



Seagull II

EUROREGION BALTIC
INTERNATIONAL PERMANENT SECRETARIAT
Ul. Sw. Duchy 3/4
82-300 Elbląg, Poland
Tel./ Fax: +48 55 641 27 70
E-mail: ips@eurobalt.org.pl
www.eurobalt.org.pl

MINUTES FROM THE JOINT ERB BOARD AND SEAGULL 2 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Date:

3rd October 2006
09.00 – 16.00 hours (local time)

Meeting Place:

Ronnebygatan 2, Karlskrona,
Region Blekinge Conference Room,

Participants:

ERB Board / Seagull 2 Steering Committee

Mikhail Pluhin	ERB President, Chairman of the Seagull 2 Steering Committee, Russia
Raisa Mincinauskiene	ERB Board member, member of the Seagull 2 Steering Committee, Lithuania
Krystyna Wróblewska	on behalf of Mr Jan Kozłowski, ERB Board member, member of the Seagull 2 Steering Committee, Poland
Bernth Johnson	ERB Vice-President, Vice-Chairman of the Seagull 2 Steering Committee, Sweden
Per Ole Petersen	ERB Board member, member of the Seagull 2 Steering Committee, Denmark
Zigo Rutkovskis	ERB Board member, member of the Seagull 2 Steering Committee, Latvia

Seagull 2 Personnel

Niels Chresten Andersen	Head of Danish ERB Secretariat, Seagull 2 Work Package 3 Leader, Bornholm
Ulf Andersson	Seagull 2 Regional Coordinator, Kronoberg
Erik Ciardi	Seagull 2 Regional Coordinator, Kalmar
S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański	Head of ERB International Secretariat, Seagull 2 Coordinator
Olga Grigoreva	Assistant to Regional Coordinator, Kaliningrad
P.G. Lindencrona	Head of Swedish ERB Secretariat, Seagull 2 Regional Coordinator, Blekinge
Dalia Makuskiene	Head of Lithuanian ERB Secretariat, Seagull 2 Regional Coordinator, Klaipeda
Kora Stanczyk	Seagull 2 Work Package 1 Leader, Pomorskie
Piotr Zwolak	Seagull 2 Regional Coordinator, Warmińsko-Mazurskie

Guests:

Åsa Karlsson	trainee at SSKL (Municipalities and County Council in Southern Smaland), Kronoberg
Elena Koroleva	Consultant of Department for Co-ordination of Region Representatives Abroad, Government of Kaliningrad Region
Asta Raugaliene	Deputy Director of Regional Development Department at Klaipeda County Administration
Bengt Gustaffon	Transport Logistics Officer at Region Blekinge
Tor-Björn Åstrand Karlsson	Baltic and European Affairs Officers at Region Blekinge
Krister Nillsson	Regional Development at Region Blekinge
Victor Romanovsky	Head of Department for Co-ordination of Region Representatives Abroad, Government of Kaliningrad Region

1. Study Visit

Sagull II Steering Committee and project coordination group had its second project study visit. This time, the aim of the visit was to enable the involved partners to familiarise themselves with some experience in constructing statistical databases of regional indicators. The establishment of such a statistical tool is one of the outputs of the project. By means of an unsophisticated system collecting the agreed statistics from the ERB member regions it will be possible to assess progress in the implementation of activities recommended in the ERB Joint Development Programme.

During the Seagull devERB some investigation was made into the election and availability of relevant indicators. At the moment, within the framework of the Seagull II project, these indicators are being adapted in such a way that it will be possible to relate them to the areas prioritised in the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies. Some assistance in this work can be sought in the results of the research performed by ESPON – European Spatial Planning Observation Network. In their report from the last year called “In Search for Territorial Potential” innovative methods were proposed to group of indicators in order to receive an aggregated indicator, reflecting a status of the region in terms of its implementation of Lisbon and Gothenburg related objectives, e.g. major economic structures, labour market efficiency, accessibility to main EU transport networks, risk of exposure to natural and man-made disasters, young populations, metropolitan centres, proportion of renewable energy, structural fund expenditure per capita, etc.

During the visit the participants learnt about the technical organisation of such systems. Mr Krister Nillsson from Region Blekinge presented technical capacity of regional banks of statistical data. Functions allowing a comparison of a number of regions and its graphical presentation, either in tables or graphs, seemed most interesting. These facilities will be a necessary part of what the ERB database should be capable of doing.

The members of the Steering Committee also requested important information concerning financial cost of such a database. There are two possibilities: either through institutions like statistical office, paying a yearly subscription fee, or commissioning the construction of such a base on the ERB website and server. In the coming months the Segull II Work Package Nr 2 will attempt to answer the question which will be a better solution for Euroregion Baltic.

2. General matters

2.1 Introduction of the new Board member

Following a change of the Vice-Governor of Klaipeda County, newly appointed Ms Raisa Mincinauskiene will represent the Lithuanian partner in the Board of Euroregion Baltic. President Pluhin introduced Ms Mincinauskiene as the new Board member.

Ms Mincinauskiene thanked for the introduction and expressed her hope that she would be a useful asset in the work within the Euroregion, given some time to familiarise herself with the current topics of the cooperation.

2.2 Approval of the final agenda

ERB President Mikhail Pluhin proposed the agenda to the Board.

President Mikhail Pluhin proposed to include a brief fill-in on the border-crossing conference under point 4.4. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska proposed to include a debate on a recent proposal by the Council of Europe to establish euroregions of the seas in Any Other Business. Mr P.G. Lindencrona asked for some time to present up-to-date information on the Baltic Master project. Mr Erik Ciardi requested time to deliver information on the China – Baltic Sea Region Business Forum in Kalmar.

The Board accepted all the proposed inclusions.

2.3 Appointment of a Board member to co-sign the minutes

By recommendation from the Board, ERB President, Mr Mikhail Pluhin asked ERB Vice-President, Mr Bernth Johnson to co-sign the minutes from this meeting.

2.4 Approval of the minutes of the ERB Board meeting on 2nd June 2006

ERB President Mikhail Pluhin and ERB Board Vice-President Bernth Johnson signed the minutes of the Board meeting that took place on 2nd June 2006.

3. Information on the situation in the Kurzeme Region

Mr Zigo Rutkovskis informed the Board that on the 7th June 2006 the Council of Kurzeme Planning Region ceased Latvian participation in the activities of Euroregion Baltic. He explained that the decision was caused by a permanent lack of human resources in the organisation to continue its involvement, split of CBC programmes that left Kurzeme outside the South Baltic area, as well as the ongoing reform in Latvia, raising questions concerning the future of the region.

Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański asked for some technical clarification. The County and Municipality of Liepaja were the founding members of Euroregion Baltic, and the Kurzeme Planning Region was accepted as a new member only in 2003. Mr Zigo Rutkovskis explained that the Regional Council took the decision to withdraw also on behalf of the founding members.

Mr Viktor Koshelev said he was sorry to hear about the Latvian decision, even more so that a number of joint projects including Latvian partners are taking place.

Mr Per Ole Petersen said it is always sad to say goodbye to a partner but has full understanding for the decision. He asked what consequences this will have on the rotation of presidency within ERB.

President Mikhail Pluhin informed that the rotation will be continued without the Latvian contribution, which means that after the Swedish Presidency it will be the turn for Denmark to take over. President also proposed that the information on the withdrawal of Latvia should be formally presented to the ERB Council in November. He asked the partners having cooperation agreements with Liepaja to ask their

partners if they would be interested in continuing involvement in the ERB at the local level.

4. Proposals for future ERB projects

4.1 Ice hockey tournament.

President Mikhail Pluhin informed the Board on the meeting held the day before with Mr Michael Fransson, a representative of the municipal authorities of Karlskrona, in order to discuss a proposal to organise an ice hockey tournament for kids in Rosenholm (Karlskrona).

The President said the preliminary arrangements are that the tournament is held in the second half of January for the teams of 10 – 11-year-olds, not for the ice hockey professional veterans, like it was originally planned. It will be under the patronage of Euroregion Baltic, and the International Secretariat will provide promotional materials. Naturally, some questions remain to be solved, especially regarding the cost of accommodation and boarding. They will be considered internally in Karlskrona, as well as with some assistance by Blekinge Regional Council. Mr Fransson will go on a round trip in the ERB member regions in order to identify the interest and possibility for the regions to take part.

Ms Dalia Makuskiene remarked that the transport cost will be a crucial one and it may be simply too expensive for kids to participate in the tournament.

Mr Victor Koshelev pointed out it might be a good idea to consider the possibility of acquiring some assistance from the Nordic Council of Ministers who had just opened their office in Kaliningrad.

Ms Dalia Mukuskine remarked that such assistance would only be possible for the Nordic countries, thus not all the members within the ERB.

In conclusion, the President said the matter will become clearer after Mr Fransson's visit to Kaliningrad, Latvia and Lithuania. He agreed each country will obviously make their own independent decision but suggested waiting a while as new opportunities may appear. He said that the related expenditure can be significant but still not to the extent that will make the whole event unrealistic. President then asked the Board for support to the idea, explaining that the first edition of the tournament could be financed with own funds, before turning into a bigger project co-financed by the EU.

4.2 ERB Basement Bands

Ms Åsa Karlsson made a short presentation of the project proposal called "ERB Basement Bands Concert". She explained that basement bands should be understood as groups of young musicians not yet acknowledged by wider audiences, so garage bands is another term that could be applied. Ms Karlsson said this project could contribute to the strengthening of cultural ties between the ERB member regions, the increase of international and cultural interests among young people, and to a better promotion of Euroregion Baltic. The idea is to combine the event with the sailing regatta to be held in Karlskrona and attract young musicians of between 15 to 25 years old. Ms Karlsson also said that financial support will be sought through SIDA.

Vice-President Johnson said he likes the idea very much and gives his full support to the organisation of the concert.

Mr P.G. Lindencrona pointed out that this idea is very much in line with one of the 5 priorities of the new cooperation programme within Region Blekinge dealing with cooperation of young people (one other priority within the programme concerns cooperation within the ERB).

Mr Per Olof Petersen also thought the idea was very good and a positive indication of young initiative. One problem he commented on was the fact that SIDA does not cover Bornholm.

Mr Erik Ciardi said it could be a good idea that the organisers have contact with other similar festivals held around the region.

Mr Ulf Andersson proposed that a more detailed proposal will be presented at the Council meeting in Kaliningrad.

Upon a suggestion from Mr Niels Chresten Andersen, President Pluhin recommended that cooperation will be established between the project coordinator and the ERB national secretariats. This will help to identify possible bands to perform at the concert, as well as to enable a better coordination between such events and regular ERB meetings in the future.

4.3 BEN

BEN Project Leader has again asked Euroregion Baltic to consider its participation in the project following a year of inactivity by one of its Latvian partner. Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański explained that the participation would only cover involvement the BEN project meetings in 2007, which could be delegated among all the ERB members, not just to the international secretariat. The overall cost of this participation would amount to 10 000 euros, subject to the 75% co-financing rate by the Interreg III B Programme.

Mr Victor Koshelev informed that the Russian partner is already involved in the BEN project and considers it a good possibility for the ERB to be represented as a whole organisation. During the conference in Petrozavodsk (that was organised by the Russian Ministry of Regional Development on 29 September 2006), he noted, it was very clear that Euroregions can only benefit from such cooperation and build up on their already significant role, for instance in the development of ideas which are later turned into infrastructural transport projects.

Mr Per Ole Petersem agreed transport can be a good example of such cooperation and supported joining in the BEN project, though only within the allocated budget.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska said it seems necessary to be involved in the project. Its level is high by the participation of the Nordic Council of Ministers and Council of Baltic Sea States. Besides, during concrete project activities like the drafting of the Euroregional Handbook we can have real influence on its contents, introducing ideas that can later be supported by the NCM or CBSS.

Vice-President Johnson agreed fully with the comments presented by Ms Wróblewska.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański said that due to the legal situation of the international secretariat formal approval will have to be given by the Board of the Association of Polish Communes, following a financial analysis of the organisation cashflow in 2007.

President Pluhin summed up the discussion by saying there are in fact two issues: first, being a very clear sign of support from the ERB Board towards the participation of Euroregion Baltic in the BEN project, and the other of the technical nature that need to be solved internally by the international secretariat.

Mr Pluhin went on to comment the lack of legal personality of Euroregional bodies in the context of their representation in projects, conferences and other joint events, and said it could be a matter of consideration in the coming future.

Vice-President Johnson supported the idea.

4.4 Seagull 2 Border Crossing Conference

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański informed on the current status of preparations for the conference, including the reasons for its delay, number of invited participants and its main focus.

Mr Victor Koshelev said that though originally it was thought to organise a separate transport conference, not it seems reasonable to include transport issues into the border crossing conference as they are so much interlinked.

Mr Bengt Gustafsson informed that the Baltic Gateway Plus project had just received a Tacis-generated neighbourhood funding and will hold a big transport conference in Kaliningrad in April 2007.

President Pluhin concluded by saying two events will be organised: ERB Council meeting and border crossing conference, including transport aspects. The question is, he continued, whether they should be separate, if so, what sequence they will come in, and how extensive the transport issue will be.

Mr Bernth Johnson stated he believed the events should be separate and the Council meeting should come first.

Agreeing with the Vice-President, Mr Niels Chresten Andersen emphasised it will be of professional importance to have the two events separated.

In conclusion, President Pluhin said it was clear that the Council meeting will be then organised on 20th November, the border crossing conference on 21st November, and the transport issue will need to be cleared up (one possibility for example will be to ask the Municipality of Baltijsk to hold a transport meeting).

5. Report from the ERB International Secretariat

5.1 Seagull 2 related activities

Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański outlined activities related to the implementation of the Seagull 2 project, implemented since the last meeting of the Steering Committee in June, and those planned till the end of the year. He put the main focus on the issues related to the establishment of the website, extension of availability of the Marratech system, as well as the running tender procedures within the project.

The Board members took note of the information.

5.2 Other ERB activities

Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański outlined euroregional activities outside the scope of the Seagull 2 project, including the status of two other events involving young and very young people: the artistic competition "From the Sea We Are" and sports games. He also reminded the Board that the Council had been promised to receive in November the information on possible follow-up to the project of "Green Circle Schools".

Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański also presented the actual budget of the international secretariat for the first six months of 2006.

The Board members took note of the information.

5.3 Baltic Master project

Mr P.G. Lindencrona gave a current status of the project with reference to its last milestone, i.e. 6-month period. After the presentation, Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said the Baltic Master project has two dimensions: one of clearly transnational character and the other of crossborder nature. Regarding the latter, he asked if it is for Baltic Master staff to identify possible continuation schemes; (this is naturally an important question in the ongoing debate on the priorities within the new South Baltic CBC programme).

Mr Lindencrona answered that 4 people had been appointed within the project to work on this issue. He also took the opportunity of inviting the participating members of the Board to a midterm project conference on 19 – 20 October.

The Board members took note of the information presented.

5.4 China BSR Business Forum in Kalmar

Mr Erik Ciardi briefly reminded of the business forum that the Regional Council in Kalmar County is organising together with their Chinese partners. An estimated number of 150 companies from China will visit Kalmar to present themselves.

6. Seagull 2 status

6.1 Report from Work Package 1

Ms Kora Stańczyk present the current situation of the reference networks in the project. Though varying in details, generally the same procedure has been applied: in the first stage regions take political responsibility for the networks (stage fully completed), in the second stage the experts are hired and core groups are established within each of the network (stage almost completed).

A special focus was put on the network dealing with the question of transport infrastructure and the recommendation from the ERB Joint Development Programme to summon a political transport committee within the ERB that will be a lobbying force for the benefit of improving accessibility to the main EU transport networks of its member regions. Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański asked if the members of the ERB Board can decide to take on this new responsibility.

Mr Bernth Johnson informed he was ready to be a part of the committee.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska said that Marshal Kozłowski is naturally interested in the transport issue as it has always been very important for Pomorskie, but his participation is subject to the local election results later in November.

Other ERB Board members will decide about their possible involvement in the coming weeks.

Mr Bengt Gustafsson, an expert to be responsible for the professional scope of the reference network, said it will be extremely important to have such a strong political support to the activities that will later be proposed. He gave examples of the two transport projects currently involving partners from around the ERB (Baltic Gateway Plus and East – West) and said that although infrastructure remains important, time has also come for intelligent transport solutions, education and intermodality questions.

While discussing the water network Ms Kora Stańczyk informed the Board that currently it is impossible to employ an expert who had previous experience on the issue in the context of ERB cooperation; hence, we can either wait until the new year or employ somebody else. The Board members decided it makes sense to wait a little more for the person who has got the necessary expertise, rather than to employ a new expert that will need time to introduce himself into the area.

6.2 Report from Work Package 2

In the absence of the Work Package 2 leader, Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański reminded of the two events already presented (ERB benchmarking system during the study part of the meeting, and Marratech under point 5.1 of this agenda). He also informed that due to a little delay of the work within the project, the exchange of civil servants which was planned to take place in Milestone 3 (July – December 2006) will have to be moved to Milestone 4 (January – June 2007).

The Board members took note of the information.

6.3 Report from Work Package 3

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen focused on his work on the promotion of the project (website and newsletter), development of the contents of the on-line training, as well as the preparation for the border crossing conference.

The Board members took note of the information.

7. Information on the programming work of the South Baltic CBC

Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański outlined the work performed within the South Baltic Area Crossborder Programme core group and presented the information on the drafting team meeting on 2nd October 2006.

He explained that the proposal of the core group consisting of the representatives of the Euroregion Baltic and Euroregion Pomerania was presented to the drafting team, as agreed when preparing their working schedule. He also informed that during the meeting on 2nd October no common position was reached due to the disagreement of the representative of the Marshal Office of Pomorskie who said he represented all the Polish regions.

The members of the Board expressed their concern resulting from the fact the representative of Pomorskie Region did not support the ERB Joint Development Programme (based on development strategies in individual regions and signed by the Polish Marshals last year). They also said the all the regions involved in this new CBC programme supported the ambition of Pomorskie to be the hosting partner of the Joint Technical Secretariat, hoping this region will remain a forefront actor in the implementation of crossborder cooperation objectives, which had been developed and approved jointly by all the regions within the ERB.

The members of the Board emphasised that this CBC programme had not been presented to the ERB member regions who had not had previous experience in joint crossborder cooperation, but was won as a result of their active lobbying and great support from the Swedish government so that now the cooperation can be enhanced and intensified.

8. Proposals for the agenda of the Council meeting in Kaliningrad

The Board members proposed that possible topics for the Council meeting on 20th November should include the formal approval of the decision of Kurzeme Council, information on the renewed Northern Dimension and presentation of newly opened office of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Kaliningrad.

9. Possible dates for the next Steering Committee and ERB Council meetings in 2007

The Board members discussed proposals regarding possible dates for the ERB Board and Council meetings at the beginning of 2007. Three proposals remain a possibility for the Council meeting to mark the transfer of Presidency to Sweden: 1 – 2 March, 5 – 6 March, 6 – 7 March. The Board meeting, it was proposed, should coincide with the hockey tournament to be held in the second half of January.

A proposal was also put forward to hold an ERB meeting in Brussels. It seemed an ideal solution that such a meeting is scheduled to coincide with the Open Days. However, as Ms Krystyna Wróblewska pointed out, it will require a very early preparation.

10. **AOB**

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska informed the Board of an idea presented by the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLARE) to create Euroregions of the Sea, including the Euroregion of the Baltic Sea. She said it was received with a lot of astonishment from the BSSSC who sent CLARE a letter questioning the obvious duplication of structures in the Baltic Sea Region, an obvious result of such an action, given the amount of existing initiatives.

The members of the Board shared the opinion presented by Ms Wróblewska, adding that in the case of Euroregion Baltic it is also a question of the name of the organisation that already exists. They recommended that the ERB take a similar action.

President Pluhin asked the international secretariat to prepare a draft of such a letter and send it out for consultation to the national secretariats before he signs it on behalf of the Board of Euroregion Baltic.