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Seagull is a project for the Euroregion Baltic (ERB) with the main purpose of developing and anchoring a long-term strategy and a joint transnational development programme (JTDP) for the region. It will form the basis for future investments in the environment and infrastructure, etc. and will thereby contribute to social, economic and environmentally sustainable development throughout the region.

The **ERB-Seagull conference in Gdansk on December 2-3** turned out to be a good step forward towards a common development programme (JTDP) for ERB.

- There was a strong consensus about the proposed focus areas of the JTDP, namely
- to lay ground for the best possible competitive business environment in the region,
 - to develop a good labour market cooperation,
 - to be a frontrunner in implementation of EU environment and energy policies,
 - to support sustainable development in the Kaliningrad Region, and
 - to develop exchange of best practises and bench-marking within the strategic areas for actions.

The conference concentrated on workshop discussions around eight different themes close connected to the JTDP focus areas. Here are some of the main conclusions from the workshops:

- **Concentrate** the JTDP proposals to a limited number of well-defined and overall accepted concrete actions
- The concrete JTDP action proposals must be **proven to add values** to each ERB member region's development
- It is important to create and develop **learning centres** for networking, knowledge building and knowledge transfer within the focus areas
- Create a working group for development of a **common tourism strategy** for ERB
- Build up and attract EU support for an **ERB Academy for rural development**
- Good **water quality** is essential for a prosperous development of ERB – meet threats against the water quality through **education programmes for farmers**, creation of an arena – a **Water Forum** – for knowledge and information transfer, and through special **support to the Kaliningrad Region**
- Make a good analysis in the JTDP about the **transport infrastructure conditions** of ERB. Propose the ERB Board to start **priority discussions** about investment needs. Develop **common ERB lobbying activities** towards the national level in each member region's country
- **Education initiatives** are imperative for creation of closer cooperation within the labour market of ERB.

The president of the ERB Board and Council, Mr Jan Kozłowski, closed the conference by stating, among others, that important proposals in the draft JTDP are development of R&D centres for business development, Competence centres for environment and energy issues, an Academy for rural development, development of thematic tourism packages and creation of an ERB labour market without barriers.

He also stressed that a prerequisite for success is that the involved decision makers, i.e. politicians in the whole Euroregion Baltic, accept the developed visions, aims and directions in the JTDP as their own visions, aims and directions and become their owners, and find sufficient human and financial resources to implement them. Another crucial condition for success is to reach concordance between the ERB member regions' decision bodies and the local communities within the regions who must share the views of specific goals and join in the implementation process.

The draft JTDP will now be developed in an iterative process of developed contents-new presentations-discussions-considerations by the ERB member regions-amendments-new presentations-etc. during the first half of 2005.

In order to attain the best possible anchoring of the JTDP, we have applied for a prolongation of the duration time of the project with three months until mid November 2005. If this is approved, we plan for final comments from the member regions decision bodies during late August/beginning of September and final decisions by the ERB Board and Council during October 2005.

We wish all our readers Merry X-mas and a Happy New Year! And welcome you back to read Seagull News during 2005.

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