

ERB COUNCIL SESSION

Minutes

Elbląg, 4th May 2004

Meeting Place:

Euroregion Baltic Secretariat, 3/4 Św. Duchy Street, Elbląg

Participants:

ERB President

Mr Jan Kozłowski, Poland

Members of ERB Council

Ms Annelise Molin, Denmark

Mr Anders Akesson, Sweden

Mr Bo Frank, Sweden

Mr Ragnar Lindberg, Sweden

Mr Sigurdh R. Petersson, Sweden

Mr Gerth Wollinger, Sweden

Ms Lillebill Grähs, Sweden

Mr Aleksander Michailov, Lithuania

Ms Dalia Makusiene, Lithuania

Mr Aleksander N. Kuzniecov, Russia

Mr Wiktor N. Koszelew, Russia

Ms Jadwiga Semmerling, Poland

Ms Jadwiga Zielinska, Poland

Mr Henryk Slonina, Poland

Mr Zbigniew Karpowicz, Poland

Mr Igor Hutnikiewicz, Poland (representing Warmia & Mazury
Marshal, Mr Andrzej Rynski)

Mr Antoni Jaszczak, Poland (representing Pommerania Governor, Mr
Ryszard Kurylczyk)

Ms Bożena Sitnik-Pietrzykowska (representing Warmia & Mazury
Governor, Mr Stanisław Szatkowski)

Latvian party was not represented.

Secretariats:

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen, Denmark

Mr Ulf Andersson, Sweden

Mr Erik Ciardi, Sweden

Mr P.G. Lindencrona, Sweden

Ms Giedre Butkute, Lithuania

Ms Elena V. Butorova, Russia

Ms Yevgienija N. Czerniavska, Russia

Mr Zdzisław Olszewski, Poland

Ms Małgorzata Samusjew, Poland

Ms Adrianna Gniado, Poland

Ms Małgorzata Szymanska, Poland

Ms Magdalena Szymanowska, Poland

Ms Danuta Chmielewska, Poland

ERB Young Representatives: Ms Natalia Malicka, Poland

Ms Ewelina Bonar, Poland

Invited Guests:

Mr Rolf A. Karlson, Sweden, Seagull Project Manager
Ms Kristina Repsaite, Lithuania, Klaipeda County Administration
Mr Yuri Donatovitch-Rozkov, Russia, II Secretary of Russian
Embassy
Ms Krystyna Wroblewska, Poland, Pomeranian Marshal's Office
Mr Stanislaw Cios, Poland, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr Marek Reszko, Poland, Polish delegate for Maritime Safety
Conference

Interpreters:

Ms Wanda Stec, (Russian / Polish)
Mr Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski, (English / Polish)

1. Welcome speech by ERB President, Mr Jan Kozlowski.

Ladies and Gentleman, Dear ERB Partners, Dear Guests!

I would like to welcome everybody at this ERB Council meeting today, which apart from being full of substantial working contents, is of symbolic nature. It is taking place shortly after ten new countries celebrated their accession to the EU, three of which are members of ERB.

The Common Europe started with the idea of eliminating the chasm created by the two world wars. Initially, it consisted of six countries, and after further enlargements reached fifteen. Today, it encompasses twenty-five states. Undoubtedly, for each country the moment of entry was of special significance, but we all can agree that the last enlargement involving the fifteen old members and ten new ones was really unique. Only now, we will be able to eliminate the chasm I mentioned earlier.

However, we are also aware that changes do not happen overnight, with the touch of a magic wand. We will all have to work hard for them to happen, taking into consideration our own national interests, as well as European ones. In the process, a special role will be played by the whole communities, local authorities, NGO's, schools, etc and not only by politicians. Therefore, cooperating within organizations such as euroregions will prove extremely important, as it involves both the old and new EU members, as well as our new neighbour: the Kaliningrad District.

As I said in my inaugural speech in February, the role of euroregions is to assist in the European integration and to eliminate negative consequences of the existence of borders. For all of us: the regions and communes around the Baltic Sea, these are land and maritime borders; borders between countries that are better or worse developed, borders that are between different mentalities and historical experiences, and finally borders that are between states belonging to the EU and those beyond. We have a lot to eliminate. Nevertheless, as we have been able to cope so well in the past six years, I do not think we will do worse now. I believe new opportunities are worth exploiting.

Ladies and Gentlemen, recalling Solidarity struggle for democracy in the European Parliament yesterday, Lech Walesa said: "we owed it to our past generations". It may be a bit too lofty, but undoubtedly, while cooperating between local governments and implementing numerous major or minor projects, we are paying back this old debt. But we are also building a better, I hope, world for the future generations. It is a gigantic task. And it is worth making a lot of effort to make it happen.

2. Greeting the participants at the Council meeting and introducing new Board and Council members.

ERB President, Mr J. Kozlowski introduced a new Council member, Mr Anders Akesson, who by the Swedish decision replaced Mr B. Frank. The Lithuanian party recommended two new Council members: Ms D. Makusiene, replacing Ms R. Strubiene, and Mr Vytautas Rinkievicius, replacing Mr Arvydas Jakas. The Council approved the recommendations.

The participants introduced themselves.

3. Council internal matters:

a) Approving the agenda.

ERB President, Mr J. Kozlowski presented the agenda of the meeting. The Council approved it without alterations.

b) Appointing ERB Vice-president ERB and the country holding the next presidency.

ERB President, Mr J. Kozłowski asked the Council to appoint ERB Vice-president, and thus the country which will chair ERB next year. At the previous meeting, the Council decided to keep the order adopted in the years 1998 – 2003.

The Lithuanian party recommended Ms V. Lukosiene, Klaipeda County Governor, to be ERB Vice-president, and presented her short resume. The Council approved the recommendation and appointed Ms V. Lukosiene present ERB Vice-president.

c) Signing the minutes by President and Vice-president.

No comments were made to the Minutes from the Council meeting on 27th February 2004. The Minutes were signed by the previous ERB President, Ms A. Molin, and Mr Z. Karpowicz.

4. ERB International Permanent Secretariat.

a) ERB Statutes

ERB Head Secretariat drew a plan presented the final draft of the ERB Statutes, having taken into consideration the conclusions from the web meetings on 25th March and 19th April 2004, and the written comments submitted by the Russian party. The Latvian and Russian parties did not take part in the web meetings, but the tapescripts from the two web meetings had been sent into the Secretariats in Baltijsk and Riga. The Latvian party did not submit any comments. The Russian party sent an important suggestion to the phrasing of Paragraph 7 Point 8, recommending a change that Council meeting shall be rendered valid if more than 50% of the ERB Parties are present, and ERB Head Secretariat suggested two variations to this point. Variation 1 read: the resolutions passed shall be obligatory for all the Parties. Variation 2 read: the resolutions passed shall be obligatory for the Parties present, and the others may accept them. Mr Z. Olszewski addressed the Council, requesting the Statutes were approved at the meeting, as the next one will take place in 2005. ERB President, Mr J. Kozłowski opened a discussion on the Statutes.

The discussion was initiated by Mr I. Hutnikiewicz, who asked for clarification if every member has one vote, or if one vote is for one ERB party. Mr Z. Olszewski explained that decisions made by the Council are based not on a vote but on consensus. The Polish party works out their position before the Council meeting at the sessions of the Board of the Association which take place in the presence of Governors and Marshals of Pomerania and Warmia and Mazury (or in the presence of their appointed representatives). All the decisions concerning the ERB Statutes and ERB International Permanent Secretariat (ERB IPS) were taken at the meetings prior to ERB Board and Council sessions. The ERB Statutes also state that the Council members may ask for a break in order to define their party's position.

The discussion moved further on to debate on Paragraph 7 Point 8 of the Statutes. The general view was that all the parties should have the possibility to express their voice and argue their opinions, but at the same time that the functionality of the Council should be guaranteed. Mr N. Ch. Andersen agreed that Par. 7 Pt. 8 should secure such functionality but it should also somehow prevent abuse of the majority vote over absentees, especially when decisions made result in political or financial consequences. Mr N. Ch. Andersen suggested that the national secretariats meet during the break and work on a compromised phrasing of Par. 7 Pt. 8 for the Council to approve. Mr Alexander Mihailov presented the Lithuanian position that Par 7 Pt 8 seemed too categorical and did not allow the absent parties to take decisions democratically, which is of extreme importance when key matters are decided on. The intension of the paragraph should be aiming at reaching consensus by all the parties, present and absent. He supported the idea of the meeting during the break. Mr S. Cios, representative of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined in, sharing his experience from other organizations

operating around the Baltic Sea. Mr A. Akesson also supported the idea of deciding on a compromise during the break. Ms A. Molin addressed the Council with a request to approve the Statutes during the meeting. ERB President, Mr J. Kozlowski agreed to hold a break, during which the representatives from all the secretariats should compromise on a new phrasing to Paragraph 7 Point 8 and present it to the Council.

b) Polish offer to host ERB IPS.

According to the schedule approved by the Council the national secretariats could submit their offers to host ERB IPS until 1st April 2004. Only the Polish party drew up such a proposal. The text of the Polish offer was presented to the remaining parties (Appendix 1). The Polish secretariat maintained their readiness to start ERB IPS on 1st July 2004 with the budget of EUR 18,000 and, as the Swedish party had asked for more time to discuss their decision among the Swedish politicians in the three regions and declare their final position in the autumn, suggested that ERB IPS should be financed by these parties who will declare to do so at the Board meeting on 16th June 2004. The Polish party argued for 1st July as applications for external co-financing within INTERREG must be submitted till late September this year.

Afterwards, ERB President, Mr J. Kozlowski opened a discussion.

Mr A. Akesson expressed the Swedish support for the establishment of ERB IPS, and declared it should be hosted by the Polish party located in Elblag. At the same time, he requested for 1st January 2005 as the opening date for IPS. Ms A. Molin presented the Danish position supporting 1st July 2004 as the starting date, and arguing that application for INTERREG money may provide external co-financing for IPS and extension of its activities. Mr I. Hutnikiewicz suggested that the Polish party should agree on its position on ERB IPS. Mr Z. Olszewski informed that the Polish party had taken all the relevant decisions on ERB IPS before this Council meeting. Mr W. Koszelew said that the Russian party will be able to declare their financial contribution into ERB IPS in one month's time, adding that the Russian party would prefer 1st January 2005, still being ready to accept 1st July 2004 if the Council decides so. Mr A. Kuzniecov supported what Mr W. Koszelew had just said and declared the Russian party would agree with the majority. Mr A. Akesson asked about the Latvian position. Mr Z. Olszewski responded that at the Board meeting in Klaipeda where the Latvian party took part, no negative comments were made about the establishment of ERB IPS, nor about the members' financial contribution to it. ERB Head Secretariat contacted the secretariat in Riga by phone and invited it to the Council meetings, though without success. ERB president will suggest holding the next Board meeting on 16th June in a location that will be acceptable by all the parties. Mr A. Akesson again said that the Swedish politicians need further discussions on ERB IPS and suggested its starting date for 1st January 2005. He claimed work on drawing up an application for INTERREG can already begin now.

A break was called, during which the representatives from the ERB Council and national secretariats: A Akesson, E. Ciardi, G. Butkute, K. Repsaite, N. Ch. Andersen, E. Butorowa, Z Olszewski, S. Cios (only as an advising participant) met and rewrote Paragraph 7 Point 8 in a new phrasing to be presented for the Council to approve.

After the break ERB President, Mr J. resumed the meeting presenting the draft Statutes to the Council for approval, including the revised phrasing of Paragraph 7 Point 8. The Council did not bring up any changes and approved the Statutes (Appendix 2).

Afterwards, ERB President, Mr J. Kozlowski announced that following the internal consultations the Swedish delegation decided to agree to start ERB IPS on 1st July 2004. Mr A. Akesson confirmed the above and stressed more consultations will follow with the politicians from Sweden's three regions on financing ERB IPS in 2004.

The Council approved the decision to establish ERB IPS in Elblag starting on 1st July 2004.

c) Working Group on external co-financing of ERB IPS.

ERB Head Secretariat proposed to set up a team which will draw up an application to INTERREG III for external co-financing of ERB IPS. The team should include one representative from each ERB member country, and the parties were asked to put forward names of their candidates.

Ms M. Samusjew from Poland, Ms G. Butkute from Lithuania, Mr N. Ch. Andersen from Denmark and Mr E. Ciardi from Sweden were proposed by the respective delegations. The team should be completed by representatives from Russia and Latvia.

d) ERB IPS financial declaration.

ERB Head Secretariat presented a draft financial declaration for financing ERB IPS. It was decided the declaration will be dealt with at the Board meeting on 16th June 2004.

5. ERB Working Groups.

Based on our own experience but also on information from other euroregions we can say that organization and activation of a network of working groups seems the most difficult task in a euroregional structure.

The Statutes provide an organizational framework to establish a working group and to help it function. In the past six years we have had the following working groups:

1. Spatial Planning WG, which later extended its scope of operation and became Spatial Planning and Regional Development WG. Within this WG a subgroup for Transport Corridors was established. Chaired by the Polish.
2. Environmental WG. Chaired by the Swedish.
3. Social WG (People-to-People Contacts). Formally chaired by the Russians, in fact by the Polish.

Working Groups have been in operation without a defined programme, and although they have produced successful individual projects, no network of cooperation has been built. It is not our intention to point fingers or try to name the most efficient group but we must say that both the Council and Board has not put enough time and effort into the proper discussion on finding an effective solution to the problem.

The Seagull project has been in operation for over a year now with the five groups:

1. ERB Development Strategy. Its output will be JTDP.
2. Water Management. As a result of these activities ERB should be able to implement the EU water directive.
3. Innovative Centres as the engines of regional development.
4. Rural Development Programme.
5. Information and evaluation. As a result of these activities ERB should be able to popularise the ideas of the project and to create a good environment for internal and external communications.

We must consider which working groups should be working towards the end of the Seagull implementation and how. Shall we focus all our efforts on supporting the five groups or shall we extend the list? We believe it necessary to keep Social WG, which should continue ERB events such as "From the Sea We Are" and "Youth Olympic Games".

Please consider this an invitation to a discussion which should result in concrete conclusions for the Council meeting on May 4th.

At the web meeting on April 19th the National Secretariats confirmed the need to discuss the issue. There was a general agreement to keep working groups in line with the Seagull project, to reactivate the Social WG. A discussion followed if working groups should deal with general thematic problems and if the general working groups should include subgroups to handle more specific questions.

ERB President, Mr J. Kozlowski opened a discussion. Mr N. Ch. Andersen said that the biggest problem preventing the groups from working effectively was the lack of money. Right people willing to work in the groups should be found, and it would be a good idea to precisely define tasks for such groups so the results are concrete. Mr R. Karlson said it was too early to discuss transforming the existing working groups into more Seagull-like groups as the Seagull project will end next year and only then will we have information on their specific results. Mr W. Koszelew presented the status of the Spatial Planning WG, stressing the fact no further functioning was possible. At the same time, he expressed a very positive opinion of the Polish contribution into the Social WG and spoke in favour of its continuation. He also suggested formal chairmanship be taken by the Polish partner. He thanked for the organization of *From Sea We Are* Competition, and ecological and scout camps. Mr A. Akesson supported the Danish view. Mr U. Andersson also considered the Social WG as effective and its activities worth continuing. ERB president, Mr J. Kozlowski suggested assigning specific tasks to the working groups and postponing discussions on them until Spring 2005. Mr N. Ch. Andersen said he was impressed by the work done by the Polish partner and was looking forward to the Youth Olympic Games. Ms A. Molin expressed her point of view by saying that the ERB partners are working on two levels: the regional one where possibilities of co-financing are sought from the European funds, and the local one where emphasis should be put on town-twinning, though not only on cooperation between two towns but on creating a network of more partners. Mr Z. Olszewski agreed to the idea of cooperation presented by Ms A. Molin, stressing the importance of town-twinning.

6. Northern Dimension 2nd Action Plan.

Ms K. Wroblewska delivered a short presentation on the Northern Dimension 2nd Action Plan and the role that euregions can play in the implementation of its initiatives. She stressed the fact that the Northern Dimension's leader is the European Commission itself, who understand that the possible success in its implementation depends on cooperation between all partners: from the central level through the regional and local levels to the citizen's communities and NGO's. A special issue, especially after the EU enlargement, will be the cooperation with Russia. Ms K. Wroblewska also presented the Northern Dimension 2nd Action Plan's priorities.

7. Maritime Safety Conference.

a) Presentation of the Polish declaration for the meeting of the 2nd Working Group „During Shipwreck”.

Mr P.G. Lindencrona updated the Council members on the preparation status for the Trelleborg Conference. Afterwards, Mr M. Reszko presented the Polish declaration for the meeting of the 2nd Working Group at the conference.

b) Approval of the decision on the draft declaration to be presented at the conference.

After Mr M. Reszko's speech ERB President, Mr J. Kozlowski supported Mr P.G. Lindencrona's proposal to set up a working group which could deal with seaways. He also asked the Council who should be appointed to present the declaration on maritime safety on behalf of ERB, requesting that the declaration be read out by Mr P.G. Lindencrona (Appendix 3).

Mr A. Mihailov said that the Baltic is a small and fragile sea where the maritime safety issue concerns each country which has a Baltic coastline, and that each country should have the possibility to express their opinion. He also requested the opportunity to familiarize himself

with the text of the declaration. ERB head Secretariat distributed the English version of the declaration. Mr A. Kuzniecov asked for more time to consult the declaration. As the Trelleborg conference is so soon, ERB President, Mr J. Kozlowski asked that possible comments should be sent to the Head Secretariat no later than 7th May 2004. The Council approved the declaration in the phrasing suggested by Mr P.G. Lindencrona with the provision of changes if comments are submitted.

8. Seagull project – Implementation status.

The project manager, Mr R. Karslon presented briefly the current implementation status of the project (Appendix 4).

Mr Z. Olszewski spoke of difficulties that the Polish party is experiencing to finance the participation of the Polish experts in the working groups' activities. The application submitted to the European Commission has not yet been accepted. Until financing is received the Polish party will have further problems to contribute actively into the project implementation.

9. Proposals for further development of activities within ERB.

a) Proposals for youth representatives.

Mr U. Andersson presented Swedish proposals on how to make a good use of youth representatives who participate in the Council meetings, and also what specific programmes they could implement. The proposals included cooperation in the following areas: culture (a movie, new media, music), sports (Youth Olympic Games), social issues (drugs, AIDS, equal opportunities), education (Green Circle schools, exchange programmes, ERB textbook), environment (seminars for youth NGO's). The youth representatives could also work on their own solutions, at a meeting on their own that could take place on the same day that the ERB Council meeting is held. Mr U. Andersson expressed his wish for participation of young representatives from each member country, not only Poland as was the case at this meeting. He also presented the idea of bringing out an ERB textbook, aimed at 13 – 16-year-olds which would consist of a CD-Rom and an accompanying workbook. The textbook could be centred around such areas as geography, history, environment, culture, democracy and politics, local traditions and customs, languages, religions and youth culture of the member regions. The textbook could be prepared in collaboration with universities and financed with EU funds and the members' own contribution.

Ms N. Malicka thanked for the invitation from the ERB Council and said that young people can work out a variety of new ideas if they are only given a chance to meet. Mr Z. Olszewski supported the Swedish proposals and said that ERB Head Secretariat will offer universities to include ERB in their Bachelor's and Master's theses. Mr B. Frank spoke in favour of the Swedish proposal to set up the Youth Council which could present their ideas at the ERB Board and Council meetings. Ms K. Wroblewska said that the Pomeranian Marshal's Office's employee, Ms A. Golec, is involved in the cooperation between young people around the Baltic Sea and should be contacted if ERB continues with the idea of its youth representatives' cooperation.

b) PHARE CBC projects.

Ms M. Samusjew presented the experiences gathered in the process of running PHARE CBC training projects for Polish-Lithuanian groups and planned training programmes for Polish-Russian groups. Apart from excelling the skills necessary in drawing up applications, these trainings produced an additional effect of new cooperation between local governments on both sides of the border. The Polish party suggested making use of the PHARE CBC experience and transferring it onto INTERREG where cooperation between Latvia, Denmark and Sweden

can be developed. This would be extremely important in the aspect of the new Neighbourhood Programme.

10. Information exchange and other matters.

Mr S. Cios, representing the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presented priorities for international cooperation within the Council of the Baltic Sea States, which will be of utmost importance during Polish presidency in the organization.

ERB President, Mr J. Kozłowski proposed to hold the next ERB Board meeting in Riga or Gdansk. ERB Head Secretariat will contact the secretariat in Riga and forward the proposal. It will also immediately inform the Russian party who will need visas if the meeting is hold in Riga.

The Council meeting was then completed.

On 5th May 2004 the participants went on a cruise on the Elblag Canal and enjoyed the opportunity of admiring the attractions of this unique system of five slipways, which makes it possible to cover 100-metre height difference over a distance of less than 10 kilometres.

ERB President

Mr Jan Kozłowski