

JOINT SESSION OF THE ESTONIAN- LATVIAN INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMISSIONS FOR
CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

DRAFT MINUTES

Location: Valga, Cultural Centre of Valga
Friday, 2 July, 11.30-15.07 hours

Chaired by:	Jaan Õunapuu	Minister of the Regional Affairs
Participants:	E. Bernard	Pärnu County Government
	T. Lukk	Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Estonia to the Republic of Latvia
	S. Lääne	Ministry of the Interior
	V. Minkowska	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications
	L. Paulson	the Estonian Consul in Latvia
	J. Reinhold	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
	T. Raat	Tax and Customs Board, South- Eastern Customs House
	T. Reinup	Valga Border Guard Region
	K. Madis	Ministry of the Interior
	A. Poom	Ministry of the Interior
	G. Trašanov	Valga County Government
	R. Kuutma	Valga County Government
	E. Sepp	Ministry of the Interior
	V. Tõemets	Ministry of the Interior
	A. Karjus	Euregio Pskov- Livonia
	A. Radzēvičš	Minister of the Regional Development and Local Government of Latvia
	V. A. Krauklis	Valka Local Government
	V. Stana	Valmiera District Council
	G. Kamenskis	National Border Guard chairman of Valmiera office
	D. Dzilna	Vidzeme Development Agency
	Z. Laksa	Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Latvia
	I. Kukute	Ministry of the Regional Development and Local Government, State Secretary
	Dz. Upmace	Spatial Planning Department
	N. Linde	Ministry of the Regional Development and Local Government, Regional Policy Department
	E. Šmite	Ministry of the Regional Development and Local Government, Regional Policy Department
Secretary:	N. Ivask	Ministry of the Interior

Agenda:

- 1. Discussion and approval of rules of procedure for the Commission**
- 2. Definition of priority areas of Estonian-Latvian intergovernmental commission.:**
 - **Planning of the Gulf of Riga region**
 - **Re-opening of checkpoints on the Estonian-Latvian border**
 - **Easing the process of issuing work permits and residence permits.**
 - **Possibilities of the joint development plan and joint services of Valga – Valka region**
 - **Possibilities for re-establishing Rail Baltica and popularising Via Hanseatica and Via Baltica.**
 - **Discussion on the need for a joint strategy for developing entrepreneurship**
- 3. Setting a work plan and a date for the next meeting of the Commission.**

1. Discussion and approval of rules of procedure for the Commission

DECISION: The languages of minutes will be both English and Russian, and Rules of Procedures for the Commission was approved

2. Definition of priority areas of Estonian-Latvian Intergovernmental Commission

- **Planning of the Gulf of Riga region**

E. Bernard:

- There have been pre-negotiations between Pärnu County and Riga region already.
- Riga region and Pärnu County could do the preparatory work
- Representatives of Saaremaa should be included
- In future Riga- Pärnu co-operation area could become a new euroregion.

A. Radzēvičš:

- Established work group in Riga`s region
- Representatives dealing with planning activities from Riga, Vidzeme Region, Pärnu County and Saaremaa should meet with each other for consulting.
- Proposal to appoint representatives of the above-mentioned regions of Estonia and Latvia for this meeting
- People dealing with planning activities at the local level should be involved first
- Proposal to consult with environmental specialists

J. Ūunapuu:

- Proposal to establish a joint work group dealing with planning of Gulf of Riga.
- Representatives of the ministries should be included in the working group`s activities

- **Re-opening of checkpoints on the Estonian - Latvian border**

T. Lukk:

- It is important to reactivate contacts between Estonia and Latvia
- Estonia and Latvia should make good use of all possible ways of co-operation
- Opening of new checkpoints on the border gives an opportunity for new investments
- Opening of checkpoints would come in useful for other areas, for example Viljandi
- Small checkpoints would serve local inhabitants above all

A. Radzēvičš:

- There is a need for checkpoints staying open for twenty-four hours
- Open hours of checkpoints would be especially important for tourism sector.
- Border-guards agreed work around the clock experimentally, but this is going to increase the amount of needed resources, including human resources.

T. Reinup: Estonian border-guards are ready to open Lilli and Mõisaküla checkpoints if the need becomes evident.

V. A. Krauklis:

- It is necessary to find other less expensive possibilities to re-establish roads, which crosses border
- There is no sense to put up some big buildings on border checkpoints as Estonia and Latvia will join Schengen in 2007, we should guarantee elementary conditions just until then.
- Border crossing point on Sõpruse-Raina street should be made attractive for tourists.

G. Kamenskis:

- Three small border crossing points were opened on 1 May in Valmiera region
- Estonia and Latvia should co-ordinate working schedules of border crossing points
- In order to guarantee better working procedure on the border crossing points the inquiries should be carried out
- Problem is the character of the roads, two-way traffic is not possible
- Legislation should be amended in case of opening new small border crossing points
- It should be co-ordinated with Brussels in case of opening border crossing points in Valga
- There is an agreement as legal basis of co-operation between Estonia and Latvia

V. A. Krauklis:

- Cross-border co-operation Convention is already signed by Latvia

V. Stana:

- Tourism is a seasonal activity so these inquiries should not be carried out in winter or in autumn

J. Ūunapuu:

- It is necessary to find possibilities to arrange border crossing through border points around the clock in summer.
- The question of Valga-Valka Sõpruse-Raina border crossing point is quite important issue and should be discussed and resolved further in future
- Proposal to engage border guard, consular departments of ministries of foreign affairs and although local governments and state authorities of Estonia and Latvia.

A. Radzēvičš:

- Estonian commission as well as Latvian should turn to their Ministries of the Interior.

- **Easing the process of issuing work permits and residence permits.**

J. Ūunapuu:

- The problem is much wider and political, than our Commissions jurisdiction.
- Governments of both states will do decisions on this matter.

A. Radzēvičš: Estonia and Latvia should motivate their inhabitants to obtain citizenship.

G. Trašanov: This is a local problem and commission should participate in resolving it.

V. A. Krauklis:

- Commission cannot make decisions on this matter, but could formulate opinions and make proposals to the governments
- Simplified border crossing would concern only border crossing points in Valga-Valka

- **Possibilities for a joint development plans and joint services of Valga-Valka region.**

G. Trašānov:

- We have to define which and what kind of problems our Joint Commission is competent to resolve.
- Representatives of Valga and Valka meet once a month since this year.
- Problems related to Valga-Valka region's joint development plan should be resolved
- Valga-Valka region belongs to Euregion
- Gas supply of Valga- Valka region needs additional supporting instruments from both states.
- Developing Valga- Valka region into a centre of logistics and transport
- Developing a joint medical service system.
- Co-operation between Valga's and Valka's rescue service and emergency medical care.
- Question of education – proposed to establish study groups for Latvian pupils also in Valga, but this issue is in ministries jurisdiction
- The joint regional development plan should foresee the solutions for all problems.

V. A. Krauklis:

- There are many co-operation projects between Valka and Valga, some of them are in implementation phase already
- Ministries should deal with Valga-Valka problems because of lack of finance resources.
- Proposal to Commission to make concrete propositions to support joint planning of Valga-Valka region.

J. Ōunapuu:

- Counties and local authorities should co-ordinate their plans.
- Proposal to establish a joint work group (10- 12 members) dealing with Valga-Valka problems.
- Public authorities should be included.

- **Possibilities for re-establishing Rail Baltica and popularising Via Hanseatica and Via Baltica**

G. Trašānov:

- Via Hanseatica got approval from BSR Interreg III B program
- Railway connection between Valga and Pētersi should be re-established
- Proposal to direct railway connection between Tallinn and Riga via Valga.

V. Minkowska:

- Railway connection between Valga and Pētersi would shorten the distance about 150 km
- Koidula border crossing point

V. A. Krauklis:

- A work group should consider how to use Via Hanseatica on state level.
- Rail Baltica is the most essential project in behalf of Estonian and Latvian economic development.
- Through Rail Baltica project Valga- Valka would become a centre of logistics and transport;

E. Bernard:

- The main task of Rail Baltica is to supply faster and simpler opportunity to get to the Central- Europe.
- Every town where railway is passing through should be treated as potential risk object.

V. A. Krauklis:

- Estonia and Latvia should gain maximum benefit from Rail Baltica project.

J. Ōunapuu:

- Rail Baltica, Via Hanseatica and Via Baltica projects are essential and the Commission will participate as advisory committee.

- **Discussion on the need for a joint strategy for developing entrepreneurship.**

G. Trašnov:

- This is important for Valga-Valka to become attractive for investors.

V. A. Krauklis:

- Commission could discuss and decide, what kind of instruments should be used to make peripheral areas (not only Valga-Valka region) more attractive for investors in general.

G. Trašnov:

- Valga- Valka free enterprise zone was established five years ago
- Estonian legislation is hostile towards entrepreneurship.

S. Rancāne:

- EU legislation gives formal opportunities for entrepreneurs to operate in other EU countries.
- In Ministry of Economy of Latvia there is a department, which gives a support to entrepreneurs in case of problems and questions
- We should use instruments, which already exist.

V. A. Krauklis:

- Problems with free movement of workers

J. Ūnāpuu: Our commission has two directions:

- 1) Joint strategy problems, which should be discussed under possibilities for joint development plan;
- 2) Second direction concerns Estonian and Latvian legislation and this is out of competence of our Commission, but the Commission should make propositions concerning the legislation.

S. Lāne: Work group, which will be established should at first specify all problems and questions and set a work plan.

V. A. Krauklis:

- Transport corridors from the west to the east are as important as corridors from the south to the north
- Baltic Tangent project idea

T. Lukk: The Commission should consult with representatives of other counties adjacent to Estonian-Latvian border (Viljandi, Võru for example)

DECISION:

- 1) Establish a joint work group dealing with planning of Gulf of Riga and representatives of the ministries should be included in the working group's activities. Members' names will be submitted by September 1, 2004.
- 2) Establish a joint work group dealing with Valga-Valka problems and public institutions should be included. Members' names of work group will be submitted by July 15, 2004.

3. Setting a work plan and a date for the next meeting of Commission.

DECISION: Next meeting will take place in Latvia, date and place will be specified.

Rules of Procedures for the Commission was signed by J. Ūnāpuu, Regional Minister of Estonia and A. Radzevičs, Minister of the Regional Development and Government of Latvia.

Jaan Õunapuu
Regional Minister

Nele Ivask
Secretary