

New cross-border cooperation obstacles and proposals identified 2019

In accordance with the current [Rules of Procedure](#) of the Estonian-Latvian Intergovernmental Commission and the [decision](#) of the 2018 Joint Session, the Estonian-Latvian Governmental Commission in Estonia and the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission in Latvia, identify on bases of joint methodology, administrative and legal obstacles which would require the involvement of the relevant authorities to resolve problems in the Estonian and Latvian border regions. For this purpose the Cross-Border Obstacle Identification [Form](#) (CBOF or Annex 1) is used.

The Round of Identification of Administrative and Legal Obstacles and Other Relevant Proposals for Cross-Border Cooperation of the Estonian-Latvian Intergovernmental Commission in 2019 was open from 10.02 to 30.05. The following list briefly describes the issues identified during the Round by the reporting authorities. For a detailed overview, please open the attached PDF form.

- 1) **Crossing of persons under 18 years of age in Valga and Valka; (file 2019-1)** 14-7/5466-1
Initiator of the topic) Municipality of Valga
- 2) **Cross-border financing of medical services; (file 2019-2)** 14-7/5467-1
Initiator of the topic) Municipality of Valga
- 3) **Definition of the River Pedeli in CBC projects; (file 2019-3)** 14-7/5468-1
Initiator of the topic) Municipality of Valga
- 4) **Use and repair of cross-border roads; (file 2019-4)** 14-7/5469-1
Initiator of the topic) Municipality of Valga
- 5) **Cross-border movement of social data; (file 2019-5)** 14-7/5470-1
Initiator of the topic) Municipality of Valga
- 6) **Initiating an exchange of information on the processing speed and costs of Russian visa applications of participants in CBC projects; (file 2019-6)** 14-7/5473-1
Initiator of the topic) Võru Town Government
- 7) **Dust-free covering of the Estonian-Latvian roads. (file 2019-7)** 14-7/5474-1
Initiator of the topic) Municipality of Mulgi

Feedback from the Estonian-Latvian Governmental Commission on the 2019 topics

1) Crossing of persons under 18 years of age in Valga and Valka

Feedback and/or position of Governmental Commission members' and relevant authorities'

Municipality of Häädemeeste

The problem has not been specifically addressed in the Häädemeeste municipality, but should be generally resolved - in many cases, citizens are probably not aware of the problem, as regular border controls have not been long. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

SA Võrumaa Development Center

We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Municipality of Valga

In the condition of a twin city Valga-Valka, this is an unreasonable bureaucracy, which prevents communication and joint events. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Ministry of the Interior

The ministry is aware that Latvia requests a credential when the state border is being crossed (a minor without a parent). It is appropriate to seek the Latvian opinion in order to clarify the rules on the crossing of internal borders.

Police and Border Guard

A citizen of the European Union has a legal right to stay in Estonia on the basis of a travel document or personal identity card. It is relevant to distinguish whether one crosses the internal or external border. We emphasize that in case of Valga-Valka, there is an internal border crossing without border control. The State Borders Act establishes the obligation to bring along a relevant personal identification document. This also applies to minors. It is mandatory to bring along a valid travel document and/or personal identification document when a person crosses internal border and travels to another EU Member State. In Estonia, according to the applicable laws there is no need to have other complementary documents (credentials).

As there have been cases when parents have turned to the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board with requests to block the child being taken abroad (e.g. moving to live with the other parent), the authority has advised the child travelling without a parent to have a credential that could be checked if needed in order to exclude the possibility that the minor is crossing the border against the parent's will.

In case of kindergarten groups that move on daily basis between Valka and Valga, the Estonian side is not expecting that each child has according written parent's permission to do so and/or credential with them. It is important to have an identity document and an adult accompanying the group. In order to ease the movement between the twin-cities it would be reasonable to harmonize regulations in both countries. In order to avoid different interpretations, the Estonian Police and Border Guard is ready to review the information meant for the public (webpages, hotlines) with aim to distinguish the children's border crossing requirements and suggestions for crossing the internal and external borders.

There is a need to define the problem more clearly. After that the authority could provide further solutions (in addition to the amending the information on webpages). In case the issue is the kindergarten children's border crossing in Valga-Valka then the authority could think on exceptions such as visiting a neighbouring country on the basis of list without a travel document. Such arrangement would require state-level bilateral approval.

2) Cross-border financing of medical services

Feedback and/or position of Governmental Commission members' and relevant authorities'

Municipality of Häädemeeste

Such problem has not emerged in the municipality. There is a hospital in Pärnu and there is an ambulance brigade in Häädemeeste. The ambulance service in the neighboring villages of the municipality (Ikla, Treimani) could be considered as it is perhaps closer to Salacgriva (if there is an ambulance). We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

SA Võrumaa Development Center

We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Municipality of Valga

We have turned several times to find a way to provide health care services to Valka residents at Valga Hospital. There is a need for local authorities and cooperation, agreements at the national level are needed. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

3) Definition of the River Pedeli in CBC projects

Feedback and/or position of Governmental Commission members' and relevant authorities'

Municipality of Häädemeeste

We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

SA Võrumaa Development Center

We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Municipality of Valga

It is a joint water body located on the territories both countries which problems cannot be solved unilaterally. If the other party lacks interest or resources, it is difficult, if not impossible, for one municipality to do something

alone. Therefore, local authorities need a cross-border approach and state support in finding solutions. An updated description of the problem and proposals were submitted to the Ministry of Finance on July 29. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Ministry of Environment

We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

4) Use and repair of cross-border roads

Feedback and/or position of Governmental Commission members' and relevant authorities'

Municipality of Häädemeeste

Within the municipality cross-border roads are national roads (Via Baltica, Rannametsa-Ikla / Ainaži), there are virtually no local cross-border roads (or there is a single forest road). However, in solving a broader problem, all possible avenues must be reviewed. The State Forest Management Center should also be involved in this issue. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

SA Võrumaa Development Center

The problem also affect Võru County. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Municipality of Valga

The issue is important for the municipalities of South Estonia and it could be merged with the proposal of Municipality of Mulgi. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications

We support the development of cooperation between Estonia and Latvia in the field of maintenance of cross-border roads. We support the agreement of the Estonia-Latvia meeting (21.08.2018, Riga) to cooperate within the 2021-2027 period INTERREG programmes as well as the decision taken at the 9th Joint Session of the Estonian and Latvian Intergovernmental Commission for cross-border cooperation (10.10.2018, Tallinn) to establish a Working Group to identify and prioritize to border area roads. The Municipality of Mulgi has submitted proposals for covering the the following gravel roads with dust-free pavement:

1. Gaujiena–Lejaskrogs–Taheva-Valga

We support co-operation although the traffic volume on the Latvian-Taheva border is low. The Estonian Road Administration estimates that the construction cost of the Estonian section of the road section is estimated at € 8.7 million (restoration of the Latvian border Taheva, repairs of the Taheva bridge and reconstruction of the Taheva-Valga section).

2. Bårdaskrogs- Korneti-Krabi

The Ministry would rather not support it as this route has no impact on economic growth. The traffic volume is very low.

3. Ērgeme-Estonian border-Tõrva

As investments are being made to support the local entrepreneurs in the area the ministry tends to support the renovation of this road section although the daily use of the road section is not that high. The estimated cost of the project on the Estonian territory of is € 2.6 million.

We recommend to establish a Working Group to prioritize the identified road sections and to submit a joint Estonian-Latvian application to the next period INTERREG programmes of 2021-2027 for renovating the most priority and most economically viable sections.

5) Cross-border movement of social data

Feedback and/or position of Governmental Commission members' and relevant authorities'

Municipality of Häädemeeste

As far as we know, there have been no problems with this issue. There have been situations where a Latvian citizen wishes to register himself in an Estonian place of residence. Opportunities exist in this regard. Given the general situation, there could be regulation. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

SA Võrumaa Development Center

We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Municipality of Valga

In addition, the need for data exchange on the data of the Tax and Customs Board could be added. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Social Insurance Board

The Social Insurance Agency exchanges data on cross-border cases with all EEA countries and Switzerland. With Latvia, we are already exchanging data by post and partly through the Electronic System for the Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI). We exchange data on a case-by-case basis for cross-border work (missions), retirement, family benefits, overpayments, and other information necessary to determine and pay benefits.

In the framework of a bilateral agreement, we are exchanging data on deaths of persons with Latvia in order to avoid overpayments of pensions. There is close and good cooperation between the competent authorities of Estonia and Latvia, both at national and local government level. At the same time, more and more people are moving to work and live across the border, and we see the need for cross-border electronic data sharing of people's actual place of residence and employment when providing benefits and services. Also, a unified personal identification system would help to resolve cases more effectively.

Automatic electronic data interchange between countries is needed to ensure that people are entitled to benefits and services and to avoid providing services and benefits when they are no longer entitled. Automation of inquiries and exchange of information through information systems ensures fast movement of required information and good quality of data. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Government Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

6) Initiating an exchange of information on the processing speed and costs of Russian visa applications of participants in CBC projects

Feedback and/or position of Governmental Commission members' and relevant authorities'

Municipality of Häädemeeste

The Municipality of Häädemeeste has no position.

SA Võrumaa Development Center

We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Municipality of Valga

The same problem is also acute in Valga rural municipality and the surrounding area. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

According to the problem description of the Võru City Government, it is a problem to apply for Russian visas (both in terms of time and money) for those involved in the Estonian-Russian cross-border cooperation programs and the Estonian-Latvian Government Committee is proposed to discuss the problem.

The problem of lengthy border crossings (time-wise) is likely to be primarily related to the organization of working the Russian border crossing points. Solving the problem of long waiting times and queues is not the responsibility of the Estonian authorities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In regards of the financial costs of applying for visas (for people involved in the Estonia-Russia Cross Border Cooperation Program) Estonia does not have a valid official agreement with Russian Federation for a simplified border crossing procedure (for example, with the Republic of Latvia, there is such an agreement).

At the cabinet meeting of the Government of the Republic on 30.10.2008, it was decided that since the simplified border crossing regime for border residents (bilateral protocols) is not in compliance with Regulation 1931/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council, the standard visa regime was implemented. The Government of the Republic decided to re-examine the possibility of a simplified border crossing procedure for the inhabitants of the border areas once the experiences of the neighboring countries with solving the issue became clear. In

Russia, simplified border crossing agreements for border residents have been concluded with Norway, Latvia and Poland (the latter suspended it in 2016 and has not yet restored it).

The processing of visa applications by both Estonia and Russia is based on the Visa Facilitation Agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation (VLL). For persons engaged in Estonian-Russian cross-border cooperation programs, obtaining a Russian visa is not free of charge; the categories of applicants exempt from the visa fee are listed in the VLL agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation. Participants in the CBC program do not fall into this facilitated category as this category was not on the agenda at the time of the negotiations on the visa facilitation agreement in the EU (2005-2007). Later, there was a wish to open the VLL Treaty and introduce changes, but after the Crimean events, discussions of the VLL Treaty amendments stalled. No amendment of the visa facilitation agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation is foreseen at this stage.

Although the issue, due to different legal bases, is not a problem of the Estonian-Latvian border area that could be solved by the Intergovernmental Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports the discussion of the topic within the IGC with the aim of exchanging information with Latvia on the topics of the organization of work at Russian border crossing points and the speed and processing of visa applications by participants in cross-border cooperation projects.

7) Dust-free covering of the Estonian-Latvian roads

Feedback and/or position of Governmental Commission members' and relevant authorities'

Municipality of Häädemeeste

As there are practically no (or there are only a few) municipal cross-border roads aside the public roads, all border roads (including private and landscape roads) should be reconsidered. Maybe something has been overlooked. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

SA Võrumaa Development Center

We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Municipality of Valga

The issue is important for the municipalities of South Estonia and it could be merged with the proposal of Municipality of Mulgi. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Municipality of Mulgi

Road renovation and dust-free black coating is important from an economic, cultural and military point of view. Road renovation is important from the standpoint of economics, logistics, labor mobility and increased mobility. It also enhances road safety in border regions and, from a national defense point of view, supports the faster arrival of Allied forces. The roads will be used and the results will be maintained after the end of the venture by the municipality of Mulgi; By the Rūjiena, Mazsalaca and Naukšēni Counties, and by the authorities of the Republic of Estonia and the Republic of Latvia for the management of public roads. We support the submission of the cooperation proposal to the Latvian-Estonian Governmental Commission of the Republic of Latvia.

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications

We support the development of cooperation between Estonia and Latvia in the field of maintenance of cross-border roads. We support the agreement of the Estonia-Latvia meeting (21.08.2018, Riga) to cooperate within the 2021-2027 period INTERREG programmes as well as the decision taken at the 9th Joint Session of the Estonian and Latvian Intergovernmental Commission for cross-border cooperation (10.10.2018, Tallinn) to establish a Working Group to identify and prioritize to border area roads. The Municipality of Mulgi has submitted proposals for covering the the following gravel roads with dust-free pavement:

1. Abja-Paluoja – Penuja – Lode – Ruhja

The ministry would rather not support it, as the average annual traffic volume is relatively low.

2. Mõisaküla – Mulgi vald – Ipiki – Ruhja

Not supported by the ministry. To date, the Estonian Road Administration has developed a light coating to the state border (last reconstruction in 2017). The establishment of a dust-free cover from the border to Ruhja is a domestic matter for the Latvian state.

3. Mulgi vald – Laatre – Vilpulka –Ruhja

The ministry would rather not support it, as the average annual traffic volume is relatively low. The roads of Kilingi-Nõmme-Mazsalaca and Karksi-Nuia-Lilli-Ruhja have recently been reconstructed in this area which satisfy the needs of both heavy transport (forest transport, raw milk transport, etc.) and the inhabitants and

entrepreneurs of Southern and Central Estonia in Northern Latvia.

We recommend to establish a joint Working Group to prioritize the identified road sections and to submit a joint Estonian-Latvian application to the next period INTERREG programmes of 2021-2027 for renovating the most priority and economically viable sections.