

# EUROREGION BALTIC NEWSLETTER

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EUROREGION BALTIC IS A POLITICAL COOPERATION OF NINE REGIONS IN DENMARK, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, POLAND, RUSSIA AND SWEDEN



## *ERB Board Meets In Svaneke*

Euroregion Baltic Executive Board met in Svaneke, Bornholm on 25th April. The meeting completed a two-day visit on the island during which the Board members and the secretariats had the opportunity to see Gudhjem Mill, Bornholm's Medieval Centre, discuss a South Baltic tourism development project and enjoy the local culinary heritage.



The Board discussed and approved of the Action Plan presented by the newly established ERB Youth Board (you can read more about the plan on page 2), continued preparations for the ERB Conference on the upcoming EU Baltic Sea Strategy to be held in Brussels on 11th June (please see below), discussed its joint statement to be approved in support of the development of the East West Transport Corridor (please go to page 4 to read more), set up a new task force within Euroregion Baltic with the view of constructing a new Information and Communication Strategy and heard status reports from the ERB Working Groups (more detailed information can be found on page 3).

The Board also decided to give a green light to the Polish Association of Communes to start preparations leading to the establishment of an ERB Working Group on People-to-People Cooperation and listened to a brief summary of the South Baltic kick-off conference that took place on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008 in Gdańsk.

## *EU Baltic Sea Strategy*

**On 16 November 2006 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on a Baltic Sea strategy for the Northern Dimension, noting the fact the Baltic had become almost an internal sea within the European Union. On 14 December 2007 the Council of European Union asked the European Commission to present an EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region until June 2009.**

The European Territorial Cooperation Unit at Regional Policy General Directorate has taken up work on a stocktaking report with a view to drafting the Strategy. The Strategy will be developed within a cross-sectoral group of 17 representatives of EC General Directorates, including DG Relex, DG Environment and DG Mare. So far a number of positions and statements have been produced and will inevitably continue to pour in following the announcement of this new initiative. We present majority of these papers on our ERB website in a specially designated part dealing with the Strategy at [www.euroregionbaltic.eu/strategy.php](http://www.euroregionbaltic.eu/strategy.php)

More importantly, however, Euroregion Baltic decided to become an active stakeholder in the development process of the new strategy. To this end, it is now organising a conference with the intention of facilitating a good exchange of opinions and contributions by the European, national and regional actors around the Baltic Sea. We believe Euroregion Baltic with its formally adopted Joint Development Programme is a successful example of crossborder cooperation constituting a good practice of how its member regions can work together in order to benefit the growth of the area, in addition to the European, national, regional and local policies.

EU Regional Policy Ms Danuta Hübner and Sweden's EU Minister Ms Cecilia Malmström will headline the conference. Interventions will also be made by the representatives of the European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, Baltic Development Forum, Helsinki Commission and ScanBalt, Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association and Euroregion Baltic.

The conference will be held between 09.00 and 16.00 on 11 June 2008 and hosted by the Regional Office of Pomorskie Region, located at Scotland House in 6 Rond point Schumann.

News on events and developments within Euroregion Baltic is available on its website at:  
[www.euroregionbaltic.eu](http://www.euroregionbaltic.eu)

# Youth Action Plan Approved

On 25th April Euroregion Baltic Executive Board met in Svaneke to among other issues discuss and approve of the Action Plan presented by the newly established ERB Youth Board.

Euroregion Baltic Youth Board defined the following vision with regards to how the ERB will develop in order to accommodate youth issues in its future agenda:

*In 2015 Euroregion Baltic will be a region where the youth agenda is an important and integral part of the ERB cooperation, well rooted in the Euroregional and regional structures, and reflected in ERB contributions towards EU policies.*

The long term goals of their cooperation will be to:

- provide the opportunity for the youth of the ERB member regions to be involved in all ERB activities,
- act as a voice for youth in the ERB,
- increase interaction between regional authorities and the youths,
- encourage closer cooperation between the youths and local government, employers, schools so as to stimulate opportunities for youth,
- reduce the distance between the youths in the regions in various areas by for example international cooperation, different projects and involvement in activities at regional level,
- eliminate cultural prejudices with a help of different communicational and informative tools,
- encourage cooperation between the youths both at the regional and international levels,
- support activities among the youths aiming at a sustainable environment,
- improve living conditions of the youths in the ERB regions,
- facilitate mobility of the youths in the region, showing them perspectives in the area of education, international exchanges and labor market,
- encourage the participation of youths in the decision making processes in the ERB regions,
- strive for equality and diversity perspectives at all levels and in all processes.



The short term goals of their cooperation will be to:

- establish a well functioning ERB Youth Board with a clear structure and projects in process and running.
- create an informative web-page.
- implement various projects which will fulfill the long term goals.
- reach out to the youths in the region and establish a well known regional cooperation for youths.
- engage youngsters to cooperate tightly with ERB working groups.
- promote the youth perspectives through youths involvement in all ERB cooperative activities.
- have a recurrent youth conference as a possibility for youths to meet and influence the politics in the region.

One of the major challenges for the Youth Board during its first years will be to create an effectively operating structure. Everything has to be built up from the beginning, internal structures and relations, as well as external structures with the ERB Executive Board and Council. Another aspect to be considered is the necessity to make the youths in the member regions aware of their possibilities to participate and influence the development of the ERB area and ERB member regions. The Youth Board should be diverse and be representative of the ERB regions.

The activities to be taken in the years of 2008 and 2009 will include: creating a Youth Board website and logo, organising their internal and external structures, holding a summer face-to-face meeting, involving youths into the ERB Working Groups, arranging the second youth conference, implementing the pre-study project an marketing the ERB Youth Board in the member regions.

The full text of the ERB Youth Action Plan is available at [www.euroregionbaltic.eu/documents.php?kat=7](http://www.euroregionbaltic.eu/documents.php?kat=7).

# ***ERB WORKING GROUPS***

*Below you will find a brief update on the activities held by the Working Groups — formally approved structures within Euroregion Baltic to work towards the implementation of its Joint Development Programme.*

## **SME / Innovation Working Group**

Two project ideas are now being developed with the aim of being applied to the South Baltic CBC Programme this autumn. One called DISKE will have the main objective of developing cooperation among innovative Small and Medium Enterprises and strengthening their potential through cooperation of science and technological parks, incubators, clusters, academia and local authorities while the other will contribute to the cooperation of net-based learning facilities within Euroregion Baltic and the setting-up of such a facility in Lithuania and/or Poland.

## **Rural Development Working Group**

This WG is now preparing a proposal for a South Baltic Rural Development Centre, to be first supported by SIDA as a pilot project and later developed and submitted to the Interreg IV B BSR Programme. Its main objectives will be to develop a final definition of the core purposes and activities of the centre, involve more strategic partners, map differences and similarities and to develop and re-launch the ERB Rural Toolbox.

## **Water Forum Working Group**

Modern Water Management project to be implemented between spring 2009 and spring 2012 is now in the process of building up partnership. It will have 4 components. Component 1 will deal with local and regional water cooperation in the South Baltic Sea Region. Component 2 will focus on management through Water Users Partnership whereby the partners from each pilot area will initiate a process aiming at creating a Water User Partnership in co-operation with the Water Authority planning and implementing measures in accordance to the EU Water Framework Directive process. In Component 3 – Pilot measures for decreased environmental load – each pilot area will carry through several best practice measures aiming at disseminating sustainable technology, decreasing the outlet of nutrients and hazardous substances and/or combating the negative effects of these substances. In Component 4 – watercourse as a resource for sustainable development – the pilot areas will study the possibilities to use a water course of good ecological status as a springboard for a sustainable local development.

## **Tourism Working Group**

This WG has prepared an outline of the project focusing on strengthening the cooperation between tourism stakeholders in the South Baltic Sea Region through three types of joint actions: Developing trans-regional cultural route (Amber Route), Joint promotion of the Baltic Sea Region and Co-operation of tourism information offices.

## **Social Dimension Working Group**

This WG has prepared an application of the project called BaltNet The project will be submitted within South Baltic Measure 1.2 i.e. Integration of Higher Education and Labour Markets with the direct objectives of closer integration of labour market institutions within Euroregion Baltic, strengthened cooperation of labour market institutions and better use of labour markets potentials through enhanced liaison with higher education institutions.

## **Energy Working Group**

An outline of proposals aiming to create a regional energy policy and an energy plan for all parts of the ERB, including the preparation and implementation of various energy goals will be further developed during a meeting held on 25th August in Gdańsk.

## **Transport Working Group**

This Group is working on a detailed plan of activities before its formal approval by the ERB Council in November 2008. One of the activities being developed is to initiate a debate on how to participate in the working of the High-level Group on Transport for Sustainable Growth at the Baltic Development Forum.

## **Environmental Protection in Kaliningrad Region**

This Group is working on a detailed plan of activities before its formal approval by the ERB Council in November 2008. So far meetings were held between Lithuanian and Russian partners in order to further work on a project dealing with the Helcom hotspot number 49 (Sovetsk Paper and Pulp Plant). The project would be submitted to Poland – Lithuania - Kaliningrad ENPI Programme in 2009.

## ***We Are From the Sea***

**On 17th May 2008 Elbląg Municipal Library hosted 23rd award ceremony of the international contest of fine arts *We Are from the Sea*. More than one hundred young artists attended.**

This year 2416 works were entered into the competition from Lithuania (Klaipeda County), Poland (Pomorskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Lubelskie, Małopolskie, Mazowieckie, Podkarpackie) and Russia (Kaliningrad Region). Techniques varied from watercolours through oil paints to graphics and ages spanned from 5 to 19 years of age.

The award giving ceremony was combined with the gala exhibition to which two hundred and three best pieces were selected. Thirteen young authors were presented with Grand Prix, fifty-three received 1st Degree Prizes and one hundred and thirty-seven got special diplomas. Congratulations!

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## **Statement on East West Transport Corridor**

**On 16th May Euroregion Baltic Executive Board adopted Joint Statement in support of the development of the East West Transport Corridor.**

Baltic Sea Region, where trade and traffic in the east-west direction is increasing dramatically, is in need of developing sustainable transport. Therefore, Euroregion Baltic backs up the EWTC II project aiming at creating measures and a best practice case for a Green Corridor concept and bringing together partners from Lithuania, Denmark, Kaliningrad Oblast, Region Blekinge, Region Skåne and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

The development of concepts for Green Corridors and integrated transport solutions is promoted by the European Transport Policies (e.g. the Transport Freight Logistic Action Plan). EWTC II is a follow up on the project dealing with the East-West Transport Corridor (EWTC) from Esbjerg to Vilnius, including connections to Russia and Far East, identified as an important corridor within the Northern Transport Axis, promoting inter-modal solutions and an integrated transport chain. The corridor includes several TEN-T ports, road and railway links, parts of the Nordic Triangle and Corridor IX B/D in Lithuania/Kaliningrad.

The full text is available at [www.euroregionbaltic.eu/documents.php](http://www.euroregionbaltic.eu/documents.php)

### **Where will we be in June and July?**

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 4th June:   | EU BSR Strategy Seminar, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern EU Office in Brussels                         |
| 11th June:  | EU BSR Strategy Seminar, Pomorskie EU Office in Brussels                                      |
| 19th June:  | European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Conference, Committee of the Regions in Brussels |
| 7-8th July: | The future Baltic Sea region Conference during Almedalsweek, SIDA Baltic Office in Visby      |



While an EU Baltic Sea Strategy still remains somewhat of a puzzle ERB Board members are looking into the future with confidence.