



Euroregion Baltic
Executive Board Meeting
9th December 2022
Olsztyn, Poland

Title Minutes

Submitted by Warmia and Masuria Region

Summary / Note This document provides final minutes from the ERB Executive Board online meeting on 9th December 2022

Requested action Implement

Participants:

ERB Executive Board:

Mr Gustaw Marek Brzezina	ERB President, Marshal of Warmia and Masuria Region
Mr Mikael Benzon	ERB Vice-President, Member of ERB Executive Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Ms Bożena Olszewska-Świtaj	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of the Board of the Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic
Ms Britt-Louise Berndtsson	Deputy Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kronoberg
Mr Robert Olesen	Member of ERB Executive Board, Region Kronoberg
Ms Ellinor Troli	Member of the ERB Executive Board, Region Kalmar County
Mr Grzegorz Grzelak	Member of ERB Executive Board, Member of Regional Council of Pomerania Region

ERB Youth Board:

Mr Grzegorz Gieda	Member of ERB Youth Board, Warmia and Masuria Region
Ms Malene Meier Pedersen	Deputy Member of ERB Youth Board, Regional Municipality of Bornholm

Mr Alexander Nilsson	Member of ERB Youth Board, Region Blekinge
----------------------	--

ERB Secretariats:

Mr Niels Chresten Andersen	Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Mr Marcin Żuchowski	Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic
Mr Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski	Region Kronoberg
Ms Antje Schreyer	Region Kalmar County
Ms Johanna Rönn	Region Blekinge
Mr Łukasz Bielewski	Warmia and Masuria Region
Mr Piotr Zwolak	Warmia and Masuria Region
Ms Agata Birecka	Pomerania Region
Ms Paulina Aleksander	Pomerania Region

Guests:

Mr Tobias Facchini, Region Kalmar – Water Core Group

Mr David Christensen, Bornholm – Waste Management Company

Mr Radosław Okuszko – Lawyer, Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic

ERB Executive Board meeting

9th December 2022

9.00 – 12.00 CET

Olsztyn, Hotel Omega, ul. Sielska 4a

- 9.00 1. **Welcome and opening**
- 9.10 Gustaw Marek Brzezina, Marshal of Warmia and Masuria Region and President of Euroregion Baltic, opened the ERB Executive Board meeting in Olsztyn, which was organised this time in physical mode. He thanked everybody for their presence at Euroregion Baltic Annual Forum of Stakeholders on 8th of December, which was held after a few years break.
- Then President of ERB asked for a formal check-up of attendance. Representatives of: Regional Municipality of Bornholm, Region Blekinge, Region Kalmar County, Region Kronoberg, Pomorskie Region and Association of Polish Communes confirmed their presence. President Gustaw Marek Brzezina confirmed the quorum, necessary to make decisions.
- 9.10 2. **Adoption of the meeting agenda**
- 9.10 President Gustaw Marek Brzezina asked ERB Executive Board members about comments to the meeting agenda. No comments were made.
- ERB Executive Board approved agenda of the meeting.
- 9.10 3. **Signing the minutes from previous ERB Board Meeting on 11th May 2022**
- 9.15 Gustaw Marek Brzezina, ERB President, signed minutes from previous ERB Board meeting held on 11th May 2022 in Växjö.
- 9.15 4. **Information on current status of ERB projects and ERB budget**
- 9.30 President Gustaw Marek Brzezina reminded decision of ERB Executive Board from 30th March 2022, when it requested the Board of the Association of the Polish Communes to continue implementing ERB projects. The Board of the Association agreed. President Brzezina underlined a good cooperation with the Association during last months and

asked Marcin Żuchowski, Director of the Secretariat of the Association of the Polish Communes to inform about current status of ERB projects.

Marcin Żuchowski said the Association was involved in 5 ERB projects:

1. Umbrella 2.0 (financed by the Swedish Institute), as a lead partner
2. InDigiSE - Promotion of social entrepreneurship in the youth sector by digital and informal education tools (Erasmus+), as a partner
3. Creative Waves Baltic Sisterhood for Change (CBSS Project Support Facility), as a partner
4. WaterMan - Climate resilient wastewater and groundwater management by circular approaches that reduce outflows of nutrients and hazardous substances (Interreg BSR Seed Money), as a lead partner
5. Baltic Sea Youth Platform (Erasmus+), as a partner.

Umbrella 2.0 project was completed and settled by APC ERB staff in October 2022. Its budget was 85.000 EUR. Project consortium consisted of 3 Polish partners, UBC and BSSSC. Not all tasks from the project application were finally fulfilled. This is where the need for reimbursement of more than 22.500 EUR to the Swedish Institute came from. The process of clarification took almost one year. Currently, project is closed, archived, documents are stored at APC office. One more important thing that still must be done is to update the website that project is finished.

WaterMan project was implemented by APC staff, which conducted also explanations with Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. Last transfer of 22.670 EUR was made to project stakeholders. Currently project is closed and archived. A new WaterMan project will be implemented from January 2023 in Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. Transfer of money for Russian partners in project was blocked by the European Commission.

InDigiSE project was implemented until the end of June 2022. There were lots of seminars and events, among others in last months of the project:

- Camp for social entrepreneurship in Lithuania (Klaipeda), 9-11 May (physical meeting) and 13-14 May (online meeting),
- Forum of Youth Initiatives - Youth entrepreneurship and social activity of the young generation - (Elbląg), 6-7 June.

Currently project is finished and final report was submitted to Programme Authorities and is being evaluated by National Agency in Lithuania. Transfers of funds within the project are still possible, if required. It is also necessary to update information at Euroregion Baltic website.

Creative Waves project was extended until 30th September 2022. Last project event was organised in Gdańsk 26-27th September. Final report is being verified and formal closing up the project will be made soon. On the 4th of December project leader informed APC that 3.500 EUR will have to be paid back to the project leader, because of its mistake and when probably it sent too much money to the partners. APC will send information to all members of ERB for their agreement, but first clarifications with the leader must be made.

Baltic Sea Youth Platform was the most difficult project, because online meetings were very short and contact person from CBSS very rarely responded. Very few activities have been done in the project and APC was involved only in promotion activities. The project was prolonged by the lead partner until the end of 2022. Final settlement will be made in January and February 2023.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezin thanked Marcin Żuchowski for the information and asked if there any questions. Responding to them Marcin Żuchowski explained issues related to partnerships, need to reimburse funds to the Swedish Institute in Umbrella 2.0, blocking funds for Russian partners and perspectives for new water projects. He also added, that new WaterMan application was written together with a consulting company. Project will consist of small investments, among else, and more information will be given by Tobias Facchini in p.9.

President Brzezin asked to present a budget status of ERB. Marcin Żuchowski said that budgetary situation was clear and good. In December total accumulated sum was 66.950 EUR, on two accounts (PLN and EUR). However budget decreases gradually, when projects are being implemented and operation costs of International Secretariat are paid. Marcin Żuchowski stressed a good cooperation with Presidency of Warmia and Masuria. Tasks were divided so that Presidency manages the expenditures and technical side was at APC side. Financial issues are decided jointly: all costs related to operational side of the projects are communicated to the Presidency, state of accounts is reported every two months and every payment is made after prior agreement.

Marcin Żuchowski added Euroregion Baltic is currently in transition period, when some issues will need to be resolved by ERB members. These are:

- long-term liabilities (International Permanent Secretariat contracts until 2024),
- final settlement of projects (ongoing - the final settlement may even take place in mid-2023, funds should be secured for possible returns of project funds),
- decision has to be taken about further budget management (APC ERB Board has given permission to support IPS only in 2022, in exceptional circumstances until the closure of the project).

President Gustaw Marek Brzezin thanked for this information, which in his opinion, was a good introduction

for discussion about fees in 2023. Niels Chresten Andersen asked what could be the final state of account after closure and settlement of all projects. Marcin Żuchowski replied, it was hard to define an exact sum, but one can assess it will be around 55.000 EUR in the middle of 2023.

9.30

5. **Annual fee for 2023 - discussion**

9.45

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina said ERB Executive Board should agree on the amount of fee, which should be paid in 2023. Warmia and Masuria Region planned a fee for 2023 in a previously agreed sum of 5.500 EUR.

Bożena Olszewska-Świtaj from the Association of the Polish Communes said that Board of the APC discussed the issue at its meeting on the 2nd of December. It proposed not to pay membership fee until the end of reorganisation in Euroregion Baltic. The question is which account the fees should be paid to, when to pay and for what, because currently IPS has no Director and does not work as a separate structure.

Grzegorz Grzelak from Pomerania Region supported previously agreed sum of 5.500 EUR. He recognised the argument about status of IPS, nevertheless Pomerania supported the previous sum.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina expressed the opinion, that base for discussion should be setting the amount of the fee, while solving of administration issues should be made later. He hoped to reach agreement on the fee in 2023.

Britt-Louise Berndtsson from Region Kronoberg said some amount is still on ERB account and ERB Work Plan for 2023 will be prepared for the first ERB Executive Board meeting in 2023. Therefore Region Kronoberg would prefer to define amount of the fee when ERB Work Plan is adopted.

Johanna Rönn from Region Blekinge asked about opinion from Bornholm, as a next ERB Presidency. She asked also how to solve the issue of transition period before EGTC is set up.

Vice-President Mikael Benzon supported the idea to pay when IPS issues are solved, but not later than September 2023. Niels Chresten Andersen added that big challenge will be bookkeeping, which will be finished by APC when projects are closed. He proposed that ERB Regional Secretariats could discuss if some member organisation could run bookkeeping for ERB.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina said many questions remain to be answered. Therefore the fee issue will be postponed until March, when presidency will be taken over by Regional Municipality of Bornholm.

9.45

6. **European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – Cooperation – status of the process**

10.45

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina reminded about ongoing important discussion on schedule of activities regarding

new functions in ERB. He expressed hope to agree on it during current meeting.

On the 11th May 2022, at the meeting in Växjö, ERB Executive Board agreed to begin work on establishment of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. Draft proposals for EGTC convention and statutes were prepared by Warmia and Masuria Region, acting as ERB Presidency, and sent out for comments to all ERB member organisations. It was also agreed that Association of the Polish Communes will be asked for finishing implementation of projects.

President Brzezina thanked ERB members for cooperation, especially Director Łukasz Bielewski. He stressed that direction of work is agreed, but decisions from ERB member organisations are needed to be able to operate within new structures in September 2023. He proposed a road map and a schedule of further actions, which will make it possible to achieve this goal:

1. end of December 2022 – comments to drafts convention and statutes sent out from all member organisations;
2. end of January 2023 – discussion at secretariats' level and working out final texts of convention and statutes;
3. February 2023 – formal decisions within all ERB member organisations;
4. March 2023 – next ERB Executive Board meeting and formal approval of documents regarding European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.

President added that in case of Poland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs has six months to have a say, from the moment of receiving a resolution of intent regarding setting-up EGTC.

President opened a discussion.

Niels Chresten Andersen thanked for a road map proposal. He said, that Regional Municipality of Bornholm had consulted draft documents in legal terms and there are no obstacles in Denmark to establish EGTC. Legal form of Grouping with limited liability is possible, if its seat is located abroad. In his opinion, Council of Regional Municipality of Bornholm will be able to approve convention and statutes until the end of February 2023. He reminded that 6 months term is regulated by EU law. So the solution should be ready in December and we should not wait any longer.

Grzegorz Grzelak thanked Presidency for its work this year. Pomerania supports establishment of EGTC in a proposed version. Law Department in Pomeranian Marshal's Office analysed both draft documents and had no legal comments. Pomerania believes some issues need a special attention – transition period and ensuring operability of ERB in 2023.

Britt-Louise Berndtsson thanked Presidency for preparing the documents. Region Kronoberg is positive towards these drafts but it asks about dates proposed in March.

Niels Chresten Andersen said dates of meetings in 2023 would be discussed in point 10. He added, that in Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not obliged to approve establishing EGTC. Topic may be directly discussed by the Regional Council.

Britt-Louise Berndtsson said it was different in Sweden. Decision-making process in member organisations is complex. Therefore Swedish party would prefer a later date for Executive Board meeting than beginning of March.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina said February was a key month – because then decisions should be made by all member organisations of Euroregion.

Johanna Rönn asked how the process looks like in Lithuania. She added Swedish regions had informal dialogue with Ministry of Entrepreneurship on EGTC draft documents. She stressed the importance of agreeing final versions of statutes and convention before sending them out to Polish ministries. She suggested to register the Grouping earlier in Poland, which could be later joined by other foreign partners.

Łukasz Bielewski admitted, he did not check the Lithuanian law, but it seemed the process should look alike. He agreed, that if any government should bring in comments, the process should be extended.

Antje Schreyer from Region Kalmar County added Swedish ministries may have some comments to the final versions of documents.

Niels Chresten Andersen said Bornholm does not want to wait any longer that is necessary. In 2023 Regional Municipality of Bornholm will be able to allocate only 100 working hours on ERB. Bornholm does not have working resources to run International Permanent Secretariat in Denmark. Euroregion Baltic is now becoming weaker and weaker for not sufficient resources to conduct its activities. It is also a theme for questions from Danish politicians. In result, situation in ERB is very tight and Danish party asks to give it the highest priority.

Britt-Louise Berndtsson suggested ERB Executive Board meeting after 8th of March 2023.

Niels Chresten Andersen suggested preparing the survey online to set the best date for a meeting and elaborating details of EGTC documents until the end of December. Moreover, he proposed to call additional ERB Executive Board meeting, dedicated solely to the topic of EGTC.

Britt-Louise Berndtsson said Swedish ministries not necessarily speak about European issues, but they must check if documents were in line with Swedish law. But in the end remains a decision-making process in regions, which has its requirements.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina underlined, that we register a Grouping together, there is no possibility of prior registration in one of the countries and joining of some members later. He called for sticking to the schedule

proposed. Then we would be able, when all countries agree, to register a Grouping.

Johanna Rönn said, that although persons directly decisive were not present at the meeting, Region Blekinge could certainly agree for a road map.

Marcin Żuchowski thanked Warmia and Masuria Region on behalf on the Association of Polish Communes for work on documents. He reminded that the Association does not bring in legal comments to the drafts. He proposed to adopt a road map and a document – declaration containing information for politicians.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina proposed that documents will be prepared: a road map and conditions of the proceeding, which could be sent out to secretariats. He thanked for appreciation for the work done, but also for cooperation of all parties involved, so that it could be our joint success.

10.45 7. **Representation in the Interreg South Baltic 2021-2027 Monitoring Committee**
10.55

The first meeting of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027 Monitoring Committee was held in Szczecin on 8-9th November 2022. Euroregion Baltic and Euroregion Pomerania, as a joint delegation of Euroregions in the Committee were informed that they could appoint deputy members for their current representatives in the Committee. Euroregion Baltic is represented in the Committee by Łukasz Bielewski, Director of the International Cooperation Department, Marshal's Office of Warmia and Masuria Region. Regional Secretariats proposed that his deputy will be Piotr Zwolak from the International Cooperation Department.

Members of ERB Executive Board decided to appoint Piotr Zwolak for a deputy member of the Euroregion Baltic representative in the Committee.

10.55 8. **Information from ERB Youth Board**
11.10

Alexander Nilsson from ERB Youth Board informed about a youth meeting, that was held just before ERB Executive Board meeting on the 9th of December, where all members of Youth Board present in Olsztyn took part. He explained that after local elections in Sweden, current Chairperson of ERB Youth Board could not fulfil her duties any longer. On the 20th of December Youth Board would meet online to choose a new Chairperson.

Niels Chresten Andersen noted communication issue. In 2022 there were only a few meetings of ERB Youth Board online, support to the Youth Board from ERB Secretariats is necessary. There are still some funds in ERB budget available for activities of ERB Youth Board. Niels

Chresten Andersen declared a full support for a meeting planned in December.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina thanked for the information presented and supported initiative from ERB Youth Board.

11.10 9. **Information from ERB Core Groups**
11.25

Tobias Facchini presented information on activities of ERB Water Core Group and WaterMan Seed Money project. He indicated aggravating problems with drought in the region, for example in 2018 on Oland surface waters almost completely disappeared. There were no rainfall at all during a couple of months. Similar problems occur elsewhere.

Project Water Man Seed Money lasted one year and elaborated the application to Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. New project will take 3 years, it will cover 8 countries and 5 pilot areas. Its budget will be 4,38 mln EUR. It will consist of 16 normal partners and 27 associated partners from Sweden, Poland, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia and Germany. Considerable part of the budget will be investments.

Project will consist of 3 Work Packages (preparing solutions, piloting and evaluating solutions, transferring solutions). Activities will be focused mainly on developing methods and tools for water reuse. One of the most interesting solutions is establishing a "BSR Water Reuse Helpdesk". Such a big project creates chances for enhanced activeness of Water Core Group.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina said, actions taken up by the Group were very valuable. He reminded importance of this topic and existing dangers. Vice-President Mikael Benzion confirmed, that as a garden owner he notices the scenario. Farmers on Bornholm have similar problems now. Such projects have a full support.

Johanna Rönn presented information on ERB Mobility Core Group. Region Blekinge believes there will be no more tasks for this Group in 2023. If some organisation were ready to assign new tasks to the Group, it can do so, but in this moment it doesn't look necessary for the Group to exist.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina said if no willing to lead the group show up its closure will happen spontaneously.

Britt-Louise Berndtsson said that during ERB Annual Forum of Stakeholders on the 8th of December a high readiness was shown to take up energy issues. Maybe this kind of group would be worth to recommend?

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina said, that establishing a new group is a technical issue, but it should be justified with persons willing to create and lead it.

Marcin Żuchowski informed that Association of Polish Communes has some funds within „Sztum Circular Economy” project, which could be used for financing energy activities. It would be necessary to find a leader for such a group.

11.25 10. **Biannual work plan**

11.35 Niels Chresten Andersen presented information about ERB biannual work plan for 2023 - 2024, which will be prepared by Regional Municipality of Bornholm and adopted during the first ERB Executive Board meeting in 2023.

When starting work on a new plan the issue of Kaliningrad Region and change in presidency calendar came up. It turned out the next after Bornholm is Region Kronoberg. Biannual work plan is elaborated jointly by presidency and vice-presidency in ERB. The plan usually is made in the beginning of the year, so it is still not ready now. Bornholm hopes Region Kronoberg will agree to prepare jointly such a plan.

Niels Chresten Andersen reminded document ERB Agenda 2030, which sets three objectives: lobbying, exchange activities and implementation of strategic initiatives and projects. Document defines 5 thematic areas of cooperation: South Baltic Agenda, Baltic Sea Region Agenda, European Agenda, Youth and People – to – People Agenda, Green and Blue Growth Agenda.

Niels Chresten Andersen said other member organisations can also submit their proposals to the plan, but the most important priorities will likely be:

1. The ERB cooperation platform (25th Anniversary, EGTC, IPS and Forum)
2. Youth cooperation – Youth Board
3. South Baltic programme 2021-2027, including capacity building
4. Blue and Green Growth – water, renewable energy, circular economy and sustainable tourism.

In regard to 25. ERB anniversary Bornholm plans to organise an occasional event, Bornholm considers inviting Local Action Groups from ERB area.

Britt-Louise Berndtsson said proposals look well, including those related to the anniversary.

Łukasz Bielewski said, in the first half of 2023, Sweden will have a Presidency in the EU, which will create significant context for ERB Presidency.

11.35 11. **ERB Executive Board meetings in 2023**

11.50

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina said 2023 is approaching and it is the time to plan a calendar of meetings of ERB

Executive Board. He asked Regional Municipality of Bornholm for proposals of dates.

Niels Chresten Andersen said first meeting should be on Bornholm in March (e.g. 8-9 March, 15 March or 22 March), second one could be in May (e.g. in Sweden), and the third one e.g. in the last week of September in Brussels.

In the opinion of President Gustaw Marek Brzezina, dates proposed in March are difficult for Warmia and Masuria, as other events are foreseen for that time. Therefore beginning of March would be better (1-2 March).

1-2 March was not possible for Vice-President Benzon, so Bornholm proposed 2-3 March, lunch-to-lunch.

Łukasz Bielewski proposed ERB regional secretariats could check the date 2-3 March and confirm it at online secretariats meeting.

It could be also possible to organise additional Executive Board online meeting in March to discuss EGTC issues.

11.50 12. **Invitation from Region Kronoberg**

11.55

Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański from Kronoberg Region presented information about the event for youth organised in this region, as a part of EU Swedish Presidency Agenda. EU Presidency events were planned in each of Swedish Regions. 20 – 22 March in Kronoberg Region there will be „9th Cycle of EU Youth Dialogue”, where ERB Youth Board is invited. There will be around 250 participants from all EU countries, youth and non-governmental organisations. 5 themes were selected to be discussed: Information and education, Action and empowerment, Governance, Mobility and solidarity, Access to infrastructure. Talks will be focused on youth influence on decision making process.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina informed on this occasion, that in 2022 Youth Council of Warmia and Masuria Region was established.

11.55 13. **Any other business**

12.00

Britt-Louise Berndtsson thanked for a possibility to participate in events in Olsztyn and for many years when she could participate in ERB cooperation. She said she will no longer represent Region Kronoberg in ERB Executive Board. She stressed the importance for cross-border cooperation.

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina thanked her for initiative, commitment and calling for social activity. He hoped for further contacts at European forum.

Johanna Rönn passed thanks from Blekinge politicians for organising the meeting and works of Presidency in 2022, as well as Christmas and New Year wishes.

Mikael Benzon also thanked for possibility to participate in events in Olsztyn. He said a great task awaits Bornholm in 2023 in a form of 25. ERB anniversary and encouraged all

to debate on direction for Euroregion Baltic, so that March meeting brings good results.

12.00

14.

Conclusion and closing

12.00

President Gustaw Marek Brzezina thanked everybody for presence and stay in Warmia and Masuria Region. He also hoped for a meeting in the Region in other season. He wished all the best for Christmas and New Year and thanked the Danish delegation for special commitment in preparation to evening artistic event, summing up international cooperation of Warmia and Masuria in 2022.