

7th March, 2014

MINUTES

AEBR TASK FORCE OF EXTERNAL BORDERS (TFEB)

Meeting of Ukrainian and Russian Euroregions

Venue: Petro Palace Hotel, Malaya Morskaya
Str. 14, Saint-Petersburg, 190000, Russia
Meeting room: «Oak Hall»

Date: 24. February 2014
Time: 14:00 – 17:00

Participants:

1. Guillermo Ramirez Martin, AEBR
2. Moisio Johannes, AEBR
3. Kosovskii Vasilii, Institute of Spatial Planning, Development and Foreign Relations, Kaliningrad
4. Krasovskiy Alexander, Institute of Spatial Planning, Development and Foreign Relations, Kaliningrad
5. Kesoretskikh Ivan, Institute of Spatial Planning, Development and Foreign Relations, Kaliningrad
6. Gromova Tatyana, Euroregion Yaroslavna / Administration of Kursk oblast Russia
7. Siromolot Eduard, Kharkiv National University of Economics (*on-line via video-chat*)
8. Gavkalova Nataliia, Kharkiv National University of Economics
9. Smulsky Sergey, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration
10. Sadkova Alena, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration
11. Nazarova Galina, Saint-Petersburg Vedomosti

Opening of the meeting:

Johannes Moisio (chairman of the meeting) – short presentation of Ukrainian-Russian meeting background, with information on aims, structure and activities of AEBR Task Force of External Borders (TFEB). Ongoing events-plan on 2014 was announced: 26th of March and a seminar on Mediterranean and Black Sea cooperation 7th of March in Kavala, Greece; and 6th of June in Parikkala following AEBR Executive meeting the 7th of June in Joensuu, Finland.

Introductory speech

The introductory speech was given by **Martin Guillermo Ramirez**. Welcoming and presentation of all participants, information of meeting Agenda and main topics:

1. Possibilities of European Union Programming Period 2014-2020. Stressed about the lack of trilateral Russian-Ukrainian-EU programs, and big opportunities for different ENP Instruments of cooperation between Kaliningrad Region (Russia) and EU.
2. 72-hour visa free regulation as an instrument for Integration of Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian regions.
3. Question of experience exchange for AEBR Information Center in Kharkov, possibilities for creation of new Info Centers in other counties and regions.
4. Ongoing plans for preparations for Lugansk Youth Summer School (5th AEBR Youth Forum). Due to absence of rapporteur Kiryukhin Alexey, Council of Heads of Border regions (UKR/RUS)/Karazin Kharkiv National University, discussion shift to dinner.
5. Further discussions and proposals of prolongation and expansion of Russian-Ukrainian cooperation network.

Concept of AEBR Info Centers.

Natalia Gavkalova started presentation with a request of moment of silence in honor of all the victims of Ukrainian events.

Given information on existing Euroregions with Ukrainian participation, as well as brief description of their aims and activities (economic, social, science development, cultural and cross-border cooperation). Presentation of AEBR Info Center in Kharkov (Ukraine) opened on 12 of November 2013, on basis of Kharkiv National University of Economics. Discussion with Regional External Affairs Department, on inclusion in Regional Development Program on cross-border cooperation 2016 thematic of promotion of Euroregional cooperation, AEBR Info Center and possibilities of Join cooperation programs.

Ongoing activity and first results of AEBR Info Center was presented: establishing of contact-network with Russian-Ukrainian Euroregions on behalf of future join events and projects, preparation of project proposals in fields of ecological, infrastructural and cross-border cooperation, holding of several internet-conference with stakeholders. As a main instrument for efficient work of Info Center was carried out the project and grant approach with possible EU, Ukrainian, Russian funding. On first steps of AEBR Info Center development it's most important to organize a precise operation with clear strategy and support of local and regional authority.

Discussion:

Martin Guillermo Ramirez had added comment: AEBR Info Center in Kharkov coordinating role between Russian and Ukrainian Euroregions is one of the hardest part of the work. Still through the Euroregions activity we can show a good example of efficient trilateral Russian-Ukrainian-EU cooperation. Lack of join system or model of Cross-border Statistic Data poses a new challenge for impact assessment through the Europe, so an idea of join project based on this thematic was presented.

Eduard Siromolot via on-line video-chat added information on unique functions of Kharkov AEBR Info Center as a tool for Euroregional communication.

Development of Russian 72h visa free legislation

Vasilii Kosovskii started presentation with short information of sustainable cooperation network and benchmarking with Euroregion Yaroslavna taking place in January 2014 in Kaliningrad Region. Was proposed to the General Secretary of AEBR to consider the possibility of creating an AEBR Info Center on the basis of Institute of Spatial Planning, Development and Foreign Relations (Kaliningrad, Russia), as a communication platform in Baltic Area. Was expressed interest in taking part as a partner in preparation of project proposal on Cross-border Statistic Data.

Was presented new opportunities of bilateral Russian-EU cooperation within 72-hours visa free regulation, as a first steps towards all-European visa-free regulation. Experience of Olympic Games in Sochi and development of Russian legislation in field of visa-free regulation for international travelers shows a good opportunity to apply for the EU Governance Structures with a proposal of parity regulation for the Russian citizens travelling to EU. In this regards was proposed to elaborate a join with AEBR strategy for promoting and lobbying of this initiative. Short information on questioner of 72-hours visa-free regulation made with help of AEBR was presented, main outputs: there is a lack of information on Russian visa-free regulation, with a background of significant interest, among EU stakeholders; positive perspective of introducing parity regulation for Russian travelers as for the certain regions and for the whole Europe.

Brief information was presented on behalf of possibilities from AEBR to organize a partner search for the prepared project proposal within NGO experience exchange program of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Discussion:

Johannes Moiso, stressed about the development of such regulation in Russian Federation for the ferries and international airports.

Martin Guillermo Ramirez, assured that partner searching through the AEBR Network is one of the Members preferences. Presented initiative for join strategy of 72-hours visa-free regulation for Russian travelers can be framed in such a way: first step is preparation of letters with description of 72-hours idea background and aims; second is join list of target EU (DE Regio, CoR and etc.) and probably Russian Institution; third is delivering and lobbying of letters from side of AEBR. Idea of creation AEBR Info Center on basis of Institute of Spatial Planning, Development and Foreign Relations (Kaliningrad, Russia) was supported.

Sergey Smulsky after a short brake presented a position on idea of parity 72-hours visa-free regulation for Russian travelers. He emphasized, that thematic of cross-border cooperation is one of the focal for Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, especially within given courses on Department of International Affairs. Current visa regulation as an instrument of control between countries has already lost it is relevance. Modern join controlling system on borders can be efficient even without visa, so it is more political instrument. Join steps in field of visa-free regulation can make significant efforts in socio-cultural exchanges, in this regards Kaliningrad region can be seen as a model platform.

During discussion also was stressed that there are possibilities for different approaches for visa regulation, like multi-visa on all validity of the international passport and etc. World examples of visa-free regulation, shows a significant positive impact on countries.

Tatyana Gromova, has a short presentation on upcoming events in the Euroregion Yaroslavna, based on cultural and economic benchmarking and exchange with Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober in May 2014.

Ukrainian-Russian network

Special section of the meeting was dedicated to Discussion on the future on the Ukrainian-Russian network. All participants were invited to impress their ideas and points of view on how this cooperation can be prolonged, how to secure the sustainability, possibilities of join project on Cross-border Statistic Data and etc.

During the discussion was clearly considered by all the participants that join work can be established in several ways. First is the cooperation between AEBR Info Centers in Kharkov and planned one in Kaliningrad, on the basis of experience exchange, join activities and communication with other stakeholders showing interested in developing cross-border cooperation.

Join Cross-border Statistic Data project proposal was supported by all participants. In this regards it was planned to establish a network group with participation of Russian, Ukraine and EU partners with aim to create a detailed project proposal that can be presented for different sources of funding. Despite the possible concerns related to the lack of single approach to statistic data in Euroregions, all the participants expressed their opinion on the importance of the project that can be multiply to all Euroregions. It was suggested that on first stage of preparation must be made a clear concept between partners on what is Cross-border Statistic Data and what criteria it should fall, possible examples of related projects. After that Funding-search stage can be established using EU (ENPI, Horizon 2020), Russian and Ukraine possibilities.

Close remarks

Johannes Moiso (chairman of the meeting), thanked all the participants for effective and fruitful meeting, wished all the best and suggest to proceed the discussion during informal dinner.