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Minutes

from the 9th Steering Committee (SC) meeting in Klaipeda, January 31, 2005

Participants:

SC members: Håkan Brynielsson, Niels-Chresten Andersen, Slawomir Demkowicz-Dobrzanski, Krystyna Wroblewska and Dalia Plavskiene.

Seagull Interreg secretariat: Rolf A Karlson, Ulf Andersson, Lars Öhrman, Eva-Lisa Ahnström, Erica Månsson and Erik Ciardi.

Seagull Russian Component: Andrey Moshkov (paragraphs 1-5).

The host, Klaipeda County Governor : Dalia Makuskiene.

1. The SC chairman, Mr Brynielsson, opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. Ms Dalia Plavskiene is new member of the steering committee, representing Klaipeda County.
2. The agenda was approved. The main issue on the agenda was paragraph no. 6.
3. The minutes from the SC meeting in Gdansk were approved.

4. Reports:

General:

After an application from the lead partner of the project, the Rostock Interreg III B Joint Secretariat has decided to approve a three months extension of the implementation period of the project. The main argument for the prolongation is to get more time for the essential anchoring activities of the central project proposal: the Joint Transnational Development Programme (JTDP). The new project dead-line is November 19, 2005. The budget frame is not changed.

WPI:

A GIS/statistics seminar is planned for 13-14th of February. No meeting activities since the Gdansk conference in December 2004.

WP2:

There are still lacks of resources in many of the member regions that complicate the transnationality of the project implementation. Ms Gunnarsson has visited all partners in bilateral



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meetings during autumn 2004 in order to get input to the WP 2 report. A first Water Forum – one of the priority action proposals of the draft JTDP – is planned for autumn 2005.

WP3:

The general actions of the work package were finalised in November 2005. A questionnaire has been sent out to all partners and involved persons in order to get input for the continued work. 20 persons have responded up till now. Ms Ahnström asked for support from the partners to get more persons to answer the questionnaire. Good examples will be a part of the tool box now developed. A database is planned to facilitate cooperation in Seagull II. The tool box will also contain good practical examples and not only ordinary reports.

The further project input from WP 3 is connected directly to the JTDP.

WP4:

The last WP phase will give input to the JTDP. The main proposal is about the Rural Development Academy.

It is now obvious that it was too optimistic to plan for establishing LAG's in all member regions. The pilot projects will be finalised during the last period of the project.

WP5:

No activities since last SC meeting. A new meeting about dissemination activities is planned in connection to the Council/Board meeting in Klaipeda in the end of February.

Seagull RC:

A report has been compiled within WP 4. It will be translated into English. There have been elections in the Russian federation and a municipal reform will be implemented. The number of municipalities will increase from 22 to 40 in the Kaliningrad Region. This means that new persons from the Russian side will be involved in Euroregion Baltic activities during the next presidency period.

Printed reports:

Six reports have been printed within the Seagull report series up till now. New reports, which will be printed in A4-format, are the study of women's choice of living, the pre-study of Cruising tourism in the Baltic Sea and the ERB Atlas. The cluster study is planned to be printed as the six already printed.

5. Summing up the Gdansk conference:

Mr Karlson commented the summary report of the workshops of the conference. There was an obvious consensus of the five focus areas proposed in the first draft JTDP. The added values for the member regions of the JTDP and the ERB cooperation must be orderly visualised in the JTDP.

Mr Andersen said it could be difficult to show added value for all member regions as they all have their own uniqueness.

It was agreed to focus on proposals that bring added values to most of the member regions. The JTDP should not contain proposals that could be implemented in each ERB member region through regional decisions independently of the ERB cooperation.

It was also agreed that it is important that the regional politicians and other decision makers feel ownership of the final actions proposed in the JTDP.

Ms Wroblewska proposed that ERB matters should be brought to the Baltic Development Forum in Malmö, February 24-25 2005. It is good to have ERB participation in such an arena. ERB should not only look for EU funding.

Mr Andersen replied EU is not only money and mentioned the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies.

Mr Brynielsson added that ERB should lobby for being an Interreg III A-like programme area.

Mr Andersen said the Bologna paper can be interesting to follow up. The paper means students within EU 25 can study in all EU member countries and in Russia as well, without paying.

Summary reflections from the workshops at the Gdansk conference:

Workshop 1: The draft ERB JTDP in the light of EU Territorial Cohesion policies

- Consensus about the proposed focus areas
- The action proposals must add value to the member regions
- Right priority to make proposals that attract EU funds
- Develop texts about
 - relations EU-Russia
 - “the local dimension”
 - transport infrastructure and tourism
 - labour market cooperation; emphasis education needs.

Workshop 2: How to develop Innovative environments and Clusters in ERB, including Local Development Centres in smaller towns?

- Further networking and knowledge transfer
- Create “learning centres” for knowledge building
- Develop triple helix cooperation
- Develop cluster cooperation.

Issues regarding learning centres should be highly prioritized.

Workshop 3: Tourism development – the potential to attract visitors to our region: what do we have to offer?

- Create an ERB tourism working group
- Build networks within the tourism sector
- Develop information exchange – activity calendar on the ERB web page
- Develop a common ERB strategy for tourism development

- Develop marketing, etc.

The Bornholm Regional Municipality has already got national funding of a small project that aims at starting a tourist centre connected to the ERB cooperation. The project was discussed at the ERB board in January. It was emphasised that it is imperative to involve primary tourism business stakeholders asap in this project.

Workshop 4: *Why local mobilization? Rural development and bottom up perspectives in EU policies*

- Build a network for benchmarking
- Develop an educational programme for training and development
- Prepare and implement a yearly rural development conference
- Propose and build up an ERB Academy for rural development
- Support local mobilization through the Leader model
- Support the development of rural tourism.

The idea of a Rural Development Academy was intensively discussed at the seminar and supported by all participants. A concrete example of the need of involving grass-roots was given by the Russian representative from the Municipality of Ozersk, underlying the importance of a bottom-up perspective in rural development activities.

Workshop 5: *Maritime safety*

- Discussed contents/preparations for a new Interreg III B project about Maritime safety.

Workshop 6: *Water management – the role of ERB*

- The threat towards water from agriculture – need of education
- Create a Water Forum – an arena for information and knowledge transfer
- Strong support is needed especially to the Kaliningrad region as the ERB Hot Spot concerning water quality.

Workshop 7: *Transport infrastructure conditions prevailing in ERB – need for improvement*

- The ERB board should – based on a well documented in depth information – start a discussion on how the ERB should deal with and prioritize infrastructure issues in its long term work
- A well thought through chapter concerning transport infrastructure should be inserted in the JTDP
- The ERB should be used as an arena for active political discussions about infrastructure development

- The ERB should act as a joint political body towards national governments not least in infrastructural issues – also in contacts with the EU level, the member regions and municipalities.

The workshop was attended by around 40 persons as it has high priority in the member regions. A discussion at the steering committee meeting followed on how the political level should be involved.

Mr Andersson stressed this is a political question.

Mr Andersen proposed a good and informative material should be prepared, and then the politicians could be involved.

Mr Brynielsson and others stressed that the public sector is not the only owner of transport issues. It is the private sector that decides if investments in ferry lines, air connections etc. are going to be done.

Ms Wroblewska proposed a joint seminar for business sector and politicians about transport infrastructure issues.

It was agreed that the role of ERB in transport infrastructure investments mainly is about influencing national and EU levels for investments.

Workshop 8: *Labour market cooperation within ERB: European Employment Strategy*

- Use the EU Employment strategy as a tool in the ERB cooperation activities
- Develop a dialogue between all ERB member regions about fair play on the labour market arena
- High priority to education/knowledge about different national regulations – to avoid tensions.

Ms Wroblewska stressed we know too little about our different rules and regulations. It would be valuable to compare strategies and see where they meet. Training activities would be good for mutual understanding.

6. JTDP status and actions

Mr Öhrman informed about how the work has developed with the JTDP. How detailed should the JTDP be presented? Who is responsible for implementation of the proposals?

Ms Wroblewska said that the proposals should not be limited to what the ERB member regions' authorities are responsible for. All essential issues should be covered. Co-stakeholders should be involved and hopefully take responsibility for some implementation activities. It is essential to identify the roles of different stakeholders.

Mr Karlson added that also the role of ERB must be discussed and analyzed in relation to e.g. the member regions' authorities.

EU documents must be used to understand the global approach. Abbreviations and definitions must be explained.

The JTDP should include a specific chapter with a general discussion on how to implement the development programme.

Mr Karlson asked the SC members to send comments on the draft SWOT as soon as possible.

Mr Brynielsson proposed that some of the present chapters should be considered as annexes to the main document.

Proposed priority actions during the nearest years

Every proposal requires a high quality discussion with parameters like arguments, what to gain and added value for the regions as well as an implementation discussion. Some external writers will be used. The steering committee should prioritise among the proposals.

1. It was agreed that the proposal to create an ***ERB structure for innovation and SME development*** is not only an issue for the ERB member bodies. Important stakeholders are universities and the business community. Contacts with such actors need to be established in order to get some kind of approval of the proposal from them. Parallel structures must not be created and other already established organisations should be used, like for example the Baltic Sea Chamber of Commerce. The network should be started to be build as soon as possible.

Ms Wroblewska proposed that a survey should be done to see what other similar projects are doing, e.g. spin off activities of the String project. It is generally difficult to involve industry in this kind of activities. The outcome of the project must be developed. Therefore important to try to describe as convincing as possible how a SME could benefit from this kind of initiative from the ERB.

Ms Ahnström underlined that the proposed action is not only about SMEs. The Triple Helix dimension is also important and contains other structures. We need to administer networks. What we can offer SMEs are arenas for catching new knowledge as well as services and consultancies.

It was agreed that a committee should not be proposed, but a structure or a mechanism is necessary to create here. Try to describe this activity as concrete as possible and in a way that could be “sold” to voters and SMEs. Focus on e.g. match-making between companies and industry clusters. Contact Chambers of Commerce now, e.g. the Öresund Business Council.

2. ***Transport infrastructure***. The important transport corridor projects for ERB are not in phase with the implementation schedule of the Seagull project. Further, ERB is not related to any TEN projects concerning roads or railways. It is necessary that the JTDP contains a good mapping and analysis of the present situation concerning transport infrastructure in the ERB.

The SC members stated that politicians do not decide about e.g. opening of ferry lines or new air connections. Such decisions are taken from a pure viewpoint of business economics. ERB can though be used to influence the national level and make the ERB problems visible. The political level can for example lobby for road, railways and port investments. In the JTDP the roles must be defined and clear as well as the internal logic. The transport corridor projects will provide with information and propose a number of priorities. The EU White Paper must also be taken into consideration.

Ms Wroblewska said there is enough with studies and documents and we must start now start lobbying and build networks with representatives of the private sector

The SC recommended the secretariat to

- start discussions with representatives of shipping companies in order to prepare for a

good decision base for further investments,

- make proper maps and point out important transport bottlenecks,
- make clear what politicians could lobby for,
- create a public-private platform and prepare meetings between politicians and private company representatives.

3. ***A Rural Development Academy.*** The main idea is to create a platform for exchange of experience and knowledge including service to stakeholders in the ERB member regions. The academy should be promoted as a test laboratory for EU in relation to the new Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and the broader EU rural development policies. The academy is one way to strengthen the ERB social cohesion and local mobilization.

4. ***Environment and energy technique sector.***

Mr Andersen proposed that bio-ethanol and biomass should be added to the proposal as important elements as they are high prioritised by EU.

5. ***Tourism.*** The tourism component should be concretized and described in the same way as the other prioritised action proposals.

6. ***Labour market cooperation.*** The actions should contain a description of the labour markets in each ERB member country and a comparison of regulations and plans. The results of such studies should be used as a basis for a series of seminars for knowledge transfer and reducing tensions between trade unions, etc.

Polish doctors roasted for working in Sweden is not a good cooperation example as it could be seen as brain drain from Poland to Sweden. Important for ERB is to show how labour market cooperation can be beneficial not only to one region. Labour market in relation to the educational area must be developed.

Cooperation between universities should be an important part of the labour market cooperation. Education activities – also in languages – are important for understanding and cohesion.

7. ***Water forum.*** Fully accepted by the steering committee.

8. ***Competence building in the environmental field.*** Fully accepted by the steering committee.

9. ***The status of the Kaliningrad Region in the ERB cooperation*** was intensively discussed at the meeting – whether there should be a set of separate actions for the region or the Kaliningrad region should be recognised as one of the horizontal goals of the ERB cooperation. All SC members thought that special attention should be put to the Kaliningrad Region issue.

Ms Wroblewska said the cooperation will be successful if the Kaliningrad Region is involved in all activities. She mentioned the Northern Dimension action plan as an example where Kaliningrad Region has special attention.

The steering committee decided that the Kaliningrad Region partners should be asked how they want the Kaliningrad Region issues to be described and treated in the JTDP document.

10. It is very important to engage the local level in the ERB cooperation. ***An Exchange programme for regional and local officials and NGO representatives*** is therefore considered as very important by the steering committee. The programme is thought to be

implemented as on the job training in other ERB member regions in occupations-professions connected to the JTDP focus areas

11. **Establishment of an arena for intensified twinning** between local authorities, NGOs and regions in matters concerning Good Governance in public sector activities, gender equality and sustainable spatial development was also highly supported by the SC.
12. **Introduction of a database** common for ERB as a prerequisite for updated information to citizens, public bodies and other organisations as well as to external bodies about ERB facts and conditions and in support of bench-marking activities was also highly supported by the SC.
13. A **new prioritised action** was proposed by the SC chairman: ERB should lobby hard for its own Interreg IIIA-like programme.

7. Anchoring plan of the JTDP

The proposed plan was approved – important to involve the business sector. Mr Karlson stressed that the final JTDP document is something quite else than the final *project report* to the BSR Interreg secretariat.

8. Ex ante evaluation of parts of the Seagull project

An ex-ante evaluation will be carried out with external experts of Nordregio together with experts of the Institute of Local and Regional Democracy in Växjö.

9. Future SC Meetings

The planned SC meeting in March was decided to be cancelled.

Next SC meeting will take place in connection to a planned study visit to a rural development academy in Hungary in May. The study visit will include a round trip and visits to a Euroregion in the same area. Time schedule: 25-29 of May.

The next SC meeting was decided to take place on July 28 in connection to the ERB board meeting in Klaipeda July 29.