



EUROREGION BALTIC BOARD

MINUTES

Date & Time:

10th October 2007, 14.00 – 16.00

Meeting Place:

Scotland House Conference Centre,
Brussels, Rond-point Schuman 6, 9th floor

Participants:

ERB BOARD MEMBERS

Johnson, Mr	Bernth	ERB President, Blekinge County
Kozłowski, Mr	Jan	Member of the Board, Pomorskie Region
Mincinauskiene, Ms	Raisa	Member of the Board, Klaipeda County
Petersen, Mr	Per Ole	ERB Vice-President, Bornholm

ERB COUNCIL MEMBERS

Frank, Mr	Bo	Member of the Council, Southern Smaland
Haider, Ms	Monika	Member of the Council, Southern Smaland
Hilmersson, Ms	Marie-Louise	Member of the Council, Southern Smaland
Lundgren, Mr	Bo	Substitute Council Member, Kalmar
Protas, Mr	Jacek	Member of the Council, Warmia & Mazury
Svesson, Ms	Suzanne	Substitute Council Member, Region Blekinge

SECRETARIATS & GUESTS

Andersen, Mr	Niels Chresten	ERB Secretariat, Bornholm
Andersson, Mr	Ulf	ERB Secretariat, Kronoberg
Demkowicz-Dobrzański, Mr	Sławomir	Head of ERB International Secretariat
Fridh, Ms	Marie	ERB Secretariat, Blekinge
Håkanson, Mr	Hans	Seagull II Transport Network Leader
Johannesson, Ms	Mariana	Seagull II Rural Network Leader
Kur, Ms	Iwona	Director of Warminsko-Mazurskie Regional Office in Brussels
Lindencrona, Mr	Per Gudmund	ERB Secretariat, Blekinge
Liutkute, Ms	Viktorija	ERB Secretariat, Klaipeda County
Majewska-Gałęziak, Ms	Alicja	Director of Pomerania Regional Office in Brussels
Wróblewska, Ms	Krystyna	Director for Int'l Cooperation, Pomerania Region
Wolski, Mr	Rafał	Director for Int'l Cooperation, Warmia & Mazury

1. WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE ERB

Marshal of Pomorskie Region and member of the ERB Board, Mr Jan Kozlowski welcomed the participants in the Regional Office of Pomorskie in Brussels.

ERB President, Mr Bernth Johnson thanked the host for making it possible for the ERB Board to meet in Brussels and for the splendid Polish-Scottish breakfast that the Board had been invited to in the morning. He then opened the Board meeting and welcome its participants.

2. SIGNING THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING IN HALLTORP

ERB President, Mr Bernth Johnson and ERB Vice-President, Mr Per Ole Petersen placed their signatures in approval of the minutes from the previous ERB Board session on 14th August 2007.

ERB President, Mr Bernth Johnson, and ERB Vice-President, Mr Per Ole Petersen also agreed to co-sign the minutes of this meeting.

3. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ERB YOUTH BOARD

Head of Södra Småland Europe Direct Office, Ms Mariana Johannesson updated the Board on process of establishing an ERB Youth Board, involving:

- a. proposing changes to the ERB Statutes,
- b. drafting a letter to be signed by the ERB President and sent to youths around Euroregion Baltic,
- c. promoting ERB as an example of a interregional cooperation institution incorporating youth in their structures at the Europe Direct Annual General Meeting already held in Barcelona (3-5 October 2007), by Ms Mariana Johansson, and Europe Direct Annual General Meeting to be organised in Dublin between 7 and 9 November 2007, by Mr Niels. Ch. Andresen and Ms Eva-Lisa Ahnström from Europe Direkt Blekinge.

The ERB Board members welcomed the information presented and approved of the proposal to finalise the process of establishing the Youth Board.

The ERB Board also welcomed the idea of letter to the youth participants at the Youth Conference in Elblag 19th – 20th April 2007, encouraging them to still be a part of the ERB Youth cooperation. ERB President, Mr Bernth Johnson asked the International Secretariat to prepare a final draft of the letter for his signature.

The ERB Board expressed their gratitude to Ms Johannesson, Ms Ahnström and Mr Andersen for promoting the idea of the ERB Youth Board at international meetings.

4. CHANGES PROPOSED TO THE STATUTES OF EUROREGION BALTIC

IPS Head, Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski presented the changes proposed to the Statutes of Euroregion Baltic, explaining their background resulting from the following considerations:

- a. regionalisation of the ERB Board:
ERB Board was thus recommended to support the extension of the Board to eight regional representatives from all the ERB members, a step reflecting ever-increasing role of the member regions in planning and implementing joint crossborder initiatives within ERB and supporting financially the International Permanent Secretariat.

A debate followed focusing on the issue of presidency rotation and the decision taking process within the ERB Executive Board. ERB Council, Mr Jacek Protas stated that ERB presidency should rotate in a way reflecting the regionalisation process. In other words, presidents should be appointed out of eight regional representatives so that one rotation round takes eight years and includes three Swedish and two Polish presidents, and one from Denmark, Lithuania and Russia. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen argued for the extension of the Board as all the member regions contribute financially to the joint ERB budget and therefore should also be represented in the Board, responsible for the ERB budget. He then responded to Mr Jacek Protas' proposal by saying ERB will not take a full step into the complete regionalisation of its structures since ERB Council will still remain a national representation body. He believed such a solution will allow more effective good governance practice whereby national partners will discuss internally their choice of best candidate to hold the leading position. Ms Monica Haider supported Mr Andersen, so did all the ERB Board members.

Ms Raisa Mincinuaskiene asked how the extension of the Board will affect the decision taking process, now with two more members from Sweden and one more from Poland. Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański explained the article of the Statutes stipulating that the Board must always follow consensus decision making remains in force, in practice meaning the need for an agreement of all the Board members, but also for such a decision taking process that would resolve or mitigate the objections of the minority to achieve the most agreeable solution.

The Board members present informed they are in favour of the proposed changes. Final decisions will be taken as a result of a series of internal meetings will be held: in Sweden on 22nd October, in Poland on 26th October, and in Denmark in November to reach consensus on the matter. ERB President, Mr Bernth Johnson asked the National Secretariats to inform all the Parties on the outcome and requested that the International Secretariat monitor the process so that the Council can approve of the changes at their meeting in Gdansk on 6th December 2007.

b. introduction of the Youth Board into the ERB structures:

ERB Board was thus recommended to support the inclusion of youth into active cooperation within Euroregion Baltic, a step enabling the establishment of the ERB Youth Board consisting of eight regional representatives who will all become members of the ERB Council. A Chair will be appointed among them on the rotating basis. In consequence, ERB Board is recommended to include the total of nine members (eight regional representatives plus the Chair of the Youth Board).

A discussion followed focusing on the best definition of youth in terms of their age. While Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish delegations pointed out that they would stick to the legal limit of 18 years of age, the Danish delegation insisted on keeping the lower limit at 16. Leaving the specification of the lower limit to the national decision, it was proposed and agreed that the youth representatives within ERB should not be old than 20.

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c. constituting permanent working groups within ERB:

Following the implementation of the Seagull II project, its reference networks will become permanent working groups within ERB. The ERB Statutes make it possible now to establish such groups and only minor changes have been proposed, including the ones enabling the appointment of working group chairs to reflect the other ERB structures.

ERB Board thus adopted these changes and decided to present them for approval of the Council on 6th December 2007.

5. INFORMATION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

IPS Head, Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski presented updated information on the following topics:

a. financial result of the International Secretariat in 2007:

Financial information regarding the activities of the Secretariat in 2007 was presented, including the actual figures between January 1st and June 30th 2007, as well as the budget planned for the second half of the year.

Main points included the presentation of cash and in-kind contribution of the ERB member regions enabling both the activities of the Secretariat but also ERB participation in three projects: Seagull II, Seagull II Tacis and BEN, as well as expenses made in relation to the Secretariat and implementation of the three projects.

ERB Board thus adopted the presented budget and decided to submit it for approval of the Council on 6th December 2007.

b. plan of income and expenditure of the International Secretariat in 2008:

Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski also presented a plan of income and expenditure of the International Secretariat in 2008. On the income side the plan comprised the increased membership fees from the regions and refunds from the implementation of the projects. All the Board members present confirmed the regions in their countries had agreed to a 15% increase as of 1st January 2008. The most significant refund from the Seagull II project is based on the amount of money spent and internal hours worked between July and December 2007. These amounts are known thanks to the information made available by the Lead Partner of the Seagull II project (Association of Polish ERB Communes), Kalmar Region, Klaipeda County Governor's Administration and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region. Information from the other regions had not been delivered so the plan is only an estimate. It does however indicate a significant surplus in the joint budget next year. However, Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski informed the Board this extra money will be accessible in the second half of the year after the last refund from the Interreg III B Programme and repayment of loans that have been taken from the Association and the Polish-American Community Fund in order to complete the Seagull II project.

A debate followed focusing on how best spent the surplus. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen referred to the agreed ERB strategy 2007-2008 indicating that the ERB should take full part in the Open Days in 2008. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska pointed out to the technical side of organising such a conglomerate. Firstly, probably in January, topics will be announced and we need to make sure they match genuine interest within ERB member regions. Secondly, conglomerates will need to be led by regional offices in

Brussels, not leaving much choice for ERB since only Pomorskie, Warminsko-Mazurskie and SydSam have their representations in Brussels. Human resources remain another key issue as preparation requires a full-time employer working for a few months with such a project. Mr Ulf Andersson proposed to hold the decision on a possible Open Day conglomerate till January while Mr Bo Frank was of the opinion that too much is happening (over 10 events this year) within the few days of the Open Days, making it difficult to stand out. He thought it was a better idea to spend the surplus on the ERB Youth Board. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen said that ERB must take initiatives aimed at promoting itself in Brussels. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska agreed and proposed an idea of an exclusive ERB event could be explored instead of the Open Days.

President Johnson summed up the discussion and proposed that an exclusive ERB event in Brussels should be prepared in 2008 instead of an Open Day conglomerate. ERB Board agreed to this proposal.

President Johnson also asked the Board to accept the 2008 financial plan of the International Secretariat and submit it to the Council for approval. ERB Board agreed.

c. preparation for the ERB Council meeting, 6 – 7 December 2007:

IPS Head, Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski, Seagull II WP 3 Leader, Mr Niels Chresten Andersen and Head of the Swedish Secretariat, Mr PG Lindencrona updated the Board members on the preparation process.

- i. ERB Council meets on 6th December at the premises of the Concert and Leisure Centre in Gdansk – Olowianka. Main decisions to be taken include: approval of Statutes changes, formal establishment of ERB Youth Board and adoption of 2008 budget. Information on 2007-2008 Strategy Status will be presented and a debate held on the Baltic Gas Pipeline, ending with a resolution. A resolution will also be proposed concerning AB Landbridge Project.

The energy debate will aim at discussing pros and cons of the Nord Stream pipeline project and moderated by Mr Kjell Albin Abrahamsson (already confirmed), Swedish foreign correspondent in Eastern Europe. One of the speakers who has also confirmed his participation is Professor Olof Lindén.

ERB Board members expressed their support to the idea. Mr Jan Kozlowski informed that six months before a similar discussion was organised in Gdansk enabling a good exchange of opinions. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska informed that the Baltic Eco Cluster is planning an energy conference in Gdansk and proposed that both events could have a common part.

President Johnson asked the International Secretariat to prepare draft texts of both resolutions which will be presented to the Council and examine the possibility of cooperating with the Baltic Eco Cluster.

ERB Board took note of the information on the preparation status and approved of the proposed agenda, urging all the secretariats involved to work together towards having a successful meeting in Gdansk.

- ii. Seagull II project ends with a conference on 7th December at the premises of the Concert and Leisure Centre in Gdansk – Olowianka. Its agenda will include reports from 6 project reference networks (innovation, rural development, tourism, social dimension, water forum, energy forum), presentation on the lessons learnt during the

project implementation period, presentation of a transferable model manual and a debate on the role of euroregional cooperation.

The euroregional debate will aim at looking into the importance of euroregional cooperation in the context of the European economic, social and territorial cohesion processes, and in particular in the context of the EU Reform Treaty. Guests invited to take part include Mr Jan Olbrycht, EP Member, Stockholm Governor, Mr Per Unckel, (formerly Director of Nordic Council of Ministers), Mr Sarunas Radvilavicius, Nordic Council of Ministers office in Vilnius and Mr Hans Brask, Baltic Development Forum Director.

ERB Board took note of the information on the preparation status and approved of the proposed agenda.

d. proposed dates to the ERB Anniversary Calendar:

During the previous meeting of the Board the preparation of such a calendar was announced, and a request to the regional secretariats was made to each propose an event which is already held in their region and could become extended with the participation of other ERB actors.

So far a proposal has been put forward by the Municipality of Karlshamn to invite euroregional participants to their Baltic Festival between 17 and 19th July 2007. Karlshamn's Deputy Mayor, Ms Suzanne Svensson explained that the Festival started 41 years ago and its last editions attracted almost a quarter of a million visitors. Nowadays it is the oldest and one of the largest free festivals in Sweden. Ms Suzanne Svensson proposed to have two events during the Festival in 2008 with the ERB dimension: one involving the presentation of regional and local culinary heritage and the other young people from around the Euroregion.

ERB Board members approved of Karlshamn's Baltic Festival as an official ERB event in its 2008 Anniversary Calendar and encouraged all the secretariats to provide assistance in identifying possible participants in their countries and regions.

6. STATUS OF THE SEAGULL 2 NETWORK ON ENERGY FORUM

Mr Ulf Anderson presented information on the activities by the Seagull II reference network on energy issues, including the conclusions from their last meeting in Gdansk 6 – 7th September 2007.

- a. ERB Energy Forum has now the following partners: Energikontor Sydost in Växjö, Klaipeda Governor's Administration, Baltic Energy Conservation Agency in Gdansk, Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region, Bornholm Energi and Kaliningrad. There are also "hang around" partners from Rostock, Bad Doberan, and UBC.
- b. Four main areas which have been so far discussed as potential cooperation fields include: electricity, transport, heating and knowledge enhancement.
- c. Continuation within Seagull II will now focus on internet core group meetings, working on common applications to Interreg IV A and B programmes, drafting a regional energy plan and joint seminars.

ERB Board members took note of the information presented.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other issues submitted by the Board members and ERB President, Mr Bernth Johnson closed the meeting.

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Mr Bernth Johnson
ERB President

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Mr Per Ole Petersen
ERB Vice-President