



EUROREGION BALTIC

ANNUAL REPORT 2017



EUROREGION BALTIC EXECUTIVE BOARD

Akko Karlsson	ERB President, Vice-Chair of the Board of Regional Council in Kalmar County, Sweden
Per Ole Petersen	ERB Vice President, Member of the Council of Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark
Carina Bengtsson	ERB Board Deputy Member, Member of the Council, Region Kronoberg, Sweden
Britt-Louise Berndtsson	ERB Board Member, Member of the Board, Region Kronoberg, Sweden
Aleksander Bogdanov	ERB Board Member, Deputy Chair of Regional Government of Kaliningrad, Russia
Gustaw Marek Brzezina	ERB Board Member, Chair of the Board of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region, Poland
Wiesław Byczkowski	ERB Board Member, Vice-Chair of the Board of Pomorskie Region, Poland
Lennarth Förberg	ERB Board Member, Vice-Chair of the Board of Region Blekinge, Sweden
Vytautas Grubliauskas	ERB Board Member, Chair of Association Klaipeda Region, Lithuania
Grzegorz Grzelak	ERB Board Deputy Member, Chair of International and Interregional Committee of Pomorskie Regional Parliament, Poland
Alla Ivanova	ERB Deputy Board Member, Minister-Head of Agency for International Affairs and Interregional Cooperation of Kaliningrad Region, Russia
Christina Mattisson	ERB Board Member, Chair of the Board of Region Blekinge, Sweden
Maria F. Kjaergaard	ERB Deputy Board Member, Member of the Council of Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark
Yanina Andrushkevich	ERB Board Member, Chair of ERB Youth Board, Kaliningrad Region, Russia
Åke Nilsson	ERB Board Member, Member of the Executive Committee, Regional Council in Kalmar County, Sweden
Mieczysław Struk	ERB Board Member, Chair of the Board of Pomorskie Region, Poland
Grzegorz Grzelak	ERB Board Deputy Member, Chair of International and Interregional Committee of Pomorskie Regional Parliament, Poland
Hanna Pruchniewska	ERB Board Deputy Member, Vice-Chair of the Board of the Association of Communes, Poland
Robert Olesen	ERB Board Member, Vice Chair of the Board of Regional Council, Region Kronoberg, Sweden
Suzanne Svensson	ERB Board Deputy Member, Member of Parliament, Sweden
Witold Wróblewski	ERB Board Member, Chair of Board of the Association of Communes, Poland
Joanna Zielińska	ERB Deputy Board Member, Deputy of Board of the Association of Communes, Poland

In 2017 **Euroregion Baltic Executive Board** met on 6th February 2017 in Kalmar (Sweden), 22nd May 2017 in Elbląg (Poland) and 18th September 20167 in Palanga (Lithuania).

EUROREGION BALTIC YOUTH BOARD

Yanina Andrushkevich	Chairwoman of Youth Board, Kaliningrad Region
Alexandra Winberg	Deputy Chairwoman of ERB Youth Board, Regional Council in Kalmar County/Kumulus
Simona Skuodaite	ERB Youth Board Member, Association Klaipeda Region, Lithuania
Dawid Jędrzejak	ERB Youth Board Member, Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region, Poland
Arvydas Razma	ERB Deputy Board Member, Association Klaipeda Region, Lithuania
Mikkel Holm Tved	ERB Youth Board Member, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Sabine Lyngberg	ERB Youth Board Member, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Damian Ciachorowski	ERB Youth Board Member, Association of Communes, Poland
Marek Ziemian	ERB Youth Board Member, Pomorskie Region, Poland

In 2017 **Euroregion Baltic Youth Board** met on 7th February 2017 in Kalmar, Sweden and on 23rd May 2017 in Elbląg, Poland and on 19th September 2017 in Palanga, Lithuania.

ADDRESS BY ERB PRESIDENT

Between 6th February 2017 and 16th February 2018 Euroregion Baltic was under political leadership of the Regional Council in Kalmar County represented by **Ms Akko Karlsson**.



Dear Euroregion Baltic Friends,

It has been a great honour and privilege to be leading the cooperation in Euroregion Baltic in 2017.

Assuming the ERB Presidency on behalf of the Regional Council in Kalmar County, I have set out clear goals that, if achieved, would further develop the ERB and make it one of the most important cross-border cooperation platforms in the Baltic Sea Region.

At the end of my tenure I can safely say that we have made significant progress towards achieving most of these goals.

First of all we have succeeded in expanding our work focusing on practical and concrete cooperation within the Interreg South Baltic Programme. Here we and our stakeholders have managed to submit several successful project applications that allow us to tackle effectively joint challenges in the area of youth cooperation, sustainable public transport and capacity building of local actors in cross-border cooperation. For the first time in the history of the organisation, the ERB is taking direct participation in at least three South Baltic projects, including one as a Lead Partner.

Through the CaSYPoT project we have put more emphasis on youth questions and strengthened the ERB Youth Board. Here we are also cooperating strongly with BSSSC and UBC on making the youth agenda a pan-Baltic question. The UMBRELLA project sets out help smaller municipalities and organisations to develop their international cooperation potential. The INTERCONNECT project attempts to develop new solutions towards more sustainable cross-border public transport, especially focusing on the pilot investment between Pomorskie and Blekinge.

Cooperation in the area of water management was also a key priority for the ERB Presidency this year. I am happy to say that the Waternets-RU project with partners from the Kaliningrad Region was progressing as planned engaging the ERB Water Core Group and other ERB stakeholders specialising in the field of water management.

The further focus on the questions of sustainable development, we have partnered with the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission to implement a project dedicated to the regional aspects of the UN's Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. Here we are also working with the CBSS and its Baltic 2030 Action Plan that translates the SDGs into the Baltic context.

Finally, we have prepared ERB to celebrate its 20th anniversary, making this occasion not only a way to bring back the memories, but to have a discussion on the future of the organisation in the ever changing realities of the Baltic cooperation.

Akko Karlsson

President of Euroregion Baltic, 2017

Focus area 1: Lobbying

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

1. In 2017 ERB participated in the implementation of ETC and ENI programmes in the BSR:
 - 1.1. In 2017 ERB was actively engaged in the implementation of the South Baltic Programme. The ERB's engagement was particularly important in:
 - 1.1.1. The first 2017 meeting of the Monitoring Committee on was held in Binz, Germany on 16-17 May 2017 in Kalmar, Sweden where delegates to the Monitoring Committee (MC) of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020 met to discuss the results of the 3rd call for proposals. Following in-depth and detailed analysis of each of the 27 proposals, they decided to approve 12 projects for funding. The resources from the European Regional Development Fund to be allocated to these projects amount to approximately 17,27 m EUR (22% of the Programme financial capacity). The projects approved cover the Programme priorities 1, 2 and 3. An official communication to the applicants will follow shortly.

The Monitoring Committee decided also to open the 4th call for proposals from 22 May until 30 June 2017 for all the Specific Objectives except of 1.1, 1.2 (due to no funding available) and 2.1. The Specific Objective 2.1 will be available in the 5th call, planned to be open from 13 November until 15 December 2017.

Among the approved projects two have been supported directly by Euroregion Baltic and its partners – Interconnect (ERB as a Project Partner responsible for communication and dissemination) and DUNC: Development of UNESCO Natural and Cultural assets (ERB as an Associated Partner).
 - 1.1.2. In the frame of the 4th call for proposals, the Monitoring Committee (MC) of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020, gathered in Güstrow (Germany) on November 8-9, 2017, has selected 11 projects for funding.

Among others, for the Specific Objective 5 – “Improve the cooperative capacity of local South Baltic area actors through participation in cross-border networks”, the delegates have selected “UMBRELLA – Boosting cross-border cooperation capacities of local actors in South Baltic Sea”. The project, which sees the Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic in the role of Lead Partner, aims at developing know-how capacities for small local and regional organisations in the South Baltic Programme area in order to initiate their active participation in the cross-border cooperation.

The resources from the European Regional Development Fund to be allocated to these projects amount to 10 547 504,02 EUR (14% of the Programme financial capacity).

1.1.3. ERB International Secretariat supported the bodies of the Programme in their works by engaging in a number of additional activities. For example, the Head of IPS took part in several recruitment committees created by the Managing Authority to recruit new Project Officers and new Head for the Joint Secretariat in Gdańsk. Such practical activities with the Programme will also be continued in the future as they promote the good spirit of cooperation and reciprocity in mutual relations.

1.1.4. The 2017 South Baltic conference dedicated to green policies and technologies gathered more than 100 participants from Denmark, Germany, Poland, Sweden and Lithuania. The annual event took place at the Roskilde University, in the heart of Zealand on 12.09.2017. During the conference the ERB was invited to moderate a panel discussion on the role of public investments in the development of the green economy in the south Baltic Sea area.

1.1.5. In the As the result of the 4th call for proposals, on 8th and 9th November 2017 in Güstrow (Germany), 11 projects have been selected for funding by the delegates of the Monitoring Committee (MC) – Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020. Among them, the ERB led UMBRELLA – Boosting cross-border cooperation capacities of local actors in South Baltic Sea for the Specific Objective 5. Improve the cooperative capacity of local South Baltic area actors through participation in cross-border networks.



The project, whose total budget amounts to € 986,566.00, sees the Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic in the role of Lead Partner alongside 6 project partners and 9 associated partners based in Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Lithuania. As the research done in the previous Capacity Building Project shows, the South Baltic Programme (SBP) is still poorly available to small organisations because of their insufficient institutional and financial capacities, communication barriers, lack of competences and capacities for project development and implementation. This leads to the fact that local community actors are hampered in participating in cross-border cooperation projects. In order to address these challenges, UMBRELLA project aims at developing know-how capacities for small local and regional organisations in the South Baltic Programme area to initiate their active participation in the cross-border cooperation in their daily activities.

To be able to answer all the listed challenges, project partners decided to build up the project structure in a manner to: A) create tailor-made solutions to each specific problem and B) create a capacity development path in a way to allow single organisations from the target group to move on in their individual development during the time thus being able to create specific knowledge on every level of knowledge capacity. Furthermore, the project addresses the basic level of cross-border cooperation mainly by “meet your neighbours” actions focusing on bringing people together and therefore create a better understanding of the identity of the South Baltic area.

Starting in 2018 the project will run over the course of 30 months engaging stakeholders and beneficiaries from all parts of the South Baltic Programme area.

- 1.1.6. In 2017 the ERB also joined a strong partnership headed by Region Blekinge which developed the INTERCONNECT - a joint project to break the car dependence trend in the South Baltic area approved during the 3rd call for proposals.

The kick-off meeting of the INTERCONNECT project took place in Karlskrona (Sweden) on 4-5th October 2017. Organized by Region Blekinge, the project's Lead Partner, the event aimed at organizing the work of the partnership while promoting its practical objectives dedicated to the establishment of sustainable cross-border public transport solutions in the South Baltic area.

Interconnect, an EUSBSR Flagship candidate, addresses the challenge of curbing the car-reliant mobility trend in the South Baltic area through user-adjusted and more sustainable public transport services for regional and cross-border travels. The current public transport offer hardly meets customer expectations for easiness and attractiveness of regional and cross-border journeys, with a scarce range of integrated ticket options for multimodal rides, difficult access to one-spot passenger information and no clear benefits for users when choosing the public transport over cars.

To enhance car-independent mobility in the region the partnership consisting of 9 formal and 11 associated partners from 6 countries will carry out joint capacity-building, pilot demonstration and advocacy actions. These will tackle the three dimensions of public transport in serving the regional and cross-border travels – the demand, the supply and the governance. Through three thematic measures on: (1) evidence, knowledge and experience; (2) steering tools and business models; and (3) future governance and institutionalization, the project will deliver innovative multi-stakeholder planning approaches for sustainable public transport of the future and invest in new and more efficient services for no-car travellers both in and between the partner areas.



2. Participating in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR):

2.1. ERB continued to be present at main EUSBSR events:

- 2.1.1. ERB actively participated in the 8th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR was hosted by the Federal Foreign Office together with the CPMR - Baltic Sea Commission and in close cooperation with the European Commission on 13 - 14 June 2017 in Berlin. About 800 participants from governments, international organisations, NGOs, universities, local and regional administrations and business discussed a broad range of issues relevant for the Baltic Sea Region. The theme of the 8th Annual Forum was connectivity. This motto highlighted the

necessity to intensify contacts throughout the Baltic Sea Region including its neighbouring regions and to develop a better awareness of each other's perspectives.

2.1.2. On November 2-3, 2017 in Turku, for the 10th time in a row, the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum gathered tourism stakeholders from the Baltic Sea Region. Dedicated to 'The Future of Baltic Sea Tourism' as the principal theme, the 10th BSTF provided participants with a mix of policy issues and several practical approaches for peer learning and exchange, keynotes regarding trends in tourism and a discussion over the future of Destination Marketing Organisations which were complemented by case-studies, good practices and seminars.

A special focus was given to future and trend topics like digitalization, tourism financing, funding, education, transnational cooperation with 150 delegates expected to take part to the forum. Therefore, in the light of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, sustainability will become an integrated part of the entire forum as the BSTF continues its commitment to both strengthening sustainable development and promoting a sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea region.

The forum offered a possibility for projects and initiatives to showcase their ideas of transnational and cross-border initiatives with a view to boost the visibility of existing sustainable approaches of international cooperation. The Tourism Networking Village and a session for project pitching offered further opportunities to increase awareness in the respective fields of sustainable cooperation among countries and regions.

3. Promoting ERB during other events:

3.1. On 7-8th June 2017 the ERB President took part in the 7th International Forum of Kaliningrad Partner Regions. The main focus of this year's Forum was on innovative approaches towards solving regional issues. The Forum included three separate round-table debates dedicated to practical aspects of cross-border cooperation, international best practices exchange on innovative service development for Internet of things as well as ecologically balanced environment as a basis for regional development. The highlight of the event was the opening of the waste water treatment plant for the city of Kaliningrad, a landmark investment drastically reducing the influx of waste into the Baltic Sea.



- 3.2. The ERB took active participation in the 15th European Week of Regions and Cities. The number of people attending the event that took place in Brussels on October 9-12, proves the success of the initiative. Indeed nearly 6000 participants and over 800 speakers from all over Europe gathered in Belgium's capital town to share ideas about the current and the future situation of regions and cities in Europe, exchange best practices and discuss cohesion policy. Therefore, 137 workshops and seminars took place for investigating how the above mentioned local actors can cooperate for a better future in Europe.
- 3.3. On 30th May 2017 in Brussels the ERB participated in a seminar organised by the Informal Baltic Sea Group (iBSG) on the topic of the future Cohesion Policy. The Head of IPS delivered a presentation on the main elements of ERB's position paper on the future CP underlining the role of ETC in the future development of the European Union.
- 3.4. Baltic Sea Future was a two-day conference in Stockholm held on the 6-7 March 2017 organised for Baltic Sea municipalities by the City of Stockholm and Stockholm University. Baltic Sea Future addressed the challenges in the Baltic Sea region, focusing on the key role of municipalities. The Baltic Sea is loved, needed and polluted, and municipalities are the hubs who can coordinate interests, engage local citizens, turn scientific results into action, and handle the challenges to create a sustainable future for the Baltic Sea. At Baltic Sea Future key stakeholders from the Baltic Sea countries gather to share knowledge, motivation, best practices and tools. They were inspired by municipalities that have succeeded, scientists who know what is needed, companies providing innovations and techniques that can do it, and agencies that can help them reach their vision. The ERB's representation at the event included the ERB President, Akko Karlsson.



Focus area 2: Strategic actions

Strategic objective: enhancing the added value of ERB cooperation

4. Reinforcing stakeholder approach through continuous dialogue and information exchange:

4.1. 9th Annual Forum of ERB Stakeholders

The event took place in Kalmar on 7th March 2017. The aim of the Forum was to discuss the development of strategic, knowledge-based youth policies and their role in the sustainable, multi-level development of the Baltic Sea Region.



During the Forum participants were able to look at the topic from different perspective starting from the local level with the experiences of the Swedish LUPP concept all the way up to cross-border and international level where we will be investigating different models employed by regional, national and pan-Baltic organisations to develop youth participation and exchange. The ERB's strategic youth policy project CaSYPoT was actively engaged in the organisation of the event.

4.2. ERB Executive Board meetings

4.2.1. The On 6th Feb 2017 the Executive Board of Euroregion Baltic met in the city of Kalmar to officially transfer the ERB Presidency from Kaliningrad Region to the Regional Council in Kalmar County and agree on a wide range of activities for the coming year. The Board meeting was held at the office of the Regional Council in Kalmar County (RFKL) and gathered more than 30 participants from all member organisation of ERB. The most important part of the Board was the Presidency transfer. In accordance with the jointly agreed sequence of chairmanships, the Board approved Ms Akko Karlsson, Vice Chair of Board of RFKL as the new ERB President, while appointing Mr Per Ole Petersen, Member of Council of Regional Municipality of Bornholm as her Deputy. At the same time, the Board approved the change of chairmanship in the ERB Youth Board where Ms Yanina Andrushkevich, representing Regional Government of Kaliningrad, took the position of the Chairperson with Ms Alexandra Winberg from Kumulus Kalmar as her deputy.



The meeting was dedicated to the outcomes of the Russian ERB Presidency in 2016. The Board expressed its satisfaction at the fact that ERB has become more oriented on tackling concrete issues through joint international projects. These especially included the implementation of the CaSYPoT – Capacity Building for Strategic Youth Policy and Transnational Cooperation and CaSYPoT-Ru which allows for direct Russian participation in the project. Development of other

projects, such as the Umbrella capacity building project in South Baltic Programme, was also considered as a very good step to develop ERB cooperation. The outgoing Presidency was also praised for ERB becoming more active throughout the region and engaging with other Baltic organisations such as BSSSC and UBC as well as actively participating in the Annual EUSBSR Forum in Stockholm.

4.2.2. Between 8-9th June On 22-23rd May 2017 stakeholders of Euroregion Baltic gathered in Elbląg, Poland for the second Executive Board meeting this year. During the two days of official discussions, youth workshops and expert seminars, ERB partners touched upon a number of issues that are of importance to the organisation's future work.

The event started with the joint meeting of the ERB Board with the Board of the Association of Polish Communes, one of important ERB member organisations and the host of the meeting. Gathered in historic roundtable hall in the Elbląg's Old Town, the ERB politicians, civil servants and youth were welcomed by Mr Witold Wróblewski, Chair of Association's Board and Mayor



of Elbląg, who underlined the importance of ERB cross-border cooperation for municipalities and regions of the South Baltic Sea which since 1998 has been facilitating international cooperation, project implementation and trust building among the participating organisations.

The meeting was presided over jointly by Ms Akko Karlsson, ERB President and

Vice Chair of Regional Council in Kalmar County, and Mr Wróblewski. The Board discussed several important issues of ERB cooperation, among them preparations for the 20th anniversary of the organisation, as well as revision of strategic cooperation documents. Concerning the recently held Monitoring Committee meeting of the South Baltic Programme in Binz, the Board welcomed the approval of the Interconnect project and decided to commence work on the resubmission of the Umbrella project, which was rejected despite a very positive assessment by the external experts and Programme's Joint Secretariat.

Discussing the draft ERB position on the future of EU Cohesion Policy, the Board decided to amend the final draft to better reflect the ERB priorities in the draft. The Board also welcomed ERB's participation in the recently approved Swedish Institute project in which together with the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, it will engage in raising the awareness of Baltic stakeholder about the importance of the UN's Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, the Board was informed about the activities of the ERB Youth Board which had submitted 4 projects to the last call for proposals in the Erasmus+ project and was actively

participating in the preparation of joint conference and seminar at the EUSBSR Forum in Berlin on the issue of youth participation and empowerment.

On 23rd May ERB organised several parallel meetings with two very important concerning water and youth issues. The Water Core Group met to discuss a potential joint project in the South Baltic Programme that could be dedicated to the issues of improved management of existing water resources, while the ERB Youth Board discussed the future project with the Norwegian partners from Hedmark, as well as the organisation of the Berlin conference. The meeting was also attended by the youth from Warmia-Mazury who were selected within the Baltic Leaders project to build capacities of local youth leaders in the Baltic cooperation.

4.2.3. On 18th September 2017 the Executive Board met in Palanga, Lithuania. During the meeting the Board discussed the preparations for the 20th anniversary of the organisation, situation in the South Baltic Programme and development of the new ERB 2030 Agenda.



During the meeting in Palanga a position paper on the future EU Cohesion Policy after 2020 was signed by Ms. Akko Karlsson, ERB president, and Mr. Per Ole Petersen, ERB Vice-President. In the document, the ERB adopted four main recommendations regarding a strengthened EU Cohesion Policy, the importance of European Territorial Cooperation and people-to-people projects, improved coordination with macro-regional strategies, and simplified administrative and financial regulations. ERB supports economic, social and territorial cohesion, recognizing the importance of the European Structural and Investment Funds for growth and jobs underlying, in this frame, the need of distinguishing between cohesion and investment policies. One point that has been underlined regards the need of adopting shared management instruments for a real involvement of actors at local and regional level, apart from the development of small-scale, people-to-people projects in order to build-up trust in the neighbouring regions. ERB will strive to align its activities with the macro-regional strategies- with the EUSBSR in this case. Moreover, in this macro-region Russia plays a fundamental role that pushed ERB to commit in carrying on a dialogue with Kaliningrad Region on topics of common interests. Finally, ERB asked for simplified administrative and financial regulations.

4.3. ERB Secretariats maintained regular contacts:

4.3.1. Via continuous email exchange

4.3.2. During online meetings held on 3rd March, 4th May, 7th September, 16th October, 15th November and 14th December 2017.

4.3.3. During a face-to-face meeting in Gdańsk on 23-24th January 2017. The meeting was dedicated mostly to the drafting of the ERB Action Plan for 2017-2018 with new ideas on lobbying and exchange initiatives proposed for further consideration. Also the ERB Secretariats discussed strategic areas of cooperation including youth issues, business-to-business and water cooperation. Finally on the agenda were practical matters concerning upcoming Executive Board meetings and 8th Annual Forum of ERB Stakeholders.

4.3.4. Second face-to-face meeting took place in Elbląg on 24th May 2017 and focused on the development of the AMBER project for the 20th anniversary of the ERB.

5. strengthening ERB internally:

5.1. From April to September 2017, the International Permanent Secretariat of Euroregion Baltic hosted Valentina Scandola, an intern from Italy. Enrolled at the Master's degree in Local Development – University of Padova (Italy), she spent six months at ERB studying the process of integration and cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. As the graduation day approaches, Valentina has finally submitted her thesis entitled: Multilevel governance and territorial cooperation. Opportunities for local authorities in Euroregion Baltic.

The thesis, whose “aim is to track whether and how the participation in the EU INTERREG program has enhanced the involvement of local and non-state actors and civil society in developing sustainable development policies at local level in the Euroregion Baltic”, is structured as follows: the first chapter is dedicated to the evolution of European integration and the concept of multilevel governance; the second chapter analyses the process of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region and its historic evolution; the third one focuses on the overlapping governance architectures within Euroregion Baltic; the last one analyses case studies such as MOMENT and MOMENT UP PROJECT as well as INTERCONNECT.

6. supporting youth cooperation within ERB Youth Board

6.1 In On 12-13th June 2017, young Baltic Leaders from the Warmia-Mazury Region and the ERB Youth Board took part in the conference 'Nothing about us without us!', organised by the three pan-Baltic organisations UBC (Union of the Baltic Cities), BSSSC (Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation) and ERB (Euroregion Baltic). The conference, organised back-to-back of the 8th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR– EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, took place in the Nordic Embassies, and later in the



Federal Foreign Office in Berlin, and followed three steps to facilitate the dialogue and networking among the youth.

The first part was the exchange of knowledge and opinions which took place on Monday, 12th June when all the youth met in the Nordic Embassies for an informal working lunch and the first working session. Good practices in the youth fields have been presented by representatives of the three organisations; afterwards, young participants were invited to reflect and discuss upon different topics and manners to facilitate the access of youth to the political discussions of their countries, giving them voice and possibility to influence their future.

The working session consisted in round-table discussions: each table was chaired by a 'representative' whose role was to act as mediator among the youth, collecting ideas to be shared with the next groups. In this way, it was possible for youth to build a discourse in a complete and exhaustive way, brainstorming together, and finally, sharing what emerged at the end. The working sessions continued on the second day, with new presentations by representatives of different countries.

Following up on the examples from Norway, Estonia, Kaliningrad, and Sweden the goal for all the other countries would be to give the possibility to the youth to be represented by the local authorities first, and later to reach higher levels. A good example to follow was presented by the County of Hedmark in Norway. This regional authority established a Youth County Council, launched

as an exemplary Youth policy implementation that is highly innovative in the European scenario on youth cooperation. It works at different levels: local-regional-ENCN (Eastern Norway County Network), and aims at creating a level that can reach the national government/parliament. Young people represent all youth in their municipalities, organise training on public speech, and support free discussions. This well-structured initiative gives young people voice in the development of youth strategies.

After these two first meetings, young participants met in the formal seminar 'Nothing about us without us!', hosted by the Federal Foreign Office, in the frame of the 8th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Annual Forum was opened in the afternoon of 13th June, by Sigmar Gabriel, German Federal Foreign Minister, Martti Ahtisaari, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former President of Finland, and others. All the interventions underlined the importance of the youth for the creation of a favourable area in the Baltic Sea that can attract foreign investments, guaranteeing peace and security.

'Nothing about us without us' allowed a direct discussion among youth and adult politicians, that had the opportunity to exchange different points of views. What emerged prevalently at the end of the conferences is a lack of coordination among the countries of the Baltic Sea, but also a common desire to create a connection among youth in all the region, that can become more structured in the future. The draft summary of the seminar is available [here](#).

The discussions on Youth participation continued also on Wednesday, during the workshop "Connecting the voice of Youth for sustainable future of BSR", organised by CBSS and Baltic University Programme.

ERB also contributed to the programme of events by linking it with the activities the LB-EME project (Baltic Leaders – Energy of the Young Europe). The young participants of the projects Baltic Leaders, between 16 and 25 years old from the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship (Olsztyn, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Elbląg and Bartoszyce) were present in Berlin and participated actively in all the meetings and workshops.

Thanks to that they have already collected ideas to be implemented at a local level, and also through potential projects that would not only help them and their organisations to develop to the youth agenda but also to contribute to European integration and development of contacts and cooperation between societies.

- 6.2. The CASYPOT project An important CaSYPoT partner meeting took place in Elbląg and Bartoszyce (Poland), on 21st -23rd March 2017. The event, organized by the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic, was devoted to project partners' knowledge and experience exchange in working with youth. It followed the three previous project meetings in Emmaboda, Sopot and Kaliningrad.

The event was launched on Tuesday 21st March in Elbląg, and the first two days were entirely dedicated to several workshops. The activities were organized according to 4 themes: To make the participants more familiar with the project's structure, in particular, those activities that concern cross-border study and capacity building. To share the results of the pilot study carried out in Poland – Bartoszyce and Słupsk, Russia – Svetlogorsk and Gusev, Lithuania – Klaipeda, Sweden – Emmaboda. The survey, based on the Swedish LUPP, allows the former mentioned municipalities to

get information of young people's situation, experiences and expectations on school, politics, society, leisure, health, security, work and future. To share partners' experiences on working with youth and creating opportunities for young people. To discuss the process of preparing youth strategies and prepare for creating a joint, knowledge-based strategic youth policy in the Euroregion Baltic. The workshop on the tools for youth opportunities was enriched by two important presentations carried out by the new associated partners: Kumulus and BSSSC.

Ms. Alexandra Winberg presented Kumulus. This Swedish NGO, located in the Kalmar region, has been particularly efficient in listening to youth's needs about culture, leisure, sport activities, but also public transports, schools, security, city planning, labour market, housing, technology. This allowed some targeted interventions, like investments in IT technology, initiation of youth groups for cooperation, creation of summer jobs, just to mention some. But, what makes this NGO really progressive is its communication strategy with the youth, which brought them to submit 91 new innovative suggestions.

The second presentation was carried out by Mr. Lars Lund Godbolt, executive secretary of the BSSSC- Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation. This political network for decentralized authorities has been able to involve youth through working groups, meeting and events, and the creation of a Youth Board. BSSSC's goal is to reach a real youth inclusion through a continuous dialogue.

Another presentation on behalf of BSSSC that deserves to be mentioned was given by Ms. Janne Vikørdegården and Mr. Hallgeir Venholen, from the Youth County Council of Hedmark (Norway). They presented their exemplary Youth policy implementation that is highly innovative in the European scenario on youth cooperation. The Youth County Council works at different levels: local-regional-ENCN, and aims at creating a level that can reach the national government/parliament. Young people represent all youth in their municipalities, organize trainings on public speech, and support free discussions. This well-structured initiative gives young people voice in the development of youth strategies.

After two busy days in Elbląg, on Thursday 23rd March, the participants traveled to Bartoszyce, a small town in the northern part of the Warmia-Masuria. There organized was a study visit that brought the participants first to the ZHP Polish Scouting and Guiding Association in Bartoszyce, then to the Centre of Professional Activity in Bartoszyce managed by the Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities, where an interesting part of the agenda was a short play based on a Turkish fairy tale 'Aisha's garden'.

The one-day trip ended with the visit to the Innovative Centre for the Artistic Development NORA, where young people can develop their various talents and passions as well as get involved in international youth exchanges.

6.3. On December 11-13th CaSYPoT project partners met in the City of Słupsk. The conference saw the participation of delegates representing local and regional bodies, NGOs, universities, cultural associations from Poland, Sweden, Russia, Italy and Lithuania. Welcomed by Mr Robert Biedroń, Mayor of City of Słupsk, and Mr Per Ole Petersen, ERB Vice-President and Member of the Council of Regional Municipality of Bornholm (Denmark), participants gathered for the presentation of the cross-border comparative report and analyse its results as well as to evaluate further steps to take in order to address issues related to youth in the Baltic Sea Region.

During the conference, held at the Słupsk City Hall and then at the Technological Incubator, participants had the chance to discuss the current state of the project and outline the framework for youth strategies. Ms Cilla Ilahmmer from the Regional Council at the Kalmar County (Sweden) provided partners with information about LUPP (Local follow-up on youth policy), the method used for the surveys. While the method sees young people as a resource, the survey lifts voices of all of them and aims at increasing an ongoing dialogue as well as at increasing young people's democratic influence. In this regard, EU's official documents such as the EU Youth Report 2015 and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region have been investigated in order to provide inputs for the joint strategic youth policy that will represent the final outcome of the whole project. As studies prove, the Baltic Sea Region is a peripheral area where on the main problem is that young people leave to metropolitan areas and do not return, the aim is to identify tool capable of supporting and empowering youth.

The presentation of the CaSYPoT final report by Dr Per Dannefjord and Dr Anna-Maria Marekovic from Linnaeus University (Sweden) and Dr Elena Zimovina from Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University (Russia), helped to clearly identify common patterns – despite some differences – in the municipalities where the surveys have been carried out: young people would like to have their voices heard and be active within the community they live in; they do not trust politicians; the large majority strongly believe that is going to leave its municipalities to study or work. In the frame of the presentation, a panel discussion involving young people from Poland, Sweden, Russia and Lithuania took place providing further opinions regarding the topics analysed in the report such as leisure time, politics and work. Addressed by Ms Alexandra Winberg – Kumulus and Vice-chair of ERB Youth Board – young people expressed their wish to have a concrete chance to exert influence over the decision-making process when it comes to issues affecting them; to have schools capable of narrowing the gap between what they learn and what's needed to succeed in the labour market; to increase the number of leisure time activities and make them more affordable; to have more secure public spaces such as city centres; to have a more inclusive society to live in that rejects racism and sexism thus allowing young people to fully developed their personality.

The next panel saw the participation of politicians – Mr. Robert Biedroń (Mayor of the City of Słupsk – Poland); Ms. Lena Granath (Councillor of the Regional Council in Kalmar County – Sweden); Mr. Andrei Kozhemiakin (Deputy Head of Svetlogorsk District – Russia); Mr. Per Ole Petersen (Vice-President of Euroregion Baltic) – and gave young participants the chance to address directly people in charge of policies at local level. Indeed, according to what emerged from the panel as well as from the survey, often the lack of face to face meeting between politicians and youth prevent the latter from having a concrete chance to make its voice concretely heard and then be engaged. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that the discussion revolved also around the fact that instead of preventing young people from leaving small communities it could be wise to find new solutions to attract them. In this regard, Mr Biedroń clearly highlighted the advantages of living in small and medium-sized municipalities and its benefits on health, well-being, social relations and personal development.

The last day of the conference was dedicated to identifying common tools capable of stimulating the dialogue with young people in the municipalities part of the project. Divided into several working groups, participants focused on tools such as face to face meetings, focal groups, youth councils and workshops to learn how to write a civil proposal. Even though all tools are potentially valuable, the conference proved that it is fundamental not only to reach those young people already active and

socially engaged but those who are left out. In this regard between March and November 2018, the municipalities involved will start testing the tools selected then providing a comparison about how they have been adapted to the local context.

The conference represented also an opportunity to meet Ms Greta Klotz – Eurac Research, Bolzano (Italy) – and Ms Annalisa Cevasco – Agenzia di Sviluppo GAL Genovese, Genova (Italy) – to evaluate the possibility to set up a concrete collaboration between CaSYPoT and GaYA projects in 2018.

7. fostering B2B cooperation with focus on clusters, innovation and SME internationalisation and tourism:

7.2. In this area work focused on involving ERB in different project initiatives connected with the activities specified in the Action Plan. As results of joint efforts by the ERB Task Force for Project Facilitation and ERB IPS, the ERB joined the following partnerships:

7.2.1. Baltic Sea Tourism Centre - the project undertakes to establish a permanent service unit for improved communication and cooperation at transnational level by associating the key tourism stakeholders and promoting a sustainable, responsible and innovative tourism in the Baltic Sea region. The BSTC is developed within the framework of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum and complements and supports the activities of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in profiling the area as a tourist destination and contributes to the target and action defined in the strategy as “Establishing the Baltic Sea region as a common and coherent tourism destination”.

With respect to ERB, participating in the project as an Associated Partner will give the organisation a direct access to all important activities and further contribute to the implementation of the ERB Action Plan 2015-2016 and its specific action fostering B2B cooperation with focus on clusters, innovation, entrepreneurial internationalisation and tourism development. The project comprises partners from Blekinge, Klaipeda and Pomorskie. The project was approved for implementation in October 2016.

7.2.2. South Coast Baltic - The project proceeds and reinforces the joint efforts to foster boating tourism intensity along the “South Coast Baltic” that started with MARRIAGE project thereby project seeking to establish durable and comprehensive boating destination management for the area of South Baltic. The project comprises partners from the following ERB regions: Bornholm, Kaliningrad, Klaipeda and Pomorskie. It also underlines the need for the development of maritime tourism thereby improving the interconnectivity of the region. The project was approved for implementation in October 2016.

7.2.3. DUNC - project aims at developing the UNESCO World Heritage sites and UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in the South Baltic area into attractive tourist destinations. This idea complies with the European programmes (e.g. indeed, UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme 2013-2015 mission is defined as facilitation of the management and development of sustainable tourism at World Heritage properties through fostering increased awareness, capacity and balanced participation of all stakeholders – which is reflected in the project by directly involving 4 UNESCO World Heritage sites as project partners and 2 biosphere reserves as associated partners), national and regional tourism

development programmes 2014-2020. Project was submitted within the 3rd call for proposals in December 2016.

8. facilitating water cooperation:

8.1. participation in development of WaterNets project

Throughout 2016 the ERB Water Core Group and its leader – Regional Council in Kalmar County were working on the development of the WaterNets-RU project within the funding mechanism of the International Centre for Local Democracy. Continuing the success of the MOMENT project, WaterNets would introduce a water management concept for a cleaner Baltic Sea, referred to as Water Users Partnerships (WUP), creating a fora for local and regional water users, enabling them to get actively involved in the implementation of EU and International Water Policies, and also facilitate a cross-sectoral and vertically aligned policy oriented dialogue amongst all levels. The main objective would be twofold, first to increase the mobilization among local authorities by providing an efficient water management concept and tools (i.e. WUP concept and tools) and secondly, establish a jointly developed concept (i.e. WUP concept) and common understanding among water authorities in the Baltic Sea Region, on how to better involve the local level in the EU Water Framework context, enforcing implementation of concrete measures.

8.2. Implementing Water Core Group Work Plan 2015-2017

The overriding goal for the ERB Water Core Group was to implement concrete measures aiming to improve ecological and chemical status in the ERB waters, as a base for better development of the area. To this end the WCG proposed two focus areas:

1/ Decreasing the outflow of nutrients and hazardous substances into the water by coastal and upstream work (for example water management and/or spatial planning). This focus area could be tackled by the WaterNets project, should it be approved for implementation.

2/ Actions needed to cope with effects from climate change, like droughts and flooding, on water supply and water recipients (for example rain/storm water, drinking water). Within this focus area activities concerning storm water treatment could be tackled within a South Baltic Programme project which would also provide additional support for the functioning of the WCG.

The ERB Water Core Group continued to operate from a local and regional perspective and support trans-boundary cooperation. Moreover, this approach should be characterized by participation from private, public and academic sector (Triple Helix) and be based on the structure of water basin areas.

The WCG continued to be led by the Regional Council in Kalmar County with Ms Akko Karlsson as the Chair and Mr Tobias Facchini as the Secretary. The WCG was supported by the EBR IPS which engaged in its activities and liaised with ERB partners when it comes to coordination of its work.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

ERB Annual Budget between 1st Jan - 31st Dec 2017 (EUR and PLN)		
INCOME	Actual for 31.12.2017 EUR	Actual for 31.12.2017 PLN
Balance as of 1-01-2017	12,046.94 €	51,801.84 PLN
Blekinge	5,500.00 €	23,650.00 PLN
Bornholm	5,500.00 €	23,650.00 PLN
Kaliningrad	5,500.00 €	23,650.00 PLN
Klaipeda	5,500.00 €	23,650.00 PLN
Kalmar	5,500.00 €	23,650.00 PLN
Kronoberg	5,500.00 €	23,650.00 PLN
Pomorskie	5,500.00 €	23,650.00 PLN
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	5,500.00 €	23,650.00 PLN
Association of Communes ERB	5,500.00 €	23,650.00 PLN
Baltic Leaders	1,491.24 €	6,412.32 PLN
Casypot	19,754.29 €	85,996.35 PLN
Income total	82,792.47 €	357,060.51 PLN
EXPENDITURES	Actual for 31.12.2017 EUR	Actual for 31.12.2017 PLN
<u>Personnel:</u>	<u>27,754.07 €</u>	<u>119,342.51 PLN</u>
Overhead including office rental	4,934.37 €	21,217.80 PLN
Phone	833.63 €	3,584.59 PLN
Salary	21,986.07 €	94,540.12 PLN
Travels, meetings	14,997.37 €	64,488.71 PLN
IT	534.51 €	2,298.41 PLN
Youth Board	2,284.79 €	9,824.60 PLN
Training and skills development	0.00 €	0.00 PLN
Banking charges	196.51 €	845.00 PLN
Projects	30,791.27 €	132,402.44 PLN
Baltic Leaders	1,870.20 €	8,041.87 PLN
EXPENDITURES	78,428.73 €	337,243.54 PLN
BALANCE	4,363.74 €	19,816.97 PLN

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