



Between 25th February 2005 and 30th March 2006 Euroregion Baltic was under the political leadership of Klaipeda County Vice-Governor, Ms Irina Rozova.

*It was a great honour and pleasure for me to act as a President of the **Euroregion Baltic** between February 2005 and March 2006, and I was very impressed by the number and diversity of activities carried out during the last year within the framework of **Euroregion Baltic** co-operation.*

*Being one of the biggest Euroregions in Europe, uniting 6 member states, covering the area of 100,000 square kms, and representing nearly 6 mln. inhabitants, **Euroregion Baltic** strives to improve living conditions of its inhabitants, promote mutual contacts, tighten bonds among local communities, eliminate historical prejudices, plan activities aimed at providing sustainable development, and to promote actions aiming at cooperation between regional and local authorities.*

A few years ago the Seagull project was initiated in order to make the goals and objectives for the co-operation more concrete. Its primary objective was to develop a clear and well defined strategy, the Joint Development Programme (JDP) for the Euroregion Baltic. This document contains the development strategy for the next 10 years, action programme and the background information, and was approved by the ERB Council session in Klaipeda on 28th November 2005.

Now, having at our disposal a strong tool and guidelines for further joint activities within the ERB, it is necessary to move further, implementing concrete actions recommended both by the Joint Development Programme and the Seagull II project, as well as other relevant projects which will contribute to sustainable development, integration and progress of the whole region.

*In conclusion, it should be noted that the establishment of **Euroregion Baltic** laid a strong foundation for the interregional co-operation. **Euroregion Baltic** has become a forum for regional and local politicians and officials in their exchange of opinions and ideas, discussions on common interests and integration of initiatives resulting in the improvement of community welfare and sustainable social-economic development of its member regions. Due to their ability to co-operate at the crossborder level, the regions and local authorities combine efforts, overcoming the obstacle of boundaries that separate them.*

Irina Rozova, ERB President

Euroregion Baltic Joint Development Programme

The ERB cooperation has long-term aims, and is directed and steered by political consensus. It is managed by the Council and Executive Board, both consisting mainly of politically elected representatives of public decision bodies in the member regions. In 2001 the Board and Council decided to start preparations for a project application to the Baltic Sea Region Interreg III B Programme, aiming at drawing up a long term development programme for the entire ERB. The underlying idea was that such a programme would strengthen the cooperation and make it more goal-oriented and concrete. The preparation work was successful and the Seagull devERB project began in August 2002.

Regional Council in Kalmar County (Sweden) took on the role of the Seagull Lead Partner, and Mr Rolf A. Karlson became responsible for its overall management. The project is now finished. Its main outcome is the Joint Development Programme (JDP) for the Euroregion Baltic, containing the development strategy for the next 10 years, action programme prioritising a number of activities within the four focus areas of the strategy, and the background document, including analyses and facts about the ERB. On 28th November 2005 the Joint Development Programme was approved by the decision bodies of the ERB member regions, as well as by the ERB Council. The Programme specifies four focus areas for future cooperation:

A competitive business environment

In a European perspective, measures will be taken that help to strengthen competitiveness of the ERB business world and promote innovation and an attractive investment climate. The emphasis will be put on sustainable growth through a prosperous SME sector, increased knowledge contents for products and services, and on environmental and energy issues as well as social and regulatory transparency and stability.

Transport infrastructure

The ERB cooperation will highlight the importance of transport infrastructure as a means of facilitating the growth of trade and improving competitiveness of industry and service business – as well as of helping to develop tourism in the region. The ambition is that ERB becomes an advocate and a driving force of the enhancement of the member regions' development aims, a political lobbyist at national and European levels.

Social dimension

Cohesion activities within the social field are very important for the sustainable development within ERB. It is necessary to reduce unemployment in order to facilitate economical growth in the region. Labour market cooperation should be pursued as a means of equalising sub-regional imbalances in the supply of and demand for manpower in the member regions.

Environment and energy policies

Joint initiatives should be taken in order to increase knowledge and common understanding of EU initiatives within the environment and energy sectors. The ERB goal is to become one of the leading regions in implementing EU initiatives and regulations in a direct dialogue with responsible EU bodies.

Seagull II

When the ERB Joint Development Programme was undergoing the last stage of its construction, it became obvious that it would require joint structures implementing it. The idea was borne that an international secretariat should be established with the main aim of assisting and coordinating implementation efforts, as well as organising financial support to this end.

A project was developed in order to enhance institutional capacities within Euroregion Baltic in assistance to the implementation of the Joint Development Programme. The project was named Seagull II and divided into the following three stages:

- Seagull II project within the Interreg III B Seed Money Facility between October 2004 and February 2005;
- Agenda 2007 project, Danish led and financed between February and April 2005;
- Interreg III B 3.2 Priority Seagull II project, between June 2005 and December 2007.

Interreg III B Seed Money Facility

This instrument provided for the preparation of the main project application, offering a maximum possible subsidy of 10,000 euros. The activities of the project involved the establishing of the task force, responsible for submitting the 7th round application and round-trip visits of the ERB International Secretariat to the member regions so that the project rationale and objectives could be presented to decision makers before they declared to take active part.

Agenda 2007

With a grant of 25,000 EUR from the Danish Programme "Project Baltic Educational Island" and under the management of Niels Chresten Andersen, a series of three seminars were organised for key staff persons from the National ERB Secretariats and International Secretariat: between 28th February and 2nd March 2005 in Klaipeda, Lithuania, between 30th March and 1st April 2005 on Bornholm, Denmark, and 11th and 13th April 2005 in Elblag, Poland.

The objectives of the project were to increase the knowledge and competencies of key staff persons in ERB on the main current EU policies and future programmes, to develop the administrative capacity of the ERB secretariats in order to improve the communication, information, lobby function, programme management, project development and management, mainly by exchange of

experiences and best practice, and to prepare the initial steps to implement the future Joint Development Programme.

The exchange of information and experiences about administrative capacities in the respective secretariats gave a much clearer picture of the resources available and how to improve the human and technical capacities. Concrete outputs were the proposals for a newsletter and a lobbying strategy in order to become an ERB Neighbourhood Programme.

Interreg III B 3.2 Priority

The main Seagull II application was successfully submitted twice: during the 7th round when the ERDF budget of 633 thousand euros was approved in June 2005, and during the 8th round in December 2005, when it was upgraded with the Tacis subsidy of 69 thousand euros.

The project is built on the political cooperation in Euroregion Baltic. Its objectives are in principal in line with the goals that ERB pursues, i.e. benefiting the cohesion in the southeast BSR through facilitating economic, social and environmental sustainability. The key objectives of the Seagull II project will be: first, to improve organisational capacities within ERB in assistance to the implementation process of the Joint Transnational Development Programme (establishing permanent cooperative ERB networks of professionals and creating project development teams), second, to improve technical capacities within ERB in assistance to the networking activities (developing internet-based communication facility and establishing a common database enabling benchmarking activities), and thirdly, to improve HR capacities within ERB in assistance to the networking activities supporting the implementation of JTDP (increasing ERB politicians and civil servants' knowledge of EU policies relating to JTDP and improving ERB good governance capacities).

In general, the project will result in strengthening ERB institutional structures by means of establishing a common cooperation platform, which will make the implementation of JTDP more coherent and in line with EU policies and programmes. With the aid of modern communication and benchmarking systems, as well as with more competent and aware politicians and personnel, ERB will be able to assist its member regions, peripheral so far, in gaining more central position in the development policies and strategies implemented in the South-East Baltic Region. The following are more detailed results:

- Eight reference networks of experts, politicians and ERB staff in eight JTDP activities; SMEs and innovation, rural development, tourism cooperation, transport infrastructure, social dimension, and water management, Kaliningrad hotspots, and energy forum; these eight reference networks will turn into ERB permanent cooperative structures;
- Eight project development teams who will submit 8 transnational project applications within the eight JTDP activities; project development teams will be temporary project-based structures, delegated ad hoc by the permanent reference networks to deal with specific problems/JTDP activities;

- Communication e-facility system operating in ERB regions, which will enable cost-effective and efficient way of communicating internally and externally;
- ERB Benchmarking Database, as an extension of the ERB website, as a technical tool facilitating the identification of problems relating to ERB JTDP and the development of projects aimed at solving these problems;
- One transferable model developed as a manual of the construction process of ERB, which can serve as an example of the "from vision to action approach", supported by initial political commitment, legal agreements, improved knowledge of EU Policies and finally by enhanced organisational capacities.

The project has been divided into three work packages with the adoption of the following approach: WP1 is responsible for organising eight reference networks around 8 JTDP activities; WP2 takes up the role of delivering technical instruments and exchange models supporting the networks in their work; WP3 provides HR support to the reference networks. In order to achieve the goal of facilitation of the JTDP implementation WP1 must secure a suitable composition of the networks, which should consist of ERB politicians and staff, local and regional authorities' personnel, representatives of the private sector and NGO's, and external experts representing national development strategies, and other projects of concern implemented in the BSR. In order to provide WP1 with technical assistance useful in the JTDP implementation WP2 must establish e-learning facility which will enable significant savings in the meeting and travel budgets in the regions and will also be used by WP3 while offering training and transfer of best practices within JTDP activities. WP2 will also set up Common Benchmarking Database providing more cohesion to local and regional spatial planning activities. In order to support WP1 with respect to developing quality projects supporting the JTDP implementation WP3 must provide training to the networks in the areas of EU policies and programmes, and project development and management.

Klaipeda Conference on 29th November 2005

The conference marked an official kick-off of the Seagull II and its main objective was to present the project to a wider audience consisting of representatives of the national, regional and local levels, and to demonstrate how the project can support the ERB member regions in their work contributing to a more sustainable development and more efficient use of opportunities made available by the New Financial Perspective and the Common Spaces between the European Union and Russian Federation.

More than 100 participants attended the conference, representing the project partners, invited guests and ERB Council. The conference included first meetings of the project reference network members who could familiarise themselves with the activities scheduled in 2006. One of these activities plans establishing so-called project development teams, which will at a later stage prepare crossborder and transnational applications, enabling EU financial assistance in the implementation of the ERB Joint Development Programme.

Establishing joint ERB structures became the main topic for discussions held at the conference, especially those in relation to SMEs and innovation, an ERB Rural

Academy, tourism promotion, transport infrastructure, ERB Energy Forum, and Water Forum, responsible for integrating the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive. In addition, the conference summed up experiences in the twinning cooperation between municipalities within Euroregion Baltic.

ENPI

At its meeting in Klaipeda on 22nd July 2005, the ERB Board adopted the text of the ERB Position Paper on the EU Draft Regulation establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.

The paper was then signed by all the political leaders of the member regions within the Euroregion and sent out to all the national actors dealing with the policies of regional development and foreign relations, as well as to the European Union institutions and national and regional representatives of the ERB members in Brussels. A lobbying campaign followed.

Lobbying for a CBC programme

Euroregion Baltic has since August 2005 been carrying out a lobbying campaign aiming at the acquisition of a CBC area status in the new financial period 2007 – 2013. The rationale behind this ERB ambition is to facilitate the implementation process of its common strategy and Joint Development Programme.

The first step in the lobbying campaign was to issue a position paper in which all the ERB member regions expressed their common goal for Euroregion Baltic to acquire the CBC status, and for all its members to be able to fall under the CBC eligibility criteria. This position paper coincided with efforts initiated by SydSam (organisation of South Swedish regions of Jönköping, Halland, Kronoberg, Skåne, Blekinge and Kalmar) aiming at making all of its member regions eligible for territorial cooperation between 2007 and 2013. The work of our Swedish partners began as early as in 2004 with a meeting held in Brussels between Mr Peter Hogla from Kronoberg County and Mr P.G. Lindencrona from Blekinge County, and the representatives of the European Commission.

A joint delegation of Euroregion Baltic and SydSam organised meetings in Brussels and Strasbourg, attracting regional and national representations of the ERB member countries to the European Union, European Commission personnel and the members of "Baltic Europe" Intergroup at the European Parliament. The delegation at these meetings included President Irina Rozova, Board members: Mr Bo Frank and Mr Zigo Rutkovskis, and Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański of the ERB International Secretariat. SydSam was represented by its Chairman Roger Kaliff, Director of the Secretariat in Kalmar, Mr Håkan Brynielsson and Director of the Secretariat in Brussels, Ms Sofie Gardestedt.

On 2nd February 2006, a meeting took place with EU Regional Policy Commissioner, Ms Danuta Hübner, accompanied by the staff of her Cabinet: Ms Ann-Kersti Mylén and Mr David Young. Euroregion Baltic was represented by Sławomir 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 Gardestedt, 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 Eva Hedqvist-Petersen commented that the new strategic position of the Baltic Sea gives the whole region the potential to become a core of Europe, not its periphery as it was in the 20th century. Mr Christopher Beazley stressed a comprehensive approach was needed towards the Baltic Sea, which after the successful European Union Enlargement is bordered by eight EU Member States, the enclave of Kaliningrad and St Petersburg region in Russia. The Baltic, Mr Beazley continued, has been a uniting element throughout most of its history and now constitutes a significant potential in the bridging of the East and West divide. More direct initiatives on the part of the European Union can contribute to the Baltic being a region of great stability and prosperity, and such initiatives could be offered in the form of indicative projects, like the one sought by Euroregion Baltic.

In the presentation by Mr Roger Kaliff, Mr Håkan Brynielsson and Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański, a brief introduction was made into the history of the ERB cooperation, highlighting its political dimension. Being a platform of the national, regional and local authorities, the ERB proves an efficient tool in the implementation of EU policies, and has so far been supported with the EU financial assistance. A strong emphasis was placed on the threat that the new EU proposal limiting geographical eligibility of maritime regions pose to further the cooperation, especially now that common strategic vision for its future has been found and concrete development activities recommended. From a number of perspectives, this unfavourable situation can be seen as a backlash for integration efforts in the Baltic Sea Region, so successfully represented by the work within the ERB. Starting as a composition of EU Member States and then Acceding Countries, Euroregion Baltic was the first such organisation to include a Russian member. Following the Enlargement with Poland and the Baltic States, it now incorporates into its own development agenda the policies shaped in the dialogue between the European Union and Russia.

Ms Alicja Majewska-Gałęziak and Ms Iwona Kur confirmed the two Polish regions continue to support an ERB cross-border programme, considering it an excellent opportunity to advance in their cooperation with the regions shoring the South-East Baltic Sea, particularly in the fields considered fundamental for the prosperity and stability of the region: economy, environment, education and security.

Ms Danuta Hübner explained the current budgetary proposal for the future territorial cooperation within the Objective 3 of the EU Cohesion Policy, and informed that a series of negotiations were being held between representatives of the EU Member States to discuss the final structure of CBC programmes in the EU. During one meeting in January, Sweden put forward a proposal of a CBC Programme for Euroregion Baltic. However, it was also only the Swedish

government that offered their support to it. Without support from other relevant governments, the Commissioner went on, DG Regio is unable to act in favour of the ERB CBC Programme.

At the same time, Ms Danuta Hübner asked if Euroregion Baltic was considering another solution: 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.

Ms Danuta Hübner also agreed to the comment made by Ms Ulrika Joelsson that the ERB member regions should attempt to convince their governments to secure regional influence in the management structure of the ERB cross-border priority within the transnational programme. Although the transnational and crossborder strands complement each other in implementing the goals of the territorial cooperation, they differ in their specific objectives. This should be reflected in the way the ERB priority would have to be managed.

Participation in events

Neighbourhood Programme Seminar in Warsaw, 27–28 January 2005

The seminar dealt with the European Commission proposals of European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and the Instrument for pre-accession (IPA). According to the proposals, cooperation on external borders from 2007 is supported through these instruments. Neighbourhood Programmes (NP) prepared for the years 2004-2006 were planned to be the first stage for the ENPI and IPA. NP's have been built on INTERREG structure. The basic idea of linking cohesion and external policy instruments into one was to make cooperation on external border and implementation of the programmes easier and more effective. Euroregion Baltic was represented by Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański of the International Secretariat.

25th Anniversary of the Madrid Convention in Warsaw, 21-22 April 2005

The Conference attracted representatives of the Council of Europe member countries, Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, Central European Initiative, the European Parliament and Commission. It was chaired by the Polish Minister of Interior and Administration, Mr Ryszard Kalisz. The Prime Minister of Poland, Professor Marek Belka addressed the participants during the second day of the event.

Euroregion Baltic was represented by its President Irina Rozova, Dalia Makuskiene of the Lithuanian Secretariat and Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański of the International Secretariat, who presented to the conference attendants the achievements of Euroregion Baltic in the area of crossborder cooperation, as well as the goals that Euroregion Baltic had defined for the future, particularly in the light of the two draft regulations that the European Commission and the Council of Europe proposed to offer the legal status to organisations pursuing

crossborder and transnational cooperation: the European Groupings of Crossborder Cooperation and Euroregional Crossborder Groupings, respectively.

Interreg III B BSR Partner Search Forum in Vilnius, 23-24 May 2005

The Partner Search Forum was organised for potential applicants of projects before the 8th call for proposals. It was attended by some 80 representatives of the Programme Steering Committee and Secretariat, as well as of projects already approved like the Seagull II. Together with the Interreg employee, s Vineta Griekere, Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański co-moderated the workshop on transnational and bilateral institution and capacity building.

NGO Forum in Gdynia, 12-13 May 2005

The Baltic Sea NGO Network gathered to the V Baltic Sea NGO-Forum in Gdynia in Poland, bringing together 190 civil society representatives from all the Baltic Sea countries. The Forum works on the conviction that civil society is based on active public participation and belief that it strengthens citizens capacity to take part actively in democratic processes. The Baltic Sea NGO network was established in Copenhagen 2001. During the V Forum in Gdynia items like Baltic Sea state citizens – Third Sector contribution to Baltic Sea cooperation programs, EU financial policy and civil society development and Third Sector as a Bridge over Borders were discussed. Euroregion Baltic was represented by Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański of the International Secretariat, who helped moderate the discussion panel on the role of nongovernmental organisations in regional development programmes in the Baltic.

Economic Forum in Gdynia, 22–23 September 2005

The international investment forum was attended by representatives of international consultancies, the largest developers and major companies from the region. The plenary session on the first day of the Forum was then followed by three thematic sessions on finance for small and medium-sized enterprises, tourism in the Baltic region and new markets, including the Far East and China in particular, for the broadly understood maritime economy. Euroregion Baltic was represented by Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański of the International Secretariat, who presented to the conference attendants the achievements and goals of Euroregion Baltic in the area of crossborder and transnational tourism cooperation.

BEN Starting Conference in Vilnius, 26-27 September 2005

ERB International Secretariat was invited to witness the kick-off of the project called Baltic Euroregional Network. Its main goal is to promote spatial development and territorial integration in the Baltic Sea Region by strengthening Euroregions as competent partners with national authorities and international institutions, and by building a network of Euroregions for continuous capacity-building and sharing of experience. Although not a project partner in BEN, Euroregion Baltic was asked to cooperate.

Water Forum kick-off conference in Klaipeda, 6 October 2005

Seagull Work Package 2 and its Leader, Ms Carolina Gunnarsson initiated the first meeting of potential actors to cooperate within the Euroregion Baltic Water Forum. The kick-off conference was organised in cooperation with the International Lagoon Conference 2005 in order to discuss the formation of a Water Forum with the objective of making ERB a pilot area for transnational and cross-border cooperation and implementation of modern methods for water management. The event was attended by representatives of regional and local authorities, experts and non-governmental organisations. The 45 participants declared their strong support to the establishment of an ERB Water Forum.

13th BSSSC Annual Conference in Szczecin, 19-21 October 2005

BSSSC conference was attended by more than 250 participants who met to discuss their work developing the Baltic Sea Region to be one of the most prosperous regions in Europe. Euroregion Baltic was represented by Erik Ciardi of the Seagull devERB Lead Partner: Kalmar County Council and Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański of the International Secretariat.

Jue Wang's visit to Gdańsk, Elbląg and Olsztyn on 21st, 22nd November 2005

Mr Jue Wang is a representative of the Chinese Region of Changxing to the Regional Council in Kalmar County. He visited the Polish partners in the ERB, accompanied by Mr Anders Åkesson, Chairman of the Regional Council in Kalmar County, and Mr Erik Ciardi of the ERB Secretariat in Kalmar.

In the morning of 21st November, he met the Marshal of Pomorskie Region, Mr Jan Kozłowski and Ms Krystyna Wróblewska, Director of International and Economic Cooperation at Marshal's Office. Later that day, he was hosted by the Deputy Mayor of Elbląg, Mr Witold Wróblewski. On 22nd November, he visited Marshal Office of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region, speaking to its Vice-Marshal, Ms Bożena Wrzeszcz-Zwada, and Director of European Integration and International Cooperation, Professor Zbigniew Puchajda.

During his visits Mr Jue Wang informed about the Business Forum held in China in September 2005 and the coming Baltic Sea Region Forum in Kalmar in October 2006. The aim of this business forum is to facilitate business relations between companies in Changxing Delta Region and the Baltic Sea Region.

Euro-Med Regional Conference in Barcelona, 25-26 November 2005

EuroMed Regional Conference Barcelona+10 was held in Barcelona to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona process. Its main goal was to promote the debate and exchange of good practices in regional partnership, decentralised co-operation, the processes of decentralisation and good governance in the Euro-Mediterranean area. The debates were divided into three working sessions:

- Good governance: role of territorial co-operation in the Euro-Mediterranean area.
- Human development: migration, education and social integration.
- Economic reform and regional competitiveness: cohesion, solidarity and economic development.

President Irina Rozova was invited to represent the Euroregion Baltic. In the separate programme, President Rozova met Abelard Vilardell, Pyrenees

Mediterranean Euroregion Secretary General and M. Isabel Galobardes, its Director General for Tourism.

Interreg Conference in Warsaw on 20th December 2005

The conference was organised to sum up the management process of the Interreg III programmes in Poland and to discuss expectations fostered by Polish regions towards the European Territorial Cooperation, to be implemented under the new Cohesion Policy Objective 3. It attracted institutions involved in the implementation of Interreg III programmes in 2004 – 2006. Euroregion Baltic was represented by Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański of the International Secretariat.

Facilitating cooperation within Euroregion Baltic

Euroregion Baltic Newsletter

At its meeting on 11th May In Klaipeda, the Executive Board agreed that it will take the overall responsibility for the publishing of the newsletter and took on the function of the Editors' Board. At the same time, it was decided that ERB Secretariats (National and International) each nominate a person, responsible for contributing to the publication by delivering texts and photos, providing necessary translation, etc. They form the Editing Team of the newsletter and provide the contents of its issues. ERB International Newsletter has a bilingual paper version (English and Russian), published every quarter in 2,000 copies. The electronic version of the newsletter is distributed among the National Secretariats who themselves decide if a separate national issue of the newsletter is necessary.

In 2005 two issues of the newsletter were published. The first in August included articles on the 1st ERB Youth Games, Danish-led tourism project, ERB Youth Council project, and the meetings of the ERB Board in Brussels and Klaipeda. The second Christmas-time issue referred to the Joint Development Programme, Klaipeda Conference, lobbying activities in order to acquire a ENPI status and the environmental project implemented by students of primary and secondary schools around the Euroregion Baltic..

Establishment of JDP-related reference networks

One of the outputs of the Seagull II project is a set of networks which will bring together politicians, civil servants, experts, researchers, and non-governmental employees working with the issues of the ERB Joint Development Programme. At the end of 2005 there were eight reference networks involving 82 institutions dealing with the following agendas:

- Small and Medium Enterprises and Innovation;
- Rural development;
- Tourism development;
- Transport infrastructure;
- Social dimension, in particular Labour market cooperation
- Energy, especially renewable energy production;

- Environmental hotspots in Kaliningrad Region;
- Water Forum.

The main objective of the reference networks is to analyse the Joint Development Programme against European funds that will be available between 2007 and 2013. They will also prepare crossborder and transnational projects implementing the priorities of the Joint Development Programme. In the future, reference networks will constitute as Euroregion Baltic permanent working groups.

Launching an internet-based communication system.

During the implementation of the Seagull II Project, an internet-based audio-vie system was purchased and installed for the member regions to use while communicating. Participants of such meetings can hear and see each other, share the same applications, make presentations and also record the meetings. The system will help decrease expenditure made on the organisation of traditional meetings although it will not replace them totally. It will simply enable having more meetings, consultations and joint projects.

Continued visits of the International Secretariat to the member regions

19 January in Klaipeda, Lithuania

20 January in Liepeja, Latvia

2 February in Vaxjo, Sweden

3 February in Karlskrona, Sweden

16 June in Kalmar, Sweden

31 July in Baltijsk, Kaliningrad, Russia

Other projects:

ERB Youth project

ERB Youth project aimed to extend cooperation between the member regions of Euroregion Baltic through integration of youths. It involved about 150 young people aged 15 – 21 living in the Baltic Sea Region. Its main activity was a film made in a joint effort by all partners in the project – promoting national values of ERB member countries, and showing everyday life of the youth in the context of the integration process in Europe. The film was supposed to be of educational character. Made by the young and for the young it presented in an interesting way how their peers in other countries live, what their history, traditions and culture are. Another project activity was the organization of training workshops for the young representatives of ERB. These facilitated integration and common understanding.

First Euroregion Baltic Youth Games

Euroregion Baltic had its First Youth Games held in Starogard Gdanski in Poland between 24 and 26 June. More than 400 sports youth, both boys and girls from around the Baltic Sea competed in boxing, basketball, volleyball, and football. Boxing matches involved young boys in a number of weight categories, up to 64 kilograms, with most fights won by Polish and Russian contenders. The home team of Starogard won the boys' basketball tournament, and the outstanding Swedish team beat all their rivals in the girls' competition. Volleyball proved a Polish specialty. The boys' team from Malbork and the girls' team from Kwidzyn scored better than their opponents from Kaliningrad and Klaipeda. Football games were played in two groups. The winners in each group: Lithuanian team from Klaipeda and Polish line-up from Tczew had their showdown on the last day of the Games. After some exciting ninety minutes of matching performance from both teams Tczew managed to score three goals as opposed to the two delivered by Klaipeda.

Green Circle Schools

This ongoing project involves 13 partner schools from the countries around the Baltic who have a variety of joint projects. They cooperate in questions concerning energy, health, democracy, flora, fauna, water and others. The pupils involved are at the age of 2 to 18. The activities in 2005 involved a visit of pupils from Angelstad, Sweden to Hasle, Denmark in May 2005, a common health project in autumn between schools from Sweden, Russia, Lithuania and Denmark, a day of health in all the project schools, and finally a project called the Green Circle Journey, where pupils collect materials from their surroundings and use them as a guide when they visit the area around the partner school. The materials are published on the project website.

New visions of tourism development in the Baltic Sea

Representatives from the regions of Euroregion Baltic met on Bonholm and in Elblag to discuss the issues regarding the establishment of Tourism Development Working Group, its priority focus areas and its future existence and development. All regions expressed strong political support to the idea of establishing the Tourism Development Working Group within Euroregion Baltic, which will serve as the network to generate common projects and work on developing common products. Although, each region would like to keep their regional identity inside or outside the network, but everyone agrees to promoting Euroregion Baltic as a macro area in order to explore wider tourism markets. The regions are also willing to cooperate in order to create better tourism infrastructure for the local tourism businesses on the crossborder and transnational level and to elaborate projects benefiting not only businesses, but also all levels of society in the regions. Therefore, TDWG may become the intermediary link connecting different economic sectors (relating to Tourism activities) and different social sectors (public, civil society) at all levels to achieve the synthesis in the tourism development at local and trans-regional levels. The following priority focus areas were identified:

- 1) Tourism Market Research;
- 2) Common Transregional Product Development;
- 3) Network to exchange the information and knowledge;
- 4) Sustainable Tourism Education and Training.

Maritime Safety: Transport and Environment in the South Sea Region (MaSTER)

MaSTER is a cooperative project by the Blekinge Regional County Council and SydSam, and politically supported by the ERB Council. It focuses on the local and regional influence on maritime safety issues in the South Baltic Sea Region. The project aims to involve the regions into the maritime safety organisational system complementing actions undertaken by existing bodies and institutions while, at the same time, integrating these actions into the planning for a secure and sustainable regional development. The main objective of the Baltic MaSTER project is to define the ability of regional governments and local partners to participate more effectively in the processes to improve the safety of transports in the South Baltic Sea Region.

The main objective of the Baltic MaSTER project is to define the ability of regional governments and local partners to participate more effectively in the processes to improve the safety of transports in the South Baltic Sea Region. This objective can be further divided into the following goals:

- To develop transports and communications within a framework of environmental maritime safety, giving attention to the diversity of activities carried out in connection to the Baltic Sea (f. ex. fishing, off-shore wind power plants, tourism, etc.).
- To increase preparedness for preventing and managing the consequences of a catastrophe, through integrating local and regional coastal zones in the planning and implementation processes.