Kronoberg

ERB Secretariats:

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen	Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Mr Łukasz Bielewski	Director of International Cooperation Department, Office of the Marshal of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region
Ms Klaudija Kionies	Managing Director of the Association of Municipalities of Klaipeda Region
Mr Sebastian Magier	ERB International Permanent Secretariat
Ms Therese Magnusson	Region Kronoberg
Mr Jan Martinsson	Regional Council of Kalmar County
Ms Małgorzata Samusjew	Acting Director of the Secretariat of Association of Polish Communes ERB
Ms Svetlana Sukhova	Region Blekinge
Ms Krystyna Wróblewska	Deputy Director of Department of Economic Development, Office of the Marshal of Pomorskie Region
Mr Piotr Zwolak	Office of the Marshal of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region

Guests:

Mr Per Martlev Hansen	Director of Bornholms Forsyning A/S
Ms Birgitte Wederking	Director of Copenhagen EU Office
Ms Karina Rembiewska	Pomorskie EU Office
Mr Sven Kastö	Director of Småland Blekinge South Sweden European Office

ERB Executive Board meeting

16th June 2014

8.30 – 13.30

Nordic House, Rue du Luxembourg 3, 1000 Brussels

1. Welcome

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska welcomed the participants on behalf of the Pomorskie in the European Union Association which is responsible for managing the Pomorskie Regional EU Office in Brussels.

2. Opening and presentation of the meeting agenda

President of Euroregion Baltic, Mr Wiesław Byczkowski opened the meeting of the ERB Executive Board and presented the agenda.

Decision:

ERB Executive Board approved the agenda of the meeting.

3. Signing the minutes of the previous ERB Executive Board meeting

ERB IPS submitted the minutes of the previous ERB Executive Board meeting held in Elbląg on 12th February 2015.

Decision:

ERB President, Mr Wiesław Byczkowski and ERB Executive Board member, Ms Akko Karlsson signed the minutes of ERB Executive Board meeting of 12th February 2015.

Session I

Strengthening dialogue with relevant actors

4. Presentation of Euroregion Baltic for representatives of EU regional offices of ERB member regions

Mr Sebastian Magier, Head of IPS, gave a presentation about the ERB to the representatives of EU regional offices of ERB member regions based in Brussels. IN his presentation he concentrated on the structure and goals of ERB cooperation with particular focus on the ERB Action Plan 2015-2016, thereby providing the EU offices with more information about the specificity of ERB's work.

Session II
Discussing internal issues of ERB cooperation

5. Decision on the organisation of 6th Forum of ERB Stakeholders

ERB President, Mr Wiesław Byczkowski started the discussion by giving further details on the organisation of the Forum. Originally, the ERB annual event was planned to be held in Gdańsk in October 2015. Unfortunately, due to unexpected formal issues, the Marshal's Office of the Pomorskie Region had to resign from realization of the project dedicated to the youth – even though it was already approved for funding by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

However, thanks to the invitation from Association of Polish Communes of ERB it would be still possible to organise the Forum in Elbląg at the beginning of October 2015 within a framework of project dedicated to international cooperation of local authorities.

Ms Małgorzata Samusjew, Head of the Association's Secretariat presented more details about the proposal. The Forum could be held together with an international conference on international cooperation and local economy organised by the Association on 7th October within a project financed by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs titled "Pros and cons of cooperation. The practice of the local government dimension of Polish foreign policy at the local level". Due to time constraints and additional activities on 8th October (study visit), it is also proposed to hold the ERB Executive Board meeting before the Forum on 6th October.

The themes of the conference would include the problem of impact of local and regional cooperation on economy, local government reforms and opportunities of international cooperation, as well as the future of local and regional international cooperation with special focus on challenges and barriers in the new programming period. Additionally, depending on the interest from the stakeholders, also other issues of relevance could be discussed during the event.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska, Deputy Director of Department of Economic Development, Office of the Marshal of Pomorskie Region, provided further explanation behind the decision to withdraw from the project and said that the event in Elbląg would be a very good idea as it would allow for a more flexible thematic setup of the Forum.

Ms Akko Karlsson, Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Board of the Regional Council in Kalmar County said that the proposal itself was very good but the dates i.e. 6-8th Oct would make it very difficult for the representatives from Kalmar to attend the event due to important meetings scheduled in advance during that time. At the same time, Ms Karlsson indicated that the event in Elbląg could still be attended by representatives from municipalities should they be interested in taking part.

Ms Christina Mattisson, Member of ERB Executive Board, Chair of the Board of Region Blekinge said that it would be impossible for the Blekinge representatives to take part in the Forum as on 7th Oct they would have to participate in the Regional Board. Instead, Mr Mattisson proposed to organise the ERB Forum around the 8th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum which is to be held in Gdańsk on 22-23rd September 2015.

Mr Per Ole Petersen, Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Council of Regional Municipality of Bornholm also said that it would not be possible for ERB representatives from Bornholm to participate in the Forum should it be organised on 7-8th October.

Mr Robert Olesen, Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Board of Region Kronoberg also indicated that 7-8th October was not a good date, and instead proposed to hold the event on 22-23rd September.

Ms Britt-Luise Berndtsson, Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Board of Region Kronoberg also voiced her support for the organisation of the ERB Forum during 22-23rd September.

Mr Piotr Zwolak, Marshal's Office of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region said that the proposed dates were convenient for the representatives of the region.

Responding to this new proposals, Ms Krystyna Wróblewska said that the Pomorskie Region would have check the possibilities of organising the ERB Forum in Gdańsk during the BSTF and then would come back with details.

Ms Akko Karlsson reiterated that the meeting in Elbląg would still be interesting for municipalities and they should be invited to take part.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen, Regional Municipality of Bornholm stated that the event should have clear focus in order to be attractive for participants. Perhaps it would be interesting to give a presentation of the Priority Axis 5 of the new South Baltic Programme. Also attracting Local Action Groups LAGs could be beneficial for the event.

Mr Sebastian Magier, ERB IPS, said that the Secretariat would of course engage in the organisation of both events, should that be required by the ERB Executive Board.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska asked whether there would be any suggestions at this point concerning the themes or should we wait some more and then discuss them. Concerning the preparations, other organisations such as the CBSS could be contacted.

Decision:

Following the discussion, the ERB Executive Board decided that the 6th ERB Forum of Stakeholders would be held in Gdańsk around the 8th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum. The final dates of the 6th Annual ERB Forum and Executive Board, as well as themes and framework would be proposed pending further consultations between the Pomorskie Region and IPS.

6. Discussion on the future legal status of ERB

Mr Sebastian Magier will informed the ERB Executive Board about the urgent matter concerning the status of ERB International Permanent Secretariat within the hosting organisation – the Foundation for Supporting and Promotion of Entrepreneurship in Olsztyn. Prior to the meeting he was informed about the facts that potential endanger the future functioning of the Foundation. The problem involved past projects implemented by the Foundation. During ex post audits by relevant authorities and the interpretation of public procurement regulations, the Foundation could be forced to pay significant financial penalties which could result in its insolvency. Moreover, this would also make it impossible for the Foundation to run projects for ERB, which one of the important elements of IPS work. Therefore, IPS turned to the ERB Executive Board to discuss potential alternatives for the current organisational setup of the Secretariat.

Ms Akko Karlsson said that the information was very surprising. The situation with respect to the Foundation could be damaging for the ERB cooperation.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska said that the cooperation with the Foundation was very good, but in this situation other options have to be considered. Therefore she proposed that the three Polish member organisations discuss this matter internally and come up with a joint proposal.

Mr Łukasz Bielewski, Director of International Cooperation Department, Office of the Marshal of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region admitted that the situation concerning the Foundation in Olsztyn was very unfortunate and surprising. While waiting for more information about how the situation would develop, the Polish partners should discuss the problem of hosting the IPS to ensure the continuity of its work.

Ms Britt-Luise Berndtsson asked whether this situation would have any negative impact on the future cooperation.

Mr Jan Martinsson, Regional Council in Kalmar County responded that it would have a direct impact on the involvement of ERB in project as a full project partner. In the current situation it would not be possible for ERB to directly support such projects as e.g. WaterNets or SYPERB.

Concerning the process of acquiring the legal status by the ERB, Mr Sebastian Magier presented the information about the current status of the process.

Based on the decision of the ERB Executive Board taken in Klaipeda, Lithuania on 20th March 2014 it was decided that the draft statutes of the international association would be anchored internally by the Russian partners who would require a longer internal procedure to adopt the draft. Taking into account that process is still ongoing and that the further legal steps on the establishment of the Association in Poland might also take a considerable amount of time, he proposed that these two process be taking place in parallel. That could allow the Russian partners to complete the internal consultations and join the association while it would still be in the process of establishment, thereby accelerating the process of legal status acquisition.

Commenting on this matter, Ms Akko Karlsson underscored that ERB should focus predominantly on the cooperation itself, while at the same time dealing with internal issues of the organisation.

Ms Britt-Luise Berndtsson stated that the organisation should move on with the process and still communicate the its details to the Russian partners.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said that there should not be a problem with a two-way process. We should proceed as proposed and still investigate options at hand. While talking to the Russian partners, perhaps we should consider also the Association of Kaliningrad Region Municipalities AMOKO, which is officially a partner in the ERB cooperation together with the Regional Duma and Regional Government.

Ms Akko Karlsson reminded that the ERB and its member organisations had for many years a very good cooperation with the Russian partners on the environmental issues.

Mr Jan Martinsson suggested that before moving on with the process, the ERB should wait for the results of the IPS visit to Kaliningrad before the next Board meeting in September. This would allow to clarify the situation before the decisions are made.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska said that throughout the years many Russian organisations were involved in cooperation on different levels. Despite this potential, still many questions are to be answered. Therefore, ERB should wait for the results of the meetings in Kaliningrad before deciding on the next steps.

Additionally, the IPS submitted the updated draft of the draft statutes of the international association with one change concerning the name of one of the member organisations in paragraph 4 - Membership. The change was of a purely technical nature and concerned the region of Kronoberg which with the beginning of 2015 changed its name to Region Kronoberg.

Decisions:

Following the discussion the ERB Executive Board decided to:

- *provide more time for the Russian partners to decide on their participation in the international association before moving on with the process. The decision would be expected by the next ERB Board meeting in September based on the results of the IPS visit to Kaliningrad;*
- *adopt the updated draft statutes of the future international association;*
- *take note of the information concerning the problems with the hosting organisation of the IPS and request the Polish partners to provide an alternative institutional solution.*

7. Decision on the appointment of the new deputy member of the current and future Monitoring Committee of the South Baltic Programme

Introducing this point of the agenda, Mr Sebastian Magier informed the ERB Executive Board about the resignation of Mr Simonas Gentvilas from the position of the deputy member of the SBP Monitoring Committee resulting

from many new responsibilities outside the ERB cooperation on both local and national level.

In order to ensure smooth and uninterrupted participation of ERB in South Baltic Programme bodies, the Klaipeda Association proposed to continue with its involvement in the MC and recommended Ms Klaudija Kionies, the new Managing Director of the Association to fulfil the duties of the MC deputy member within ERB delegation.

Ms Klaudija Kionies gave a short presentation about her professional experience underlining her involvement in the international project development and implementation, as well as strategic planning at the Neringa Municipal Office.

Decision:

The ERB Executive Board voiced its positive opinion of the proposal and decided to appoint Ms Klaudija Kionies as the new deputy member of the SBP Monitoring Committee representing ERB in the Joint Delegation of Euroregions.

8. Discussion on the ERB Water Core Group

ERB Executive Board member, Mr Akko Karlsson gave a presentation on the current status of the ERB Water Core Group and requested the ERB Board members to provide updated information concerning the representation of their organisations to the WCG. The representatives of the member organisations in the WCG could be both politicians and experts in the field of water management. She also asked to consider the organisation of the upcoming Water Forum around the ERB Forum / Board meeting in Gdańsk in September 2015.

Finally, referring to the letter submitted to the ERB Executive Board from the WaterNets project manager, Mr Tobias Facchini, she informed about the initial idea to consider the full involvement of ERB as a formal partner through the ERB IPS in Olsztyn.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said that the Water Core Group was originally one of the ERB Working Groups and later became a permanent body dealing with concrete issues related to water management. Concerning the ERB involvement in the WaterNets, this could be considered in the form of the Association Partner without any additional financial resources.

Responding to the comments, Mr Jan Martinsson stated that the financial involvement of the IPS would only amount to 15% of co-financing, which might correspond with the working hours of Sebastian as the Head of IPS.

Ms Akko Karlsson said that in the view of the current situation with the Foundation the ERB would not be able to take part in the project as a full partner and the details about the involvement in the WaterNets project were only an information.

Mr Per Ole Petersen asked whether there would be any other projects that could be potentially affected by the involvement in the WaterNets project.

Mr Jan Martinsson indicated that one other project was being considered for such direct support from the ERB ie. SYPERB.

Ms Akko Karlsson said in the light of the current situation with the IPS hosting organisation, the ERB Executive Board would be requested to agree for the ERB to become an Associated Partner in the project.

Mr Wiesław Byczkowski asked for more information on paper concerning the ERB involvement as the Associated Partner.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said that the water cooperation was one of the key areas of the ERB cooperation, as the Action Plan specifies in detail the ERB's involvement in water issues.

Ms Akko Karlsson added that the ERB Task Force for Project Facilitation already supported the WaterNets project. Also she mentioned that a letter of interest could be signed by the ERB President to facilitate ERB's involvement in the project as an Associated Partner.

Decision:

The ERB Executive Board decided to:

- *take note of the information presented*
- *agree to hold the ERB Water Forum around the ERB Forum and Executive Board meeting in Gdańsk*
- *consider participation in the WaterNets project as an Associated Partner pending further information from the WaterNets project.*

9. Information from the IPS on the results of the visits to ERB member organisations held between March and May 2015

Mr Sebastian Magier, Head of IPS, informed the Executive Board about the results of his visits to ERB member organisations between March-May 2015. In his presentation he focused on common challenges and ideas that could be jointly tackled through ERB cooperation in the future.

ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented.

10. Information from the ERB Task Force on Project Facilitation

10.1 • status of the upcoming Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020

Mr Sebastian Magier, Head of IPS, will gave an overview of the ERB's engagement in the current activities of the South Baltic Programme. The information focused mainly on the participation of ERB in the preparation and launching of the new Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020.

ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented.

10.2 • **update on projects facilitated within the Task Force**

The discussion on this point was held in the previous point concerning the ERB Water Core Group.

10.3 • **support for South Baltic Professionals project**

ERB President, Mr Wiesław Byczkowski informed the ERB Executive Board that the ERB was approached by the representatives of the South Baltic Professionals with a draft letter of support from ERB. The letter had already been discussed by ERB Secretariat which recommended its approval by the ERB Executive Board.

Mr Wiesław Byczkowski asked the ERB Executive Board whether they would authorise him to sign the letter of behalf of the ERB.

Decision:

The ERB Executive Board decided to support the above mentioned project and authorise the ERB President to sign the relevant letter of support.

11. **Information from ERB Youth Board**

Mr Mateusz Kryzba, Chair of ERB Youth Board presented the information about the results of the current activities within the ERB Youth Board and also gave an outlook on the future of the Board.

In particular he will present issue concerning the ERB Youth Board meetings so far, the result of the visit to Sweden, review of the action plan, summary of activities of EVS volunteer (infographics attached), the youth seminar in September in Olsztyn, as well as future funding perspective. He also asked the Executive Board to consider the continuation of the EVS support for the ERB Youth Board after summer.

ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented.

12. **Report on business-to-business cooperation between southern Sweden and northern Poland**

Mr Jan Martinsson, Regional Council in Kalmar County, gave a presentation of the result of a study investigating the potential for business-to-business cooperation between SMEs in southern Sweden and northern Poland.

ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented.

13. **Information about participation of IPS in external events**

Mr Sebastian Magier informed the Executive Board about his participation in the conference entitled "Business as usual? Governing the Baltic Sea Region in the times of changing security needs" during which he showcased ERB in relation to the concept of Multi-Level Governance.

ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented

14. **Information on joint ERB budget**

Mr Sebastian Magier informed the ERB Executive Board on the implementation of 2015 budget between January – May 2015.

ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented.

15. **Conclusion and closing**

President of Euroregion Baltic, Mr Wiesław Byczkowski thanked all participants for taking part in the meeting. He also thanked the Pomorskie in the EU Association for taking an active part in the organisation of the meeting. Wishing everyone good summer holidays he closed the meeting of the ERB Executive Board.