

# Political declaration

## Draft

We, the participants in the conference “Perspectives for future border crossings of people and cargo within Euroregion Baltic” have with great interest have discussed the current border crossing situation between the Kaliningrad region and its neighbouring regions within Euroregion Baltic.

We confirm the aims of the Euroregion Baltic (ERB), as agreed in February 1998, to

- improve the life conditions of the people inhabiting the area of Euroregion Baltic,
- promote mutual contacts,
- tighten bonds among local communities,
- eliminate historical prejudices,
- plan activities aimed at providing sustainable development,
- promote actions aiming at co-operation between regional and local authorities.

We also confirm the ERB Joint Development Strategy, adopted 28<sup>th</sup> November 2005, in which the Kaliningrad Region should be given special attention in the joint development efforts to be implemented. Furthermore concrete goals and measures of the ERB activities should relate to the Kaliningrad region’s status as a potential gateway to the Russian market and markets further eastwards.

In this respect we fully support the Joint Statement agreed 31<sup>st</sup> May 2003 on the occasion of the St. Petersburg Summit, stating that the Russian Federation and the European Union agree to examine the conditions for visa-free travel as a long term perspective; and the EU-Russia Summit in Sochi the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2006, reaffirming the intention to establish a visa-free travel regime between the European Union and the Russian Federation.

Referring to the overall objective of the Common Economical Space, agreed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2005 at the Moscow Summit, to create an open and integrated market between the European Union and the Russian Federation, and

the new Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document agreed 24<sup>th</sup> November 2006 in Helsinki, aiming to help to ensure that no dividing lines are established in the North of Europe, and including Kaliningrad Oblast as a priority area, with its opportunities for development given its particular geographical situation, as well as

the report by the European Parliament 16<sup>th</sup> November 2006 on a Baltic Sea Strategy for the Northern Dimension, urging the Russian Federation and the European Union to examine the possibility of developing the Kaliningrad Oblast into a more open and less militarised pilot region with improved access to the internal market. The European Parliament stresses the need for full implementation of freedom of navigation in the Baltic Sea, including the Vistula Lagoon and Kaliningradzkij Zaliv, and free passage through the Pilava Strait/Baltiiskij Proliv;

we hereby will forward our recommendations to the Head of States and Governments in the European Union and the Russian Federation, to take the following concrete steps in order to ensure the best possible conditions in the joint objective to improve the social and economic integration of the Baltic Sea Region, with a particular attention on the Kaliningrad region and its neighbouring regions in EU:

- To ensure, when Poland and Lithuania will soon become fully part of the Schengen regime, that residents of Kaliningrad region and the neighbouring regions in Lithuania and Poland will not experience new or worse barriers compared with the current border crossing regime;
- To work for a local border traffic regime within the framework of the new regulation adopted 6<sup>th</sup> October 2006 by the European Council of Ministers, specifically applicable to local border traffic through bilateral agreements offering advantages to border residents crossing the external borders of the Member States; and in this respect we will strongly recommend that the limit of 30 km from the border will be extended allowing residents in all the Kaliningrad region and all of the neighbouring regions to take advantage of the special local border regime;
- To prioritise specific resources in the new programmes under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument to more intensively prepare a visa-free regime between Kaliningrad region and the neighbouring EU regions in a short term perspective, and in a medium term perspective extended to all the regions within the Euroregion Baltic - if needed as a pilot project;
- With the aim to induce humanitarian and economical relations to relate general issues of visa regime between the Russian Federation and EU with infrastructure issues on border area inland waters and tourist passenger shipping, and we urge the Governments of the Russian Federation, the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland to sign inter-governmental agreements, which would enable navigation in Baltijsk – Wisla and Curonian Bays.