



ERB COUNCIL MEETING Minutes

Date:

28th November 2005, 15.00 – 18.00 hours local time

Meeting Place:

Klaipeda Hotel, Klaipeda, Lithuania

Participants:

Members of ERB Board

Ms Irina Rozova, ERB President, ERB Board Member, Lithuania
Ms Annelise Molin, ERB Board Member, Denmark
Ms Krystyna Wróblewska, substitute for Mr Jan Kozłowski, ERB Board Member, Poland
Mr Bo Frank, ERB Board Member, Sweden

Members of ERB Council

Ms Dalia Makuskiene, ERB Council Member, Lithuania
Mr Vaclovas Dackauskas, ERB Council Member, Lithuania
Mr Arvydas Jakas, ERB Council Member, Lithuania
Mr Vytautas Rinkievicius, ERB Council Member, Lithuania
Mr Vidmantas Pleckaitis, substitute for Mr Rimantas Taraskevicius, ERB Council Member, Lithuania
Ms Jadwiga Semmerling-Osowska, ERB Council Member, Poland
Ms Joanna Zielińska, ERB Council Member, Poland
Mr Henryk Słonina, ERB Council Member, Poland
Mr Zbigniew Karpowicz, ERB Council Member, Poland
Ms Bożena Sitnik-Pietrzykowska, substitute for Mr Cezary Dąbrowski, ERB Council Member, Poland
Mr Zbigniew Puchajda, substitute for Mr Andrzej Ryński, ERB Council Member, Poland
Ms Elena Butorova, ERB Council Member, Russia
Mr Juri Rozkov-Jurevski, ERB Council Member, Russia
Mr Victor Koshelev, ERB Council Member, Russia
Mrs Marianne Eckerbom, ERB Council Member, Sweden
Mr Bo Löfgren, ERB Council Member, Sweden
Mr Alexander Wendt, ERB Council Member, Sweden
Mr Kenneth Johansson, Blekinge Region ERB Council Member substitute, Sweden
Mr Bo Lundgren, Kalmar Region ERB Council Member substitute, Sweden

Secretariats

Mr Niels Ch. Andersen, ERB Secretariat, Denmark
Mr Armands Puzulis, ERB Secretariat, Latvia
Ms Magdalena Szymanowska, ERB Secretariat, Poland
Mr Zdzisław Olszewski, ERB Secretariat, Poland
Ms Olga Grigorevna, ERB Secretariat, Russia
Mr Ulf Andersson, ERB Secretariat, Sweden
Mr Erik Ciardi, ERB Secretariat, Sweden
Mr P.G. Lindencrona, ERB Secretariat, Sweden
Ms Sara Sjöln, ERB Secretariat, Sweden
Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski, ERB IPS Secretariat

Invited guests:

Mr Alexander Dolgopolov, Vice-Consul of the Russian Federation to Klaipeda
Ms Ludmila Klimentko, Representative of the Russian MFA to the Kaliningrad Oblast
Mr Zbigniew Kozłowski, Mayor of Starogard Gdański, Pomorskie Region, Poland
Mr. Valdas Puckorius, Local Economy & Development Department, Klaipeda District, Lithuania
Ms. Roma Kazakauskyte, Public Relations at Klaipeda County Governor's Administration, Lithuania
Mr Lars Orhman, Seagull devERB WP 1 leader, Kalmar, Sweden
Ms Patrycja Belau, ERB Youth Games Coordinator, Pomorskie Region, Poland
Mr Daniel Mühlendorf Jensen, Youth Council member, Bornholm, Denmark
Ms Ewelina Bonar, Youth Council member, Pomorskie Region, Poland

The meeting will be simultaneously interpreted in English, Lithuanian, Polish and Russian.

1. Opening and welcome

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova thanked the participants for accepting the her invitation and coming to the meeting in Klaipeda.

2. Council internal matters:

2.1 Approving the agenda.

The Council approved the agenda proposed, asking to extend it with new items. Mr Bo Frank requested that a discussion should be held on establishing a high-level ERB political representation, in accordance with the EU framework. Marianne Eckerbom requested time in the last point of the agenda to present some information. ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova offered to give a brief account of her visit to the Euro-Med summit in Barcelona.

2.2 Appointing Council members to co-sign the minutes from the Council meeting on 28th November 2005.

It was recommended that ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova and ERB Council Member, Mr Victor Koshelev sign the minutes.

2.3 Deciding on a date of the next Council meeting.

As the next Council meeting will mark the change of presidency in Euroregion Baltic, and since a new president will be appointed by the Russian Party, the Council asked the present Russian representatives to the ERB Council to propose the date and place of the meeting. Their proposal was to organise it after the elections to the regional

Duma take place in March. Eventually, the next ERB Council meeting was agreed to be 30th – 31st March 2005 in Klaipeda.

3. Approval of the Joint Development Programme for the Euroregion Baltic.

Mr Lars Orhman presented a brief account of the latest developments within the Seagull devERB project and its final output, i.e. the Joint Transnational Development Programme (JTDP). Since December 2004 it has undergone a continuous process of drafting and evaluation among the member regions of ERB. It has also been formally approved by most regional authorities within the Euroregion. Following the presentation by Mr Lars Orhman, a number of speakers took the floor. First, Mr Bo Lofgren expressed his belief that the JTDP constitutes a real milestone for the ERB. Region Blekinge, he continued, strongly supports the idea of transnational cooperation, and the task now for the Board should be to develop a network of actors implementing the JTDP – as a pool of resources necessary in the work to come. Mr Niels Chresten Andersen expressed his admiration to the people involved in the construction of the JTDP, and agreed that it is an important step for the ERB. He also added that ten signatures on the position paper on the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument were another significant element in the present progress. Answering the question how the JTDP will be implemented, Mr Andersen pointed to the Seagull II project, which will develop so-called reference networks around the JTDP priority areas. On the other hand, he went on, we must be aware of some degree of scepticism in our member regions and be ready to discuss the added value each region may generate through common activities. Afterwards, Mr Victor Koshelev thanked the authors of the JTDP and informed the Council that the Russian component of the Seagull devERB project had been completed, too. The JTDP had been translated into Russian and sent out for comments. One of the comments received came from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggesting the introduction of the following changes:

- a) to appeal for and aim at faster border-crossing procedures for Russian citizens travelling to EU countries within the transport priority of the JTDP;*
- b) to include the statement that the D6 oil rig meets modern ecology standards, and the Russian monitoring sputnik contributes greatly to environmental efforts taken in Europe within the environment priority of the JTDP;*
- c) to balance the existing phrase within business priority of the JTDP that Kaliningrad may be a gate for European goods into Russia with a new sentence saying that the possibility for Russian products to enter the European market may greatly contribute to the growth of Kaliningrad.*

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova thanked Mr Koshelev for interesting comments, stressing they are of detailed nature and need to be discussed further at the JTDP implementation level. Next, Mr Vidmantas Pleckaitis took the floor and said he was glad to hear the Russian comments as transport issues remain of great importance, both regarding sea and land transports. Often, he stated, the sea transport is the only possibility for Klaipeda County as there are recurring problems with the establishment of a customs facility on the Curonian Spit in Nida – Ribatchi. An interesting solution to such problems, he mentioned, is a proposal discussed in the Warminsko-Mazurskie Region to make a channel across the Vistula Spit, connecting the Baltic Sea and the Vistula Lagoon. Mr Zbigniew Puchajda confirmed discussions were being held on this proposal trying to solve the problem that vessels on the Vistula Lagoon have accessing the Baltic Sea. So far, using the Pilau Strait has been very difficult and the Board of Warminsko-Mazurskie Region had sent letters to the Administration of the Kaliningrad Oblast, also under its new Governor, Mr Grigori Boos, arguing that the tourism sector both in Poland and Russia would benefit significantly if a common solution were found. Following that, Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said the ongoing discussion was a little against the policy of good governance that the ERB advocates. It seemed that it lacked preparation for the adoption of such an important document. However, the comments which were being made, he pointed out, did not contradict the JTDP, in fact some of them could be found in its text upon careful reading. Still, he suggested, there should be time to discuss more detailed proposals concerning the implementation of the Programme at the next meeting. Ms

Krystyna Wroblewska thanked the authors of the Programme for their work in putting it together and informed the Council that it was also adopted by the Board of Pomorskie Region. She appealed to the Council members to keep a good balance between the general and the specific comments from the regions, as well as between the contents that are already in the Programme and the new proposals. Afterwards, Mr Henryk Slonina recalled the initiation of the work on a common strategy when he himself proposed a different approach i.e. to construct regional strategies first, and then to combine them into the euroregional one. Nonetheless, he thought the Swedish partners deserved the credit and admiration for their enormous work, in result of which a good document was well timed with the EU guidelines on 2007 – 2013 Structural Funds, and national and regional strategies. Which Programme activities and how much of it will be implemented depends on the effective definition of regional priorities. Not always, though, money will be necessary as political commitment is equally important, which can be exemplified by problems to develop tourism without the possibility of free transport. Here, Mr Slonina expressed his support to the comments made by Mr Vidmantas Pleckaitis, Vice-Mayor of Klaipeda City Municipality. Elblag, he continued, had invested a lot into transport infrastructure which should not be fully exploited. Mr Slonina also agreed with Mr Andersen that both the Council and the Board should discuss how to further implement the JTDP. One example of how the JTDP action proposals can be implemented is to use ongoing regional projects; a Science Park is now being constructed in Elblag, which can later develop into a Learning Centre, in line with one of the priorities within the JTDP. Then, Mr Zdzisław Olszewski took the floor to congratulate everybody who was involved in the preparation of the Joint Development Programme between the meeting in Kalmar in 2001 and the current meeting in Klaipeda, with special thanks to the Swedish partner. He also expressed his gratitude to the ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova for the letter on the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. What seemed completely unrealistic before is now attracting support from the Swedish government and growing understanding among other governments. The Polish partner can offer its experience gathered within PHARE to such an ERB Neighbourhood Programme. Next, Mr Victor Koshelev recalled 1998 when not many people thought that Baltijsk would open up for the outside world. Now, the town has cargo and passenger ships sailing in from Poland, Germany, Finland and Sweden. As shown by this development, he went on, although things do not happen immediately, they can be brought to a successful end with time.

At this moment, ERB President proposed that the Council members formally approved the Joint Development Programme. No objections were made and the Programme was officially adopted.

4. Presentation of two projects implemented in the Euroregion Baltic in 2005.

4.1 ERB Youth Games in Starogard Gdański

Ms Patrycja Belau, Project coordinator, presented a brief report on the ERB Youth Games which were held in June 2005. More than four hundred young people participated from Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. She also informed the Council members that a second edition of the Games was being prepared and a coordination meeting would be held on 5th December. The Council took note of the information presented.

4.2 ERB Youth Project in Malbork

MS Ewelina Bonar, Project coordinator, presented a short report on the ERB Youth Council Project, with Malbork acting as its Lead Partner, and representatives of Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. The members of the ERB Council took note of the information, with particular stress being placed on a necessity to hold a debate on how to promote cooperation among the young in ERB, after some difficulties had been experienced during the implementation of the said project.

5. Presentation of three project ideas seeking support of the Euroregion Baltic in 2006.

5.1 International Baltic Real Estate Fair

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański presented a n invitation from WORLD-CONNECT to participate in the real estate trade fair, combine with conferences to take place in Gdynia between 8 and 10 June 2006. The aim of the event will be to present the investment offer in the south-east Baltic Sea Region. The Council took note of the information presented.

5.2 Maritime Festival and Trade Fair of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in Elbląg, Poland.

The President of Elbląga, Mr Henryk Słonina invite the Council members to hold their next meeting in Elbląg in June. At his time, the National Sea Festival will be organised in the city, accompanied by a number of other events.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański presented an offer by LIDER to stage a Small and Medium Enterprise Trade Fair at the same time. The perspective organizers had already been granted the free use of the sports hall where the trade fair could be hosted. This will reduce the cost for participants. The Council took note of the information presented.

5.3 Tourism Fair in Gdańsk and Poznań, Poland

Mr Zdzisław Olszewski informed the Council of two tourism events that the Polish partner has been participating for a number of years. The Tourism Trade Fair in Gdańsk r held in Spring and constitute a good opportunity to promote local an regional tourism products before the actual season begins. The Fair is of international character and attended by dozens of countries from around the world. It is also the only such fair in the Euroregion Baltic. It is accompanied by a series of lectures, seminars and stud visits. In 2006 it will take place between 7th and 9th April, and already ore than 250 participants have declared to participate. Meetings are planned with study groups from Russia, Ukraine, Belarusia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and also other member states of the EU. The Polish partner is thus offering all the other ERB partners (free of charge) the possibility to form one common euroregional presentation stand.

The other event is called Tour Salon, and is held in Poznań in Autumn. It somehow announces highlights of the following year's season, rather than summing up the finished Summer season. It attracts more and more exhibitor every year. In 2005 almost 700 participants came from all the continents. The programme included closed days for the tourism industry, spa exhibitions, special spots for hotels housed in castles and palaces, festival of regional cuisines, seminars, conference, and contests. In 2006 Tour Salon is planned to take place between 25th and 28th October. Mr Olszewski invited all the national secretariats to form one common euroregional presentation stand (at no cost as the Polish Association will cover the expenditure). The Council took note of the information presented.

5.4 Econoic Forum China – Baltic Sea Region in Kalmar, Sweden.

Within the framework of cooperation pursued between the Swedish Region of Kalmar and the Changxing County a representation of the Chinese County had been opened in Kalmar with the main aim of supporting Swedish and Chinese entrepreneurs in establishing business contacts. In September 2005 some Swedish companies took part in the Yangtze River Delta Region Forum (including Changxing County). Between 26th and 30th June 2006 a second edition f the Forum will be organised in Kalmar, focusing on the issues of energy and environment. Its organisers, the Council in Kalmar Region have invited all the ERB member regions to participate.

The Council took note of the information presented.

Summing up points 4.1 and 4.2, President Rozova addressed the national secretariats with the request to appoint regional contacts, responsible for the implementation of these two joint initiatives. She also asked the International Secretariat to make information concerning points 5.1 – 5.4 available to all the national secretariats.

6. Any other business

Mr Bo Frank presented brief information on the meetings held in Strasbourg on 15th November and in Brussels on 16th November. Both concerned the initiative to obtain the status of a crossborder cooperation area by the Euroregion Baltic, and both were organised together with SydSam (organisation of South Sweden). The meeting in Strasbourg attracted the members of the European Parliament associated in the Intergroup Baltic, who declared their support towards our efforts. The meeting in Brussels attracted staff of the regional representations to the EU and the Russian Mission. In relation to these two meetings Mr Frank suggested that the ERB Board and the International Secretariat prepare a proposal to establish a high-level political representation of Euroregion Baltic, in line with the EU framework. President Rozova recommended that the Board deal with this matter at their next meeting.

Afterwards, Mr P.G. Lindencrona presented a brief account of the idea to launch the first think tank implemented within the Baltic Master project. He offered that the secretariat in Karlsrona, Blekinge will provide necessary information to all interested parties.

Later, Ms Marianne Eckertom informed the participants that soon a programme of exchange for civil servants within ERB dealing with environmental questions will be presented.

President Rozova informed the Council of her participation in Euro-Med summit, celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona process. She was honoured to represent the only BSR euroregional structure, there. The summit dealt with the themes of good governance, development of human resources, an regional competitiveness. Ms Rozova met Abelard Vilardell, Pyrenees Mediterranean Euroregion Secretary and M. Isabel Galobardes, its Director General for Tourism.

At the end, Mr Juriy Rozkov-Jurevskiy thanked the organisers for their invitation to this meeting and for the interesting comments made in its course, particularly those submitted by Lithuania and Polish speakers on the question of crossborder cooperation. He congratulated on the idea to hold a Council meeting together with the Sea Festival in Elbląg, and appealed that another meeting is organised at the same time, that is a meeting of the Russian – Polish Crossborder Cooperation Council of the Kaliningrad Oblast and Polish Voivodeships. Due to elections on both sides of the border, the Council has had no possibility to meet recently (the latest meeting in Gdynia was cancelled), but, Mr Rozkov-Jurevskiy continued, local authorities may try to exercise some influence on the authorities in the regions in order to advance their cooperation.

No more comments were made, at which point President Irina Rozova thanked the Council members for their participation and closed the meeting.