



Euroregion Baltic
Present Presidency
Latvia 2002-2003

Minutes **Euroregion Baltic Board Meeting** **Eurohouse, Talsi, 10 June 2002**

Participating Executive Board members:

Normunds Niedols, BSCPR, Latvia
Ethel Duvskog, Southeast Sweden
Carl Ilsøe, Bornholm, Denmark

Secretariats:

Gunta Strēle, ERB official secretariat
Niels Christen Andersen, ERB national secretariat, Bornholm
PG Lindencrona, ERB national secretariat, Southeast Sweden
Ligita Laipeniece, ERB national secretariat, Latvia
Līga Riežniece, ERB national secretariat, Latvia

Other guests:

Aivars Lācarus, Chairman of Talsi District Council
Solvita Īdre, Head of International Co-operation Centre
“Eiromāja”

§ 1 Welcome

Mr. Niedols, Chairman of the meeting opens it by welcoming everybody to meeting of ERB Executive Board in Talsi, and gives floor for a welcoming speech to Mr. Aivars Lācarus, Chairman of Talsi District Council.

Mr. Lācarus welcomes the participants in the small, but beautiful town of Talsi and wishes successful work throughout the day.

Mr. Niedols inquires if there are any additional issues to be placed on the agenda.

Mr. Andersen proposes to add information on the results of elections held in Bornholm. Proposal accepted.

At Bornholm after elections there will be a new structure in place starting from January 1, 2003. This body will have 27 members in stead of 100 as it is now. The aim of these reforms is to strengthen the government. Starting with the January of next year Mr. Ilsøe will again be the Chairman of Rohne Harbour. The position of the Mayor of Council will be occupied by the current mayor of Rohne – Mr. Thomas Torss.

1. Appointment of a member to co-sign the minutes of today's meeting

Mr. Niedols proposes Mr. Ilsøe to be the co-signer of the minutes.

Decision

The proposal is accepted unanimously.

2. Approval of previous Executive Board meeting minutes

Minutes approved.

3. Report about Seagull Dev ERB project and plans for following half a year

Mr. Lindencrona has met with Mr. Karlson and has the authority to speak on Seagull project. As not all members of Board are present a deeper discussion of this project should be held at the next Board meeting in Bornholm.

Basic info about the project: The duration of project is at least 2 years aiming at development of the ERB. In May the Steering Committee of Interreg took a decision to approve the project. A meeting for lead partners will take place in Rostok, June 26-27, where they will discuss how to organise the work. Applications for Tacis and Phare programmes still have to be prepared by the respective partners. Mr. Karlson will soon come into contact in order to achieve that.

The main part of the project is long-term strategy for joint development plan of the ERB. We have to define what themes are common for all of us. The work packages (WP) of the project are:

1. Strategic planning
2. Environment protection
3. Innovative centres (for SME)
4. Rural development
5. Communication and information

WP 1 and 5 could be combined.

EU has allotted 1,3 mio EUR for this project, which is about 50% of the budget. The total budget estimated – 3,5 mio EUR for 2 or 3 years. Mr. Lindencrona gives a press release of the Steering Committee about all project applications (attached). On October 1 will be the next project approval.

Mr. Andresen – Karlson named two problems – need of assurance that Phare and Tacis will co-finance. It is necessary to discuss this in August. And the second – Rostok office asks clarification about WP 3. We should involve stakeholders – centres from Sweden and Denmark, in order to facilitate participation and feel the input.

Mr. Lindencrona – We just got the message that no clarification is necessary.

Ms. Strēle – About Phare – we have a new project – Capital Investment Programme in co-operation with our partners from the Cities of Change network and other partners. Budget 100 000 EUR from the Small project fund.

Mr. Lindencrona shows the Seagull structure and adds that active involvement is needed from the secretariats, but political support and active info dissemination are also necessary.

Ms. Strele proposes that the ERB web site should have an additional page for the Seagull project where all the current information could be placed. Ms. Strele undertakes to write a letter to Kalmar to discuss this issue. Others agree.

4. Good Governance project

Mr. Lindencrona distributes materials in English (attached). The seminars for politicians – first now (10-14 June), second/third – September/October/November – depending on the country. Etel Duvskog will also represent the Swedish side in these seminars. Expert seminars will be held in September and October. There is support provided for the operation of secretariats in Lithuania, Latvia and Kaliningrad. Themes of seminars:

1. Local and regional politics in an open market economy;
2. Government, regions and municipalities – the need for devolution in responsibilities and resources in the public sector;
3. Co-operation for local and regional development. The ERB and the EU perspective.

Reports on the progress of this project should be prepared for all board meetings.

Proposal by **Ms. Strele** – to organise the Council meeting together with the end seminar of “Good Governance” project in November.

Mr. Andersen – It is good to combine these things, because Danish and Swedish people are not part of GG project which is a kind of introduction to the Seagull project. Thus it would be beneficial to see the results, but we all have to save our money and time. Danish side would want to have an impression, but maybe could not come if these events would take place in different times and locations.

Mr. Lindencrona – It would be good for all the participants if Polish and Danish partners would participate in the concluding seminar of the GG project, because it is input into Seagull project.

Mr. Andersen points out that it is bad planning to organise the seminar in Klaipeda on the same day as the Board meeting is held in Talsi. This could have impeded the Klapeda representatives to come to the meeting.

All participants agree that GG planning should be subject to ERB planning and schedules, and not the other way around.

Ms. Strele – proposal to have the next Board meeting in Bornholm in August, because time is needed to properly prepare for the following Council meeting. This would correspond to request of Polish side expressed on the last meeting.(transport possibilities to Bornholm are better in August, than in September).

All agree. Possible date 20th of August.

5. Skone and Blekinge project suggestion “Baltic Gateway” for Interreg III submission

Mr. Lindencrona informs participants that the next day he and Ms. Duvskog have a meeting in Riga with Mr. Ivars Gaters in order to have this project ready till September. The Skone and Blekinge municipalities are trying to find partners in Latvia, Lithuania, Kaliningrad, Germany, Pomerania and Denmark. The information will be provided to the Latvian side so they can decide if they want to participate. The Baltic Gateway project is sort of an umbrella project for many projects concerning transport corridors. The main idea – many gateways that are coming up right now did not exist 10 years ago (e.g. direction East-West). Municipalities are planning huge investments in infrastructure. It is a fact proven by history that development always occurs along transport routes. Earlier we did not have East – West routes across all Europe. Now this direction is developing and also many more perspectives. This project could be the platform for many other projects – e.g. SEBTrans. Many projects will be integrated. Suggestion from the Interreg secretariat was to have a 3-year time span.

Areas of activity:

1. Exploring the potential of the “Gateway” concept
2. Improving regional accessibility through better rail and road infrastructure
3. Developing intermodal and waterborne freight transport concepts
4. Demonstrating IT solutions for increased safety and capacity

Work packages (WP):

1. Gateway regions
2. Regional accessibility
3. Sustainable freight transport
4. Intelligent transport solutions

Potential partners should be identified by August. Local dissemination of information necessary.

Mr. Andersen: Recently received an invitation from Skone to participate in discussions about “Baltic +” project. Is this the same?

Mr. Lindencrona: No, this project is more like Seagull, than Baltic Gateway. Baltic + could later use the Baltic Gateway.

Mr. Andersen: The information in Roger Callif's letter was very similar – development of political platform for Southern part of the Baltic region. How can we avoid simultaneous development of so many similar projects? One of the points in Seagull is combination of similar Interreg projects.

Mr. Lindencrona: This project is more about knowledge, than creation of a political platform. We can use the already existing ones. None of the other projects have an East-West direction. The Interreg secretariat said that this project is interesting and should be continued. Of course, more attention should be devoted to avoid overlapping. Questions?

Mr. Andersen: These projects could be wonderfully used for creating things, but currently all these projects are on discussing things and no-one really creates.

Ms. Strele: Provides info on First Class Industrial Park project (network of small airports).

Mr. Andersen: Worried that we talk too much and each time conclude the same – we need transport routes. We already have the Baltic Bridge. Let's make the next project on establishing something.

Mr. Lindencrona: There are investments made. When Latvia, Lithuania and Poland join, there will be more means from the structural funds. Arguments are needed to impress TINA/TEN and have means to invest in harbour infrastructure.

Mr. Niedols: Does this project include air connections?

Mr. Lindencrona: If there are adjacent transport routes creating a transport gateway.

Mr. Niedols: There is an airport in Liepaja and they investigate various possibilities for involvement in projects.

Mr. Lindencrona: The problem with airports is that there are too many small airports and some of them just have to disappear.

Mr. Ilsoe: Is this planning connected to work of European Seaport Association?

Mr. Lindencrona: Ten years ago these issues were not considered in the southern part of the Baltic Sea. Now strangers come and plan transportation issues. All plans are made on national levels. We have to think how this will influence the situation.

Mr. Andersen: There are pan-European organisations that will look at the strategy for the whole of Europe. It will be very difficult to get money if the plans will not be in conformity with the large strategy. All the region is ready to invest money to become a transport centre, but we need to think strategically.

Mr. Lindencrona: Consultants were used in the process of writing project. Seldom there is such political support. Project is being prepared for September. In 2 years time after accession many things will change, a lot of old plans will not be taken into consideration anymore. Due to this the TINA/TEN system should be updated regularly.

Mr. Niedols: Proposal – to extend the illustration on the cover to include the territory of the BSPR.

Mr. Lindencrona: If there is interest on the Latvian part – of course.

Ms. Strele: Undertakes to inform the BSPR about this project in the name of the Board.

6. Working group operational questions.

Ms. Strele: We have several working groups, some of which are operating more successfully than others. The most active is environmental group led by Mrs. Eckerbom. This group submitted report on their activities and will actively participate in the implementation of Seagull. The other groups are not so active.

The project leader has requested some changes. Comments?

Mr. Andersen: The environmental group – WP2 is active, but we should devote some more time to discuss this issue in Bornholm. When Seagull starts there will be necessity for working groups for each work package. The spheres will be overlapping. Maybe the groups could be integrated?

The social group will always have activities, but more information should be disseminated, and planned things discussed to facilitate overall ERB involvement.

Maybe we do not need permanent groups, but could form groups according to current needs?

Ms. Strele: The reporting should be improved. As there will be a project proposal site on the Internet, the task of secretariats is to make a list of different scale project proposals. Then the web site could really function as a source of information. A table could be devised for these purposes – who is proposing, basic idea, what partners needed. Afterwards support for projects could be discussed in Board meetings. And it would be clear which spheres are the most topical and what kind of working groups ERB needs.

Mr. Lindencrona: Now ERB has Seagull and it can be used for developing and restructuring groups if needed.

Ms. Strele: There were discussions with Kalmar to place a project search instrument. The Nordic Council of Ministers funding is widely used.

Suggestion: To place the project table as an active search instrument on the web site.

Mr. Ilsoe: As a practical person – maybe we need less groups, but better work.

7. Expo 2002 in Kaliningrad, results and causes

Ms. Strele: Definitely would need opinion of the Russian side. Exhibition was canceled because only 50% of are was filled. No more concrete information. The entrepreneurs said, that the prices were too high comparing with similar expos in Riga. Kaliningrad colleagues said, that it is accustomed to charge foreigners higher prices.

Mr. Lindencrona: Opinion of Swedish side – doubt if it is the business of ERB to organise this kind of Expos. Maybe some introductory exhibitions, but not expos. The companies choose very carefully where they want to participate. We can not influence that.

Mr. Anderson: The Danish side said in advance, that we would not participate due to elections. The price policy was also strange. Agree with Swedish side, that regions should be promoted in a different way. We can only pass on invitations, but companies must decide for themselves. Different promotion – exchange of materials, common cultural and sports events, web page.

Proposal: To place a point on the agenda of next Board meeting: If expos are a relevant issue for ERB.

Ms. Strele: Up to now the agenda for next meeting is like this:

1. Border crossing issues (expert invited)
2. Seagull project
3. Maritime safety
4. Table of projects
5. Expo
6. Working groups.

Secretariat is waiting for additional issues and proposals. Please send them up to the end of June.

Mr. Andersen: Proposal: If a person proposes an issue to the agenda, the person should send to secretariat 1-2 pages of background info to be distributed to all ERB sides, in order to be prepared at the meeting and have a fruitful discussion.

All agree

Ms. Udre: Basic info on the cooperation centre Eiromaja – the only centre of this kind in Latvia outside Riga. Based on Eurohouse in Sarema. EU financing.

Mr. Niedols: Thank you for active participation. See you next time in August in Bornholm.

Normunds Niedols
Chairman of meeting

Carl Ilsoe
Board member

Liga Riezniece
ERB secretariat