



Växjö, 6th November 2012

Ms Ivanka Lakova
Head of Unit, REGIO E2
Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy

Dear Ms Lakova,

I would like to address you with reference to the on-going discussions on the future of the European Territorial Cooperation programmes, and in particular on the South Baltic Cross-Border Cooperation Programme (the Programme). In my capacity as the President of Euroregion Baltic (ERB) I wish to express our strong and unequivocal support to the continuation of the Programme as a separate European Territorial Cooperation instrument.

The Programme is the only CBC instrument in our part of the Baltic Sea Region, and it has provided significant added value in our cooperation by co-financing joint projects which have implemented the ERB Joint Development Programme. This has enabled ERB to contribute more effectively to the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and more concretely to the building of our common identity (ERB was established in 1998 and is a formal and politically anchored cooperation platform with a joint development strategy, consisting of regions from Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden).

ERB as well as Euroregion Pomerania have been directly involved in the preparation and implementation processes of the Programme since its very beginning. Our engagement has followed a bottom-up approach and has always been regionally anchored. Consequently, we have been directly represented in the Monitoring Committee, the Steering Committee, and the Joint Programming Committee recently established to work on the future Programme.

As both Polish and Swedish studies and evaluations have underlined, the Programme has proved to be a well-functioning facility with a significant level of local and regional anchoring. It has enabled partners from the old and new member states to enhance their cooperation through more than 60 projects involving a great deal of local and regional authorities, NGOs, small and medium-sized enterprises, academic and research institutions, as well as a number of associated organisations from the Kaliningrad Region.

The Programme has demonstrated to be an excellent tool coordinating common efforts to make the Baltic Sea cleaner, to develop and increase the use of renewable energy sources, to improve cross-border business cooperation, to connect labour markets, to create transport corridors, as well as to improve intercultural dialogue in the cooperation area.

At its meeting 29th October 2012 the ERB Executive Board adopted a standpoint regarding the geographical scope of the Programme, which is enclosed to this letter. In this document, not only do we support the continuation of the Programme, but we also advocate the inclusion of the whole ERB area, opposing ideas to merge it with the Central Baltic programme and integrating it into the transnational BSR programme.

We are convinced that the continuation of the Programme in its cross-border character will facilitate in particular a more dynamic participation of municipalities and NGOs in the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation, thus actively contributing to the objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy as well as the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Yours sincerely,

Roland Gustbée

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roland Gustbée', written in a cursive style.

President of Euroregion Baltic