

EUROREGION BALTIC

INTERNATIONAL PERMANENT SECRETARIAT



EUROREGION BALTIC BOARD

AGENDA

Date & Time:

28th January 2008, 10.00 – 16.00

Meeting Place:

Teleborg Castle, SE-351 96 Växjö

Participants:

ERB BOARD MEMBERS

Johnson, Mr	Bernth	ERB President, Blekinge County
Wróblewska, Ms	Krystyna	On behalf of Mr Jan Kozłowski Member of the Board, Pomorskie Region
Mincinauskiene, Ms	Raisa	Member of the Board, Klaipeda County
Petersen, Mr	Per Ole	ERB Vice-President, Bornholm
Romanovsky, Mr	Victor	On behalf of Mr Mihail Pluhin, Member of the Board, Kaliningrad Region

ERB COUNCIL MEMBERS

Frank, Mr	Bo	Member of the Council, Södra Småland
Gajos, Mr	Robert	Member of the Council, Blekinge
Haider, Ms	Monika	Member of the Council, Södra Småland
Hilmersson, Ms	Marie-Louise	Member of the Council, Södra Småland
Svensson, Ms	Suzanne	Member of the Council, Blekinge

SECRETARIATS & GUESTS

Andersen, Mr	Niels Ch.	ERB Secretariat, Bornholm
Andersson, Mr	Ulf	ERB Secretariat, Södra Småland
Demkowicz-Dobrzański, Mr	Sławomir	Head of ERB International Secretariat
Hakansson, Mr	Hans	Transport Network Leader
Joelsson-Gustafsson, Ms	Ulrika	ERB Secretariat, Kalmar
Johannesson, Ms	Mariana	Seagull II Rural Network Leader
Koroleva, Ms	Elena	Government of Kaliningrad Region
Koshelev, Mr	Victor	ERB Secretariat, Kaliningrad Region
Lindencrona, Mr	Per Gudmund	ERB Secretariat, Blekinge
Liutkute, Ms	Viktorija	ERB Secretariat, Klaipeda County
Ratcovitch, Mr	Peter	South Baltic S.C. Deputy Member

1. WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE ERB

Chair of Regionförbundet in Södra Småland, Ms Marie-Louise Hilmersson welcomed the participants in the Treleborg Castle built in 1900 by architect firm Lindvall & Boklund as a wedding present from Count Fredrik Bonde to his wife Anna Koskull.

Afterwards, Mr Ulf Andersson made a presentation of the region of Södra Småland.

ERB President, Mr Bernth Johnson opened the Board meeting.

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

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 10th October 2007.

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

3. 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 were presented with the actual figures between January 1st and December 31st 2007.

The major part of both the income and expenditure within the joint budget were higher than planned even though the Russian Party did not contribute their 2007 membership fee. The increased income was a result of more internal hours provided within the Seagull II project. The increased expenditure was caused by a larger number of activities performed and by a stronger Polish currency which increases all the expenses of the Secretariat when calculated into euros.

The ERB Executive Board approved of the financial information presented.

b. Preparation for the ERB Council meeting, 22-23rd February 2008

A preliminary agenda for the Council meeting on 22nd February and an accompanying seminar on 23rd February was presented. It was proposed that the two-day meeting will take place in Elblag, following the invitation by its Mayor, Mr Henryk Słonina and his readiness to provide suitable facilities. According to the agenda the ERB Council will meet on 22nd to:

- have a press conference between 13.00 and 14.00,
- have a working meeting between 14.00 and 15.30,
- have a debate on the role of Euroregions between 15.30 and 16.30,
- start an anniversary celebration at 18.00

The agenda also proposed that 23rd will be the day for a seminar on the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue during which the partners from the ERB will be asked to present how it will be celebrated in their countries.

A discussion followed. Mr Ulf Andersson asked whether it will be possible to have some cultural events accompanying the seminar on the 23rd. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska informed about a related event that is planned to be

held in Gdańsk. Mr Niels Chresten Andersen pointed out that it will be very important to let the Council members express their opinions during the seminar on how to improve intercultural dialogue within ERB. Ms Ulrika Joelsson-Gustafsson said that such an open debate on intercultural dialogue should include politicians and also the Youth Board already established by then. Mr Bo Frank supported this point of view in the broader context of the need for more involvement of the political level in the ERB discussions. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska stressed the fact that discussions will have to be well prepared.

President Johnson proposed that the secretariats discuss the proposal for a seminar on intercultural dialogue during the lunch break and present their proposal afterwards. After the lunch break, Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski informed that as a result of the discussion the secretariats agreed to postpone the seminar on intercultural dialogue and let the Danish partner take responsibility for its organisation during the Board meeting on 25th April on Bornholm. Instead, 23rd February will be a day when all the ERB Council meeting participants will take a trip to Malbork Castle where the signatures were placed on the Agreement establishing Euroregion Baltic and have a group photo taken.

The ERB Executive Board approved of the Council agenda presented for 22nd February and the changed programme for 23rd February.

The budget of the event was also presented. Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski informed about contributions made by the regional secretariat in Gdansk (transport of and performance by the Polish Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra – Sopot), Polish secretariat in Elblag (cost of internal transports, cost of anniversary diplomas, cost of participating guests), as well as by the International Secretariat (interpretations, anniversary video presentation). He then requested that the other secretariats consider contributing to the event too.

President Johnson announced a short break in order to allow the delegations to have internal discussions on the subject. After the break, the Danish and Swedish secretariats informed that they will cover the cost of transport and food of their delegations to the Council meeting in Elblag.

The ERB Executive Board decided that the cost of transport to and from Elblag, as well as the expenditure related to the board and accommodation while in Elblag will be covered by the member regions individually.

c. South Baltic CBC Programme support to ERB initiatives

Mr PG Lindencrona informed the Board of the outcome of the first South Baltic CBC Programme Monitoring Committee meeting that took place in Gdansk on 22nd January 2008. During the meeting, he said, the MC members approved most of the Programme documents and agreed that the Programme will start on 3rd March 2008. The first call of proposal will continue till June allowing the Steering Committee to meet and select first projects in July. Mr Niels Chresten Andersen added that the Polish Ministry of Regional Development will soon sign the formal contract with the Cooperation Fund to run the Programme Joint Technical Secretariat, making it possible to start employment procedures. Ms Ulrika Joelsson-Gustafsson informed that an EU representative congratulated everyone involved in the programme development process on the swift and positive progress.

The ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented.

Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski presented a draft of guidelines to projects seeking ERB support in the selection process in the South Baltic CBC Programme. The rationale behind such a document regulating support to projects submitted to the SBA Programme was to define clear rules on how to apply the ERB vote in the selection process of the Programme Steering Committee.

A discussion followed initiated by the strong opposition to such a regulation voiced by the Danish delegation. Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said the guidelines would favour non-ERB projects because they put extra requirements towards the projects prepared within the framework of the ERB cooperation. He also argued that the Programme Steering Committee members will need to follow the Programme rules, not the ERB rules.

The ERB Executive Board decided not to adopt any joint document specifying the role of its representative within the SBA CBC Programme Steering Committee with reference to ERB Cooperation projects.

4. ORGANISATION OF AN ERB EVENT IN BRUSSELS

Mr PG Lindencrona presented a proposal for an ERB event in Brussels (to be held on 11 – 12 September) with the aim of promoting ERB and the ERB area to the EU institutions as part of the 2008 – 2009 Action Plan and ERB Anniversary calendar.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska proposed a little alteration of the programme presented, allowing high-ranking representatives of such organisations as BSSSC, AEBR, AER to take part in the morning session. She said that now when the Baltic Sea strategy is being prepared, Euroregion Baltic should take active part in the process. She also informed that the Committee of the Regions will establish its Baltic group in February and they could also become the ERB event target audience. Mr Niels Chresten Andersen supported a seminar on the ERB vision and the Baltic Sea strategy but expressed his concern about possible lack of attendance by the Russian partners in the process. He said the Baltic Sea strategy unlike the Northern Dimension will be an internal EU policy and recalled that no Russian representatives had ever participated in the ERB Brussels events.

President Johnson and the whole Board hoped that the Russian partners will be able to attend the event. Mr Victor Romanovsky said it was now too early to make definite confirmation. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska pointed out that this will also be a regular ERB Board meeting that is usually attended by all its members.

The ERB Executive Board recommended that the ERB secretariats continue work on the preparation of the event in Brussels so that the Council will be able to make a formal decision on 22nd February 2008.

5. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ERB YOUTH BOARD

The National Delegations were asked to inform on the progress made in the selection process of regional representatives to the ERB Youth Board, following the decision of the ERB Council to change the Statutes and allow the establishment of the ERB Youth Board.

In Sweden public announcements were made in the three member regions who will perform a selection procedure together. In Russia, Ms Anna Gryazova, a young employee at the Swedish Consulate in Kaliningrad, was already appointed as their

candidate to the ERB Youth Board. In Poland public announcements were made and the regions are now waiting for application. The selection process is expected to take place at the beginning of February. In Lithuania, no appointment of a youth representative has taken place yet but it will be completed before the ERB Council meeting in February. In Denmark, a youth representative was selected in October 2007.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen expressed his concern about the delayed selection process. Mr Ulf Andersen reassured him that the Youth Council members will be able to attend the Council meeting in February. Ms Mariana Johannesson said she had information from Region Blekinge was ready to be Lead Partner in a future youth project. Mr PG Lindencrona confirmed. Mr Niels Chresten Andersen was happy to hear Blekinge was ready to take the responsibility due to their vast experience in running projects.

The ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented.

6. LUNCH BREAK

7. CHANGES PROPOSED TO THE STATUTES OF EUROREGION BALTIC

The National Delegations were asked to make a final decision regarding the proposal made by the Danish Party during the debate at the Council meeting on 6th December 2007 of a new phrasing for Paragraph 8 Point 4, stipulating decisions of the Board will be valid for those Parties present if more than 50% of the Board members are present. The Danish proposal was to add the phrase: *from at least three ERB member countries*.

On behalf of the Danish delegation Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said the idea was to safeguard proper anchoring of ERB decisions in the situation where the Board will now be extended to include two more Swedish representatives and one more Polish member. Without the added phrase it would be possible, he continued, that the Swedish and Polish delegations could outvote the other members of the Board to their disadvantage.

Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski disagreed saying the paragraph relates strictly the validity of the decisions taken to only those who are present and take them. It would also not be possible to impose any decisions on the remaining partners because consensus remains the rule. He also pointed to the solution which had been earlier adopted for decisions taken by the ERB Council (Paragraph 7 point 8) as a possibility to be reflected in the case of the Board decisions.

Ms Raisa Mincinauskiene expressed her doubts to the new phrasing for two reasons. Firstly, she said she had expressed her concerns as to the voting procedure within the Board after its extension during the meeting in Brussels (10.10.07) only to hear the Danish delegates tell her there were no reasons to question the decision making procedure. Secondly, the phrasing of the paragraph makes an unclear division between presence of the Board members and validity of their decisions regarding Euroregion Baltic. Therefore, she said the Lithuanian delegation will not support the changed paragraph.

Ms Mariana Johannesson had her doubt regarding the added phrase since in her opinion it was unclear which country, if any, the chair of the Youth Board will represent once she or he goes into the ERB Executive Board. Mr Ulf Andersson said Euroregion Baltic has been active for ten years and the only time the Statutes become the topic of debates is when they are changed. Mr Bo Frank said decisions can change with time and that there was possibly no need to make the whole issue

more complicated. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska agreed the Statutes rarely become the issue of such significance but are needed just in case something becomes problematic. She was of opinion that the Danish proposal was a democratic solution. Ms Monika Haider commented that it seemed now impossible to reach a good agreement on this particular paragraph and proposed a discussion is prepared before reaching consensus.

President Johnson concluded by saying the Board now seemed to reach the majority agreement on the issue but not consensus. For this reason, he recommended that the ERB secretariats will continue their work on a phrasing of Paragraph 8 point 4 of the ERB Statutes that will be satisfying for all the Parties. The Board agreed to the recommendation.

8. ESTABLISHMENT OF ERB WORKING GROUPS

Facilitating a further process on the establishment of Working Groups based on the Seagull II reference networks the Executive Board was presented with proposals to recommend to the ERB Council the setting-up of ERB Working Groups.

The following were presented to the Board, including the identification of regional support, candidates to chair their work and action plans:

- ERB WG on rural development, by Mr Niels Chresten Andersen,
- ERB WG on tourism development, by Ms Krystyna Wróblewska,
- ERB WG on social dimension, by Ms Krystyna Wróblewska,
- ERB WG on water management, by Ms Ulrika Joelsson-Gustafsson
- ERB WG on energy, by Mr Ulf Andersson
- ERB WG on transport Infrastructure, by Mr Hans Håkansson
- ERB WG on SME and Innovation, by S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski

After presentations opinions were shared. Mr Bo Frank asked if there is a deadline for the se groups to deliver their planned outputs. Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski informed that the time framework for the ERB Working Groups will be 2008 – 2012 but at the same time the Groups will provide yearly status reports and be assessed by the Board and Council which in turn will decide whether the Groups should continue for another year or not.

Six Working Groups dealing with rural development, tourism development, social dimension, water management, water management, and SME and Innovation were recommended by the ERB Executive Board to be submitted for approval by the ERB Council. Upon request from Mr Hans Håkansson the Working Group dealing with transport infrastructure was planned to be established in November 2008.

9. RECOMMENDATION OF 2008-2009 ACTION PLAN TO THE COUNCIL

Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski informed the Executive Board about the preparation process of the 2008 – 2009 Action Plan which had been carried through in the cooperation of the Danish, Polish and International Secretariats. He explained that the Plan has now four objectives, each with its rationale, specific outputs and activities planned so that it resembles the way the EU programmes are constructed.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska added the Polish contribution into the Action Plan was a result of internal Polish consultations involving the regional offices in Gdańsk and Olsztyn as well as the Secretariat of the Association of the Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen asked all the Secretariats to check the dates of the ERB meetings included in the calendar at the back of the Action Plan so that there is as few changes as possible in the future work.

President Bernth Johnson congratulated the Secretariats on the 2008 – 2009 Action Plan and asked the Executive Board to recommend it for approval by the ERB Council. The Board agreed.

10. ERB CONTRIBUTION TO EU DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF COHESION POLICY

Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzanski presented the key messages that in his opinion should be included in a position of Euroregion Baltic towards the future EU Cohesion Policy including the need to maintain the principle of solidarity, adherence to the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies, and promotion of interregional cooperation through EU territorial cooperation programmes.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska suggested that the point on territorial cooperation should specifically mention the South Baltic Programme and that the ERB position should mention the ENPI programmes as important tools to actively involve the Russian partners in the cooperation. Mr Niels Chresten Andersen proposed to reiterate in the position that proposal that in the subsequent programming period the whole Euroregion Baltic will be covered by an ENPI programme.

Mr Bernth Johnson requested that the paper will be prepared by the International Secretariat and consulted with the all the national and regional secretariats before its formal submission to DG Regio. The Executive Board authorised the ERB secretariats to agree on the final version of the position paper.

At this point the agenda of the meeting as completed and President Johnson closed the meeting.

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Bernth Johnson
ERB President

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Per Ole Petersen
ERB Vice-President