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**19 written comments on the draft II of the ERB development programme (JTDP)** have now been sent to the project management. Of the 12 main partners of ERB, politically decided comments have been delivered from 5 – The Polish Association of Communes of ERB, the Regional Municipality of Bornholm, the Regional Council in Kalmar County, Region Blekinge and the Municipalities and County Council of Kronoberg County. From Poland there are also comments from four different departments of the Marshalls' offices in Warmia-Masuria and Pomerania, and from two municipalities, two NGOs and the Regional Development Agency in Gdansk. From the Kaliningrad Region there are comments from the representative in Kaliningrad of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and from two experts participating in the Seagull work packages 2 and 3. Finally the ERB National Secretariats together, and the County Administrative Board of Kronoberg County have sent comments.

**The Seagull Steering Committee** met on May 28 in Budapest during its study tour to Hungary and Slovakia (see below). The main item for the meeting was to go through the comments on the second draft of the JTDP and conclude on the direction of the further work on the JTDP. The result of the meeting was that the structure and content of the continued JTDP work should be the following:

1. **The final papers describing the JTDP** should be divided into three separate documents: (1) The Strategy – focus areas, (2) The prioritised actions to implement the strategy, and (3) a background document with facts and figures about ERB, SWOT analysis, etc.
2. **The strategic focus areas**, with regards to the comments from the member regions, should be: (1) Support to a competitive business environment in the region, (2) Actions in order to enhance the unsatisfactory situation for ERB when it comes to transport infrastructure, (3) To be a frontrunner in implementing EU environment and energy policies, and (4) Labour market cooperation – in a wider frame of the EU social dimension.
3. Efforts in order to get ERB recognized as an **”Interreg III A-like area”** for EU support should be excluded from the JTDP since such actions are already under way through decisions by the ERB Board and Council.
4. **Horizontal goals** for all prioritised actions should be sustainable development, good governance and equal opportunities. Actions concerning the Kaliningrad Region should also be treated horizontally.
5. The prioritised actions should according to the Steering Committee be:

**In support of a competitive business environment:**

(a) Establish a platform for innovation and SME development as a partnership between the public and private sectors and academia, (b) establish an ERB Academy for Rural Development, (c) develop cooperation within the tourism sector;

**In order to enhance the transport infrastructure:**

(a) Establish a Transport Infrastructure Committee with politicians from the member regions, (b) gather results from different transport corridor projects and make analyses, (c) carry out and adopt a common ERB strategy for joint actions in order to enhance the transport infrastructure situation, (d) establish a dialogue with the private sector and national authorities responsible for transport infrastructure issues, (e) carry out lobby activities;

**In order to be a front runner in implementing EU environment and energy policies:**

(a) Create an ERB Water Forum with the objective of establishing ERB as a pilot area for trans-national and cross-border cooperation in the field of water management, (b) develop the cooperation within the energy field in order to speed up the transition into a sustainable energy supply system based on renewable sources such as wind- and bio-energy, (c) work out a special programme for diminished threats from the 2-3 most important environmental hot spots in the Kaliningrad Region;

**In order to enhance labour market cooperation:**

(a) Compile a report that describes and analyses the labour market rules in the countries of the ERB member regions, (b) carry out an education programme based on the report for the labour market parties in the member regions.

6. Building up a joint **statistical database** and **benchmarking/knowledge transfer** between the member regions are to be seen as tools for the further cooperation.
7. **The time table** for the further JTDP work is that new drafts of the strategy and the prioritised actions should be sent to the member regions for a second round of comments in the beginning of September this year. Final decision by the ERB Council is planned to late November.

**Other activities carried out since previous Seagull News:**

- The Seagull Steering Committee made a study tour to Hungary and Slovakia in the end of May in order to study rural and other development actions by the West-Hungarian Research Institute (HAS) in support to its stakeholders, and to study actions and work methods of the Carpathian Euroregion including information exchange between the two Euroregions.
- Seagull management and WP-leaders met in Kalmar May 24.
- Two meetings in Kalmar on June 14 with politicians from the three Swedish ERB member regions about the comments of the JTDP draft II and the further JTDP work.
- WP 1: Two meetings in Gdansk on May 9 and 10; the first one about the development programme of the Pomeranian region and its connections to the ERB JTDP and to neighbouring regions' development programmes, and the second about the current status of the ERB cooperation and about the Seagull project and the JTDP. An interview study about good governance and gender equality has been carried through in the ERB member regions. A report is under compilation.  
Several information and discussion meetings about the draft II of the JTDP to different stakeholders in south-east Sweden.
- WP 2: The Lyckeby River Day, April 24. Authorities, companies and NGOs along the river invited the citizens to different activities (information, competitions, exhibitions, study visits, etc.) – totally about 500 participants in the activities.  
May 3: Swedish water meeting in Kalmar between the Water Authority for the South Baltic Sea District and all Swedish regions concerned. Discussion about the role of the local authorities when implementing the EU Water Framework Directive.
- WP 4: Transnational expert meeting in Gdansk, May 31 about establishing of a Rural Development Academy. Study tour to Finland on June 15-16 about Rural Development and Innovation issues.
- WP 5: Info about the project during the Tylösand Rally week in Sweden, May 30 – June 3. The ex-ante evaluation of the Seagull project is under implementation through interviews with stakeholders in the member regions. The evaluation is carried out during spring-summer 2005, conducted by experts from Nordregio in Stockholm and the Institute for Local and Regional Democracy in Växjö.

**The activities during the coming months** are concentrated on redrafting of the documents describing the ERB JTDP and on printing of some project reports.

*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. The programme will form the basis for future investments in the environment and infrastructure, etc. It will thereby contribute to social, economic and environmentally sustainable development throughout the region.*