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Northern Dimension Framework Document

Euroregion Baltic has not officially expressed its position towards the newly adopted Northern Dimension Framework Document but was asked to participate in the seminar on the subject, organised within the BEN project in Lappeenranta, Finland. The following is the abridged speech delivered by Sławomir Demkowicz – Dobrzański of the International Secretariat. It is by no means a formal stand but rather an opinion that hopes for the reader's response.

Euroregion Baltic (ERB) has been monitoring the development process of the Northern Dimension (ND) initiative since its 2nd Action Plan, at that time expecting it would become an important tool assisting crossborder cooperation in the region. Today, with the subsequent revision of this policy it seems of significance that the ND has now become the joint policy of the European Union, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation, whereby all the partners involved confirm the importance of territorial cooperation, encouraging the support of the European and national levels.

It can though be clearly seen that the thematic scope of the ND largely duplicates the cooperation priorities of the Four Common Spaces between the EU and Russia, EU's Territorial Cooperation and some bilateral agreements between the countries of the region. This is understandable since the ND itself does not offer financial assistance to the collaborating actors, referring them to the EU crossborder and transnational programmes. Another possible source can be provided by the international financing institutions (e.g. European Investment Bank or World Bank) but details on the application procedures remain undisclosed.

ND may present an interesting field for the ERB to act. Firstly, its geographical coverage comprises all its member regions, although the main focus is that on the North-West Russia. Secondly, the stakeholders of the policy are not only its main partners like European Union, Iceland, Norway or the Russian Federation but also are other actors: regional councils in the North (e.g. CBSS and Nordic Council of Ministers), as well as regional and sub-regional organisations. Thirdly, the collaboration within the ERB demonstrates compliance with the most common themes of crossborder cooperation, which are so closely reflected in the latest ND policy document.

The question asked to the ERB during the seminar was: What can Euroregions do? It was actually a two-fold question: what we can do for the Northern Dimension, as requested by Mr Christer Persson of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or what we can do to benefit from the Northern Dimension. In response to the former, one comment can be that whatever it is that can be done for the ND, organisations like ours do it everyday, implementing thousands of projects, cooperation schemes and structures. Attempting to answer the latter, three aspects seem relevant.

Firstly, the implementation of the Northern Dimension policy. The ND supports the cooperation within the so-called partnerships, e.g. Northern Dimension Partnership for Public Health and Social Well-being or Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership. It could be an idea for the ERB members either to join the already existing ND Partnership or form a new one, e.g. Northern Dimension Crossborder Partnership.

Financing is the second aspect. The ND advocates the use of territorial cooperation programmes but also offers the assistance from the international financing institutions. At this point however, it is not clear what sort of structures will be evaluating applications, who will make decisions regarding the funding from these financing institutions, and how the project will be reported and monitored.

Finally, the ND provides the technical instrument of assistance: the IT system. In this respect, all the Baltic Sea Region and the ND actors can benefit each other. The thousands of bilateral and multilateral projects and activities taking place at the regional and sub-regional levels can promote themselves and the system itself can develop to offer a more complete picture of the cooperation.

How the Northern Dimension Framework Document will complement the territorial cooperation in the North of Europe or if it becomes the truly framework policy implemented by all the actors in this region remains to be seen in the coming years. The nearest future, however, will show how it can assist all the invited partners in very practical

COUNCIL MEETING



Swedish delegation: Mr Bo Frank, ERB Council member, Mr Ulf Andersson, Seagull 2 Regional Coordinator from Kronoberg, Ms Johanna Ronn from Region Blekinge and Mr Bengt Gustafsson, Seagull 2 transport network expert.

On 20 November 2006 the Euroregion Baltic Council had its second meeting this year. Since the Russian Party holds the ERB presidency it was organised in Svetlogorsk in the Kaliningrad Region.

The meeting was chaired by Mr Mikhail Pluhin, ERB President, who at the beginning greeted special guests: member of the Lower House of the Polish Parliament Leonard Krasulski and of the Upper House, Jerzy Szmit. The President congratulated the representatives of local and regional authorities elected in the recent elections in Poland: Ms Joanna Zielińska (who became member of Gdynia City Council), Mr Henryk Slonina (who became Mayor of Elbląg), Zdzisław Olszewski (who became member of Elbląg City Council), as well as Mr Bernth Jonson who had been nominated Chairman of Blekinge County Council in result of the elections in Sweden, And Mr Bo Frank who became Mayor of Vaxjö. President Pluhin also congratulated Ms Raisa Mincinauskiene on her nomination to the post of Klaipėda County Vice-Governor.

As for its administrative matters the Council set the date of its next meeting which will be held on 14 March 2007 in Karlskrona and mark the end of the Russian presidency and the beginning of the Swedish term of office. The Council also acceded to the request by the Kurzeme Planning Region Council (Latvia) to withdraw from the Euroregion, which was motivated with insufficient human resources to manage crossborder cooperation, the ongoing administrative reform in Latvia, as well as the division of new CBC programmes that leave Kurzeme outside the South Baltic programme, grouping together the remaining ERB members. The Council asked that the appropriate changes are introduced to the ERB founding documents.

One of the items on the agenda was the drafting a response to the proposal of creating the Euroregions of the European Seas, put forward by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLARE), including the Euroregion of the Baltic Sea. This idea had already been discussed at the meeting of the ERB Board on 3 October. The Board members raised the issue of the obvious overlapping of such a structure with the existing organisations in the Baltic Sea Region, especially when considering the huge number of joint initiatives already in place. They also pointed out that this new entity would even duplicate the very name of the Euroregion Baltic. ERB President, Mikhail Pluhin signed the letter to CLARE on behalf of the whole Euroregion.

The Council also discussed a proposal of the action plan for 2007 - 2008 as part of the presidencies of Denmark and Sweden. This document will define the priorities of the ERB cooperation. The presented proposal recommends that all the ERB Council sittings will also be the forum to invite the high-ranking representatives of the European Commission or national authorities. Meetings of the Board on their part should take place in diverse locations allowing for better "visibility" of the Euroregion. Stronger involvement of ERB regional structures are also called for in order to support the International Secretariat, especially in offering technical instruments to the project reference networks.



From left to right: Mr Mikhail Pluhin, ERB President, Mr Jerzy Szmit, member of the Polish Senate, Mr Arthur Kuzniecov, Head of Consular Department, Russian Embassy in Poland, and Ms Mai Andersson, Acting Consul of Sweden in Kaliningrad.



Polish Voivodes' aids to the border issues: Mr Zbigniew Szmurło (Warmińsko-Mazurskie), and Mr Witold Kuszewki (Pomorskie)

IN SVETLOGORSK

ERB Council took note of the information on the preparations for the execution of two "soft" projects with the participation of young people of the Euroregion: hockey tournament and the concert of garage bands. Both are scheduled for 2007 although they remain at the stage of search for financial assistance. The discussion revolved around the topic of where and when such support will be accessible, as well as, in more general terms, the people-to-people measurement of the cooperation in the Euroregion Baltic, which, apart from the implementation of the prioritised development programme is an important element of joint activities.

According to the proposal of the ERB Board, Mr Arne



Polish delegation at the Conference (left to right): Ms Kora Stańczyk, Seagull 2 Regional Coordinator from Pomorze, Ms Krystyna Wróblewska, Director of the International Cooperation Department at Pomorskie Marshal's Office, and Ms Joanna Zielińska, Polish member of ERB Council.



Mr Niels Chresten Andersen (in the centre), PG Lidencrona (on the left) and Tor-Björn Åstrand-Karlsson (on the right) are all discussing matters of importance.

Grove, Director of the Kaliningrad Office of the Nordic Council of Ministers was invited to the meeting of the Council. He introduced the organisation's priorities and objectives, not only in the area of the Baltic States and the Kaliningrad Region, but also in the northern regions of Poland. Mr Grove emphasised that by interacting with the existing organisations, the Nordic Council of Ministers wants to aim at the larger synergy of development activities in the Baltic Sea Region. These organizations are among others the Baltic Sea States Sub-Regional Cooperation, Council of the Baltic Sea States of, Euroregions, Helcom or nongovernmental organisations.

Since the meeting took place on the eve of the border crossing conference to be held as part of the Seagull 2 project on the following day, the Swedish delegation proposed that the ERB Council pass a resolution on the necessity to take appropriate steps in order to facilitate a more favourable situation in which the cooperation in the Euroregion will not hindered by problems resulting from the existing border crossing regimes between the Kaliningrad region and its neighbours. The ERB Council members accepted the text prepared by the Swedish Party with the following content:



Council of Euroregion Baltic

Proposal for further Cross-Border cooperation in the South Baltic Sea Area

It is with a successful cooperation within the Euroregion Baltic we can see new possibilities to intensify our common activities in the future. However there are still difficulties for participating members to solve. The accessibility and the procedure related to visa application and the pass-through situation in boundary areas has been and still is an impediment and makes it harder for the ERB-members to take part in each member regions activities. The accessibility concerns sea-transport and tourism as well as aviation and road transport. The Swedish part in ERB –Region Blekinge, Region Kalmar and Region Kronoberg stress and welcome a joint work, focusing on create a situation where all members in ERB obstruct the impediments for future cooperation. The joint activities concern all member regions and should be seen as a necessary objective.

The Swedish part proposes that the ERB-Council, the 10th of November in Kaliningrad makes a statement to encourage regional and national authorities and governments to acquire proper causes. The cooperation in the southern Baltic Sea as well as an ERB will by this necessary action develop in a positive direction. To obtain the important Lisbon- and Gothenburg agendas and use the funding in the new program-period in EU 2007-2013 an action like this is unavoidable. Finally, this statement should be presented to all consulates and honorary consulates in each member countries and the European Commission to show our great interest in future joint development work.

By Commission of Region Blekinge, Region Kalmar and Region Kronoberg

Bernth Johnson
Vice President ERB
Chairman of the board, Region Blekinge

BORDER CROSSING CONFERENCE

Significant imbalances in the level of development in the regions around the Baltic Sea prevail in Euroregion Baltic (ERB), consisting of the Danish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Swedish regions. The need to provide a sustainable set of activities aiming at supporting the cohesion process in the area has been tackled by a number of strategies and policies outlined in the Baltic Sea Region, including the Euroregion Baltic Joint Development Programme (JDP), drawn up within the Interreg III B BSR project: Seagull DevERB and containing a proposed action plan to be implemented in the ERB in the next 10 - 15 years. Approved by the Board and Council, the JDP identifies four priority areas of development: first, increasing business competitiveness, second, enhancing transport infrastructure in the region, third, improving labour market cooperation, and fourth, implementing EU energy and environment policies.

The Seagull II project, also co-financed by the Interreg III B BSR Programme has the following key objectives: first, to improve organisational capacities within ERB in assistance to the implementation process of JDP so that crossborder and transnational activities implemented on the ERB territory support the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies, the Common EU / Russia Economic Space. These activities are more and more intensive and bring notable effects. Together with the new financial perspective of the European Union new possibilities emerge to intensify joint operations that would benefit the improvement of the social-economic cohesion of border regions and help integrate more effectively local communities. However, ERB member regions face problems that need solving. The availability and visa application procedures, as well as the very act of crossing the border still remains the obstacle for the ERB members to participate in mutual undertakings. These problems concern sea travel and tourism, going by air and by land.

For this reason, as part of the Seagull 2 project we are now managing a series of two conferences entitled: *Poland and Lithuania's accession to the Schengen Treaty: consequences and perspectives for the crossborder cooperation between the Kaliningrad Region and its neighbours*, whereby we are seeking practical solutions to define possible ways of continuing the cooperation in the Euroregion in the context of the enlarged Schengen Treaty and to contribute to the prevention from new divisions on the UE's external borders. The first conference took place in Svetlogorsk in the Kaliningrad Region, attended by over 70 regional politicians, representatives of foreign ministries and parliaments of Lithuania, Poland of Russia, as well as of the Consulates of Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Poland and Sweden residing in the Oblast, and the border service people from Lithuania, Poland and Russia.



The border crossing conference was attended by more than 70 representatives of the national, regional and local level from around the Euroregion Baltic



Polish Secretariat Director, Mr Zdzisław Olszewski during the interview with Radio El reporter, Ms Marta Hajkowicz.



Representatives of Warmińsko-Mazurskie: Director of the European Integration Department, Mr Zbigniew Puchajda and Seagull 2 Regional Coordinator, Mr Piotr Zwolak.

IN SVETLOGORSK, 21.11.06

The first conference aimed at providing the information on the existing visa systems on the EU borders with the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation, changes resulting from the enlargement of the European Union and on the possible consequences that the enlargement could have had on the flow of goods and people across these borders. It was emphasised that the introduction of the visa regime on 1 May 2004 did not hinder the traffic on the borders. It seems sensible to conclude that the introduction of the so-called Schengen visas alike will unify the system in all the countries, enabling their citizens to travel more freely. This position was unanimously voiced by the representatives of Denmark, Lithuania, Germany, Poland and Sweden. All the same, the Schengen stipulates the provision for bilateral agreements between different countries to further facilitate conditions for people to travel between the EU member states and their external neighbours.

As the follow-up task of the Seagull 2 project, based on such formulated preliminary conditions, a report was commissioned. It will be prepared and presented to the ERB Board for approval by the Centre or Scientific Research in Olsztyn. It will contain a description of existing regulations, analysis of statistical data and the proposal of action that the Euroregion can take towards regional and national authorities in support of the cooperation in the area of the South Baltic and in the Euroregion itself, creating better conditions for the implementation of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies, as well as for the extensive use of financial means available in the EU between 2007 and 2013. The action suggested will be under discussion at the second border conference which will be held on 15 March 2007 in Karlskrona, the capital of the Swedish County of Blekinge.



In the centre: ERB President, Mr Bernth Johnson. On the right: Mr Per Gudmund Lindencrona, heading the Swedish Secretariat. On the left: Ms Olga Grigoreva from Baltijsk.



Three Musketeers: Mr Victor Koshelev, Mr Yuri Rozkhov-Yurevsky and Mr Victor Romanovsky.



The order crossing conference was attended by 70 national, regional and local representatives from Euroregion Baltic.



Bornholm's representatives to the Conference: ERB Bard member, Mr Per Ole Petersen and the Head of the ERB Danish Secretariat, Mr Niels Chresten Andresen.

SECOND SEAGULL 2 STUDY VISIT

On 3 October 2006 in Karlskrona, the Seagull 2 Steering Committee and Coordinating Group had the second study visit. This time, for its aim was to enable the partners involved in the ERB cooperation, as well as the implementation of the project to get to know some good examples related to the construction of statistical databases, presenting indicators concerning regional development. Launching such a tool is one of objectives of the project. Thanks to an uncomplicated system of collecting selected statistical information, ERB member regions will be able to assess the progress of the process of implementing the Joint Development Programme.

While executing the Seagull devERB project the problem of selection and availability of appropriate indicators was already examined. At this moment, within the Seagull 2 project these indicators are being developed in such a way that way they could also reflect the progress that the ERB regions make in the areas of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies. Also, the findings of research carried out by ESPON (i.e. European Spatial Planning Observation Network) offer some aid in our work. In their report entitled In search of territorial potential, an innovative way can be seen of grouping indicators which together give a picture of the region in terms of its progress in the implementation of aims of the the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies, for example in he context of important economic structures, labour market efficiency, potential accessibility to main transport networks, hazard exposure to natural and human disasters, share of persons aged 0 to 14, metropolises, share of renewable energy, average structural fund spending pr capita, and the like.

During this visit we made ourselves acquainted with the technical organisation of such systems. Krister Nilsson of Region Blekinge presented to the ERB audience technical capacities of regional statistical databanks.

The functions allowing for the comparison of results of different regions turned out most interesting, both in the form of tables and coloured graphs. Such functions will be of course most desirable in the Euroregion the Baltic system.

The Steering Committee members also took note of important financial aspects involved while running such a database. In principle, there are two ways of operating the system: either through such institutions like statistical offices, covering the cost of e.g. annual subscription fees, or commissioning the construction of the database on your own server and the international website of the Euroregion Baltic. Building our own database remains the ambition of the ERB partners who want it then accessible on the public website.

At the present moment preparatory work is being carried on. Based upon the recommendation concerning the concrete indicators and ways of their presentation, the company servicing the international websites of the Euroregion and Seagull 2 project will construct an relevant database. These data will then be regularly collected by the national and regional offices in ERB in order to systematically monitor the progress made in the realisation of the ERB Joint Development Programme.

Work on the preparation of the database will continue through the next three months. In the months to follow, tests of the database will start so that it can finally be in full operation before the end of June 2007. We hope that it will be an effective and modern instrument in acquiring and processing of information that will be essential in the effective implementation of the ERB Joint Development Programme.



President Mikhail Pluhin and Head of International Secretariat, Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański are checking out a former Swedish Royal limo, now exhibited at the private car museum in Karlskrona.



From left to right: Per Ole Petersen, ERB Board member from Bornholm, Erik Ciarki, Region Kalmar coordinator, Raisa Mincinauskiene, ERB Board member from Klaipeda, Dalia Makuskiene and Asta Raugaliene from Klaipeda County

ERB as an example of crossborder cooperation

Invited by El Institut d'Economia i Empresa Ignasi Villalonga in Valencia the International Secretariat represented the Euroregion Baltic at the two meetings organised in the city. On 12th December 2006 the Cotemporary Culture Centre was officially opened and a seminar held on the cooperation within Euram or the Mediterranean Arch, grouping together the Valencia Commune, Region of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands.

This inaugural session was opened by Clement Eliseu, the editor-in-chief of the Valenciano edition of El Pais.



He introduced the listeners into the wide range of themes of collaboration of the regions in Europe, addressing cultural, social and historical aspects of the relations between Valencia, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, in the context of their status in Spain and the entire European Union.

In the next speech, Joan Baptista Casas, the Vice-president of El Institut d'Economia i Empresa Ignasi Villalonga, paid attention to the economic significance of the cooperation of regions which will have the fundamental meaning in counter-balancing the dynamically developing regions that constitute the so-called "European banana".

Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański talked about the Euroregion Baltic and its evolution from its establishment, through the development of the Joint Development Programme and setting up of the permanent secretariat, until the realization of the Seagull 2 project, aiming at enhancing institutional structures within the Euroregion and preparing its members for the full realisation of tasks resulting from the Joint Development Programme.

Between 13 and 14 December 2006 a conference concerning the development of the port industry was held in Valencia attended by the representatives of ports from all over the world. As part of the cooperation being implemented in the Euroregion Baltic, Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański presented information on common projects, realised jointly by the ERB member regions, as for example Baltic Master, East West, SEB Trance the Link and Baltic Gateway Plus.

About the cooperation within ERB

Jarosław Czubiński, General Consul of Poland in the Kaliningrad Region:

Euroregion Baltic is an initiator, creator and coordinator of the majority of crossborder activities within the Kaliningrad Region. In addition, the role of the Euroregion is institutional. It is an entity which to a large extent took on the responsibility of creating new possibilities. A great number of these projects realised within the ERB will produce desired effects in the future. Certainly, no such opportunities would be feasible without this "company" which the Euroregion de facto is, nor without the need to cooperate felt by the people active in ERB.



Yuri Rozkow - Yurevski, Representative of the Kaliningrad Region in Poland:

The Kaliningrad Region cooperates with three Polish voivodships: Warminsko-Mazurskie, Pomorskie and Zachodniopomorskie. We have the closest relationship with Warminsko-Mazurskie and Pomorskie. Amongst the large number of cooperation fields, right after the economy, culture and nongovernmental organisations are play the most significant role. We take part in euroregional activities, mainly within the Euroregion Baltic. The inhabitants of the Kaliningrad Region join in cultural initiatives, for example the International Competition of Children and Youth of the Euroregion Baltic "From the Sea We Are", which is attended by many young artists every year.



**EUROREGION BALTIC
INTERNATIONAL PERMANENT
SECRETARIAT**

Ul. Sw. Duchy 3/4
82—300 Elblag, Poland
Sławomir Demkowicz Dobrzański
Tel./ Fax: +48 55 641 27 70
E-mail: ips@eurobalt.org.pl
www.eurobalt.org.pl



BALTIC

CONTACTS IN ERBREGIONS:

Bornholms Regionkommune
Niels Ch. Andersen
Tel.: +45 5692 1303
Niels.Chresten.Andersen@brk.dk

Администрация Балтийского
Городского Округа
Виктор Кошелев
Tel: +07 4014 522 669
koshelev@bltfrd.koenig.su

Region Blekinge
P.G. Lindencrona
Tel: +46 455 30 50 11
pg.lindencrona@regionblekinge.se

Regional Förbundet i Kalmar Län
Erik Ciardi
Tel: +46 480 44 83 33
erik.ciardi@regionforbund.se

Klaipėdos apskrities viršininko
administracija
Dalia Makuškienė
Tel: +370 46 312 483
region@klaipeda.aps.lt

Södra Smålands kommuner och
landsting
Ulf Andersson
Tel: +46 470 77 85 48
ulf.andersson@sskl.se

Kurzemes plānošanas reģions
Zigo Rutkovskis
Tel. +371 73 31 492
zigo.rutkovskis@bjpaa.eunet.lv

Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa
Pomorskiego
Kora Stańczyk
Tel: +48 58 32 61 710
k.stanczyk@woj-pomorskie.pl

Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa
Warmińsko-Mazurskiego
Piotr Zwolak
Tel: +48 89 53 40 019
depie5@warmia.mazury.pl

CBC South Baltic programme 2007-2013

As informed in the last Newsletter a new EU Cross-Border Programme for cooperation in the South Baltic Area is under preparation.

Since the first programme meeting in Gdansk 23rd May 2006 the programme area have been significantly extended and finally decided as late in November 2006. Now the programme will be one of the biggest CBC programmes in EU, though the total EU contribution provided by the five involved EU countries will be less than 60 Million EUR, which means around 8,5 Million EUR per year in the programme period 2007-2013.

The programme will cover all the northern part of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (D); Region Zealand and Bornholm (DK); Klaipeda, Taurage and Telsiau regions (LT), West-Pomerania and Pomerania regions and the Elblag area (PL); and the regions of Blekinge, Kalmar, Kronoberg and Skaane (S). Under certain limits it will be possible even to include partners from the Kaliningrad Region in concrete projects.

The Polish Ministry for Regional Development will be hosting the programme Managing Authority, and the main programme secretariat will be located in Gdansk.

The preparation of the programme has been very much delayed, mainly because of the late final decision on the programme geography and secondly because of some major disagreements between the regions involved on what kind of actions to be supported by the programme.

So far have been agreed three main focus areas:

1. Growth and Jobs, with support to improve the competitiveness, innovation, accessibility, entrepreneurship and labour market integration.
2. Sustainable development with a focus on environment, use of natural resources, renewable energy and cultural/natural heritage.
3. Local initiatives with a focus on people-to-people type of cooperation.

At the last programme meeting taking place in Warsaw 6th December 2006 an outline of priorities and indicative actions, made by a Core Group of 7 regional and euroregional representatives, was discussed. Assisted by an expert the Core Group will until beginning of January 2007 concentrate the outline by reducing the big number of proposed actions to be supported.

At the same time the representatives of the involved ministries from the 5 EU countries will work on the implementation structure and procedures. The ambition is to reach a final agreement at the next programme meeting late January 2007, and then afterwards to have an official consultation period, before a final programme document can be sent to the European Commission for a final approval. The first application round will only be launched after Summer 2007, and maybe only in the end of the year.



Russian Secretariat employees: (from left to right) Julia Zdanova, Katia Grigoreva, Victor Koshelev, Elena Butorova and Olga Grigoreva.