



Euroregion Baltic

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Minutes for ERB Executive Board meeting Kaliningrad, 31 October 2003

Participants

Board Members

Mrs Annelise Molin, ERB President, Denmark
Mr Zbigniew Karpowicz, ERB Vice President, Poland
Mr Normunds Niedols, Latvia
Mr Alexander Kuznetsov, Russia
Mr Ragnar Lindberg, Sweden (substitute for Bo Frank)

Secretariats

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen, Main ERB Secretariat, DK
Mrs Gunta Ceplevica, Latvia
Mr Zdzislaw Olszewski, Poland
Mrs Malgorzata Samusjew, Poland
Mr Victor Koshelev, Russia
Mrs Elena Boutorova, Russia
Mrs Evgenia Tcherniavskaja, Russia
Mr Andrej Moshkov, Russia
Mr Ulf Andersson, Sweden
Mr Eric Ciardi, Sweden
Mr Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski

Invited guests

Mr Igor Y. Krasnyanskiy, Vice-governor of Kaliningrad region
Mr Boris S. Batalin, Chairman of the Committee on legal order, security, international and interregional relations in the regional Duma
Mr Pavel Mamontov, Deputy Head of International Department, Kaliningrad Oblast Admin.
Mr Dmitry Ofitserov, International Department, Kaliningrad Oblast Administration
Mr Tomas Valukas, Vice Consul, the Lithuanian General Consul in Kaliningrad
Mr Gzhegozh Marchak, Consul on visa application, the Polish General Consulate in Kaliningrad
Mr Ulf Sir, Swedish General Consulate in Kaliningrad
Mr Arne Grove, Danish Honorary Consul in Kaliningrad
Mr Raitis Avenish, Office of the Latvian Consular department
Mr Boris Sheremetjev, 1st Secretary, the MFA of Russian Federation in Kaliningrad
Mr Juri Kadzhojan, General Director of "LUKoil/Kaliningradmorneft"
Mr Andrey Saltikov, "LUKoil/Kaliningradmorneft"
Mr Vladimir Petunin, President of Bank Baltica in Kaliningrad
Professor Vjaschalav Orlenok, Dean, geographical geocology faculty of Kaliningrad State Univ.
Mr Feliks Alekseev, Chairman of the Ecological union "The Right to Life"
Mrs Svetlana Smirnova, Chairwoman, the Association of travel companies in Kaliningrad region
Mr Ludwik Szakiel, City of Starogard Gdanski (project initiator)
Mrs Ivanova Alla, Tacis Office in Kaliningrad

Vice Governor, Mr Krasnyanskiy, welcomed the participants to Kaliningrad region.

1) Internal Board matters

- a. Approval of Agenda
Approved, with point 2e postponed to next board meeting.
- b. Approval of minutes for last ERB Executive Board Meeting 25/5-03
Approved and signed by the President and the Vicepresident
- c. Appointment of Board member to co-sign minutes
Mr Zbigniew Karpowicz, Vice President, appointed to co-sign the minutes

2) Report by the President, status and activities since ERB Council meeting

- a. Maritime Safety
Mrs Molin informed about activities undertaken since the ERB Council meeting on Bornholm late August:
 - A preparatory meeting has been held in Malmö the 7 October 2003 on the initiative of SYDSAM, in order to prepare a Maritime Safety Conference in the Baltic Sea during 2004. ERB was represented by Mr P. G. Lindencrona and Mrs Marianne Eckerbom. Minutes for the meeting and a report from P. G. Lindencrona has been sent to the Board. Next meeting will be held. From ERB will participate Marianne Eckerbom and Bo Löfgren.
 - A conference on Maritime Safety has been held 14 October 2003 in Nantes, France, organised by the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR). ERB was represented by Mr Bo Löfgren and P. G. Lindencrona. Copy of a speech by Mr Löfgren has been sent to the Board. A declaration from the conference will follow the draft minutes.
 - Mrs Molin as President of ERB sent a letter 15 October 2003 to the European Commissioner, Mrs Loyoly de Palacio, responsible for Transport and Energy. The ERB resolution on Maritime Safety, adopted 24th February 2003, was enclosed the letter, and Mrs Molin especially draws the Commissioners attention to the safety of oil production platforms, the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) and recommend to let the local and regional authorities be more involved in the maritime safety structures.

In the discussion Mr Kuznetsov stressed that discussion on Maritime Safety should not only be a question of ecology, but also other aspects such as the risk of terrorism. Mr Kadzhojan, General Director of LUKoil/Kaliningradmorneft, informed about the company plan in the Spring 2004 to set up oil production platforms in the Baltic Sea, using the most advanced technology. There will be a high control including cooperation with a German company among others and from July 2004 with the use of satellite control. The production will be based on a "Xero discharge" level of control, minimizing

the risks to an absolute minimum. Many different stakeholders have been consulted, not at least Lithuanian specialists. Mr Kadzhojan recommended that the “Xero discharge” level should be standard for all similar oil production platforms in the Baltic Sea. Mr Koshelev added that LUKoil Company has expressed its interest in participating in the planned Maritime Safety Conference next year.

Professor Orlenok from Kaliningrad State University presented work on monitoring maritime systems in the Baltic Sea, and the risks of the carbo-hydrids flows. The accident of Fu Shan Hai near Bornholm late May 2003 resulted in 1 500 tons of oil spill, and after 14 days the oil reached the coast of Kaliningrad region, and later Lithuania and Latvia, with oil up to 15 cm thick.

Mr Felix Alekseev from the Ecology Union in Kaliningrad Region, informed about his organisation and the need to consider life quality and nature as important elements in a sustainable development. In Maritime Safety a joint approach is needed, and soon an initiative for a scheme of nature protection will be discussed in the regional Duma, based on experiences from Sweden, EU policies and pan European strategies.

Conclusions:

The ERB Board

- confirm its will to co-operate with SYDSAM in organising a conference about Maritime Safety in 2004, preferably in September, alternatively in beginning of May 2004. To be clarified in the Working Group
- recommend that the conference will be held in the Southern part of the area, in one of the new memberstates or in Kaliningrad region
- recommend Region Blekinge and the Environmental Working Group to co-ordinate the co-operation between ERB, SYDSAM and other organisers, and within ERB to consult Professor Orlenok and Mr Felix Alekseev in the further preparations. A final decision on the ERB involvement will be taken at the next Board meeting 23 January 2004
- underline the importance of that the conference will be a cross border co-operation and where the involvement of the local and regional level in the planning process is necessary
- as important objectives of the conference points at
 - Classification of the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA)
 - Safety standards for oil production platforms (“Xero discharge” level)
 - Separation of traffic
 - Co-ordination of the long term traffic planning in progress on and over the Baltic Sea
 - Double-hulled ships and standards of material
 - A mutual plan for rescue work in Southern Baltic Sea
 - Sector co-ordination regionally, inter-regionally, nationally and internationally

b. ERB Secretariat web meeting 21 October 2003

Mr Andersen gave a short information about the first web meeting between the Secretariats, with the aim to prepare the Board meeting and agree on the agenda. Further steps will be taken to prepare future web cam meetings, with the use of a camera and microphone, which will further improve the meetings.

c. BSSSC Annual Meeting in St Petersburg 23 – 25 October 2003

Mrs Molin gave a short report from the BSSSC Annual meeting, and recommended to visit the BSSSC website to get the official declaration. Special attention was given to the information that the Swedish government do not intend to continue support to the Danish-Swedish INTERREG cooperation in the Oeresund Region after 2006, but will give priority to cooperation with the Baltic states.

d. CPMR, information on eventually membership

The main Secretariat has received information from the CPMR General Secretary, Mr Xavier Gizard, about membership fees and conditions to become membership of CPMR. Bornholm, Klaipeda and Öland (Kalmar) are already members. Mrs Molin recommended the other ERB regions to consider membership of CPMR, and if so, to inform the main ERB Secretariat.

e. ERB Information and Communication Strategy

Postponed to next Board meeting. In the meantime the Work Package 5 group under the Seagull project will prepare concrete proposals to follow up on actions in the strategy.

3) Discussion of experiences on new visa regime between Kaliningrad, Lithuania and Poland

1 July 2003 the visa regime came into force between Kaliningrad and Lithuania, and since 1 October 2003 the visa regime between Kaliningrad and Poland.

Information from the Kaliningrad region says

- that even in the end of August several hundred citizens every day had to wait outside the Lithuanian General Consultate to apply for a visa, and had to wait three weeks to become such one
- Travel agencies are deprived of the right to make annual Lithuanian visa for their own clients, which contradicts with the Agreement between the governments and decrease the number of travel tours, where crossing Lithuania is needed
- The number of tourists going to Lithuania and through its territory have decreased remarkably

Information from the Swedish BaltSeaInfo newsletter from 3.10.2003 says

- that only a few hundred persons passed the border Kaliningrad-Poland per day in the beginning of October, where the normal passing was about 3 000 persons
- that especially the cargo traffic is affected due to delays in provision of visa, and both in Warsaw and Kaliningrad is considered as the main problem

The question is, if these problems will only be timely limited or will continue. If so, they will seriously influence badly on the economic situation and considerably cause financial damages to Kaliningrad and the neighbouring regions in Lithuania and Poland.

If the problems will continue, the situation very badly conflicts with the intentions in the EU Northern Dimension, the 'Wider Europe' initiative and the new Neighbourhood programmes and will also question the possibilities to implement the coming INTERREG III A programme for Kaliningrad, Lithuania and Poland.

In the light of the main aims of ERB the situation therefore call for a major concern, and discussion on eventually needed adjustments and eventually ERB initiatives to be taken in order to assure also in the near future good conditions for cross border cooperation in the ERB area.

With the participation of invited guests, there will be an exchange of experiences to form the basis of such a discussion.

Discussion:

Mr Batalin from the Regional Duma in Kaliningrad informed that some problems in the new visa regimes have already been solved. From 1 January 2005 the citizens in the Kaliningrad region must have international passport instead of the current national passport, in order to get a transit visa. With the current capacity it will take 4-5 years to provide the citizens with such passports and in the mean time the first passports will expire. He proposed the current procedure to continue, using the internal Russian passports. Another problem unsolved is the transit to and from Belorussia, which is not possible due to the visa agreement with Lithuania. There should be agreed simplified schemes for such transits.

More consulates are to be opened in Kaliningrad, such as for the Republic of Latvia. Best solution would be no visa demand, and if ERB can assist in this it will be the biggest success so far for ERB.

Vice Governor, Mr Krasnyanskiy, compared Kaliningrad region with an island, where boats are needed for transit. He informed about the technical and financial problems due to the visa regime, and that the monitoring of the problems are improving. Now the number of border crossing is the same as before the visa regimes came into force, but more border crossings is done by air transport. He informed also about the decision 28 August 2003 on sea cruise passengers etc. in shipping to Kaliningrad. The visa demand has stopped the duty free ship traffic, which affects the economy in the sea ports. Within 1,5 years the sea ports have received taxes on 1 Million Dollars, but this has stopped now. The Vice Governor recommended to avoid extra demands in border crossing and if possible the number of needed stamps for those, who often cross the border. Citizens in Kaliningrad have almost get used to the new visa regime, but especially the technical problems must be solved.

Mr Koshelev informed about a letter received from the Company of Zegluga Gdanska, which ask for support in the problems with the duty free shipping traffic to and from sea ports in the Kaliningrad region. The rules decided in August 2003 makes such traffic impossible, as lists of passengers must be sent at least 72 hours in beforehand. Mr Koshelev proposed that there should be introduced a special ID Card for ERB residents, maybe a finger print to be tested in the ERB area.

Mrs Smirnova from the Association of Tourism Companies in Kaliningrad Region noted that the relations with the consulates and diplomats in and outside Kaliningrad are very good. The association cooperates closely with partners in Lithuania and Poland, and also organises tours to Belorussia. Many middle-aged people from Kaliningrad region often go to Lithuania and Poland for holidays and therefore now needs visa several times during the year. This demands lot of time and papers, and should be avoided. The visa regime with Poland is more flexible than with Lithuania.

Mr Mamontov from the International Department in Kaliningrad Oblast Administration, informed that the technical problems are now solved, in good cooperation with the neighbouring countries. The border crossing by air has increased since July with 37%, while the border crossing by train has decreased with 30% in the same period. 105 000 residents have used the simplified document and only 12 Russian were denied transit. Since 1 July 2003 45 000 visa has been issued, and 85 000 transit documents. Technical problems are solved and now it takes only one day to get a visa. In connection to the idea of a finger print system, he informed that EU experts are working on an idea to experiment with a system including fingerprints and photos.

Mr Andersson informed about his own experiences to get a visa for Russia, including the costs. It is also difficult, time consuming and costful for citizens outside Kaliningrad to cross the border.

Mr Marchak from the Polish General Consulate in Kaliningrad, informed about the effective system for the new visa regime and that the situation at the Polish-Russian is the same now as before the visa regime. 25 000 visa's have been issued so far, since 1 October 2003.

Mr Valukas from the Lithuanian General Consulate in Kaliningrad, informed that the Consulate since 1 July 2003 has issued 49 991 visa and a total of more than 60 000 transit documents. He stressed the need of transparency in the visa procedures.

Mr Olszewski informed about a Conference in Krakow 2 – 3 October 2003 about international cooperation. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed about a plan of a series of meetings with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss introduction of small transit documents for people living in the border area. Mr Olszewski stressed the need to support this idea and found that at the national level no technical problems have been solved. The ERB Board should support the resolution expressed by the Polish Party for possible introduction of simplified transit document for residents near the border.

Mr Moshkov recommended also considering problems with border crossing to Estonia and Latvia, as 30% of the population in these countries are Russian speaking. Visa handling can only be provided via Moscow. Mr Moshkov referred to a BSSSC Youth Workshop, where obstacles and bureaucracy for youth co-operation were discussed. Simplified procedures for youth representatives should be considered.

Mr Avenish from the Latvian Consular Office in Kaliningrad informed about the problems to get approved a location for a Latvian Consulate in Kaliningrad. Visa to Latvia demands 2 days and must go through Moscow.

Conclusion:

The Board

- support the proposal from the Polish Party, in which residents near the border should have a small transit document, and recommends the Polish ERB Party to communicate this support to the key actors (EU and the national governments of Russia, Lithuania and Poland)
- stress the need to increase the capacities in providing Russian citizens with international passport, in order to reach the EU-Russia agreed deadline of 1 January 2005, and recommends the Russian ERB Party to communicate this concern to the Russian authorities
- stress the need to introduce a simplified transit document for citizens from Kaliningrad region, which want to go to and from Belorussia, and recommends the Lithuanian and Russian ERB Parties to forward this concern to the national authorities
- propose to reduce the time for those residents of Kaliningrad and neighbouring regions, that often cross the border, by reducing the demanded number of stamps, and recommends the Lithuanian, Polish and Russian ERB Parties to forward this proposal to the respective national authorities
- recommend more flexibility in the visa regime between Russian Federation and the Republic of Lithuania, in line with the agreement between Russian Federation and Poland, and recommend the Lithuanian and Russian ERB parties to forward this recommendation to the respective national authorities
- stress the need of simplified rules for the duty free shipping traffic between Poland and Kaliningrad region, and recommend the Polish and Russian ERB Parties to forward this concern to the respective national authorities
- stress the need of simplified procedures for youth up to the age of 25 years, taking part in international youth activities, and recommend the Russian ERB Party to raise this issue to the national authorities in Russian Federation
- propose the introduction of a finger print system for ERB residents for border crossing
- recommend a quick approval of a Latvian Consulate in Kaliningrad region, and easier access to get visa to and from Estonia and Latvia, and recommends the Russian ERB Party to forward this recommendation to the national authorities in the Russian Federation

4) ERB projects, status and activities undertaken

a. Seagull DevERB

Mr Andersson gave a short report from the Seagull project, referring to the electronically newsletter. The Democracy report has now been printed, in WP 2 some participation problems are faced, in WP 3 seminars have been held in Lithuania and Latvia, in WP 4 seminars have been held in Lithuania and in WP 5 the next meeting will take place in Kaliningrad 1 November 2003, with a focus on further development of the ERB website.

b. Green Circle Schools

The first network meeting will be held in Saldus, Latvia, the 29 – 31 October 2003.

Mr Koshelev informed that the participating school from Zelenogradsk has calculated its financial needs to 7 500 USD in order to participate fully in the project. The details will be forwarded to the main ERB Secretariat, which will work on providing the financial support, as agreed at the last Board meeting.

Mr Ciardi informed that the Green Circle School project are now linked to the website.

- c. Leadership and Competence Development within the ERB region
The project proposal has been withdrawn, though it is considered as a good project. It will maybe be launched again later, but the initiative should come from one of the Eastern partners in ERB.
- d. The 1st Euroregion 'Baltic' Youth Games
Mr Ludwik Szakiel from Starogard Gdanski, Poland, presented the proposal distributed to the delegations at the last Council meeting. The City of Starogard Gdanski will co-finance with 15 000 EUR and EU will be applied for 50 000 EUR.
The target group has been changed to now consider youth in age 13-15.
Type of sport games is proposed to be football, volleyball and basketball, with a girl and a boy team from each ERB Party.
In totally 400 participants is expected, and besides the games there will be planned seminars – education through sport.

Conclusion:

The ERB Parties are recommended to identify one partner each to join a working group for further preparations, and to inform Mr Szakiel about interested partners.
The Board recommends the last part of July 2004, as it must be held during the school summer holidays.

5) ERB organisation in future

- a. Prolongation of ERB Presidency and/or permanent Secretariat function
The proposal from the main ERB Secretariat was discussed.

Conclusion:

The Board

- Recommends the main ERB Secretariat to further investigate external financing opportunities, especially contact to the INTERREG III secretariat in Karlskrona and possibilities with an eventually neighbourhood programme for ERB
- The weighting of own financing between ERB Parties should besides the size of population also be based on the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per inhabitant and a new proposal for financing prepared, including eventually possible external co-financing
- Agrees in the task and role described in the proposal, but will only take a final decision after a new proposal has been prepared and after consultations in the formal bodies in the regions

- b. Enlargement of ERB
The proposal from the main ERB Secretariat was approved.
- c. Future structure and working methods of permanent ERB Working Groups
Postponed to next Board meeting.

d. ERB Conference 2004

The proposal prepared by the main ERB Secretariat, the Polish ERB Secretariat and consulted with the Seagull project manager was discussed. The Polish ERB Party expect to allocate a big amount for the conference, and to include costs in the PHARE application to co-finance the Seagull project. Also the Seagull project is expected to co-finance some of the costs, but it require relevance to the project implementation.

Conclusion:

The Board

- want the programme to include more concrete and relevant activities, aiming at partnership building and town twinning
- recommends the main ERB Secretariat and the Polish ERB Secretariat to continue the preparations as proposed and soon to set a final date and place for the Conference

6) ERB lobbying subjects

a. Structural Funds 2006+, ERB position paper

The Position Paper drafted by the main ERB Secretariat was discussed

Conclusion:

The Board approved, and the ERB regions were recommended to support the Leipzig Declaration from May 2003, which express the general opinions of the local and regional authorities in EU.

b. Neighbourhood programmes, ERB lobby strategy

The proposal prepared by the main ERB Secretariat was discussed

Conclusion:

The Board approved the proposed ERB position and a plan for further steps to be taken in order to lobby for an neighbourhood programme for ERB after 2006.

c. INTERREG III A programme for Kaliningrad, Lithuania and Poland

Mrs Alla from the Tacis Office in Kaliningrad introduced the draft Neighbourhood Programme/INTERREG III A programme 2004-2006 for Poland, Lithuania and Kaliningrad. Infrastructure and people-to-people will be priorities.

Mr Olszewski added with information about problems for the ERB Secretariat to get the management of micro projects, though EU and the Assembly of European Regions supported it. The Managing Authority has been placed in Vilnius.

7) Exchange of information

a. Town and municipality twinning

There is a need to improve the exchange of information between the delegations, especially considering the current and planned international/cross border activities in and between the respective ERB regions. The aim is that the Board members get a better picture of the priorities and subjects for bigger projects, cooperation fields, main partners etc.

At this meeting a special focus should be put on the town and municipality twinning within the ERB. How is the situation today and what can we do to get more connections between municipalities in the ERB area? All regions are recommended to prepare a list of existing town-twinning in their respective region.

Conclusion:

Postponed to next Board meeting

8) Other common matters and next Board meeting

Next Board meeting is planned to be in Klaipeda Friday 23 January 2004.

A main subject will be to prepare the next Council Session 27 February 2004 in Poland.