

EUROREGION BALTIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2008



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1. Introduction

Euroregion Baltic (ERB) was established in February 1998 and is a politically solid and well-anchored cooperation in the south-east of the Baltic Sea region, consisting of eight regions of Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. It was the first Euroregion to have formally included a partner from the Russian Federation. Since its early days ERB has been pursuing the goals of improving life conditions for its inhabitants, promoting bonds and contacts among local communities, and providing measures for a more sustainable development within the region. These then proved challenging tasks for the organisation which included EU member states, acceding countries, and the Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation.

Comprising the regions from both old and new EU Member States, and the Russian Kaliningrad Oblast, Euroregion Baltic constitutes the operational network of substantial and effective links across the borders, facilitating the promotion of political dialogue and reform, as well as sustainable, economic, social and environmental development, and thus strengthening local democracy and fostering people-to-people contacts between civil societies. The co-operation actively involves both local and regional authorities, private and public sectors, and NGOs.

Within the framework of the INTERREG III B BSR financed Seagull Project, in 2005 ERB partners elaborated a long-term development strategy based on four strategic priorities, including economic and social development, implementation of the EU policies regarding environmental protection and promotion of renewable energy sources, as well as improving the infrastructures in order to provide better access to the Trans European transport networks, all corresponding with the revised Lisbon Strategy and the development of Four Common Spaces between the European Union and Russia.

2. Information and Communication activities so far

2.1. 2004 Information and Communication Strategy

The INTERREG III B BSR Seagull Project also gave rise to the first time ever effort within Euroregion Baltic to produce a methodical approach to information and communication activities of the organisation in the form of a strategy. Its goals focused around some selected objectives:

- To assure constantly updated and easily accessible information about ERB with main focus on our common website
- To steadily increase the visibility of ERB internally in our regions as well as externally in our countries and Europe
- To assure timely well prepared and well informed and communicated meetings and other activities
- To assure a high quality, target oriented, short and precise communications between the ERB partners and in our communications with external partners
- To assure that concrete results and benefits of the ERB co-operation are communicated internally in our regions and to external relevant partners
- To elaborate and implement a more concrete strategy for our lobbying activities

2.2. 2007 – 2008 Action Plan

In 2007 two-year action plans for ERB cooperation were introduced with the aim of streamlining activities recommended by the combined Parties holding ERB Presidency and Vice-Presidency in the organisation. They covered the whole set of issues on the ERB agenda, placing a lot of focus on our information policy. The 2007 - 2008 Action Plan, presented by the Swedish – Danish combo, proposed that:

- Information and Communication Strategy adopted in September 2004 should be updated and revised;
- more efforts should be put into developing and updating the ERB homepage;
- a statistical database and a benchmarking system should be set up, connected to the ERB homepage;
- use of the Marratech on-line meeting system should be extended and be the main communication tool for the ERB secretariats and networks, as well as an important tool to be used in the people-to-people cooperation;
- an ERB lobbying strategy will be prepared for each ERB presidency, pointing out the main issues, the main institutions and structures to address the lobbying activities, how and when to address them etc.
- promotional material in all ERB languages will be published through the homepage;
- a closer cooperation should be sought between political leaders at the local and regional level in ERB, as well as a higher involvement of members of national parliaments, European Parliament, EU Committee of Regions and the EU Economic and Social Committee.

2.3. 2008 – 2009 Action Plan

The 2008 - 2009 Action Plan submitted by the joint Danish and Polish Parties included the following objectives regarding the ERB information policy agenda:

- making ERB brand more recognisable in Baltic Sea Region and EU;
- pursuing coherent and active ERB information policy;
- maintaining well updated and functioning ERB website;
- taking more active part in the EU policy-making processes;
- publishing regularly ERB newsletter,
- uploading regularly statistical data to the ERB database.

3. Foci and objectives

This Information and Communication Strategy takes into consideration the previous efforts taken by ERB actors in order to pursue a coherent information policy. It aims at continuing good practices already initiated within our organisation rather than at offering a set of completely novel methods of communicating the goals and achievements of ERB cooperation to the general public. It does however strive to streamline ERB information and communication activities so that, given our growing but still limited institutional and financial capacities, they generate expected results.

After careful consideration of submitted ideas and discussions held within the ERB Information and Communication Strategy Task Force, ERB Executive Board and ERB Working Groups, the Council members have agreed to put forward the following foci and objectives of 2008 Euroregion Baltic Information and Communication Strategy:

1. Increasing visibility and promoting results of the cooperation, making Euroregion Baltic a more recognisable brand in Baltic Sea Region and EU:
 - 1.1. Increasing the number of information activities targeting local and regional political bodies, other relevant target groups and the public in general;
 - 1.2. Promoting funding opportunities (EU, Nordic, national etc.) in order to increase more concrete cooperation activities for specific target groups, such as youth, business life, NGO's etc.;
 - 1.3. Participating in debates held in the European Union, Baltic Sea Region and nationally on issues of relevance for Euroregion Baltic;
 - 1.4. Organising conferences and other bigger events, including use of well-known speakers;
 - 1.5. Taking part in events of European and interregional organisations, such as annual meetings, fairs and thematic conferences of specific ERB interest, as well as in regional and local events such as fairs and festivals;
2. Improving internal communications among ERB partners, both between ERB member regions and their municipalities, consolidating ERB institutional capacities and coordinating its cross-cutting activities:
 - 2.1. Tightening cooperation between political leaders at the local and regional level within Euroregion Baltic;
 - 2.2. Improving the efficiency of the existing channels of communication;

4. Action Plan

No	Action	Implemented	Responsibility by	In cooperation with
1.0	Visibility			
1.1	Information on ERB			
1.1.1	ERB Website			
A	Updating the website with news and documents.	regularly	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats, ERB Youth Board, ERB Working Groups
B	Promoting new entries on the website with emails to selected target groups	regularly	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
C	Updating the website section containing links to other organisations and placing links o the ERB website on other organisations' homepages	January - February 2009	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
D	Upgrading the website with new sections that will be considered relevant in the course of ERB cooperation	whenever relevant	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats, ERB Youth Board, ERB Working Groups
E	Uploading the ERB bimonthly electronic newsletter in English	every three months	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
F	Uploading electronic summaries of the newsletter in the ERB languages	when available	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
G	Introducing the links related to the EU territorial cooperation programmes.	January - February 2009	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats, ERB Youth Board, ERB Working Groups
H	Introducing information on South Baltic contact points in the regions	January - February 2009	ERB Secretariats	SBA Contact Points in ERB regions
I	Promoting projects developed by the ERB Working Groups. Information on WG members, contact information and tasks will be made available on the WG sites.	whenever relevant	ERB Working Groups	ERB Secretariats, ERB Youth Board, ERB Working Groups
1.1.2	ERB electronic newsletter			
A	Publishing the ERB quarterly electronic newsletter of four A4 pages in English.	every three months	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats, ERB Youth Board, ERB Working Groups
B	Distributing the newsletter among the contacts on the A, B and C mailing lists (see chapter 4). Uploading the newsletter on the ERB website	every three months	ERB IPS	
C	ERB parties may produce electronic summaries of the newsletter in the ERB languages (Danish, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Swedish) and disseminate them locally. IPS will upload such summaries on the ERB website (Action under 1.1.1)	every three months	ERB Secretariats	

1.1.3	ERB statistical database			
A	Finalising a discussion on the ERB statistical website: whether needed, in what scope and how updated.	before November 2009	ERB Executive Board	ERB Secretariats, ERB Youth Board, ERB Working Groups
1.1.4	Promotional material			
A	Producing info packages for selected target groups, as part of a new joint ERB project	2009 - 2011	ERB Secretariats	Regional Councils of ERB Members
B	Producing info packages for the youth in English, as part of an ERB Youth Board project. A short information text in all the ERB languages will be available on the ERB Youth Board website.	2009 - 2011	ERB Youth Board	ERB Secretariats, Regional Councils of ERB Members
C	Producing official ERB images, including logotypes, maps, etc, as part of a new joint ERB project	2009	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
1.1.5	Media			
A	Inviting local, regional, national media representatives to selected ERB meetings and events	regularly	ERB Secretariats	
B	Inviting most recognised media representatives (either as observers or as moderators) to special ERB events, e.g. thematic conferences, project conferences, etc	regularly	ERB Secretariats	
C	Providing information on ERB cooperation to local, regional, national media	regularly	ERB Secretariats	ERB Executive Board, ERB Council
D	Including addresses of local, regional, national media representatives in the ERB mailing lists (see Action A under 2.2.2)	before December 2008	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
1.1.6	Facilitating provision of knowledge and expertise to ERB members			
A	Facilitating participation of experts in ERB Working Groups	2009 - 2011	ERB Working Groups	ERB Secretariats
B	Promoting the triple-helix concept in ERB cooperation, as part of ERB Working Group projects and/or of a joint ERB project	2009 - 2011	ERB Secretariats	Regional Councils of ERB Members, ERB Working Groups
C	Exploring the possibilities of the organisation of a scientific conference on Euroregions, preferably as part of a joint ERB project	2010 or 2011	ERB Secretariats	Regional Councils of ERB Members
D	Commissioning a scientific study on ERB history and cooperation, as part of a joint ERB project	2010 or 2011	ERB Secretariats	Regional Councils of ERB Members

1.2	Funding opportunities			
1.2.1	ERB Website			
A	See Actions G and H under 1.1.1	January - February 2009	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
1.2.2	ERB Working Groups			
A	See Action I under 1.1.1	regularly	ERB Working Groups	ERB Secretariats

B	Keeping information on existing financial opportunities as a permanent point on the agenda of ERB Working Group meetings	regularly	ERB Working Groups	ERB Secretariats
1.2.3	ERB Youth Board			
A	Keeping information on existing financial opportunities for youth cooperation as a permanent objective in ERB Youth Board Work	regularly	ERB Youth Board	ERB Secretariats
B	See Action B under 1.1.4	2009 - 2011	ERB Youth Board	ERB Secretariats
1.2.4	ERB Local Community Working Group			
A	Promoting actively cooperation possibilities through a new Norwegian Financial Mechanism programme, managed by the Polish Association of Communes	2009 - 2011	ERB Local Community Working Group	ERB Secretariats
1.3	Participation in European debates			
A	Monitoring current issues of importance for ERB and its member regions and informing ERB Executive Board	regularly	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
B	Initiating internal debates on issues of importance for ERB and its member regions	regularly	ERB Executive Board	ERB Secretariats, ERB Youth Board, ERB Working Groups
C	Drafting position papers on issues of importance for ERB and its member regions as a result of internal debates	regularly	ERB Executive Board	ERB Secretariats, ERB Youth Board, ERB Working Groups
D	Disseminating ERB approved position papers on issues of importance for ERB and its member regions	regularly	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
1.4	ERB events			
A	Organising conferences dealing with current matters of importance for ERB and its member regions, preferably in the autumn at the second Presidency Council meeting	annually, starting in 2010	ERB Presidency	ERB Secretariats, ERB Youth Board, ERB Working Groups
1.5	Other events			
A	Monitoring meetings of importance for ERB and its member regions organised by other entities and informing ERB Executive Board	regularly	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
B	Delegating ERB representatives to take part in events meetings of importance for ERB and its member regions	regularly	ERB Executive Board	
2.0	Internal communication			
2.1	Political cooperation			
2.1.1	ERB cooperation agendas			
A	Involving local and regional political leaders in ERB member regions into debates held within ERB	regularly	ERB Executive Board	ERB Secretariats
B	Enabling local and regional political leaders in ERB member regions to present their cooperation agendas	regularly	ERB Executive Board	ERB Secretariats

2.1.2	Meetings of ERB structures			
A	Assuring timely and well informed and communicated meetings and other activities in ERB	regularly	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
B	Inviting local politicians representing municipalities, communes and regions in which the meeting takes place	regularly	ERB Executive Board	ERB Secretariats
2.2	Improving efficiency			
2.2.1	ERB Marratech online facility			
A	Organising regular monthly meetings of secretariats in ERB online room	regularly	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
B	Organising regular meetings of Working Groups in ERB online room	regularly	ERB IPS	ERB Working Groups
C	Organising regular meetings of Youth Board in ERB online room	regularly	Youth Board	Region Blekinge, IPS
2.2.2	Emails			
A	Making mailing lists which will correspond to different types of the ERB Information and Communication target audiences (see chapter 5).	before December 2008	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats
B	Exploring possibilities of using the same email software (e.g. Microsoft Outlook) which gives the possibility of more effective coordinating activities (e.g. by sending reminders)	before 31 st March 2009	ERB IPS	ERB Regional Secretariats

5. Target Groups

Category A: ERB structures

- ERB Council members (including ERB Youth Board): A1
- ERB Executive Board: A2
- ERB Secretariats: A3
- ERB Working Groups leaders: A4

Category B: ERB member regions' organisations

- Members of Regional Councils and selected staff of their administrations: B1
- Local Councils and selected staff of their administrations: B2
- ERB member regions' offices in Brussels: B3

Category C: General

- Baltic organisations and their antennas in Brussels: C1
- Baltic Sea regions' offices in Brussels: C2
- European institutions: (EU Commission, EU Parliament, Committee of the Regions, Socio-Economic Committee): C3
- National Parliaments in Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden: C4
- universities with departments on international relations, European studies in ERB regions: C5
- general and honorary consulates in ERB regions: C6
- Ministries of Foreign Affairs: C7
- Media: C8

6. Monitoring and Assessment

This Communication and Information Strategy recommends both special actions to be implemented in the perspective of the next three years, as well as regular actions to be conducted by all the formal bodies within Euroregion Baltic. Therefore, its implementation period should remain open, giving ERB actors the possibility of reviewing and modifying the Strategy in three-year cycles. Thus, the Strategy will be a living document easily adaptable to the altering conditions within ERB cooperation as well as to the external circumstances.

The success of the Strategy will largely depend on the commitment offered by all the ERB partners. Nonetheless, strong leadership will be instrumental in providing suitable resources in the management of the Strategy implementation process. It is therefore recommended that rotating ERB Presidencies make the implementation of the Strategy one of the objectives in their two-year action plans.

On everyday basis, it will be the ERB Executive Board which is held accountable for regular assessment of the Strategy implementation process. The assessment procedure shall comprise:

- periodic progress evaluations to be held together with the ERB Executive Board meetings;
- written 6-month progress reports presented to the ERB Council before their meetings; these reports shall consist of:
 - review of regular Strategy activities;
 - review of products delivered within special Strategy assignments;
 - review of work in progress;
 - review of unchallenged Strategy activities and solutions offered towards their completion;
- feedback to subsequent ERB Presidency enabling review in of the Strategy activities;
- written overall progress report presented to the ERB Council in February 2012 with the view of facilitating a discussion of the modification of the Strategy after the first three-year cycle;

Since the special actions of the Strategy are scheduled until 2011, the Swedish Party which will be handed ERB Presidency in February 2012 will be requested to perform the Strategy review in and propose actions to its next three-year cycle.