

## BSR INTERREG III B Progress Report – Activity Report (general information)

<b>Project name:</b>	Baltic Euroregional Network		
<b>Reporting period:</b>	01.07.2007 - 31.12.2007	<b>Number of the report:</b>	5

### Summary description of the project

**Please provide a brief overall summary of the project. The description will be directly published on the BSR INTERREG III B website, and it is intended for use in marketing material, project summaries etc. Please therefore pay attention to the language and make the text easy to understand also for people not familiar with your project theme.  
(maximum 2500 characters)**

The objective of the Baltic Euroregional Network (BEN) was to promote spatial development and territorial integration in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) by strengthening Euroregions as competent partners with national authorities and international institutions, and by building a network of Euroregions for continuous capacity-building and sharing of experience. In order to achieve the objectives, the project aimed at

- increasing the institutional capacity and strategic planning capabilities of the Euroregions through a structured exchange of knowledge and experience on best practices,
- answering specific problems in specific Euroregions through targeted competence-building
- deepening the communication between the Euroregions and their national, central authorities through specific forums,
- establishing a permanent (but non-institutional) network among the Euroregions through a series of durability measures or tools.

The project had altogether 37 partners from the following countries: Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. The Lead Partner was the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) Office in Lithuania. Partners represented different institutions involved in the CBC issues in the BSR: Pan-Baltic organizations, national, regional, local authorities, Euroregions and non-governmental organizations. Activities in Belarus and Russia, not eligible for INTERREG IIIB funding, were supported by the NCM and the CBSS, and a complementary project "BEN-EAST" with TACIS funding was granted under the 9<sup>th</sup> call of the BSR INTERREG Neighbourhood program.

The project period was from July 2005 to January 2008. The activities of the project were organized into four work packages. Activities within the packages consisted mainly of seminars and roundtables, giving possibilities for exchange of experience and formulation of recommendations, with supportive functions such as a website, a e-library and newsletters.

The project resulted in a creation of a network of Euroregions/CBC structures in the BSR. During the project capacities of participating CBC structures were increased, new projects started, contacts between existing Euroregions and national authorities in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia has been established and procedures for further work of the network agreed. In general the public awareness about CBC issues, and activities of Euroregions has been raised in all the Baltic Sea Region.

(<http://www.benproject.org> )

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Achievements of the project so far
Please do not fill in this section.

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### Are there any changes on the general project conditions/project set-up? (e.g. partnership, key persons, schedules ...)

During the milestone the company providing financial management services for the LP reorganized its structure. As a result the financial management functions were transferred to the company "Management Information", belonging to the same owner. This change in praxis meant only the change of the name but not content of the services.

The final Steering Committee meeting was arranged not in conjunction with the final conference in October, as it was planned originally but a bit before – in September. This was done in order to still have some possibility to change something in the project implementation if needed.

With approval of the JTS, the final date of eligible expenditures of the project was set up to 11.1.2008.

### Please describe the main co-ordination activities that have taken place during the reporting period. (e.g. partnership contracts, organisational arrangements, mid-term meetings for the whole partnership...)

The fifth and the final Steering Committee meeting was arranged on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2007 in Tallinn, Estonia. During the meeting implementation of the project during milestones 4 and 5 was discussed; work on the final conference and the Best-practice handbook was presented. The SC approved the final text of the BEN strategy.

The Coordination Group has had consultations through e-mail, no special meetings were arranged.

## BSR INTERREG III B Progress Report – Activity Report (activities and outputs)

<b>Title of WP1</b>	<b>Thematic exchange of knowledge and experience</b>	
<b>Strategic focus of WP1</b>	To increase and to deepen the institutional capacity of Euroregions through exchange of best practices in CBC issues	<b>MILE-STONE</b>
<b>Planned results of WP1</b>	Best practice information and experience passed on from those who have it to those who don't, implementation of the best practices in the participating Euroregions, ignition of discussions for further development of the best practices for all.	5

<b>Planned activities and outputs</b>	<b>Main activities that have taken place during the reporting period</b>	<b>Outputs produced during the reporting period and related output indicators</b>
<p>WP1.13 “CBC summer school”; in Värskä, Estonia; responsible partner 6. Target group: about 40 representatives of Euroregions, local authorities, NGO specialists working in the border regions of BSR. Special focus will be on environmental problems in CBC regions in the framework of overall spatial planning in BSR. Experienced speakers from different CBC regions, national governments, international organizations will be invited. WP1.14 Final conference of the BEN. In Jelgava, Latvia. Activity coordinated and implemented by partners 2 and 13 with support of LP. Participants: representatives of all BEN partners, national authorities from the BSR countries, the European Commission, NCM, CBSS and other international organizations. 1,5 day; working languages: Latvian, English and Russian. Main goals: to inform about results of the BEN; to decide about the future of network of Euroregions and to discuss future of CBC in the BSR. On the second day the 5th SC meeting of the BEN will be organized (same partners responsible).</p>	<p><b>WP1.13</b> A summer school “Cross-border cooperation to support environment and sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region” was organized on August 20-25, 2007, in Tartu, Estonia. Responsible - Partner 6. Experts in cross-border cooperation from different BSR countries shared their knowledge and experiences in planning, preparation and implementation of CBC activities. The summer school included lectures, hands-on training sessions and work in small groups. The summer school also had a practical outcome: during the workshops participants of the summer school worked out three new project ideas, which will be further developed into new projects by some of the BEN partners.</p> <p><b>The last SC meeting</b> The final SC meeting was arranged in Tallinn, Estonia, on 4 September 2007. responsible partners – LP and partner no.3.</p> <p><b>WP1.14</b> Final conference of the BEN project was organized on 25-26 October in Jelgava, Latvia. Responsible partners no. 2 and 36. During the conference results of the project,</p>	<p>WP1.13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 summer school organized, attended by 46 persons from 6 countries;</li> <li>• 18 best-practice examples presented by different CBC structures and institutions from the BSR.</li> <li>• Three new project ideas developed.</li> </ul> <p>Final SC meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 meeting organized, attended by 25 persons from 8 countries;</li> </ul> <p>WP1.14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 conference organized, attended by 100 persons from 11 countries;</li> <li>• Project results presented;</li> <li>• New project ideas collected.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presentations and programs from the events available on the project website;</li> <li>• Articles in media and press releases about the events available through the main project coordinator;</li> <li>• Lists of participants available through the main project coordinator;</li> <li>• Proposals for the new projects available at the main project coordinator.</li> </ul>

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### Progress Report – Activity Report (activities and outputs)

<u>Planned activities and outputs</u>	<u>Main activities that have taken place during the reporting period</u>	<u>Outputs produced during the reporting period and related output indicators</u>
	new projects developed among BEN partners and future strategy of the network were presented. Ideas for future projects of the network were collected.	

#### Deviation from the planned activities and outputs as well as their reasons/justifications

The final Steering Committee meeting was arranged not in conjunction with the final conference in October, as it was planned originally but a bit before – on 4th September 2007. This was done in order to still have some possibility to change something in the project implementation if needed.

## BSR INTERREG III B Progress Report – Activity Report (activities and outputs)

<b>Title of WP2</b>	<b>Targeted capacity building for specific regions</b>	
<b>Strategic focus of WP2</b>	To increase the knowledge and capacity in specific Euroregions on issues arising directly from specific needs	<b>MILE-STONE</b>
<b>Planned results of WP2</b>	Specific solutions to specific problems in a specific region; follow-up project activity; increased capacity of institutions involved in CBC.	5

<b>Planned activities and outputs</b>	<b>Main activities that have taken place during the reporting period</b>	<b>Outputs produced during the reporting period and related output indicators</b>
No activities in this milestone	<p><b>WP2.7</b> Training seminar “Sustainable self-governance on the Estonian-Russian border” was arranged in Valga, Estonia, on 24-28 September 2007. Responsible partner – 12. The seminar programme included such topics as the role of local authorities in management of educational training, culture work, social welfare, environmental control, public water supply and sewerage, etc. A special issue in the seminar was management of the former state-owned dwelling space and formation of apartment associations in blocks of flats.</p>	<p>- 1 seminar arranged with 33 participants from 2 countries</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All training material, presentations and programs from the seminars available on the project website;</li> <li>• Articles in media, press releases about the events available through the main project coordinator;</li> <li>• List of participants available through the main project coordinator;</li> </ul>

<b>Deviation from the planned activities and outputs as well as their reasons/justifications</b>
Seminar “Sustainable development of self-government in Estonian-Russian border regions” was supposed to be arranged in Valga, Estonia, on 2-5 of May 2007. Event was cancelled due to political tensions between Estonia and Russia and the participants from Russia could not come to Estonia. Therefore event was arranged later, during 5 <sup>th</sup> milestone.

## BSR INTERREG III B Progress Report – Activity Report (activities and outputs)

<b>Title of WP3</b>	<b>Strengthening the dialogue between Euroregions and central authorities</b>	
<b>Strategic focus of WP3</b>	To increase the dialogue between the participating Euroregions and their central authorities for the development of the border areas	<b>MILE-STONE</b>
<b>Planned results of WP3</b>	Deeper understanding of the role of the Euroregions for their representatives and central authorities, increased communication between the two, permanent changes in the ways these two work together for the development of border areas	5

<b><u>Planned activities and outputs</u></b>	<b><u>Main activities that have taken place during the reporting period</u></b>	<b><u>Outputs produced during the reporting period and related output indicators</u></b>
<p>One roundtable arranged in Lithuania. Event arranged in Ignalina, event coordinated by partner 1, hosted by partner 11 (Euroregion Country of Lakes); participants: representatives of at least five Lithuanian Euroregions, representatives from relevant national ministries, invited speakers. Before the roundtable evaluation forms will be distributed to all involved partners, evaluating progress since the last roundtable. During the meeting evaluation of overall results of roundtables will be performed, and further steps for permanent dialogue between Euroregions and Lithuanian central authorities approved. After the roundtable a list of new recommendations for national development of Euroregions prepared. During the Final conference overall results of all national roundtables will be presented to the participants</p>	<p>Third Lithuanian roundtable was arranged in Siauliai, Lithuania, in the territory of Euroregion “Saule”, and event was arranged by partner 15. Representatives of five Euroregions active in Lithuania, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania were present. Main issues of discussions during the roundtable were role of Euroregions in spatial development and implementation of new territorial cooperation programs. Recent development of Euroregions in Latvia was presented by Latvian representative of Euroregion “Saule”. Ministry of Interior of Lithuania has expressed their intention to continue organization of such roundtables after the end of the BEN project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 roundtable arranged, 17 participants from 2 countries;</li> <li>• System of contacts between Euroregions and national authorities in Lithuania strengthened;</li> <li>• Report of the roundtable produced;</li> <li>• Appeal, prepared on behalf of the Lithuanian Euroregions on implementation of INTERREG programs prepared and sent to several Lithuanian institutions.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report of the roundtable, appeal and program are available on the project's website;</li> <li>• Questionnaire forms are available at the project coordinator;</li> </ul>

### **Deviation from the planned activities and outputs as well as their reasons/justifications**

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## BSR INTERREG III B Progress Report – Activity Report (activities and outputs)

<b>Title of WP4</b>	<b>Network durability tools</b>	
<b>Strategic focus of WP4</b>	To ensure the smooth flow of activities in WPs 1-3 during the project, and to guarantee the continuity of the network after the project	<b>MILE-STONE</b>
<b>Planned results of WP4</b>	Information support to work packages 1-3; continuous assessment of continuation possibilities during the project period through a working group; continuation of the network after the project period within existing institutions,	5

<b>Planned activities and outputs</b>	<b>Main activities that have taken place during the reporting period</b>	<b>Outputs produced during the reporting period and related output indicators</b>
<p>WP4.1: Decision about future of the website taken during WP14.</p> <p>WP4.3: 3rd meeting of the working group responsible for publication of the Handbook arranged in Lithuania. Handbook published in electronic and paper format in English and Russian and presented during the Final Conference. It would consist of two main parts: the first part will be a short guide about Euroregions as tools for CBC, it will as well contain recommendations (based on results of WP1, 2 and 3) for authorities involved in CBC in the BSR. The second part of handbook would present examples of successful projects implemented in different CBC regions. Responsible partners - 2 and 16.</p> <p>WP4.4: The 6th edition of project newsletter will be issued, distributed via e-mail and placed on the projects website. Responsible partner – 6.</p> <p>WP4.5: Final version of the strategy of network developed and distributed to all partners. During the last SC meeting at the Final conference decision about future of the network approved.</p>	<p><b>WP4.1</b> A website <a href="http://www.benproject.org">http://www.benproject.org</a> for the BEN project further developed. Responsible partner – Lead Partner. All documents produced in WP1, 2, 3 and 4 placed in the “Outputs” chapter of the site. During the final conference it was decided that the Nordic Council of Ministers will take care of the project website after end of the project.</p> <p><b>WP4.2</b> E-library has been further developed and updated. Responsible – Partner no.6.</p> <p><b>WP4.3</b> The BEN Best-practice handbook has been published in English and Russian and distributed to all partners, as well to a wide range of institutions and organizations in the BSR and Europe.</p> <p><b>WP4.4</b> The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of electronic project newsletter was issued. Newsletter informs about BEN project and presents main news from the project, as well as CBC related events in the BSR. In addition electronic CBC News were constantly prepared and sent to different</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project’s website further developed, project documents presented in the website;</li> <li>• E-library further updated;</li> <li>• The Best-practice handbook published in English and Russian and sent out to all partners.</li> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> newsletter of the project issued;</li> <li>• BEN Future Strategy prepared and approved.</li> <li>• Recommendations for Euroregions on their role in spatial development prepared.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project’s homepage <a href="http://www.benproject.org">http://www.benproject.org</a>. about 23500 visits to the project website (<a href="http://www.benproject.org/webalizer">http://www.benproject.org/webalizer</a>)</li> <li>• E-Library available on the internet <a href="http://www.nexdo.com/view.do?w=73">http://www.nexdo.com/view.do?w=73</a>). 10 new entries in the library.</li> <li>• 6th newsletters available on the website;</li> <li>• Handbook available on the projects website and in hard copies at the main project coordinator.</li> <li>• BEN Future strategy in English and Russian available on the website.</li> <li>• Recommendations on spatial</li> </ul>

## BSR INTERREG III B

### Progress Report – Activity Report (activities and outputs)

<u>Planned activities and outputs</u>	<u>Main activities that have taken place during the reporting period</u>	<u>Outputs produced during the reporting period and related output indicators</u>
	<p>recipients.</p> <p><b>WP4.5</b> The Strategy of the BEN was developed and approved by the project partners. Strategy contains a list of major challenges for the CBC in the BSR in coming years, and describes the model of how the BEN will function after the end of the project. One of the partners – the Nordic Council of Ministers have obliged itself to take over responsibility for coordination of the network during 2008. During this time new projects among partners of the network will be developed and at least one annual event will be arranged.</p> <p><b>Additional activity</b> Based on obligation of the Lead Partner expressed during negotiations between the LP and the JTS in the process of application, “The recommendations for increase of the role of Euroregions/CBC structures in the spatial development process in the BSR” were developed. In this paper the systems of spatial development in four countries, where roundtables were arranged, are described, and some recommendations for Euroregions were developed.</p>	<p>development prepared and published on the project’s website.</p>

#### Deviation from the planned activities and outputs as well as their reasons/justifications

As the most of communication between the partners, responsible for development of the Handbook, was possible via e-mail, it was decided that a separate meeting is not necessary. The structure of the Handbook was changed slightly as well – it was decided that the Handbook will contain one more theoretical article about challenges of CBC, written by the former Secretary General of the AEBR, Jens Gabbe, and then series of articles devoted to different topics, which were discussed during implementation of the BEN project. Then, a separate chapter includes presentations of all partners of the BEN, and there some project examples are described.



## BSR INTERREG III B Progress report – activity report (results)

**Please describe the accumulated results of the project from the start of the project until now. Please present the progress of the specific work packages, and refer to the planned results as stated in the Application Form. Please also include examples of the main outputs. If you have defined result indicators, please use them in this description.**

The main result of the project is that a wide-range network of institutions and organizations involved in the formulation and implementation of the cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region has been established. Network includes all main levels of authorities guaranteeing wide representation of different actors: Pan-Baltic organizations, national ministries, local and regional authorities, Euroregions and non-governmental organizations. During the activities of the first work package (WP1) 16 seminars, conferences and summer schools were arranged where partners were exchanging best practices of CBC and developing new ideas and best solutions in different fields of cooperation. After almost each of the seminars recommendations were prepared and are now available in different formats. New projects involving different BEN partners were initiated and in some cases already received financial support. As an example the project between two cross-border lake regions – Peipsi and “Country of Lakes” received financial support from INTERREG A program. Exchange of experiences contributed to increase of capacity of institutions of Euroregions, and their activities all over BSR is becoming more and more visible. Experience gained in cooperation between Nordic and Baltic Euroregions was transferred on to the Russian and Belarusian sides of the participating Euroregions, and the complementary BEN-EAST project approved under INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Program was a positive result of such development. Through cooperation with such regional organizations as CBSS and the NCM we could notice general increase of interest in CBC issues and Euroregions in the BSR.

In the framework of WP2 eight seminars/trainings/study trips were arranged where selected CBC structures/Euroregions had possibility to increase the knowledge and capacity on issues arising directly from specific needs. During the seminars Euroregions had possibility to train wider groups of people from their regions and inform about experiences of neighbouring countries in certain topics. The seminars gave possibility to discuss and develop new project ideas. Recommendations for future work were formulated. Increasing capacity of Euroregions, at least in the Baltic countries, can be proved by the fact that Euroregions are getting more and more active in the implementation of different CBC programs.

During 13 roundtables organized within WP3 the project has initiated an increased and deepened dialogue between the Euroregions and the central authorities in four countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia. This systematic dialogue was developed during the project and is now taking a shape of a permanent structure. All involved actors expressed readiness to continue organizing such meetings after the project will end. Euroregions and national authorities have discussed different ways of exchange of information in the future, for example appointing concrete persons in the ministries, responsible for contacts with Euroregions. Euroregions are invited to take part in different Task Forces or consultations. Recommendations have been prepared for increase of the role of Euroregions in the spatial development process in the Baltic Sea Region.

The homepage of the project was created and it provides information, important both for partners of the network and also for wider audience interested in CBC in the BSR. Here it is possible to find contacts of many organizations involved in the cross-border cooperation, information about Euroregions acting in BSR, useful links, and all outputs of the project. The E-Library which is developed during the project in wiki format, is supposed to become one of the basic collections of research papers and studies on the CBC in the BSR. Best-practice Handbook of the BEN contains a lot of useful information for those who are interested in cross-border cooperation and especially in the work of Euroregions/CBC structures. Most of outputs produced during the project (in form of recommendations) are included into the Handbook. The future strategy of the BEN network contains two important parts. The first one contains a list of the most important challenges, which the cross-border cooperation in the BSR might expect in coming years. The second one suggests a plan how the BEN will continue to exist after the end of the project. The Nordic Council of Ministers expressed political will to continue coordination the BEN, and allocated financial resources for it during the year 2008. The CBSS have also supported achievements of the BEN and will in near future make decision about continuous financing of the network. Partners of the network have already started the work on formulation of the new project proposals, which should build the ground for network's future.

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Is there anything else you would like to report (problems, highlights etc.)?

During the BEN final conference two of the BEN partners – Zemgale Planning Region (Latvia) and the Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Karelia (Russia) signed cooperation agreement.

### **TACIS funding**

**Please describe the main activities, outputs (WP level) and results (project level) of the Tacis part of the project during the reporting period according to the indicated activity and planned output in the Supplement to the Annex IV of the application form. Please follow the structure below – do not delete the headings.**

**(This section refers only to projects that have received Tacis funding. The information is required to follow up the main progress of the Tacis part. Please note that there is a separate reporting procedure including time-table towards the EC Delegation).**

## **BSR INTERREG III B Progress Report – Activity Report**

From May 2007 a complementary project "BEN-EAST" has started with TACIS financing for Russian and Belarusian partners. During the last milestone of the BEN project most of events were organized together with BEN-EAST project.

### **WP1**

Representatives of Russian and Belarusian partners attended all WP1 events.  
No activities carried in Russia and Belarus.

### **WP2**

No activities carried in Russia and Belarus.

### **WP3**

The third Russian roundtable with topic "Institutional and financial capacity of organizations working in cross-border cooperation" was organized in the framework of 3rd Annual International Conference "Cross-border cooperation: The Russian Federation, the European Union and Norway", which took place in Kaliningrad on October 11-12, 2007. The total number of the conference participants was over 200 and among them there were representatives from 11 countries and 5 international organizations. Among speakers of the conference were the EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the Aide to the President of Russian Federation Sergey Yastrzhembsky, the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers Halldor Asgrimsson, the Governor of Kaliningrad Oblast Georgy Boos and other important guests.

Outputs produced: all presentations and recommendations of the conference will be available in the separate publication.

### **WP4**

Activities carried out: Russian and Belarusian partners of the BEN provided information for the project website; Best-practice handbook, newsletters and E-Library. Two Russian partners were members of the Strategy Working Group, responsible for the preparation of the BEN Future Strategy.

Outputs produced: two issues of newsletter; first draft of the Handbook; second draft of the Strategy.

### **Main results:**

Experience shows that Russian and Belarusian partners in the most of Euroregions are the weakest parts both when it concerns the general understanding of the added value of cross-border cooperation, and administrative and financial capacities. Possibilities provided by the BEN project for Russian and Belarusian partners to take full part in project activities has helped to increase capacities of people who are involved in the CBC activities, and to establish contacts with other CBC organizations in EU. One of results is a new complementary project "BEN-EAST", which was granted TACIS financing under the 9<sup>th</sup> call of the BSR INTERREG III B program. Another project, which started as an off-spring of the BEN project was a project between two CBC regions, where one of project partners was a Russian NGO. This project was financed by the INTERREG program. Another example is a start of cooperation between two BEN partners – Zemgale Planning Region (Latvia) and the Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Karelia (Russia). These two organizations have signed cooperation agreement during the final BEN conference.

During the project activities an internal network of Russian Euroregions has been created, and contacts between this network and regional/state authorities has been created. In Russia project's annual roundtables are now arranged together with large CBC conferences, and are attracting great interest of highest representatives of federal authorities of the Russian Federation. In general project can see a positive development in increasing interest of federal authorities towards problems of the CBC in the Russian Federation.