



NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

BERLIN, GERMANY

13 JUNE 2017

Intervention from Euroregion Baltic

1. Role of ERB and ERB Youth Board in BSR cooperation

Since its establishment in 1998 Euroregion Baltic has supported and implemented projects and activities which targeted children and youth in a variety of cooperation areas, e.g. education and exchange activities. Drawing competitions such as We Are from the Sea, ecological youth camps, sports events like Euroregion Baltic Youth Games, Youth Film project, Green Circle Schools and Ice Hockey tournament are only some of the several projects that can serve as a good example of the activities in question. Youth issues in relation to cross-border cooperation are of high priority in most of the ERB member regions which therefore agreed that support to youth cooperation and creating a youth structure within Euroregion Baltic should be special priorities in the ERB strategy. This continues to this day and during the current Swedish Presidency in ERB led by the Regional Council in Kalmar County the development of strategic youth policy is one of the key priorities.

Our ERB Youth Board was established in 2008. It was one of the first Baltic organisations to have included a youth

body in their organisational structure thus enabling the youth to not only actively participate in the ERB cooperation but also to have the voting right.

ERB member organisations thus provided the Youth Board with a possibility to act through an internationally recognised cooperation platform, to use joint ERB financial resources and to participate in all ERB decision making processes. On the other hand, acting within the framework of ERB, the ERB YB can not only promote youth perspectives across all ERB activities but also bring youth policies to the attention of ERB and all of its stakeholders.

Between 2009 and 2011 the ERB Youth Board was involved in the YC3 project, led by Region Blekinge with the active participation of all the member regions within ERB. The project resulted in the establishment of an effective platform for the youth cooperation within ERB and generated a number of positive results, e.g. facilitating intercultural dialogue, experience exchange, personal development, non formal learning around 7 strategically selected themes. On the negative side though, the feeling was that as a result the youth cooperation has become an "island" within the ERB cooperation, and the identity of youth cooperation hereby had become connected to the project rather than to the identity of being connected to the ERB cooperation and cross-border communities.

Since 2013 the ERB has been working with new concepts that would better engage and empower youth as active stakeholders responsible for creating and implementing relevant policies on local, regional and macroregional level.

2. Governance

Many organisations have been raising the issue of how to deal with the youth not only as recipients of public actions

but also important stakeholders actively engaged in decision making processes. The state and local governments has for some time been more frequently considering the youth as equal subjects in creating and implementing relevant policies. This process is also spreading to the international level although, due to different reasons, there is still much to be done to give the youth a possibility to influence their future within international structures.

The question is why this important social group of young people has not been sufficiently included in the decision making processes?

Working together with ERB partners we have decided to try to change this situation and allow young people from our regions to have their say on the development and implementation of youth policies on different levels of governance.

To do that we have employed the Swedish survey tool called LUPP (a local follow-up of youth policy). LUPP is a survey that enables municipalities, urban districts or regions to gather knowledge on the living situation of young people in their area, as well as information on their experiences and opinions.

It has been developed by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society in consultation with municipal representatives and researchers. The survey has become the core of a model for following up and developing a knowledge-based municipal youth policies. Aided by the knowledge from the survey, politicians and officials are able to set up measurable targets for municipal activities.

In Euroregion Baltic we have decided to use Lupp on the cross-border level to investigate if it might be used in the future as an effective input to the youth policy on a wider scale. To this end our member region of Kalmar

together with a wide partnership from ERB have applied successfully for funding from the Swedish Institute and later from the Interreg South Baltic Programme, where we are currently implementing the CaSYPoT project – Capacity Building for Strategic Youth Policies and Transnational Cooperation.

In the project we are using the Lupp as a tool on the international level to include young people as actors in creating youth policy. We want to build a database platform to lift the policy development closer to the youngsters.

Through engaging in cross-border links and partnerships, community groups can learn and benefit from the experiences of others. By sharing knowledge and experience of previous activities, groups can support and encourage each other. Fresh ideas on tackling issues of common concern can emerge from networking and sharing information with others.

Through the cooperation, all ERB regions can attain added values in terms of sustainable development and growth, with due attention to social aspects in line with EU and national demands. An active participation of young people in decisions and actions at both local and regional level is essential if there is to be a more democratic, inclusive and prosperous Baltic Sea Region.

It is necessary to involve the people who are actually going to live in the future – the youth of today. Therefore, a youth perspective should be included in all activities and initiatives. This means that the relevant Baltic Sea structures have to find methods that tend to attract and involve young people in the development of the region. Through involving the decision makers of tomorrow, we will contribute to developing a more sustainable, dynamic and stronger Baltic Sea Region.

Our goal is to extend this strategic concept of youth involvement beyond ERB. After completing pilot surveys in Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Swedish municipalities and analysing their results together with leading regional universities of Kant, Linnaeus, Gdańsk and Klaipeda, we will undertake to create one integrated youth strategy for the entire ERB. At the same time we will continue to engage in the strategic dialogue and cooperation with our partner organisations - Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation and Union of the Baltic Cities, to develop joint initiatives that would allow us to have an impact the entire Baltic Sea Region empowering youth and giving them real tools to change their future.

ERB strongly believes that:

- Young people should be given the preconditions for living an independent life, for example the right to good education and the possibility of getting both a job and somewhere to live.
- Young people should have genuine possibilities of participating in the life of their municipality and/or school and influencing the decisions taken through access to public discussion.
- Young people's commitment, creativity and critical thinking shall be seen and utilised as a resource. This should apply to the activities of authorities in municipal, regional and macroregional politics, where the youth would be treated as one of the important partners in policy development and implementation.