

BSR INTERREG III B

Progress Report – Activity Report (general information)

Project name:	Baltic Euroregional Network		
Reporting period:	01.07.2005 - 31.12.2005	Number of the report:	1

Summary description of the project Please provide a brief overall summary of the project to be published on BSR INTERREG III B webpage. (maximum 2500 characters)	
<p>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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>The four aims are organized into four work packages. Activities within the packages consist mainly of seminars and roundtables, with supportive functions such as a website, a e-library and newsletters. 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. Activities in Belarus and Russia, not eligible for INTERREG IIIB funding, are supported by the NCM and the CBSS.</p> <p>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.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">http://www.benproject.org)</p>	

Achievements of the project so far Please describe the main achievements of the project so far to be published on BSR INTERREG III B webpage. (maximum 1500 characters)	
<p>Project has started 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, Euroregions, 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting conference of the project and the first meeting of BEN Steering Committee arranged; • WP1 seminar "Promoting Science and Innovation in Cross-Border Cooperation" arranged; • Four WP3 roundtables of Euroregions arranged (in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia); • Homepage of the project launched (http://www.benproject.org); • Info-sheet of the project in English and Russian published; • First newsletter of the project issued; 	

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

- WP2 seminar “Sustainable tourism development in Peipsi lake region” which was scheduled to take place in Pskov (Russia) in November 2005, has been moved to 1-2 February 2006;
- Decision on the working group for development of strategy for future of network was scheduled to the first Steering Committee meeting in September 2005 but was moved to the second SC meeting in April 2006.

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

The Lead Partner has employed the main project coordinator, Šarūnas Radvilavičius, and financial manager of the project. An internal area for all project partners has been developed in the project's homepage. It has inbuilt system of communication between all project partners. A network of financial managers of the project partners has been established.

All partners have appointed their representatives in project's Steering Committee (SC). SC then consists of 35 persons representing 35 partners in 9 countries. The rules for procedures of the SC have been adopted. During the first SC meeting in Vilnius 26 September 2005 the chairman and vice-chairwoman of the SC were appointed, procedures for SC approved and other questions related to the implementation of the project has been discussed.

Partnership agreement has been developed by the LP and is now distributed to the partners for signing. This process was delayed because the Subsidy contract was signed later than planned (only in December 2005).

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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.	1

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>WP1.1 Starting conference of the BEN project. In Vilnius, Lithuania. The activity will be coordinated and implemented by Partner 1 with financial and administrative support from Partner 21. Participants: representatives of all BEN partners, national authorities from the BSR countries, the European Commission, NCM, CBSS, AEBR and other international organizations. Conference will take one full day; working languages will be Lithuanian, English and Russian. The main goals of this event will be to inform about start of the BEN project and to discuss main trends, challenges and possibilities of CBC in the BSR. On the second day the first SC meeting of the BEN will be organized (same partner responsible)</p> <p>WP1.2 seminar "Science and innovation in CBC regions". In Tallinn; responsible partner 7. Participants: representatives from all interested partners. 1,5 days, in English and Russian. Main goal – to discuss the role of science and innovation in CBC regions in the framework of overall spatial development of the BSR.</p>	<p>WP1.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting conference of the BEN project was organized 27 September in Vilnius, Lithuania. Event was organized by the LP and Partner 21. During the conference, BEN project was presented to the public, and current development of cross-border cooperation in the BSR discussed from the point of view of local/regional authorities, Euroregions, national authorities, Pan-Baltic organizations, INTERREG III B projects. Press conference for journalists was arranged during the conference. 26 September, the first SC meeting of the BEN was organized by LP. Representatives of 33 partners attended the meeting. SC has approved its procedures, elected chairman and vice-chairwomen, approved the timetable of events in first and second milestone. <p>WP1.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8-9 December 2005 the seminar "Promoting Science and Innovation in Cross-Border Cooperation" took place in Tallinn. Seminar was organized by the Partner 7. Representatives from different 	<p>WP1.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 conference organized, attended by 107 persons from 11 BSR countries representing BEN partners, national authorities and international institutions and organizations from the BSR.; Information about BEN spread to wide audience in the BSR; 1 meeting of the Steering Committee of BEN was organized, attended by 49 persons representing 9 countries; Procedures of the SC approved; Network of Euroregions and cross-border regions created; <p>WP1.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 seminar organized, attended by 51 persons from 7 countries; 15 examples of best-practises from different Euroregions or CBC regions in the BSR exchanged; List of recommendations for the more active use of scientific potential and innovation in the CBC regions adopted; <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> presentations and programs from the conference and the seminar available on the project 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>
	Euroregions and CBC regions around the Baltic Sea attended the seminar and shared experiences about use of science potential and innovative approach in cross-border projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 list of recommendations available on the project website;• Articles in media about the events available through the main project coordinator;• evaluation forms;• SC procedures available through the main project coordinator;• 158 persons attended events;• Presentations by the main project coordinator and representatives of other partners about BEN maid in different seminars/conferences.

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

Evaluation of the starting conference was not done right after the conference; it will be done in connection with the next SC meeting as internal interim evaluation of whole project.

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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.	1

Planned activities and outputs	Main activities that have taken place during the reporting period	Outputs produced during the reporting period and related output indicators
No activities in eligible EU area are planned for this milestone. For activities in Russia, see Annex IV	No activities in eligible EU area were planned for this milestone	-
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Deviation from the planned activities and outputs as well as their reasons/justifications
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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	1

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>Three roundtables arranged in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In Estonia: arranged in Tartu, event coordinated by partner 3, hosted by partner 6 (Peipsi CTC); participants: representatives of at least three Estonian Euroregions, representatives from relevant national ministries, invited speakers. In Lithuania: arranged in the territory of Euroregion Bartuva, event coordinated by partners 21 and 1, participants: representatives of at least five Lithuanian Euroregions, representatives from relevant national ministries, invited speakers. During the meetings current issues of CBC development in relevant country will be discussed. After each roundtable a list of recommendations for national development of Euroregions prepared.</p>	<p>WP3:EE1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Estonian roundtable was arranged 19 October in Tartu. Event was organized by Partners 3 and 6. Roundtable was attended by representatives of four Estonian euroregions / CBC regions and two ministries. Main themes of the meeting were current problems and exchange of information about CBC in Estonia. <p>WP3:LV1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Latvian roundtable was arranged 1-2 November in Balvi. Event was organized by partners 4 and 8. Representatives of four Latvian euroregions and three ministries attended roundtable. Main themes of the meetings were: support to Euroregions from the national level and possible involvement of Euroregions in the management of EU CBC programs. <p>WP3:LT1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Lithuanian roundtable was arranged 1-2 December in Druskininkai. Event was organized by Partners 1 and 21. Roundtable was attended by representatives of all five Lithuanian euroregions and three ministries. The 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three roundtables arranged; Permanent system of contacts between Euroregions and national authorities in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania established; Three lists of recommendations produced; <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three lists of recommendations available on the projects website; Evaluation and questionnaire forms; Special Estonian newsletter for the roundtable; 80 participants (23 in EE, 20 in LV, 37 in LT)

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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>main topics discussed were: the system of spatial development and planning in Lithuania and the BSR; current situation in Euroregions; next programming period of EU; new legislation in the EU and Council of Europe concerning the legal status of Euroregions. Representatives of Euroregions could express their proposals for the next programming period in the questionnaire prepared by the Ministry of Interior of Lithuania.</p>	

<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 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,	1

<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>WP4.1: A website for the BEN project will be developed. Partner responsible – 1. An IT company will be contracted to create the website and administration program for it. The website will contain information about the BEN project; links to all partners; restricted members area; calendar of project events; result-documents of WP1, 2, 3 and 4 etc.</p> <p>WP4.4: An Info-sheet (hard copy) and the first edition of electronic project newsletter will be issued. The Info-sheet will present all main information about the BEN and will be distributed during the WP1.1 Newsletter will inform about news in the BEN project and general issues related to the CBC in BSR. Both documents will be available on the projects website. Partner responsible – 6.</p> <p>WP4.5: Idea of the strategy for the future of Euroregional network will be presented by LP during WP1.1. Project SC will appoint a special working group for its development . The first meeting of the group will take place in Tallinn during WP1.2 event.</p>	<p>WP4.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A website http://www.benproject.org for the BEN project was developed. Responsible partner – Lead Partner. The website contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> information about the BEN project; project news; links to all partners and other important organisations working with CBC; outputs of all working packages; restricted member area for project partners; calendar of project events. <p>WP4.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first draft of the best-practise handbook prepared by partners 2 and 16. <p>WP4.4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Info-sheet (hard copy) in English and Russian was published. Responsible – Partner 6. The Info-sheet presents all main information about the project, and it will be distributed among project partners as well and other relevant organizations and institutions in the BSR. It will be used as information material presenting project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project's homepage launched; Info-sheet in English and Russian published; First newsletter of the project issued; First draft of the best-practise handbook prepared; <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project's homepage http://www.benproject.org Info-sheet (hard copies and electronic); First newsletter available on the website; 5456 visits to project 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>
	<p>during different events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The first edition of electronic project newsletter was issued. Newsletter informs about BEN project and presents main news from the project. <p>WP4.5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Idea of the strategy for the future of BEN network was presented by LP during the starting conference. Composition of the working group for this task was postponed to the next SC meeting.	

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

Decision of the working group for development of strategy for future of network was scheduled to the first Steering Committee meeting in September 2005. Due to the late approval of updated project application there was too little time to prepare all necessary documents for SC decision (mandate and composition of the working group), therefore this decision was postponed to the second SC meeting in April 2006.

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Progress Report – Activity Report (project implementation status)

Please describe the accumulated results of the project from the start of the project until now. 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 started to exchange best practices of CBC and develop new ideas and recommendations for best solutions. These new solutions strengthen Euroregions as one of the main institutes implementing CBC policy. Especially important is that experience gained in cooperation between Nordic and Baltic Euroregions is transferred on to the Russian and Belarusian sides of the participating Euroregions.

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 expected to develop during the project and to continue permanently. 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. Euroregions acting in one country has got possibility to formulate common opinion, which is then submitted to the national ministries in order to take decisions, belonging to responsibility of national or international level.

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.

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

In the clarification of application form BEN project has promised to establish contacts with another relevant BSR INTERREG III B project - "SEAGULL II". Representative of the SEAGULL II project has participated with a presentation in the BEN starting conference, and the main project coordinator of BEN has made a presentation at the kick-off conference of SEAGULL II. Link to SEAGULL project is published on BEN project website. Two project coordinators have agreed about meeting in order to discuss future interrelation between the projects. BEN project has established relations to another relevant project – "EXLINEA", financed by the Fifth Framework Program (<http://www.exlinea.org>)

The main BEN project coordinator has made presentations of the project at 8 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.

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Progress Report – Activity Report (CEEC/NIS activities)

Please describe the activities that have been carried out in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland (1st – 4th round projects with the exception of upgraded projects), and in Russia and Belarus.

Project has 10 partners from Russia and Belarus, representing different levels of authorities. As the upgrading application for TACIS funding submitted for 8th round of BSR INTERREG III B program was not approved, all costs of participation of Russian partners are financed from the Nordic Council of Ministers. Russian and Belarusian partners are actively involved in implementation of the project:

- representatives of Russian and Belarusian partners have attended two WP1 events (WP1.1 in Vilnius and WP1.2 in Tallinn) both as speakers and as participants;
- one planned WP2 seminar which should take place in Pskov due to the illness of the project coordinator of responsible Partner 27 was postponed to the second milestone (commented above).
- On 22 November a first roundtable of Russian Euroregions was organized in St. Petersburg. Responsible – Partner 26. Roundtable was attended by 42 persons, representing all euroregions or CBC regions working with EU neighbours on the western border of Russia; national authorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and presidential Office in North-West Russia) and different scientific institutes from St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Pskov and Moscow. At the end of the meeting recommendations for further development of CBC in Russia were adopted. Program of the seminar and the recommendations are available on projects homepage. Participants of the meeting answered to an evaluation-questionnaire.
- Project partners from Russia and Belarus were involved in activities within WP4, they have provided information for website, info-sheet and the newsletter.