



EUROREGION BALTIC

ACTION PLAN

2019



Klaipeda, 13th February 2019

Background

Euroregion Baltic (ERB) Action Plan for 2019 was adopted on 13th February 2019 at the beginning of the new presidency within the organisation assumed by the Association Klaipeda Region. The Action Plan is elaborated on a annual basis to better streamline stakeholders' resources and concretise results they expect from ERB cooperation, also from longer-term strategic actions, while at the same time to allow better reporting on the achievements after one year.

Vision and mission of Euroregion Baltic by 2030

The ERB 2030 Agenda builds on the achievements of first 20 years of successful cooperation and provides an updated strategic framework by defining the vision for Euroregion Baltic. According to the vision, by 2030 ERB will become an important platform involving partners from Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden in activities contributing to the development of the whole Baltic Sea Region and with particular attention to the South Baltic area.

The Euroregion's mission is therefore to undertake joint initiatives aiming at strengthening and promoting cooperation among the local and regional authorities of the Parties of the Agreement, as well as contributing to the sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region, with particular focus on the South Baltic area.

The ERB cooperation is built around three main types of activities:

- Lobbying activities in order to represent and promote common interests
- Implementation of strategic initiatives and projects complementing the local and regional agendas of the member organisations
- Exchange activities, to seek collaborative approach to common challenges and to progress in innovation and in operational efficiency of the cooperation.

Apart from internal documents guiding ERB cooperation, there are also external documents and initiatives that are of vital importance to the organisation's work. These include the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and their flagships, which contributes to the enhancement of cooperation in the Region and aims at bringing together initiatives in different sectors to reach its three main objectives - save the sea, connect the region and increase prosperity. The second important document is the Europe 2020 Strategy which is intended to create conditions for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union.

ERB members deal also with challenges included in one of the Europe's 2020 flagship initiatives – Innovation Union. In this context it is important to remember about the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme - Horizon 2020 and possibilities that ERB could benefit from. Also worth mentioning are important sector programmes such as Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens, Life, Creative Europe and the Health programme, but also the European Social Fund and the regional funds where transnational cooperation now becomes an essential part.

As ERB includes a member organisation from the Russian Federation, i.e. the Kaliningrad Region, it is therefore also important to make reference to the Strategy of social and economic development of the North-West Federal District until 2020, which guides the development in such areas as development of sustainable, innovative and diverse economy, improved environmental protection, better transport connections and attractive tourist offers as well as improved capacities for cross-border cooperation and development of innovative socio-economic potential in such areas as education, health care, social policy, youth policy, culture and sports.

The ERB 2030 Agenda comes at a time of organisational development of the network. This development momentum culminated in 2018 when on its 20th anniversary ERB welcomed its new member, the Skåne Association of Local Authorities (Kommunförbundet Skåne – KFSK). The Association is a non-profit organisation with the task of supporting and developing the local self-governance, protecting local interests, promoting collaboration between municipalities and assisting them in their activities. With all 33 municipalities in Skåne being members of the Association, KFSK works in important cooperation areas of energy and climate, environment and community planning, labour market and business, local authority management, education, public health and welfare as well as research, innovation and development. Their membership will undoubtedly bring new ideas for cooperation, especially focusing on the issues of green and blue growth.

In their joint cooperation efforts all ERB partners will seek the best possible solutions to address common challenges and will therefore look for synergies in diverse strategic frameworks employed throughout the Baltic Sea Region. Working in this manner ERB members will be able to effectively tackle those of the challenges which have different impact on particular regions.

ERB Cooperation Agendas and actions

The actions planned to help ERB stakeholders tackle common challenges take into account interests and ambitions of ERB member organisations and are based on five cooperation agendas. These agendas are dedicated to relevant areas of ERB cooperation such as South

Baltic, wide Baltic Sea Region, European issues both internal and external, youth and people-to-people cooperation, as well as green and blue growth.

Assuming the leading role in the organisation in 2019, the Association Klaipeda Region will focus on the better efficiency of ERB cooperation streamlining organisation's limited resources with the most important strategic actions and initiatives. Much effort will be dedicated to the initial implementation of the ERB 2030 Agenda combined with the evaluation and reporting of the results of the ERB's previous strategic document, the ERB 2020 Agenda.

The Lithuanian ERB Presidency will also focus on blue and green growth agenda with smart specialisation strategies (S3) tool-kit to be used as a method for obtaining concrete results. Transport accessibility in the region will remain one of important areas, especially through the implementation of the Interconnect project. The overall project engagement will be further investigated for activities and results that would be linked with the Action Plan in the future.

Much attention will be dedicated to the overhaul of the youth cooperation in Euroregion Baltic. While the organisation is heavily involved in developing youth cooperation on the project level via such projects as CaSYPoT, SIA4Y, YCGN etc., the ERB's Youth Board struggles to keep its effective performance over recent time. Therefore the ERB will engage in a discussion on the better alignment of youth political dimension with the projects, investigating whether to keep the Youth Board in its current shape or change it into a more effective working structure dedicated to youth issues eg. a youth core group similar to the ERB Water Core Group.

Furthermore, continuation of effective lobbying for the future EU Cohesion Policy, focusing especially on the Interreg South Baltic Programme after 2020 will also be prioritised. The ERB's participation in the implementation of the UN's Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the context of the Baltic Sea and the CBSS's Baltic 2030 Action Plan, will be treated as a horizontal activity.

The organisation will also continue to engage in concrete multi-stakeholder cooperation with other pan-Baltic organisations, especially with BSSSC and UBC on strategic youth cooperation, with CPMR Baltic Sea Commission on the regional aspects of the SDG implementation, and with CBSS on both youth and sustainable development activities identified in Baltic 2030 Action Plan. The organisation, through its main capacity building project UMBRELLA, will be also directly involved in the organisation of 2019 Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, assisting in its Participation Day 2019.

Finally, the Presidency will strive for improved measuring of results to fully identify the added value of ERB cooperation and better communicate its results.

1. South Baltic Agenda (Actions 1-2)

➤ Action 1 - supporting the continuation of independent South Baltic Programme

Euroregion Baltic will:

- 1.1. take measures ensuring the continuation of the South Baltic Programme as an independent structure with its own managing authority, monitoring committee, joint programme secretariat, regional contact points and budget
- 1.2. specifically lobby for the inclusion of the entire area of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship and Kaliningrad Region in the South Baltic Programme area to ensure that all ERB stakeholders have an equal access to the Programme after 2020
- 1.3. focus its lobbying activities on key players responsible for the development of Interreg regulations within EU bodies and national governments
- 1.4. create a voluntary working group to lead and coordinate further lobbying efforts for the South Baltic Programme meeting online and face-to-face as necessary for the best possible result
- 1.5. establish close cooperation with regional EU offices of ERB member organisations in Brussels
- 1.6. continue to actively work within the Programme bodies including the participation in its Monitoring Committee, heading the Joint Delegation of Euroregions and engagement in Programme's ad hoc working groups such as evaluation committees, recruitment groups and future Joint Programming Committee of the new Programme after 2020
- 1.7. investigate potential role of ERB as a managing body of the future small projects fund within the Programme

➤ Action 2 - making the ERB Executive Board a better link between the political level and projects developed and implemented in the ERB member organisations, especially focusing on South Baltic Programme:

Euroregion Baltic will:

- 2.1. improve conditions for cross-border cooperation in the area of South Baltic, especially through successful implementation of the South Baltic UMBRELLA project
- 2.2. invite projects to attend the Executive Board meetings and present their results and discuss them in future cooperation/projects

- 2.3. support and promote targeted events planned in ERB projects, especially in UMBRELLA (conference on sustainable tourism in April 2019 in Copenhagen and transport/energy in Autumn 2019 in Gdańsk), CaSYPoT and INTERCONNECT
- 2.4. actively facilitate and support relevant cross-border initiatives in the South Baltic area, also by organising hackaton-like events on selected emerging topics

South Baltic Agenda success criteria:

- ✓ continuation of South Baltic Programme ensured,
- ✓ linkage between the ERB Executive Board and projects improved,
- ✓ new project ideas developed.

2. Baltic Sea Region Agenda (Actions 3-5)

➤ **Action 3 - maintaining active involvement in the EU Strategy for Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)**

Euroregion Baltic will:

- 3.1. co-organise EUSBSR Participation Day 2019 in Gdańsk on 11.06.2019 through activities within the UMBRELLA project
- 3.2. co-organise Baltic Sea Youth Camp on 8-11.06.2019 in Sobieszewo back-to-back with EUSBSR Forum in Gdańsk
- 3.3. actively participate in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Forum in Gdańsk on 12-13.06.2019
- 3.4. continue to work closely with relevant Policy Areas and Horizontal Actions of the EUSBSR, mainly by organising relevant cross-border conferences with PA/HA panels in the UMBRELLA project
- 3.5. continue to monitor the implementation of the EUSBSR and report to the Board on the most important developments

➤ **Action 4 - maintaining active participation in the Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF)**

Euroregion Baltic will:

- 4.1. continue to participate in the meetings of BSLF as an observer, including the BSLF Round-table Meeting on 18-19.03.2019 in Hamburg

4.2. participate in the implementation of the ESF project entitled BSLF for Sustainable Working Life

- **Action 5 - maintaining and further developing cooperation with relevant pan-Baltic organisations especially with CBSS, BSSSC, UBC and CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, especially focusing on EU policies and EUSBSR**

Euroregion Baltic will:

5.1. further develop strategic cooperation with the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) on topics related to EUSBSR, youth ('Baltic Sea Youth Camp' project) and sustainable development;

5.2. further develop strategic cooperation with the Conference of Maritime Peripheral Regions Baltic Sea Commission (CMPR BSC) utilising the results of the 'Regions and Sustainable Development Goals' project and developing new initiatives connected to sustainable development;

5.3. maintain close working relation with Council of the Baltic Sea States regarding especially labour issues, youth and Sustainable Development Goals, participating in relevant joint activities planned by CBSS;

5.4. maintain close working relation with the Swedish Institute, facilitating ERBs participation in SI Baltic Sea Cooperation initiatives and programmes ie. Seed funding projects, third country cooperation focusing on Russia, leadership programmes

- **Action 6 - To follow other national and regional strategies relevant in the Baltic Sea Region context**

Baltic Sea Region Agenda success criteria:

- ✓ EUSBSR Participation Day organised
- ✓ Baltic Sea Youth Camp successfully organised in Sobieszewo
- ✓ UMBRELLA activities implemented in accordance with the timeline
- ✓ ERB represented at BSLF Round-table in Hamburg
- ✓ Cooperation with relevant pan-Baltic organisation maintained and developed

3. European Agenda (Actions 6-7)

➤ **Action 6 - Maintaining strong lobbying activities in areas like EU Cohesion Policy, social dimension, water directives, agriculture and rural development, youth policy**

Euroregion Baltic will:

- 6.1. closely monitor the process of developing the regulations regarding the EU Cohesion Policy with special focus on Interreg regulations and report on it to the ERB Executive Board;
- 6.2. closely monitor the process of developing regulations regarding EU's social dimension and youth policy with special focus on European Social Funds and Erasmus+ and report on it to the ERB Executive Board;
- 6.3. closely monitor the process of developing regulations regarding water management, agriculture, rural development, economic development and innovation;
- 6.4. will take up necessary lobbying actions fostering joint interests of ERB members regarding the above mentioned focus areas;
- 6.5. will utilise the knowledge on the new regulations to further develop the ERB potential and effectiveness in strategic actions and projects.

➤ **Action 7 - improving cooperation with ERB member organisations' offices in Brussels as a channel for dialogue with EU institutions, lobbying and gaining knowledge on topics relevant for ERB**

Euroregion Baltic will:

- 7.1. update or establish contact with relevant Brussels regional offices
- 7.2. develop a mutually beneficial model of cooperation between ERB and the regional offices
- 7.3. organise one face-to-face meeting in Brussels between ERB and representatives of regional offices

European Agenda success criteria:

- ✓ ERB interests lobbied effectively
- ✓ Cooperation with regional offices of ERB member organisations in Brussels improved
- ✓ f2f meeting with regional offices organised in Brussels

4. Youth and People-to-People Agenda (Actions 8-10)

- **Action 8 - maintaining and further developing youth cooperation with a focus on local youth policies, education, student exchanges and exchange of young volunteers**

Euroregion Baltic will:

- 8.1. conduct a strategic discussion on the existing ERB youth cooperation model (starting at the Executive Board meeting in Klaipeda and finalising at the next meeting in Kalmar), and decide on its future shape;
- 8.2. develop and agree on the ERB Youth Strategy prepared within the CaSYPoT project
- 8.3. organise the final conference of CaSYPoT project as the ERB Annual Forum of ERB Stakeholders on 13-14.05.2019 in Kalmar
- 8.4. finalise the implementation of the CaSYPoT project and develop a concrete plan on how to best utilise its results
- 8.5. utilise the tools and results of the Youth Core Group Network project for improving ERB youth cooperation
- 8.6. organise a youth conference in Elbląg on 07.03.2019 within the SIA4Y (Strengthening civil society rights by Information Access for European Youth) project
- 8.7. co-organise Baltic Sea Youth Camp on 8-11.06.2019 in Sobieszewo
- 8.8. take active measures to develop new youth projects, especially focusing on the upcoming call in the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment, as well as Erasmus+

- **Action 9 - putting more focus on social sustainability, mainly through exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practice in areas like social vulnerable groups, migrants and healthcare.**

Euroregion Baltic will:

- 9.1. collect and develop information from all ERB member organisations regarding relevant projects and good practices on social sustainability
- 9.2. exchanging knowledge with all ERB member organisations
- 9.3. develop at least one joint initiative/project supported by ERB Executive Board

- **Action 10 - improving people-to-people cooperation, mainly through exchange activities and smaller projects** (directly linked to Small Projects Fund in South Baltic Agenda)

Euroregion Baltic will:

- 10.1. utilise the results of the UMBRELLA project to develop international projects for smaller actors within the South Baltic area
- 10.2. investigate other funding sources eg. SI, NCA and other national funding to develop people-to-people projects
- 10.3. connect activities planned in 1.7 (South Baltic small projects fund)

Youth and People-to-People Agenda success criteria:

- ✓ Improved youth cooperation within the ERB structure
- ✓ ERB Youth Strategy developed and implemented
- ✓ CaSYPoT projects successfully finalised
- ✓ SIA4Y conference in Elblag organised
- ✓ new international youth project initiated
- ✓ UMBRELLA project implemented in accordance with the timeline

5. Green and Blue Growth Agenda (Actions 11-12)

- **Action 11 - providing ERB member organisations with added value in their effort to achieve green and blue growth.**

Euroregion Baltic will:

- 11.1. monitor developments regarding climate and energy, marine environment, coastal zone management, maritime tourism, offshore industry, transport/connectivity, infrastructure, circular economy, soil erosion;
- 11.2. select one concrete area for in-depth cooperation throughout the year;
- 11.3. strengthen the work of the ERB Water Core Group by supporting its new chairperson and secretariat in Kalmar;
- 11.4. present results and recommendations of the INTERCONNECT project at the Executive Board in September 2019

11.5. evaluate all other relevant projects with ERB participation to use knowledge gained for development of new initiatives after 2020

➤ **Action 12 - fostering attractiveness, innovation and business development as an important element of sustainable development agenda**

12.1. map ERB member organisations regarding the involvement of business sector in concrete projects eg. South Baltic CTCC project

12.2. establish effective working relation with the EEN network in ERB cooperation area

12.3. investigate and utilise results of S3 implementation in selected ERB member organisations for further facilitation in ERB actions, with special focus on green energy

12.4. participate in the implementation of the Culturability project focusing on connection between culture and development of urban areas and creative industries;

Green and Blue Growth Agenda success criteria:

- ✓ one specific area selected and investigated
- ✓ Improved and more effective water cooperation through ERB Water Core Group
- ✓ recommendations received from INTERCONNECT project
- ✓ cooperation with EEN established

6. Horizontal issues (Actions 13-14)

➤ **Action 13 - implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

➤ **Action 14 - democratic and human rights with focus on equality and protection of the minority rights**

Euroregion Baltic will:

14.1. actively participate in the implementation of Connect Europe project (Europe for Citizens Programme)

Improving ERB organisation, leadership and visibility

To ensure the implementation of the Action Plan, ERB will also focus on improving organisational, executive and communication capacities. To achieve this the ERB will:

1. develop stronger linkage between the political level and the project level
2. improve the ERB visibility inside and outside the ERB area by updating the organisation's communication strategy
3. improve ERB as a platform for project support
4. update ERB Presidency annual rotation

Monitoring

ERB Action Plan for 2019 gives an outline of actions, each of which will require specific structure and framework that are impossible to define at the present moment and will have to be agreed at a later time. Therefore, the role of the ERB Executive Board is crucial in the regular monitoring of its implementation. The most important criterion while assessing and guiding the delivery of the planned results should be the level of their contribution to the goals of the ERB 2030 and meeting the success criteria for each of the agendas and horizontal issues.