

**EUROREGION BALTIC BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
BRUSSELS, 24 - 25th JANUARY, 2005**

Location

Scotland House Conference Centre, Brussels, Rond-point Schuman 6

Time

24th January, 2005, 10.00 – 13.00 hours

Participants

Guests:

Ms Danuta Hübner	EU Regional Policy Commissioner
Mr Jan Olbrycht	Member of European Parliament, Poland
Ms Hanna Jahns	Head of Regional and Cohesion Policy Unit, Permanent Polish Representation to EU
Ms Iwona Krzeszewska	1 st Secretary, Regional and Cohesion Policy Unit, Permanent Polish Representation to EU
Mr Janusz Gałęziak	1 st Counsellor, Regional and Social Policy Unit, Permanent Polish Representation to EU
Mr Imants Tiesnieks	Attache, Permanent Latvian Representation to EU
Ms Jane Aitken	Acting Head of Scottish Executive EU Office
Ms Sarah English	Policy Coordination and Development Department, Scotland Europa
Ms Elzbieta Okulska	Directorate for Consultative Work, Committee of the Regions
Mr Esben Poulsen	Head of Interreg Unit, DG Regio
Mr Brendan Smyth	Programmes and Projects Directorate, DG Regio
Mr Witold Willak	Programmes and Projects Directorate, DG Regio
Ms Egita Aizsilniece	Head of Riga City and Region Office to EU, Latvia
Mr Bo Beck	Brussels Office of Alliance of Maritime Regional Interests in Europe
Ms Iwona Kur	Head of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Office to EU, Poland
Ms Anne Britt Larsson	Head of North Denmark EU Office
Mr Michael Lloyd	Deputy Director of Brussels Office of Alliance of Maritime Regional Interests in Europe
Ms Alicja Majewska-Gałęziak	Director of Pomorskie Office to EU, Poland

ERB Board and Council Members:

Mr Jan Kozłowski	ERB President, Marshal of Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland
Ms Annelise Molin	ERB Board Member, Bornholm Regional Council Member, Denmark
Mr Anders Åkesson	ERB Board Member, Chairman of Kalmar County Regional Council, Sweden
Mr Bo Frank	ERB Council Member, Member of the Board of the Association of Municipalities and County Council in Southern Småland (SSKL), Sweden
Mr Vytautas Rinkievicius	ERB Council Member, Secretary of Klaipeda County Governor's Office, Lithuania
Mr Henryk Słonina	ERB Council Member, Mayor of Elbląg, Poland

ERB Secretariats and their guests:

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen	Head of ERB Secretariat, Bornholm, Denmark
Ms Giedre Butkute	Klaipeda Regional County Administration, Lithuania
Mr Erik Ciardi	Head of ERB Secretariat, Sweden
Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański	ERB International Permanent Secretariat
Mr Peter Hogla	Officer of the SSKL Administration, Sweden
Mr Rolf A. Karlson	Seagull Project Coordinator, Sweden
Mr P.G. Lindencrona	Administration of Region Blekinge, Sweden
Mr Bo Löfgren	Member of the Board of Region Blekinge, Sweden
Ms Dalia Makuskiene	Klaipeda Regional County Administration, Lithuania
Ms Dalia Pleskoviene	Klaipeda Regional County Administration, Director of Regional Development Department, Lithuania
Ms Kristina Repsaite	Klaipeda Regional County Administration, Lithuania
Mr Zigo Rutkovskis	Director of Kurzeme Region Development Agency, Latvia
Ms Małgorzata Samusjew	ERB Secretariat, Poland
Ms Magdalena Szymanowska	ERB Secretariat, Poland
Ms Krystyna Wróblewska	Director of Department of International and Economic Cooperation, Marshal's Office of Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland

1. Welcoming the guests

ERB President, Mr J. Kozłowski opened the meeting and welcomed the guests and participants.

2. Introduction into the discussion

In his opening speech (see Annex 1) ERB President, Mr J. Kozłowski addressed the issues of the future EU Regional Policy and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument with respect to crossborder and transborder cooperation, pursued by the ERB member regions.

3. Intervention by Ms Danuta Hübner, EU Regional Policy Commissioner

The Commissioner briefly outlined the challenges of the future EU policies relating to regional development. She highlighted the fact that the 2007 – 2013 budget for this purpose will double, and that the Lisbon strategy will remain its essential part. She also confirmed the important role that euroregions can play in implementing these policies.

4. Intervention by Ms Hanna Jahns, Head of Regional and Cohesion Policy Unit at Permanent Polish Representation to EU

5. Intervention by Mr Jan Olbrycht, EMP

Mr J. Olbrycht presented the proposed legal framework for European Groupings of Crossborder Cooperation (EGCC's), pointing out that this legal instrument was devised to facilitate internal cooperation within EU. He stressed that Euroregion Baltic will employ two different kinds of cooperation under two separate policies within the new EU regulations. Firstly, ERB will implement crossborder and transborder cooperation among its EU member regions, falling under the territorial cooperation of the new Structural Funds. Secondly, ERB will perform cooperation with the Kaliningrad Region, subject to the proposed European Neighbourhood and Partnership Programme. Commenting on the future Neighbourhood

Programmes which will replace the existing Interreg III A, B, and C programmes, Mr J. Olbrycht informed that the zone defining process is still under debate in terms of their number, contents and geography.

6. Opening of the exhibition and lunch

ERB President, Mr J. Kozłowski opened the exhibition presenting ERB achievements in the area of transborder and transnational cooperation, including the information on the number and contents, as well as examples of projects so far implemented with the assistance of the EU funds in the ERB member regions. He also invited the participants to the lunch, consisting of a selection of traditional specialities of the Polish cuisine, followed.

Time

24th January, 2005, 14.00 – 17.30 hours

Participants

ERB Board and Council Members:

Mr Jan Kozłowski	ERB President, Marshal of Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland
Ms Annelise Molin	ERB Board Member, Bornholm Regional Council Member, Denmark
Mr Anders Åkesson	ERB Board Member, Chairman of Kalmar County Regional Council, Sweden
Mr Bo Frank	ERB Council Member, Member of the Board of the Association of Municipalities and County Council in Southern Småland (SSKL), Sweden
Mr Vytautas Rinkievicius	ERB Council Member, Secretary of Klaipeda County Governor's Office, Lithuania

ERB Secretariats and their guests:

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen	Head of ERB Secretariat, Bornholm, Denmark
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Mr Erik Ciardi	Head of ERB Secretariat, Sweden
Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański	ERB International Permanent Secretariat
Mr Peter Hogla	Officer of the SSKL Administration, Sweden
Mr Rolf A. Karlson	Seagull Project Coordinator, Sweden
Mr P.G. Lindencrona	Administration of Region Blekinge, Sweden
Mr Bo Löfgren	Member of the Board of Region Blekinge, Sweden
Ms Dalia Makuskiene	Klaipeda Regional County Administration, Lithuania
Ms Dalia Pleskoviene	Klaipeda Regional County Administration, Director of Regional Development Department, Lithuania
Ms Kristina Repsaite	Klaipeda Regional County Administration, Lithuania
Mr Zigo Rutkovskis	Director of Kurzeme Region Development Agency, Latvia
Ms Małgorzata Samusjew	ERB Secretariat, Poland
Ms Magdalena Szymanowska	ERB Secretariat, Poland
Ms Krystyna Wróblewska	Director of Department of International and Economic Cooperation, Marshal's Office of Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland

1 ERB Board internal matters

1.1 Approval of the Agenda

The Agenda was approved by the Board with one amendment and one alteration. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen requested the inclusion of information on a project aiming at the establishment of ERB Tourism Development Working Group. Mr Rolf A. Karlson requested changing the order of points 5 and 6 of the Agenda.

1.2 Signing the Minutes from ERB Board meeting on 16th November, 2004

The minutes from ERB Board meeting on 16th November, 2004 were signed by Ms Annelise Molin and Mr Jan Kozłowski.

1.3 Appointing the Board members to co-sign the minutes from the Board meeting on 24-25th January, 2005.

Annelise Molin and Mr Jan Kozłowski were appointed by the Board to sign the minutes from this meeting.

2. ERB International Secretariat's information on:

2.1 Working visits to the ERB member regions of Bornholm, Klaipeda, Blekinge, Kalmar and Kurzeme, paid within the framework of the Seagull II activities.

In December 2004 and January 2005 S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański visited the ERB regions in order to discuss ERB cooperation premises relating to the regions' involvement in the Seagull II project. Following the short report on the visits to Bornholm, Klaipeda, Karlskrona, and Kalmar (see Annex 2), S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański briefly outlined two visits he paid together with Mr Rolf A. Karlson to Klaipeda County Administration on 19th January, 2005 and to Liepaja District Administration on 20th January, 2005. During the meeting in Klaipeda, the Lithuanian party confirmed their willingness and readiness to take over presidency at the Council meeting in February. During the meeting in Liepaja on the next day Mr Rolf A. Karlson and S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański first met Mr Zigo Rutkovskis and Ms Gunta Ceplevica, Director and Deputy Director of the Kurzeme Development Agency. After the first meeting, they were all invited to the offices of Liepaja District Council and hosted by its Chairman, Mr Eksteins and ERB Board Member Mr Normunds Niedols. Mr Zigo Rutkovskis was asked to inform the Board of the comments and opinions expressed by the Latvian partner during these two meetings. Mr Rutkovskis said that the recent ERB Board and Council meetings had been all organised in Poland, making it almost impossible for the Latvian partners to attend due to the amount of time they would have to spend travelling. Instead of traditional meetings, he claimed, it could be a good idea to have teleconferences. He also pointed out that members of the Kurzeme Development Region, and especially Liepaja City, have lost interest in cooperation within ERB as they could see no concrete results or immediate benefits from being the ERB member. With limited resources they would rather, he stated, be interested in applying to EU structural funds, for which they do not need partners. Commenting on the specific projects implemented within the ERB area, Mr Rutkovskis criticised the Good Governance project, for not considering regional differences among the ERB member regions, and Seagull II for being proposing different new surveys and investigations instead of concrete actions with (too slow in providing) desired outputs. He said he believed ERB could become a networking organisation giving information on compatible and complimentary projects which are under implementation around ERB. Mr Rolf A. Karlson responded that the projects

like Seagull do acknowledge regional differences in the process of their preparation and management. Then, Mr Niels Ch. Andersen took the floor and argued that although he appreciates the explanation provided by Mr Rutkovskis, he cannot still see any contribution on the part of the Latvian partner on how to improve cooperation. He also reminded that the Latvian presidency was not very effective, and even though the lack of resources to cater for cooperation in Kurzeme can be understood, lack of participation from this region is hard to comprehend. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen continued by saying that Kurzeme Development Region leaving ERB would not contribute to ERB's good reputation. On the other hand, it would be better if we know clearly what the situation is. He also said that this very finance-oriented approach is understandable and common among new EU member states but ERB is primarily a political cooperation platform, where a strategy always comes before money, and money is a long-term objective. Ms K. Wróblewska joined in, saying she could not agree more with Mr Andersen. She also added that the political component in the cooperation compliments the financial one, and one single region on its own can never be better than several regions working together. Ms Wróblewska also suggested that maybe it was now time for politicians to meet in Latvia. Mr Anders Akesson supported Ms Wróblewska's idea, stressing that such visits as the International Secretariat has been making around ERB, can only bring positive effects.

2.2 Interim financial report

A short report on the ERB International Secretariat's income and expenditure was delivered and accepted by the Board (see Annex 3). S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański proposed to discuss the budget planned for 2005 during the next meeting in Klaipeda once the Board knows the Latvian decision on its membership in ERB.

3. Presentations of the project

3.1 Baltic Euroregional Network (BEN)

BEN is a project coordinated by the Nordic Council of Ministers and intended to improve cooperation among Euroregions and CBC regions in the Baltic Sea area (see Annex 4). ERB has been invited to participate in the project. In his presentation Mr Niels Ch. Andersen explained ERB participation would be politically desirable as the leaders of BEN are strong and acknowledged actors in the Baltic. A discussion followed on what extent, if any, this participation should take. Mr Anders Akesson pointed out that ERB needs to be more focused on its own agenda, making sure it does not lose that focus, especially in the context of the Latvian comments. Mr Erik Ciardi asked which ERB body could legally represent the organisation in BEN. He also stressed that BEN will be a competitor to the Seagull II within Priority 3 in the 7th Interreg III B Application Round. Mr Rolf A. Karlson added that ERB must now keep its central interest in the development strategy and besides it is big enough an organisation to advertise itself with its own means. Mr P.G. Lindencrona stated that although it is a diplomatic objective to be in good relationship with the NCM, the project itself remains very unfocused with too many themes and activities. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen agreed to the above mentioned comments, but reminded there is a strong support from the Interreg Office to cooperate with institutions like the NCM. He then suggested offering a low level participation on the part of ERB without financial contribution. Mr Bo Lofgren said that even the minimal input into the project in the form of internal hours translates as money, and asked what the durable effect of the BEN project was. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen responded this was the network of euroregions as a lobbying organisation. Mr Rolf A. Karlson then emphasised that it would be essential to check how many partners have already confirmed their participation in BEN. Mr Zigo Rutkovskis informed that euroregions like Saule or the

Country of the Lakes, already listed as BEN partners, are only temporarily active. He also commented that BEN's Work Package 1 is overpacked with activities that could really be enough for three projects. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen responded that possible involvement of ERB would not be because of an outcome but due to the fact that BEN groups together a number of influential organisations around the Baltic. Mr Zigo Rutkovskis suggested diminishing the scope of activities first. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen proposed then that each secretariat finds out what the regional interests are and decides which seminars it attends. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska expressed her doubts whether CBSS, partner listed in the description, will really participate in BEN. She also pointed out that ERB can pursue its advertising function through placing its links on the CBSS website or putting articles out through the Baltic Info. Ms Dalia Makuskiene informed that the Lithuanian partner received an invitation to BEN last autumn but did not have sufficient resources. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen proposed that the Board should conditionally confirm ERB's participation in BEN if (1) no cash contribution is required, (2) ERB IPS becomes a partner in BEN, (3) ERB hosts one activity without covering financial expenditure, and (4) ERB receives the updated list of the BEN partners. The Board accepted this proposal.

3.2 Agenda 2007

This is a project submitted by the Regional Municipality of Bornholm within the last application round of the ten-year-long programme called BALTIC EDUCATION. The project aims at increasing the knowledge and competences of key ERB staff in the area of major EU policies, as well as providing them with the necessary expertise before the Seagull II begins. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen delivered a brief presentation (see Annex 5). In the discussion which followed Mr P.G. Lindencrona asked if there is a possibility to include more than one representative from each region at no additional cost to the project and Mr Niels Ch. Andersen informed such a possibility exists. Ms Krystyna Wróblewska suggested that documents produced by the Baltic Development Forum should be of considerable benefit to the Agenda 2007 project.

3.3 ERB Tourism Development Working Group

Mr Niels Ch. Andersen presented another project submitted within the Baltic Education Programme. It will aim at exploring tourism development opportunities within ERB, and eventually at establishing an ERB Tourism Development Working Group. The project resulted from one of the workshops held during the ERB/Seagull conference in Gdańsk last December. After the presentation Ms Annelise Molin pointed out that tourism remains a common sector among the member regions so all the partners can learn from each other, on condition however, that the seminars planned in this project are attended by tourism professionals. Mr Anders Akesson agreed with Ms Molin, saying these seminars will become a testing ground for the project which will certainly be successful if supported by professionals. Mr Rolf A. Karlson added that the Seagull project is now identifying the ten priority actions within the Joint Transnational Development Programme and believes tourism should be included in Priority Area 1, i.e. competitive business environment.

3.4 Maritime Safety: Transport and Environment in the South Sea Region (MaSTER)

MaSTER is a cooperative project coordinated by the Blekinge Regional County Council. Mr Bo Lofgren first presented the background of the project and explained why the role of regional and local authorities in bearing the responsibility for maritime safety. Mr P.G. Lindencrona discussed then the contents of the project and emphasised the fact that ERB is thereby requested to provide strong political support to the project. Mr Bo Lofgren also informed that on 25th January he is going to attend a CPMR-led meeting which is held within the consultation process of drafting a EU green paper called: "The Europe of the Sea". Ms Krystyna Wróblewska asked about the relationship between MaSTER and the CPMR project on maritime safety which is going to be implemented through Interreg III C Programme. Mr Bo Lofgren responded that relationship would become clear after the meeting on 25th. He also informed that so far no response to the project had been voiced by the Latvian or Lithuanian partners. Ms Annelise Molin suggested that the Board members should support the project and recommend it to the relevant organisations at home. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen remarked that a strong support to the project is in line with ERB interests and objectives. Mr Anders Akesson agreed with the point that Mr Andersen made, especially in the light of ERB interest in tourism development. Mr Erik Ciardi pointed out that without a legal personality ERB cannot be a partner in the project, how then it could support it? Mr P. G. Lindencrona responded that eligibility criteria vary with opinions, and the expected and needed support can come through the member regions. Mr Niels Ch. Andersen said that ERB can be a promotor without being a legal entity, e.g. allowing its logo to be used by the project.

4 ERB position on the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)

Following a debate on the wording of an ERB position paper on the ENPI, Ms Krystyna Wróblewska proposed that such a paper will be written down after the meeting with Mr Alistair MacDonald, Head of DG Relex Coordination Unit on ENPI on 25th January, 2005. The Board accepted the proposal.

6. Seagull's current status

Mr Rolf A. Karlson informed the Board that the Seagull project had been granted implementation prolongation until 19th November, 2005 within the approved budget. The prolongation, he said, will be beneficial for the anchoring process of JTDP which is now under revision after the workshops held during the Gdańsk Conference. Summary papers from the individual workshops and the closing speech by ERB President, Mr J. Kozłowski will be put on the ERB website. Mr Rolf A. Karlson also announced that a SWOT analysis is being prepared for the whole ERB area, and the ten priority actions within JTDP will be presented at the Seagull Steering Committee meeting in Klaipeda on 31st January, 2005. Towards the end of February the new JTDP draft will be sent out to the ERB member regions for further distribution and comments until the end of April. The Seagull Steering Committee should not make any final decisions about the contents of the JTDP or how the drafts of the JTDP should be anchored, and therefore will ask the ERB Board/Council to do so. That is why a request was made to include further discussions on JTDP and its anchoring procedures in the agendas of future ERB meetings, also during the joint Board / Council meetings in Klaipeda in February 2005, when a decision should be made by the Board about submitting a draft II of the JTDP for comments to the ERB member regions.

5. Discussion on ERB Council meeting in Klaipeda in February 2005

5.1 Discussion on a date and an outline for the agenda

After hearing some considerations from the Danish and Swedish partners the Board accepted that the ERB Council meeting will take place in Klaipeda on 25th February in the afternoon. The Board will meet on 26th in the morning. The national secretariats and the international secretariat were instructed to prepare a preliminary schedule of the Board and Council meetings during the Lithuanian presidency to be presented and approved in Klaipeda on 25th February, 2005.

5.2 Appointing the Vice-President of ERB for 2005, and thus confirming the rotation of ERB presidency.

Mr Vytautas Rinkievicius informed the Board that the problems which had recently arisen with the Lithuanian presidency in 2005 were due to the elections in the country. A new political power appeared on the arena, which required reshuffling of the Cabinet. The Governors' positions were also affected. Ms Virginija Lukosiene will remain the Governor of Klaipeda County although for the sake of effective presidency this year it was decided that it will be the newly appointed Vice-Governor of Klaipeda County taking over ERB presidency. The name will soon be disclosed.

6 Any Other Business

No other business was brought forward.

Time

25th January, 2005, 10.00 – 11.30 hours

Participants

Guests:

Mr Alistair MacDonald	Head of DG Relex Unit on ENPI General Coordination
Ms Jane Aitken	Acting Head of Scottish Executive EU Office
Ms Sarah English	Policy Coordination and Development Department, Scotland Europa
Ms Alicja Majewska-Gałęziak	Director of Pomorskie Office to EU, Poland

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Mr Bo Löfgren	Member of the Board of Region Blekinge, Sweden
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Ms Dalia Pleskoviene	Klaipeda Regional County Administration, Director of Regional Development Department, Lithuania
Ms Kristina Repsaite	Klaipeda Regional County Administration, Lithuania
Mr Zigo Rutkovskis	Director of Kurzeme Region Development Agency, Latvia
Ms Małgorzata Samusjew	ERB Secretariat, Poland
Ms Magdalena Szymanowska	ERB Secretariat, Poland
Ms Krystyna Wróblewska	Director of Department of International and Economic Cooperation, Marshal's Office of Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poland

1. Introduction by ERB President, Mr Jan Kozłowski

In his introduction (see Annex 6) ERB President, Mr J. Kozłowski addressed the issue of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument with respect to crossborder and transborder cooperation, especially in the light of ERB's ambition to manage its own Neighbourhood Programme, significant sea crossings, and the eligibility of activities in the Kaliningrad Region under the new ENPI.

2. Intervention by Mr Alistair MacDonald

Mr Alistair MacDonald began by thanking the organisers for the invitation. He then went on to make a few, most essential in his view, comments on the new instrument:

- *ENPI is characterised by the two-step approach: introduction of Interreg Neighbourhood Programmes within 2004 – 2006 and afterwards the introduction of the legal and financial framework for programmes between 2007 – 20013;*
- *ENPI aims at strengthening crossborder cooperation on EU's eastern and southern external borders after the Enlargement;*
- *Programming within ENPI will be carried out locally and managing will be performed through joint established structures;*
- *The proposed ENPI regulation will be followed by the implementation regulation which will answer many detailed questions;*
- *There will be parallel procedures and rules for the southern and eastern regions, also in terms of maritime borders;*
- *ENPI is an external instrument for the cooperation between EU member regions and the non-EU regions across the EU border;*

- *For the organisations including the Kaliningrad Region two instruments will be applicable: Interreg and later Neighbourhood Programmes will cover EU members, and ENPI will cover cooperation with the Russian Federation;*
- *Ideally, there will be one big “Baltic” Programme instead of a number of smaller programmes managed by many organisations;*
- *ENPI will certainly evolve, so sharing the Baltic programme by a few organisations within the Baltic Sea Region could become possible in the next programming period: 2014 – 2020;*
- *Activities carried out on the Russian territory will be eligible;*
- *The definition of significant sea crossings is still under debate and not definite;*

Responding to specific questions from the audience, Mr MacDonald said:

- *JTDP is an excellent idea and an essential document whose implementation can be performed through the now operating Interreg III B Programme, soon to be activated Interreg III A Programme, ENPI Baltic Programme in the future, and within the EU - Russia cooperation concerning the Kaliningrad Region;*
- *ENPI Programme and its Baltic component will quite probably enable implementing quite substantial projects;*
- *Legislation itself should not differentiate between the Baltic and Mediterranean regions (specially during negotiations with the member states) although once it is adopted, specific financial allocations will be made based on projects submitted by the regions, so better projects can attract more money to the region.*

3. Closing of the meeting

ERB President, Mr Jan Kozłowski thanked the guests and participants from the ERB regions for the two fruitful days’ meetings and closed the meeting.

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 Jan Kozłowski
 ERB President

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 Annelise Molin
 ERB Board Member