

Euroregion Baltic
Executive Board Meeting
22 April 2010

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Title	Provisional Minutes
Submitted by	SDD, International Permanent Secretariat
Summary / Note	This document provides explanatory notes regarding the items included in the provisional agenda and, within a given item, specifies actions requested from the meeting participants.
Requested action	Comments

Euroregion Baltic Executive Board

Mr Jacek Protas	Marshal of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region, Poland
Mr Roger Kaliff	Chair of the Municipal Council in Kalmar, Sweden
Mr Per Ole Petersen	Member of the Council of the Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark
Ms Joanna Zielińska	Chair of the Board of the Association of Polish Communes, Poland

Other participants

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen	Head of Europe Direct, Bornholm, Denmark
Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański	ERB International Permanent Secretariat, Poland
Ms Marie Fridh	International Relations, Region Blekinge, Sweden
Ms Mariana Johannesson	International Relations, Södra Småland, Sweden
Mr Przemysław Łodziana	Department for Coordination of Promotion and Public Relations at Warmińsko-Mazurskie Marshal Office, Poland
Mr Sebastian Magier	ERB International Permanent Secretariat, Poland
Mr Piotr Pancer	Department for Coordination of Promotion and Public Relations at Warmińsko-Mazurskie Marshal Office, Poland
Mr Piotr Pasternak	Cabinet of the Marshal of Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Poland
Ms Małgorzata Piaścik	Cross-Border Cooperation Centre, Poland
Mr Jarosław Słoma	Member of the Board of Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Poland
Ms Victoria Snioliene	International Relations, Klaipeda County, Lithuania
Ms Kora Stańczyk	International Cooperation Department at Pomorskie Marshal Office, Poland
Ms Kamila Tkaczuk	Cross-Border Cooperation Centre, Poland
Mr Rafał Wolski	Director of the International Cooperation Department at Warmińsko-Mazurskie Marshal Office, Poland
Mr Piotr Zwolak	International Relations, Warmińsko-Mazurskie Marshal Office, Poland

1. Opening and Welcome

Mr Jacek Protas, Marshall of Warmińsko – Mazurskie Region and President of Euroregion Baltic welcomed the participants and opened the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda

Mr Jacek Protas presented the agenda of the meeting and asked the Executive Board for comments and its adoption. The Board approved the agenda.

3. Adoption of 21.01.2010 ERB Board Meeting minutes

ERB Executive Board members approved the minutes of the ERB Executive Board meeting held in Gdańsk on 21st January 2010.

4. ERB cooperation review process

4.1 Implementation of the ERB Action Programme

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański presented a status report on the implementation of the ERB Joint Development Programme.

Mr Per Ole Petersen, Member of ERB Board, commented on the main themes of the report. In his view, some elements of the Programme were a success. In this context he mentioned the environmental issues which were being tackled very effectively through the MOMENT project. Other ERB projects like LED or DISKE were also greatly contributing to the successful implementation of the Action Programme. As far as the youth aspect of ERB cooperation is concerned, it was being successfully implemented through the ERB Youth Board's Yc3 project. Apart from that he also touched upon so called half-successes, i.e. ERB activities or projects which were still to be completed or were currently suspended. Among them he mentioned the LAG conference in Olsztyn, activities of the Transport Working Group concerning the revision of the TEN-T and the BaltNet project.

Mr Roger Kaliff presented his opinion on the implementation of the ERB Action Programme and stated that although the ERB was in the middle of process, some adjustments could be made in order to improve the effectiveness of its implementation. These adjustments could include for instance the revision of the number of Working Groups. He also stated that the ERB actions and involvement on various forums result in greater respect and recognition not just within the region but also on the EU level. Finally, he stressed that the ERB was very important for future relations within the region.

Ms Kora Stańczyk stated that a number of institutions of Pomorskie Region were involved in the implementation of the ERB Action Programme. She stated that although the ERB had not managed to implement all actions through its Working Groups, the ERB was involved in a strategic flagship project which contributed to the implementation of the Programme. Ms Stańczyk also added that in December 2010 the Working Group on Social Affairs would like to try to resubmit the BaltNet project to the South Baltic CBC Programme.

Ms Joanna Zielińska commented on the implementation of the Action Programme and said that ERB managed to implement around forty percent of the Programme objectives. In her opinion, ERB was successfully involved in many different activities that contributed to the implementation of the Programme. Firstly, she pointed to the success of the Karlshamn Baltic Festival in which ERB was actively involved. ERB was also present at the Gdańsk Tourism Fair during which a joint stand for ERB regions was established and it attracted a lot of attention from the visitors. Moreover, ERB organised a series of Youth Games which also proved to be a success. Ms Zielińska

also indicated that ERB website could be supplemented with links to the websites of partners willing to cooperate with ERB.

Mr Jacek Protas commented on the discussion and presented his views on the implementation of the ERB Action Programme. He suggested that ERB could be involved in three types of actions/themes. Firstly, strategic actions allowing ERB to become a strong and recognisable political platform. These actions include joint statements and resolutions on important EU initiatives. Regarding the above, Mr Protas also stressed that the continuous participation of the Russian partners from the Kaliningrad region greatly contributes to strengthening of the ERB position not only within the Baltic Sea Region but also at the EU level. Secondly, actions concerning joint ERB projects. In his view, these projects could be implemented mainly through the South Baltic Cross-border Cooperation Programme but ERB should also try to find additional funding through other programmes and initiatives. Moreover, the participation in such a project should not be obligatory for all the ERB regions. Therefore, such a project could be implemented by some ERB regions and involve also outside partners. To give an example, Mr Protas mentioned the ongoing cooperation activities between Bornholm, Warminsko – Mazurskie and Rivne regions. Thirdly, actions aiming at bringing the member regions closer together. These could involve joint sports or cultural events or other such events facilitating people to people contacts. A joint calendar of events could be set up in order to coordinate the ERB participation in relevant events. In his opinion, it was also important that the youth aspect of ERB cooperation be included horizontally in each theme. All these activities could then be managed by three working groups, i.e. Strategic Group for implementing strategic actions; Project Group for initiating and implementing joint projects; Integration Group for actions bringing the regions closer together.

ERB Board adopted the conclusions presented in the status report on the implementation of the ERB Joint Development Programme and recommended that they are included in the information pack for the participants of the ERB Stakeholder Conference in June.

4.2 Review of ERB Working Groups

Mr Jacek Protas, ERB President opened the discussion concerning the review of the ERB Working Groups and asked the ERB Board members to share their views on the process.

Ms Mariana Johannesson stated that the Working Groups facilitated the creation of stronger identity within ERB through continuous dialogue, which is very important for future development. She also said that the Södra Småland region would like to continue their responsibility for the Energy Working Group as it is an important instrument to tackle issues such as environment, climate change, energy etc., which are important for all ERB regions.

Ms Marie Fridh stated that the transport issues were among the most important issues for the ERB. Although there were difficulties in implementing them, as it was sometimes difficult to identify what transport issues could be handled by ERB, still concrete problems increased interest in the cooperation, e.g. the ERB position on the ongoing revision of TEN-T.

Ms Kora Stańczyk informed the participants that the overall experience regarding the Social Working Group was not very positive, especially after the withdrawal from the BaltNet project. She emphasised that greater flexibility is required in the future activities of working groups.

Mr Roger Kaliff stated that the Water Working Group was very active in implementing the MOMENT project. He also mentioned a SIDA project was being considered to involve the Kaliningrad Region.

Mr Per Ole Petersen elaborated on the Working Group on Rural Development. In his opinion, the creation of the Academy of Rural Development proved to be too ambitious for ERB. Firstly, there was a lack of necessary scientific institutions to implement it. Secondly, it was too expensive. Mr Petersen also commented on idea of

main themes of cooperation presented by Mr Protas. In his view, it was a very good idea which, if implemented, could be more efficient than the traditional working groups and it could provide some concrete results for the local communities. New working groups based on these main themes could have a shorter time framework for implementing their tasks, e.g one to two years. They would also include a clear pattern of leadership and partnership.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said that the working groups were based on the reference networks created within the implementation of the Seagull II project and belong to a very traditional model of work. In his opinion the idea of regional patronage was generally good for the cooperation. Although the working groups have been putting a lot of effort, they have not fully succeeded in implementing the Joint Development Programme. Based on that a new model of work is needed, which should involve fewer actions, concrete task forces and specified time limits.

Mr Roger Kaliff commented on the discussion and said that ERB should focus on what can be done together better. He was doubtful as to the idea of ERB supporting sports events because such activities were already supported by the regions. In his view, ERB should focus on more important issues such as lobbying activities or implementation of joint projects. Mr Kaliff agreed with Mr Protas as to the first two themes, while a more in-depth discussion should be held on the third theme.

Mr Jacek Protas agreed with Mr Kaliff that not all events proved to be successful. However, ERB should not abandon this idea entirely even though such events can be expensive. Therefore, ERB should try to search for funding from outside sources which could help implementing some of the most important events.

Mr Per Ole Petersen agreed that sports events were part of the integration activities. He also said that thanks to such events ERB becomes more recognisable in the regions.

ERB Board adopted the conclusions of the review of the ERB Working Groups and recommended that they are included in the information pack for the participants of the ERB Stakeholder Conference in June.

4.3 Defining next steps to more effectively involve Lithuanian partners

Mr Jacek Protas, ERB President began by expressing his regret about the absence of Lithuanian partners at the ERB Board meeting and promised to further investigate the issue of future Lithuanian involvement in ERB cooperation.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański presented up to date information on the ongoing administration reform in Lithuania, pointing out that no final decisions have yet been made as to their future role of the Regional Development Councils in Lithuania. He also presented the outcome of the mapping activity which made it possible to see the number and intensity of existing links at the local and regional levels between Lithuania and the other ERB member regions.

Mr Roger Kaliff stressed that the continuous participation of the Klaipeda Region in the cooperation is of utmost importance to the future of ERB. Therefore, ERB should do all it can to secure future membership of the Lithuanian partners.

Mr Per Ole Petersen asked whether anything could be done before the end of June 2010 when the current administration of Klaipeda county is dissolved and if the Lithuanian partners would continue to pay membership fees. He also said that ERB should remain focused on the Klaipeda issue and later, when this matter is solved, ERB should also look for partners in other Baltic States.

Mr Jacek Protas replied that he was a great supporter of involving Latvia and Estonia in the ERB cooperation as it would complement the organisation and he asked the Board for a permission to investigate this issue. Responding to Mr Petersen's questions, Mr Protas promised he would do his best to clarify this situation before the end of June. He also confirmed that the Lithuanian partners paid all membership fees for 2010 and that they would continue paying them in the future.

Ms Joanna Zielińska, Member of ERB Board, stated that the situation with Lithuanian partners is very similar to the case of the Kurzeme region when they decided to leave

ERB. Therefore, the negotiations with the Lithuanian partners should commence immediately.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen pointed to the fact that ERB initiated a process to more effectively involve Lithuanian municipal partners in the cooperation. In his view, the future of Lithuanian involvement in the ERB cooperation will be based mostly on local authorities.

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański said that heads of some Lithuanian municipalities were members of ERB Council. He also reminded that the geography of the Klaipėda County would change as a result of the upcoming administrative reform in Lithuania. Consequently, the region will be bigger as it will probably include Telšiai and Tauragė counties.

ERB Board asked President Protas to hold a second meeting with the Lithuanian Ministry of Interior in order to discuss further involvement of the Lithuanian partners in the ERB cooperation. President Protas offered to coordinate the organization of such a meeting with Governor Burksas and IPS so that it can take place by the end of June.

ERB Board adopted the conclusions of the mapping activity and recommended that they are included in the information pack for the participants of the ERB Stakeholder Conference in June.

5. Information on ERB Council TEN-T revision statement

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański informed the ERB Board of the activities following the adoption of the ERB statement on the revision of TEN-T adopted by the ERB Council in March. A map accompanying the statement was developed and attached to the letters which were sent to Mr Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy and Mr Siim Kallas, EU Commissioner for Transport.

Following the presentation ERB Board members encouraged all the ERB secretariats to distribute the statement at their regional and national level.

6. Transport infrastructure development in Kaliningrad Region

ERB Board member received the information on the current development of transport infrastructure in the Kaliningrad region which had been earlier prepared by the representatives of the Kaliningrad Region.

7. Committee of the Region's Forum of Macro-Regions

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański presented the information on the Forum of Macro-Regions held in Brussels on 13th April 2010 pointing out to some of its most important highlights, e.g. praise given to the preparation process of the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, as well as concerns voiced by some participants over feared regionalisation of the European Union.

Ms Mariana Johannesson added that there were many participants at the meeting although not all representatives were able to attend it. Concerning the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, she said that there was a discussion on how to implement the strategy.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said that another EU strategy, the Danube Strategy under preparation now, refers to the Baltic Sea Strategy as an example of a successful macro-regional strategy of the EU.

ERB Board members took note of the information presented.

8. Yc3 Report by ERB Youth Board

Ms Kamila Tkaczuk, ERB Youth Board representative presented the report on the implementation of the Yc3 project.

ERB Board members accepted the report and congratulated the ERB Youth Board on their successful cooperation.

9. South Baltic CBC Programme

4th Call for proposals

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen briefly presented the results of the 4th Call for proposals adopted by the Programme Steering Committee on 21st April 2010.

ERB Board members took note of the information presented.

South Baltic Capacity Building Project

Mr Sebastian Magier gave a presentation of the upcoming activities within the Capacity Building Project which aims at increasing attractiveness of the Programme to applicants throughout the South Baltic area.

ERB Board members took note of the information presented.

10. Approval of next dates

ERB Board members approved the proposed dates of next ERB Board and ERB Council meetings. These dates are as follows:

ERB Board in Klaipeda on 28th September 2010, starting after lunch.

ERB Council in Växjö on 28 – 29th October 2010: lunch to lunch meeting.

11. Closing

Mr Jacek Protas, ERB President thanked the participants for attending and closed the meeting.