

BSR INTERREG III B

Progress Report – Activity Report (general information)

Project name:	Baltic Euroregional Network		
Reporting period:	01.01.2007 - 30.06.2007	Number of the report:	4

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 37 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>)

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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. In general public awareness about CBC issues, and activities of Euroregions has been raised in all the Baltic Sea Region. Concrete activities implemented so far:

- Starting conference and fourteen network seminars, summer schools, meetings on different issues related to CBC arranged;
- Seven 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;
- Five newsletter of the project issued;
- E-Library launched;
- Second draft of the network's strategy prepared;
- First draft of the Best-Practice handbook prepared.

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

During this milestone the JTS of the programme approved several changes in the project. First of all the reallocation within the project budget was approved. Secondly, two changes of the partners was approved:

- Partner no.13 “Zemgale Development Agency” stopped acting as a legal person, and its functions and responsibilities were taken over by the new partner no. 36 “Zemgale Planning Region”.
- Project partner no. 9 “Open Society Center for Environmental Management Bartava” was excluded from the project accordingly to the decision of project’s Steering Committee, and a new partner no. 37 “Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic” entered the project partnership.

After approval from the Joint Technical Secretariat one additional WP1 activity – a seminar “Northern Dimension: from policy paper to concrete actions. Role of Euroregions and other CBC structures in the implementation of the Northern Dimension policy” was arranged 25-26 January 2007 in Lappeenranta, Finland.

WP2 activity - a seminar “Sustainable development of self-government in Estonian-Russian border regions” was supposed to be arranged in Valga, Estonia, on 2-5 of May. Event was cancelled because due to political tensions between Estonia and Russia the visitors from Russia could not come to Estonia. Event is planned to be arranged during 5th milestone.

The third Russian roundtable (WP3) was planned to be arranged during the 4th milestone. But after organizers have received a proposal from the President Office of Russian Federation to arrange a roundtable together with large CBC conference (the same was done last year as well) decision was taken to postpone arrangement of 3rd Russian roundtable to the fifth milestone.

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 fourth Steering Committee meeting was arranged in April 2007 in Szczecin, Poland. During the meeting implementation of the project during milestone 3 and 4 were discussed; results of the interim evaluation of the project among the project partners was presented; certain measures for improvement of project implementation were adopted; changes in the project partnership approved; work on the Best-practice handbook and second draft for BEN strategy was presented. Decision was taken to arrange a final SC meeting not simultaneously with the final conference but a bit before.

The Coordination Group has had consultations through e-mail, no special meetings were arranged. In beginning of May the complementary project “BEN-EAST” have started it’s activities. Since BEN and BEN –EAST have some of the same partners and will jointly arrange some of the activities the system of coordination and communication between two projects was established.

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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.	4

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>WP1.10 seminar "Role of CBC regions in the process of regional development"; Øresund region, Denmark or Sweden,; responsible partner 19. Participants: representatives of partners; 1,5 days. Seminar will tackle different issues related to CBC regions participating in spatial development of BSR: spatial and strategic planning, sustainable development, CBC statistics.</p> <p>WP1.11 4th SC meeting; in Szczecin, Poland arranged by partner 23. Participants: representatives of partners. 1 day, in English.</p> <p>WP1.12 seminar "Issues of common labour market and business cooperation in a CBC region"; Uddevalla, Sweden; responsible partner 20, in cooperation with partners 25 and 19. Participants: representatives of partners. 1,5 days, in English and Russian. Main goal – to present experiences of Nordic CBC regions in the field of labour market, business cooperation and services provided to local communities.</p>	<p>Additional WP1 event Seminar "Northern Dimension: from policy paper to concrete actions. Role of Euroregions and other CBC structures in the implementation of the Northern Dimension policy" was arranged 25-26 January 2007 in Lappeenranta, Finland. Responsible - Partner 17. The main goal of the seminar was to discuss the new Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document adopted at the end of the last year, and assess how Euroregions or other cross-border cooperation structures can contribute to the implementation of this policy in coming years.</p> <p>WP1.10 A seminar "Cross-Border Cooperation and Regional Development" was organized on March 15-16, 2007, in Malmö, Sweden. Seminar was organized by partner no.19. The main topics of the seminar were spatial planning, infrastructure and regional development strategies in a cross-border perspective. About 50 participants of the seminar representing different BEN partners from took part in the seminar.</p> <p>WP1.11 The fourth BEN Steering Committee meeting took place 19 April in Szczecin, Poland, on the territory of Euroregion Pomerania.</p>	<p>Additional WP1 event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 seminar organized, attended by 73 persons from 10 countries; • 13 speeches and examples of best-practises were presented, informing about different aspects of ND policy in different BSR countries; <p>WP1.10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 seminar organized, attended by 47 persons from 10 countries; • 9 best-practice examples presented by different CBC structures and institutions from the BSR. • Recommendations of the seminar prepared and published on the website; <p>WP1.11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 meeting of the Steering Committee of BEN was organized, attended by 27 persons representing 8 countries; • Interim evaluation of project's implementation prepared, <p>WP1.12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 seminar organized, attended by 62 persons from 10 countries; • 11 best-practice examples presented by

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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>
	<p>Meeting was hosted by the partner no. 23. During the meeting such important questions as strategy of the BEN network, financial management of the project and final project activities were discussed.</p> <p>WP1.12 Seminar "Common labour market and business cooperation in CBC region", was organized on 15-17 May in Fredrikstad, Norway. Responsible partners no. 20 and 25. Participants of the seminar have exchanged experiences on issues of labour market, business cooperation, cultural differences and infrastructure in the cross-border cooperation regions.</p>	<p>different CBC structures and institutions from the BSR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations of the seminar adopted; <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentations and programs from the seminars available on the project website; • 2 list of recommendations/conclusions available on the project website; • Articles in media about the events available through the main project coordinator; • Lists of participants available through the main project coordinator; • Summary of interim evaluation available at the main project coordinator; • Minutes of the SC meeting available at the main project coordinator.

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

WP1.12 seminar in the original application was planned to be arranged in Sweden. After discussions with responsible partners, who represent Swedish-Norwegian CBC regions, it was decided to hold the seminar in Fredrikstad, Norway, in order to involve Norwegian members of these CBC regions more into the BEN project.

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.	4

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>WP2.7 seminar “Sustainable development of local self-governance in Russian-Estonian border regions”. In the area of Valga County, Estonia; responsible partner 12. Participants: about 30 representatives from local authorities placed in the Russian-Estonian border area. Seminar – 2 days, in Russian. Speakers – representatives of Estonian local authorities, academics from Tartu University, representatives from other CBC regions. Topics of the seminar are: development work on local and regional level; role of local authorities in promotion of entrepreneurship; legislation covering planning and construction; control of environmental situation, funding of the health sector etc.</p>	<p>Seminar “Sustainable development of self-government in Estonian-Russian border regions” was supposed to be arranged in Valga, Estonia, on 2-5 of May. Event was cancelled because due to political tensions between Estonia and Russia the visitors from Russia could not come to Estonia. Event is planned to be arranged during 5th milestone.</p>	<p>-</p> <hr/> <p>-</p>

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

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	4

<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>Two roundtables arranged in Estonia and Latvia. In Estonia: arranged in Hiiumaa, event coordinated by partner 3, hosted by partner 5 (Euroregion Baltic 7 Islands); participants: representatives of at least three Estonian Euroregions, representatives from relevant national ministries, invited speakers. In Latvia: arranged in Kraslava, event coordinated by partner 4 and hosted by partner 10; participants: representatives of at least four Latvian Euroregions, representatives from relevant national ministries, invited speakers. Before each roundtable evaluation forms will be distributed to all involved partners, evaluating progress since the last roundtable. During the meetings evaluation of overall results of roundtables will be performed, and further steps for permanent dialogue between Euroregions and central authorities approved. After each roundtable a list of new recommendations for national development of Euroregions prepared.</p>	<p>Fourth Estonian roundtable of Euroregions was organized in Kardla, Island of Hiiumaa, Estonia, in the territory of CBC structure “Baltic 7 Islands”. Event was arranged by partners 3 and 5. Representatives of all Estonian Euroregions, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were present. As one additional Estonian roundtable was performed in MS3, this roundtable was devoted to issues of spatial planning and development in CBC regions, and the future of the BEN network.</p> <p>Third Latvian roundtable was arranged in Kraslava, Latvia, in the territory of Euroregion “Country of Lakes”, and event was arranged by partners 4 and 10. Representatives of all Euroregions active in Latvia, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were present. Main issues of discussions during the roundtable were current problems of Latvian Euroregions, national policies in the field of CBC, new territorial cooperation programs; role of Euroregions in spatial development and the future of cooperation within the BEN network.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two roundtables arranged; • System of contacts between Euroregions and national authorities in Latvia and Estonia strengthened; • Three lists of recommendations/conclusions produced; <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists of recommendations and programs are available on the project’s website; • Lists of participants available through main project coordinator - 42 participants in total, 22 in EE and 23 in LV.

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Progress Report – Activity Report (activities and outputs)

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

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,	4

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: E-Library containing CBC studies will be launched on the website of partner 6 and on the main website of the project. Responsible partners – 6 and 1.</p> <p>WP4.3: 2nd meeting of the working group responsible for publication of Best-practice handbook arranged in Marijampole. Responsible partners - 2 and 16.</p> <p>WP4.4: The 5th edition of project newsletter will be issued, distributed via e-mail and placed on the projects website. Responsible partner – 6.</p> <p>WP4.5: 2nd draft of the strategy presented presented for SC during WP1.11 in Stockholm.</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.</p> <p>WP4.3 An outline of the handbook has been presented during the fourth BEN SC meeting. Responsible partners 2 and 16. Working group responsible for development of the Handbook communicated via e-mail.</p> <p>WP4.4 The fourth and fifth editions of electronic project newsletter were issued. 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. The strategy was presented during</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project’s website further developed, project documents presented in the website; • E-library further updated; • Partner forms for the Best-practice handbook created and sent out to all partners. • Fourth and fifth newsletter of the project issued; <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project’s homepage http://www.benproject.org. 15433 visits to the project website (http://www.benproject.org/webalizer) • E-Library available on the internet http://www.nexdo.com/view.do?w=73). 16 new entries in the library. • forth and fifth newsletters available on the website; • Outline of the Handbook and Partner forms available on the projects website. • Second draft of the strategy available on the website.

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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>
	the fourth SC meeting. After discussions and comments from partners, the SWG had a meeting on 29 May in Helsinki. After the meeting the third draft version was prepared and sent out to all partners.	

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

Planned meeting of the working group on Best-Practice handbook in Marijampole was not arranged because the group had sufficient exchange of information via e-mail.

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Progress Report – Activity Report (activities and outputs)

Title of WP5	.	
Strategic focus of WP5	.	MILE- STONE
Planned results of WP5	.	4

<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 being initiated and in some cases already received financial support. 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.

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 BEN project goals was to initiate new project ideas between partners. On the 29-30 January 2007 the Steering Committee of the BSR INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme IIIA Priority North approved a project "Promoting Local Component in Environmental Education in Transboundary Lakes ' Regions of Latgale and Pskov Region". Project is a result of cooperation between two CBC structures, which met under BEN project: NGO "Lake Peipsi Project, Pskov " and Euroregion "Country of Lakes" (Latvian office).

Another example is 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 started to discuss a possible cooperation in the field of science and innovation.

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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).

WP1

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

WP2

WP2.8 seminar “Euroregion as a tool for CBC on Russian-Finnish border” was organized on April 11, 2007, in St. Petersburg. Responsible partners – no. 17 and 28. Seminar was attended by 42 persons from different organisations involved in CBC between Finland and Russia. During the seminar following issues were discussed: political framework of cooperation on Russian-Finnish border; existing projects; experience of Euroregions on other borders (based on experience by BEN partners); the concept of Euroregion as a tool for CBC.

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

WP3

The third Russian roundtable was moved to MS5 (please see the justification above).

WP4

Activities carried out: Russian and Belarussian partners of the BEN provided information for the project website; Best-practice handbook, newsletters and E-Library. Two Russian partners are 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 Belarussian 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 Belarussian 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. The BEN-EAST project has started its implementation by the Opening Conference arranged together with the Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation on May 24-25, 2007, in Moscow.

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. Following final roundtable of Russian Euroregions will be as well arranged together with this conference in October 2007.