

Euroregion Baltic  
Executive Board  
Meeting Minutes  
Elbląg, Poland  
25th Feb 2021



**Title** ERB Executive Board meeting 25th Feb 2021

**Submitted by** MLR, International Permanent Secretariat

**Summary / Note** This document provides the Minutes of the ERB Board online meeting on 25th Feb 2021 in an online format.

**Requested action** Implement.

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**Participants:**

**ERB Executive Board:**

Mr Johan Sandberg	ERB Vice-President, Member of ERB Executive Board, Chair of the Regional Development Board, Region Blekinge
Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina	Member of ERB Executive Board, Marshal of Warmia and Masuria Region
Mr Wiesław Byczkowski	Member of ERB Executive Board, Deputy Marshal of Pomorskie Region
Mr Robert Olesen	Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Board Region Kronoberg
Mr Roland Gustbée	Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Board Region Kronoberg
Ms Suzanne Svensson	ERB Board Member, Member of the Regional Development Board Region Blekinge
Ms Ingrid Hermansson	ERB Board Member, Member of the Regional Development Board Region Blekinge
Mr Lars Lundberg	Member of ERB Executive Board, Skåne Association of Local Authorities
Ms Cecilia Magnusson-Svärd	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Skåne Association of Local Authorities
Mr Per Ole Petersen	Member of ERB Executive Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm

Ms Sabine Lyngberg	Member of ERB Executive Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Ms Liana Maximova	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Deputy Head of the Agency for International Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Kaliningrad Region
Ms Karin Helmersson	Member of the ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County
Ms Elin Sjölander Landerdahl	Member of the ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County
Ms Johanna Wyckman	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County
Mr Peter Vretlund	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County

### **ERB Youth Board**

Ms Johanna Wyckman	Chairwoman of ERB Youth Board, Kalmar Region
Ms Małgorzata Lewandowska	Vice-Chair of ERB Youth Board, Pomorskie Region
Ms Julia Orluk	Member of the ERB Youth Board, Pomorskie Region
Ms Elin Petersson	Member of ERB Youth Board, Region Blekinge
Mr Alexander Nilsson	Member of ERB Youth Board, Region Blekinge
Mr Grzegorz Gieda	Member of ERB Youth Board, Warmia and Masuria Region
Mr Adam Gronek	Member of ERB Youth Board, Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic
Ms Greta Tautavičiūtė	Member of ERB Youth Board, Association Klaipeda Region

### **ERB Secretariats:**

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen	Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Mr Slawomir Demkowicz - Dobrzanski	Region Kronoberg
Ms Evgeniya Russu	Kaliningrad Region
Mr Peter Nilsson	Skåne Association of Local Authorities
Ms Egle Stonke	Association of Klaipeda Region
Ms Łukasz Bielewski	Warmia and Masuria Region
Ms Małgorzata Klawitter-Piwowska	Pomorskie Region
Ms Antje Schreyer	Region Kalmar County
Ms Johanna Rönn	Region Blekinge
Ms Małgorzata Samusjew	Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic

Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło	Euroregion Baltic International Secretariat
Ms Anna Dudziak	Euroregion Baltic International Secretariat
Ms Paulina Lieder-Żuchowska	Euroregion Baltic International Secretariat
Mr Marcin Żuchowski	Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic
Ms Adrianna Gniado- Turkowska	Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic

**Guests:**

Mattias Andersson, Mobility Core Group

Torben Jørgensen, Water Core Group

Nicolai Munch Pedersen, Mobility Core Group

## **ERB Executive Board meeting**

**25<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021**

**12.00 – 15.00**

Zoom online meeting

LINK: <https://zoom.us/j/2654506432>

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### **1. Welcome and opening**

Vice-President of Euroregion Baltic, Mr Johan Sandberg, representing Blekinge Region, welcomed the meeting participants and opened the ERB Executive Board meeting for the first time in 2021. He acted as a Chair of the meeting due to the absence of ERB President, Chairman of Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic, Mr Witold Wróblewski. Mr Sandberg presented the meeting agenda and asked the ERB Executive Board members if they have any comments on the agenda.

*There were no comments nor disagreement from the ERB Executive Board Members; thus, the agenda was approved.*

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### **2. Adopting the minutes of the previous ERB Executive Board meeting**

ERB Executive Board were asked to approve the minutes of the previous ERB Executive Board meeting held on 3rd Dec 2020. The IPS presented the minutes two weeks after the meeting, and the comments were collected and implemented.

*There were no comments from the ERB Board, and the minutes were approved. ERB President will sign the minutes of the ERB Executive Board meeting.*

### **3. Approval of the ERB Annual Report 2020 and Annual Budget for 2020**

Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło, Head of ERB International Secretariat, presented the Annual Report for 2020 and the Annual Budget Execution Report for 2020. She presented documents that were prepared by IPS in cooperation with the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic. The documents were sent to all ERB Secretariats, and they were discussed with them already during the ERB Annual Secretariats meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

In 2020, ERB cooperation was highly challenging because of the COVID19 pandemic. It was impossible to perform many of the activities which were planned in the Action Plan for 2020. Almost all physical meetings had to be cancelled. The last meeting was the Baltic Sea Youth Platform project kick-off in Elbląg at the beginning of March 2020. Still, ERB was trying to continue cooperation, and all meetings were held online.

The first focus area in the ERB Report for 2020 was Lobbying.

ERB was active in the Interreg South Baltic Programme Monitoring Committee and Joint Programming Committee, and two working groups. We were preparing socio-economic analysis, SWOT, a draft of the strategy for the future programme 2021-2027. We were also

active in the Interreg South Baltic Programme Annual Conference. We had few active youth board members engaged in discussion during conferences and representatives from a few ERB regions being invited as panellist or moderator.

The Umbrella project finished in December 2020. We engaged 627 stakeholders, 277 organisations. We organised CBC awareness-raising conferences, webinars, seminars and active in Interreg South Baltic events. We started in the last months of the 2020 year working on UMBRELLA 2.0. ERB is there the Lead Partner of the project from the Swedish Institute. This capacity-building project will last one year. The goal is to increase awareness and knowledge of transnational cooperation in BSR, and we will target the newcomers and small and local actors.

Interconnect project ended last year in November, but the Lead Partner, which was Blekinge, had an idea to establish a Mobility Core Group in the Euroregion Baltic. Executive Board agreed to this during its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020, and the Mobility Core Group was established and is looking forward to its first meeting in March 2021.

ERB is active in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the BSR. We took part in the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum of the EUSBSR. As a partner in the Baltic Sea Youth Platform project, we invited ERB Youth Board to work on the youth declaration presented during the Youth EUSBSR pre-Forum (digital youth camp), where ERB YB members participated and contributed with their input.

ERB Strategic Actions in 2020:

- there were 4 ERB Executive Board meetings, 3 of them were organised online, and one held physically in Elblag in February 2020;

- ERB Executive Board adopted one Position Paper, "Capacity building process and ways to involve newcomers and smaller actors", that was disseminated among Interreg SBP stakeholders, including the European Commission DG Regio Officer responsible for the Interreg SBP, the Managing Authority, Monitoring Committee and Joint Programming Committee members and more;

- IPS ERB had working meetings with the Union of the Baltic Cities and BSSSC representatives. IPS had been in contact with many panbaltic organisations like CBSS and the Baltic Sea Commission of CPMR. Head of IPS was in Stockholm in October 2020 to meet with the new Director-General of the Council of Baltic Sea States – Mr Grzegorz Poznanski; she also had a BSYP Erasmus+ project meeting and discussion with two Senior CBSS Advisors on Baltic Sea Labour Forum and other possible cooperation activities. ERB and other Baltic organisations are constantly informing each other about the possibilities of future joint activities.

- ERB Youth Board was very active and engaged in IPS activities in 2020, including their engagement in BSYP and Advocacy Group, as well as present to a small-scale youth event in Elblag Technological Park organised by the IPS on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020 as the preparatory event to EUSBSR Annual Forum (Youth meeting STEM science event);

- ERB has a functional website with over 20.000 visits since September 2019, and we are active on social media – Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram targeting different target groups.
- IPS will prepare a short booklet this year explaining ERB to our stakeholders and presenting our working groups and project activities.

ERB Budget 2020 (*Excel file with data was sent out to ERB Secretariats and ERB Board Members before the meeting*):

- Most of the income are fees from ERB members and gain from projects. There are few pre-financed projects: Erasmus+ and UMBRELLA 2.0; they are also 100% funded, meaning no additional financial input from the ERB budget is necessary. We have a lot of savings because of no travels and meetings. We still await the project money to be sent to us.

Johan Sandberg, Chair of the ERB Board meeting, asked the ERB Board members for additional questions to Magda, but there were no questions nor comments. He requested the Board of ERB for the Report 2020 approval.

*All present ERB Board members approved the Annual Report for 2020 and the Annual Budget Report for 2020.*

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4. **Election of the ERB President and ERB Vice President following the rotation sequence approved by the ERB Board on 12.09.2019. Transfer of ERB Presidency and presentation of Blekinge Region priorities for ERB Presidency in 2021.**

The Head of the IPS read the information in the ERB Statute referring to the Presidency transfer rules for the ERB Board Members. She also reminded the rotation sequence approved by the ERB Board in 2019 in Iława, Poland. She reminded that according to the Statute, the ERB Executive Board would be requested to discuss the nominees and elect the ERB President and ERB Vice President.

The ERB Executive Board approved the transfer of ERB Presidency from Poland - Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic to Region Blekinge from Sweden, according to the ERB Executive Board's decision 12.09.2019 in Iława, Poland. The Vice Presidency position will be assumed by Poland – Warmia and Masuria region.

IPS presented the information received from Blekinge Region and Warmia and Masuria region with their nominees for the ERB President and Vice-President. According to Blekinge Region's decision, Mr Johan Sandberg shall become the ERB president in 2021 and Warmia and Masuria region confirmed Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina to become ERB Vice President.

*According to the ERB Statute, the Executive Board approved new ERB President Mr Johan Sandberg and the ERB Vice-President Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina for the term of one year. There was no objection from any delegation nor ERB Board member.*

Mr Sandberg expressed his gratitude to become the new President of Euroregion Baltic. He said he was happy to welcome Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina as the new ERB Vice-President.

Mr Sandberg also said he is pleased and honoured to continue with the President's role for these 20 years of unbroken cooperation between regions and people among the Euroregion Baltic members. He was also happy to have Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina, from the Warmia-Mazuria region, by his side as a Vice-President. Even though not present, he said he also likes to present his thanks to Mr Witold Wróblewski and the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic for last years chairmanship and the role of being the host of our international secretariat.

Region Blekinge is looking forward much to chair this organisation for the coming year. He does believe that they have many important issues to discuss concerning the new funds available from the EU in the coming years. He also sees that there are many concrete steps to take together concerning our joint Baltic seawater, mobility issues and tourism development. Blekinge region also considers the benefits of the youth board and board members meeting face-to-face, even though for now it is online, exchanging ideas and common thoughts today. On behalf of the Blekinge Region, he was looking forward to inviting all ERB Board members to Blekinge during the year. Even though the pandemic situation might not allow us to meet physically next time, he still took the possibility to invite all in a digital way to the Blekinge region. Once again, Mr Sandberg thanked all and welcomed Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina as ERB Vice-President.

Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina thanked ERB Board members for choosing him to be a Vice-President of Euroregion Baltic and congratulated the new ERB President, Mr Sandberg. He hopes that they will be able to cooperate during this 2021 year. He also congratulated Mr Wróblewski for last year work. In the name of Mr Wróblewski, he thanked that he could be President of Euroregion Baltic, but also he apologised for his absence. For Mr Brzezina, it's essential to cooperate, and the idea of cooperation via Euroregion Baltic is fundamental. He thanked them for their cooperation with the Association of Polish Communes and for their years of work in ERB, where the whole region gain many benefits. Mostly he thanked Ms Małgorzata Samusiewicz, who works in the Association of Polish Communes for more than 20 years. Region Warmińsko Mazurskie would like to work in actions connected to green energy and sustainable development. They also focus on the development of youth, and we must have an ERB Youth Board, which is the future of all of us and our region.

Ms Johanna Ronn from Blekinge Region presented the priorities of the Swedish presidency.

ERB has 20 years of cooperation which is grate base to work on priorities. Blekinge chose four priorities to work in 2021:

1. Work with Interreg South Baltic Programme.

ERB is an organisation which realise this programme and we would like to talk with the European Union about our needs and funding. ERB will work together in the Monitoring Committee, discuss the new programme's formalisation, and what kind of activities we would like to see when it comes to the projects. Using ERB, they would like to discuss strategic development and all challenges.

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They also would like to discuss a joint vision to strengthen our cooperation in the South Baltic Area.

## 2. Sustainable Mobility

ERB has Mobility Core Group to discuss "how we can use mobility to become more sustainable". We will talk about what happens in the Mobility Core Group. The key area to work is the possibility to connect people, SME and organisations.

## 3. Sustainable and innovative tourism cooperation

This is important for Blekinge and the whole region because, in the past, they had few projects connected with tourism. They will see what kind of activities are going on and how they can strengthen this area. They need to include the cultural aspect and creative industries.

## 4. Capacity Building and People to people activities

Finally, they would like to continue capacity building and people to people activities. ERB has an Umbrella capacity project. We should use Euroregion as a facilitator for organisations in our regions to increase their capacity to work cross-border and gain funding for joint actions. They hope that we can work more horizontally with youth issues to strengthen them. We hope that we can still cooperate even if the physical meetings are a bit harder.

There were no comments on the Blekinge Priorities.

Mr Sandberg said that our cooperation is essential because all of us bring difference, and these priorities will help that forward.

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## 5. **Transfer of ERB Youth Board Presidency**

Ms Julia Orluk 2019-2020, ERB Youth Board Chairwoman in 2019-2020, thank for her presidency and said that her adventure as ERB Youth Board Chairwoman has finished. She had a chance to meet and work with many creative young people. On February 19<sup>th</sup> were Elections for the new Chairwoman of the ERB Youth Board. This year two candidates were Johanna Wyckman and Małgorzata Lewandowska. Johanna Wyckman was elected, which means now she is the new Chairwoman of ERB Youth Board, and Ms Małgorzata has become Vice-Chair.

Ms Johanna Wyckman greeted everyone as the new ERB YB Chairwoman. She thanked Julia Orluk for her excellent work. She reminded that she was in the Youth Board for two years, so already had some experience with the ERB and ERB Board meetings. Regarding the plans for 2021, ERB Youth Board prepared the Erasmus+ application, and they would like to work on the application to submit it again. ERB Youth Board wants to cooperate more with the ERB Executive Board and be more present in daily ERB activities and meetings. They want to work more on climate change, democracy and the economy. They want to be more active in the policy and the Baltic Sea region affairs. Johanna Wyckman finalised, hoping that the ERB Youth Board will have good cooperation with ERB Board.

Ms Małgorzata Lewandowska presented herself briefly, introducing her and saying she represents the Pomorskie region. She mentioned she actively participates in regional organisations. She

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will do her best to represent the ERB Youth Board and Euroregion Baltic.

Mr Johan Sandberg congratulated Johanna and Małgorzata. He hoped that this year they would have a chance to work closely because the ERB Youth Board connects the ERB with the next generations.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen congratulated Johanna and Małgorzata. He also thanked Julia Orluk, as she did a lot of great work, especially communication with ERB Board was much better than before. He agreed that youth must take part and give their input on essential topics.

(Coffee break 10 min)

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6. **ERB Action Plan 2021**

Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło, Head of the IPS, outlined the new Action Plan for the ERB cooperation for 2021 and the Annual Budget plan for 2021.

Draft of the Action Plan was sent to ERB Secretariats and ERB Board Members, and all activities were discussed during the ERB Secretariats Annual meeting in January 2021. Planned actions are connected to Presidency priorities from Blekinge Region. They were also agreed and discussed with Warmia and Mazury to connect the activities from 2021 with those in 2022.

Action Plan is based on 5 Agendas that are important for ERB cooperation: South Baltic Agenda, Baltic Sea Region Agenda, European Agenda, Youth and People to People Agenda, Green and Blue growth Agenda.

ERB is supporting the continuation of the south Baltic programme to be an independent programme. They are working on a new programme, 2021-2027. Most of the Interreg South Baltic program projects has ended. But ERB is thinking about UMBRELLA 2.0, where will be an online webinar for ERB stakeholders. Then it will be able to present what we are doing in the project and who can take part in it. Seminars are planned to be 1,5-2 hours seminars, which will start in March 2021. Now we are working on the agenda draft, but first, we will discuss the South Baltic Agenda.

ERB representatives plan to participate in Baltic Sea Tourism Forum. They are new project ideas about tourism and culture, and it's also connected with new Presidency priorities. ERB Mobility Core Group and Water Core Group are planned to meet quite often, and their members will be invited to ERB Board meetings. They are working on the latest projects which could be submitted in the South Baltic Programme.

In Baltic Sea Region, Agenda will mainly work with UMBRELLA 2.0; we will contact EUSBSR Policy Area Coordinators and work with them to find out how to better involve small and local actors in the EUSBR processes and BSR cooperation.

This year, the EU strategy Forum will be based in Lithuania, probably online because it takes part around 800-1000 participants during this forum. We hope that Youth Camp will be prepared physically if we invite 50 youth.

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When it comes to the EU Strategy, we are organising with UBC and BSSSC joint communication campaign. We are starting to raise awareness about the importance of Baltic Sea cooperation.

Within the Baltic Sea Region Agenda, we will cooperate with pan-Baltic organisations as the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation, the Union of the Baltic Cities, Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Baltic Sea Commission. We have good contact with these organisations, and with some of them, we have projects as UMBRELLA 2.0 with UBC. We are working with Policy Area Coordinators in Culture, tourism, transport, PA Nutri.

European Agenda Activities – we cooperate with ERB member organisations' offices in Brussels; last year, we had a meeting in Brussels with them. We plan to organise an online event for ERB Stakeholders about the European Agenda. We were invited to be a project partner in H2020, which is something new for ERB. The project was submitted, and we have to wait until June – July for results. We will be able to involve our municipalities to discuss climate issues in ERB members regions.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> EU Macro Regional Strategy Week, ERB YB member Julia Orluk will present BSYP at a "Youth dialogue" panel.

Youth and People-to-people are made for the improvement of youth cooperation. We have changed the ERB Youth Board presidency now, and IPS has confirmed that ERB YB representatives are very engaged and wish to be even more involved in ERB cooperation and activities. They can be included in the work of the Executive Board. We have a few youth projects, but youth can't go anywhere due to the pandemic situation. We are able only to prepare an online meeting.

Green and Blue Growth Agenda Activities we have a Water Core Group. We have an expert who helps us to write a project application for the Waterman project. We have a Baltic Sea Biogas Alliance project funded by the Swedish Institute; IPS is supported by biogas expert – Ms Elvira Laneborg from Kalmar Municipality. Also, Klaipeda Region I represented in the project via Klaipeda University.

In lobbying activities, we engage in SBP; we plan to develop a more vital linkage between the political and project levels. We will check all project in which we will participate if they align with our Action Plan. We will improve the visibility of ERB; that's why we are preparing a folder about ERB.

### **Budget for 2021**

Incomes consist of the fees from members of the ERB and also from the projects. We are waiting for UMBRELLA reimburse and Europe for Citizens project reimbursement (final payment), and we receive partial payments from 2 Erasmus+ projects.

Magda put the same amount for travel as it was before COVID-19. Most of the amount from outcomes will be spent for UMBRELLA 2.0 activities. In the WaterMan project, we also have expenditures, and this amount will be reimbursed in 2022.

We should stay on balance with a budget, around 46.000 EUR.

Ms Johanna Ronn shortly commented that we have a very active international secretariat and – despite the pandemic situation, we

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still had many activities. It might be good to use ERB Board Meetings to discuss strategies related to all activities that we have a plan for and connect these activities with all regional strategy. We can discuss the most critical issues in each region, key strengthen. She said she was happy to hear that the liquidity of the budget is suitable for this year.

Mr Wiesław Byczkowski congratulated Mr Johan Sandberg to take President of ERB's position in 2021 and Ms Johanna Wyckman, the new Chairwoman of ERB Youth Board. Pomorskie shares the vision that in 2021 ERB should focus on Baltic and European values and implement actions in the areas of capacity building, people to people activities, sustainable and innovative tourism and last, but not least - sustainable mobility. These are also essential priorities in our Pomorskie Voivodeship Strategy until 2030, which is currently being shaped by a multi-stakeholder and a multi-level cohort of residents and professionals in a transparent, bottom-up process. The pandemic and probable future public health risks will impact our plans for a more extended period, and this is also why we have to move forward. Instead of focusing on coronavirus and its consequences, we have to embrace the fact that we managed to cooperate closely and effectively despite it and use this experience to build on our path with our Baltic and European togetherness, which has proven itself effective and uniting. We have to provide residents with lasting security – environmental-, energy-, health- and also digital-related. We focus on tackling climate crisis impacts and developing renewable energy sources, increasing the resilience of our economy and competitiveness, supporting tourism and free time offer. We put special effort into the development of an open regional community. We also aim to increase the quality of public transport. At the same time, intensive works are underway on regional strategic programs. It is clear to him that ERB initiatives planned for the nearest future are entirely in line with the Pomorskie Region's aims.

Mr Johan Sandberg asked about any other ERB Board Members comments, but nobody wanted to add anything.

Mr Johan asked if ERB Executive Board can approve ERB Action Plan 2021 and the Annual Budget plan for 2021.

*There was no disagreement, and the ERB Board members from 8 present delegations approved the ERB Action Plan for 2021.*

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7. **State of programming of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027**

Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański presented the state of play of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027, which is still in the working process. Ms Magda Leszczyzna-Rzucidło represents ERB and all regions in preparing the programme as Head of the Delegation in the Joint Programming Committee (JPC). Other persons from the ERB cooperation are involved in this SBP preparation process representing their regional/national delegations: Niels-Chresten Andersen, Johanna Ronn and also himself. The JPC, represents all stakeholders, and jointly develops the new programme document to be handed in to the Commission. The JPC has 2 working groups: WG1, programme content and WG2 technical issues. The Meeting of JPC took place (17.02.2021), and took the big step to approve the strategy for

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the coming programme 2021-2027. Terms of reference for the strategic documents have been discussed, and the final programming process is started. The Strategy for the Programme 2021-2027 describes:

1. SBA socio-economic analysis,
2. intervention logic,
3. complementarity with other Interreg programmes,
4. priority axes.

The programme points out seven different thematic areas leading to four priority axes:

Priority axis 1 Innovative South Baltic – enhancing the level of innovation and internationalisation of local actors. Measure 1.1 Digitalizing the region, Measure 1.2 Building connectivity of the region through internationalization. Suggested allocation is 20% of the total program budget.

Priority Axis 2 Sustainable South Baltic – promoting sustainable development and blue and green economy. Three measures are suggested for 45% of the total programme budget: 2.1 Supporting transitions towards green energy, 2.2 Promoting sustainable use of water, 2.3 Developing circular economy.

Priority Axis 3 Attractive South Baltic – activate South Baltic Area's tourist potential with 25% allocation of the budget. Measure 3.1 Develop sustainable and innovative tourism products and services

Priority Axis 4 Active South Baltic – improving governance cooperation will be a 10% allocation of the total budget. Measure 4.1 Strengthen the trust and cooperation capacity of actors within the South Baltic Area.

This is what was accepted by JPC yet, and the final programme document is planned to be handed in to the European Commission in autumn 2021. The strategy is published on the Programme website.

In working group 2, dealing with technical issues related to the different roles and responsibilities of the programme partners, the SMEs and regular project partners' involvement and how we can involve SMEs in the project activities is currently up for discussion. Finally, the Programme is preparing for a Seed Money projects to help smaller organisations to start their work.

Mr Johan Sandberg said that it was an excellent presentation, and he is impressed by Sławeks work. There were no more comments nor questions from the ERB Board Members.

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8. **Request from Klaipeda Region Association to sign the Letter of Support for the Palanga Region Airport**

Ms Egle Stonke from Klaipeda Region Association presented the Klaipeda Region request to sign a letter of support on behalf of the Euroregion Baltic Executive Board. The information about international Klaipeda airport's status will be changed into the national airport, as explained during the ERB Secretariats meeting

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in February 2021. It would be a significant loss for the region since Klaipeda is the coastal region, they need an international airport. Further development is a matter not only for the Klaipeda region but also for the whole Baltic Sea region. The airport will lose the chance for further modernisation, and there will be fewer flights. The Letter of Support's draft template has been sent to the ERB Secretariat members and ERB Executive Board Members before the meeting.

*ERB Executive Board was requested to discuss and agree on signing the Letter of Support by the ERB President.*

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said that Bornholm gives full support. This, for sure, will have a negative impact on Euroregion Baltic. We will spend more money and more time going, e.g. via Vilnius.

Mr Roland Gustbee from Kronoberg thinks the same as Bornholm. It will be much harder to go for meetings in Lithuania, and they support this letter.

Ms Małgosia from Pomorskie said that they also support this letter.

Mr Johan from the Blekinge region is very supportive of this letter. ERB is an organisation that should connect people, and this change of the airport will make it harder. Other Members of ERB would like to support this letter, e.g. Warmia and Mazury, Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic.

9. The Board jointly agreed to sign the letter of support, and that the signature will be presented by Johan Sandberg in the role as president for the ERB Board.

### **Umbrella project update and ERB capacity building initiatives**

Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło presented information on the Umbrella 2.0 project's planned activities aiming at small and local actors from the Baltic Sea Region. It is just one year project, and we have still a pandemic situation. Swedish Institute help us a lot, and they support us in our actions. If, for instance, ERB and the partners would like to postpone meetings or extend the project's duration, they could do it. For now, Umbrella 2.0 started a promotional campaign. We have selected an expert who will support us; one of the experts is Sebastian Magier. He is in contacting policy area coordinators, and we are working to interview them. End of April, we should report "how smaller actors can improve the connection to Baltic Sea cooperation to the strategy". This document will be presented during an online conference in April. This report will be a good base for us, and it will fill the gap. Later we will try to include more stakeholders, e.g. we will prepare flagship events. Maybe one of the possibilities could be an event in Kronoberg Region, and one may be in the Kaliningrad region and one in Lithuania (Klaipeda region). The topic will be chosen based on the interest of the stakeholders – culture, transport or learning. We plan webinars on project management, probably in Autumn. We would like to have three sessions on EUSBSR strategy, EU Green deal and sustainable development goals SDGs. They will be open for everybody interested; we will organise them in hybrid or just online versions.

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Capacity building initiatives are continuing. Magda was involved in Interact Common capacity building working group.

There were no more questions about UMBRELLA 2.0 project.

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10. **Information on the implementation of ERB projects and report from the Water Core Group and Mobility Core Group**

Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło from the ERB International Secretariat, together with Ms Anna Dudziak, Project Officer at IPS, presented information on the current developments in ERB youth-oriented Erasmus+ projects and updated on the works of Water Core Group. Mr Mattias Anderson from Blekinge Region gave a short update on the recently established Mobility Core Group.

In ERB, we have still five projects in which we are involved in 2021: UMBRELLA 2.0 (Swedish Institute funding), WaterMan (Interreg Baltic Sea Region), Baltic Sea Youth Platform (Erasmus+), InDiGiSE (Erasmus+), Baltic Sea Biogas Alliance – BASE (Swedish Institute). In all projects, ERB is present via IPS representative and supported by experts from other ERB member organisations.

WaterMan – ERB, as the Lead Partner, organised a Project Partner meeting and invited the Project Partners members and different stakeholders and Water Core Group members interested in preparing a more extensive application. Partners discussed where WaterMan should go for the Main Project phase. We have an expert who will put all information to the one to prepare an application. In the project, we will have the approach of Frontrunners and Followers. As for the project, we were invited to the PA NUTRI meeting to present the project. The main project application will be delivered in 3-4 quarter of this year.

Ms Anna Dudziak presented 2 Erasmus+ projects. BSYP on Monday we will take part in the EU MRS week conference. We are trying to be active in youth projects and events. We will take part in the BSPC Annual Conference and EUSBSR Annual Forum, and BSYP 2021. We submitted the first Erasmus+ report. Indigise – promotion of youth entrepreneurship, now we are promoting the platform, which are valuable materials for youth who would like to be entrepreneurs. We hope to be able to prepare two Innocamps in autumn 2021.

Mr Mattias Anderson from Mobility Core Group informed that 15 persons from ERB Members and beyond are appointed to the group. The 1<sup>st</sup> MCG meeting is scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> march. The group considers to send a joint position for the TEN'T open public consultation on mobility, green issues and digitalization. This would be in line with the MCG work plan. MCG also submitted an application for seed money to the Swedish Institute; "Public transport Interconnecting Sustainable Tourism Routes and destinations in the South Baltic Area" with six partners from Mobility Core Group engaged in the project.

Mr Johan Sandberg asked the ERB board to comment on the suggestion that the MCG develops a joint ERB reply to the TEN-T public consultation. He commented that ERB, will give additional strength to the regional positions and that it would be good to take a joint position in this matter.

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Mr Niels-Chresten Andersen agreed that the changes and amendments in the South Baltic transport area are crucial for the trans-European network's planned changes. As ERB, we are lobbying, so it would be good to send the joint reply to TEN-T consultations as Euroregion Baltic.

The ERB Board decided to give the MCG the task to discuss the TEN-T public consultation further in next meeting and to prepare a draft statement, to be adopted by ERB Executive Board in a written procedure, signed by the ERB board president.

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## 11. **Invitation to the next Executive Board meetings**

Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło presented the upcoming activities:

- End of March – ERB Seminar on South Baltic Agenda,
- June – ERB Seminar on Baltic Sea Agenda; ERB seminar on Youth & people to people agenda,
- September – ERB Seminar on European agenda,
- October – ER Seminar on works of Water Core Group incl. Blue & Green growth Agenda;
- November – ERB Seminar on Mobility Core Group incl. Blue & Green Growth Agenda

Next ERB Executive Board meetings:

25-26<sup>th</sup> May in Blekinge, Sweden and 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 in Kaliningrad Region –hopefully this meeting will be physical.

Ms Liana Maximowa, ERB Executive Board Deputy Member from Kaliningrad Region, informed the Board Members that the BSSSC conference would take place on 7-8<sup>th</sup> October for the Panels and conference itself and 6<sup>th</sup> Oct for the board meetings. They suggest organising a joint meeting for the Board of ERB and BSSSC to align our work better and seek possible areas of future cooperation between our organisations. But all information is not final; due to the COVID19 situation, the travelling possibilities are still not certain; the Kaliningrad Region representatives will discuss different options and soon send info to IPS with more details.

Ms Magda Leszczyna Rzucidło said they already discussed this conference and meeting during the BSSSC Board meeting she attended the day before. BSSSC was in favour of moving the meetings to one week earlier in October (from 13<sup>th</sup> Oct to 6<sup>th</sup> Oct for the Board meetings), as the following week is European Week of Regions and Cities and Committee of Regions plenary session week, which Warmia and Masuria representatives also highlighted. It was suggested that these dates collide and may need to be rescheduled. To summarise, the new date is not colliding with any major EU events.

Mr Johan Sandberg asked the ERB Board to confirm the proposed dates and ERB Board Members confirmed the new appointment on 6.10.2021 in Kaliningrad Region. Again, Mr Sandberg expressed his hope that the next ERB Board meeting could be organised in a hybrid or physical format in Blekinge Region. If that would not be possible, he promised that Blekinge would welcome ERB Board members to a digital visiting experience.

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12. **Conclusion and closing**

Mr Johan Sandberg thanked everyone for a very productive and pleasant meeting. He expressed that this year will be an exciting time, and he is much looking forward to a year as president for the ERB. He also express the hope to soon be able to meet each of the board members in person, With these words, Mr Sandberg closed the ERB Executive Board meeting.

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