

# EUROREGION BALTIC ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Gdańsk, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025

## Euroregion Baltic Executive Board 2024

Rene Jaramillo	ERB President, Region Kronoberg
Grzegorz Grzelak	ERB Vice President, Pomorskie Region (until August 2024)
Leszek Bonna	ERB Vice President, Pomorskie Region (from August 2024)

Heidi Burgedahl	Member, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Mikael Benzon	Member, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Vytautas Grubliauskas	Member, Klaipeda Region
Witold Wróblewski	Member, Association of Polish Communes (until May 2024)
Michał Missan	Member, Association of Polish Communes (from May 2024)
Marcin Kuchciński	Member, Warminsko-Mazurskie Region
Lisa Österblad	Member, Region Blekinge
Suzanne Svensson	Member, Region Blekinge
Elinor Troli	Member, Region Kalmar
Maria Ixcot-Nilsson	Member, Region Kalmar
Robert Olesen	Member, Region Kronoberg (until May 2024)
Emil Torstensson	Member, Region Kronoberg (from May 2024)
Emma Falkbacken	Chairperson, Youth Board

Helle Munk Ravnborg	Deputy member, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Johanna Zielińska	Deputy member, Association of Polish Communes
Hanna Pruchniewska	Deputy member, Association of Polish Communes (until May 2024)
Michał Kontraktowicz	Deputy member, Association of Polish Communes (from May 2024)
Anna Ekberg	Deputy member, Region Blekinge (until May 2024)
Estelle Nerö	Deputy member, Region Blekinge (from May 2024)
Andreas Salomonsson	Deputy member, Region Kalmar
Mahmoud Al Mokdad	Deputy member, Region Kalmar
Helen Bengtsson	Deputy member, Region Kronoberg (until May 2024)
Robert Olesen	Deputy member, Region Kronoberg (from May 2024)
Emil Torstensson	Deputy member, Region Kronoberg (until May 2024)
Bo Bergsjö	Deputy member, Region Kronoberg (from May 2024)

## Euroregion Baltic Executive Youth Board 2024

Emma Falkbacken	Chairperson, Region Kronoberg
Arnas Murauskas	Vice Chairperson, Klaipeda Region
Sofie Christiansen	Member, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Artur Frajny	Member, Association of Polish Communes
Amelia Laszewska	Member, Pomorskie Region
Jakub Hamanowicz	Member, Pomorskie Region
Gabriela Mierzejewska	Member, Warminsko-Mazurskie Region
Estelle Nerö	Member, Region Blekinge (until May 2024)
Ville Alm	Member, Region Blekinge (from May 2024)
Denniz Konduk	Member, Region Blekinge (from May 2024)
Simon Josefsson	Member, Region Kalmar
Amar Dlakic	Deputy member, Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Dawid Jędrzejewski	Deputy member, Association of Polish Communes Deputy member
Magdalena Wołczek	Deputy member, Warminsko-Mazurskie Region
Gustav Caligari Berger	Deputy member, Region Kronoberg

## Task Force Climate Change and Green Transition Experts

Mr Robert Hedman	Region Blekinge (spokesperson)
Prof. Adam Cenian	Institute of Fluid-Flow Machinery, Polish Academy of Sciences
Adam Krzyśków	Foundation PRO-Masuria
Anne Thomas	Director of Center for Regional- and Tourism Research, Bornholm
Carolina Gunnarsson	Region Kalmar
Ksawery Kuligowski, PDEng.	Institute of Fluid-Flow Machinery, Polish Academy of Sciences
Mariusz Rychcik	Director of Municipal Waste Management Company Ltd., Olsztyn
Mieczysław Dzierzgowski, PDEng.	Warsaw University of Technology
Paulina Lieder-Żuchowska	Association of Polish Communes
Pierre Stahl	Energy Agency South Sweden
Søren Møller Christensen	Director of Baltic Energy Island
Tomasz Kolerski, PDEng.	Gdańsk University of Technology
Tomasz Koprowiak	National Association of RES-friendly Communes

## Water Core Group

Maria Ixcott Nilsson	Chairwoman, Region Kalmar County
Antje Schreyer	Region Kalmar
Sarah Ericsson	Region Blekinge
Tobias Facchini	Region Kalmar
Torben Jørgensen	Bornholm Energy and Supply

## Euroregion Baltic Secretariats

Niels Chresten Andersen	Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Greta Tautavičiūtė	Association of Klaipeda Region
Marcin Żuchowski	Association of Polish Communes
Adam Krzemiński	Pomorskie Region
Agata Birecka	Pomorskie Region
Ewa Jagodzińska	Pomorskie Region
Gabriela Zarębska-Jende	Pomorskie Region
Łukasz Bielewski	Warminsko-Mazurskie Region
Piotr Zwolak	Warminsko-Mazurskie Region
Johanna Rönn	Region Blekinge
Antje Schreyer	Region Kalmar
Sławomir Demkowicz-Dobrzański	Region Kronoberg

## President's Address

Between 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025, Euroregion Baltic was under political leadership of Region Kronoberg, Sweden. The position of the ERB President was held by Mr Rene Jaramillo, Chair of the Regional Development Committee at Region Kronoberg.

Dear Friends of the Euroregion Baltic cooperation,

### **It has been a Good Year!**

In a world of polarisation and conflict, I have dedicated my time to meeting our member regions and engaging in conversations about our shared challenges.

After visiting each of you, one thing has become clear: our challenges are the same. But I have also been deeply impressed by the strengths and qualities that unite us as regions. Through our discussions, it has become evident how we can grow stronger—by embracing collaboration and cooperation for our shared development.

Throughout the year, we have worked towards the goals I set out in my first speech as president. We have strengthened our youth organisation, enhanced our image, and ensured our relevance in the European context. Together, we have taken statements and resolutions on key issues.

The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation status we have been preparing for will take us to the next stage—building projects together. While some talk about protectionism and war, we talk about cooperation and collaboration. While some focus on difficulties and obstacles, we focus on opportunities. While some look backward, we are committed to building the future—together!

Thank you for allowing me to get to know you. Thank you for opening your doors to me. I have grown both as a politician and as a person through our meetings and meaningful conversations.

My friends, we are ready for the next step. I am confident that under the leadership of Mr. Leszek Bonna, our journey will continue successfully.



**Rene Jaramillo**

*President Euroregion Baltic 2024*

## Priorities under Kronoberg presidency 2024

The Presidency in 2023 focused on four main priorities, reflected in the activities for the Euroregion Baltic during the year:

1. Improve its strategic approach by defining medium term goals in relation to the ERB Agenda 2030 as well as specific measures that will help Euroregion Baltic achieve these goals.
2. Offer specific support to the ERB Youth Board, both with its more strategic work and its daily administrative tasks.
3. Enhance its institutional capacity by finalizing the application process for the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) and establishing a secretariat.
4. Increase its visibility, both internally towards its member regions, municipalities and other actors in the member regions and externally towards national and European authorities and organisations.



*On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024, ERB Presidency shifts from the Regional Municipality of Bornholm to Region Kronoberg. From left to right: the new ERB President, Mr Rene Jaramillo and the former ERB President, Mr Mikael Benzon.*

*Mikael Benzon thanked everyone for their engagement and exemplary cooperation spirit. Rene Jaramillo highlighted the importance for cooperation on a local level, which makes interregional cooperation fundamentally important as well as the need for more effective communication of our work in Euroregion Baltic.*

## Improve the strategic approach

ERB stakeholders expect the soon to be acquired EGTC status to be a game changer that will give a new impetus to the cooperation. While the ERB 2030 Agenda provides a strategic framework for the ERB cooperation, it does not offer concrete ambitions that Euroregion Baltic is set to achieve in the medium-term perspective. Therefore, a series of activities were held throughout 2024 in order to find possible ways of retuning the objectives of the network and giving them a more specific focus.

Visibility, strategic orientation and project implementation capacity were important issues that were discussed during the round table discussions held on 16th May 2024 that gathered the members of the Euroregion Baltic Executive Board, Youth Board and secretariats. These discussions led to the conclusions and input to further deliberations on mid-terms goals in the ERB 2030 Agenda as well as a specific guidance for the new ERB secretariat once the EGTC application process is finalised.





Annex to the ERB 2030 Agenda was adopted at the Executive Board meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024 in which the Euroregion Baltic stakeholders agreed on what needs to be communicated and what should be prioritised in the coming years.

*To the left: Johanna Rönn och Sławomir Demkowicz Dobrzański at the round table discussions in Olsztyn on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024.*

## Support the ERB Youth Board

During the Baltic Challenge Edu Offshore Wind event held in March 2024 in Gdansk the ERB Youth Board met the representatives of the youth council of Ostfold County and Buskerud County in Norway. This led to the invitation to the ERB Youth Board to visit the two Norwegian counties in order to exchange experience, learn from each other and talk about how to ensure best possible conditions for good upbringing for all of the youths in the Baltic Sea Region.

In September 2024 ERB Youth members attended an international youth event in Rendsburg, organised by the Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC). Together with other youth representatives Norway, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Sweden, Lithuania and Germany they were able to exchange views on resilient societies and the impact of and fight against fake news and then discuss their findings with political decision-makers. Each region had the opportunity to share experience and knowledge, and engage in discussions on different topics such as youth politics, human rights etc. The participants of the event took a joint position paper on strengthening resilience, democracy, and youth engagement in the Baltic Sea Region.



*ERB Youth Board members. From left to right: Gustav Berger, Amelia Laszewska, Magdalena Wołczek, and Artur Frajny. Olsztyn 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024.*



*ERB Youth Board members. From left to right: Simon Josefsson, Gabriela Mierzejewska, Jakub Hamanowicz, Amelia Laszewska, Sofie Christiansen, Emma Falkbacken, Gustav Berger, Estelle Nerö and Amar Dlakic. Växjö 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024.*

In this context it is also worth mentioning that the Association of Polish Communes was awarded Interreg South Baltic funding to implement the project called D-Effect- Civic Society Democracy Lessons. The project aims at testing and creating conditions for active multisectoral cross-border cooperation of youth-oriented organisations by means of small-scale transnational festivals in support of EU values. The project partnership includes organisations from Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.

## Enhance the institutional capacity

Even though the hopes were high, the application process for European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) was not finalised during 2024. Seven ERB member organisations had successful dialogues with their respective national authorities and had the application documents approved by their regional decision makers. Unfortunately, in the middle of November the Association of Klaipeda Region withdrew from the application process. This required a new round of regional decisions and delayed the process.

At the end of 2024 the ERB stakeholders took further steps looking at a possible budget of the future organisation and agreeing on the amount of the membership fees to be paid from 2025 onwards. With unwavering support from Warminsko-Mazurskie Region that leads and coordinates the application process the ERB stakeholders expect the approval of Euroregion Baltic European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation with limited liability to become reality in the beginning of 2025.

*Establishing and operation of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation is regulated by Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC), as later amended. Under this regulation, EGTC is an entity with legal personality, which can be established on the territory of the European Union. Its objective is to facilitate and support territorial cooperation (crossborder, transnational or interregional) for enhancement of economic, social and territorial cohesion of the European Union. In each of EU member states EGTC has a legal capacity and capacity to perform acts in law.*

## Increase the visibility

During spring 2024 the Presidency visited some of the ERB member organisations. The goal with these meetings was to get to better understand preconditions for cross-border cooperation in the regions as well as to have a dialog about possible areas of cooperation, both within the whole ERB geography and in bilateral relations. The visits were reported through the ERB social media and in some cases by the local media outlets.

### **Bornholm**

On 26<sup>th</sup> April 2024 ERB President, Rene Jaramillo visited the Regional Municipality of Bornholm. First, he met Søren Møller Christensen, Director of Baltic Energy Island and heard about the development of this green hub in the Baltic Sea. Baltic Energy Island has the ambitious goal of not only developing solutions for energy islands but also of innovating the global energy system.

At the next stop during the visit, Christa Lodahl, Director at Business Center Bornholm informed how their local business support service promotes business and harnesses the entrepreneurial spirit and innovative power of the island. A diversity of companies and entrepreneurs across a wide range of industries contributes to innovation in business and sustainable growth.





The day concluded with a meeting at the offices of the Municipality, hosted by Jacob Trøst, Mayor of Bornholm, Mikael Benzon, Member of the ERB Executive Board and Niels Chresten Andersen, Head of Europe Direct Bornholm. Current issues related to the ERB cooperation were discussed and ideas exchanged on what specific initiatives could be undertaken in the nearest future.

*From left to right: Mikael Benzon, Jacob Trøst, Rene Jaramillo and Sławomir Demkowicz Dobrzański. Bornholm, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2024.*

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024 ERB President, Rene Jaramillo visited the three member organisations in Poland.

### **Region Pomorskie Poland**

The meeting was hosted by Vice-Marshall Leszek Bonna and attended by Grzegorz Grzelak, Marshal's Plenipotentiary for International Relations, Stanisław Szultka, Director of the Department for Economic Cooperation, Monika Zdroik, Deputy Director for International and Interregional Cooperation, Ewa Jagodzińska, Head of the Baltic Cooperation Team and Anna Jafra from Pomorskie Development Agency.

Several important topics were discussed, including ideas for future cooperation. Economic development and regional growth remained in focus. How can we support small and medium businesses in our regions, what can we do in order to promote entrepreneurship and STEM education?

Additionally, in the context of digital and technological transformation, the importance of securing the labour market through the preparation of a skilled workforce was emphasised. The Baltic Sea Region is currently facing a shortage of workers in key sectors such as IT, engineering, and the green economy. These challenges relate directly to the priorities of the Polish Presidency in EU and will be highlighted during the coming Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, to be held in Pomorskie in October 2025.



*From left to right: Grzegorz Grzelak, Rene Jaramillo and Leszek Bonna. Gdańsk, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024.*

## Association of Polish Communes, Poland

The meeting was hosted by Piotr Kowal, Vice-Mayor of Elbląg and attended by Marcin Żuchowski, Director of Secretariat, as well as Adrianna Gniado-Turkowska, Jolanta Olszewska and Paulina Lieder-Żuchowska project developers at the Secretariat.

The discussions centred around Euroregion Baltic's near future with focus on the establishment of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) and its practical consequences, i.e. the recruitment of the EGTC Director, joint budget and first joint initiatives directly after the EGTC establishment.



The Association's employees gave ERB President a tour of their offices and their vast archives with historical materials dating back to the beginnings of Euroregion Baltic. It was a swift and insightful tour that brought back past memories and inspirations for the future!

*From left to right: Marcin Żuchowski, Piotr Kowal Vice-Mayor of Elbląg, Rene Jaramillo and Sławomir Demkowicz Dobrzański. Elbląg, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024.*

## Region Warmińsko-Mazurskie

The meeting was hosted by Marshal Marcin Kuchciński and attended by Piotr Zwolak, International Coordinator.

On behalf of all the ERB stakeholders ERB President, Rene Jaramillo expressed gratitude to Marshal Marcin Kuchciński and his office for the support given in the application process for European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). "Your assistance has been invaluable and without it we would not have made it this far", said Rene Jaramillo.



continues to benefit the regions?

The discussion focused on challenges ahead. How do we ensure continuity in our work? ERB is currently facilitating work in such thematic areas as green transition, water management and youth participation. Task forces and projects are the primary tools we use in order to further progress in these strategic areas that are financed both from the ERB budget and external funds.

Another important issue concerned the future of EU Cohesion Policy. There has been a lot of news recently suggesting the European Commission is planning to change how these funds are allocated. This is of special significance for our regions whose development has been supported with EU structural funds. What role can ERB have in arguing for Cohesion Policy that

*From left to right: Rene Jaramillo and Marcin Kuchciński. Olsztyn, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024.*

## Strategic areas of activities

ERB 2030 Agenda defines five agendas within which the ERB stakeholders undertake joint initiatives: South Baltic Agenda, Baltic Sea Region Agenda, European Agenda, Youth and People-to-People Agenda and Green and Blue Growth Agenda.

### South Baltic Agenda

Throughout 2024 Euroregion Baltic continued its active engagement in the Interreg South Baltic Programme, and in particular it actively participated in the Programme Monitoring Committee meetings and head the Joint Delegation of Euroregions in close cooperation with Euroregion Pomerania. Euroregion Baltic is represented in the Monitoring Committee by Mr Lukasz Bielewski from Warmińsko-Mazurskie Region.

2nd call for project proposals	5 October – 5 December 2023	43 project applications submitted under all Programme Measures	24 projects have been selected for funding by the Monitoring Committee on 17-18 <sup>th</sup> April 2024 in Klaipeda, Lithuania
1st call for Small-scale project proposals	22 February – 21 March 2024	Call closed, 11 project applications submitted under 5 Programme Measures	5 projects have been selected for funding by the Monitoring Committee in written procedure
3rd call for project proposals	25 April – 26 June 2024	Call closed, 4 project applications submitted under 2 Programme Measures	2 projects have been selected for funding by the Monitoring Committee 24 October 2024 during on-line meeting
4th call for project proposals	5 November 2024 – 4 February 2025	Call closed, 25 project applications submitted under 5 Programme Measures 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1.	

In addition, ERB stakeholders promoted the programme's calls for proposals, facilitated project partner searches and supported project development initiatives connected to the ERB priorities.

## **Baltic Sea Region Agenda**

During 2024 Euroregion Baltic continued to engage with actors in the whole Baltic Sea Region. It was particularly rewarding to rejuvenate relations with The Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC). The two organisations began discussing an idea for a joint event to held in connection with the Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Euroregion Baltic was also invited to attend as observer the BSSSC Board meeting in Brussels on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024 where it was given the floor to inform of its recent activities and plans.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region remain an important framework agenda promoting international cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region that contribute to the three main objectives: saving the sea, connecting the region and increasing prosperity. Together with 600 other participants ERB stakeholders attended the Annual Forum held on 30-31 October 2024 in Visby, Sweden. Considering the challenges in our neighbourhood, the programme focused on preparedness, robustness and resilience. An overarching focus was the cooperation with and support to Ukraine, initiated during the Swedish Presidency of the Strategy 2022–2023. A recurring focus area was also the cooperation with young people, which follows from the Council conclusions for the EU's macro-regional strategies developed during Sweden's Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2023.

## **European Agenda**

### EU Cohesion Policy

A lot of focus in Euroregion's work with policy questions in 2024 was put on EU Cohesion Policy. And 2024 was a pivotal year for the EU Cohesion Policy due to several key developments.

At the beginning of 2024 the European Commission published 9<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report, which assessed the state of economic, social, and territorial cohesion within the EU. This report highlighted significant progress in reducing disparities across regions but also identified challenges such as the green and digital transitions, climate change, and geopolitical instability.

At the end of June, the General Affairs Council discussed the link between cohesion policy and the EU's strategic agenda for 2024-2029. This agenda aimed to ensure that cohesion policy continued to support the EU's strategic objectives, including competitiveness, social inclusion, and the green and digital transitions.

In September, former President of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi published a report providing a comprehensive strategy for boosting European competitiveness and addressing the challenges faced by the EU in the global market. Overall, the Draghi report reinforces the objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy by promoting investment, sustainability, resilience, and coordinated development across the EU.

In October a proposal was leaked from the Directorate-General for Budget on the EU's future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), sparking significant discussions and concerns by suggesting a shift to policy-based budgeting and reduction of funding programs.



Euroregion Baltic followed and contributed to the debate on the future of EU Cohesion Policy. At its meeting in Olsztyn on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 the ERB Executive Board adopted ERB Joint Position on EU Cohesion Policy. The paper called among others for multi-level governance and partnership principle to be upheld as crucial prerequisites for Cohesion and for the continuation of Interreg programmes in their current form.



At its meeting in Brussels on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024 the ERB Executive Board adopted ERB Joint resolution on the next Multiannual Financial Framework. In the resolution ERB Executive Board found that proposals for centralisation of programming and implementation of Cohesion funds to be in strict contradiction with the provisions of the Treaty on the European Union and the subsidiarity principle. The Board also called for increased funding for interregional, cross-border and transnational cooperation, with special emphasis on the regions along EU's external border which have been particularly affected by the socio-economic consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and migration crisis.

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#### ERB Executive Board meeting in Brussels

Euroregion Baltic Executive Board met in Brussels on 6-7 November 2024. The two-day meeting kicked off with a debate attended by MEP Jacek Protas and MEP Janusz Lewandowski emphasising the importance of regional collaboration in driving the EU's growth and resilience. The discussion highlighted successful cross-border platforms like Euroregion Baltic in the context of ever more complicated geopolitical situation in Europe.



*From left to right: Leszek Bonna, Janusz Lewandowski, MEP, Rene Jaramillo, Jacek Protas, MEP and Mikael Benzon. Brussels, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024.*

Special attention was given to ongoing discussions on the relevance and future direction of Cohesion Policy. Euroregion Baltic stressed the importance of EU's partnership with regional and local authorities in strengthening cohesion and growth policy and the regions' central role. This collaborative approach ensures that all stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process, leading to more comprehensive and inclusive policies.



We must not forget the fundamental principles enshrined in the Treaty on European Union, including the principle of subsidiarity that ensures that decisions are made as close to the citizens as possible, empowering local and regional authorities to address issues more effectively. This avoids unnecessary centralisation and ensures that policies are tailored to the specific needs of different regions.

The Executive Board meeting in Brussels also created an opportunity to liaise with ERB member organisations' regional offices in Brussels. In attendance were: Anna Drażek from the Pomorskie EU Office in Brussels, Małgorzata Wasilenko from the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Regional Office in Brussels, Sven Kastö, Sandra Jansson and Martin Broberg from the Småland Blekinge Halland South Sweden Regional Office in Brussels.

### ERB President's participation in Interreg Art of Cooperation Conference

On 13-15<sup>th</sup> November ERB President, Rene Jaramillo represented Euroregion Baltic at the second edition of the Interreg Art of Cooperation conference, organised under the Hungarian EU Presidency in partnership with the EU Committee of the Regions and the Association of European Border Regions.



EU Cohesion was an important topic at the conference with its positive impact in strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion across the EU. Special attention was paid to Interreg programmes and their role in promoting solidarity, common understanding and sustainable economic growth.

INTERREG 35 Declaration was adopted, highlighting the importance and future existence of Interreg in promoting European values through cross-border, transnational, and interregional cooperation.

“This conference confirmed me in my opinion that the European community is more crucial than ever”, said ERB President, Rene Jaramillo.

### **Youth and People-to-People Agenda**

For see the earlier section Support the ERB Youth Board on page 7.

## **Green and Blue Growth Agenda**

### Task Force - Climate Change and Green Transition

On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024 the Task Force presented to the ERB Executive Board its Report - Mapping on renewable energy sources (RES). The report includes a detailed analysis of the European Union's energy policies is presented here. It covers major frameworks like the Energy Union, Clean Energy for All Europeans Package, and the European Green Deal, along with directives focusing on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and governance. The also report presents a detailed exposition of various policies, strategies, and plans related to RES in different countries and regions within the Baltic Sea area. It showcases the diversity of initiatives and approaches adopted at different governmental levels.

On 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024 the Task Force presented to the ERB Executive Board its final report including two recommendations outlining plans for further work. Recommendation 1: Network for leaders suggests creating a network for leaders in green transition in the Baltic Sea Region to exchange knowledge and good examples. Target groups are politicians and administration leaders, and possible themes to explore include citizen involvement, social change and public consultations. Recommendation 2: A series of webinars / seminars suggests setting up webinars on various topics and inviting politicians and officials from municipalities and regions. Good examples from other countries would be shown and experts, Brussels offices and other relevant organisations involved.

Throughout autumn 2024 the task Force focus its activities on exploring various financing options, ranging from EUI-Innovative Actions (EUI-IA) through Swedish Institute to Horizon Europe.

### ERB Water Core Group

Since 2023 the project WaterMan - Promoting water reuse in the Baltic Sea Region through capacity building at local level has been implemented with the funding from Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme. The project will last three years, and cover 8 countries and 5 pilot areas. With the budget of 4,38 MEUR it includes 16 project partners and 27 associated organisations from Sweden, Poland, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia and Germany. Investments are a considerable part of the budget.

“WaterMan” supports municipalities and water companies in adapting their strategies to these challenges. An international team of municipalities, water companies & domain experts from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Lithuania & Latvia will jointly develop a region-specific approach to water recycling that uses the alternation of too much and too little water, which has become typical in the Baltic Sea Region, to make the local water supply more resilient.

In 2024 the project was in full swing implementing activities in accordance with the plan. Some highlights included:

- study trip to gain knowledge about best practices of Water reuse in practice: Co-existence with water scarcity in the Region of Murcia in Spain,
- initiation of one of its pilot measures: the pilot for reuse of water in Saldus Municipality in Latvia. The pilot facility collects & recirculates of stormwater for supplying a public fountain as well as further utilisations (e.g. watering / cleaning of streets).

Editor: Sławomir Demkowicz Dobrzański

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