

ESTONIAN-LATVIAN GOVERNMENTAL COMMISSION PROPOSALS FOR THE LATVIAN-ESTONIAN GOVERNMENTAL COMMISSION IN 2017

The legal and administrative cross-border obstacles identified by the Estonian-Latvian Governmental Commission (GC) in 2017 for the 2017/2018 Intergovernmental Commission's (IGC) agenda:

1. Estonian and Latvian border region municipalities roundtable

- Once the regional and administrative reform has been finalized in Estonia there will be a number of new municipalities in the cross-border regions.
- The aim of this municipality round table would be to refresh the old/expired cooperation agreements and to update contacts of the administrative staff in order to encourage further cross-border cooperation. Such event could be organized in late 2018.

2. Information seminar about the new Estonian administrative division

- As the Estonian administrative division is undergoing major changes in 2018 the Estonian delegation proposes to organize a joint information seminar for the Estonian and Latvian local governments and other interested parties in order to introduce the new Estonian system and its principles.
- The aim of such meeting would be to increase the cross-border knowledge and provide relevant information for cross-border municipalities. Such event could be organized in early 2018.

3. Mapping the possibilities of encouraging additional cross-border cooperation clusters between Estonian and Latvian cross-border regions

- The Estonian delegation would like to discuss the needs and possibilities of encouraging similar Valga-Valka cross-border cooperation clusters in additional cross-border areas such as Häädemeste – Salacgrīva, Mõisaküla – Rūjiena and Ape-Alūksne – Võru.

The Estonian-Latvian GC proposals in regard of the current 2016/2017 IGC agenda issues:

1. Health care services in border regions

- During the Joint Session the expert-level Medical working group will brief the IGC about the progress. Estonian delegation supports the Latvian delegation proposal to keep the topic in the IGC Agenda of 2017.

2. Vocational education, life-long learning and retraining of the unemployed

- The Estonian delegation proposes to organize an expert-level meeting in order to discuss the overall cooperation possibilities and needs in regard of cross-border vocational education in border regions.
- To keep the topic in the IGC Agenda of 2017 and to organize an expert-level meeting with the relevant ministries, employers, municipalities and vocational education centres in order to discuss the cooperation possibilities in cross-border vocational education in border regions.
- To receive an overview about the labour market trends and needs of the border regions in English which was carried out by the University of Vidzeme.

3. Labour force mobility in border regions

- Estonian delegation withdraws the previous proposal to consider discussing the labour force mobility in border regions.

4. Development of cross-border railway connection

4.1 Passenger services on the railway route Rīga–Tallinn

- During the Joint Session the Railway working group will brief the IGC about the progress. At the same time the Estonian delegation is of the opinion that the issue still has not found a suitable solution for the border regions and therefore would like to discuss the following new proposals below:
- To keep the topic in the IGC Agenda of 2017 and to organize an additional expert-level meeting with the involvement of relevant ministries and organizations (including representatives of the IGC) responsible for transport;
- To discuss the possibility of organizing a feasibility study within the Estonia-Latvia CBC programme under the integrated labour market thematic objective in regard of the Riga-Tartu direct train line.

4.2 Synchronisation of the schedules of the railway route Rīga–Valga un Valga–Tallinn

- To keep the issue in the IGC agenda 2017 as an informative issue in order to monitor the progress of exchanging information on train schedules and harmonizing the train schedules so that there will be at least one synchronized train connection in Riga-Tartu line a day in both directions starting from 2018.

5. Repairs of the gravel roads in cross-border region

- Estonian delegation supports the Latvian delegation proposal to exclude the topic from the IGC Agenda of 2017. At the same time Estonian delegation would like to propose a following joint statement to be made by the Joint Session –
 - a) According to the possibilities both Estonian and Latvian Road Authorities should jointly prioritize the improvement of gravel roads by harmonizing the national road improvement lists in order to achieve a bigger cross-border effect in the border regions.

6. Joint intercity public transport in Valga/Valka

- In Europe there are several border areas which have managed to find a working solution to a similar challenge in order to better integrate the cross-border regions (e.g. Basel – St. Louis – Weil-am-Rhein). Therefore, Estonian delegation proposes to organize after the Joint Session an expert-level meeting for mapping the challenges and possibilities in establishing a joint intercity public transport in Valga/Valka.
- To arrange an expert-level meeting for mapping the challenges and possibilities in establishing a joint intercity public transport in Valga/Valka.

7. Fire-fighting and rescue services in border-regions and maritime areas

- Estonian delegation supports the Latvian delegation proposal to exclude the topic from the IGC Agenda of 2017.

8. Taxation issues in border regions

- During the Joint Session the Taxation expert-level working group will brief the IGC about the progress.
- To keep the topic in the IGC Agenda of 2017 and to agree on the further steps to be taken.

9. Development of tourism

- Estonian delegation supports the Latvian delegation proposal to exclude the topic from the IGC Agenda of 2017.

10. Planning of joint events in border regions

- Estonian delegation supports the Latvian delegation proposal to exclude the topic from the IGC Agenda of 2017.

11. Agreement between Estonia and Latvia on exchange of data from the population register

- Estonian delegation asks the Latvian delegation to re-consider adding the issue to the IGC Agenda of 2017 as the agreement is very important for Estonia. In addition, the signing of the agreement has been delayed in the past and although it is in its final stage it is still not signed. Therefore, the Estonian delegation would like to monitor the development of the signing process and keep the issue on the IGC Agenda until the treaty is officially signed. The proposal would not increase administrative burden of the IGC.
- To include the issue of the Agreement on exchange of data from the population register in the IGC agenda of 2017 in order to monitor the development of the signing process until the treaty is officially signed.