

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING

### Joint Session of the Estonian–Latvian and the Latvian–Estonian Intergovernmental Commissions for Cross-border Cooperation

Venue: Valga County Government  
Kesk 12, Valga 68203, Estonia

22 January, 2010

Beginning of session: 10:00 a.m.  
End of session: 15.00

Chairman: Mr Siim Kiisler, Estonian Minister for Regional Affairs  
Vice-Chairman: Mr Edgars Zalāns, Latvian Minister for Regional Development and Local Government  
Secretaries: Dagnija Ūdre, Valka Municipality Council  
Liane Rosenblatt, Valga Town Government  
Participants: List of participants  
Agenda: Annex (Agenda final)

1. **Opening speech by Mr Siim Kiisler**, Estonian Minister for Regional Affairs  
Opening of the meeting and a short overview what has been done by the commission earlier, as well as the main objectives of the would-be commission and assignments for the working groups.

2. **Opening speech by Mr Edgars Zalāns**, Latvian Minister for Regional Development and Local Government  
We face new problems in Valka-Valga and our two countries. There are new people working in the ministries. We have different systems in our ministries. In Latvia, we experience the consequences of the administrative reform. Main point of the day is that we set the common interests in the border area of our two states. Our priorities shall be (1) administrative capacity, (2) development of infrastructure and (3) quality of human resources. We feel bad consequences of the monocentric development; we should promote the polycentric development instead. We shall also think about the common policy for Estonian and Latvian border areas. We must try to effect the EU policies before we start preparations for the next programming period.

3. **Welcome speech by Mr Kalev Härk**, Acting Valga County Governor

4. **Welcome speech by Mr Kārlis Albergs**, Chairman of Valka Municipality Council

5. **Overview of Commissions' work since its formation in 2004 by Mrs Krista Kampus**, Estonian Ministry of the Interior  
I give my overview as many of the commission members in Estonia and Latvia have changed. There has been lack of coordination between the sessions as there were no many activities. Today our task is to identify the long- and short term priorities of the commission. Co-ordination is going to be through the secretariat through the Valga County Government. The Valga County Government will be the co-ordinator of the commission. Next joint session of the Estonian –Latvian Intergovernmental Commission shall be held in spring 2011.

6. **Commissions' cooperation priorities by Mr Rainer Kuutma**, Valga County Government  
(Annex 1, first column)  
Overview about Estonian and Latvian priority co-operation themes for future discussions. The problems are divided into short-term and long-term actions; both of them have 3 activity subgroups. We have identified 8 short term and 12 long term actions

One of the existing problems – special requirements from Latvia related to sports weapons upon border crossing.

A. Andreicika – the problem should be solved and there is no need for any additional licenses required from Latvia, enough to have an EU license.

U. Ozolina – there is no need to pay any additional fee and to have a stamp for Latvia.

K. Kampus – we should clarify the need of the solving the problem.

**Ms. Arina Andreičika**, Latvian Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government

Priorities of Latvia are the same as R. Kuutma presented.

Additional issues to be included could be the following:

- (1) In tourism sector – joint marketing of the border region as one tourism destination;
- (2) Preservation of culture and historical heritage;
- (3) Joint development of transport sector, as well joint actions of regions in entrepreneurship development, Vidzeme, Kurzeme and Riga regions shall be involved;
- (4) Co-operation with Russia;
- (5) Co-ordination of regional planning;
- (6) Issues of health care could also be interest for the whole border-region.

7. **Discussion** and approval of priorities of Estonian and Latvian cooperation themes for mutual solutions.

S. Kiisler – we go through all items pointed out and presented by representatives of the Estonian and Latvian respective committee (R. Kuutma, A. Andreicika) and give the standpoints of Estonian and Latvian committee to agree or disagree with need to work with the given issue. We'll set the working groups afterwards.

R. Kuutma presented the list of problematic issues and the adequate standpoints of Estonian and Latvian delegation

***It was decided:***

*The common problematic issues to work with in working groups were determined (Annex 5, second to fifth column)*

***Main issues of discussion:***

Valga-Valka Tourism Visitor Centre

A. Andreicika – talking about a joint tourism visitor centre in Valka-Valga we would not like to concentrate only on the two towns, but all border regions, Latvia-Estonia border region shall be promoted as one tourism destination.

U. Ozolina – we have started the preparations of VV Tourism Visitor Centre, we have a common strategy, elaborated technical drawings of the centre and perhaps Valga-Valka could have a pilot project.

S. Kiisler – we should broaden the subjects where possible for the whole border-region.

Non-citizens working on other side of border

S. Kiisler - we recognize it as a problem. I am not sure if we can solve it soon. The working group should discuss the issue and see if there is a realistic solution.

Also the accrual of non citizen's income tax to the budget of the local municipality where people work and where they use the public infrastructure, services is an issue to be discussed.

Roads, transport directions

K. Kampus – the ministries, working groups should prioritize the road connections they would like to develop and ministries of the two countries should harmonize and coordinate their investment plans.

A. Moppel – we shall look through the national road maintenance program.

A. Andreičika – the working group of transport issues shall discuss it, we should not copy the national plans.

K. Kampus – the specific roads shall be mentioned by regions, and then discussed in the working group, finally to be harmonized with the central governments.

Restoring cross-border bus lines

There is a question of prolonging the bus line from Pärnu till Ainaži; it might be solved easily.

K. Kampus – the same approach as mentioned about roads.

A. Andreicika – we agree the topic shall be discussed and solutions offered by the working group.

### Boat lines

R.Kuutma – the boat lines should work on commercial bases

S.Kiisler – the state cannot subsidise these boat lines at this point, but we can look into ways to help to promote the lines, because it would be good to have such connections. Unfortunately, we do not see resources in short term.

A.Andreicika – subject should be discussed into working groups, but is it clear that no subsidies will be given.

### Cycling and jogging paths Via Baltica

K.Kampus – this issue is related with tourism, it can be solved by municipalities on the local level, they can elaborate projects and apply for EU funding; there is nothing to be discussed at working groups, neither by the governments.

A.Andreicika – we should see the road as a whole and have a common strategy for that; the issue can be analysed by the working group to make a common action plan.

K.Kampus – should be discussed how to harmonize the state priorities of support.

### ITC and cross-border internet

K.Härk – we had a common project. Are there problems?

A.Andreicika - should be discussed at the working group keeping in mind the whole border region.

### Valga railway junction

A.Moppel – we welcome the idea. Koidula will be the new station and ready soon.

U.Ozolina – the container terminal in Valga and an oil terminal in Valka.

A.Andreicika – we should assess the possibility to establish a free zone in Valka as well.

### Rail Baltica

S.Kiisler – in 2011 there will be plan ready for government. The working groups, commissions are formed already, but local people could be more involved at the RailBaltica working group, although there is not much to be discussed locally.

K.Kampus – regions are not involved now, but we can appoint local people there.

A.Andreicika – the Ministry of Transport must inform us more about the progress of the RailBaltica project.

### Via Hanseatica

There are three ideas about continuation of the project.

A.Moppel – there are Cohesion Fund projects being implemented.

A.Andreičika – the issue shall be discussed, other actions should be identified.

### Common waste management

S.Kiisler – how realistic is the proposal?

U.Ozolina – from the commercial point of view, the issue can be solved and the Latvian waste management company is ready for supplying the services, but there are legislative hindrances – waste shall not be transported over the border.

M.Lepik – nuclear waste can be transported, why not usual waste?

E.Zalāns – we should check legislation.

### Cross-border cultural heritage

K.Kampus – there should be no problems in co-operation in cultural sector.

S.Kiisler – the topic is too wide, it shall be more specific taking into account the regional issues.

A.Andreicika – the issue should be connected with tourism.

### Taxation

S.Kiisler – it is not realistic to harmonise our tax systems, but we can discuss it with authorities and make recommendations.

**8. Formation of joint thematic working groups** in accordance with the agreed priorities. Agreement on the work plan and time schedule for 2010 - **Mr. Kalev Härk**, Acting Valga County Governor

K.Härk presented the suggestions for formulating the working groups, possible time schedule for commission work and system of the joint sessions of the commission - (*Annex 2*)

***It was decided:***

*To acclaim the formation of 4 thematic working groups as follows:*

- *Social / medical services*
- *Educational training issues / tourism / sports*
- *Transport issues / energy and environment*
- *Labour movement and taxation*

*To acclaim the time schedule and work plan:*

- *Appointing of members of working groups including the chairpersons of the working groups till 26.02.2010*
- *Submission of Activity Plans for 2010 to the commissions of either of the countries till April 2010*
- *Meetings of EE and LV commissions (hearings and discussions on the activities of the working groups and feed-back) till Sept 2010*
- *Joint Session of EE-LV Commissions - 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2011*

*The chairpersons of the working groups will rotate: 1 year there is a chairperson from Estonia, the other year – from Latvia.*

9. Presentation of changes in the **Rules of Procedure** and adoption of the updated Rules of Procedure - **Mr. Kalev Härk**, Acting Valga County Governor (*Annex 3*)

***It was decided:***

*To adopt the updated Rules of Procedure.*

10. Site-visit to cross-border cooperation projects in Valga

Chairman:	S.Kiisler
Vice-Chairman:	E.Zalāns
Minutes-Secretaries:	L.Rosenblatt
	D.Üdre