

Opening address to the ERB Executive Board meeting in Brussels, 26 & 27 September 2023

By Mr Mikael Benzon, ERB President

Dear friends, colleagues and secretariats

I am particularly pleased to open this meeting of the Euroregion Baltic Executive Board here in Brussels. And I thank our hosts here at Greater Copenhagen EU Office for their hospitality and help in planning this meeting.

Our meeting is again being held against a background of geopolitical tensions and environmental and climatic changes. Economic downturns put a strain on our social and democratic stability and cohesion.

Our region faces the common challenges that the EU president, Ms Ursula von der Leyen, pointed out at her recent state of the European union address: high inflation, economic stagnation and a shrinking pool of skilled workers and specialists – coupled with high proportion of youth unemployment.

In this context, our cross-border collaboration and development is more important than ever. And it is our responsibility to rapidly achieve measurable goals that support the economic, social, democratic and environmental cohesion of our region. And which must be communicated to our voters in ways that promote trust in our institutions and democratic processes.

Therefore, I look forward to discussing the final details of the establishment of our EGTC-status, and to finally resolve the outstanding questions, so that we may complete the legal groundwork for the working group.

In view of the important work ahead, it is necessary to avoid further delay. Again, on behalf of the ERB Board, I want to express a special gratitude to the Warmia and Masuria Region, for their efforts in preparing the legal groundwork for the EGTC and for supporting the ongoing work of Euroregion Baltic in this period of transition.

I also would like to thank the Association of Polish Communes for their important support with our joint accounts, and keeping the Board updated on our financial situation.

So, without further ado, I herewith open the Board meeting of Euroregion Baltic!