



2022

**EUROREGION BALTIC
ANNUAL REPORT**



EUROREGION BALTIC EXECUTIVE BOARD 2022

Gustaw Marek Brzezina, ERB President, Marshal of Warmia and Masuria Region, Poland

Mikael Benzon, ERB Vice-President, Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark

Heidi Burgedahl, Member of ERB Executive Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark

Helle Munk Ravnborg, Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark

Vytautas Grubliauskas, Member of ERB Executive Board, Chair of Board of Association of Klaipeda Region, Lithuania

Witold Wróblewski, Member of ERB Executive Board, Chair of the Association of Polish Communes ERB, Poland

Grzegorz Grzelak, Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Council of Pomorskie Region, Poland

Hanna Pruchniewska, Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Association of Polish Communes ERB, Poland

Joanna Zielińska, Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Vice-Chair of the Association of Polish Communes ERB, Poland

Elin Petersson, Member of ERB Executive Board, Chair of Regional Development Board, Region Blekinge, Sweden

Suzanne Svensson, Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Regional Development Board Region Blekinge, Sweden

Ingrid Hermansson, Member of ERB Executive Board, Deputy Chair of the Regional Development Board, Region Blekinge, Sweden

Karin Helmersson, Member of the ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Ellinor Troli, Member of the ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Åke Nilsson, Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Peter Vretlund, Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Johanna Wyckman, Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County, Sweden



Roland Gustbée, Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kronoberg, Sweden

Robert Olesen, Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kronoberg, Sweden

Helen Bengtsson, Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kronoberg, Sweden

Britt-Louise Berndtsson, Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kronoberg, Sweden

In 2022 Euroregion Baltic Executive Board met two times online, via the ZOOM meeting tool: on March 10th 2022 and March 30th 2022, and two times in physical mode: on May 11th 2022 in Växjö (Sweden) and December 9th 2022 in Olsztyn (Poland).

EUROREGION BALTIC YOUTH BOARD

Johanna Wyckman, Chairwoman of ERB Youth Board, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Małgorzata Lewandowska, Vice Chairwoman of ERB Youth Board, Pomorskie Region, Poland

Emil Rigstad-Andersen, Member of ERB Youth Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark

Malene Meier Pedersen, Deputy Member of ERB Youth Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark

Greta Tautavičiūtė, Member of ERB Youth Board, Association Klaipeda Region, Lithuania

Julia Orluk, Member of ERB Youth Board, Pomorskie Region, Poland

Grzegorz Gieda, Member of ERB Youth Board, Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region, Poland

Dawid Markun, Member of ERB Youth Board, Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic, Poland

Dawid Jędrzejewski, Deputy Member of ERB Youth Board, Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic, Poland

Alexander Nilsson, Member of ERB Youth Board, Deputy Chair of Blekinge Youth Council, Sweden

In 2022 Euroregion Baltic Youth Board met four times online, via the ZOOM meeting tool: on February 3rd 2022, March 9th 2022, May 5th 2022 and December 5th 2022. It had also a physical meeting on December 9th 2022 in Olsztyn (Poland).



WATER CORE GROUP

Åsa Felix Everbrand, WCG Chairwoman, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Sarah Ericsson, Region Blekinge – expert sustainability, Sweden

Tobias Facchini, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Torben Jørgensen, Bornholm Energy and Supply, Denmark

In 2022 ERB Water Core Group was entirely focused on preparation and submission of WaterMan application to Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.

MOBILITY CORE GROUP

Mattias Andersson, ERB MCG Chariman, Blekinge Region, Sweden

Sylvia Wymysłowska, Innobaltica Ltd., Pomorskie Region, Poland

Pawel Warszycki, Hanseatic Institute for Entrepreneurship and Regional Development at the University of Rostock, Germany

Antje Schreyer, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Agneta Carlsson, Region Kronoberg, Sweden

Nicolai Munk Pedersen, Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark

Andrius Samuilovas, Klaipeda Public Transport Authority, Lithuania

Eglė Stonkė, Association of Klaipeda Region, Lithuania

Sven Borén, Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden

Anna Jaroszevska, Marshal's Office of the Warmia and Masuria Region, Poland

Milan Rzepkowski, Marshal's Office of the Warmia and Masuria Region, Poland

Aleksandra Iglińska, Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic, Poland

Agata Widzicka, Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic, Poland

ERB Mobility Core Group had its Joint Stakeholder Meeting in Karlskrona (Sweden), on 12-13 May, 2022.

During the year 2022 main activities within the Mobility Core Group were focused on the implementation of the Seed Money project Interconnect Tourism, which was financed by the Swedish Institute.



ADDRESS BY ERB PRESIDENT

Between March 10th, 2022 and March 2nd, 2023 Euroregion Baltic was under political leadership of Warmia and Masuria Region, Poland. The position of president was held by Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina, Marshal of Warmia and Masuria Region.



Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends of the Euroregion Baltic cooperation,

It has been a great honour for me to be a president for Euroregion Baltic during 2022. Year 2022 was a time of profound changes, which occurred both in external and internal setting of Euroregion Baltic.

At the forefront of these circumstances stands out Ukraine, which was brutally invaded by army of the Russian Federation. The tragic consequences for Ukrainian population pushed all ERB member organisations towards a quick and steady response with humanitarian aid for those affected. It had also direct implications for Euroregion Baltic as a whole, which decided immediately to suspend ERB membership of Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation. It was a turning point for the organisation, which was one of the first Euroregions to include a partner from the Russian Federation.

Another factor with huge implications was COVID-19 pandemic, which luckily began to fade away in 2022. Thus, after a few years, we could return to organising face-to-face meetings of ERB Executive Board, which we successfully held in May in Växjö and in December in Olsztyn.



It was also a year when new edition of Interreg South Baltic Programme was inaugurated. The programme had proved to be invaluable tool in the past for enhancing stakeholders' participation in cross-border activities across the sea. New programme sets up a ground for many years of successful initiatives between our partners.

One must also mention the decision of ERB Executive Board to strive for establishment of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation by Euroregion Baltic. Appropriate steps were initiated by Warmia and Masuria Presidency and we are currently on a right track to establish a structure, which will boost our capacities for cooperation over the borders.

By these words I would like to thank all members of Euroregion Baltic for close cooperation during this passing year, which allowed us to navigate safely through the sea of unprecedented challenges.

Gustaw Marek Brzezina,
President of the Euroregion Baltic 2022



Focus area 1: Lobbying

Strategic objective: strengthening the political role of ERB in the cross-border cooperation



Interreg South Baltic Programme

The Euroregion Baltic representatives were actively engaged in preparing the new programming perspective 2021 – 2027 for Interreg South Baltic Programme. After leaving of Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło from the post of the Head of International Permanent Secretariat on 31st March, there was a need for her replacement in Interreg South Baltic Committees 2014 – 2020. By the decision made by ERB Executive Board on 30th March, Ms Raimonda McGeever, who was previously deputy of Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło, became a representative of Euroregion Baltic in a Monitoring Committee of the Programme.

In May Polish Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy informed about preparations for Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027. Within a new Monitoring Committee a joint delegation of Euroregions had to be included, which consisted of Euroregion Baltic and Euroregion Pomerania. In a result of the written procedure in June, Mr Łukasz Bielewski, Director of International Cooperation Department, Marshal's Office of Warmia and Masuria Region, was approved as a head of joint delegation of Euroregions in the Monitoring Committee of Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027. First meeting of the Monitoring Committee was held on 8 – 9th November in Szczecin. In December ERB Executive Board decided to appoint a deputy for Mr Bielewski, whom will be Mr Piotr Zwolak from Marshal's Office of Warmia and Masuria Region.

On the 4th of October 2022 the European Commission decided to approve Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027 in its final version from 31st August 2022. The Programme has a budget of 85 510 713 EUR. The Programme consists of four priorities:

- Innovative South Baltic – enhancing the level of innovation and internationalization of local actors,
- Sustainable South Baltic - promoting sustainable development and blue and green economy,
- Attractive South Baltic – activating the tourist and cultural potential of South Baltic Area,
- Active South Baltic – improving cooperation governance.

The Programme covers 25 NUTS 3 sub-regions in five Baltic countries: Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. In spite of lobbying by ERB, Olsztyński sub-region of Warmia and Masuria will remain outside the Programme area. The South Baltic Area ('SBA') has a distinct blue

(maritime sector) and green (natural resources sector) character, featuring the sea basin, coastal landscapes and extensive green areas with numerous lakes and streams. Most of Euroregion Baltic territory is covered by the Programme.

The First Call for Proposals of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027 was open on 20th December 2022.

Euroregion Baltic Core Groups

In the beginning of 2022 Euroregion Baltic was involved in 5 projects. Formally Euroregion was represented by the Association of Polish Communes, which was a holder of ERB's account. These projects were:

- Umbrella 2.0 (financed by the Swedish Institute),
- InDigiSE - Promotion of social entrepreneurship in the youth sector by digital and informal education tools (Erasmus+),
- Creative Waves + Baltic Sisterhood for Change (CBSS Project Support Facility),
- WaterMan – Climate resilient wastewater and groundwater management by circular approaches that reduce outflows of nutrients and hazardous substances (Interreg BSR Seed Money),
- Baltic Sea Youth Platform (Erasmus+).

Facing the changes in Euroregion Baltic International Permanent Secretariat, in March 2022 ERB Executive Board discussed the further implementation of the projects. It was agreed, that Umbrella 2.0 project, where the Association was a lead partner, will not be extended and it will be terminated on 31st March. Other projects, where the Association of Polish Communes acted as a partner (Baltic Sea Youth Platform, InDigiSE, Creative Waves and WaterMan) were supposed to be implemented according to the initial plan, with the consent of the Board of the Association of Polish Communes.

► Umbrella 2.0

Project Umbrella 2.0 - Boosting transnational cooperation capacities for multi-level actors in the Baltic Sea Region was launched in January 2021. Consortium consisted of 3 Polish partners, UBC and BSSSC.



On 28th January Umbrella 2.0 project organised an online training on International Project Management for everyone interested in starting new projects and forming new partnerships. Topics of the training were: change management, work breakdown structure, budget including rules and regulations in EU-funded projects. Training was prepared together with experts from Peerstage company.

In 2022 project continued dissemination of its two publications:

1. Report **“Umbrella 2.0 Entry points to EUSBSR cooperation”**. Umbrella 2.0 experts conducted a series of 14 interviews with Coordinators of all Policy Areas of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, attempting on the one hand to gain a broad picture of the current status of local stakeholders’ participation but also to listen to exciting ideas and proposals on what should be done further to integrate them in the works of the Strategy.

2. Booklet **“Umbrella 2.0 Be part of the change”** contained best practices to build the capacities of small and local actors and inspire more stakeholders to engage in transnational BSR cooperation. Partners of Baltic Sea cooperation projects and initiatives were asked to share their stories about what good transnational cooperation can bring to their work, organizations, and local communities. Project budget was 85.000 EUR. Due to termination of the project on 31st of March 2022 not all tasks from the project application were finally fulfilled. From April to October the Association of Polish Communes clarified the project with the Swedish Institute. During the process of clarification the Swedish Institute requested a reimbursement of more than 22.500 EUR, which was executed in November. In the end of 2022 the project was closed and archived.



UMBRELLA 2.0



**BRINGING PEOPLE
AND GOALS
TOGETHER**

SI. Funded by
**Swedish
Institute**

InDigiSE – Erasmus+ project

Project “InDigiSE - Promotion of social entrepreneurship in the youth sector by digital and informal education tools” was funded by the Erasmus+ programme. It aimed at delivery of youth-oriented, innovative education tools to develop entrepreneurial competence in the field of social economy, but also at engagement of youth within social entrepreneurship.

The project was started in March 2020 and was finished in the end of June 2022. Out of many seminars and events, two of them were the most significant in 2022:



“Together we are stronger” – InDigiSE International camp for social entrepreneurship

On 9-11th of May almost 30 young people from Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Norway had opportunity to participate in the International Entrepreneurship Camp organised by the University of Klaipeda. Participants promoted youth social entrepreneurship in the Baltic Sea Region, and also had a chance to seek positive social and environmental changes in society.

The workshop in Lithuania was conducted under the guidance of experts from universities, non-governmental organisations and business networks, who acted in accordance with the latest trends in education.

The exchange of experience, learning about functioning of existing social enterprises and international cooperation resulted in many great and financially aspiring business ideas, which were later consulted during the online part of the event on 13-14th May. It was also an opportunity to present the platform socialenterprisebsr.net, carry out individual consultations on the participants' business plans and get to know where to look for substantive support by young entrepreneurs.



InDigiSE Forum for dialogue of the young generation

On 6th of June the Young Generation Dialogue Forum was held in Elbląg. Over 30 people participated – representatives of Youth Councils and their supervisors, who operate in member municipalities of the Association of Polish Communes. The aim of event, which was organised by the Association, was to integrate the community of Youth Local Government Councils, exchange experiences, search for inspiration for youth activities and establish cooperation with Youth Councils.

Along with the agenda of the Forum, participants of the event received 2 handbooks created as part of the InDigiSE project – “Manual – how to stimulate social entrepreneurship using non-formal and informal learning methods” and “Social Entrepreneurship Methodology Handbook”.

Participants were introduced to the activities of Youth Councils and their goals. Assumptions of the InDigiSE project, its partnership, activities and financing sources were presented by the hosts.

The Young Generation Dialogue Forum was combined with thematic workshops aimed at shaping innovative, entrepreneurial and participatory attitudes and thinking of young people. There was also a discussion panel on the needs of youth, their environment, social activity and directions of action. The entire part was conducted by Civis Polonus Foundation from Warsaw.

In the end of 2022 project was finished, the final report was submitted to Programme Authorities by APC staff and was under evaluation by National Agency in Lithuania.

► Creative Waves project



“Creative Waves – Baltic Sisterhood for Change” was a project exploring the role women play in building prosperous and sustainable Baltic Sea Region while addressing current challenges and changes. It was about improving societal relations and environment by bringing together traditions and crafts with new technologies. It was to show how women leaders and creatives can improve life in the neighbourhoods while having fun and satisfaction.

The project lasted from 15th September 2021 until 30th September 2022 (after extension). It was financed by the Council of the Baltic Sea States Project Support Facility. Project leader was Intercult Productions (Sweden), while project partners were: Baltic Sea Cultural Centre in Gdańsk (Poland), Euroregion Baltic, Estonian Women Studies and Research Centre ENUT (Estonia), and in the first half of the project Team of Women Activists from Kaliningrad Region (Russian Federation).

Among the most important activities carried out in the project were:

- Webinar “Baltic Sisterhood for Change – Cultural Heritage Meets New Technologies”, which was organised on February 28th. Two experts explained how to link cultural heritage, especially non-material one, with new technologies – from the perspective of current trends and research, using examples from various parts of the world.
- “Slavic” webinar, which was organised on May 7th. Two workshops were held: one about white embroidery which is part of cultural heritage of Powiśle (Poland) and one about new media – digital tool enabling gathering and use of information about cultural heritage of Powiśle.
- The final event of the project in Gdańsk on 25-27th September, entitled “Talks to empower. Strong, visionary, activist women & crafts”. The first day consisted of micro-workshops, shows and discussions with artists and craftswomen from Pomorskie Region, Warmia and Masuria Region and Sweden. On the second day participants could meet women-experts from the Baltic Sea Region, who discussed such topic as: Creative Community Building upon Balticness: Role of Tradition and New Approaches; Empowered and Creative Women in the Modern World; Women Empowerment: Social Relations in Local Communities. On the last day, guests from four countries of the Baltic Sea Region discussed female entrepreneurship (turning passion into profession) and importance of building supportive environments (how to use sisterhood, empathy and solidarity to strengthen society).

In the end of the year final report of the project was reviewed, while formal closing up the project was expected to be made soon.



► **WaterMan - Climate Resilient Water and Wastewater Management in the BSR**



Project seed money WaterMan – financed by Interreg Baltic Sea Region - was implemented from March 2021 to March 2022. Project consortium consisted of nine partners from Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Russia and Lithuania, with support by Union of the Baltic Cities. Aim

of the project was to prepare a joint application to Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2021-2027. Project dealt with problems like high amounts of nutrients and hazardous substances in water, water shortage and floods, need for circular approaches and impacts of climate change. Main objectives were water re-use with circular approaches, finding new ways for re-using water. In the end of February a new call was opened within Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. Therefore the project focused on elaboration of a quality application: especially budget of the project, completing the partnership, collecting partner declarations. This was done in March and April and the application was successfully submitted. New project will be implemented from January 2023.

Water Man seed money project was reported, closed and archived by APC in the end of 2022.

► **BSYP - Baltic Sea Youth Platform**

Baltic Sea Youth Platform was an Erasmus+ Programme project aiming at empowering youth and fostering real participation in decisions and policy-making in the Baltic Sea Region. It started on 1st February 2020 and was prolonged until December 2022. Project partnership consisted of organisations from

Poland, Finland and Latvia, as well as pan-Baltic organisations such as UBC, BSSSC and CBSS. Association of Polish Communes was involved in promotion activities of the project.



Euroregion Baltic Core Groups



Water Core Group

During 2022 the ERB Water Core Group had no meetings as the focus was to prepare and submit the WaterMan application.

A new WaterMan project will be implemented from January 2023. Project will take 3 years, it will cover 8 countries and 5 pilot areas. Its budget will be 4,38 mln EUR. It will consist of 16 normal partners and 27 associated partners from Sweden, Poland, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia and Germany. Considerable part of the budget will be investments.

Project will consist of 3 Work Packages (preparing solutions, piloting and evaluating solutions, transferring solutions). Activities will be focused mainly on developing methods and tools for water reuse. One of the most interesting solutions is establishing a “BSR Water Reuse Helpdesk”. Such a big project creates chances for enhanced activeness of Water Core Group.

Contact Person: Tobias Facchini, Region Kalmar



Mobility Core Group

The Mobility Core Group was initiated and coordinated by Region Blekinge. The main aim was to explore trends affecting public transport and to discuss sustainability change in local and regional transport systems in the South Baltic area. During the year 2022 main activities within the Mobility Core Group were focused on the implementation of the Seed Money project Interconnect Tourism. The Seed Money project started in September 2021 and was finalized in June 2022. The project presented suggestions for improvements in cross-border public transport in the Baltic Sea region with special attention to the tourism sector. In the end of 2022 Mobility Core Group was proposed to be dissolved.

Contact Person: Mattias Andersson, Region Blekinge

Focus area 2: Strategic actions

Strategic objective: enhancing the added value of ERB cooperation



Euroregion Baltic cooperation priorities

Warmia and Masuria Region set following priorities for cooperation in 2022:

1. Interreg South Baltic Programme – active participation of Euroregion in programming new edition of the Programme for 2021 – 2027. In 2022 most programmes for territorial cooperation were in the final phase. Important task for ERB Presidency was encouraging stakeholders for wider participation in new edition of the Programme.
2. Sustainable development through cooperation – demonstrating benefits from international cooperation, highlighting the role for mobility and sustainable tourism, which are the leading themes for Euroregion Baltic Mobility Core Group.
3. Competence building and people-to-people cooperation – promoting knowledge about cross-border programmes and projects by ERB, while, at the same time, promoting Baltic international cooperation to facilitate creation of new partnerships among self-governments, institutions and non-governmental organisations.
4. Youth – the European Commission declared 2022 the European Year of Youth, hence the special role for Euroregion Baltic Youth Board and its actions in international arena.



Euroregion Baltic International Permanent Secretariat

Warmia and Masuria Presidency was deeply influenced by the situation of International Permanent Secretariat, which since 2004 has been providing a framework for cooperation in ERB and implementing decisions of ERB bodies. In the end of 2021 internal audit in the Association of Polish Communes, which hosted International Permanent Secretariat, indicated the need for introducing significant changes in operations of IPS. In result, International Permanent Secretariat highly limited its activities. The written procedure announced in ERB in December 2021, did not bring unanimous decision, which made ERB Presidency take up tasks of coordinating Euroregion Baltic activities. Most actions of Euroregion Baltic in 2022 were about finding a proper legal and organisational framework for International Permanent Secretariat and for Euroregion Baltic itself.



Taking over the Presidency in Euroregion Baltic

The first ERB Executive Board meeting in 2022 was organised online, on 10th March. This was the first meeting without Kaliningrad Region, which was suspended as ERB member just after the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine. Difficult international situation was a leading theme of interventions of Executive Board members.

Ms Elin Peterson from Region Blekinge, previous President of Euroregion Baltic, finished her term during the meeting, while Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina, Marshal of Warmia and Masuria Region, became a new President. Mr Mikael Benzon from Bornholm became a Vice-President of Euroregion Baltic. Ms Johanna Wyckman from Region Kalmar County was approved as a Chairwoman of Euroregion Baltic Youth Board for the second consecutive year, while Ms Małgorzata Lewandowska from Pomerania became her deputy.

Executive Board approved the Annual Report for 2021 and ERB Action Plan 2022 – 2023. It also discussed the results of the written procedure to provide a joint suggestion for a well-functioning International Permanent Secretariat to work on behalf of the Euroregion Baltic members. Three options were proposed to be considered:

A: a continued and joint solution between the Association of Polish Communes as a host organisation for the IPS and the Euroregion Baltic Executive Board as the decision-making body in Euroregion Baltic, in accordance with the ERB Statutes as well as principles and the spirit of the cooperation.

B: a solution where a new organisation, either already existing or established for the purpose of hosting the International Permanent Secretariat, is given the function of the host for the IPS.

C: a solution where there is a rotating system to host the IPS following the sequence of the adopted schedule for presidency.

ERB Executive Board took note of the information from the Association of Polish Communes about possible conditions for further hosting IPS and it decided to call additional ERB Executive Board meeting on 30th March, when decisions about future of IPS and ERB projects should be made.



Extraordinary meeting of Euroregion Baltic Executive Board

ERB Executive Board met online for the second time on 30th March. The most important point in agenda was a decision on the future of Euroregion Baltic International Permanent Secretariat. Members of Euroregion Baltic did not reach a consensus about preferred form of IPS.

In result, ERB Executive Board decided that tasks of International Permanent Secretariat will be temporarily taken over by ERB Regional Secretariat in Warmia and Masuria Region.

From that moment ERB Regional Secretariat was responsible among others for organising ERB Executive Board meetings, Euroregion Baltic website handling and contacting other Baltic organisations.

ERB Executive Board made a decision about currently implemented projects, where Euroregion Baltic was represented by the Association of Polish Communes. It was agreed, that Umbrella 2.0 project, where the Association was a lead partner, will not be extended and it will be terminated on 31st March. Other projects, where the Association of Polish Communes acted as a partner, Baltic Sea Youth Platform (Erasmus+), InDigiSE (Erasmus+), Creative Waves (CBSS Project Support Facility) and WaterMan (Interreg BSR Seed Money) will be finished according to the initial plan, with the consent of the Board of the Association of the Polish Communes.



New legal form of Euroregion Baltic

In March Legal Department of Marshal's Office of Warmia and Masuria Region, provided a legal opinion on defining the legal framework to be used in the process of transformation of Euroregion Baltic into an entity with legal personality. Out of two solutions analysed: international association or European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) it was recommended, that EGTC was the most suitable legal form for characteristics and objectives of Euroregion Baltic. However establishing EGTC is a very complex and time-demanding procedure.



Euroregion Baltic Executive Board meeting in Växjö

On the 11th of May Euroregion Baltic Executive Board met in Växjö. This was the first physical meeting since the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. The special guest of the meeting was Mr Mikael Johansson, Chairman of Region Kronoberg Executive Board, who welcomed the participants. ERB President Gustaw Marek Brzezina led the meeting. He invited Executive Board members to a political discussion on a current international situation in Europe. Representatives of member regions presented aid activities taken by their administrations for Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees.

On the initiative of ERB Presidency, Executive Board made a couple of decisions on directions of actions for the nearest future. First of all, it agreed on taking up efforts for establishing a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, which would provide a legal personality for Euroregion Baltic. It also authorised ERB Presidency to manage current financial obligations, with consent of the Association of Polish Communes.

ERB Executive Board took note of the report from the Association of Polish Communes on the status of euroregional projects. For some of these projects decisions were to be made in a written procedure.

Johanna Wyckman from ERB Youth Board informed about preparations for Erasmus+ youth project in Kalmar and about YB presence at various Baltic meetings, such as: Baltic Meeting Point, Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum, Baltic Sea Youth Camp, Advocacy Group at Baltic Sea Youth Platform.

ERB Executive Board made decisions about Euroregion Baltic participation in current Baltic events and consultations (Baltic Sea Labour Forum Roundtable and public hearing on VASAB long term perspective and vision 2040).

On the 12th of May members of Executive Board visited Swedish National Skills Competition (Yrkes-SM 2022) - national final of the vocational skills competition for young people, which was organised in Växjö. Teams of young people from all Sweden rivalled for awards performing practical tasks in their professions.

International Permanent Secretariat is running Euroregion Baltic website and social media daily. All the information related to the works of Euroregion Baltic, ERB Board meetings, Youth and people to people activities, and information regarding the projects is shared on the www.eurobalt.org website (more than 6000 visitors in 2021). IPS ERB also posts information on daily on Facebook (over 1400 visitors), Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram accounts. Instagram is mainly used to promote the ERB Members and presents the cities, municipalities and landmarks from the ERB member regions.



Towards European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

After ERB Executive Board agreed to begin work on establishment of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation during the meeting in Växjö, adequate proceedings were initiated. Warmia and Masuria Region, as a current ERB Presidency, in July and August prepared drafts of founding documents – EGTC Convention and Statutes – which are required by the law of European Union. Documents were sent out to ERB Regional Secretariats in September. From that moment ERB member organisations have been analysing content of Convention and Statutes and have been preparing their comments.

Establishing and operation of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation is regulated by Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC), as later amended. Under this regulation, EGTC is an entity with legal personality, which can be established on the territory of the European Union. Its objective is to facilitate and support territorial cooperation (cross-border, transnational or interregional) for enhancement of economic, social and territorial cohesion of the European Union. In each of EU member states EGTC has a legal capacity and capacity to perform acts in law.

EGTC statutory seat is located in one of EU Member States, while its members are located in at least two Member States. EGTC members may belong to one or more of the following categories: Member States, regional authorities, local authorities, enterprises, associations consisting of units from one or a number of these categories. EGTC has at least two organs: an assembly (made up of representatives of its members) and a director (who represents EGTC and acts on its behalf). EGTC statutes may provide for additional organs with clearly defined powers.



Decision on Annual Fee

In October ERB Presidency initiated a written procedure among ERB members on annual fee for 2022 and 2023. All members of Euroregion Baltic agreed not to pay annual fee for 2022, which was previously set as 5.500 EUR per year. At the same time they agreed that annual fee for 2023 should be decided by the ERB Executive Board at one of its meetings at a later date.



Euroregion Baltic Executive Board meeting in Olsztyn

On the 9th of December Euroregion Baltic Executive Board met in Olsztyn. This was the last meeting in 2022, organised just after ERB Annual Forum of Stakeholders. The most important issues of the meeting were related to internal affairs of the organisation: establishing European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, ERB budget, annual fees and status of euroregional projects. The consultation process for EGTC Convention and Statutes was still underway. Therefore ERB President Gustaw Marek Brzezina proposed a schedule, which should be followed in order to secure swift organisational transition into new legal framework:

1. end of December 2022 – comments to drafts convention and statutes sent out from all member organisations;
2. end of January 2023 – discussion at secretariats' level and working out final texts of convention and statutes;
3. February 2023 – formal decisions within all ERB member organisations;
4. March 2023 – next ERB Executive Board meeting and formal approval of documents regarding European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.

ERB Executive Board agreed on a proposed schedule. At the same ERB Executive Board agreed to withhold the decision on a fee until 2023, when new ERB Action Plan will be adopted, however no longer than until September 2023.

ERB Executive Board took note of the report from the Association of Polish Communes on the status of ERB budget and euroregional projects which have been implemented throughout 2022: Umbrella 2.0, InDigiSE, Creative Waves - Baltic Sisterhood for Change, WaterMan and Baltic Sea Youth Platform.

While those projects have been gradually completed, settled and closed by APC staff, condition of ERB budget was stable in the end of 2022. However it was clear that 2023 will put new challenges ahead of ERB, like setting-up new organisational framework, further budget management and bookkeeping, 25th anniversary of ERB and new European Territorial Cooperation Programmes 2021-2027. This all will influence finances of Euroregion Baltic.

ERB Executive Board took also note of the reports from ERB Core Groups. ERB Water Core Group successfully prepared a new application to Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. The project budget will be 4.38 mln EUR (see page 11). On the other hand, ERB Mobility Core Group had no tasks defined for 2023 and Region Blekinge, which led the Group, suggested closing it down.

Region Kronoberg invited members of ERB Youth Board to the „9th Cycle of EU Youth Dialogue”, which will be organised in March by EU Swedish Presidency. Members of ERB Youth Board informed that after local elections in Sweden, current Chairperson of ERB Youth Board could not fulfil her duties any longer. ERB Youth Board planned a meeting online to choose a new Chairperson. On the 20th of December Ms Malene Meier Pedersen from Bornholm was elected for that post.



Euroregion Baltic at other international Baltic cooperation events

Euroregion Baltic was present at many international Baltic cooperation events:

-On the 29th of March Marshal Gustaw Marek Brzezina presented activities of Euroregion Baltic at the meeting of the Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX) in the European Committee of the Regions, where he was talking about history, mission and current actions of ERB;

-Baltic Meeting Point event in Karlskrona, May 19th, where Ms Johanna Rönner from Region Blekinge represented ERB in the panel “Baltic Cooperation in Practice – Who? Where? How?”;

-Euroregion Baltic took part in public consultation on the VASAB Long Term Perspective 2040, sending out, on 15th of July, its input approved by ERB Executive Board. VASAB is intergovernmental multilateral co-operation platform of the Baltic Sea Region in spatial planning and development;



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As president of @Euroregion_ERB, I plan to focus on topics such as the South Baltic Programme, youth, sustainable development and people-to-people contact across 🇩🇪🇷🇺🇵🇱🇸🇪 @BrzezinaMarek @EU_CoR

Przetłumacz Tweeta



- Webinar "New spatial challenges in the Baltic Sea Region" organized by VASAB on 26th September, supplementing the public consultation. Euroregion Baltic was represented by Ms Johanna Rönk from Region Blekinge;
- Warmia and Masuria Region, as Presidency, represented Euroregion Baltic in working contacts with Pomeranian Platform for the Development of Offshore Wind Energy;
- On the 8th of June, representative of ERB Regional Secretariat in Warmia and Masuria Region participated in Baltic Sea Labour Forum Roundtable, where he presented current organisational status of Euroregion Baltic. He also participated in the final conference of Sustainable Working Life project (9th June). Both events were held online. ERB has observer status in the Forum;
- On the 26th of August Mr Łukasz Bielewski participated online in the event "Baltic Sea Region Future Forum - Setting Sails for a Sustainable and Prosperous Baltic Sea Region 2030". Event was organised by German State of Schleswig-Holstein in Kiel. In seven different workshops, members of the state government discussed sustainable transport, digitalisation, equal rights, e-mobility, sustainable public procurement, munitions clearance and youth cooperation with experts.
- On the 30th of August Mr Łukasz Bielewski took part in online event "Forum on Eastern EU Border Regions", which was organised jointly by Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and Finnish town Lappeenranta. Discussions were about future of cross-border cooperation of regions located along EU eastern border after Russian aggression on Ukraine;
- September 28-29th, representative of ERB Regional Secretariat in Warmia and Masuria Region took part in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Annual Forum in Lappeenranta. Forum has been the most important event for stakeholders of the Strategy, for many years. Forum is also usually attended by other participants of Baltic cooperation. Key elements of the programme of the Forum were: plenary sessions on Baltic challenges and financing and parallel thematic sessions.
- On 1st December Marshal Gustaw Marek Brzezina took part in a seminar "Integration of Ukraine into the European Union - context of euroregions", which was organised by East Poland House in Brussels. Polish, Ukrainian and European officials discussed issues of integration of Ukraine with the European Union and role of euroregions in the process.
- Warmia and Masuria Region, as Presidency, represented Euroregion Baltic in working contacts with Pomeranian Platform for the Development of Offshore Wind Energy.

Focus area 3: Exchange activities

Strategic objective: deepening relations & strengthening cooperation between ERB member regions

► Euroregion Baltic Annual Forum of Stakeholders

For the first time since 2019, after a break due to Covid-19 pandemic, Euroregion Baltic had its Annual Forum of Stakeholders, which was held in Olsztyn on the 8th of December. The event was organised jointly by Warmia and Masuria Region and the Association of the Polish Communes.



The event was hosted by Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina, Marshal of Warmia and Masuria Region and the President of Euroregion Baltic in 2022. He opened the Forum jointly with Mr Leszek Tabor, Mayor of Sztum Municipality, the leader of the project „Sztum Circular Economy”, implemented by the Association of the Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic.

Forum was the first of the series of events planned within the project, financed by EEA and Norway Grants, and its theme was circular economy and green energy. It gathered more than 60 participants. Experts and local government officials from Poland, Denmark, Hungary, Norway and Sweden

presented their experiences in two discussion panels.

Among the topics discussed were the introduction of circular economy solutions in production, planning, water resources management, waste recycling, as well as the conditions for the use of renewable energy sources.

A large part of interventions concerned limitations and obstacles for such solutions, which are met while putting them into common practice. Speakers explained how countries from Baltic Sea Region try to overcome them.



Moreover, they exemplified specificity of green energy market and conditions resulting from technical features of energy systems.

Participants of the Annual Forum pointed at energy as issue of high potential for further cooperation within the Euroregion Baltic network.



► **Baltic Evening**

A series of December meetings in Olsztyn was concluded with a “Baltic Evening”, an official summary of international activities of Warmia and Masuria Region in 2022. It gathered nearly 100 participants – from Euroregion Baltic, as well as from Warmia and Masuria itself. The event was hosted by Marshal Gustaw Marek Brzezina and a honorary guest was Mr Jacob Trøst, Mayor of Bornholm. The highlight of the programme was a concert of a duo from Bornholm: Helene Holm Nielsen & Torsten Borbye Nielsen, who presented music of Danish composers. The event ended with an official dinner with dishes from Baltic countries.



► **Budget execution in 2022**

See annex to the Annual Report 2022.



Editors: Łukasz Bielewski, Piotr Zwolak

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