



Euroregion Baltic
Present Presidency
Latvia 2002-2003

Minutes

Euroregion Baltic Council Meeting

Liepāja, Latvia, November 4, 2002

Participating Council members:

Normunds Niedols, BSCPR, Latvia
Knud Andersen, Bornholm, Denmark
Carl Ilsøe, Bornholm, Denmark
Zbigniew Rychly, Assoc. of Communes, Poland
Alicja Klimczak, Pomeranian Voivod, Poland
Krzysztof Swiatek, Olsztyn, Poland
Ludwik Szakiel, Pomerania, Poland
Sarmīte Ozoliņa, Saldus, Latvia
Ilmārs Sekacis, Ventspils, Latvia
Zigo Rutkovskis, BSCPR, Latvia
Tāļivaldis Bergmanis, Kuldīga, Latvia
Māris Dadzis, Ventspils, Latvia
Aivars Lācarus, Talsi, Latvia
Bernth Johnson, Sweden
Sigurdh R. Petersson, Sweden
Ulf Andersson, Sweden
Aleksandr Michailov, Klaipeda, Lithuania
Oleg Chlyk, Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia

Secretariats:

Gunta Strēle, ERB official secretariat
Niels Christen Andersen, ERB national secretariat, Bornholm
Malgorzata Samusjew, ERB national secretariat, Poland
PG Lindencrona, ERB national secretariat, Sweden
Daniel Skold, ERB national secretariat, Sweden
Ann-Kristin Erlandsson, ERB national secretariat, Sweden
Dalia Makuškiene, ERB national secretariat, Lithuania
Victor Koshelev, ERB national secretariat, Russia
Elena Butorova, ERB national secretariat, Russia
Evgenia Cherniavskaya, ERB national secretariat, Russia
Ligita Laipeniece, ERB national secretariat, Latvia
Līga Riežniece, ERB national secretariat, Latvia

Other guests:

Rolf A. Karlson, Seagull project leader
Lars Ohrman, Good Governance project leader

§ 1 **Welcome**

Mr. Niedols, Chairman of the meeting opens it by welcoming everybody to meeting of ERB Council in Liepāja.

Mr. Niedols inquires if there are any additional issues to be placed on the agenda.

Proposal to put on agenda an additional point about the “Good Governance” conference in Sweden.

Thus the agenda is as follows:

1. Appointment of member to co-sign minutes of today’s meeting
2. Approval of the last council meeting minutes
3. Report on the project Seagull DevERB(Mr.Rolf A Karlsson)
4. ERB and and Maritime Safety - P G Lindencrona
5. AEBR annual event information Mr. N.Niedols
6. The Kaliningrad visa situation and report from the workinggroup decided at the board meeting at Bornholm (Niels Chresten Andersen);
7. Good Governance-project - projectleader Lars Ohrman
8. Proposal from the EAST-WEST Institute about cooperation with ERB
9. Euregions proposal from Poland (Poland party)

1. Appointment of a member to co-sign the minutes of today’s meeting

Normunds Niedols proposes Danish party to be the co-signer of the minutes. The proposal is accepted unanimously.

2. Approval of previous Council meeting minutes

Minutes approved. Signed by the Presidency and the Swedish party.

3. Report about Seagull Dev ERB project

Mr. Rolf A. Karlson - A new informative material is prepared about the project and was used in the conference in Lillehammer. Situation with the project – the plan developed with the help of WP1 would be the basis for investments evaluated to be central for the development of the region. Plan anchored in the decision-making bodies is a very strong instrument. WP2 – input into development plan of Water Directive. WP3 – network of innovative centres. Sweden and Denmark already have such networks. Private sector needs to be strong to be able to develop such networks. WP4 - planning of rural areas. Tests will be performed on national level. WP5 – dissemination of information. The newly prepared booklets is the first step. Web-page has also

improved considerably. The first materials – booklets, stand can be considered rather good. Necessary to increase the number of languages of available information. Booklets are planned to be published in all 6 languages. WP1 needs the greatest part of assistance. Inputs – “Good governance”, geographical data collection, statistics, etc. The first meeting of WP4 was held in Gdansk in October. Was not successful, because project leaders did not arrive due to a technical ferry problem. The conference in Ronneby will be held one day longer to discuss all issues.

Generally the situation with the project is good. Only problem – no Phare or Tacis applications up to now. Polish partners are working on a proposal.

New information on the web-site: www.eurobalt.org/admin. Materials for internal use – very effective.

A summary about the current situation in the project and general structural information is distributed to all participants.

Knud Andresen – What is the situation with co-financing from Eastern partners?

Malgorzata Samusew – Poland will prepare an application for 3 partners – 2 regions and the association from the Small Project Fund in the end of December, beginning of January – when the call for proposals will come.

Rolf Karlson – most of the calculations are done taking into account just the Interreg application.

Gunta Strēle – in Latvia the call for proposals is also expected in January.

Rolf Karlson – the competition is very hard, so we must prepare high quality projects.

All agree to proposals for decisions to be made mentioned in Rolf’s report.

4. Maritime Safety

PG Lindencrona – there are several parties operating in this sphere. There is co-operation between Coast Guards around the Baltic Sea. Organisations like: Helcom, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, on the EU level – European Maritime Safety Agency.

An important issue is to find how to handle it in ERB, for the moment there is no concrete proposal.

Victor Koshelev – Dear Colleagues, thank you Mr. Lindencrona. Maritime safety is a very topical issue. It is important because after communication between regional authorities, a dynamic development of transport sector will follow and it will be necessary to ensure not only maritime safety, but also safety on the land. Some proposals should be made.

Ulf Andersson – This issue is of course important, but we should not devote so much attention to national level questions. We should follow to these questions. It is good, that we have an overview of the situation due to this paper. I believe there is need to make any decisions now.

Knud Andresen – This is an open question. On the one hand it is said, that there is good co-operation, on the other in this paper it is said that there is lack of co-operation.

Victor Koshelev – We would like to have good co-operation on ensuring safety on land. It is not necessary to perform the role of national level.

Knud Anderesen – There is a good system in Sweden. It is a good idea to write to different authorities with request to explain the real situation. After that we can decide on any concrete actions.

5. Report on the AEBR conference

Normunds Niedols – I had meetings with President of the association and Jan Gabbe the Secretary General.

We have to make a decision to become or not to become members of this association. Not all members pay participation fees – this gives to us the possibility to participate with some of our ERB members who are able to pay.

Decision should be made till January 2003. Membership fee is 2000 EUR from each membership party, which gives one voice.

Knud Anderesen – The importance of regional authorities is increasing. Right now there are 4 such organisations, we should look at how regional authority importance will change on European scale.

It would be better to make this decision in spring of 2003, then we would be in a much better position.

Normunds Niedols – Regarding the participation fee for non EU members, it can be reduced, as in our case, for Kaliningrad region.

Victor Koshelev – We are very interested in the experience of such an organisation, because thanks to such euroregions Europe is like it has no borders. I think it would be very positive to be a member, however the payment issue is difficult.

Normunds Niedols – in terms of budget planning it would be better to make a decision now.

Aleksandr Michailov – it is important.

Ulf Andersson – right now the most important thing would be to analyse how important it is for us. We have been discussing this matter very long and I hope we will make a positive decision.

Normunds Niedols – this issue is postponed till the next Council meeting.

6. Border-crossing problems – work group report

Niels Chresten Andersen – this issue has been discussed for several meetings. I have prepared a background document, which was distributed to all of you in advance. Together with Mr. Koshelev we have prepared a resolution. The documents contains information on the development of this issue as well as the opinion of EU - proposal to introduce special permits for inhabitants of Kaliningrad Oblast that would improve the border crossing process, and to introduce special high-speed trains going from Kaliningrad region to Russia without stopping in between. No additional comments were received during the work of border crossing work group.

A special fund should be established for Kaliningrad region, and these resources should be used for solving these problems.

A concrete proposal should be discussed using the concrete background paper.

Victor Koshelev – This theme is difficult and important. Considering the Bornholm proposal it was clear that introduction of strict rules could impede the development of

Kaliningrad region, Poland and Lithuania, as well as create obstacles for co-operation. That is why we offer for discussion a concrete document. We ask you to consider it and come to a common opinion.

I believe that the introduction of strict rules could create tension in this Kaliningrad-Poland-Lithuania region, because local inhabitants will be very disappointed about these problems.

All of us have the responsibility to do something, each of us can provide input and we can prepare a common ERB opinion regarding this issue.

Oleg Chlyk – The proposals are topical, both EU and Russia have to make a decision about establishment of new border-crossing points, thus the situation could be improved.

The development of common ERB opinion is also important, because it will help to solve common problems. The introduction of high-speed trains will humiliate Russian inhabitants, it is not the right solution. It is necessary to look for new approaches and solutions.

Victor Koshelev - The most important thing is to solve safety issues, ensuring it both from Russian and the EU side. Visas will not solve the criminality problem. It is important to approach this issue carefully.

Ludwik Szakiel – Most important is the issue of border-crossing points, not visas. This document contains just general suggestions, not concrete proposals. As this is an international issue we can not make a decision here.

Knud Andersen – We have to talk about simplification of border-crossing process and support for Kaliningrad region in this resolution, there has to be a good reason to sign it.

Victor Koshelev – in order to obtain visa:

- 1) acquisition of a voucher
- 2) special mark
- 3) processing visa – difficult procedure in Moscow.

The process is difficult both ways – for us and for people from foreign countries wanting to come to Russian Federation.

About the resolution – there are no concrete solutions yet, it is a general document.

Ulf Andersson – Is this really the key issue. What we want to achieve is improved possibilities for movement.

- 1) agreement or compromise regarding visas will be achieved on November 11.
- 2) the main issue is border-crossing and I have experienced a lot. When it takes 8 hours to cover the distance that looks about 2 hours on the map it is not how it should be.

In this case my EU passport and visa was no help. I believe that the Kaliningrad Fund resources could be used for establishment of more border-crossing points, thus helping in solving this problem.

Oleg Chlyk – The travelling problem influence also the people of Lithuania. There are 941000 people in Kaliningrad region currently being able to cross Lithuania without a visa with the internal Russian passport. It is not possible for all these people to receive special foreign passports till July 1, 2003, and it costs 30 USD for one person. The purchasing ability of people is not high enough for them to be able to buy ferry or plane tickets, and such situation will create tension. The problem of free movement has to be solved.

Knud Andersen – Resolution has to be signed today. My suggestion – a working group makes changes using the existing resolution as a basis and stressing the importance of Kaliningrad Fund. Important is to decide what we want to change.

Victor Koshelev – It would be best if changes could be made till 11th of November.

Knud Andersen – I believe it can be done today.

Gunta Strēle – Proposal: Niels and Victor make the necessary changes.

Aleksandr Michailov – We all agree that this is our common problem. Only problem is, we are not fully satisfied with the text of resolution, if it can be changed now – we agree.

Ludwik Szakiel – We agree that the changes are made right now and we sign the resolution today.

Victor Koshelev – I am not ready to provide recommendations regarding border-crossing procedures, but I can reflect the current situation. Each of us can provide input, we can discuss the things and prepare a material.

7. Good Governance project

Lars Ohrman - Closing conference of the project will be held in Sweden 2.-3., 2002. Project results will be processed and distributed to all parties involved. There will be proposals for “Seagull” project, report to the Swedish government.

13 seminars of 15 were held, each for about 20 people, 110 politicians and experts all together.

Swedish party – It was a good opportunity to learn from each other. The main idea is co-operation, we came to the conclusion that one municipality is too small to influence national development. We as politicians must be the ones explaining why one or another decision has been made.

Good Governance is a good start for Seagull, it will be good for those that will join EU and also for those who will not. Thank you for the project.

Victor Koshelev – I want to express my gratitude to the Swedish party for this project, it was a good tool for co-operation. It has facilitated strengthening of ties and the following conference will be very useful.

8. Proposal from East –West Institute about co-operation with ERB

PG Lindencrona – We have received an invitation to take part in the project ER Network – first of all to go to ER Carpathian to give a presentation of ERB. I will report back about this event to the next ERB Board meeting.

Victor Koshelev – We have to improve communication between partners, Russian party should know about all projects regarding ERB.

PG Lindencrona - In the mailing list there was also a contact person for Kaliningrad, I believe.

9. Euroregions’ proposal from Poland

Malgorzata Samusjew – We have received the following proposal (materials handed out).

Normunds Niedols - please get acquainted and we should make a decision on the next meeting.

10. Other business

About the conference in Ronneby on 2 - 3 December

The idea is to discuss the future co-operation issues. Plenary sessions- guests from the Danish and Swedish sides, responsible for Baltic Sea co-operation issues, as well as responsibilities for Phare and Tacis issues.

Conference for seminar participants, ERB officials as well as Seagull work package experts. There will be guests from BSSSC.

The Seagull project will be presented, there will be 6 workshops.

200-250 participants from Baltic states, Polands and Kaliningrad. Invitation was sent to national secretariats.

Proposal of Environmental group

A common project – question – economical assistance to this project.

Information from Kaliningrad

There was a meeting of Lithuania – Poland – Russia organised by EU, with participation of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Fund for Protection of Children organises a round table to help children with tuberculosis. ERB is invited to participate in this round table.

Northern Dimension seminar

Will be held in Murmansk 24-25 January. Information available – please ask the secretariat.

11. Signing of revised Resolution on Border Crossing Problems connected with Kaliningrad region

All parties sign the resolution and it will be sent to governments of 6 partner states and to several international organisations - the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, etc.

Normunds Niedols
President

Vice President