

Euroregion Baltic
 Executive Board Meeting 19th May 2020
 Online meeting



Title Meeting minutes

Submitted by MLR, International Permanent Secretariat

Summary / Note This document provides the meeting minutes of the ERB Executive Board online meeting on 19th May 2020

Requested action Implement.

Participants:

ERB Executive Board:

Mr Witold Wróblewski	ERB President, Mayor of Elbląg, Chair of the Association of Polish Communes ERB
Mr Johan Sandberg	ERB Vice – President, Chair of the Regional Development Board, Region Blekinge
Mr Wiesław Byczkowski	Member of ERB Executive Board, Deputy Marshal of Pomorskie Region
Ms Elin Landerdahl	Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County
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 Helen Bengtsson	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kronoberg
Ms Britt-Louise Berndtsson	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kronoberg
Ms Maria F. Kjaergaard	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Regional Council in Bornholm
Mr Jørn Westh	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Ms Liana Maximova	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Kaliningrad Region
Mr Anders Tell	Member of ERB Board, Skåne Association of Local Authorities

Mr Lars Lundberg	Member of ERB Board, Skåne Association of Local Authorities
Mr Peter Vretlund	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County
Ms Johanna Wyckman	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County
Ms Karin Helmersson	Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County
Ms Ingrid Hermansson	Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Blekinge
Ms Suzanne Svensson	Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Blekinge

ERB Secretariats:

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen	Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Mr Slawomir Demkowicz - Dobrzanski	Region Kronoberg
Ms Evgeniya Russu	Kaliningrad Region
Ms Johanna Haward	Skåne Association of Local Authorities
Ms Klaudija Kionies	Association of Klaipeda Region
Ms Krystyna Wróblewska	Pomorskie Region
Ms Małgorzata Klawitter-Piwowarska	Pomorskie Region
Ms Agata Birecka	Pomorskie Region
Mr Jan Martinsson	Region Kalmar County
Ms Johanna Rönn	Region Blekinge
Ms Małgorzata Samusjew	Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic
Mr Łukasz Bielewski	Warmia and Masuria Region
Mr Piotr Zwolak	Warmia and Masuria Region
Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło	Euroregion Baltic International Secretariat
Ms Anna Dudziak	Euroregion Baltic International Secretariat
Mr Marcin Żuchowski	Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic

ERB Youth Board:

Ms Julia Orluk	Chairwoman of the ERB Youth Board, Pomorskie Region
Mr Kieran Hindshaw	Member of ERB Youth Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Mr Emil Rigstad	Member of ERB Youth Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Mr Daniel Migunov	Member of ERB Youth Board, Kaliningrad Region
Ms Olga Miskevich	Member of ERB Youth Board, Kaliningrad 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

ERB Executive Board meeting 19th May 2020

10.00 – 12.00 CET

Online session, ZOOM web app

10.00	1.	<p>Welcome and opening</p>
10.10		<p>President of Euroregion Baltic, Mr Witold Wróblewski, Mayor of Elbląg and Chair of Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic welcomed the participants of the ERB Board meeting organised online due to the pandemic and presented the meeting agenda. There were no comments or questions to the programme, hence the Chairmen asked the ERB Board members to approve the proposed document.</p> <p>Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło provided short technical instructions for the meeting.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>ERB Executive Board approved the agenda of the meeting.</i></p>
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10.10	2.	<p>Informative round on COVID-19 situation in the ERB states</p>
10.40		<p>ERB President informed the ERB Board Members about the COVID19 situation in Poland. He mentioned that the situation differs in various regions, with Silesia and Mazovia region being the most affected and, i.e. Pomorskie and Warmia and Masuria region having less confirmed cases of the disease and significantly lower death rate in Pomorskie. In Elbląg, there were no death cases from COVID19. Currently, we are loosening the restrictions, since Monday we will re-open the restaurants and some services like hairdressers. Also last week Elbląg started re-opening schools and kindergartens; currently, around 25% of kids are attending the classes, as it is still possible to stay at home and provide the child care by parents and receive the 80% of their salary. It is still unknown when the borders will be opened, vice-premier announced recently that it might start around 15th Jun, but this may change depending on the pandemic situation in our country.</p> <p>Ms Maria F. Kjaergaard from Bornholm Municipality presented the information on the situation in Denmark. She started saying that there was also a lockdown strategy in Denmark until now and the schools, almost all services were closed and people were advised to stay at home, but now they are starting slowly to re-open. New test strategy was introduced, and people can get tested even if they were not sick. Kids aged 6-15 are back to school now, and in June the phase 3 will start, when the museums, cinemas and other public places will be re-opened. At the moment still, a lot of people work from home. The more significant events planned for summer will most likely not happen. This may change maybe in August, but it's not guaranteed. The borders are still closed, and probably the new regulations will come at the end of May. Overall she confirmed</p>

that they were quite lucky in Bornholm and the island was not that much affected.

Ms Klaudija Kiones from Klaipeda Region presented the information on behalf of Lithuanian ERB Member. She informed everyone about the key facts about the COVID219 situation, saying that the situation is becoming more stable. Klaipeda, unfortunately, had most of the cases noted in Lithuania, as they are major transportation corridor, so this was a considerable challenge to the regional hospital and the municipality. As Association they were also involved as coordinators and were helping with the situation. Just a day ago kindergartens and schools re-opened but the situation is the same as in Poland – it is up to the parents to decide whether they wish to send their kids to school. Klaipeda region also decided to hold the online schooling possibilities until the end of the school year. The cross borders are starting to open – “the Baltic states travel bubble” allows the travel for people from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania freely, which they expect will be suitable for the tourism sector and the services like restaurants hotels etc. They also, as an Association, are already thinking about the tourism sector and see the need to make some awareness-raising campaigns to alert people how can they travel safely. There’s the newly approved plan for tourism promotion and local tourism adopted by the government, that will financially help the whole sector. New ways of working are being introduced, there is a huge need for digitalisation, and there are new procedures introduced to do online work as easy and well-working as possible.

Ms Liana Maximova presented the situation in Russia, and the Kaliningrad region is becoming slightly better. There are less officially registered cases in Kaliningrad every day, and the figures are looking good now. Since 20th May most of the public services are re-opened, there are restrictions as in other countries, but people are coming back to work. Students still have distance learning, and secondary schools have already finished education and started summer holidays. Now the main concern is how to support the SMEs and the families affected with the pandemic situation. Families with children will get financial support from the government.

Finally, Mr Johan Sandberg presented the situation on behalf of the Swedish regions. In general, Sweden has a slightly different strategy. They did not have the lockdown, daycare centres and primary schools are running. However, the secondary schools and the universities are operating online rather than physical. All business is also opened, although there is a downfall to trade, hotels and restaurants mostly. Around 35.000 people were infected in Sweden. Blekinge has the lowest number of infected people, 53 people per 100.000 inhabitants, in Skane around 77/100k, Kalmar 90 / 100k and Kronoberg around 250 per 100.000 inhabitants. There is a stabilisation now in the number of affected, but they expect a peak in these four regions this summer. The larger events were cancelled or postponed, travel is restricted and will remain restricted until 15th Jun, but it is expected that it will be prolonged after this time. The Swedish government has started substantial

financial help to business, and the support packages are introduced.

ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented.

Since ERB President Mr Wróblewski had to leave the meeting due to the necessity to attend another meeting, he asked Mr Johan Sandberg, ERB Vice President, to chair the meeting from this moment. He thanked everyone for their participation and wished them a lot of health.

ERB Vice President, Mr Johan Sandberg, representing Blekinge Region, will continue as a Chair of the meeting.

10.40 3. **Information from the South Baltic Programme**

11.20

Mr Niels Chresten-Andersen informed the Board about the state-of-the-play in the South Baltic Programme including the Programme's Monitoring Committee written voting procedure in April. In regards to the current Programme, the MC was supposed to meet in April, but this was not possible. Instead, the written voting procedure was introduced, as it was necessary to make small changes in the Programme Manual and to approve the Annual Implementation report for 2019, as it had to be delivered until the end of June. The third important decision was to prolong the Contact Points until the end of 2021 and the Joint Secretariat until the end of 2023. Both were approved, but the decision about the Technical Assistance budget will be taken during the June JPC/MC meeting, most likely in the online format. In June MC will also decide about the Programme savings, but there are not so many of these so far. As for the next Programme, the information about the SBP communication activities was given, and the online activities will replace the Annual event scheduled for 16-17 September in Sweden.

Formally we still do not know whether there will be the new Programme, but on the 29th Apr, there was an update for the MC, that the 1st step to work on the new Programme would be the SWOT analysis of the South Baltic Programme. There was a bid organised by the MA, and the bid-winner shall work on the review now and present the outcomes to the JPC in June 2020. The net JPC meetings are scheduled for June, September, November and January 2021. As for now, it is still challenging to discuss the future as the new EU budget for 2021-27 is also yet not known. There is information that the Environment Impact Assessment is obligatory for our Programme, which means that there needs to be a procedure of 8-12 weeks of public hearings, which may again prolong the process of the new Programme adoption.

ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented.

11.20 4. **ERB position paper on the capacity building process and ways to involve newcomers and smaller actors.**

11.40

Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło presented the state-of-play on the draft position paper on the capacity building initiatives and ways to involve newcomers and smaller actors. She confirmed that there was a very intense discussion on this paper during recent weeks and that the document was redrafted a few times. The final version that was shared on the screen was agreed on Friday, 15th May, between the ERB Secretariats. Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło confirmed that this is the fourth ERB document of the future of the Interreg South Baltic Programme and briefly reminded the previous papers. She read the whole text and added necessary comments on how the specific sections were understood by all ERB regions, making sure that the ERB Board members are aware of all the details. She briefed everyone on the comments raised by the Swedish regions, as well as the feedback sent by the Warmia and Masuria region and Pomorskie region.

She also mentioned the capacity building initiative submitted to the Swedish Institute in December 2019 based on the Umbrella project results. SI replied some time ago they are positive towards this initiative and invited ERB for the online meeting to discuss this further. At the beginning of May Magda and Jan Martinsson met with the SI representatives: Gabor Schneider, Camilla Wristel and Markus Boman and Anders Bergstrom Coordinator of the EUSBSR Ha Capacity to present the ERB/Umbrella proposal and discuss on the joint possibilities. The SI is very interested in our capacity building projects results, as well as the tools we have introduced to raise awareness of small and local actors in our regions and to boost their capacities and engage them in the cross-border cooperation. They mainly see ERB experience in engaging the municipalities for the peripheral region, but also smaller civil society organisations. They would like to form some sort of the joint activities with us but are not sure whether the Baltic Leadership programme format is the best option. It was decided that the SI needs to discuss the possibilities internally and will get back to ERB with concrete proposal and information on what type of joint activities are possible. This way, we could continue the capacity building process in the region after the Umbrella project is finished (Dec 2020) and before the new capacity-building initiatives are possible in the new programming period.

ERB Vice President and the meeting Chairman thanked Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło and asked the representatives of all ERB Members to comment on the policy paper she presented. Mr Sandberg confirmed that Blekinge Region agrees with the final version of this position paper and they agree that the aim of this position paper is also in line with the ongoing capacity building discussion with the Swedish Institute. He confirmed that Blekinge is in favour of adopting the document.

Ms Maria F. Kjaergaard from Bornholm Municipality confirmed that they support the document and do not have any additional comments to it.

Ms Kaludija Kiones confirmed she discussed this with the Mayor Grubliauskas, who unfortunately could not join the ERB Board

meeting today, and they agree with the document and have no further comments.

Ms Małgorzata Samusjew representing the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic confirmed that they also support every initiative that helps smaller municipalities and smaller actors to be more engaged. They are in favour of adopting the document.

On behalf of Pomorskie region, Ms Krystyna Wróblewska and Marshal Byczkowski confirmed they support the document and wishes to thank for the active negotiation process.

Ms Liana Maximova confirmed that Kaliningrad region also supports the document in this form.

Mr Łukasz Bielewski confirmed on behalf of the Warmia and Masuria region that they do not have any additional comments and they support the document in the presented form.

Mr Roland Gustbée representing the Kronoberg region, stated that they are in favour of adopting the document. Ms Karin Helmersson from Region Kalmar County also thanked for the presentation of the material and confirmed they support it on behalf of the Kalmar delegation. Ms Johanna Haward from Skåne Association of Local Authorities also confirmed that they are in favour of adopting the document in the current form.

ERB Vice President, Mr Johan Sandberg thanked everyone and confirmed that the ERB policy paper has been adopted unanimously by the ERB Executive Board Members and thanked Magda and the Secretariats for their work coordinating it.

ERB Executive Board decided to adopt the ERB Position Paper on the capacity building process and ways to involve newcomers and smaller actors.

11.40

Information about the current work of the ERB International Permanent Secretariat.

11.50

Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło, Head of the ERB IPS presented the information about the cancelled shortly and postponed events, especially mentioning information about the postponed Umbrella final conference that was supposed to happen on 18-19th May, back-to-back with the ERB Board meeting. Due to the COVID situation, the Umbrella project has been extended and will not finish in June 2020 but in Dec 2020. This way it is possible to have the final conference on the 2-3rd Dec 2020, as this date is now booked in the European Solidarity Centre, an event venue in Gdansk. As the situation is still uncertain, it may happen that the physical conference will not be possible anyway. In this case, it will be organised an interactive online event, with the already-invited speakers from the EUSBSR and the Interreg South Baltic Programme. If the event takes place, there should also be an ERB Board meeting on the 3rd Dec, back-to-back to the conference. Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło also informed about the planned webinars and online "rent-an-expert" possibilities for the ERB/Umbrella stakeholders, that will be organised starting from June and until the late fall. All Secretariats will be informed about these events in

advance so that they can share the info with their regional stakeholders.

Regarding the upcoming September ERB Board meeting Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło asked Ms Liana Maximova to inform about the current situation in the Kaliningrad region and plans for the September BSSSC Annual event, ERB Water Forum and ERB Board meeting. Ms Maximova confirmed that the BSSSC Annual Forum would take place online and it is doubtful that the other activities would be possible in the last week of September. She mentioned that she has the information that the Russian border will be closed until the end of this year. Ms Leszczyna-Rzucidło confirmed, if the situation prevents ERB Board meeting from physically meeting regularly, she has now purchased the ZOOM account and is ready to continue with the online meeting formats as long as it is necessary.

Ms Krystyna Wróblewska invited everyone to share info about the BSSSC Spring Youth event organised for the first time in digital version due to the pandemic restrictions. Pomorskie region, who is now leading the BSSSC organisation, will host the event between 2nd and 5th June and would like to invite the ERB Youth Board and all youth interested in Baltic Sea Region cooperation. Among the topics that will be covered, she confirmed the Green Deal to fight the climate crisis in corona times, Digital Era in post-corona crisis and the democracy in the post-corona world. BSSSC organise this year's event in cooperation with the ERB, CBSS and UBC.

Since the September ERB Board meeting shall happen, online Mr Johan Sandberg suggested that we should set the date as soon as possible, as it could be earlier than the end of the month, as previously planned. It was also suggested by the Swedish regions to have more online meetings/ more frequent/ using the ZOOM possibilities, and everyone agreed with this proposal. Ms Karin Helmersson confirmed that Kalmar region also would opt for the earlier September dates for the Board meeting. Ms Niels Chresten-Andersen confirmed that the online session is acceptable, but they recommend the Doodle as soon as possible so that the dates can be fixed as early as possible.

Mr Johan Sandberg asked Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło to organise the Doodle as soon as possible and to set the date at the earliest possible convenience. The date for the December Board meeting stands for now, but it will be decided later whether this will be physical or an online meeting.

ERB Executive Board took note of the information presented.

11.50 5. **Conclusion and closing**
12.00

Vice President of Euroregion Baltic, Mr Johan Sandberg, thanked everyone for their active engagement and closed the online meeting of the ERB Executive Board.
