

Euroregion Baltic
Executive Board Meeting
Kaliningrad, Russia
22 January 2009



Title	Final Minutes
Submitted by	SDD, International Permanent Secretariat
Summary / Note	This document provides the provisional minutes of the Board meeting held on 22 nd January 2009
Requested action	Adoption

Participants

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen	Head of ERB Secretariat, Bornholm
Mr Pavel Bekker	Ministry of Territorial Development, Kaliningrad
Mr Arunas Burksas	Governor of Klaipeda County
Ms Elena Butorova	ERB Secretariat, Kaliningrad Region
Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski	Head of International Permanent Secretariat
Ms Evgenija Demina	Youth Board member, Kaliningrad Region
Ms Elena Emelianova	General Consulate of Sweden in Kaliningrad Region
Ms Marie Fridh	ERB Secretariat, Region Blekinge
Mr Marek Gołkowski	Consul General of Poland in Kaliningrad Region
Ms Alla Ivanova	Deputy Head of International Cooperation Department at Government of Kaliningrad Region
Mr Bernth Johnson	Blekinge County Council Chair, ERB Executive Board member
Mr Roger Kaliff	Kalmar Municipal Council Chair, ERB Council member
Ms Elena Koroleva	Ministry of Territorial Development, Kaliningrad
Mr Victor Koshelev	Head of ERB Secretariat, Kaliningrad Region
Mr PG Lindencrona	ERB Secretariat, Region Blekinge
Ms Agata Nazar	ERB Secretariat, Association of Polish Communes
Mr Zdzisław Olszewski	Head of ERB Secretariat, Association of Polish Communes
Mr Per Ole Petersen	ERB President, Bornholm
Mr Mihail Pluhin	Minister of Territorial Cooperation, Kaliningrad Region, ERB Executive Board member
Mr Peter Ratcovitch	Region Blekinge
Mr Boris Sheremetev	1 st Secretary at Representation of Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kaliningrad Region
Mr Gintautas Siulys	1 st Secretary at General Consulate of Lithuania in Kaliningrad Region

Mr Jan Skagbrant	Consul of Sweden in Kaliningrad Region
Ms Victoria Snioliene	ERB Secretariat, Klaipeda County
Ms Kora Stańczyk	ERB Secretariat, Pomorskie Region
Ms Svetlana Sukhova	Region Blekinge
Ms Lena Westman	ERB Secretariat, Kalmar
Mr Rafał Wolski	International Cooperation Department Director, Wamińsko-Mazurskie Region
Mr Piotr Zwolak	ERB Secretariat, Wamińsko-Mazurskie Region

ERB EXECUTIVE BOARD AGENDA

- 11:00 – 11:05 1. **Welcome**
- ERB Board member, Mr Mihail Pluhin addressed the participants of the meeting to the city and the region of Kaliningrad.
On behalf of the Governor of the Oblast, as well as his own, Mr Pluhin welcomed the ERB Board members, secretariats and the invited guests, including the Consuls of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.
Mr Pluhin noted the meeting is being held in one of the recently redeveloped parts of the city, called the Fishing Village.
- 11:05 – 11:10 2. **Opening**
- ERB President, Mr Per Ole Petersen opened the meeting and highlighted the topics to be discussed herewith. He paid special attention to the work performed by the ERB Working Groups, Green Paper on EU Territorial Cohesion and preparations for the Council meeting and ERB presidency transfer.
- 11:10 – 11:15 3. **Adoption of the agenda**
- ERB President, Mr Per Ole Petersen presented the agenda and ERB Executive Board approved it.
- 11:15 – 11:20 4. **Adoption of 11.09.08 ERB Board Meeting minutes**
- ERB President, Mr Per Ole Petersen placed his signature on the minutes of the ERB Executive Board meeting which took place in Klaipeda on 11th September 2008. Since ERB Vice-President, Mr Jacek Protas was absent, the minutes were handed to Mr Piotr Zwolak who will have them signed after the meeting. The minutes will then be posted to the International Secretariat.
- 11:20 – 12:20 5. **ERB Working Groups**
- 5.1 ERB projects submitted to South Baltic
- S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski updated ERB Executive Board on the current situation with the project applications ERB Working Groups had submitted to the South Baltic Programme. ERB Working Groups submitted 6 applications (out of 22 sent into the Programme) totalling 8 MEUR (out of 22,6 MEUR worth of all the 22 submitted projects).

The ERB Board members have all signed the support letters for the 6 projects, which will be distributed among the South Baltic Programme national delegations after the formal check.

Ms Alla Ivanova asked about Russian participation in the ERB projects, taking into consideration that the Russian Federation has not signed an agreement with EU on cross-border cooperation. Without this formal framework, Russian partners from the Kaliningrad Region can be only associated partners. The participants of the meeting expressed hope that Russia could sign the agreement later so that the partners from Kaliningrad could be equal partners in ERB projects.

S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski added that Russian partners within Euroregion Baltic are present in the South Baltic Programme at two levels; at the Programme level ERB cooperation resulted in the presence of Russian observers in the Monitoring and Steering Committees and specific recommendation of applying 10% flexibility rule to the Kaliningrad Region. At the project level, Russian entities can only be associated partners and thus not generate ERDF refund in the South Baltic. Even though, Russian organisations are present in 4 out of 6 projects which have been submitted by ERB Working Groups.

Mr Roger Kaliff noted that the Russian participation proved necessary in the MOMENT project (prepared by the Water WG) where pilot projects will be run throughout ERB. Some pilots in Kaliningrad may be financed through the Swedish Development Agency SIDA.

ERB Executive Board members took note of the information presented and approved the proposed information activities to be conducted in support of the WG projects.

Regional involvement in Working Groups

5.2 ERB Executive Board were requested to discuss the future role of the ERB member regions in the ERB Working Groups and projects they prepare for implementation. As highlighted by the Swedish partners, the regions have experienced some difficulty in finding their representatives to the Working Groups even though they had declared their willingness and readiness to do so in the past.

S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski noted that the implementation of the ERB Joint Development Programme should remain the key objective of our cooperation, and it should be primarily achieved through the joint initiatives within ERB Working Groups. He propose the following solution to the staffing problem:

- no new Working Groups should be formed in the near future;
- ERB Working Groups are requested to inform about vacancies in their composition;
- regions should have the possibility to prioritise their involvement in the Working Groups and will decide which Working Groups they can complete;

President Petersen thought it was a good proposal and gave his support. He agreed that the regions cannot appoint their representatives to all the groups, and that's the reality we have to face.

ERB Executive Board agreed that IPS will collect information on missing members in the ERB Working Groups and decide which vacancies they can fill in.

ERB Working Group on Local Community Initiatives

5.3 A draft action plan for the Local Community Initiative Working Group was presented.

S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski said feedback from the regions is now crucial since only the regions of Bornholm and Pomorskie have appointed their members into the Group, and the completed plan should be made ready before the Council meeting in February.

Mr Bernth Johnson commented that the proposed action plan needs discussing in the regions.

President Petersen noted that internal discussions have already been held and small steps taken into the formulation of the group.

Mr N. Ch. Andersen said the Local Community Initiative Working Group is a very good idea for cooperation within ERB. A multitude of proposals have been made, like youth rock festival, hockey tournament, culinary presentations at Baltic Festival in Karlshamn, and what is needed now is a structure to follow up on these ideas. This particular group, he continued, will be different than others, offering small but concrete results. Mr Andersen expressed hope the other regions will be able to join in.

Mr Bernth Johnson agreed. He noted the hockey tournament, whose subsequent edition took place in December 2008, is a good example of such a local initiative.

Mr Mihail Pluhin said the Russian partners take part in virtually all efforts of the kind within ERB. Hockey is an idea he himself is particularly fond of and expressed gratitude to the Swedish partners for their assistance in the ongoing work for a hockey project application.

President Petersen concluded by saying the Group will follow the routine other groups had before their establishment and will have a complete proposal ready for the Council meeting.

ERB Working Group on Environmental Protection

5.4 Mr Victor Koshelev presented a draft action plan for the Environment Working Group. The document included activities which have already been held, since the hotspot reference network was set up during the Seagull II project, and activities planned to be held in 2009, focusing mainly on the elimination of two hotspots located in the Kaliningrad Region, i.e. hotspots nos 49 and 73. He presented the composition of the Group which now comprises members from the Kaliningrad Region and Swedish Kalmar County.

Mr Mihail Pluhin requested that other regions appoint their representatives to the Group.

Mr Arunas Burksas said that there has unfortunately been not enough attention to this particular problem on the part of local self-government in Klaipeda County. He thought taking part in the activities within this particular group will be of utmost importance for Klaipeda.

Mr Gintautas Siulys asked why the Group should deal with hotspot no 49 when the Pulp and Paper Plant in Sovetsk is no longer in operation.

Mr Victor Koshelev responded by saying the company has not been closed down completely and is in partial operation. In addition, although its main activity has stopped, there are many deposits which remain harmful to the environment, and such consequences, making the area a Helcom hotspot, should be taken care of by a joint project.

Mr Mihail Pluhin agreed and added that the problem is more complicated and also concern safety of the inhabitants of Sovetsk.

President Petersen concluded by saying the Group will follow the routine other groups had before their establishment and will have a complete proposal ready for the Council meeting. He also noted that even though the name of the group refers to Kaliningrad, the issue is important for all in ERB.

Continuation of ERB Working Groups in 2009

5.5 ERB Executive Board discussed possible ways of assessing ERB Working Groups established in February 2008, i.e. ones dealing with SMEs and Innovation, rural development, tourism, social dimension, energy platform, and water platform.

President Petersen was of an opinion that the Council should hear reports from the groups in February.

Mr N. Ch. Andersen said the plan presented by the Environment WG could be a good example of such a report, presenting both activities held in the past year and activities planned for the following year. He proposed that each WG should prepare a two-page document for the Council.

Special attention was given to the Tourism Working Group which has been inactive since April 2008. On behalf of the Pomorskie Region Ms Kora Stańczyk presented two possible solutions: first, the other regions are given the opportunity to take over this particular Group; second, if no interest is shown by others, Pomorskie will start the process again and organise the first meeting in February, a day before the Council so that the Tourism WG will have the chance of making a formal proposal of activities for 2009.

S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski thought it was a good idea to have regional representatives to the Group meeting with the Council.

Mr Victor Koshelev said tourism is probably one of the most important cooperation area in ERB, including such issues as shipping in the Vistula Lagoon.

President Petersen concluded by saying the Group should be given the chance of preparing a plan for 2009 and asked the regions to consider their involvement.

12:20 –
13:00

6. **Information by the International Secretariat**

6.1 2009 – 2010 Action Plan

S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski briefly discussed the ERB 2008 – 2009 Action Plan implementation status, highlighting 70% of what was scheduled for two years was done in one. Based on that status report, he outlined the four proposed priorities of the ERB 2009 – 2010 Action Plan to be the same as in the previous document. The difference, he continued, will lie in specific actions to be conducted under each of the priorities.

President Petersen said the past year proved that working according to such a two-year plan is a very good idea. He thought that on the achievement side special compliments should be paid for the ERB Youth Board and ERB branding efforts.

Ms Alla Ivanova asked why indicators of the action plan are at the level of activities only, and not also at the level of objectives.

S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski explained that together with developments in ERB, its action plans evolve too. ERB 2009 – 2010 Action Plan will

probably be different in form to the two of its predecessors.

President Petersen concluded by encouraging the Polish and Lithuanian partners, who will hold ERB presidencies in the two years to come, to keep up the good work on the Action Plan.

6.2 a future ERB project

S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski presented some key messages resulting from the meeting with the head of the South Baltic Programme, Mr Jacek Zaucha in the context of a possible future project to be implemented jointly by the ERB partners.

These messages concerned possible roles ERB could take in the implementation of the Programme. ERB, as envisaged by Mr Zaucha, could not only be a generator of projects but also a depository of project results and evaluator of the Programme itself.

Regarding possible projects submitted by ERB, Mr Zaucha proposed a few topics, including an ERB partenariat for SMEs, energy network, and a pilot implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy.

President Petersen said it was very positive to hear such an open acknowledgement of ERB in the South Baltic programme, and he felt proud of what we all can do together.

Ms Alla Ivanova asked why ERB has not been so active submitting projects to the trilateral Interreg III A Programme for Lithuania, Poland and Kaliningrad.

S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski explained Euroregion Baltic was not ready to act as a project applicant but had taken efforts to be ready to take on the responsibility of managing small projects within the Programme in question, just as it did within the Phare Programme, and just as the other euroregions have done, both in the 2004 – 2006 and 2007 – 2013 financial perspectives. Unfortunately, ERB is the only such structure to have been denied the management function on the Polish border. ERB could consider making specific applications, he continued, when the trilateral Interreg IV A Programme for Poland, Lithuania and Kaliningrad officially starts.

Mr Mihail Pluhin noted that cooperation initiatives within ERB consider different sources of financing, including those from the South Baltic CBC and the trilateral Interreg IV programmes.

Mr Bernth Johnson said working with projects is a big responsibility and is taken seriously in ERB. Projects need sufficient consultations and preparations. People must be delegated by the regions, and secretariats requested to coordinate and draft proposals.

President Petersen concluded by saying both the ERB Board and Council have monitored so far and will monitor in the future work within ERB Working Groups in relation to projects submitted.

6.3 Preparation for the ERB Council meeting, 24 – 26 February 2009

Mr Piotr Zwolak presented first information on the Council meeting which will take place in Ryn between 24 and 26th February 2009. Participants are expected to arrive on 24th February in the afternoon and are invited to an informal dinner. Departures are planned for 26th after breakfast. On 25th February, after the morning study visit, the ERB Council meeting will take place and include such highlights as the adoption of 2009-2010 Action Plan and assessment of ERB Working Groups. This time, a seminar accompanying the Council session will

deal with the EU Green Paper on territorial cohesion, and is expected to end with the approval of an ERB position towards this EU policy. In the evening a gala dinner will be held to mark ERB Presidency transfer. About 80 people are expected to attend. The participants will cover their cost of travel and accommodation (at 240 PLN per single room).

S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski asked that more time should be allocated to the Council meeting itself and proposed it is extended from three to four hours.

Mr Roger Kaliff informed of the idea to organise a Water Forum meeting on 24th, probably in the morning. He asked for the support of the Board and said invitations will be sent to politicians to attend.

Ms Marie Fridh said there will be quite a few new members in the Youth Board and it will be very important that they have enough time to be properly introduced into the ERB agenda. She asked all the delegations to make it possible for the youth to arrive in time to be able to start their meeting at 18.00.

ERB Executive Board members took note of the information presented

Factual information

6.4

Representatives of the ERB member regions were asked to inform of any changes in the composition of their delegations to the ERB Council, ERB Executive Board, ERB Youth Board, and South Baltic Monitoring and Steering Committees, which have taken place recently or are planned to occur before or at the time of the Council meeting on February.

ERB Executive Board noted that some of the information has already been provided by email (e.g. from Kalmar County) while more information will be provided to IPS by the secretariats before the Council meeting.

13:00 –
13.30

Coffee break

13.30 –
14.30

7.

EU Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen introduced the participants into the ongoing EU debate on territorial cohesion. He explained that the "Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion – turning territorial diversity into strength", which the European Commission launched 6th October 2008 is a result of a long process, but should also be regarded in connection with the ongoing review of the EU budget and financing, as well as the preparations of the EU Cohesion Policy and priority of the structural funds after 2013.

Mr Andersen proposed that ERB prepares a position paper on the subject that will centre around the following six questions:

- What is the most appropriate definition of territorial cohesion?
- What additional elements would it bring to the current approach to economic and social cohesion as practiced by EU?
- Is there a role for the EU in promoting territorial cohesion? How could such a role be defined against the background of the principle of subsidiarity?
- How far should the territorial scale of policy intervention vary according to the nature of the problems addressed?
- Do areas with specific geographical features require special policy measures? If so, which measures?

- What role should the Commission play in encouraging and supporting territorial cooperation?
- Is there a need for new forms of territorial cooperation?
- Is there a need to develop new legislative and management tools to facilitate cooperation, including along the external borders?
- How can coordination between territorial and sectoral policies be improved?
- Which sectoral policies should give more consideration to their territorial impact when being designed? What tools could be developed in this regard?
- How can the coherence of territorial policies be strengthened?
- How can Community and national policies be better combined to contribute to territorial cohesion?
- Does the pursuit of territorial cohesion require the participation of new actors in policymaking, such as representatives of the social economy, local stakeholders, voluntary organisations and NGOs?
- How can the desired level of participation be achieved?
- What quantitative/qualitative indicators should be developed at EU level to monitor characteristics and trends in territorial cohesion?

President Petersen supported the idea of producing such a paper which would eventually be approved by the Council. The time schedule is tight, he said, with only one month left to run the process. Mr Roger Kaliff noted that it will be important to get feedback from all relevant actors, e.g. from the Association of Local Authorities in Sweden which has worked with the question. He agreed consensus on the paper contents must be reached soon but stressed that decisions will have to be consulted at home first. He called for the full participation of the Russian partners in the work and asked for the prompt delivery of the paper draft so that this work can start immediately.

Mr Mihail Pluhin said the Kaliningrad Region has also experienced uneven development of territories and finds such a debate very relevant. He stated the Russian partners within ERB will participate in the process, considering their abilities and limitations.

Mr Andersen noted that this would give ERB an extra opportunity to be part of the process which will influence the future EU budget.

President Petersen concluded by requesting that a draft paper will be shortly presented to the ERB secretariats (following their online meeting on 27th January), and then consulted by the regions to enable formal adoption of the document by the Council.

14.30 – 8.
14.40

Information on the upcoming events

Ms Marie Fridh informed that 3 youth representatives, YC3 project coordinator and herself will attend the youth conference in Hamburg on 4th February 2009, and then continue at the 2nd Stakeholder Conference on the Baltic Sea Strategy in Rostock on 6th February.

The 2nd Stakeholder Conference in Rostock will also be attended by President Petersen. Ms Lidia Wójtowicz representing Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Mr Lars Orhman representing Kalmar County.

14.40 – 9.
14.50

AOB

ERB Executive Board approved of the changes proposed to the schedule of events, including:

- online secretariat meeting to be held on 27th January instead of

- 2nd February;
- ERB Executive Board meeting to be held on 6th April instead of 23rd April (the location remains in Gdańsk)
 - ERB Executive Board June meeting to be held in Brussels instead of Kalmar;
 - ERB Executive Board September meeting to be held in Kalmar instead of Brussels.

At this point the agenda was completed and ERB President, Mr Per Ole Petersen closed the meeting.

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Per Ole Petersen
ERB President

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Jacek Protas
ERB Vice-President