



Euroregion Baltic

Presidency: Regional Municipality of Bornholm, EU Secretariat, Ullasvej 17, 3700 Rønne, Denmark
Tel: + 45 5692 1303 fax: +45 5692 1301 e-mail: carrefour@brk.dk - homepage: www.eurobalt.org

Draft minutes

ERB Executive Board meeting

Klaipeda, 23 January 2004

Participants

Board Members

Mr Knud Andersen, Acting ERB President, Denmark
Mr Zbigniew Karpowicz, ERB Vice President, Poland
Mr Normunds Niedols, Latvia
Mr Vytautas Rinkevicius, Lithuania (substitute for Mrs V. Lukoshene)
Mr Alexander Kuznetsov, Russia
Mr Bo Frank, Sweden

Secretariats

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen, Main ERB Secretariat, DK
Mrs Gunta Ceplevica, Latvia
Mrs Sonate Dumbliauskiene, Lithuania
Mrs Giedre Butkute, Lithuania
Mr Zdzislaw Olszewski, Poland
Mr Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski
Mr Victor Koshelev, Russia
Mrs Evgenia Tcherniavskaja, Russia
Mr Ulf Andersson, Sweden
Mr Eric Ciardi, Sweden

Mr Rolf Karlson, Sweden - Seagull project
Mr Ludwik Szakiel, Poland – project Baltic Youth Games

Guests

Mr Mikhail Torshin, Russian General Consul in Klaipeda
Ms Mika Simkunaite, Ministry of Interior, Lithuania
Mr Arturas Bytautas, Ministry of Interior, Lithuania

1) Internal Board matters

a. Approval of Agenda

Approved including following amendments:

P. 2: Information about extension of ERB partners in Kaliningrad region

P. 7: Discussion on how to mark EU Enlargement 1 May 2004

P. 11: Proposal on establishment of information bank on town twins

P. 13: Invitation to competition and to a trade exhibition in Gdansk

b. Approval of minutes for last ERB Executive Board Meeting 31/10-03

Minutes approved and signed by the President and the Vicepresident .

c. Appointment of Board member to co-sign minutes

Vicepresident, Mr Karpowicz, was appointed to co-sign the minutes for this meeting.

2) Report by the President, status and activities since the last ERB Board meeting

On behalf of Mrs Annelise Molin, who could not take part in this meeting, Mr Knud Andersen gave a report on the status of ERB and activities since the last Board meeting.

The status of the ERB cooperation was given on the basis of the 5 main objectives set up by the president, when taking over the presidency almost a year ago.

- 1) Well prepared meetings and thematic discussions on certain common issues
- 2) A special priority of the implementation of the Seagull project
- 3) Strengthening of the ERB profile externally
- 4) Anchoring of the ERB cooperation inside our own regions
- 5) Concretisation of ERB cooperation

ad. 1) Not at least because of the good cooperation between all of our national secretariats we have succeeded to send out agenda and background notes in good time for each of our Board and Council meetings. We have had several thematic discussions on important issues. Minutes have been delivered within the demanded time and all decisions have so far been followed up.

ad. 2) No doubt that the Seagull project have had our highest priority, and due to an enthusiastic project manager and team, several results and reports have already been delivered. Most of the project partners are actively involved in the project implementation, though we still face some difficulties due to lack of co-financing and some changes among the involved partners.

ad. 3) The Board meetings in Brussels, participation in different conferences and several communications with EU Commissioners and national governments have increased the ERB external profile and lobbying role. For sure, we have still much to do in this area, but we have started well.

ad. 4) Especially the Seagull project increase the numbers of actors in our regions involved with ERB cooperation. But also other projects like the Green Circle Schools and other projects under preparation will increase the anchoring of ERB in our regions.

ad. 5) The round trip of our President visiting all ERB regions was a major activity in order to identify proposals for more concrete activities. A big number of ideas were identified and some initiatives have already been taken, such as creating a network among museums for local authors. But also here we have just started.

Mr Knud Andersen stressed the perspective for ERB, as regarded from the side of Bornholm, namely to prepare ERB to implement a common long-term development strategy – the result of the Seagull project, when it ends next year.

The optimal solution is that ERB from 2007 will have its own Neighbourhood programme, which will be an important financial framework to implement all the concrete actions in order to strengthen the cooperation. Money for development of infrastructure, better border management in order to make passage more easy, improving the business development and employment, and to give the ERB citizens better life conditions.

A joint effective structure, a long-term common development strategy and a competent and experienced administrative capacity are the key factors if ERB should prove to the European Commission and the national governments, that ERB is capable to manage a Neighbourhood programme. It is still a realistic opportunity, but it demands ERB to within the coming months to improve the lobbying activities quite a lot.

Crucial milestones to be regarded, as I see it, will be:

? February 2004	The European Commission will launch its 3 rd Cohesion Report, and the financial perspective from 2007-2013 (or 2011)
Spring 2004	A special Task Force under the European Commission will launch a report about the implementation of the Wider Europe initiative
13 June 2004	European Parliamentary Election
1 November 2004	A new European Commission

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After the report of president Mr Koshelev informed that the Regional Administration and the Duma in Kaliningrad region both have decided to participate actively in ERB activities as full members. Mr Koshelev also asked to have this information put on the agenda for the next coming ERB Council meeting.

a. Letter from the AEBR General Secretary, Mr Jens Gabbe

After the ERB Council meeting on Bornholm, Mrs Annelise Molin, informed AEBR General Secretary, Mr Jens Gabbe, about the ERB Council decision not for the moment to apply for AEBR membership and expressing her hope that ERB and AEBR will still be in contact with each other.

Mr Gabbe in a responding letter 29th October 2003 confirmed that AEBR do not consider ERB as a member of AEBR any longer.

b. Letter from the EU Commissioner, Mrs Loyola de Palacio

Mrs Annelise Molin addressed 15th October 2003 a letter to the EU Commissioner, Mrs Loyola de Palacio, informing about the ERB positions and initiatives on Maritime Safety. In a letter of 10th November 2003 the Commissioner inform that EU regulations in the field of oil production platforms are not possible, as they are located in international sea areas. The issues in such

matters are regulated by the international Conventions as MARPOL (Prevention of Pollution from ships, 1978) and COLREG (preventing collisions at Sea, 1972).

The Commissioner also informs that a proposal about designating the Baltic Sea area as a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) is prepared by the all the Baltic States except Russia, to be discussed at the next meeting in the International Maritime Organisation in March 2004.

Finally about the ERB support for a permanent seat for the Committee of Regions or CPMR in the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), the Commissioner informs that this is not possible due to the current EU Regulation for the Agency. The Commission does not intend to extend the attendance to other parties than already mentioned in the Regulation, mainly because of the EU Enlargement and the efficiency of the EMSA Board meetings. In stead she recommend the local and regional authorities to be in touch with their national representatives.

c. Letter from the Danish Foreign Minister, Mr Per Stig Möller

Mrs Annelise Molin the 17th November 2003 addressed a letter to the Danish Foreign Minister, Mr Per Stig Möller, with a request to consider ERB in the further preparations of the EU Neighbourhood Policy, especially for the period after 2006.

Mr Möller in a responding letter 3rd December 2003 informed that he has noted the request from ERB and will consider this in relation to the coming discussions during 2004. At the same time he states that the Neighbourhood Policy after 2006 will be closely regarded in the light of the reform of the EU Cohesion Policy.

Mr Karlson informed that the Swedish Government has a positive view on a neighbourhood programme for ERB, but for the moment discuss to have a special programme between South Sweden and Kaliningrad. A conference between SYDSAM and the Duma in Kaliningrad were held 21 – 22 January 2004 with successful output.

Mr Olszewski informed about a planned conference about a NGO fund connected to the Neighbourhood Programme 2004-2006 for Kaliningrad and neighbouring regions in Lithuania and Poland.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen informed about meetings with the Polish and Russian Embassies in Denmark, where both embassies were informed the considerations in ERB to have its own neighbourhood programme after 2006. Both embassies asked for more detailed information, in order to inform their respective ministries of foreign affairs.

Mr Torshin informed about a recent meeting in Taurage, Lithuania, discussing connection between different programmes, including programmes covering activities among schools and universities in such matters as language training. He recommended ERB to be aware of these programmes.

Mr Knud Andersen informed that in the discussion about the new EU Constitution Treaty, pressure is made on the Council to underline the importance of interregional cooperation in the Treaty text.

Conclusion:

The report by President and added information was taken into consideration.

3) Maritime Safety Conference

a. Report from the Working Group, by Ulf Andersson

Mr Andersson distributed introduction, programme and other information about the Maritime Safety Conference, which has been prepared by a working group with representatives from SydSam, Baltic Seven islands (B7) and ERB. Mr Bo Löfgren from Blekinge has represented ERB in the working group.

The Conference dates are now fixed to 13 – 14 May 2004 and will take place at Hotel Horizont in Trelleborg, Sweden. The conference place has been decided not at least because of the significant contribution by Region Skaane.

The Swedish EU Commissioner for Environment, Mrs Margot Wallström, will not be able to participate and will be replaced by the Swedish Minister for Transports, Mrs Ulrica Messing. The overall aim of the Conference will be to support a classification of the Baltic Sea area as a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA). There will be a focus on how the local and regional authorities in the Southern Baltic Sea area can influence national and international authorities to develop higher maritime safety and environmental protection as well as on how to create better local preconditions with the aim to avoid environmental effects from accidents at sea. A follow up conference in 2005 have been discussed and proposed to be held in Poland.

Each country will be asked to give a 15 minutes speech, and name of the representative should as soon as possible be informed to Mr Bo Löfgren.

There is a limit of participants to maximum 100 persons. Each ERB Party can participate with 15 persons, which very urgent must be identified and informed before end of January to Mr Löfgren.

There will be no conference fee, but transport must be financed by each delegation.

Mr Olszewski informed that from Poland will participate 7 persons.

Mr Knud Andersen recommended in the conference to refer to the letter from EU Commissioner Mrs de Palacio, which fully supports that the Baltic Sea should be have a status a “Particular Sensitive Sea Area”.

b. Decision on ERB participation

At the last Board meeting it was decided to make a final decision on ERB involvement in the Conference at this Board meeting.

Recommendation:

The Board is recommended to confirm the ERB participation in the Conference, and to recommend to the ERB regions to identify participants for the Conference.

The ERB representatives in the Working Group is recommended to assist the ERB President in preparing a presentation as scheduled in the proposed Conference programme.

Conclusion:

Recommendation approved

4) ERB Conference 2004

The ERB Council 29th August 2003 decided to organise a big ERB/Seagull Conference in 2004, and has asked the main ERB Secretariat, the Polish Secretariat and the Seagull Project Secretariat to prepare a proposal.

The ERB Board 31st October 2003 discussed a proposed and agreed to include more concrete and relevant activities, aiming at partnership building and town twinning. The Secretariats were recommended to continue the preparations and soon to set a final date and place for the Conference.

The Conference is proposed to partly be financed by the Seagull project and by a Polish project under PHARE CBC connected to the Seagull project.

As it has still not been possible to apply for co-financing under PHARE CBC and as the final dates for the Maritime Safety Conference has now been set to 13 – 14 May 2004, the Secretariats recommend to organise the big ERB/Seagull Conference after summer 2004.

The Conference is proposed to take place in Elblag, Poland and the main subjects are proposed to be:

- The Sea as a common Border of the Euroregion Baltic (Neighbourhood Policy)
- A Euroregional Dimension in the EU Cohesion Policy (Structural Funds 2006+)
- Forming the future of Euroregion Baltic – in puts to a concrete and integrated approach (Seagull related group meetings, target group: representatives from local authorities)

Recommendation:

The Board is recommended to approve, that

- the final dates of the ERB/Seagull Conference will be decided after the necessary financing have been provided
- main subjects of the conference should be EU Neighbourhood Policy, Structural Funds after 2006 and activities in relation to implementation of the Seagull project

The Polish ERB Secretariat is as the coming main ERB Secretariat recommended to take over the main coordination in the further preparation of the conference.

Conclusion:

Recommendation approved.

5) A permanent ERB Secretariat

The ERB Council 29th August 2003 agreed to let the main ERB Secretariat prepare a concrete proposal to the Board for a permanent ERB Secretariat and a common ERB budget.

The ERB Board 31st October 2003 discussed a concrete proposal and recommended further investigations on external financing opportunities and adjustment in the weighting of own financing between the ERB regions.

a. External financing opportunities

21st November 2003 the head of the main ERB Secretariat and head of the Swedish ERB Secretariat met Mr Bo Löwendal from the INTERREG III B office in Karlskrona, to discuss possibilities of co-financing from INTERREG III B programme in the establishment of a permanent ERB Secretariat.

The Priority 3 in the programme aims at supporting transnational promotion of institutional strengthening of the capacity for spatial development. Focus under this priority is to mobilise different sectoral activities, proper mix of measures, planning and decision making in a well

organised form, improvement of the capacity of the individual actors and to interact sectorally and internationally.

It seems possible to combine the establishment of an ERB Secretariat with co-financing from INTERREG III B, focusing on spatial development and exchange of experiences.

An Eastern partner will be the preferred lead partner and application should be prepared to be sent in during next application round in autumn 2004. Up to 50% of eligible costs can be applied.

b. ERB co-financing, membership fee

Both the main ERB Secretariat and the Polish ERB Secretariat will at the Board meeting present proposal for financing of a common ERB budget, considering establishment of a permanent Secretariat.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen presented the proposal from the main ERB Secretariat with a total budget on 100 000 EUR, of which 50 000 EUR should be externally financed. Own financing was proposed to be based on basic fees with 2 000 EUR for Danish and Swedish regions, 1 000 EUR for Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish regions and 0 EUR for Kaliningrad region. The rest of the amount needed should be based on the number of inhabitants and GDP per inhabitant in the different regions.

Mr Olszewski presented the proposal from the Polish Party with a total budget on 36 000 EUR. The Polish Secretariat will be able to host the permanent secretariat and will besides the budget provide office facilities, accounting and other basic services. The financing is proposed to be 6 000 EUR per ERB Party.

As a compromise Mr Knud Andersen proposed that 36 000 EUR should be financed with 6 000 EUR per Danish and Swedish regions, 3 000 EUR per Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish region and 0 EUR for Kaliningrad region. If the budget will be more than 36 000 EUR, the extra amount will be financed by a fee per region, based on number of inhabitants and the GDP level in the regions.

Recommendation:

The Board is recommended to discuss the external financing opportunities, the proposals on how to provide needed ERB co-financing and to decide eventually further steps to be taken.

Conclusion:

All Board members agreed in principle the proposal for and need of a permanent ERB Secretariat. About the proposed financing, each ERB Party at home will clarify its position, before further steps will be taken.

6) Seagull project, report by Mr Rolf Karlson

a. Steering Committee meeting 8 – 9 January 2004

Mr Rolf Karlson reported from the meeting. Still co-financing for eastern partners in the project is complicated and hopefully the opening of Structural Funds for the new EU members, such as INTERREG III B programme, will better the situation.

Fact finding and mapping activities has now resulted in several reports and analysis, of which a Democracy report has been printed. Further documents will be printed and distributed in the near future.

In order to improve the commitment among the regions in the project, a half-time report including positive and negative learnings will be made, and together with a letter be sent to governors and other regional leading persons in the ERB regions.

b. Synopsis for the ERB Strategy

Mr Karlson presented a proposal for the synopsis of the ERB strategy, focusing on methods for the continued work and main strategic areas. Special focus should at this initial stage be what added values a common ERB strategy could bring to each of the ERB regions. An example could be that different 'clusters' could benefit on strengthening of ERB cooperation.

A time schedule for involving the ERB Board and Council in the further development of the Strategy will be made.

The Strategy vision is to make ERB as a European frontrunner, and four strategic areas have been proposed for this.

Conclusion:

The Board took the report into consideration and had an initial discussion on added values connected to an ERB strategy, and recommended the project management to continue the planned process.

7) **Implementation of ERB Information Strategy**

a. Renewal of the ERB website, by Eric Ciardi

Mr Ciardi informed that the number of visitors to the ERB website are increasing, probably because the spreading of the Seagull electronic newsletter.

With assistance of a Polish company a new website is developed including a new structure. It will be presented at the next ERB Council meeting.

b. The use of web cam meetings, by Niels Chresten Andersen

Mr Andersen informed that the ERB Secretariats has made one more web meeting, preparing this Board meeting. Again it went successfully. To further develop including web camera will mean expenditures for buying of 'web rooms'. Mr Ciardi has made investigations on prices and the cheapest offer is 80 EUR per hour.

Mr Olszewski from the Polish ERB Secretariat could confirmed the price level due to his investigations, but at the same stressed to keep on developing the idea. Web cam meetings are low cost and very effective meetings.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen recommended considering the extra costs in combination with the budget for a permanent ERB Secretariat.

c. Follow up on other proposed actions, by Niels Chresten Andersen

Mr Andersen stressed each ERB Party to translate main ERB communications into own language and to link the official ERB website to the regional official website.

The Polish Secretariat was recommended to prepare a concrete proposal for production of a promotional ERB leaflet.

Mr Andersson presented a concrete proposal from the Swedish ERB party for an information package to schools about ERB. Preparation should be done by a network of universities and pupils and financing via the EU Comenius programme.

d. Marking the EU Enlargement 1 May 2004, proposal by the Swedish ERB Party

Mr Frank recommended strongly that ERB marked the date for the EU Enlargement, for example by organising a common event.

Conclusion:

The Board recommend the secretariats to further develop the possibilities to have web cam meetings, to let the Polish ERB Secretariat prepare a concrete proposal for a promotional ERB leaflet and to further discuss the Swedish proposal for an information package for schools. Each ERB Party is recommended at the next Council meeting to report about planned activities celebrating the EU Enlargement 1 May 2004, and based on this an eventually ERB activity will be decided.

8) Green Circle School project, report by Swedish Delegation

Mr Andersson informed that the project implementation so far is successful and information about the project accessible on the ERB website. A report about the project will be given at the Council meeting.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen asked the Russian ERB Party to specify the need of financial support for the Zelenogradsk School participating in the project. He referred to the Board meeting in Brussels, where the Swedish ERB Party promised to co-finance the project coordinator, and the other ERB Parties except Kaliningrad region would co-finance other costs for the participation of the Zelenogradsk School. Mr Andersen proposed that the hosting region for project meetings should finance the accommodation costs, and that financing of transport costs will be clarified among Danish, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish ERB parties once the costs for this is known.

Conclusion:

The Board took the report and recommendations into consideration.

9) Baltic Youth Games project, report by Mr Ludwik Szakiel

Mr Szakiel informed that several partners have been identified in all ERB countries and a preparatory meeting is planned to take place during March 2004. A detailed programme will be made and co-financing matters clarified. The perspective of the project is to have an annual ERB sport event.

There will be three kind of activities: 1) Sport competitions in football, volleyball, basketball and boxing, 2) Education through sport, including information seminars in Kaliningrad, Klaipeda and Poland with exchange of best practice, 3) Cultural meeting of young people. The project will have a final publication and CD Rom as out put.

Budget has been extended to 55 000 EUR and will be co-financed by the Polish PHARE Cross Border Cooperation programme for Eastern borders. Partners themselves will pay transport costs.

160 participants from Poland, 160 participants from Russia, 80 participants from Lithuania and in total 60-70 participants from DK/S/LV are foreseen.

Target group is young people in age 13 – 15, and the games are planned to take part in late July 2004.

Conclusion:

The Board took the given report into consideration.

10) ERB Working Groups – structure and working methods

The ERB Council 29th 2003 agreed on to let the Board discuss the future structure and working methods of the ERB Working Groups. The main ERB Secretariat has made a proposal, which will be presented at the Board meeting.

Recommendation:

The Board is recommended to discuss the proposal presented and decide on eventual further steps to be taken.

Conclusion:

Postponed to next Board meeting, as the issue is more or less connected to the discussion of an eventually permanent ERB secretariat.

11) Town and Municipality Twinning

List of twin towns and regions have been made and distributed from the Danish, Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish ERB parties.

Mr Knud Andersen recommended to base the town twinning activities on exchange of 'ordinary' people such as young people from schools, sport organisations etc. and not at traditional only politicians. He also recommended to collect examples and to develop ideas on how to use town twinings.

Conclusion:

The Board decided to let the Secretariats collect a full picture on twinning towns and regions within ERB, good examples and ideas how to develop such twinings in order to further discussion by the Board.

12) ERB Council meeting 27 February 2004

The meeting will take place in Elblag at the Polish ERB Secretariat. It will begin during the afternoon and end with an evening dinner.

Each delegation can include a young person due to Board decision in May 2004, and members of ERB working groups can also be included.

Mr Olszewski stressed to as soon as possible to receive a list of participants from each ERB Party.

13) Other matters

The Polish delegations distributed invitations for participation in an art competition and a trade exhibition.