

Welcoming Address
by Karin Roth
Parliamentary State Secretary at the
Federal Minister of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs

on the occasion of the Final Conference
of the INTERREG III B Project COMMUN
(Promoting Spatial Development by Creating COMMUNscapes)

on 26 April 2007

in Berlin

Check against delivery!

**Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Project Partners,**

I am pleased to welcome you here in Berlin. You have chosen Berlin as place for your final conference. I think that this is a good choice. It is this place where at the moment all political activities meet to keep Europe in motion. And they bring Europe again closer to our citizens.

Your project aims at a mutual understanding, a common “language” for the daily life activities of all stakeholders involved in regional and urban development in the Baltic Sea Region. I would like to congratulate you for this endeavour and elegant task. With your project, you would like to analyse spatially relevant activities, to understand planning processes, and to develop a more efficient communication among yourselves and with others from outside through a structured exchange of experiences. I am convinced that in doing so, language is not only a mere linguistic instrument. It serves rather as a media that is accepted and used by all stakeholders.

To find a common language and the mutual understanding is more necessary than ever. We are living in times of increasing interests of individuals. We have lost an attitude of joint interest. To think and act cooperatively again, communication as well as networking, which aims at exchanging experiences and listening to each other’s ideas and needs, is indispensable. We have to keep these networks together and to develop them further. We have to initiate new networks, wherever it seems reasonable and necessary. And we have to get involved. It is so how we can bring Europe again closer to our citizens and to make Europe more “understandable”. For this, all social groups have to cooperate. I am convinced that social networks play a crucial role in this process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have read with interest on the homepage of your project that you also address transport issues. As you may know, I speaking to you as representative of the Federal Minister of Transport. Transport related topics are by nature a core subject for us. But we have not only in mind the traditional infrastructure, such as roads and rail tracks. It is also about information and communication technologies.

I see the Baltic Sea Region as model for European cooperation in transport networks. Here, the EU Member States and their Neighbouring Countries are working together. And they agree upon a mutual understanding. Considering the issue of transport this can only imply that, on the one side, the Baltic Sea Region should to be linked closer to the European core area. On the other side, its regions and cities should also be interlinked with each other.

Here – as I see it – another important issue appears: It is not only essential to have a common language and mutual understanding among each other, as it is supported by your project. It is also the European understanding of the accessibility of our regions and cities which is indispensable. New forms of governance are demanded more than ever. Only these new forms will lead us to a success: to make ourselves understood – particularly beyond our regions and hopefully also in Brussels!

This is the reason why we have financially supported the project COMMUN. Today I realise, that our investment was a good one. I would like to thank the lead partner of this project as well as all project partners for contributing actively. We will use the Federal Programme on Transnational Cooperation in

future as well for our participation in the national cofinancing of Object 3 Projects. Its is the Object 3 Funding, starting this year, that constitutes – according to our understanding – a future-oriented instrument for realising territorial cohesion in Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

in a few weeks time, Ministers being responsible for urban and territorial development will agree upon the Territorial Agenda of the EU and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities on the occasion of their Informal Ministerial Meeting in Leipzig on 24th and 25th May. The Territorial Agenda of the EU is the product of a network of countries and social groups. The work has been carried out within the last two years. All EU Member States will agree jointly upon the “language” of the Agenda. The Agenda constitutes – according to the common understanding of Member States and the European Commission – the spatial form of a European Social Model as contribution to territorial cohesion in Europe. And the Agenda describes new ways of governance, of cooperation in political terms.

I wish your final conference and your project all possible success!

Thank you very much for your attention!