

We must be more communicative, public and present.

If we want to build the future, we sometimes have to go back to basics. So, in order to prepare myself for today I took a few minutes to study the background and history of the ERB cooperation. There were some key words that stuck in my mind – capacity building, sustainable development, youth participation and Green and Blue growth. Just those areas where we need to focus and that will mark our presidency this year.

We live in troubling times. War, conflicts, terrorism and economic distress is a great challenge for the world. As you know, in times of war there are never winners – only losers.

In difficult times it's more important than ever to cooperate. The European Union is the basis of our cooperation, but we also need to work together on a more local level. This makes regional cooperation so fundamentally important. But how can we make our organization strong and relevant? How can we take a more active role in the European context?

The answer is communication! We must be more visible to our citizens, to spread the message about what they are gaining with our cooperation.

We must go to Brussels to mark our presence. We must raise our voice to our own governments. We can not only work in our secretariat and board rooms, ERB must be more communicative, public and present.

Another key concept is youth participation, where we must put emphasis, and Emma will soon tell you more about how.

To involve young people in the decision making is crucial. More and more young people state that they lack interest in politics and participation in the democracy. In order to secure a democratic future in Europe, we must involve young people and attract them to the fine art of politics.

Our job is not only to handle the reality, it is also about building hope for the future. We know what it takes – it takes willpower, which is something we all possess.

Slawek will tell you more in detail about the action plan 2024-2025, but I will only enhance that during our presidency, we will visit the different regions and have an open dialogue about our common challenges. We will always encourage cooperation between the different regions and I hope to see many initiatives where regions act together in different issues, even outside of our organization.

As you have probably noticed, Kronoberg is a region where the colour green is obvious. Our natural environment is a source of joy, the green forest is a big part of our identity. Partly for what it means for our environment and outdoor life, but also what it means for our industry.

We are a region where forestry is of great importance and we use wood to a large extent as a building material, as an energy source and more.

In Kronoberg, our industry is the engine, regardless of whether we are talking about small, medium or large companies. Our business community plays an important role in economic green growth. The companies in our regions play a role in the global economy, but above all when it comes to the green transition.

We, in the ERB, have the opportunity to find new solutions, innovation and reinforce cooperation in a new area.

Because of that, I am especially eager to highlight the forest industry as an area where we can cooperate more within ERB.

My fellow colleagues,

As I said before, I am looking forward to a productive and memorable year together.

The work we do here is not about us. It is about coming generations, about those not yet born.

Together we have a strategic opportunity to influence, to build and develop our future regions.

That is not a work that I do, nor you. That is a work that WE do, in ERB. And because of that, the cohesion policy is such an important process where we need to take an active part. The cohesion policy is not a piece of paper. It is an instrument of action.

Thank you very much.

Rene Jaramillo

President of the Euroregion Baltic

Chairman of the regional development board in Region Kronoberg.