



ERB COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes

Date:

20th November 2006
14.30 – 18.30 hours (local time)

Meeting Place:

Hotel Volna, Svetlogorsk

Participants:

ERB Board members

Mikhail Pluhin	ERB President, Russian Federation
Bernth Johnson	ERB Vice-President, Sweden
Raisa Mincinauskiene	Vice-Governor of Klaipeda County
Krystyna Wróblewska	on behalf of Pomorskie Region Marshal, Mr Jan Kozłowski
Per Ole Petersen	Bornholm Regional Municipality Council Member, Denmark

ERB Council members

Boris Batalin	Kaliningrad Duma member, Russia
Ken Bolmar	Bornholm Regional Municipality Council Member, Denmark
Bo Frank	Mayor of Vaxjo, Sweden
Lillebill Grähs	Kalmar County Council Member, Sweden
Alexander Gregorev	Chairman of the Association of the Municipalities of the Kaliningrad Region, Russia
Bernth Johnson	Blekinge County Council Chairman, Sweden
Zbigniew Karpowicz	Vice-Mayor of Olsztyn, Poland
Victor Koshelev	Deputy Head of Baltijsk Municipal Administration, Russia
Witold Kuszewski	On behalf of Pomorskie Governor, Mr Piotr Ołowski
Ragnar Lindberg	Kronoberg County Council Member, Sweden
Bo Löfgren	Blekinge County Council Member, Sweden
Bo Lundgren	Kalmar County Council Member, Sweden
Zbigniew Puchajda	On behalf of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Marshal, Mr A. Ryński

Juriy Rozkov-Jurevskiy	Representative of Kaliningrad Region to Poland
Juriy Savenko	Mayor of Kaliningrad, Russia
Jadwiga Semmerling-Osowska	Mayor of Młynary, Poland
Henryk Słonina	Mayor of Elbląg, Poland
Adam Supeł	Governor of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region, Poland
Alexander Wendt	Blekinge County Council Member, Sweden
Gert Wollinger	Kalmar County Council Member, Sweden
Fedor Yaroshevitch	Head of Baltijsk Municipal Administration, Russia
Joanna Zielińska	Gdynia Municipality Council Member, Poland

Guests

Mattias Alisch	Region Blekinge, Sweden
Arne Grove	General Consul of Denmark to Kaliningrad Region
Bengt Gustafsson	Transport Network Reference Leader, Sweden
Elena Korolova	Consultant at the Ministry of Territorial Development and Cooperation with Self-Government, Russia
Victor Romanowski	Director of the Unit at the Ministry of Territorial Development and Cooperation with Self-Government, Russia
Johanna Ronn	Region Blekinge, Sweden

Secretariats

Niels Chresten Andersen	Head of ERB Secretariat, Bornholm, Denmark
Ulf Andersson	ERB Secretariat, Kronoberg, Sweden
Tor-Bjorn Astrand-Karlsson	ERB Sekretariat, Sweden
Elena Butorova	ERB Secretariat, Baltijsk, Russia
Erik Ciardi	ERB Secretariat, Kalmar, Sweden
Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański	Head of ERB Int'l Secretariat
Olga Gregorevna	ERB Secretariat, Baltijsk, Russia
Sven Lindahl	Kaliningrad Cooperation Coordinator, Bornholm, Denmark
PG Lindencrona	Head of ERB Secretariat, Blekinge, Sweden
Zdzisław Olszewski	Head of ERB Secretariat, Poland
Armands Pužulis	ERB Secretariat, Kurzeme, Latvia
Kora Stańczyk	Seagull II WP 1 Leader, Poland
Piotr Zwolak	Seagull II Warmińsko-Mazurskie Regional Coordinator, Poland

Interpreters

Wanda Stec	Russian – Polish interpreter
Olga Danilova	Russian – English interpreter
Elena Bojarska	Russian – English interpreter

14.30 - 14.40 Opening and welcome

1. ERB President, Mr Mikhail Pluhin opens the meeting and welcomes its participants. He makes the special introduction of the two guest representing the Polish Parliament: Mr L. Krasulski of the Lower House and Mr J. Szmit of the Upper House. He points out it is the second ERB Council session during the Russian Presidency and bears significance due to two facts: firstly, it holds a debate on the future priorities of cooperation in Swedish and Danish presidencies, and secondly, it takes place during the discussions on the South Baltic CBC programme and the trilateral Neighbourhood programme between Poland, Lithuania and Kaliningrad. He also extends his congratulations to the politicians re-elected during the local elections in Poland (Ms J. Zielińska and Mr Z. Olszewski) and in Sweden (Mr B. Johnson and Mr B. Frank).

14.40 - 15.00 Council internal matters:

2.1 Approving the agenda

The ERB Council members have two more amendments to the agenda before approving it: firstly to formally adopt the letter expressing proposal for further Cross-Border cooperation in the South Baltic Sea Area, and secondly to include information on the ERB Transport Committee.

2.2 Appointing Council members to co-sign the minutes from the Council meeting on 20th November 2006

Following the Board's recommendation, President Mikhail Pluhin and Vice-President, Bernth Johnson are appointed to sign the minutes of this meeting.

2.3 Request from the Council of Kurzeme Region to withdraw from Euroregion Baltic

On the 7th June 2006 the Council of Kurzeme Planning Region ceased Latvian participation in the activities of Euroregion Baltic. The decision was caused by a permanent lack of human resources in the organisation to continue its involvement, split of CBC programmes that left Kurzeme outside the South Baltic area, as well as the ongoing reform in Latvia, raising questions concerning the future of the region.

In accordance with the Board's decision at the meeting on 3rd October 2006 the information on the withdrawal of Latvia is now formally presented to the ERB Council. The Council of Euroregion Baltic, in accordance with the ERB Statutes Paragraph 5 Point 1.8, decides to accept the withdrawal of the Latvian Party.

2.4 Deciding on a date of the next Council meeting

The next Council meeting will mark the change of presidency in Euroregion Baltic. The new president will be appointed by the Swedish Party. Therefore, as expected, the date and place of the meeting proposed by the Swedish representatives to the ERB Council is 14th March 2007.

The Council members accept the proposal.

2.5 Signing a letter to The Council of Europe by ERB President, Mr M. Pluhin

The Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLARE) has expressed its wish to create Euroregions of the Sea, including the Euroregion of the Baltic Sea. This idea was discussed on 3rd October by the Board who questioned the obvious duplication of structures in the Baltic Sea Region, an obvious result of such an action, given the amount of initiatives taken in the BSR. They also thought such a

Baltic Euroregion would also duplicate the name of the organisation that already exists (Euroregion Baltic).

BSSSC sent CLARE a letter explaining their position towards this idea, similar in content to what the ERB Board members thought. President Pluhin asked the international secretariat to prepare a draft of a letter on behalf of the Board of Euroregion Baltic.

During the Council meeting President Pluhin informs on the situation and asks if there have been comments from the National Secretariats to the text.

Mr N.Ch. Andersen says the letter should not mention Kurzeme now it has left the ERB and indicates the end of the letter seems a little too friendly.

Ms K. Wroblewska suggests the letter should be extended with more specific description of all the different types of cooperation within Euroregion.

President Pluhin then asks the International Secretariat to produce a new draft of the letter and consult the text again between partners.

15.00 – 15.30 Proposal of an outline for Swedish and Danish presidencies in 2007 and 2008.

3. President Pluhin informs the International Secretariat has received a draft outline of ERB cooperation from the Danish Secretariat, agreed on with the Swedish Secretariat. He then asks either of the secretariats to present the outline.

Mr N. Ch. Andersen says this is not a final proposal but marks the beginning of appositive development. The outline contains strategic priorities for the next period, proposes to further develop capacities within ERB to implement the JDP, and indicates locations of the Council and Board meetings inside the ERB territory and outside, e.g. in Brussels.

Mr P.O. Petersen expresses his hope to have a fruitful debate on the proposal.

Mr B. Lofgren says the outline is very good but should also include the necessary discussion on urgent action to improve the ecosystem of the Baltic Sea. ERB must have, he continues, its own maritime safety agenda.

Ms R. Mincinauskiene suggests the inclusion of more concrete proposals to the outline, possibly extending it till 2009. She also proposes that Point 3 of the outline also includes a more educational agenda, e.g. youth professional training and integration of handicapped children.

After the comments, President Pluhin asks the national secretariats of Denmark and Sweden in collaboration with the International secretariat to prepare a revised outline to be further detailed during the next Board meeting and formally approved during the Council meeting in March 2007.

15.30 - 16.00 Status of the two project proposals to be implemented in 2007.

4.1 Ice hockey tournament

President Pluhin makes an introduction and presents the current status on the preparation for the youth hockey tournament. He says the tournament which was initially planned to take place in Elblag, Poland will be organised in the Telenor Arena in Karlskrona, Sweden.

Vice-President Bernth Johnson says it is quite upsetting that the ERB does not have a people-to-people cooperation budget and that this problem should be addressed urgently. He also promises to help in any way possible to organise the tournament.

4.2 ERB Festival of garage bands

President Pluhin makes an introduction and then Mr Ulf Andersson presents the current preparation status.

After the presentation, President Pluhin asks for comments.

Mr B. Frank says it is a very good idea and gives his full support to it, also being himself a chairman of the local Beatles' Fan Club.

Mr P.O. Petersen approves of the idea and promises to do his best support it. He also points out that the youth and cultural cooperation is a priority in the strategy outline for 2007 and 2008.

Mr Z. Olszewski thanks the Danish and Swedish secretariats for their efforts aiming at improving the ERB cooperation, as well as for the inclusion of the very important though sometimes neglected people-to-people aspect. He also says that ERB has a lot more achievements than it actually publicises. Although the international newsletter has done something to promote ERB more, this still remains a gap to fill. The ERB Council members should, in his opinion, take a more active role in the process of advertising the Joint Development Programme.

He also says the Polish Secretariat actively supported people-to-people cooperation by managing the Phare programme and helping to implement 236 projects at the amount of over 8 million EUR, making Euroregion Baltic one of the best CBC structures in Europe. That role will be sustained in the future by continued efforts of the Polish Secretariat.

President Pluhin closes this point of the agenda appealing to all of the Council members for support to cultural, people-to-people events.

16.00 – 16.30 Coffee break

16.30 – 18.00 Presentations

5.1 Nordic Council of Ministers

Upon the invitation of ERB President, Mikhail Pluhin, the Director of the newly established bureau of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Kaliningrad, Mr Arne Grove makes a presentation to the ERB Council members.

He explains that the newly opened office of NCM can be of benefit for the cooperation within Euroregion Baltic, supporting collaboration efforts in the Baltic Sea territory, including the Kaliningrad Region, Baltic States and the North of Poland.

He stresses the fact the NCM wants to act by means of generating synergy by cooperating with other organisations like Helcom, CBSS or Euroregions. Assistance to nongovernmental organisations is also planned.

Mr Grove then introduces programmes operating within the NCM, e.g. the Mobility Programme supporting regional and socio-economic development. NCM can also contribute to other forms of financing provided e.g. by private sponsorship.

After the presentation, President Pluhin asks if there are any questions from the floor.

Mr B. Johnson asks if there is interest on the part of NCM to observe ERB meetings and events. Mr Grove responds by saying there are no objects to his participation in such meetings.

Mr B. Lofgren asks if Mr Grove has heard of such ERB projects as Baltic Master or Baltic Gateway that can somehow be continued with NCM. Mr Grove says he has no knowledge of these cooperation schemes.

President Pluhin thanks Mr Grove and wishes that this meeting will only be the beginning of closer cooperation between ERB and NCM.

5.2 South Baltic CBC Programme

President Pluhin makes an introduction into the two major programmes that will finance the ERB cooperation will be South Baltic and the trilateral Neighbourhood programme. Then he asks V. Romanovsky to present the current status of the trilateral Neighbourhood programme.

Mr Romanovsky indicates that the preparations for this programme have just begun and only one meeting has been held so far. No concrete decisions have been made regarding the location of the Joint Secretariat or the contents of the programme.

Then he asks S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski to present the current status of the South Baltic programme.

Mr Demkowicz-Dobrzanski begins by informing that a new EU Cross-Border Programme for cooperation in the South Baltic Area is under preparation. The programme will be one of the biggest CBC programmes in EU, though the total EU contribution provided by the five involved EU countries will be less than 60 Million EUR, which means around 8,5 Million EUR per year in the programme period 2007-2013. The programme will cover all the northern part of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (D); Region Zealand and Bornholm (DK); Klaipeda, Taurage and Telsiau regions (LT), West-Pomerania and Pomerania regions and the Elblag area (PL); and the regions of Blekinge, Kalmar, Kronoberg and Skaane (S). Under certain limits it will be possible even to include partners from the Kaliningrad Region in concrete projects. The Polish Ministry for Regional Development will be hosting the programme Managing Authority, and the main programme secretariat will be located in Gdansk.

So far three main objectives of the programme have been agreed:

- Growth and Jobs, with support to improve the competitiveness, innovation, accessibility, entrepreneurship and labour market integration.
- Sustainable development with a focus on environment, use of natural resources, renewable energy and cultural/natural heritage.
- Local initiatives with a focus on people-to-people type of cooperation.

The representatives of the involved ministries from the 5 EU countries are now working on the implementation structure and procedures.

President Pluhin thanks both the presenters for their input.

18.00 – 18.30 Any other business

6.1 Letter expressing proposal for further Cross-Border cooperation in the South Baltic Sea Area

Upon the request of the Swedish Party, the ERB Council adopts the letter of the following wording:

It is with a successful cooperation within the Euroregion Baltic we now see new possibilities to intensify our common activities in the future. However, difficulties for our participating members remain to be solved. The accessibility and procedures related to the application for Russian visas, as well as the actual border crossing in the boundary areas have been an impediment, making it harder for the ERB members to participate in each other's activities. The accessibility concerns sea-transport and tourism as well as aviation and road transport.

Therefore, we, the members of the Euroregion Baltic Council consider it necessary to encourage regional and national authorities, and governments to take necessary steps. We believe, the cooperation in the southern Baltic Sea as well as in Euroregion Baltic will by this necessary action develop into a positive direction. Moreover, implementing successfully the important Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas and benefiting fully from the funding available within the new EU programming period 2007-2013 will not be possible without such action.

6.2 Information on the ERB Transport Committee

Following the meeting of the Seagull II Transport Network members in Baltijsk in the morning, its leader, Mr Bengt Gustaffsson informs the Council that the ERB Working

Group on Transport Issues has now been constituted. Vice-President Johnson has agreed to become the chairman of the Group.

Mr P.O. Petersen expresses his support for this particular network emphasising that the networks still lack concrete ideas for the implementation of the Joint Development Programme. This, he says will be an important step towards their more efficient work.

The Council approves the establishment of the Group.

At this moment, when all the points of the agenda have been discussed, ERB President, Mr Mikhail Pluhin closes the meeting of the Council.

Mikhail Pluhin

Bernth Johnsson

President of Euroregion Baltic

Vice-President of Euroregion Baltic