

Annex 1 to the Annual Implementation Report 2013

Summary on the main achievements of the Estonia – Latvia Programme 2007-2013

This summary has been compiled to reply to the questions raised in the EC letter of (2014)428582. For the reasons of clarity, the questions have been included in the text.

What, in your opinion, has your Programme achieved?

The slogan of the Estonia - Latvia Programme says “Linking Estonia and Latvia”, and this is exactly what the Programme has achieved. It is true both for Estonians and Latvians that with the help of projects many of them discovered the neighbouring country as a place with plenty to learn and people, who are worth cooperating with, be it professionally or in the field of hobby activities.

There is now a much larger community in Estonia and Latvia, who are experienced in cross-border cooperation, have a positive attitude towards cooperation, trustworthy partners on the other side of the border and carry out regular cooperation well beyond project lifetime, all of which were rare before start of the Programme. To be more precise, partners of around 40 projects out of 67 continue regular cooperation after the end of project, which illustrates the quality of cooperation carried out and satisfaction level of participants. In several cases regular cooperation between partners has spread to other fields of life than that of the projects. For example cooperation between media teachers of secondary schools has led to durable contacts between municipality councils and joint actions in the field of tourism have led to a cooperation between youth organisations.

Besides increased cooperation-mindedness among people, the Programme has brought along a considerable difference in several concrete fields of life. Growing worthy local organic products, and even more importantly – **creating new types of teas, juices, sauces and hams** based on locally grown goods has been an issue developed by at least **4** projects with tangible results and creating new jobs. These 4 projects have contributed to creation of at least **10 new jobs**, which last also after the end of projects, and in total the Programme has helped to create at least **35 work places**.

Joint development of ambulance and rescue response systems in the border areas in combination with **trainings and investment support for constructing and equipping rescue stations** has well facilitated provision of cross-border help in case of emergencies, as the needed support forces might be closer on the other side of the border.

Due to sparse population, there are large areas with clean natural environment and high biodiversity stretching to both sides of the border. **8** projects have been implemented in the area of environment including planning, protection and promoting sustainable use of resources and educating youngsters and grown-ups about the resources we share.

The most remarkable **results** of these projects are:

- joint coastal and maritime planning in the Gulf of Riga area;
- development of joint basin management plan for the transboundary Gauja/Koiva River
- streaming web camera picture from the nests of eagles to at least 8 million viewers around the world.

In addition, the area is now linked by **3 new tourism routes** combining Estonian and Latvian nature tourism assets among them beautiful sandy beaches along the coast of the Gulf of Riga, cycling routes in scenic rural landscapes and paddling possibilities along picturesque and winding rivers.

Last but not least, all of the above is made easier with the renovated **cross-border connection links with a total length of 78 kilometres**. While there used to be 4 hard cross border cover roads in 2007, now there are **6**, and from 4 existing hard cover roads, one was completely re-built. It is important, because private cars still are the main mode of transport between Estonia and Latvia.

Who has benefitted?

The biggest beneficiaries have been people participating in the activities of the projects, most of them being from immediate border areas, and people, who have worked for the projects in partner organisations.

Altogether nearly 100 000 persons have attended the events, which is 5% of the 2 million inhabitants of the Programme area, among them nearly 10 000 have been actively involved and hence benefitted even more. In the regions closer to the border the share of population, who have been actively involved is definitely higher, as the border areas are sparsely populated, but many active projects come from immediate border areas.

Financially, the biggest share of funding (36% or a bit over 13 MEUR) has been allocated to state institutions, which include road authorities, who were responsible for the road construction projects that were among the most expensive ones of the Programme. 22% of funding (*ca* 8 MEUR) was allocated to local public authorities, 13% or *ca* 4,8 MEUR to the universities and research institutions.

What evidence do you have for achievements – from indicators, from evaluation, or from other sources?

The main sources of evidence include the following:

- 1) progress and final reports of the projects submitted from 2009 till 2014;

- 2) statistical survey (250 respondents representing public, private or third sector organisations from the Programme area in Estonia and 250 in Latvia) carried out in 2009 and in 2013 to measure awareness of the Estonia – Latvia Programme and readiness to cooperate between Estonian and Latvian organisations;
- 3) 56 impact interviews (28 on LV and 28 on EE side) carried out by the JTS from 2012 till 2014 with the representatives of 74 partners of supported projects not earlier than one year after project's end;
- 4) 67 stories written by Estonian and Latvian professional journalists in 2014 about all the projects supported by the Estonia – Latvia Programme, which included carrying out more than 140 interviews with people involved or benefitting from projects.