



Euroregion Baltic
Present Presidency
Southeast Sweden 2001-2002

23 January 2002

Minutes

Euroregion Baltic Executive Board

Embassy of Sweden, Vilnius, 23 January 2002

- Board members:** Roger Kaliff, President, Southeast Sweden
Normunds Niedols, Vice President, Liepaja City Council
Knud Andersen, Bornholm
- National secretariats:** Roma Stubriene, Klaipeda County
Maria Lindbom, Southeast Sweden
PG Lindencrona, Southeast Sweden
Gunta Strele, Liepaja City Council
Gunars Ansins, Liepaja City Council
Malgorzata Samusjew, ERB Poland
Niels Chresten Andersen, Bornholm
- Interreg IIIB (PIA):** Håkan Brynielsson, Chairman of Working group
Rolf A Karlson, Expert
Zbigniew Czepulkowski, member of Working group
- Other guests:** Vytautas Rinkevicius, Secretary Klaipeda County
Mr Arbergs, Mayor of Talsi City (presiding BSC Planning Region)
Berndt Johnsson, Region Blekinge (becoming Swedish ERB Board repr)
Carl Sonesson, President Region Skåne/Vice President SydSam
Edvardas Borisovas, Chairman Reg Coop Unit/Ministry Foreign Aff Lith
Ms J. Kriskovicene, Counsellor Reg Coop Unit/Ministry Foreign Aff Lith
Jan Palmstierna, Ambassador, Embassy of Sweden, Vilnius
Carl-Michael Gräns, Secretary, Embassy of Sweden, Vilnius

The Kaliningrad party is not present at the meeting.

§ 1 Welcome

Mr Kaliff opens the meeting by welcoming everybody to the board meeting at the Embassy of Sweden in Vilnius, expressing gratitude towards the embassy for letting us use their premises two days, for the PIA working group and the board meeting. Mr Berndt Johnsson, Region Blekinge, becoming Swedish representative in the ERB Board, Mr Carl Sonesson, President Region Skåne/Vice President SydSam, Mr Arbergs, President of BSC Planning Region as well as guests from the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry are especially welcomed.

§ 2 Appointment of a member to co-sign the minutes of today's meeting

Mr Niedols is chosen to check and co-sign the minutes of today's meeting.

§ 3 Presentation of a project within Interreg IIIB Skåne-Blekinge "East - West"

The group working with preparations for a common Skåne – Blekinge project presents the focus, which will be on development of the transport corridor Blekinge – Skåne with links to the Baltic States, Poland, Russia, Denmark, Germany and Great Britain. The two recently finalised Interreg IIC projects SEBTrans and TransLogis shall form a basis and starting point for the work.

The initiative is considered urgent since it contributes to the development of a sustainable transport system in the southern parts of the Baltic Sea Region, thereby also promoting the integration process, which presently is a priority within the EU.

An Interreg IIIB draft proposal is handed out. For more information please contact: PG Lindencrona, Region Blekinge (pg.lindencrona@regionblekinge.se)

§ 4 Brief ERB presentation for external guests

Mr Brynielsson makes a brief Euroregion Baltic presentation for external guests attending today's board meeting.

- History and background of ERB
- Signing of the agreement at Malbork Castle in Poland, February 1998
- Euroregions as an important tool for cross border cooperation in Europe
- EU Commission instruments for integration between regions in Europe

Mr Edvardas Borisovas and Ms J. Kriskovicene, Regional Cooperation Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, thanks for the invitation to the ERB Executive Board Meeting. Mr Borisovas stresses the importance of initiatives from local and regional level in international cooperation and explains that he follows the ERB progress with great interest.

§ 5 Report from the Environmental Working Group (EWG)

The Environmental Working Group has an idea of a "School Development Project" which they intend to submit to the program Comenius 1. Closing day for applications 2002 is 1 March. However the group regard it as unrealistic to form a project of sufficient quality in such a short time.

They will therefore work in accordance with the following schedule:

January 31	Short descriptions from each school about themselves, environmental experiences and plans for the future, are spread to all schools in the network as a way to get to know each other. Responsibility: each school
February 25	The Swedish EWG secretariat provides the members of the group with a first draft of a more detailed project description/application. Responsibility: Mr Karl Nordlund, Borgholm, Sweden
Spring 2002	Possibilities to arrange preparatory meeting(s)
2003	Application to Comenius 1, School Development Project Start of the project dealing with ecological education within ERB and running for three years.

Idea 1: Application to Comenius 1, grants for Preparatory Visits

An eligible institution wishing to set up a transnational cooperation project may apply for a preparatory visit grant to enable appropriate staff members and pupils to undertake a preparatory visit of up to one week. Closing day for this kind of application 1 May 2002.

Idea 2: Application to Swedish Association of Local Authorities, Twin Town project

Idea 3: Baltic Small Project Fund, Poland.

Requires a Polish leading part. Coordination: The Regional Council in Kalmar County, Carolina Gunnarsson

Decision

The board approves the information and proposals presented by the Environmental Working Group.

§ 6 ERB 2002+

Before the Executive Board meeting all parties have been provided with the following reports (can also be found on the web site <http://www.eurobalt.org>):

- Seminar report Liepaja 11-12 November
- Final report ERB 2002+
- Evaluation of ERB 2002+

Revision of Statutes

Additional proposals from the parties have been received until only a few days ago. The Swedish party therefore proposes to assign the task to the national secretariats to form a common proposal, which can be presented to the board before the Council meeting in Liepaja 12 March.

Decision

The board approves all ERB2002+ reports.

The task is given to the national secretariats to form a common proposal regarding revision of the ERB Statutes. The proposal shall be presented to the board before the Council meeting on 12 March.

(A short board meeting is foreseen in the evening 11 March in Liepaja)

§ 7 Report from the PIA group concerning the Interreg/Phare/Tacis applications

Håkan Brynielsson reports that the PIA group had a good meeting yesterday 22 January in Vilnius.

Participants representing ERB at the meeting: Zbigniew Czepulkowski and Malgorzata Samusjew, Poland, Roma Stubriené, Lithuania, Normunds Niedols (partly), Mr Arbergs, Gunars Ansins and Gunta Strele, Latvia, Niels Chresten Andersen, Denmark, Håkan Brynielsson and Rolf A Karlson, Sweden.

Participants representing the SEBTrans East-West project: Bengt Gustavsson (partly), PG Lindencrona (partly), Susanne Ingo and Lars Källström.

Mr Rolf Karlson summarises some issues discussed at the meeting.

News from the EU programmes:

- Only six out of 39 projects were approved by the BSR IRIIB steering committee in December. The assessment procedure is obviously careful and pretty tuff.
- The second call for project application will be launched on the 18th of February with closing date the 28th of March.
- An updated Applicant's package will be published latest the 18th of February.
- Each Phare partner must make its own Phare CBC application(s). Coordination is not possible of several reasons – different procedures, dead lines etc. There are problems with Phare funding during 2002.
- The Tacis CBC deadline is now well synchronised with the BSR IRIIB – the 22nd of March. Furthermore - for Tacis Micro there are no deadlines; applications can be made continuously.

The parties have made several actions

All parties seem now prepared to take part in the project. Further, more concrete division of responsibilities must naturally be carried through. The situation concerning the main partners in the project is the following:

- *Sweden*: The Regional Council in Kalmar County, Region Blekinge, The County Council of Kronoberg, The Association of Municipalities in Kronoberg County;
- *Denmark*: The Bornholm Amt;
- *Poland*: Not finally decided. There will be a meeting about the Polish partnership and other issues connected to the project in Elblag on Friday 25th of January;
- *Russia*: Preliminary the Association of Communes of Kaliningrad Oblast
- *Lithuania*: The Governor's office in Klaipeda County
- *Latvia*: To be decided asap by the new constellation of Latvian members of the ERB.

The PIA group has agreed on the following five work packages:

1. Joint Transnational Development Programme (JTDP) for ERB. There will not be a special work package for transport infrastructure. The planned activities about such infrastructure will instead be handled within the JTDP package. Most important is that the Seagull project offers concerned owners of transport corridor projects a joint arena for information exchange, discussions and possible conclusions. But there could be included also other activities concerning transport issues in the Seagull project. One example is the great need of access to good data about transport volumes etc.
2. Management of Water Resources. Toning down of activities concerning the EU Water Framework Directive and more concentration on environmental aspects related to regional development. Give priority to pilot projects. Low priority to indicators since many international and national expert groups are working in this area.
3. Innovative centres as vehicles in regional development.
4. Development programmes for rural areas. This proposal was well received, especially by the Danish partner. The contents must though be put in a more concrete form.
5. Information and communication package.

Preparations of Phare and Tacis applications

It will be very hard to get any funding from Phare during this year, probably somewhat better chances to get Tacis funding (the Russian party must discuss this issue). Phare funding is realistic from milestone three and forwards, starting in September 2003. The detailed planning of the project milestones 1 and 2 should therefore be directed towards

activities that could be implemented independently of Phare (and Tacis) funding. Many of the proposed activities are of that kind, and the possible funding from the Swedish Baltic Billion Fund will evidently facilitate the starting up phases of the project.

The time schedule for further project preparations seems to be possible to follow. It will soon be completed with the most important decision deadlines for the Danish, Polish, Russian, Lithuanian and Latvian parties. It is very essential to present a first draft of the IRIIB application no later than 20 February.

The presentation of the planned SEBTrans East-West project was appreciated by the participants and got a substantial support.

Decision

The board approves the information and proposals presented by the PIA group.

§ 8 Baltic Billion Project

An application to the “Baltic Billion 1” program has now been sent in to the Swedish Foreign Ministry. We expect to know the result by the end of February.

Project partners are:

- Liepaja City and Region (contact Gunta Strele)
- Klaipeda County, Governor’s Administration (contact Roma Stubriene)
- The Association of Municipalities in Kaliningrad Oblast (contact Victor Koshelev)
- Southeast Sweden (The Regional Council in Kalmar County is the formal project leader)

Aim and objective for the project

”Good Governance” – an important prerequisite for the development of the ERB cooperation

Municipalities and regions in the candidate countries around the Baltic Sea are now preparing to eventually become members of the European Union. The Kaliningrad region will be surrounded by EU member states in a few years. Development of efficient local and regional administrations in Kaliningrad region is an important prerequisite to be able to utilise cooperation possibilities with becoming EU neighbour countries.

However efficient municipal and regional structures in the candidate countries and in a EU-perspective is not only a question of skilfulness and capability of handling EU funds and programmes. The question is much more complex and has to do with competence dealing with the task to manage a local and/or regional administration in close cooperation with members of the community/citizens. An important prerequisite to be able to implement required parts of the EU regulation system, is that certain basic demands are fulfilled concerning both administrative procedures, organisation and

expert knowledge. This concerns public procurement, financial issues, economic administration and accounting, permission and control within e.g. the spheres environment, provision, spatial- and regional development planning etc. The function to handle EU funds is only entrusted those who are able to show a political leadership and an administration that fulfils basic requirements on local/regional "Good Governance".

Overall objective

To contribute to an improved administrative and organisational competence at the local and regional bodies within the ERB member regions in Latvia, Lithuania and Russia (Kaliningrad Oblast).

To convey knowledge to Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian partners in ERB, strengthening their competence and conditions concerning

- How to develop efficient administration and political structures of special value at the prospect of EU-membership and cooperation with EU-partners

Specific aims

The project shall convey ERB partners with knowledge and capability that strengthens conditions to, in an efficient way

- Manage tasks given by a municipality/region in question concerning primarily economy, social service, administration and regional development/infrastructure,
- Implement regulations which can come into question for local and regional functions within the frame of future EU-membership

Target groups

Education and technical assistance for politicians, administrative officers and experts, representatives for parties on the labour market and NGOs

Support to the national ERB-secretariats in Latvia, Lithuania and Kaliningrad region.

Realisation and method of the project

A total of 16 seminars or workshops for politicians, officers and experts in each of the beneficiary regions and **one common Final Seminar** together with all regions.

Working groups/workshops for leading officials and experts within certain areas of competence. The aim is to train a sufficient number of officials and experts from each participating country in order to be able to continue cooperation after the project is finished. The idea is to form groups of trainers, which can further train groups of officials and experts in each country respectively.

Support to the national ERB-secretariats in Latvia, Lithuania and Kaliningrad region
In the application a contribution to salary costs for one expert and one assistant per country during 24 months is suggested. The contribution is suggested to be 75 % of the total salary costs in the Kaliningrad region and 50 % of the total costs in Lithuania and Latvia.

Project length

Approx 10 months (Start March 2002)

Decision

The board approves the information presented.

§ 9 Request from Baltic Sea Coast Planning Region (BSC) in Latvia to become a member of ERB

The Council has earlier declared their positive view on welcoming the municipalities/regions in Baltic Sea Coast Planning Region (BSC) as new members of ERB. We have now received the formal request from the BSC to become a member of ERB.

Municipalities/regions in the Baltic Sea Coastal Zone are:

- Ventspils District
- Ventspils City
- Talsi District
- Saldus District
- Liepaja District
- Liepaja City
- Kuldiga District
- Edole Parish

Decision

The board recommends the council to acknowledge the request from BSC and to take a decision accordingly at the council meeting on 12 March in Liepaja.

§ 10 Vice President of ERB 2002-2003

Mr Kaliff presents the person who has accepted the appointment of ERB Vice President during the Latvian Presidency as of March 12, Mr Knud Andersen, County Mayor of Bornholm.

Mr Andersen however points out that there will soon be a local election on Bornholm, which in fact could result in him not being available for this appointment.

§ 11 EXPO in Kaliningrad

Maria Lindbom gives brief information from a New Bridges/“Forum South Sweden” meeting held in Sweden this week, where coordination problems with the ERB EXPO were discussed. The Executive group of New Bridges has therefore sent a letter to the ERB Executive Board explaining the situation as follows:

The New Bridges project group is worried about coordination problems, e.g. need of infrastructure, hotel capacity – how to handle two parallel events. It is estimated that 200 participants will arrive from Sweden to Forum South Sweden and the number of Russian participants can reach 300-500. The group regards it as almost impossible to arrange two big public events at the same time and therefore asks if it would be possible to postpone the EXPO to a later date.

Victor Koshelev, who is involved in both events, however points out that the EXPO has already been postponed once. He is worried that postponing again can hurt the reputation of ERB and maybe lead to difficulties if we would like to involve companies in Kaliningrad in future projects.

If it is impossible to postpone the EXPO at this stage, the New Bridges group assures that they will do their best to reduce obstacles and they declare themselves prepared to cooperate for the best possible result. In case of postponing they offer possibilities to advertise the EXPO to the participants of Forum South Sweden.

At the board meeting it is discussed whether the parties have already started concrete planning of the EXPO, if invitations have been sent out etc. All parties will check the situation with their EXPO responsible company respectively and come back with more information to Maria Lindbom.

According to Baltic Expo in Kaliningrad 42 companies have registered – mostly from Poland and Lithuania (information received 6 February).

Decision

The board realises the coordination problems presented and takes the following decisions:

- It shall be investigated if it is possible to postpone the EXPO until a later date.
- If it is not possible to postpone the EXPO it shall be kept a small-scale event with a concrete focus.
- The secretariats shall reach a final common conclusion/proposal within a month on how to proceed and present this information to the ERB Executive Board members (*after the Secretariat meeting 19 February in Klaipeda*)

§ 12 Forthcoming dates/Activity Plan 2002

Ms Gunta Strele hands out an up-dated version of the Activity plan 2002.

New dates are decided:

- Executive Board 10-11 June, Talsi District, Latvia
- Council 27-28 September, Liepaja
- Executive Board 4-5 November, Bornholm

Gunta kindly asks the Swedish and Lithuanian parties to provide her with information on Cultural events in the regions to add to the list. The list will be put on our common ERB homepage <http://www.eurobalt.org>.

Roger Kaliff
President

Normunds Niedols
Vice President

Maria Lindbom
Secretariat