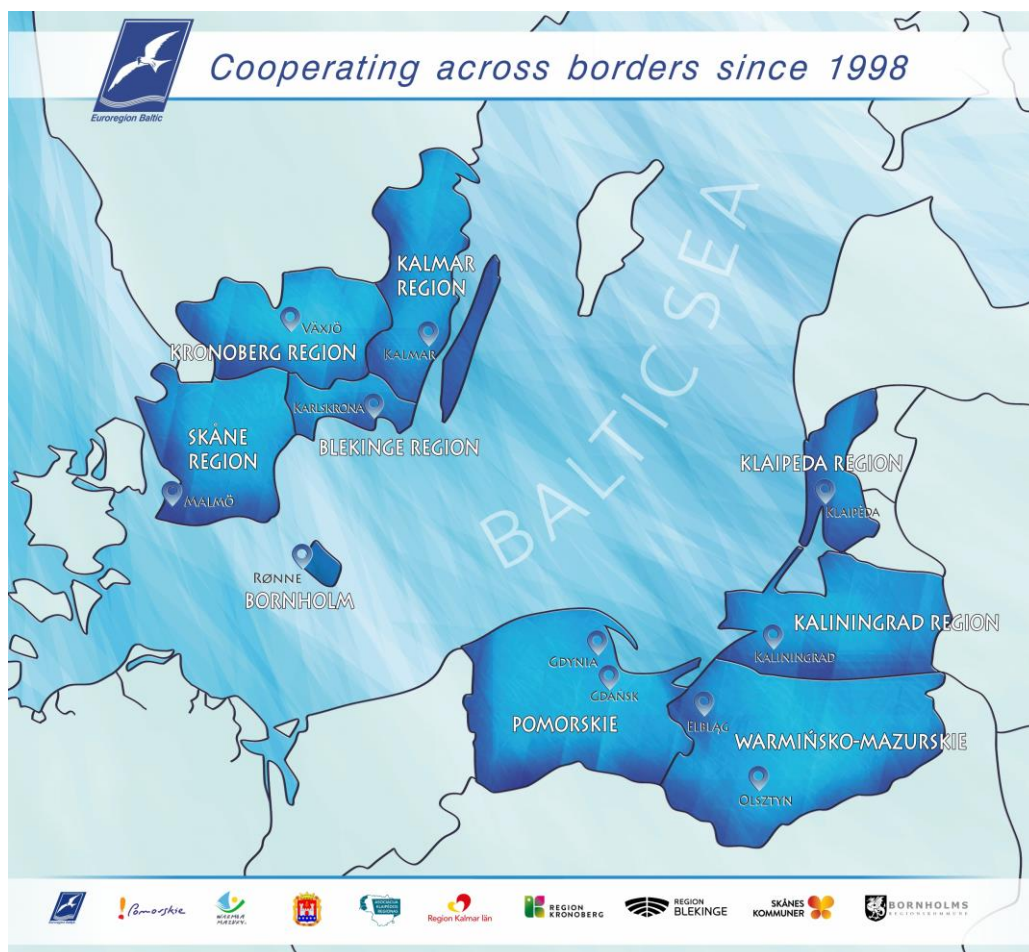




EUROREGION BALTIC

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



EUROREGION BALTIC EXECUTIVE BOARD

Witold Wróblewski, ERB President, Mayor of Elbląg, Chair of Board of the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic, Poland

Johan Sandberg, ERB Vice-President, Chair of the Regional Development Board, Region Blekinge, Sweden

Vytautas Grubliauskas, ERB Board Member, Klaipeda City Mayor, Board Member of Association Klaipeda Region, Lithuania

Maria F. Kjaergaard, ERB Board Member, Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark

Sabine Lyngberg, ERB Board Deputy Member, Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Denmark

Helen Bengtsson, ERB Board Deputy Member, Region Kronoberg, Sweden

Britt-Louise Berndtsson, ERB Board Deputy Member, Region Kronoberg, Sweden

Roland Gustbée, ERB Board Member, Region Kronoberg, Sweden

Robert Olesen, ERB Board Member, Region Kronoberg, Sweden

Aleksander Bogdanov ERB Board Member, Deputy Chair of Kaliningrad Regional Duma, Russia

Alla Ivanova, ERB Board Deputy Member, Minister-Head of Agency for International Affairs and Interregional Cooperation of Kaliningrad Region, Russia

Liana Maximova, ERB Board Deputy Member, Deputy Head of the Agency for International Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Kaliningrad Region, Russia

Gustaw Marek Brzezina, ERB Board Member, Chair of the Board of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region, Poland

Wiesław Byczkowski, ERB Board Member, Vice-Chair of the Board of Pomorskie Region, Poland

Suzanne Svensson, Regional Development Board Member, Region Blekinge, Sweden

Ingrid Hermansson, Deputy Chair of the Regional Development Board, Region Blekinge, Sweden

Karin Helmersson, ERB Board Member, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Elin Sjölander Landerdahl, ERB Board Member, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Peter Vretlund, ERB Board Deputy Member, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Åke Nilsson, ERB Board Deputy Member, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Johanna Wyckman, ERB Board Deputy Member, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Hanna Pruchniewska ERB Board Deputy Member, Association of Polish Communes ERB, Poland

Joanna Zielińska ERB Board Deputy Member, Vice-Chair of the Association of Polish Communes ERB, Poland

Anders Tell ERB Board Member, Skåne Association of Local Authorities, Sweden

Lars Lundberg ERB Board Member, Skåne Association of Local Authorities, Sweden

Leif Sandberg ERB Board Deputy Member, Skåne Association of Local Authorities, Sweden

Cecilia Magnusson-Svärd, ERB Board Deputy Member, Skåne Association of Local Authorities, Sweden

Vlado Somljačan, ERB Board Deputy Member, Skåne Association of Local Authorities, Sweden

In 2020 **Euroregion Baltic Executive Board** met on February 12th 2020 in Elbląg (Poland) and three times on-line, via ZOOM meeting tool: May 19th 2020, September 8th 2020 and on December 3rd 2020.

EUROREGION BALTIC YOUTH BOARD

Julia Orluk, Chairwoman of ERB Youth Board, Pomorskie Region

Małgorzata Lewandowska, ERB Youth Board Member, Pomorskie Region

Maksym Pozdniakov, ERB Youth Board Member, Pomorskie Region

Greta Tautavičiūtė, ERB Youth Board Member, Klaipėda, Lithuania

Grzegorz Gieda, ERB Youth Board Member, Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region, Poland

Emil Rigstad-Andersen, ERB Youth Board Member, Regional Municipality of Bornholm

Johanna Wyckman, ERB Youth Board Member, Region Kalmar County, Sweden

Adam Gronek, ERB Youth Board Member, Association of Polish Communes ERB, Poland

Illia Oganisian, ERB Youth Board Member, Kaliningrad Region

Danil Migunov, ERB Youth Board Member, Kaliningrad Region

Elin Petersson, ERB Youth Board Member, Blekinge Region

Alexander Nilsson, ERB Youth Board Member, Blekinge Region

In 2020 **Euroregion Baltic Youth Board** met on February 12th in Elbląg (Poland) and participated three times on-line to the ERB Executive Board meetings on: May 19th, September 8th and December 3rd, 2020.

WATER CORE GROUP

Roger Gustavsson, WCR Chairman, Region Kalmar County

Tobias Facchini, Region Kalmar County

Valeria Zagirova, Environmental Center “ECAT-Kaliningrad”

Anders Almqvist, Region Kalmar County

Torben Jørgensen, Bornholm Energy and Supply

Therese Jephson, Skåne Association of Local Authorities (until June 2020)

Sarah Keidser, Blekinge Region

In 2020 **Water Core Group** met on 12-13th February 2020 in Elbląg (Poland) for a study visit and workshops, participated in the ERB Board meeting on 19th May and met on-line in October and December discussing the WaterMan project.

ADDRESS BY ERB PRESIDENT

Between February 12th, 2020, and February 25th 2021, Euroregion Baltic was under the political leadership of the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic from Elbląg, Poland represented by Mr **Witold Wróblewski**.



Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends of the Euroregion Baltic network,

having the opportunity to lead the cooperation in the Euroregion Baltic in 2020 was a great honour for me - for the first time since 20 years of collaboration the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic has taken the ERB Presidency. In February 2020, we outlined many plans for joint activities and projects on behalf of our organisation. Meanwhile, we faced a challenging time, which none of us has ever met. I am thinking of course about the SARS-Cov-2 virus pandemic announced by the WHO and the resulting limitations.

In the beginning, we believed that we would be able to implement many projects and initiatives run by ERB in such areas as environmental protection, cooperation for young people or innovative local government because these were our cooperation priorities. The reality of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to revise these plans and expectations and has severely restricted each partner's options.

We didn't give up, and I can definitely say that the Baltic Euroregion as an international cooperation network passed the test of perseverance and stability with the highest mark. We are still a noticeable Baltic organisation which support cross-border cooperation, and our strength and determination have even increased, in such unfavourable conditions.

Despite the pandemic constraints, many tasks have been accomplished! In close cooperation with many stakeholders, we maintained and preserved the South Baltic Interreg program's existence and independence. Our representative worked in the group to develop the new Interreg South Baltic programming document for years 2021-2027. The voice and opinion of the Baltic Euroregion on this

matter (adopted by the Presidium in the Position paper) were taken into account by the European Commission.

Our Water Group worked - and as a result, the WaterMan project was submitted and approved for implementation in 2020, which focuses on wise management of water resources. Its effect should be a proposal for a multilateral and long-term project related to water resources protection.

Our joint project - Interconnect has been recognised by the Polish Ministry of Regional Development as one of the best under the Interreg South Baltic program. Innovative solutions developed by this project will have a chance to be promoted and the next stages of implementation with the newly established Working Group's help on mobility and transport connections by the ERB Presidium in December 2020.

I would also like to emphasize the work done by all members of young people in the Baltic area. In 2020, ERB was maintained and even strengthened as a strong Youth Platform that opens up new opportunities and spaces for young people actions. Many projects were developed and submitted, two of which were supported by the Erasmus + program: InDigiSE which focuses on learning innovative social entrepreneurship, which is now badly needed for our economies to recover as quickly as possible from the crisis. The cooperation of young people in their participation in the Baltic Sea Youth Network project's decision-making process gives hope that we will have worthy successors and that cross-border collaboration will be continued in the future.

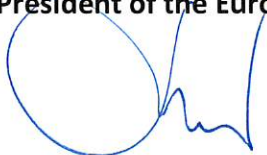
In 2020, the Euroregion Baltic put a lot of efforts to support cross-border cooperation - in 2020, we implemented the Umbrella project, which had its summary conference in December. Thanks to Euroregion Baltic initiative and partners' contribution, we managed to receive support for the Umbrella 2.0 project from the Swedish Institute, which will enable us to support potential stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region cross-border cooperation.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank all partners - members of the Board, those working in the ERB Secretariats, those involved in the implementation of projects, and their contribution to the effort to implement the tasks of the Euroregion Baltic network. Many thanks for always constructive work, insights, ideas and important decisions that we approved in 2020 for a better ERB cooperation future.

I wish all of us that the next year would bring us back to everyday life, to our direct contacts and meetings. That 2021 would give us a lot of creative joy and satisfaction from the implementation of our plans.

Witold Wróblewski

President of the Euroregion Baltic, 2020



Focus area 1: Lobbying

Strategic objective: strengthening the political role of ERB in the cross-border cooperation

➤ **South Baltic Programme**

The first meeting of the Joint Programming Committee of the Interreg South Baltic Programme for the 2021-2027 programming period (JPC) took place on February 4th, 2020, in Warsaw, Poland. The central part of the discussion was centred around the “Orientation paper for the cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea region” document released by the European Commission on January 31st 2020. The JPC’s position, the same as the Euroregion Baltic position expressed in the ERB Position Paper from Nov 2019 was that the South Baltic Programme should be continued in the 2021-2027 programming period a separate Interreg CBC programme, without a merger with Central Baltic. Throughout the year, ERB actively participated in another 3 JPC meetings organised on-line due to COVID19. As the head of the Joint Delegation of Euroregions, we concentrated on securing the involvement of socio-economic, environmental, civic society partners etc. in the work of the JPC. This was done thanks to the Umbrella project, that organised four thematic cross-border discussions with socio-economic actors in November 2020. From each event, reports were prepared and sent to the JPC members.

Cooperation related to the Interreg South Baltic Programme in 2020 focused on preparing socio-economic analysis, SWOT, problems and objectives tree of the Interreg South Baltic Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2021-2027, as well as the strategy and object of the Programme. In Dec 2020 the four Strategic Axes presented to the Joint Programming Committee were as followed:

- I. Priority axis 1: Innovative South Baltic –enhancing the level of innovation and internationalisation of local actors;
- II. Priority axis 2: Sustainable South Baltic -promoting sustainable development and blue and green economy;
- III. Priority axis 3: Attractive South Baltic –activate the tourist potential of South Baltic Area;
- IV. Priority axis 4: Active South Baltic –improving cooperation governance.

Euroregion Baltic representatives were actively involved in the works, providing comments and engaging in the discussion during the meetings of the JPC, as well as two established working groups – Working Group 1 for the elaboration of Programme Strategy and Programme’s Priority Axes and Specific Objectives and Working Group 2 for implementation arrangements of the future Programme. In both WG’s representatives of the ERB IPS are present.

Due to the situation caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the SBP Joint Secretariat decided to organise the Annual Event 2020 conference virtually on September 17th. Over 170 participants from Poland, Lithuania, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden – project partners, beneficiaries, representatives of local and regional authorities and NGOs took part in the virtual Annual Event 2020. The panel discussions were led by Niels Chresten Andersen, the Regional Contact Point Bornholm and ERB Secretariat in

Bornholm representative. In the second session, which was dedicated to the future of the South Baltic Programme Sweden was represented by Johanna Wyckman, from Region Kalmar, Member of the ERB Youth Board, Lithuania by Mr Vytautas Grubliauskas, Mayor of Klaipeda City and ERB Board member and Euroregion Baltic by Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło, Head of International Permanent Secretariat.

➤ **UMBRELLA project summary & final conference**

On December 2nd, the project's final conference was held on-line as an engaging webinar conducted by Mr Maciej Kautz, a Polish journalist and moderator. Short videos alternated to partners' introduction and presentation of the results with a look to the future and Umbrella 2.0 launched in 2021. This conference aimed to be a moment of awareness-raising on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Sustainable Development Goals and their achievements in the Baltic Sea Region, and the EU Green Deal- a roadmap for the upcoming years. Some hints about the future South Baltic Programme and EU programming period were provided, and Umbrella results were presented.



Umbrella became a brand in the region, recognised for its replicable toolbox of tailor-made solutions.

- It mapped 627 stakeholders in the South Baltic Region and delivered a report to assess needs and potential project themes and project barriers to addressing the South Baltic Programme and its future programming period (2021-2027). It invited mapped stakeholders to 2 awareness-raising events on EU financial possibilities, programmes, cross-border cooperation networks;
- It organised 3 Cross-border conferences with EUSBSR Policy Area panels on Bioeconomy, Energy and electromobility and sustainable tourism;
- It held 41 micro-activities to “meet-your-neighbours”: networking thematic meetings to initiate cooperation (including five thematic webinars held by experts in the field);
- It delivered 12 national trainings in national languages on project management in Sweden, Denmark, Poland and Lithuania (3/country), training 200 people.
- It invited mapped stakeholders to Umbrella’s “Rent-an-Expert” service to help them learn how to write meaningful project applications;
- It delivered a training and coaching pack on project management: from ideation to implementation of EU financed projects, including and 1 “train-the-trainers” session;

- It organised one cross-border workshop on project ideation and formulation in 2018 and 4 Cross-border workshops in the form of focus groups to discuss the upcoming SBP programming period.
- It delivered 1 “Success Stories” book.

All the training materials and stakeholders are collected in the Moodle platform <http://umbrellaproject.eu/moodle/>. The project helped write ten new projects submitted to SBP, Swedish Institute, Erasmus +, and other INTERREG programmes.

Project involved 277 local actors and organisations in cross-border activities of which:

- 90 were involved in cross-border micro-activities and raising awareness events developing knowledge capacity about the South Baltic Programme.
- 100 were involved in CBC conference with EUSBSR PA panels and training
- 187 were involved in basic cross-border cooperation level (97 scouting actions). These are organisations (newcomers) with lack of capacity to participate in regular projects, and relevant bodies involved in SBP implementation (directly and indirectly) were also collected and presented in the form of on-line platforms.

➤ **UMBRELLA 2.0**

2021 will be a gap year for cross-border cooperation. The South Baltic Programme, a primary financial tool utilised by Euroregion Baltic to reach its scope, will launch the new programming period 2021-2027 only at the end of 2021. Only small project funds will be available. Hence, Euroregion Baltic realised that the Umbrella project’s success and capacity building process initiated in 2018 could not be stopped. For this reason, the so-called Umbrella 2.0 proposal was presented to the Swedish Institute as the natural consequence of Umbrella Project (SBP) and its willingness to become a recognised brand, active also on a broader Baltic Sea scale.

Therefore, Euroregion Baltic, together with UBC and BSSSC, submitted Umbrella 2.0- Boosting transnational cooperation capacities for multilevel actors in the Baltic Sea Region- approved and launched in January 2021.



AIM OF THE PROJECT

The project’s overarching goal is to increase awareness and knowledge of transnational cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. More specifically, the project aims at initiating a process for the development of strong multi-actor and multilevel governance partnerships that can undertake cross-sectoral sustainable solutions while following the principles and objectives of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, EU Green Deal and UN SDG.

The aims concerning the Baltic Region are :

- To raise awareness of opportunities and benefits of transnational and cross-border cooperation and increase regional stakeholders' interest in it;
- To empower stakeholders to build strategic and long term-partnerships, support networking, and straighten community of practitioners in different sectors;
- To improve knowledge of the EU, its financial instruments and relevant strategies, with particular focus on the EUSBSR;
- To explore the opportunities and benefits of being part of EUSBSR and offer practical guidelines on how to engage in long-term;
- To help build competencies, i.e. knowledge and skills necessary to run projects with benefit to the Policy areas, and create specific networks of interest in different sectors in a cross-sectoral manner, focusing on our beneficiaries' shift and transformation by our beneficiaries (activating them for sustainable transnational cooperation).

UMBRELLA 2.0

Our goal:
to increase awareness and knowledge of transnational cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region



Umbrella 2.0 builds on Umbrella project results. The Umbrella project was launched at the beginning of 2018. The realisation that the South Baltic Programme (SBP) was hard to access for small organisations, mainly because of their insufficient institutional and financial capacities. SBP stakeholders in general and small local actors specifically still

experience communication barriers, limited English language skills, and lack of competences and capabilities in project development and implementation. The Umbrella project committed to developing know-how capacities for small local and regional actors and civil society organisations in the South Baltic Programme area to improve their cross-border cooperation participation to address these challenges. To achieve this goal, Umbrella implemented a significantly more comprehensive approach, determined by a strategic decision of the partnership to address different levels of capacity building processes – from a single institutional capacity of potential project partner, via micro-activities addressed to the micro organisations till strategic capacity building on the programme macro-level where we cooperated with EUSBSR HA Capacity coordinators (our Associated Partner).

We start a new #capacitybuilding project – Umbrella 2.0



Funded by
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UBC

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OF THE BALTIC
CITIES



Umbrella proved to be an optimal mediator among different stakeholders. Therefore, starting from the presumption that the EUSBSR and the local actors are completely detached one from the other, Umbrella 2.0 objective would be to develop know-how capacities for local organisations in cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, harmonising local needs and actions and upper strategic lines.

While the local actors are focused on objectives in their local sphere of influence, the strategy provides guidelines that are not known at the local level. A bridge between local actors and the strategy needs to be set to enhance the interaction among all the

governance levels to start a process that can facilitate the implementation of EUSBSR and other sustainable policies matching with EU Green Deal and SDGs. Umbrella 2.0 would mediate the communication between the strategies and the local level, raising awareness and providing practical knowledge and implementation tools.

➤ **INTERCONNECT project**

The past year was the final and firmly the busiest year for the Interreg South Baltic Interconnect project which started in June 2017. 2020 began with some great news from one of the project partners, Innobaltica (Poland), who announced an open tender for the implementation of FALA – integrated ticket for the Pomorskie Region - a charges collecting system for transportation in collective passenger transport and a consistent passenger information system, standard for both coordinators and carriers.



On February 17th, the Interconnect project was presented on a hearing regarding the revision of the TEN-T regulation held by Ministry of Infrastructure in Sweden. During the conference, the Interconnect project Manager Mr Mattias Andersson,

representing Region Blekinge, had an opportunity to emphasise the importance of cross-border public transport. The collaboration between Blekinge and Pomorskie Region in the Interconnect project was set as a good example where regions collaborate with private players, in this case, Stena Line, to find new ticket solutions.

In March 2020, the South Baltic success story series, developed within ERB's Umbrella project, noted the Interconnect project as an example of Interreg South Baltic Programme success story, offering an understanding of the best practices and the success of the project's results and outcomes.



On March 11th 2020, a first partnership meeting was held in Karlskrona, Sweden. Due to the travel restrictions following the Covid -19 pandemic, only ten persons participated in Region Blekinge office, and two persons experienced on-line. During this meeting, partners discussed the multi governance cooperation model for public transport in the South Baltic area, the project's main outputs, and the project's final conference details. The partnership has submitted a request for changes where additional activities were mentioned and a prolongation of the implementation period of 6 months until the end of November 2020. Furthermore, a decision

was made to postpone the final conference to preliminary October 1st 2020, instead of May 7th and most likely to hold it on-line.

At the turn of March and April 2020, Joint Secretariat agreed on the project's prolongation by six months while Monitoring Committee approved all requests for changes.

With the begging of June, The Hanseatic Institute for Entrepreneurship and Regional Development at the University of Rostock (HIE-RO) announced it is about to deliver an *Indicator-based self-evaluation tool* in Excel for public transport planners within the task 4.2 "Implementing a multi-stakeholder planning model for public transport services". The tool's main objective is to develop an easy-to-use self-evaluation (or monitoring) indicator tool in Excel that can be used by public transport planners to evaluate the local and regional (public) transport system's performance.

In August Mr Mattias Andersson, Interconnect Project leader was invited by Mukran Port in Germany to participate in 'South Baltic Transport Loops' project partnership meeting, where he had a chance to speak about the findings the Interconnect project and discuss the cross-project exchange.

In August, the Polish Ministry of Development Fund and Regional Policy has chosen the Interconnect Project to be promoted as one of the best Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020. Therefore, a photo session was organised to present the main goals and achievements of Interconnect Project. The photo session results were presented in December 2020 in a publication on "15 years of Interreg programs in Poland".



Summer period ended up with information that the first Interconnect scientific paper on 'PT Data for multi-stakeholder planning and monitoring excel tool for public transport services' was accepted for publication at the CSTFM-conference in Madrid October 2020. The paper resulted from WP 3.5 and related to a process and solutions for sustainable cross-border and regional public transport.

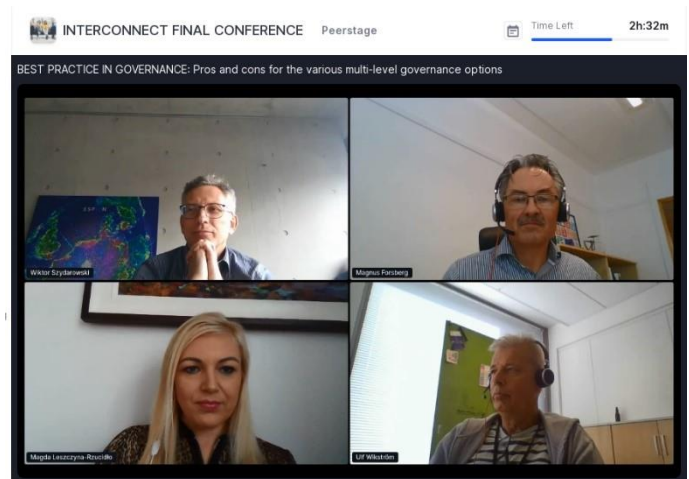
With the beginning of September, intensive preparations for the upcoming Final Conference started. The invitation and conference agenda sent to more than 300 people and an intensive promoting campaign in social media began.

On September 8th, Mr Mattias Andersson attended the ERB Executive Board meeting. He presented the idea of establishing a new task force within ERB, concentrated on sustainable transport issues and related to the Interconnect project's outputs.



On September 17th, the Project partner Mr Frede Danborg from Guldborgsund Kommune was invited to become one of the panellists during the Interreg South Baltic Programme's Annual Event celebrating 30 years of Interreg South Baltic. Mr Danborg had a chance to present the Interconnect project, its objectives and challenges throughout projects lifetime, and opportunities it has created to impact public transport in small Baltic Sea regions.

On October 1st 2020, the Interconnect Final Conference titled 'Future of Public Transport – Trends, Tools, Governance' was held on-line via Hop.in the platform. Nearly 100 participants from 14 countries joined the conference to take part in many valuable lectures on sustainable transport, cross-border passenger transport and new solutions in public transport given by experts from EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, The Hanseatic Institute for Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, Innobaltica, Blekinge Institute of Technology and Interreg South Baltic. The participants also had a chance to hear panellists from ESPON Programme, Interact Programme, Region Blekinge and Euroregion Baltic discussing and exchanging experience on various multilevel governance options.



In November, as a result of several workshops and discussions among project partners and experts in the transport sector, a Catalogue of Solutions for Sustainable Cross-Border and Regional Public Transport was finally developed and published on the project website. The publication was shortly followed by the Interconnect Final Report on Guidelines on multilevel governance for Public Transport in the South Baltic Area published on November 25th 2020.

On November 30th 2020, partners from Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, and Viimsi Municipality in Estonia met for the last time, to sum up, the Interconnect project results. After 42

months of exciting and fruitful cooperation, the Interconnect project partners from 6 EU countries met for the last time to finalise their work results achieved within the project. During the final meeting, the project partners had a chance, to sum up, their previous work & results within the project and share their experience and ideas for further cooperation. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the meeting was held on-line. All the partners expressed their hopes to continue cooperating to support sustainable public transport, mobility and connectivity in South Baltic Area.



Finally on December 3rd, 2020, during the final ERB Executive Board meeting in 2020 the Board members all agreed to establish another task force in the Euroregion Baltic – Mobility Core Group, which will consist of partners from the Interconnect project, as well as contact persons and experts from the ERB member organisations.

➤ **InDigiSE – Erasmus+ project**

The project “Promotion of social entrepreneurship in the youth sector by digital and informal education tools” - InDigiSE, funded by Erasmus+ programme, is led by Klaipėdos Universitetas from Lithuania with the joint efforts of Kristiansand katedralskole Gimle (Norway), Baltic Institute for Regional Affairs (Poland), Sociales Inovacijas Centrs (Latvia) and Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic (Poland). The project aims to deliver youth-oriented, innovative educational tools to develop entrepreneurial competence in the social economy field and engage youth within social entrepreneurship.

The project has officially started on March 1st, 2020, and will continue for 26 months until April 30th 2022. During the first partnership meeting, which was initially planned to be held in Riga, Latvia, but was moved to an on-line setting, partners have discussed planned activities, implementation processes, project management, and tools to maximise the impact of the project. Further partnership meetings were held on-line via Zoom platform once a month.



In the first months of the project, the work was primarily concentrated on implementing the Intellectual Output 1 - “Promotion of youth social entrepreneurship by digital tools” by improving the existing knowledge and networking platform www.socialenterprisebsr.net. This required systematic publishing of educational materials, information on events, support mechanisms, and any user experience that could inspire youth to become social entrepreneurs. Simultaneously, all partners have been collecting input for the IO2, which aims to determinate guidelines for youth centres and youth

organisations on “How to stimulate the social entrepreneurship via informal learning methods including gamification methods.” The next step of the project is to prepare the Innocamp Methodology Book and organisation of two youth InnoCamps in 2021 – one in May in Norway and 2nd one in fall 2021 in Klaipeda. The ERB YB members are invited to participate in both events.

➤ **Baltic Sea Youth Platform – Erasmus+ project**

Baltic Sea Youth Platform is an Erasmus+ Programme project that aims to empower youth and foster real participation in decision and policy-making in the Baltic Sea Region. The platform will enable youth organisations to reach their fullest potential by empowering them to develop new ideas and pursue them jointly, under the 2030 Agenda framework’s guidance. Moreover, it will engage youth at different levels to design a common framework for action and a shared Baltic Sea Region (BSR) identity. The partnership aims to improve youth’s political impact on Baltic Sea policy-making, develop tools for better knowledge transfer, and facilitate various innovative projects relying on youth’s interests and capacities in a broad range of policy areas.

The BSYP project started on February 1st, 2020, and will be completed in August 2022. Throughout the past year, it supported and got involved in many youth-oriented initiatives, thus promoting BSYP.

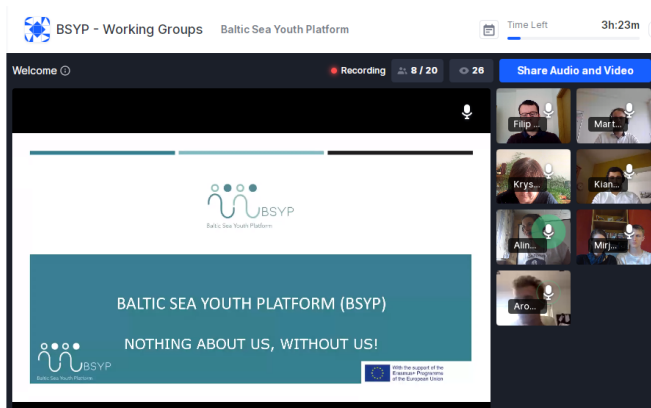
On 2-3rd March 2020 in Elbląg, the first physical strategic partner meeting took place. Partners from CBSS, BSSSC, UBC, ESN Finland and via Skype Lithuanian Youth Council met to discuss budgetary issues, intellectual outputs, and activities planned for 2020 among many Baltic Sea Youth Camp EUSBSR Forum in Turku.



Over the next months, partners focused on intensive preparations for the Baltic Sea Youth Camp 2020, developing youth working groups, recruiting its members, communicating campaigns, and collecting feedback for the BSYP development purpose.

Between 2-5th June 2020 BSYP participated in the BSSSC Spring Youth Event. On the 5th day of the conference, Ms Kaarina Williams and Aline Meyer from CBSS (BSYP Project Leader) introduced BSYP as a new tool for youth participation in BSR.

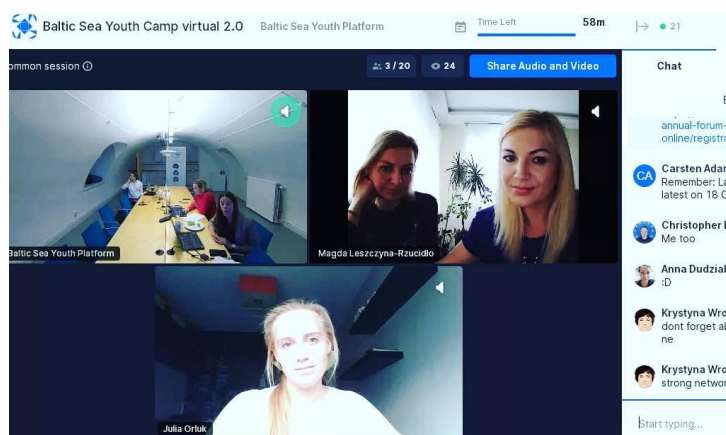
Only one week later, on 12-13th June the Baltic Sea Youth Camp 2020 took place. Due to the emerging pandemic outbreak in Europe, the event was held on-line, instead of primarily planned camp in Turku. The event gathered experts, youth and all enthusiasts of the Baltic Sea Region. It gave them a chance to work on EUSBSR issues and to join the discussion on regional cooperation, climate change, bioeconomy, SDGs, education, culture and youth – leadership and networking.



On July 8th, the first on-line BSYP working groups meeting was held. Participants who applied for joining Advocacy, PowerBox, Culture and Cities, Research, IT or Communication working group discussed each group's framework and work plan for the next months.

BSYP was also a partner for the BSSSC Autumn Youth Event organised on 22-24th September, which concerned circular economy and plastic-free Baltic, Baltic identity and culture, intelligent transport and mobility and finally cooperation.

At the beginning of October, several local events for young people were organised to familiarise youth with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. One of the hubs was organised by ERB on October 5th in Elbląg Technological Park. Its purpose was to encourage youth to choose science and technology studying path.



On October 17th, the second edition of virtual Baltic Sea Youth Camp took place. Again the event gathered many young people who joined an interactive and fruitful discussion with many decisionmakers who presented their personal experience within the EUSBSR. The event resulted in the development of a very promising EUSBSR Youth Declaration which was later explained by Ms Aline Meyer, BSYP project leader, on

the 11th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR digital edition on October 20th 2020, during a panel discussion about merging knowledge, skills and working cross-generationally in the BSR.

At the turn of October and November BSYP was also engaged in the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue Competition initiative encouraging youth to show their creativity in BSR cooperation.

➤ **WaterMan – Interreg Baltic Sea Region project of the ERB Water Core Group**

ERB Water Core Group developed together in 2020 project application for the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme Seed Money Facility call called "Climate-resilient wastewater and groundwater management by circular approaches that reduce outflows of nutrients and hazardous substances – WaterMan project. The partnership consists of organisations from all ERB member regions.

WaterMan develops and promotes circular approaches to reduce outflows of nutrients & hazardous substances to surface water, groundwater and the Baltic Sea in particular, which at the same time contribute to the climate-resilient water supply. Its centre of attention is measures & techniques to re-use water from wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) and water retention before flowing into the

Baltic Sea. Thus, fewer groundwater resources will be needed for drinking water production & other uses, and water supply becomes more climate-resilient.

The project focusses on measures at the local level and on areas in the BSR, where the water supply may be significantly affected by climate change. Primary target groups are municipalities & water companies that are responsible for local water management.

➤ **Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)**

ERB actively participated in the 11th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), in 2020 held on October 19th on-line, due to COVID19 pandemic. The central theme of the 11th Annual Forum was “Towards a Decade of Innovation and Sustainability”. The Forum discussed how to cooperate effectively even during times, such as a global pandemic. It discussed also emerging areas of cooperation and the future of the EUSBSR in the next decade. One of the forum’s highlights was the speech given by Aline Mayer, representing CBSS and Leader of the Baltic Sea Youth Platform project, where ERB is also a project partner. Aline delivered the Youth Declaration prepared during the Youth Camp that took place before the Forum. She made a powerful statement of the importance of including youth in areas where decisions are made. This is particularly important during the Covid-19 pandemic when young people may be one of the groups that suffer most of its impacts.

➤ **Mobility Core Group**

On December 3rd 2020, during the final ERB Executive Board meeting in 2020, a decision was made to establish another task force in the Euroregion Baltic – Mobility Core Group.

The idea of establishing a sustainable transport Working Group in ERB was first proposed to the ERB Board Members by the Blekinge Region and Mr Mattias Andersson, Interconnect Interreg South Baltic



Project Leader, on September 8th the ERB Executive Board meeting.

Blekinge Region will host the secretariat for the newly established group. The ERB Mobility Core Group will consist of partners from the previous Interreg South Baltic project Interconnect and contact persons and experts from the ERB member organisations. The group will be working on behalf of the ERB Board with concrete actions. The work is supposed to contribute to project development and everyday activities, improving mobility between the ERB member regions.

The aims of the Mobility Core Group are:

- Lobbying activities to represent and promote common interests;

- Implementation of strategic initiatives and projects complementing the local and regional agendas of the member organisations;
- Exchange activities seek a collaborative approach to common challenges and progress in innovation and operational efficiency.

➤ **Pomorskie Offshore Platform**

On September 25th 2020, at the Marshal's Office in Gdańsk, a letter of intent was signed to establish a cooperation platform to support the offshore sector development in Pomerania. The declaration,



signed by over 20 representatives of Pomeranian local governments, universities, companies and institutions from the region, creates the "Pomeranian Platform for the Development of Offshore Wind Energy in the Baltic Sea". The offshore wind farm sector's development is considered one of the strategic goals in the Polish energy sector transformation process. Therefore, the declaration's parties

intend to create a platform for cooperation and information exchange, promote investments, develop human resources and use the research and scientific potential in offshore wind energy. Another crucial aim is to increase the share of future assets in the supply chain to strengthen domestic entities' participation in the transformation process.

The letter signatories were i.a. Pomorskie Region, the City of Gdynia and Pomeranian Development Fund. Gdańsk University of Technology, Gdynia Maritime University and the Institute of Power Engineering Research Institute will represent the scientific side. Thanks to IPS ERB and ERB Regional Secretariat's collaborative work on Bornholm, the first on-line meeting between the partners from Bornholm and Pomorskie region was organised already in Oct 2020.

Focus area 2: Strategic actions

Strategic objective: enhancing the added value of ERB cooperation

➤ ERB Executive Board meetings

The Executive Board of Euroregion Baltic met in Elbląg on February 12th, 2020, to discuss the progress, the challenges and the priorities of the organisation in the coming year. During the meeting, the ERB Presidency was transferred to the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic (APC ERB). Mr Witold Wróblewski, Mayor of Elbląg, assumed the position of ERB President. ERB Board Members thanked the representatives of the Klaipėda Region Association for their fruitful Presidency in 2019. The ERB Youth Board presidency, by the decision of the ERB Youth Board, was extended to 2020 and still held by the Pomorskie Region representative - Ms Julia Orluk.

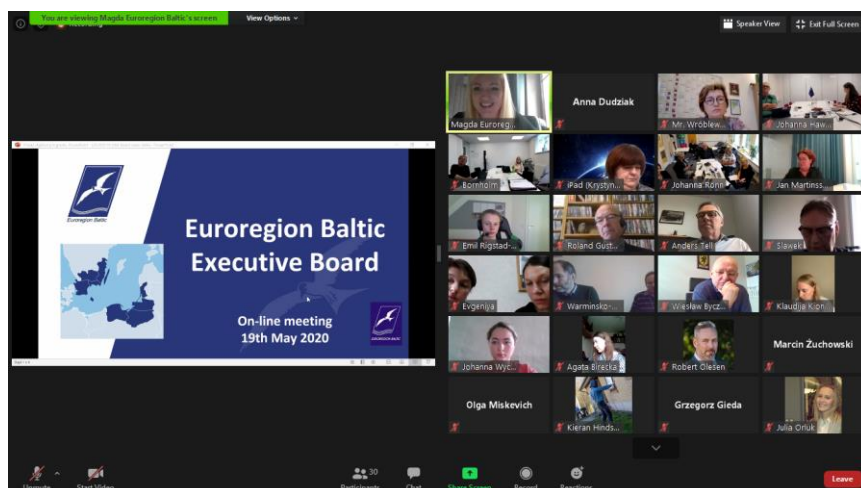


The main topic of the meeting was the discussion on the priorities of the APC ERB for their presidency:

- Environmental protection including water management;
- Youth policy;
- Innovation in local government – smart local governments in small municipalities, focusing on human resources and trust-based governance.

ERB Executive Board also adopted the ERB Annual Report for 2019, ERB Action Plan 2020-21 and accepted the ERB IPS budget execution for 2019. The discussion on the future of the Interreg South Baltic Programme and the ERB members' priorities regarding the next programming period were presented and discussed.

After the coronavirus shutdowns in March 2020, the possibilities to travel and meet in person were ceased. Next ERB Executive Board meeting took place on-line on May 19th, 2020, and started with the informative round on COVID-19 situation in the ERB states presented by all ERB members.



ERB Board member adopted the Position Paper on the "Capacity building process and ways to involve newcomers and smaller actors". The document aims to underline the need to attract newcomers and smaller actors, and to ensure people-to-people and small-scale projects in the future South Baltic Programme. ERB Board confirmed that

Euroregion Baltic wishes to advocate for the programme's capacity building measures at the earliest possible stage in the programme lifetime. Head of the ERB IPS also presented the progress of works on the Umbrella 2.0 project application. Swedish Institute was interested in supporting the initiative, and the clarification and discussion with the SI representatives were necessary.

3rd ERB Executive Board meeting in 2020 was organised on September 8th. During the meeting the state-of-the-play in the South Baltic Programme Monitoring Committee was presented by the SBP MC members, ERB Board members also discussed the recent developments of the works in the JPC for the future Interreg South Baltic Programme. Blekinge region representatives and Interconnect project Leader presented the proposal to establish the next ERB ad hoc working group for sustainable transport. IPS ERB and Water Core Group representatives informed about the WaterMan Interreg Baltic Sea Region Seed Money Facility project start and planned project activities.

The 4th and final ERB Board Members meeting in 2020 took place on December 3rd. Head of the IPS informed the Board Members about the Swedish Institute approval for the Umbrella 2.0 project that will be continued in 2021 with pan-Baltic partners like Union of the Baltic Cities and Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation. The project received the grant of 85.000 EUR and will be carried out in 2021. ERB Board members also decided to establish the Mobility Core Group and confirmed that the Secretariat would be based in Blekinge Region.

➤ ERB Position Papers

On May 19th 2020, ERB Board Members adopted the Position Paper on the "Capacity building process and ways to involve newcomers and smaller actors". Euroregion Baltic took the following position to attract newcomers and smaller actors and to ensure people-to-people and small-scale projects in the future South Baltic Programme, ERB wishes to advocate the continuation of programme's capacity building measures at the earliest possible stage in the programme lifetime.



This was followed by the main arguments underlying that it is still crucial to enhance smaller organisations' involvement – local communities, non-governmental organisations, civil organisations, associations and clubs from the South Baltic Sea area in active international cooperation through projects supported under the future South Baltic Programme. Furthermore, it is stated that the challenge of reaching newcomers and smaller actors in the programme area has been recognised (also) in the South Baltic Programme, leading to the South Baltic Capacity

Building project (2010-2011) and the UMBRELLA project (2018-2020), UMBRELLA led by the Euroregion Baltic.

➤ 12th Annual Forum of ERB Stakeholders

The coronavirus spread has led to the cancellation of various events, including the Annual Forum of ERB stakeholders planned, back-to-back to Umbrella project final conference on 18-19th May 2020 Gdańsk, Poland.

➤ Working meetings with CBSS and CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

In October 2020 Head of the IPS, ERB had a working meeting in Stockholm with the new Secretary-General of the Union of the Baltic Cities and CBSS Senior Advisers for Regional Identity and Sustainable and Prosperous Region. Aim of the visit was to exchange the information on organisations priorities for 2020 and 2021 and seek for possible synergy in ERB and CBSS initiatives with particular attention to the Baltic Sea Youth Platform (Erasmus+) project and capacity building initiatives in the Baltic Sea Region.

In September 2020 Head of the IPS, ERB had an on-line working meeting with the new Executive Secretary of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission. The meeting aimed to exchange information about the current agendas in both organisations and discuss the possible synergies between the working groups dealing with water issues and sustainable transport both in ERB and CPMR.

➤ ERB YOUTH BOARD

Despite all the difficulties of the pandemic outbreak in 2020, it was a very active year for the ERB Youth Board.

One of the most significant initiatives undertaken by the YB in 2020 was applying for the Erasmus+ Programme with the 'Baltic Days: Stock Exchange of Characters' project. The project application's main purpose was to counteract against the common problems of the young population in the SBR and to educate young leaders from each partner region on several aspects. The objectives were planned to be achieved through organising a Summer Youth Camp in Malbork, Poland. With strong determination, continuous work, and ERB YB contribution, the application was successfully submitted in the second call on October 1st 2020. Unfortunately, the

Julia Orluk, our ERB Youth Board Chairwoman is one of the panelists in the discussion at 17.30!

Join us!

project was not approved, but thanks to the assessment and comments received, YB plans to submit a revised application again in 2021.

Throughout the 2020 ERB YB actively participated in such events as BSSSC Youth Events, Baltic Sea Youth Camp, EUSBSR Annual Forum and many more. They also intensely engaged in the BSYP project, particularly in developing the Baltic Sea Youth Declaration presented on the EUSBSR Annual Forum. YB also implemented its ideas as part of which a promotional campaign was carried out. For the first time, a campaign promoting the differences between celebrating Christmas in different ERB member states appeared on a Facebook page. The followers warmly received the action.

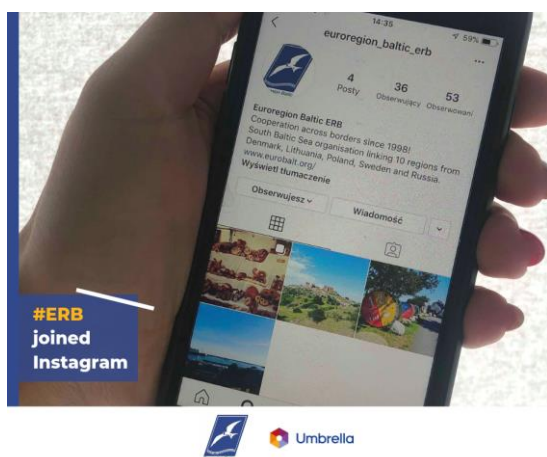


In 2020 the ERB YB also welcomed new members from Bornholm, Poland, Lithuania and Russia.

One of the highlights of the upcoming events is the election of the new chairwoman of the Youth Board on February 19th. In this election year, candidates with Małgorzata Lewandowska (Pomorskie, Poland) and Johanna Wyckman (Kalmar, Sweden).

➤ Communication

In 2020 IPS ERB finalised the renovation of the organisations' website – <http://www.eurobalt.org>. Throughout the year there were over 9000 visitors on the website, that is updated regularly. Euroregion Baltic is also very active on its social media – we use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn to communicate with our ERB Members, project partners and stakeholders. The majority of



promotional material is presented on the Facebook account, where ERB has more than 1200 followers, and our posts reach on average 500 people. The information presented differs from info on Euroregion Baltic events and meetings, daily ERB IPS activities, EUSBSR and Baltic Sea Region news and updates on the Euroregion Baltic projects. We also prepared a few promotional campaigns, both for Facebook and Instagram, like #KnowERBMembers, presentation of the most interesting ERB cities - #DiscoverSouthBalticSea, suggestions for summer activities the South Baltic sea and many more.



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