

ERB BOARD MEETING

Minutes

Palanga, 11th May 2005
12.00 – 16.00 hours local time

Meeting Place:

ERB Board will have the meeting in the Conference Facility at the Palanga Airport, Klaipeda County, Lithuania.

Participants:

Members of ERB Board and Council

Ms Irina Rozova, ERB President, ERB Board Member, Lithuania
Ms Annelise Molin, ERB Board Member, Denmark
Mr Bo Frank, ERB Board Member, Sweden
Ms Dalia Makuskiene, ERB Council Member, Lithuania
Mr Zbigniew Karpowicz, ERB Council Member, Poland
Ms Krystyna Wróblewska, Poland
(on behalf of Mr Jan Kozłowski, ERB Council Member, Poland)

Secretariats

Ms Magdalena Szymanowska, ERB Secretariat, Poland
Mr Ulf Andersson, ERB Secretariat, Sweden
Mr Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski, ERB IPS Secretariat
Mr Sven Lindahl, ERB Secretariat, Denmark

Invited Guests

Mr Tadeusz Macioł, Honorary Consul of Poland in Klaipeda
Mr Ryszard Zarzecki, Counsellor at the Polish Honorary Consulate in Klaipeda

1. Opening and welcome

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

2. Intervention by Mr Tadeusz Macioł, Honorary Consul of Poland in Klaipeda

Dear Ladies and gentlemen!

On behalf of the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Klaipeda I would like to warmly welcome all the participants of the Board of Euroregion Baltic.

I am very pleased that this session of the Board is taking place in Palanga, on the friendly land of Samogitia. I am also glad that due to the municipal – state character of Euroregion Baltic the meeting today is attended by representatives of the regional authorities of Klaipeda County, where I have the honour to be Honorary Consule. Having got familiar with the achievements of ERB I would like to emphasise how extremely important the projects implemented through Phare Funds, as well as other crossborder and transnational projects, have been. Taking into consideration the grave importance of ERB objectives I wish all the participants of the meeting a fruitful session, an abundance of ideas and undying perseverance in efforts to accomplish them.

3. Board internal matters:

3.1 Approving the agenda.

The agenda was approved by the Board members with no alterations.

3.2 Signing the Minutes from the Board meeting on 26th February 2005.

No comments were submitted to the Minutes from the Board meeting on 26th February 2005. Though not delivered by the International Secretariat, the Minutes are binding, as stipulated by the ERB Statutes. They will be delivered by mail to ERB President Irina Rozova and ERB Council Member, Mr Jan Kozłowski to be co-signed.

3.3 Appointing Board members to co-sign the minutes from the Board meeting on 11th May 2005.

Following the recommendation ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova and ERB Board Member, Ms Annalise Molin were appointed to co-sign the minutes.

4. Report from the Conference on the 25th Anniversary of the Madrid Convention in Warsaw between 21 -22 April 2005

25 years ago the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities was signed. It has so far been ratified by 33 member countries in the Council of Europe, including all the ERB member countries. The Madrid Outline Convention (as it is also called) supports crossborder cooperation contributing to economic and social growth in the crossborder regions. It also highlights priority of the legal system in a giving country against agreements signed with crossborder cooperation partners. Thus, it defines legal and structural patterns for such cooperation. Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski delivered a short report of the Conference and the conclusions made at its closure.

The Conference took place in Warsaw between 21 and 22 April, attracting representatives of the Council of Europe member countries, Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, Central European Initiative, the European Parliament and Commission. It was

chaired by the Polish Minister of Interior and Administration, Mr Ryszard Kalisz. The Prime Minister of Poland, Professor Marek Belka addressed the participants during the second day of the event.

Euroregion Baltic was represented by its President Irina Rozova, Dalia Makuskiene of the Lithuanian Secretariat and Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski of the International Secretariat, who had presented the achievements of Euroregion Baltic in the area of crossborder cooperation, as well as the goals that Euroregion Baltic had defined for the future, particularly in the light of the two draft regulations that the European Commission and the Council of Europe proposed to offer the legal status to organizations pursuing transfrontier and interterritorial cooperation: the European Groupings of Crossborder Cooperation and Euroregional Crossborder Groupings, respectively.

The conference closed with the acceptance of the conclusions wherein the Conference participants:

- recommend that the legal framework for transfrontier cooperation be strengthened and express their support for the conclusion of a third protocol to the Madrid Outline Convention on the status of Euroregions;
- consider that more needs to be done to strengthen the capacity of border municipalities and regions to engage in effective cooperation with their neighbours and recommend that the Council of Europe, with all appropriate partners, develops tools and actions to that end;
- recommend that transfrontier and interterritorial cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe be enhanced, and invite the Committee of Advisers on the Development of Transfrontier Cooperation of the Council of Europe to reinforce its action on that area;
- express appreciation for the action of the Council of Europe Development Bank and invite it to further develop its interventions in support of crossborder projects and initiatives.

5. Report from the Agenda 2007 Project

Mr Sven Lindahl presented to the Board a brief report of the recently completed Project Agenda 2007, implemented by the Danish Partner. The project brought together the key personnel of the ERB secretariats and aimed at increasing competences and the knowledge of EU policies in the light of its New Financial Perspective, as well as improving cooperation and communication between the secretariats.

The objectives of the projects were all achieved, which means that the key staff persons in all ERB secretariats are now more familiar with the main current EU policies and the drafts for future programmes relevant for a euroregion like ERB. Besides increased knowledge the participants also had the opportunity to discuss in what way the future programmes can relate to ERB and the implementation of the JTDP. The exchange of information and experiences about administrative capacities in the respective secretariats gave a much clearer picture of the resources available and how to improve the human and technical capacities. In general this project founded a perfect background for implementation of the applied Seagull 2 project, and further on the future implementation of the JTDP.

6. Information from ERB IPS on the current status of the two proposals regulating the future legal framework for euroregions: EGCC's by the European Commission and ECG's by the Council of Europe.

Mr Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski presented the current status of the two proposals, differences between them, and impact they might have on the future cooperation within euroregions. The Board discussed whether ERB should support the ratification of the proposals by the states. Mr Bo Frank asked what real relevance the proposed statutes will have for ERB. Mr Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski responded that it would make it possible for euroregions to employ personnel and manage EU funds but it is very difficult to say at this moment if the two proposals are feasible to be in force as there is a substantial reservation on

the part of the EU Member States to adopt EGCC's and one can expect similar opposition can be expected among 46 Member States in the Council of Europe. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska suggested then that ERB should not make any formal step, including forming a position with respect to these two draft documents now that it is impossible to predict their real significance. The Board agreed with the suggestion.

7. Debate with the aim of adopting the ERB Position Paper on the EU Draft Regulation establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.

The Danish Secretariat prepared a proposal outlining a time schedule and action plan for the adoption of such a position by the ERB Board. The main objective for ERB, in the proposed position paper, should be to become a Neighbourhood Programme Area as this would provide a substantial financial framework for the implementation of the Joint Transnational Development Programme (JTDP), expected to be approved the 24th October 2005. The alternative way of implementing the JTDP is to through projects applicable to different financial instruments and programmes, which will make it much more difficult to plan and coordinate initiatives, and to commit partners from especially the private and NGO sectors. So far it seems very difficult for ERB to own its Neighbourhood Programme, all ERB member regions are expected to be eligible for the future ENPI programme for all the Baltic Sea Region, similar to the current INTERREG III B BSR programme. However, Only Klaipeda region, Kaliningrad region, Warmia-Mazury region and the Eastern part of Pomerania region are foreseen to be included in a future ENPI Cross-Border Cooperation programme, similar to the current INTERREG III A/NP programme for the same area. Nevertheless the draft ENPI regulation from the Commission, in the light of comments from among others the European Parliament, only needs a few changes to allow a euroregion like ERB to own a NP for 2007-2013.

All the ERB Parties present at the meeting had familiarised themselves with the contents of the Danish proposal and agreed to the following schedule:

- *11th May 2005 - Discussion by ERB Board in Palanga with approval of the further procedure and the general framework of the Position Paper;*
- *19th May 2005 - Draft Position Paper sent to IPS / National ERB Secretariats for consultation in the ERB member regions;*
- *30th June 2005 - Deadline for comments from the ERB member regions, including information about the position of national governments;*
- *5th July 2005 - Final draft of Position Paper sent to IPS / National ERB Secretariats, to be translated and transferred to the ERB Board members;*
- *22nd July 2005 - Final discussion and approval by the ERB Board in a meeting in Klaipeda.*

It was also agreed that the lobbying activities must first of all be targeted at the National governments and the EU Commission, but also be addressed to the European Parliament, other EU institutions, key players among European organisations and national parliaments. Furthermore, a series of visits will be arranged by the International Secretariat for a high-ranking ERB politician, ready to take on the task of coordinating the lobbying effort, to pay in Brussels at the beginning of September 2005. At around the time, a joint meeting of the national and regional representations of ERB member states and regions to Brussels will be attempted. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska suggested keeping the format of the position paper recommended by the Danish Secretariat only for internal records. EU institutions, she argued, are not inclined to read texts that are too extensive, so a paper should be made presentable and easy to comprehend. The Board agreed with Ms Wróblewska.

8. Follow-up on the Board's debate concerning the publication of an ERB international newsletter.

Following the previous Board's debate on the proposal to publish such a newsletter, and as a result of consultations with the secretariats during the Agenda 2007 Project Mr Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski presented a new idea of publishing an ERB international newsletter including proposals to establish the Editors' Board and the Editing Team, to delegate the task of printing the newsletter to the International Secretariat, to print the newsletter in English and Russian every two months, and to distribute the electronic version of the newsletter to the National Secretariats and other target readers. A discussion followed the presentation, in which Mr Bo Frank questioned the idea of a paper version of the publication. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska responded that the paper copy is a valuable promotion material during all sorts of international meetings. Ms Annalise Molin asked who will read the newsletter in English. Mr Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski informed that the electronic version will be in English and the National Secretariats will be able to translate them into their own languages to be distributed locally. Ms Dalia Makuskiene stated that the Russian language version will also be very useful in Lithuania. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska suggested that the English newsletter should be primarily targeted at European and regional organizations. Mr Sven Lindahl asked if it would be possible that the International Secretariat pays the cost of editing national versions of the newsletter. Mr Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski responded that such a cost would be five-fold (extra newsletters in Danish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish). Mr Ulf Andersson said provided that each ERB member region receives copies of the newsletter, they can make their own decisions whether to publish their own language copy. Ms Annalise Molin claimed that the newsletter should be attractive and therefore each National Secretariat must be involved in the editing process. Also, she continued, the publication should include success stories of cooperation within ERB. Mr Ulf Andersson suggested covering events like ERB Youth Games, and Mr Sven Lindahl proposed to include the ERB Youth Council project. Ms Annalise Molin suggested that the newsletter is not published in two language versions but in one bilingual version so that it will have eight pages instead of four. She also proposed to publish 4 issues yearly. Mr Bo Frank agreed and recommended that the front page includes all the national flags within ERB. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska agreed that the proposed publishing frequency will be more appropriate. In conclusion the Board agreed that:

- *It will take the overall responsibility of the Editors' Board.*
- *ERB Secretariats (National and International) will each nominate a person who will be responsible for contributing to the publication by delivering texts and photos, providing necessary translation, etc. They will form the Editing Team of the newsletter and propose the contents of its first issue at the Board meeting on 22nd July.*
- *ERB International Secretariat will be additionally responsible for collecting texts and photos, editing the material and having the newsletter printed.*
- *ERB International Newsletter will have a bilingual paper version (English and Russian), published every quarter in 2,000 copies. The electronic version of the newsletter will be distributed among the National Secretariats who themselves decide if a separate national issue of the newsletter is necessary. Should they decide so, they should cover the cost of translation and publishing themselves.*
- *The cost of the publication is estimated at EUR 400 per issue. ERB International Secretariat will cover the cost relating to the scope specified herein.*

9. Information on the current status of the consultation process carried out in the member regions on the Second Draft of the Joint Transnational Development Programme.

The National delegations provided updated information on the activities in their countries relating to the evaluation of the JTDP. Mr Bo Frank informed that each of the three Swedish regions has a separate consultation process. Debates have already been held by the SSKL (County Council and Municipalities in Southern Smaland) and a common position is now being constructed with other organisations, such as the local Chamber of Commerce, which will later be again consulted within the Region of Kronoberg. Afterwards, Ms Annalise Molin

informed the participants that the Danish Party had already drawn up its common position towards the Second Draft of JTDP. Proposals were made to make it clearer and more coherent, separating its objectives and the tools envisaged to their completion. Seven focus areas, each with the guiding EU Policy, were recommended. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska said the member communes both in the Region of Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie received the Second Draft with the cover letter explaining how they are requested to contribute to the process. These were also sent to the Marshal Offices, development agencies, universities and non-governmental organisations. The response has so far been quite weak. Ms Wróblewska also informed that on 9th May Gdańsk held a conference on its regional development strategy, during which it was evident that both documents have a lot in common in terms of general goals and focus areas. On 10th May, also in Gdańsk a joint seminar was held for representatives of regional and local authorities, and public institutions which enabled them to express their opinions concerning the Second Draft. It may be concluded that two general comments were made: firstly, it seems necessary to differentiate priorities within JTDP and instruments to accomplish them, and secondly, doubts were voiced whether identifying one geographical area within ERB (i.e. Kaliningrad Oblast) as a priority is a good solution as assisting the region in terms of all JTDP foci should be a horizontal activity. Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski informed the participants that the Board of the Association of Polish Communes will have a meeting on 13th May, whose agenda includes a debate on the Second Draft. Ms Dalia Makuskiene told the Board members that the document was sent to the Klaipeda County municipalities and so far only two opinions had been sent in. A discussion took place in the Economic Department of the Klaipeda County Administration where opinions were pronounced that Kaliningrad Oblast should be considered horizontal focus within the strategy, and that more emphases should be put on the business environment.

10. Any other business

10.1 ERB Board meeting in Klaipeda on 22nd July 2005

Mr Bo Frank requested the Board to specify the time the next meeting will begin. As it will be organised during Summer holidays and at the time of the maritime festival in Klaipeda travel and hotel arrangements have to be made in good time. The Board decided that the meeting on 22nd July will start at 11.00 local time.

10.2 Invitation letter to a business forum in China

Mr Ulf Andersson read out an invitation to a business forum to take place between 8 and 14th September in China, following the invitation that the Kalmar Region received last year from Changxing County, and the offer that the Chairman of the Regional Council in Kalmar County, Mr Anders Akesson made to ERB President, Mr Jan Kozłowski, to include the whole territory of ERB into the cooperation. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska informed that the Region of Pomorskie cooperates with Shanghai and is planning to hold a mission some time in Autumn 2005 so it might be possible to combine the two visits. Ms Annalise Molin said that the invitation will be forwarded to the Business Centre on Bornholm to be discussed by their Board.

10.3 Questions

Mr Sven Lindahl asked the Board if there had been any recent developments concerning the Latvian participation. Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski informed the Board that Mr Zigo Rutkovskis was planning to attend the meeting in Palanga but had to cancel in the last minute. However, he had explained that the new Council of the Kurzeme Planning Region will convene its first meeting on 8th June and only then will be able to make a final decision whether to continue its participation in ERB. Mr Rutkovskis also informed the International Secretariat that the position of the Agency, of which he remains Director, will be in favour of such continuation.

Mr Lindahl asked the participants if there is a common database of all projects which have been and are being implemented within ERB. He was informed that there are several databases holding information on implemented projects (e.g. Interreg III B BSR) but no such electronic storage on ERB applications.

The meeting was brought to an end and ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova closed it.

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Irina Rozova
ERB President

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Annalise Molin
ERB Board Member