

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

Project name:	Baltic Euroregional Network		
Reporting period:	01.07.2006 - 31.12.2006	Number of the report:	3

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) is 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 aims 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 has altogether 35 partners from the following countries: Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. The Lead Partner is the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) Office in Lithuania. Partners represent different institutions involved in the CBC issue 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, are supported by the NCM and the CBSS.

The activities of the project are organized into four work packages. Activities within the packages consist 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 period is from July 2005 to December 2007. The project is expected to result in a strong network of Euroregions actively engaged in spatial development within the BSR, with increased and deepened institutional capacity and strategic planning capabilities. An increased dialogue between the Euroregions and the central authorities in their countries is expected to develop during the project and to continue permanently. Experience gained in cooperation between Nordic and Baltic Euroregions in this project is expected to be transferred on to the Russian and Belarusian sides of the participating Euroregions, and the interaction is expected to be beneficial to other participants as well. A number of specific follow-up projects in specific regions are expected as a result of targeted competence building.

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

BSR INTERREG III B

Progress Report – Activity Report (general information)

Achievements of the project so far

Please describe the main achievements of the project so far. The description will be published on the BSR INTERREG III B webpage 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 1500 characters)

Project is implementing activities as planned, and the network of institutions working in the field of cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea region has been established. Network includes Pan-Baltic organizations, national authorities, regional and local authorities, Euroregions and non-governmental organizations. Contacts between existing Euroregions and national authorities in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia has been established and procedures for further contacts agreed. Concrete activities implemented so far:

- Starting conference and seven network seminars on different issues related to CBC arranged;
- Six WP2 seminars for specific CBC regions arranged;
- Nine WP3 roundtables of Euroregions arranged (in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia);
- Homepage of the project launched in English and Russian (<http://www.benproject.org>);
- Info-sheet of the project in English and Russian published;
- Four newsletter of the project issued;
- E-Library launched;
- First draft of the network's strategy prepared;
- First content draft of the Best-Practice handbook prepared.

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

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

- The second Russian roundtable (WP3) was planned to be arranged during the 2nd milestone. But after organizers have received a proposal from the President Office of Russian Federation to arrange a roundtable together with large CBC conference decision was taken to postpone arrangement of 2nd Russian roundtable to the third milestone. Event was organized in 28-29 September 2006 in Petrozavodsk (Russia).
- After approval from the Joint Technical Secretariat one additional WP1 activity – a CBC summer school was arranged in August 2006 in Varska, Estonia;
- After approval from the Joint Technical Secretariat one additional WP3 activity – a Estonian roundtable of Euroregions was arranged in November 2006 in Tallinn, Estonia;

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 third Steering Committee meeting was arranged in October 2006 in Stockholm, where results of the first two milestones of the project were discussed; certain measures for improvement of project implementation were adopted; decisions about exclusion of one of the project partners, and invitation to join the project for another potential partner were approved; drafts of the Best-practice handbook and network strategy were approved. An request for the change of the partner and project budget recalculation were submitted to the JTS for decision.

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)

Title of WP1	Thematic exchange of knowledge and experience	
Strategic focus of WP1	To increase and to deepen the institutional capacity of Euroregions through exchange of best practices in CBC issues	MILE-STONE
Planned results of WP1	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.	3

Planned activities and outputs	Main activities that have taken place during the reporting period	Outputs produced during the reporting period and related output indicators
<p>WP1.6 seminar "Tourism development in CBC region"; in Sakiai, Lithuania; responsible partners 18. Participants: representatives of partners; 1,5 days, in Eng. and Rus. Main goal – to discuss best practices of tourism development in border areas, and a role of cross-border tourism in process of the overall spatial planning of BSR.</p> <p>WP1.7 seminar "EU structural policy and financial instruments supporting CBC in 2007-2013". In Stockholm; responsible partner 2. Participants: representatives of partners. 1,5 days, in Eng. and Rus. Main goal – to discuss the new EU financial perspective and possibilities for CBC. In connection with this seminar – 3rd SC meeting in the same place.</p> <p>WP1.9 seminar "Legal status of Euroregions"; Vilnius, responsible partner 21. Participants: representatives of partners. 1,5 days. Main goal – to discuss the problems of legal status of Euroregions, and especially the EU regulation on establishment of EGCC.</p>	<p>Additional WP1 event Cross-border cooperation summer school was arranged 20-26 August in Varska, Estonia. Responsible - Partner 6. In the course of the summer school specialists from Estonia and abroad provided the participants with knowledge of policies and programmes on transboundary cooperation, financing possibilities, collaboration structures, youth work and exchange programmes, etc. In addition to academic lectures, the schedule foresaw group and individual work and simulation games. The summer school also had a practical outcome: during the first day, the participants determined a subject matter which links with their organisation's everyday activities. All study days ended with thematic group work; by the end of the week, each group have completed a conceptual design regarding their future cooperation, and presented an outline of a new project.</p> <p>WP1.6 Seminar "Tourism development in CBC regions" was organized 7-8 September 2006 in Sakiai (LT). Seminar was organized by the Partner 18. Representatives from different Euroregions and CBC regions around the Baltic Sea attended the seminar and shared experiences about tourism development in</p>	<p>Additional summer school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 summer school organized, attended by 37 persons from 9 countries; • 12 examples of best-practises /lectures from different CBC regions and institutions presented; • 3 draft project proposals prepared; <p>WP1.6.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 seminar organized, attended by 53 persons from 8 countries; • 14 examples of best-practises from different CBC regions and institutions in the BSR exchanged; • List of recommendations adopted; <p>WP1.7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 seminar organized, attended by 54 persons from 10 countries; • 6 presentations were held, informing about different aspects of EU structural policy; • Conclusions of the seminar prepared; <p>WP1.8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 meeting of the Steering Committee of BEN was organized, attended by 32 persons representing 9 countries;

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>cross-border regions.</p> <p>WP1.7 Seminar “EU structural policy and financial instruments supporting CBC in 2007-2013”. 5-6 October 2006, Stockholm. Responsible – Partner 2. The seminar was divided into a more theoretical session giving a general overview on the territorial co-operation 2007-2013 and a more practical session focusing on the day-to-day project work. Discussions were held mainly on topic of future relation between transnational and cross-border co-operation and new partnerships between national/transnational and regional/local authorities and organizations.</p> <p>WP1.8 The third Steering Committee meeting of the BEN was organized on 4th of October in Stockholm. SC has discussed results of the project in the first milestone, and measures for improvement of implementation in following milestones.</p> <p>WP1.9. Seminar “Legal status of CBC structures”; 5-6 December in Vilnius (LT). Seminar was organized by partners 21 and 1. Participants: representatives of partners, European Commission, Council of Europe, Association of European Border Regions. During the seminar the problems of legal status of Euroregions were discussed, and recent development of the legislation in EU and the Council of Europe were presented.</p>	<p>WP1.9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 seminar organized, attended by 50 persons from 11 countries; • 9 presentations were held, informing about legal issues of euroregions and best-practice examples; • Recommendations of the seminar adopted; <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentations and programs from the seminars available on the project website; • 3 list of recommendations/conclusions available on the project website; • 3 new project proposals prepared, available on the projects website. • Articles in media about the events available through the main project; • Lists of participants available through the main project coordinator;

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

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

Additional summer school was arranged after approval from the JTS in Rostock. Project partners had some resources saved from previous activities; therefore it was possible to arrange this additional activity. One more summer school will be arranged in summer 2007, as it was planned in the application.

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

Title of WP2	Targeted capacity building for specific regions	
Strategic focus of WP2	To increase the knowledge and capacity in specific Euroregions on issues arising directly from specific needs	MILE-STONE
Planned results of WP2	Specific solutions to specific problems in a specific region; follow-up project activity; increased capacity of institutions involved in CBC.	3

<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>
No activities in the eligible EU area are planned for this milestone. For activities in Russia , see Annex IV	No activities in the eligible EU area were planned for this milestone. For activities in Russia, see Annex IV	

<u>Deviation from the planned activities and outputs as well as their reasons/justifications</u>

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

Title of WP3	Strengthening the dialogue between Euroregions and central authorities	
Strategic focus of WP3	To increase the dialogue between the participating Euroregions and their central authorities for the development of the border areas	MILE-STONE
Planned results of WP3	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	3

<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>One roundtable arranged in Lithuania. Event arranged in Marijampole, event coordinated by partner 1, hosted by partner 16 (Euroregion Nemunas Marijampole Bureau); 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 current issues of CBC development in Lithuania, progress and remaining obstacles will be discussed. After the roundtable a list of new recommendations for national development of Euroregions prepared.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Second Lithuanian roundtable was arranged in Alytus, in the territory of Euroregion Neman, and event was arranged by partner 16. Representatives of all six Euroregions active in Lithuania, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were present. Before the meeting, organizers of the roundtable arranged telephone interviews with representatives of Euroregions in Lithuania, and the results of this evaluation were presented during the meeting. Main issues of discussions during the roundtable were current problems in Euroregions, national policies in the field of CBC, issues of participation of Euroregions in the next generation of CBC programs. ▪ Additional roundtable of euroregions in Estonia was arranged on 29 November in Tallinn. Issues discussed: an overview of the Estonian BEN-partners and their priorities in the BEN-project; BEN activities 2005-2006 and experiences from auditing; possible developments of BEN after 2007; cooperation of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two roundtables arranged; • System of contacts between Euroregions and national authorities in Lithuania and Estonia strengthened; • Two lists of recommendations/conclusions produced; <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One list of conclusions, one report from the meeting and programs are available on the projects website; • Lists of participants available through main project coordinator (30 participants in total, 18 in LT and 12 in EE).

**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>BEN -partners with the Estonian governmental institutions.</p>	

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

Additional roundtable of euroregions in Estonia was arranged accordingly to request from Estonian partners due to a need to discuss certain urgent CBC issues with relevant Estonian ministries. This request was approved by the JTS in Rostock.

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

Title of WP4	Network durability tools	
Strategic focus of WP4	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	MILE-STONE
Planned results of WP4	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,	3

Planned activities and outputs	Main activities that have taken place during the reporting period	Outputs produced during the reporting period and related output indicators
<p>WP4.1: Result documents from WP 1,2,3,4 placed on the project website.</p> <p>WP4.2: Work on the creation of an E-Library containing available CBC studies in the BSR will be started. Information from all project partners about studies produced in their Euroregions will be collected. An IT company will be contracted for production of the e-library with search function. Responsible partner –6.</p> <p>WP4.3: First meeting of the working group responsible for publication of Best-practice handbook during WP1.7 event in Stockholm. Responsible partners - 2 and 16.</p> <p>WP4.4: The 3rd and 4th editions of project newsletter will be issued. Responsible partner – 6. The newsletter will provide news about the BEN project and general issues related to the CBC in BSR. It will be distributed via e-mail and placed on the project website.</p> <p>WP4.5: 2nd meeting of work group on the strategy of network will have meeting during WP1.6 in Sakiai. 2nd draft of the strategy discussed.</p>	<p>WP4.1 A website http://www.benproject.org 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.</p> <p>WP4.2 E-library has been further developed and updated Responsible – Partner no.6. E-Library was presented during the third SC meeting, partners were encouraged to fill E-library with information. New instructions for how to use the library were sent to all partners.</p> <p>WP4.3 An outline of the handbook has been presented during the third BEN SC meeting. Responsible partners 2 and 16. Working group responsible for development of the Handbook had meeting during the seminar in Stockholm 5-6 October. Partner form was prepared and sent out to all partners.</p> <p>WP4.4 The third edition of electronic project newsletter was issued. The fourth edition was</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project’s website further developed, project documents presented in the website; • First draft of the E-library further updated and new instructions placed on the website. • Partner forms for the Best-practice handbook created and sent out to all partners. • Third newsletter of the project issued, and fourth prepared; • Questionnaire containing leading questions about the BEN future strategy developed, sent to all partners, answers collected. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project’s homepage http://www.benproject.org. 1041 visits to the project website. • E-Library available on the internet http://www.nexdo.com/view.do?w=73. 27 new entries in the library. • Third and forth newsletters available on the website; • Outline of the Handbook and Partner forms available on the projects website.

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>prepared during 3rd milestone but it was sent to partners and published in January 2007 (fourth milestone). Newsletters informs about BEN project and presents main news from the project, as well as CBC related events in the BSR.</p> <p>WP4.5 The Strategy Working Group continued work on discussing the second draft of the strategy by e-mail. Meeting during seminar in Sakiai was cancelled, and it was instead arranged in the beginning of milestone four. Questionnaire with leading questions about the strategy was prepared and sent to all partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First draft of the strategy available on the website.

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

The fourth edition of newsletter was prepared at the end of 3rd milestone but it was sent to partners and published in January 2007 (fourth milestone). Delay was caused by the fact that the issue should include information from the WP1 seminar in Vilnius, which took place in the beginning of December; therefore the final version of the issue was not ready by the end of the year.

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

Title of WP5	.	
Strategic focus of WP5	.	MILE- STONE
Planned results of WP5	.	3

<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><i>(In case there were deviations/delays of activities from the previous milestone, please indicate explicitly which activities are the delayed ones and which belong to the current reporting period.)</i></p>	<p><i>(Outputs are the immediate products of project activities. They are tangible goods and services that the activities produce, e.g. reports, written concepts, policy tools, strategies, new products, websites, databases, seminars, training sessions.)</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Please report on the progress of the output indicators you have defined in the application form. Please also see the list of programme outputs in the instructions to this reporting form).</i></p>

<u>Deviation from the planned activities and outputs as well as their reasons/justifications</u>

BSR INTERREG III B Progress Report – Activity Report (project implementation status)

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.

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 project activities partners are exchanging best practices of CBC and developing new ideas and best solutions. New projects involving different BEN partners are been initiated and are now looking for financing. Exchange of experiences is as well contributing to increase of capacity of institutions of euroregions. Especially in the Baltic countries some of euroregions are getting more and more actively involved in the implementation of the CBC programs. Experience gained in cooperation between Nordic and Baltic Euroregions is transferred on to the Russian and Belarusian sides of the participating Euroregions, and the project can see a positive development in increasing interest of federal authorities towards problems of the CBC in the Russian Federation.

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 is developing during the project and is now taking a shape of a permanent structure. Euroregions and national authorities have discussed different issues important for development of CBC: next programming period of EU, and the role of Euroregions in territorial cooperation; spatial development and the role of Euroregions; recent problems of CBC etc.

The homepage of the project provides information, which is important not only for project partners but 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 being developed during the project is supposed to become one of the basic collections of research papers and studies on the CBC in the BSR. The work, which is carried out in formulating the future strategy of the BEN network encourages an important discussion about institutional framework of CBC in the BSR and different roles of CBC structures in further development of this region.

BSR INTERREG III B Progress Report – Activity Report

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

The main BEN project coordinator has made several presentations of the project at national and international seminars and conferences. Presentations are available in the LP office. Project has been widely presented through information channels of several international organizations in the BSR and EU – the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Association of European Border Regions.

One of the main problems connected to the management of the project is late audit of project partners' financial reports in Estonia and Latvia. As a result, the general project progress reports are delayed as well.

BSR INTERREG III B

Progress Report – Activity Report

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).

As the BEN project did not received TACIS financing during the 8th call of applications of the program, activities in Russia and Belarus were still financed from the Lead Partner's own budget. The short report about project's activities in these countries is presented below because they are integrated part of the BEN project.

WP1

No activities carried out in Russia and Belarus.

WP2

WP2.4. seminar "Water resources in the Euroregion Country of Lakes" was arranged in Braslav, Belarus on 24-25 August 2006. 37 participants from three countries of the euroregion – Belarus, Latvia and Lithuania attended the seminar. Responsible partners – 29, 10 and 1. Best-practice experience from other CBC regions, BEN partner, as well as some scientific reports and examples were presented. Main issues, which were discussed was how the natural resources of the lakes in this border region could be preserved, and in the same way how they can be used in order to contribute to the social-economic development of this quite peripheral region.

Outputs produced: presentations from the seminar available on the project website.

WP2.5 seminar "Development of strong self-governance in Russian-Estonian border regions" was arranged 21 September 2006 in Gdov District, Pskov region (Russia). Responsible partners – 12 and 30. 21 representative of municipalities from Estonian-Russian border regions took part in the seminar, and discussed different issues of local governance.

Outputs produced: presentations from the seminar available on the project website.

WP3

A second Russian roundtable of euroregions was arranged 28-29 September 2006 in Petrozavodsk (Russia) together with large international conference "Cross-border cooperation between the Russian Federation and the European Union". Conference was attended by more then 150 representatives from all North-West Russia, Belarus, the Baltic countries, Germany, Poland and Finland. List of speakers included ministers, parliamentarians, representatives of the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation, European Commission etc. BEN roundtable was arranged as one of the workshops in the conference and was devoted to the issue of legislative basis for creation and development of euroregions in the Russian Federation.

Outputs produced: list of recommendations, presentations available on the website

WP4

No activities carried out specifically in Russia and Belarus.

Outputs produced

WP5

Activities carried out

Outputs produced

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

BSR INTERREG III B Progress Report – Activity Report

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 9th call of the BSR INTERREG III B program.

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 is attracting great interest of highest representatives of federal authorities of the Russian Federation. This has increased interest from the federal authorities in Russia towards issues of CBC (the new law on CBC is under preparation in, the new federal fund for CBC projects is being created etc.) and strengthened dialogue between different levels of authorities.