

Euroregion Baltic
Executive Board Meeting
20th December 2021
Online meeting

Title	Meeting minutes
Submitted by	MLR, International Permanent Secretariat
Summary / Note	This document provides the ERB Executive Board online meeting minutes on 20 th December 2021.
Requested action	Adopt

Participants:
ERB Executive Board:

Ms Elin Petersson	ERB President, Member of ERB Executive Board, Blekinge Region
Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina	ERB Vice-President, Member of ERB Executive Board, Marshal of Warmia and Masuria Region
Mr Roland Gustbée	Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kronoberg
Mr Robert Olesen	Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kronoberg
Ms Karin Helmersson	Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar
Ms Johanna Wyckman	Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar
Ms Suzanne Svensson	Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Regional Development Board Region Blekinge
Ms Ingrid Hermansson	Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Regional Development Board Region Blekinge
Ms Liana Maximova	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Deputy Head of the Agency for International Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Kaliningrad Region
Mr Vytautas Grubliauskas	Member of the ERB Executive Board, Klaipeda Region Association
Mr Witold Wróblewski	Member of the ERB Executive Board, Association of Polish Communes ERB

ERB Youth Board:

Ms Johanna Wyckman	Chairwoman of ERB Youth Board, Kalmar Region
Ms Małgorzata Lewandowska	Vice Chairwoman of ERB Youth Board, Member of the ERB Youth Board, Pomorskie Region
Mr Alexander Nilsson	Member of ERB Youth Board, Region Blekinge
Ms Greta Tautavičiūtė	Member of ERB Youth Board, Association Klaipeda Region

ERB Secretariats:

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen	Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Mr Sławomir Demkowicz -Dobrzanski	Region Kronoberg
Ms Egle Stonke	Association of Klaipeda Region
Mr Łukasz Bielewski	Warmia and Masuria Region
Mr Piotr Zwolak	Warmia and Masuria Region
Ms Agata Birecka	Pomorskie Region
Ms Antje Schreyer	Region Kalmar County
Ms Johanna Rönn	Region Blekinge
Mr Marcin Żuchowski	Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic
Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło	Head of the Euroregion Baltic International Permanent Secretariat
Ms Anna Dudziak	Euroregion Baltic International Permanent Secretariat
Ms Paulina Lieder-Żuchowska	Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic

Guests:

Mr Radosław Okuszeko, Legal Advisor to APC ERB

ERB Executive Board meeting

20th December 2021

14.30 – 15.30 CET

Online session

14.30	1.	Welcome and opening
14.35		ERB Vice President, Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina from Warmia and Masuria Region, opened the session as a Chair of the meeting. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and passed his greetings to all ERB Executive Board members and guests. Mr Brzezina presented the meeting's agenda and asked the ERB Board members to comment or approve the agenda provided.

ERB Executive Board approved the agenda of the meeting as presented by the Chair.

14.35	2.	Signing the minutes of the previous ERB Executive Board meeting
14.40		

ERB IPS have submitted the minutes of the previous ERB Executive Board meeting held on 6th October 2021.

Mr Roland Gustbée, ERB Board Member from Kronoberg Region, asked for a formal check-up of attendance of ERB Executive Board Members, as it was not possible to verify this via the participants' list since few people sit together in one room and others are participating individually.

ERB Vice President, Mr Brzezina, asked the Head of the IPS ERB to confirm the ERB Board Members' names in the meeting. Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło, Head of the IPS, asked each delegation to confirm the names of the ERB Board members who participated in today's session. Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic is represented by Mr Witold Wróblewski, Warmia and Masuria Region represented by Marshal Brzezina, Pomorskie Region – Ms Agata Birecka, ERB Secretariat member were present on behalf of Marshal Byczkowski, Ms Liana Maximowa, ERB Board Member was present on behalf of Kaliningrad Region, Mr Vitautas Graubliauskas, the member of ERB Board, was representing Klaipėda Region, no ERB Board Members were representing

Bornholm region to the meeting, Blekinge Region was represented in ERB Board by Elin Petersson, Ingrid Hermansson, Suzanne Svensson and Mr Aleksander Nilsson as ERB Youth Board member, Kronoberg Region was represented by Mr Roland Gustbée and Mr Robert Olessen, and Johanna Wyckman and Karin Helmersson represented region Kalmar. Head of IPS ERB also confirmed the present ERB Youth Board Members – Johanna Wyckman, Aleksander Nilsson, Małgorzata Lewandowska and Greta Tautavičiūtė.

Marshal Brzezina thanked the attendance check-up and continued by signing up the meeting minutes from the ERB Board meeting on 6th October 2021.

ERB Executive Board approved the minutes, and ERB Vice President signed the ERB Executive Board meeting minutes.

14.40 3. **Election of the ERB President appointed by the Blekinge Region**
14.55

ERB Vice President reminded that the ERB Statute states in § 4 point 2 that the:

"The tasks of the Board are to:

2.4 elect the ERB President for the term of one year in accordance with the rotation sequence approved by all the Parties of the Agreement".

By the decision of the ERB Executive Board of 21st February 2011 approving the sequence of ERB Presidency transfers, the ERB Presidency for 2021 is held by the Region Blekinge from Sweden, according to the decision taken by the ERB Executive Board on 12.09.2019 in Iława, Poland. The Vice Presidency position was assumed by Poland – Warmia and Masuria region.

The ERB Vice President informed the ERB Board Members that the Blekinge Region decided on 19th November 2021 to nominate Ms Elin Petersson for the position of President of the Euroregion Baltic. ERB Vice President informed that Ms Petersson also holds the position of Chair of the Regional Development Board in Region Blekinge. Mr Brzezina asked Ms Petersson to address the ERB Board members, and he called for ERB Board Members to officially confirm the election of Ms Elin Petersson as ERB President.

Ms Elin Petersson addressed the ERB Board Members saying that she is both glad and honoured by the nomination and

thanked for the trust for her and her organisation to lead ERB cooperation. She thanked everyone for their support and expressed special gratitude to ERB Vice President and Warmia and Masuria Region representatives for taking the temporary responsibilities during the sad circumstances in Region Blekinge. Even though there is not too much time until the end of the Blekinge Presidency, there are still many tasks to fulfil. Ms President is looking forward to completing the mission, and she assured everyone that she believes that the history of 23 years of positive cooperation will accomplish in a good manner. She added that she was involved in Euroregion Baltic cooperation for eight years. She understands this can be a challenge; nevertheless, there's a great strength behind the ERB organisation, and she believes ERB has many future and collaborative opportunities ahead of us.

ERB Vice President thanks Ms Elin Petersson for her words and asked the ERB Board Members to discuss and formally approve Ms Petersson to the position of ERB President.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen from the Bornholm region said they are very happy that ERB solved the sad situation. He confirmed Bornholm is pleased to have Ms Elin Petersson as the new ERB President and welcomed her warmly.

Marshal Brzezin thanked everyone for their comments and approval; he congratulated Ms Elin Petersson on behalf of all ERB Board members for being formally approved as the ERB president and asked Ms Petersson to Chair the meeting from now on.

The ERB Executive Board will formally confirm the election of the ERB President.

14.55	4.	Information about the letter from the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic Board to ERB President regarding the IPS ERB
15.05		

ERB President, Ms Elin Petersson, asked Mr Witold Wróblewski, ERB Board Member representative from the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic, to briefly explain the situation as a host situation to International Permanent Secretariat and inform about the official letter sent by the Board of the Association to ERB president on 3rd December 2021. She asked Mr Wróblewski to take the floor and comment on the works of the International permanent Secretariat within the structure of APC ERB.

Mr Witold Wróblewski welcomed all the ERB Board members on behalf of the APC ERB Board.

Due to technical problems with the APC ERB connection head of IPS ERB suggested that she continues with the next point in the agenda, and after Ms Wróblewski reconnects again, he will continue with point no. 4.

Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło, head of the IPS ERB, continued with point no. 5 in ERB Board meeting Agenda

5. Results from the WG COFE meeting

The Head of the IPS ERB presented the summary of WG at the COFE meeting on 21st September 2021 and the next steps taken after the WG was established, met and concluded with the discussion after the September meeting. The meeting minutes were sent to all the WG members, including ERB Secretariats representatives, Europe Direct Offices Representatives and Brussels Office representatives from Warmia and Masuria and Blekinge/Kalmar/Kronoberg Regions.

During the ERB Secretariats meeting in November, it was decided that the joint ERB position paper would not be prepared at the moment. Still, all the ERB Members received the discussion results, and each ERB Member can give their input based on these results to the CofE Platform. Head of IPS ERB also presented the upcoming events related to COFE – panel on Climate Change and Citizens Panel on the better engagement of smaller municipalities and citizens in the Dialogue.

Mr Niels Chresen Andersen added that the Platform might be open even longer than the end of January 2022, but he heard from Brussels that those who want to influence the Platform should have their say until the end of the year, preferably. The Citizens Panels have the last meetings now, and there will be the final one, which is postponed until 10th February 2022, so this gives still an option to participate in it. Mr Chresten Andersen concluded that the input from ERB coming in March 2022, with the next ERB Board meeting, would not give too much meaning and value to the Platform, so it is better if every ERB Region that shares this interest does it on its own now.

ERB Board members took note of the information presented.

Continuation of point no. 4 in the ERB Board Meeting Agenda.

Mr Wróblewski informed the ERB Board Members that concerning the ERB late ERB President - Mr Johans Sandbergs' - letter that was sent to APC ERB Board members decided to perform an audit by an independent auditor, whose task was to verify all the operations undergoing in the Association as such. The audit highlighted several areas that required immediate intervention and preventive measures. Mr Wróblewski did not go into the details of internal APC ERB matters but was informed about the functioning of the IPS ERB within their organisation. Auditor has concluded that the functioning of the ERB IPS in the way it operates at the moment in APC ERB is in contradiction to Polish law. Therefore APC ERB would like to start the discussion to ensure the proper rules of operation and functioning. APC ERB Board analysed the audit results, and they suggest in the letter that the shared aim should be to ensure the legal functioning of the IPS ERB in line with the Polish regulations. Therefore it is urgent, and he asked all the ERB Board Members to start the urgent action to ensure compliance with Polish laws, as it cannot be that APC ERB has any allegations that they operate illegally.

ERB President thanked Mr Wróblewski for this information, and she confirmed that she also agrees that the dialogue is welcomed and asked ERB Board members for the discussion.

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen said that he talked about the letter that Mr Wróblewski was referring to with the ERB Board Members from Bornholm; they also noted the letter from Blekinge on what to do next. They all fully agree that we ERB need to take action as soon as possible. He supported the proposal from Blekinge Region to have the written consultation, and he agreed it should be until 13th January, as this is rather urgent. He also mentioned they looked back into the agreement from 2015 that regulated the rules between the ERB and host of the IPS ERB, and he said that the Statue of ERB states that the IPS ERB acts under the direction of the ERB President and in line with the decisions of the ERB Board and this is crucial to Bornholm. And from the understanding of the APC ERB letter and results of the internal audit, they see that the Association will not be able to fulfil what we agreed in 2015 as this is contrary to Polish legislation, as it was said. This means ERB must seek an alternative solution. And based on the letter from the Blekinge region offering 3 possible answers, Bornholm states that they would like to see solution A, which is a continued and joint solution between the APC ERB and ERB Board. Still, they wish to see how it can be ensured within the Polish legislation that the IPS ERB is independent and under the direction of the ERB President and ERB Board.

This may be difficult, so it would be good to see the proposal from APC ERB Board if they see possibilities for that. Solution B is seeking another organisation in Poland that could be a new host of IPS ERB that would align with the Polish regulations. Bornholm does not support option C, so rotating International Secretariat, as they had this solution before and did not work well and efficiently to ERB cooperation. To sum up, Ms Andersen agreed to the written consultation, and he urged for the solution by 13th January and final agreement at the next ERB Board meeting in March 2022.

Mr Wróblewski said he is happy with the reply from Mr Andersen but said he has his doubts that IPS ERB can be independent concerning Polish law; these are also the doubts that the auditor highlighted. But he is open to seeing this proposal, and if APC ERB Board received it, they would discuss it. Mr Wróblewski also confirmed he agrees with the date of 13th January to conclude with the ways forward. He underlined that there is only one condition for the APC ERB – all suggestions and solutions must be in line with Polish law and regulations.

Mr Roland Gustbee agreed with the reasoning of the Bornholm Region and the Blekinge Region proposal. They believe that the written procedure is the only way to go forward quickly. He believes that the two solutions are preferable, but they will await the procedure results. He stated that it obviously cannot be continued the way we operate with IPS ERB now, as all have to comply with the law, but he believes ERB will find a proper solution.

Mr Vitautas Garubliauskas thanked all ERB Board Members for the good meeting and wished everyone Merry Christmas. He fully supported the suggestion by Niels Chresten Andersen about the written procedure and supported the shorter timeline until 13th January. Klaipeda Region fully support the 2nd option, this is their position, but he also wants to see the results coming from all ERB Members.

The written procedure should end with a result to show which option is preferred by the member regions and the proposal for final solution should be presented and decided by ERB board in next meeting in March.

Ms Elin Petersson, ERB President, asked if there were any other points in the discussion, but there were not. She reminded everyone about the Blekinge Region proposal for the written procedure and concluded that the ERB Board Members should confirm and agree to proceed with the written manner. This decision was taken by the ERB Board Members unanimously.

ERB Executive Board agreed to start the written procedure to prepare for a final decision at the next board meeting based on the Blekinge Region proposal.

15.20 6. **Invitation to the next ERB Board meeting in 2022**

15.25 On behalf of the ERB Vice President Gustaw Marek Brzezina, Mr Łukasz Bielewski, Director of International Cooperation Department of the Marshal Office in Warmia and Masuria Region, invited the ERB Board members to the next ERB Board meeting in Olsztyn, Warmia and Masuria Region. The dates suggested by the hosts are 9-10th March 2022, and the meeting is planned in a traditional, physical manner. He also reflected on the planned priorities of the Warmia and Masuria Regions ERB presidency that will start in 2023, informing that the priorities would be:

- 1) Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027;
- 2) Sustainable development through cooperation;
- 3) Competence building and people-to-people cooperation;
- 4) Youth.

These priorities are the continuation of the Blekinge Region priorities and will be discussed more in detail during the next ERB Board Meeting in March 2022 in Olsztyn. Mr Bielewski again invited all the ERB Board members warmly to the meeting in Olsztyn in spring next year.

ERB Board members took note of the information provided.

15.30 7. **Conclusion and closing**

Chair of the meeting, President of Euroregion Baltic, Ms Elin Petersson, summarised the meeting saying that despite the continued effects of the pandemic, ERB managed an agenda full of activities and several activities new ideas for new projects and cooperation. She hoped to see everyone in person and good health during the next meeting in Olsztyn. Finally, ERB President wished everyone Merry Christmas and all the

best for the New Year. With that Ms, President closed the meeting of the ERB Executive Board.
