

Letter to the BSR Interreg IIIB Monitoring Committee on future Cohesion Policy 3rd objective

Gdańsk, 20 April 2005

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BSR INTERREG III B MONITORING COMMITTEE

Dear Sir/Madam,

At the initiative of the Union of the Baltic Cities, the major Baltic Sea Organisations namely: Baltic Sea Seven Islands (B7), Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe- Baltic Sea Commission (CPMR-BSC), Union of the Baltic Cities, decided to send to the European Commission the attached joint statement on the objective 3 of the reformed cohesion policy from 2007 - namely the European Territorial Cooperation. The statement emphasizes the fact that the cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region may be severely harmed if the limit of 150 km for maritime border is introduced.

The undersigned Baltic Sea organisations consider that the maximum distance of 150 km of maritime border - to be eligible to obtain funding for cross-border projects - is counter-creative to the idea of strengthening the territorial cooperation and therefore we object to it. Our opinion is that in case of the Baltic Sea Region such distance can not be set definitely. We expect from the European Commission a more flexible approach taking into account (1) existing cooperation in various fields between the partners on both sides of maritime border and (2) historical, social, cultural and economical factors which justify cooperation across larger distance than mentioned above.

The European Commission replied in two letters (attached). The first letter informs that President Barroso passed the statement to the DG Regional Policy. In the second EC reply, the Director of European Commission Directorate-General Regional Policy Mr Ronald Hall informs that the Commission do not share the point of view of four major Baltic Sea organisations and the EC plans to introduce mentioned above limit of 150 km.

The statement of four organisations was also sent to the Foreign Ministers of 10 Baltic Sea countries along with the letter from the UBC Secretary General asking the ministers to lobby this extremely important for all Baltic Sea countries issue in Brussels.

The UBC Executive Board meeting in Luleå, 5 March 2005, expressed an opinion that the Baltic Sea region is a very special region where sea connects not divides, and the limit of 150 km shall not be introduced in this region. Instead of setting a stiff distance in kilometres, a more flexible approach must be applied in the BSR. The Board authorised the President to send a letter with the statement to the prime ministers of 10 Baltic Sea countries.

Attached please find a letter sent to the Polish Prime Minister as an example. The same letters were sent to the prime ministers of all 10 Baltic Sea countries.

Last week the UBC Board Member from Gdańsk spoke with Commissioner Danuta Hübner on the issue, during the COR session.

Ms Hübner promised that the Commission will reconsider its approach to this matter.

UBC would like to kindly ask you to take up this question with the ministries in your countries responsible for the negotiations on the EU cohesion policy 2007-2013.

yours sincerely,

Paweł Żaboklicki
Secretary General
Union of the Baltic Cities
www.ubc.net