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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. 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.

The Project manager of the Seagull project participated in the Baltic Development Forum Summit in Riga 5-7 October 2003. The theme of the summit was: *New Europe meets old Europe – the Baltic Sea Region as a global frontrunner.*

The summit gathered about 400 representatives of governments, private sector, media and NGOs from all countries around the Baltic Sea. It discussed many different issues of central importance for the Seagull project. For more information about Baltic Development Forum and the Riga programme, please visit www.bdforum.org

Firstly, it was very interesting to note that the Seagull project from many points of view is addressing issues that are considered as central for the development of the entire Baltic Sea Region (BSR):

- Many key note speakers underlined the importance of elaborating long term strategies for the cooperation in the region and develop more concrete programmes and plans for the implementation of the strategies. That is exactly what we are aiming at in the Seagull project with the objective of working out and anchor a Joint Transnational Development Programme for ERB.
- There are great expectations among experts and decision makers from all BSR countries that the BSR will be able to foster world competitive clusters in the ICT and Health sectors. "Develop and market the BSR as a Smart Region", as many speakers expressed the idea. Also in this context, the Seagull project is working in the "right" direction through developing a network of Innovative Centres within the ERB region and through the planned studies and matching of clusters within the region.

Secondly, it is obvious that the Governments of the three Baltic States (and Poland) are focussing hard on transport corridors from the St. Petersburg Region through the Baltic States and Poland to reach the strong markets in Germany and France. All three Presidents of the Baltic States as well as several ministers from these states mentioned in their speeches the importance of implementing the Via Baltica and Rail Baltica projects as priority one for the development of their countries. Motorways of the Sea were also noted by many of the top politicians, but nobody mentioned anything about connections over the Baltic Sea to Swedish or Danish destinations.

- An important lesson for the further implementation of the Seagull project, as well as for projects as SEBTrans Link and Baltic Gateway, is that we must much better than up till now inform about and explain the ideas behind our projects to central decision makers in Riga, Vilnius, Moscow and Warsaw – as well as in Copenhagen and Stockholm.

www.eurobalt.org



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