



ERB BOARD MEETING

Minutes

Date:

1st March 2006
09.00 – 12.00 hours (Danish, Polish, Swedish time)
10.00 – 13.00 hours (Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian time)

Meeting Place: on-line via Marratech

Participants:

Members of ERB Board

Ms Irina Rozova, ERB President, ERB Board Member, Lithuania
Mr Bo Frank, ERB Board Member, Sweden
Mr Alexandr Kuzniecov, ERB Board Member, Russia
Mr Per Ole Petersen, ERB Board Member, Denmark
Ms Krystyna Wróblewska, substitute for Mr Jan Kozłowski, ERB Board Member, Poland
Mr Armands Puzulis, substitute for Mr Zigo Rutkovskis, ERB Board Member, Latvia

Secretariats

Mr Niels Ch. Andersen, ERB Secretariat, Denmark, Seagull II WP3 Leader
Ms Dalia Makuskiene, ERB Secretariat, Lithuania
Ms Kora Stańczyk, Seagull II WP1 Leader
Mr Zdzisław Olszewski, ERB Secretariat, Poland
Ms Elena Butorova, ERB Secretariat, Russia
Ms Olga Grigorevna, ERB Secretariat, Russia
Mr Victor Koshelev, ERB Secretariat, Russia
Mr Ulf Andersson, ERB Secretariat, Sweden
Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański, ERB IPS Secretariat

1. Opening and welcome

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova opened the Board meeting and welcome its participants. She extended a special introductory word for Mr Per Ole Petersen, a new member of the Executive Board, representing the Regional Municipality of Bornholm.

Mr Per Ole Petersen introduced himself, saying he was a Social Democratic Party member, elected to the regional council last autumn. He is also a headmaster in one of the schools on Bornholm. All the other Board members welcomed Mr Petersen, also making brief introductions of themselves.

2. Board internal matters:

2.1 Approving the agenda.

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova presented the agenda for the meeting and asked whether there were any comments to it. ERB Board Member, Mr Bo Frank remarked that the usual point of approving the minutes of the previous meeting was missing. Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański explained that both the minutes from the last Board meeting (held in Klaipeda on 22nd July) and from the Council meeting (in Klaipeda on 28th November) were sent out to the National Secretariats and no comments had been made within the following two months. Thus, in accordance with the Statutes, the minutes are considered valid.

Afterwards, the ERB Board members approved the agenda.

2.2 Appointing Board members to co-sign the minutes from the Board meeting on 1st March 2006.

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova recommended that she and ERB Vice-President, Mr Alexandr Kuzniecov will sign the minutes from this meeting, which is the first in the history of Euroregion Baltic meetings to be convened in virtual reality. The Marratech system (purchased through the Seagull II project) enables recording of meetings, both its audio and visual part. Based on this recording, a traditional, paper version of the minutes will be drawn up by the ERB International Secretariat and presented for approval.

The ERB Board agreed to appoint ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova and ERB Vice-President, Mr Alexandr Kuzniecov to sign the minutes.

2.3 Approving the draft ERB yearly plan for 2006.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański informed the Board members that during the meeting on 25th January ERB secretariats agreed to present a draft plan of ERB activities in 2006. This plan takes into consideration ERB Board and Council meetings, as well as events held in the region, including ones that are organised within the Seagull 2 project.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen requested that two more events should be included in the calendar: a Green Circle Schools event in Kaliningrad between 25th and 28th April 2006, and the second ERB Council meeting.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański responded that according to the Statutes of Euroregion Baltic, 2006 should see the second Council meeting which is not yet included in the yearly plan, but suggests considering this issue together with a visit of the Catalan delegation to the ERB regions, to be discussed in 6.4 of this agenda. He also said that the Green Circle Schools event will be added to the yearly plan.

The ERB Board approved the yearly plan, and decided to look into possible dates for the Council meeting later during the meeting.

3. Proposal to secure highest possible political representation of ERB members in the Board of Euroregion Baltic

ERB Board member, Mr Bo Frank raised the issue of political representation in the ERB Board. He requested that the Board should discuss what steps need to be taken in order to ensure that political representation of Euroregion Baltic in its Board has a rank of significance.

Mr Zdzisław Olszewski informed that the Polish Party in Euroregion Baltic had its internal meeting on 17th February, during which this issue was discussed. He said the Polish partners give their full support to the proposal and stressed that they have already demonstrated it being a practice when appointing Mr Jan Kozłowski, the highest elected regional politician to hold ERB Presidency in 2004. Mr Olszewski also mentioned that in the opinion of Polish members of Euroregion Baltic this initiative should be finalised as a declaration of the will on the part of the regions, rather than a change to the ERB Statutes.

ERB Vice-President, Mr Alexandr Kuzniecov expressed his support to the idea, and informed the participants that the Russian party is already effecting measures to secure such a significant political representation in Kaliningrad. Talks with the Kaliningrad Governor are being held at the moment, he went on, to appoint the Deputy Prime Minister in Kaliningrad as a next ERB President, as well as to complete the Russian delegation to the ERB Council with the Vice-Speaker of the Kaliningrad Duma, representative of the Association of Russian Municipalities in the Kaliningrad Region, and Director of the Regional Development Affairs of the Kaliningrad Government.

ERB Board member, Mr Per Ole Petersen said that the decisions regarding the representation of the Regional Municipality of Bornholm were taken last autumn, after the local elections, and it would now be very difficult to change them. He informed that the Danish Party will be represented by himself and Mr Ken Bolmar, elected member of the Regional Council.

ERB Board member, Mr Bo Frank informed that the three Swedish member regions follow their internal rotation within Euroregion Baltic. In 2006, it will be Blekinge to chair the Swedish Party, and there is already some preparation going on with regards to who will be appointed as ERB Vice-President. Mr Frank did not disclose any names but confirmed that an official announcement will be made on 30th November in Kaliningrad.

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova suggested that the ERB International Secretariat will prepare a draft resolution on the political representation of the regions in ERB bodies to be discussed at the Council meeting on 30th March 2006. The Board members agreed to President Rozova's suggestion.

4. Information on the Seagull 2 project, with particular focus on the activities related to the implementation of the ERB Joint Development Programme (JDP)

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański began with referring to the ERB Joint Development Programme. It was approved by the ERB Council, and seven out of nine member regions individually, as well as by the ERB Council. It is still unclear when the JDP will be approved in Kaliningrad and Klaipėda. The Programme, he continued, calls for the establishment of transnational structures, responsible for the implementation of the prioritised activities. This recommendation, he continued, constituted the point of departure for the Seagull II project which is now in the process of completing so-called reference networks, i.e. networks of politicians, civil servants, local and regional institutions, experts and non-governmental organisations centred around each of the specified focus areas and actions. There are 8 such networks corresponding with the themes of SMEs and innovation, rural development, tourism, transport infrastructure, social dimension, water forum, energy forum, and Kaliningrad hotspots. At this moment, however, these networks present uneven contribution at the level of regional representation, which is in direct relation to the interests of each ERB region. Here, it is up to the regions to decide where their priorities lie, especially in terms of their own regional strategies, as it seems unreasonable to assume that all the regions will be equally committed to all of the JDP activities. Thus, on behalf of the Seagull II Project Coordination Group, he requested that each ERB region will lead work in the reference network dealing

with the strategy activity selected as its priority. He then presented the tentative recommendation is that the ERB regions take patronage for the following JDP activities:

<i>Blekinge</i>	<i>SMEs and Innovation</i>
<i>Bornholm, Kurzeme</i>	<i>Social Dimension</i>
<i>Kaliningrad</i>	<i>Environmental Hot Spots</i>
<i>Kalmar</i>	<i>Water Forum</i>
<i>Klaipeda</i>	<i>Transport Infrastructure</i>
<i>Kronoberg</i>	<i>Energy Forum</i>
<i>Pomorskie</i>	<i>Tourism</i>
<i>Warmińsko-Mazurskie</i>	<i>Rural Development</i>

Mr Demkowicz-Dobrzański stressed that such regional patronage could secure the Joint Development Programme with long-term political support and provide the regions with more control over its implementation process.

Mr Zdzisław Olszewski informed that the Polish Party in Euroregion Baltic had its internal meeting on 17th February, during which this issue was discussed. He said the Polish partners supported the idea of regional patronage but needed time for internal work in order to consult the JDP area proposed for them to be responsible for.

Ms Krsytyna Wróblewska confirmed that the Pomorskie supported the idea and preliminarily accepted tourism as their area of responsibility.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said Bornholm was in favour of the ERB regions being patrons of the JDP activities. He stated that Bornholm too needed time to consult the issue internally.

Ms Dalia Makuskiene asked why Klaipeda was given the issue of transport infrastructure as their leading JDP activity, and who made the decision. Mr Demkowicz-Dobrzański explained that this is only a very preliminary proposal, put forward during the meeting of the Seagull II Secretariat. The regions are therefore requested to consider the proposal and express their opinions, both positive and negative.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen explained that the reason why it was suggested that Klaipeda County should be responsible for transport infrastructure was because of the status of its port and the potential it has in becoming part of the EU Motorways of the Sea.

Ms Dalia Makuskiene responded that the regional level in Lithuania lacks prerogatives in the issue of transport infrastructure and will not be effective leader in this area. Instead, she went on, Klaipeda would be interested in the field of tourism development.

ERB Board Member, Mr Bo Frank took the floor to say that the Region Kronoberg will be interested in taking responsibility for the transport infrastructure issue.

Mr Victor Koshelev said the Russian Party will have an internal discussion before accepting leadership of any activity prioritised in the JDP.

Mr Armands Puzulis said it was now impossible for Kurzeme to make commitments of this kind, and that a debate will take place in the region to make proper decisions.

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova suggested that the International Secretariat should continue consulting the member regions regarding the priority activities they want to be responsible for, and prepare a second proposal with regards to regional patronage over the Joint Development Programme. The ERB Board members agreed to holding a further discussion on seeking permanent commitment on the part of the member regions to the implementation of the JDP.

5. Debate on an agenda for the ERB Council meeting on 30th March 2006 in Kaliningrad

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova went back to the decision of the ERB Council to hold its meeting in Kaliningrad on 30th March 2006. The meeting will mark the change in ERB Presidency. The Russian Party, she continued, will appoint its representative to hold the post until February 2007. Also, the Swedish partners will appoint their representative to become ERB Vice-President. During the meeting, other national delegations will also be requested to present their Council members.

Mr Victor Koshelev informed the Board that he is already having discussions with the Governor's Administration regarding the organisation of the Council meeting. Initial arrangements have been made to host the meeting in the premises of the Administration, as well as to host dinner for the ERB Councillors. He also addressed the National Secretariats with the request to specify the number of people in each national delegation to the Council meeting, how they will be travelling into the Kaliningrad Region, and whether they will need assistance in acquiring visas.

Mr Armands Puzulis said that the Latvian delegation is only being composed but will definitely need help to obtain the Kaliningrad visa.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen informed the Danish delegation will consist of four people, two of whom will need to be assisted in getting visas.

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova said that the Lithuanian delegation will handle the visa problem themselves.

ERB Board member, Mr Bo Frank informed the participants that the Swedish delegation will already be headed by the new Board member as the internal rotation among the three Swedish regions now goes to Blekinge. He also mentioned that the Swedish delegation will receive Kaliningrad visas through an agency in Sweden.

Mr Zdzisław Olszewski said the Polish members of the Council will travel to Kaliningrad together by bus, and they already have the visas. He also mentioned that the Polish group will do the sightseeing tour in the city on 31st March, to which they will be happy to invite other delegations.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański offered to collect all the information requested by the Russian Secretariat and pass on to Baltijsk and Kaliningrad.

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova stressed that this Council meeting could be an excellent opportunity for Euroregion Baltic and its member regions to establish good working relations with the new administration of the Kaliningrad Oblast. It is therefore important to prepare an interesting agenda, as well as relevant political representation.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański confirmed that invitations will be sent to top regional politicians from around the Euroregion, and expectations are high, also regarding Russian participation. He also said that invitations will be extended towards General and Honorary Consuls of Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in Kaliningrad.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska suggested inviting a guest from the European Commission. She said that in the light of further discussions on future Neighbourhood Programmes, it could be advisable to host somebody from DG Relex. Ms Wróblewska offered to help identify a suitable person.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said the Danish delegation was ready to host a youth representative and asked if other National Secretariats are also going to invite them to the Council meeting.

ERB Board member, Mr Bo Frank stated that the Swedish representation could also be extended with a young representative.

Mr Zdzisław Olszewski said that the ERB has a youth coordinator, Ms Ewelina Bonar, who will be contacted and invited to participate in the meeting.

To sum up, ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova suggested that the Russian and International Secretariats should remain in close contact on the organisational arrangements. She also requested that the International Secretariat should send out invitations to the Council members, regional politicians, consuls and the European Commission, and prepare a draft agenda for the meeting to be consulted among the National Secretariats. The Board members agreed to President Rozova's suggestion.

6. Information from ERB IPS

6.1 Financial reports

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański presented the IPS budgetary implementation for 2005 and the plan of IPS income and expenditure for 2006. He pointed out two important aspects of these budgets. Firstly, the balance remains negative, both in

2005 (around 18,000 EUR) and 2006 (around 60,000 EUR), due to the implementation of the Seagull II project. This negative balance is possible thanks to the role of the Association of Polish Municipalities as the project Lead Partner, whom Euroregion Baltic owed around 21,000 EUR at the end of 2005. Secondly, although the book shows a negative balance, considering the refund of 43,700 EUR for the Seagull II expenditure made in Milestone 1 (between June and December 2005), which is only going to be made during Milestone 2, the International Secretariat will have a positive balance of around 22,500 EUR.

Mr Ulf Andersson asked to confirm the information regarding this apparently negative balance of the IPS, and Mr Demkowicz-Dobrzański did so, reminding such a situation take place because of the refunding procedures within the Interreg Programme: money is paid back after expenditure has been made.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska asked why the two Polish regions have a varying amount of their contribution made to the International Secretariat. Mr Demkowicz-Dobrzański explained that the financial declaration by the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region was made in Polish zloty when it was a very strong currency. Thus, when calculated again into euros after its decrease in value, the figure was nominally smaller. He also said that the situation will be resolved in 2006.

Following President Rozova's request, the Board members approved the budgets.

6.2 Information on recent activities aimed at acquiring the status of a CBC area for ERB.

Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański informed the Board on the current status of ERB lobbying activities towards the acquisition of its own CBC Programme. He paid special attention to the meeting held on 2nd February 2006 with EU Regional Policy Commissioner, Ms Danuta Hübner and the staff of her Cabinet. Euroregion Baltic was represented by Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański of the ERB International Secretariat, and the two Polish ERB member regions by the Directors of the Offices in Brussels: Ms Alicja Majewska-Gałęziak (of Pomorskie) and Ms Iwona Kur (of Warmińsko-Mazurskie). SydSam was represented by its Chairman Roger Kaliff, Director of the Secretariat in Kalmar, Mr Håkan Brynielsson, Director of the Secretariat in Brussels, Ms Sofie Gardstedt, and Ms Ulrika Joelsson of the SydSam Secretariat in Kalmar.

Two special guests participated in the meeting: Ms Eva Hedqvist-Petersen, MEP and a member of the EU Parliament Committee for Regional Affairs, and Mr Christopher Beazley, MEP and Chairman of the EU Parliament "Baltic Europe" Integroup. They both shared the arguments for the establishment of such a cooperation zone.

Ms Danuta Hübner suggested a proposal for Euroregion Baltic to consider: an ERB cross-border priority within a new BSR transnational programme. Once supported by the Member States, the Commissioner offered to assist the ERB in the process of designing such a "subprogramme". She reminded that the financial allocation by each Member State under the "European territorial cooperation" objective may be subject to flexibility of 10% of the amounts allocated between the cross-border component and the transnational component, which may give the ERB regions the possibility to seek expected financial assistance.

Mr Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański stressed the urgency for the ERB member regions to take a position towards this proposal and start seeking approval in the respective governments.

ERB Board member, Mr Bo rank thanked the International Secretariat for the work put into the lobbying activities for an ERB crossborder cooperation programme. He also informed the participants that both the regions and the national government of Sweden continuously support this initiative.

Niels Chresten Andersen drew attention to the fact that such a programme must be a satisfactory solution for all the ERB members. In the perspective of Bornholm, it seems most desirable that the ERB programme is a neighbourhood one. He also asked

whether the current position of Poland is known as the country earlier suggested so-called transition periods and delaying the beginning of the ENPI programmes.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański responded that to his knowledge Poland still opposes taking full responsibility for any misuse of funds on the territory of a neighbourhood country, proposing the so-called transition periods and extending the existing 2004 – 2006 programmes.

President Rozova asked the International Secretariat to prepare a draft position towards a future ENPI programme for the ERB, in order to present it at the Council meeting in Kaliningrad. The Board members backed the proposal.

6.3 NEEBOR

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański informed the Board that on 8th December 2005, a network of eastern external border regions was established in Brussels. There are a number of already existing networks of European regions but NEEBOR, he went on, is the first to comprise regions situated along the EU's external border. It is an open organisation of no membership fee consisting of 26 regional authorities, associations and development agencies.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska noted that she was ambiguous about joining the NEEBOR network. On the one hand, she said, NEEBOR has the innovative quality and could be an interesting initiative. On the other, Ms Wróblewska wondered, why Euroregion Baltic does not fully utilise existing and well-established regional networks that exist in the European Union. She suggested waiting a while to see how effective NEEBOR will become in the future.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said that he does appreciate the establishment of this new cooperative network but agrees with Ms Wróblewska that any decision regarding membership in NEEBOR should be postponed until more concrete results of its work can be seen.

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova suggested that the International Secretariat collects information on activities conducted within the NEEBOR cooperation and presents it to the Board members so that they will be able to take a final decision in the future.

6.4 Request from Pyrenees Mediterranean Euroregion to host a visit of the Catalan delegation to the ERB regions.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański informed the Board that he had received an inquiry from the Secretariat of the Pyrenees Mediterranean Euroregion whether the ERB would be ready to host a visit by the government of Catalonia. A small Catalan delegation would be headed by the regional prime minister, Mr Josep Bargalló, and the time considered is the end of October or the beginning of November. The objective of Mr. Bargalló's visit would be to know in situ the reality of Euroregion Baltic and how this cooperation works. The visit would take place in the framework of the Catalan "Baltic Sea Policy", whose aim is to strengthen the dialogue and practical cooperation between the European Union's "North" and "South" at the subnational level. As the central aim of the visit is to learn about the BSR and its complexities, Pyrenees Mediterranean Euroregion is requesting the opportunity of visiting several places in ERB. At the present stage, if Euroregion Baltic confirmed its willingness to host the visit, the first step could be to determine the dates of Mr. Bargalló's visit in October/November. As a second step, a suggestion could be that a member of Mr. Bargalló's staff and of Pyrenees Mediterranean Euroregion come in June to discuss the contents and the logistics of the visit.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański proposed considering two activities: firstly, Euroregion Baltic invites the Catalan Prime Minister to the Council meeting in Kaliningrad in the autumn 2006; secondly, individual ERB regions offer to host Mr

Josep Bargalló at home. At that point, he returned to the question of a second Council meeting (as decided in point 2.3 of this agenda). Having checked on calendars of events planned in the Baltic Sea Region, he suggested that the meeting should be held between 6 and 7 November.

President Rozova said she supports inviting the Catalan guests to the Council meeting in the time proposed, and that Klaipeda County will also host him.

Mr Bo Frank agreed to the proposed date and informed that the Swedish regions will also invite the Prime Minister of Catalonia.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska said that both local and regional elections will be held in Poland, which may cause some irregularities in the work of the offices. On the other hand, she said, the date seems sensible and Pomorskie will definitely be interested in hosting the visit.

Mr Armands Puzulis supported the date of 6 – 7 November and informed that the Latvian Party would invite Mr Bargalló to Kurzeme.

President Rozova asked the International Secretariat to prepare a letter of invitation to Mr Bargalló, and possibly, for coordinating his visits to the ERB regions.

7. Information from the Polish Secretariat on the forthcoming trade fairs

7.1 Tourism trade fair in Gdansk

On behalf of the Polish Secretariat Mr Zdzisław Olszewski reiterated the invitation to all the other Secretariats to participate in the trade fair held in Gdańsk between 7th and 9th April this year. The Polish Secretariat has attended the event for a number of years and already bought space at the venue. All the ERB regions are welcome to come to Gdańsk and use the space to promote themselves at no participation charge. All other expenditure (travel and accommodation) must be covered by the participating regions themselves.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański suggested organising a meeting of tourism reference network members together with the Gdansk Trade Fair. He offered covering the cost of accommodation for the members and asked the Seagull II regional coordinators to promote the idea among their tourism organisations and inform Seagull II Work Package 1 Leader, Ms Kora Stańczyk.

Mr Niels Chresten Adersen expressed Danish support to the idea of the tourism reference network and informed that two representatives from Bornholm will take part in the Fair in Gdańsk.

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova informed the Board that the Tourism Agency among other similar organisations in Klaipeda will be informed about this initiative.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska said Pomorskie Region will be definitely participating in the Fair, held in their regional capital.

Mr Armands Puzulis said he will transfer the invitation to tourism organisations in Kurzeme and will contact the Polish Secretariat regarding any necessary details.

Mr Victor Koshelev closed the debate, saying he will contact the International Secretariat to discuss how tourism organisations from the Kaliningrad Region could participate in the trade fairs, as well.

On behalf of the Board, President Rozova thanked the Polish Party for the invitation to the fair, expressing her hope that all the ERB member regions will be able to attend the event.

7.2 5th International Trade Fair for Small and Medium Enterprises in Elbląg

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański reminded the participants of the invitation to come to Elbląg extended at the Council meeting in Klaipeda by Mayor Henryk Słonina. 24th June will mark the national celebration of the Maritime Festival in

Elbląg. This big event will also be accompanied by other shows and entertainment. One already planned is 5th International Trade Fair for Small and Medium Enterprises, organised under the auspices of the President of Elbląg and in cooperation with the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The fair could also correspond with the scope of the Seagull 2 activities relating to the Innovation/SMEs reference network. Hence, there is a possibility to make use of some assistance from the project.

Mr Zdzisław Olszewski said the organisation process of the fair is already quite advanced, and that both the invitations and registration forms had been sent to the National Secretariats.

Niels Chretsen Andersen informed that the Business Centre on Bornholm is a member of the SME / innovation reference network and cooperates with chambers of commerce in Poland. It should then, he continued, be a logical partner in the fair. The Danish Secretariat will keep promoting the event among all relevant actors.

Seagull II Work Package 1 Leader, Ms Kora Stańczyk said all the members of the SME / innovation reference network will be notified of the fair during their on-line meetings throughout March.

President Rozova asked all the National Secretariats to remain in permanent contact with the International Secretariat, as well as to promote and support the fair in their regions. The Board approve of the request.

8. AOB

No other business was introduced. At this moment, when all the points of the agenda had been discussed, ERB President, Irina Rozova closed the meeting of the Board.

Irina Rozova, ERB President

Alexander Kuzniecov, ERB Vice-President