



ERB COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes

Date:

30th March 2006
16.00 – 19.30 hours (local time)

Meeting Place:

Kaliningrad Oblast Government Office, Donskovo Street 1

Participants:

ERB Board members

Irina Rozova	ERB President, Vice-Governor of Klaipeda County, Lithuania
Bo Frank	Vice-Mayor of Växjö, Sweden
Alexander Kuzniecov	ERB Vice-President, Russia
Jan Kozłowski	Marshal of Pomorskie Region, Poland
Per Ole Petersen	Bornholm Regional Municipality Council Member, Denmark

ERB Council members

Camilla Håård Andersson	Political Advisor to Regional Council in Kronoberg, Sweden
Boris Batalin	Kaliningrad Duma member, Russia
Ken Bolmar	Bornholm Regional Municipality Council Member, Denmark
Lillebill Grähs	Kalmar County Council Member, Sweden
Alexander Gregorev	Chairman of the Association of the Municipalities of the Kaliningrad Region, Russia
Bernth Johnson	Blekinge County Council Chairman, Sweden
Zbigniew Karpowicz	Vice-Mayor of Olsztyn, Poland
Victor Koshelev	Deputy Head of Baltijsk Municipal Administration, Russia
Ragnar Lindberg	Kronoberg County Council Member, Sweden
Bo Löfgren	Blekinge County Council Member, Sweden
Bo Lundgren	Kalmar County Council Member, Sweden
Dalia Makuskiene	Chief Foreign Relations Officer, Lithuania
Piotr Ołowski	Governor of Pomorskie Region, Poland

Mikhail Pluhin	Minister of Territorial Development and Cooperation with Self-Government at Kaliningrad Region Government, Russia
Juriy Rozkov-Jurevskiy	Representative of Kaliningrad Region to Poland
Andrzej Ryński	Marshal of Warminsko-Mazurskie Region, Poland
Juriy Savenko	Mayor of Kaliningrad, Russia
Jadwiga Semmerling-Osowska	Mayor of Młynary, Poland
Henryk Słonina	Mayor of Elbląg, Poland
Adam Supeł	Governor of Warminsko-Mazurskie Region, Poland
Fedor Yaroshevitch	Head of Baltijsk Municipal Administration, Russia
Alexander Wendt	Blekinge County Council Member, Sweden
Gert Wollinger	Kalmar County Council Member, Sweden
Joanna Zielińska	Gdynia Municipality Council Member, Poland

Secretariats

Niels Chresten Andersen	Head of ERB Secretariat, Bornholm, Denmark
Ulf Andersson	ERB Secretariat, Kronoberg, Sweden
Elena Butorova	ERB Secretariat, Baltijsk, Russia
Erik Ciardi	ERB Secretariat, Kalmar, Sweden
Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański	Head of ERB Int'l Secretariat
Olga Gregorevna	ERB Secretariat, Baltijsk, Russia
Sven Lindahl	Kaliningrad Cooperation Coordinator, Bornholm, Denmark
PG Lindencrona	Head of ERB Secretariat, Blekinge, Sweden
Zdzisław Olszewski	Head of ERB Secretariat, Poland
Armands Pužulis	ERB Secretariat, Kurzeme, Latvia
Sara Sjöln	ERB Secretariat, Blekinge, Sweden
Magdalena Szymanowska	ERB Secretariat, Poland

Guests

Sergey Bezberezhnev	Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in the Kaliningrad Region, Russia
Georgiy Boos	Governor of Kaliningrad, Russia
Jarosław Czubiński	General Consul of Poland to Kaliningrad Region
Marianne Eckerbom	Ljungby Municipal Council Vice-Chairman, Sweden
Björn Elmer	Acting Consul General of Sweden to Kaliningrad Region
Arne Grove	General Consul of Denmark to Kaliningrad Region
Niklas Hansson	Environment Inspector, Municipality of Ljungby, Sweden
Elena Korolova	Consultant at the Ministry of Territorial Development and Cooperation with Self-Government, Russia
Witold Kuszewski	Eastern Relations Advisor to the Governor of Pomorskie Region, Poland
Zbigniew Puchajda	Director of Department of Int'l & Economic Cooperation at Pomorskie Marshal's Office
Peter Ratcovich	RED Project Manager, Sweden
Avenins Raitis	Director of the Consular Office of the Republic of Latvia

Victor Romanowski	Director of the Unit at the Ministry of Territorial Development and Cooperation with Self-Government, Russia
Kora Stańczyk	Seagull II WP 1 Leader, Poland
Zbigniew Szmurło	Eastern Relations Advisor to the Governor of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region, Poland
Krystyna Wróblewska	Director of Department of Int'l & Economic Cooperation at Pomorskie Marshal's Office
Piotr Zwolak	Seagull II Warmińsko-Mazurskie Regional Coordinator, Poland
Interpreters	
Wanda Stec	Russian – Polish interpreter
Olga Danilova	Russian – English interpreter
Elena Bojarska	Russian – English interpreter

16.00 – 16.30 1) Registration

16.30 – 16.40 2) Opening of the meeting

The Governor of the Kaliningrad Region, Mr Georgiy Boos welcomed the participants to this Council meeting, marking the change in the ERB Presidency, now to be held by the Russian Party. In his address, Mr Boos said:

I am particularly glad to be opening a Euroregion Baltic Council meeting, during which the Presidency in the organisation will be transferred to the Russian Party.

I would like to welcome all the participants to this meeting who have arrived here in Kaliningrad from Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. My special gratitude goes to Ms Irina Rozova, the Vice-Governor of Klaipeda County who, for over a year, bore a heavy burden of the multitude of ERB President's duties.

Let us now recall the beginning when in 1998 the municipalities of the Kaliningrad Region and Administration of Baltijsk initiated Russian participation in the Euroregion. During the next eight years, all the partners from around the Southern part of the Baltic have managed to lay good grounds for crossborder cooperation, developing and partially implementing common projects in spatial development, coordinating socio-economic, historical and cultural heritage and youth initiatives. Still, the most essential seems the fact that the local and regional authorities of the neighbouring countries have overcome their distrust and prejudices to learn to understand each other and build a common action plan.

As you know, the Russian participation in the work of the Euroregion expanded two years ago with the introduction of the Oblast's executive and legislative bodies. Now that the Government of the Kaliningrad Oblast is a legal successor of the regional administration, the ERB Establishment Agreement will once again be annexed. The Government will be represented by Minister Mikhail Pluhin.

Finally, I would like to address one more issue. Next year, Lithuania and Poland are expected to join the Schengen Treaty. I believe we should make every possible effort to prevent deterioration of border crossing procedures now in place, especially those related to the time needed to obtain visas, possibility to receive multiple entry visas, and exemption from fees.

I wish the participants a successful and fruitful meeting!

16.40 – 16.45 3) Change to the Agreement establishing Euroregion Baltic

Following the request by the Russian Party, the Council adopted a resolution, officially annexing the Agreement Establishing Euroregion Baltic in the following phrasing:

Due to the establishment of the Government of Kaliningrad Region, which is a legal successor of the Administration of the Kaliningrad Region – one of the founders of Euroregion "Baltic", page 5 paragraph 7 of the Agreement establishing the Euroregion "Baltic" should be read in the following wording:

"Whenever the expression "Russian Party" is used in the Agreement, it should be understood as "The Government of the Kaliningrad Region", "The Kaliningrad Regional Duma", and "The Association of Municipalities of the Kaliningrad Region". This Supplement is an integral part of the Agreement on establishing the Euroregion "Baltic"

4) Approval of Final Agenda

The Council members approved the proposed agenda without changes.

5) Signing the minutes of the previous ERB Council meeting

ERB President, Ms Irina Rozova, and Council member, Mr Victor Koshelev, placed their signatures in approval of the minutes from the previous ERB Council session on 28th November 2005.

16.45 – 17.00 6) 2005 Annual Report

Ms Irina Rozova read out an outline of the 2005 Annual Report, presenting a brief account of the activities conducted within the Euroregion under her chairmanship. She emphasised the completion of the Seagull devERB project and its main output: Joint Development Programme. It underwent a continuous process of consultations which took place in the member regions, as well as during the meetings, seminars, conferences organised around the Euroregion. Its final version contains the development strategy for the next 10 years, action programme prioritising a number of activities within the four focus areas of the strategy, and the background document, including analyses and facts about the ERB. On 28th November 2005 the Joint Development Programme was approved by the decision bodies of the ERB member regions, as well as by the ERB Council. The Programme specifies four focus areas for future cooperation:

- A competitive business environment
- Transport infrastructure
- Social dimension
- Environment and energy policies

President Rozova went on to discuss the Seagull II project, whose main aim is to enhance institutional capacities within Euroregion Baltic in assistance to the implementation of the Joint Development Programme so that future activities carried out in ERB are in line with the 2nd Northern Dimension Action Plan, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies, and Common Economic Space between the EU and Russia. The conference in Klaipeda marked an official kick-off of the Seagull II and its main objective was to present the project to a wider audience consisting of representatives of the national, regional and local levels. More than 100 participants attended the conference, representing the project partners, invited guests and ERB Council. The conference included first meetings of the project reference network members who could familiarise themselves with the activities scheduled in 2006. One of these activities plans establishing so-called project development teams, which will at a later stage prepare crossborder and transnational applications, enabling EU financial assistance in the implementation of the ERB Joint Development Programme.

President Rozova also debated on the lobbying campaign pursued by the Euroregion in order to acquire a status of a CBC area between 2007 and 2013. The Council was to come back to this point in a separate discussion, following this item of the agenda.

President Rozova mentioned the promotional activities of Euroregion Baltic, participation in other projects that contribute to sustainable development in the region, cultural and youth cooperation and international events attended by ERB representatives.

The participants received the 2005 Annual Report drawn up and released by the International Secretariat, which will distribute copies of the Report among the ERB parties.

17.00 – 17.30 Coffee break

17.30 – 18.30 Thematic Discussions

7) Euroregion Baltic territory in the future crossborder cooperation programmes

Proposals were presented of geographical scopes of the planned crossborder and transnational cooperation programmes covering the territory of the ERB member regions. The discussion concerned both, the new Objective 3 programmes (suggested programmes: Denmark – Germany – Poland – Sweden, Lithuania – Poland, Latvia – Lithuania), and those on the EU's external border to be financed by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, particularly the one covering Poland, Kaliningrad and Belarusia.

The members of the Council passed a resolution in support of the efforts aiming at establishing such a programme which would make it possible for all the ERB member regions to fully participate in the European territorial cooperation. The resolution adopted the following wording:

The Euroregion Baltic Council reiterates its earlier position concerning the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), whereby we proposed that all the Euroregion Baltic member regions be included on the list of eligible territorial units for cross-border ENPI programmes and constitute an ERB cross-border Neighbourhood Programme area between 2007 and 2013.

We do consider, however, a less favourable, alternative approach towards future opportunities for cooperation within the territory of Euroregion Baltic, offered by a mixture of other crossborder and transnational programmes within Objective 3 of the Structural Funds, as well as ENPI programmes involving the Kaliningrad Region and its neighbours.

We are confident that Euroregion Baltic can offer a politically well-anchored and effective existing cross-border neighbourhood co-operation platform, capable of implementing the main objectives of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Northern Dimension and the objectives for EU-Russia relations concerning the Kaliningrad region and the development of the Four Common Spaces.

8) Joint Development Programme activities under the political patronage of the member regions

Representatives of the Pomorskie Region from Poland and Blekinge Region from Sweden presented official declarations to offer their patronage over the two activities recommended by the ERB Joint Development Programme, cooperation towards tourism development and improving transport infrastructure in the territory of the member regions, respectively.

Such administrative support towards the Joint Development Programme will substantially enhance the implementation of the Seagull II project and the work of the reference networks. The Council took note of declarations from other member regions to promptly respond to the proposal suggesting their patronage over the remaining activities.

The Head of Baltijsk Municipal Administration, Mr Fedor Yaroshevitch, put forward a proposal to organise a conference dealing with the question of the West – East transport corridor, to be held in the Kaliningrad Region. The Council took note of a preliminary proposal to combine the conference with the next ERB Council meeting in November 2006.

ERB Council member, Ms Joanna Zielińska, presented a request voiced by the *Association of Amber Motorway Cities* in support of the initiative aiming at the European Commission considering the Pan-European Transport Corridor No 6 an element of the TEN – T network. The Council adopted a resolution in the following wording:

In accordance with the Euroregion Baltic Joint Transnational Development Programme, the Council of ERB will take political actions in order to highlight the unsatisfactory situation that all ERB member regions have poor access to the main TEN transport corridors now prioritised on EU and national levels. Their aim will be to mobilise support for actions acting to improve the situation for the South East Baltic Sea area.

In line with the above, we strongly support the idea of upgrading the Baltic-Link corridor in Sweden to be part of the Trans European Network system and part of the PAN European Corridor system.

The Baltic-Link corridor in Sweden consists of road 27 and the railway Coast-to-Coast line. Upgrading of the corridor, connecting the Nordic Triangle to the A1 motorway and the railway axis Gdansk-Vienna in Poland, which are already parts of the above systems – (project no 25 and no 23), would mean enlarging of the PAN European Corridor VI with a Nordic axle, combining the North Sea, the Baltic Sea and the Adriatic Sea.

We believe that the upgrading of the Baltic-Link would also mean better connections between Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea area, combining strategic E-roads and the roads with the TEN status, and facilitating greater cohesion between the old and new EU members (see map below).

The upgrading of the Baltic-Link is also supported by the final conclusions from the former EU Interreg III B project SEBTrans-Link, which states “the entire Baltic-Link corridor should be identified as part of the PAN European Transport Network”. The whole corridor includes Sweden, Poland, Lithuania and Kaliningrad/Russian Federation, who were also the partners of the SEBTrans-Link project.

ERB support to his imitative will give a strong impetus to the ERB cooperation in the field of transport infrastructure and its activities planned by the Joint Development Programme to address the so far unsatisfactory situation. It will also assist the activities within the Seagull II project that aim at establishing a permanent committee dealing with transport infrastructure within Euroregion Baltic.

ERB Council member, Mr Victor Koshelev presented a request from the Kaliningrad Region Philharmonic Orchestra to be involved in activities held within the ERB cooperation. The Council members requested that the Russian Secretariat send out a detailed calendar of events that the Philharmonic Orchestra plans for 2006 so that they can familiarise themselves with the proposal.

18.30 – 19.30 Change of ERB Presidency

9) Transferring the ERB Presidency from the Lithuanian Party to the Russian Party.

The outgoing President, Irina Rozova transferred the chair of the ERB Presidency to Mr Mikhail Pluhin, Minister of Territorial Development and Cooperation with Self-Government at Kaliningrad Region Government, wishing him a successful year of work.

Ms Irina Rozova, and the outgoing Vice-President, Mr Alexander Kuzniecov received gifts from the delegations of Poland, Russia and Sweden.

Ms Irina Rozova also thanked the International Secretariat for assistance and support provided in the course of her presidency.

The incoming President, Mr Mikhail Pluhin gave a brief opening speech, addressing all the participating parties with a request for assistance in his work for the benefit of the Euroregion, expressing his belief that collaboration will result in further success.

10) Changes of Councillors in the ERB Council

The participating delegations of the ERB member regions presented their current Councillors, following the national and regional elections, and changes. The Swedish Party also introduced their new representative to the ERB Board, Mr Bernth Johnson, who had become the new Vice-President of Euroregion Baltic.

The Latvian and Lithuanian partners informed the Council members that they will send the lists of their national Councillors to the International Secretariat at a later date.

11) Appointing the ERB Council members to sign the minutes from this Council meeting

ERB President, Mr Mikhail Pluhin and ERB Council member, Ms Irina Rozova were appointed to co-sign the minutes from this Council session on 30th March 2006.

12) Resolution of the Council on political representation of the regions in the Board

Following the proposal made by the ERB Board member Mr B Frank at the Council meeting in Klaipeda on 28th November 2005 and the discussion conducted at the Board meeting on 1st March 2006, concerning the question of political representation of the regions in the Board of Euroregion Baltic, the International Secretariat drafted the text of the resolution, expressing willingness on the part of all the Parties in Euroregion Baltic to provide significant rank to their representatives to the Board.

The Council adopted a resolution in the following wording:

The Euroregion Baltic Council considers it desirable that candidates to the Euroregion Baltic Executive Board be persons of the highest possible rank of political significance.

It is well understood that such candidates can offer their experience and political skills to the management of Euroregion Baltic and support the organisation in the achievement of its goals.

13) Setting a date for the next Council meeting and signing an invitation to the Pirme Minister of Catalonia, Mr Josep Bargalló

The next Council meeting was proposed to be held on 6th November 2006 in Kaliningrad, with the invited participation by Mr Josep Bargalló, Pirme Minister of Catalonia. The Polish Party Euroregion Baltic requested that the date be postponed until about ten days later due to the local and regional elections to be held at the beginning of November. The debate did not result in a new date being set so President Pluhin asked the International and National Secretariats to propose an alternative date. The Council seconded the President's request.

14) Any Other Business

On behalf of the Polish delegation, Mr S. Demkowicz-Dobrzański, proposed that the Secretariats of Lithuania, Poland and Russia prepare a joint project proposal to the Lithuania – Poland – Kaliningrad Interreg III A Neighbourhood Programme to host the third edition of ERB Youth Games in 2007.

The Council approved the proposal and asked the Secretariats of Lithuania, Poland and Russia to appoint people responsible for the preparation of the project.

At this moment, the agenda was thoroughly discussed, and President Pluhin closed the meeting.

Mikhail Pluhin
ERB President

Irina Rozova
ERB Board Member

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