

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING

### OF THE JOINT SESSIONS OF THE ESTONIAN-LATVIAN AND LATVIAN-ESTONIAN INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMISSIONS FOR CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

Venue: Taagepera Castle,

*Taagepera village, Helme Parish,  
Valga County 68502, Estonia*

20<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Beginning of the Joint Session: 11:00

End of the Joint Session: 17:00

Chairman: Mr Hanno Pevkur, Estonian Minister of the Interior

Vice-Chairman: Mr Kaspars Gerhards, Latvian Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development

Minutes-Secretary: Mr Rainer Kuutma

Participants: Annex 1 (*List of participants of the Joint Session*)

Agenda: Annex 2 (*Agenda of the Joint Session*)

Decisions: Annex 3 (*Rules of Procedures of the Joint Session*)



Annex 1 List of  
Participants.pdf



Annex 2 Agenda of  
the Joint Session.pdf



Annex 3 Rules of  
Procedures.pdf

#### **WELCOMING SPEECH**

*by Valga County Governor Mr Margus Lepik*

The Chairman gave floor for welcome speech to Mr Margus Lepik, Governor of the Valga County.

#### **OPENING SPEECH**

*by Chairman Mr Hanno Pevkur, Estonian Minister of the Interior*

The Joint Session of the Estonian-Latvian and Latvian-Estonian Intergovernmental Commissions for Cross-border Cooperation (hereinafter – the IGC) was opened by the Chairman Mr Hanno Pevkur, Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Estonia. The Chairman gave a short summary about the previous actions of the Commission, as well as the main objectives of the Commission.

#### **OPENING SPEECH**

*by Mr Kaspars Gerhards, Latvian Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development*

The opening was followed by the speech of the Co-chairman Mr Kaspars Gerhards, Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia. The Co-Chairman emphasized the role of the IGC being an essential platform for constructive dialogue on national, regional and local levels between both countries and also gave some conclusion on the achievements of the IGC work.

#### **ABOUT THE ESTONIAN-LATVIAN FUTURE CO-OPERATION**

*by Jaan Hein, Estonian Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and Leonarda Kestere, Latvian Ministry of Culture*

The Chairman gave floor to Mr Jaan Hein from the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who presented of summary about the Estonian-Latvian future co-operation report. The presentation was

followed by an overview made by Mrs Leonarda Kestere from the Latvian Ministry of Culture about the goals of centenary celebrations in Latvia and preparation works, meaning also Baltic dimension of the forthcoming anniversary.

## **REPORT ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES AGREED IN 2013 AND PROPOSALS FOR THE IGC CHANGES AND NEW OBJECTIVES**

*by Margarita Golovko, Estonian Ministry of the Interiors*

The Report on the Progress of the Joint Co-operation Activities (hereinafter – the Report) agreed by the IGC in 2013 was presented by Margarita Golovko, Head of the European Territorial Co-Operation Bureau of the Estonian Ministry of the Interior. The Report on the progress was compiled by the Estonian and Latvian ministries in collaboration with Working Group chairs. According to the Report, based on the suggestions of the national delegations that embody the working groups of the Joint Sessions, the current status includes:

- In regard of the **first-aid, rescue and health services in border regions**, the Latvian Ministry of Health does not support the proposal to grant the benefits to the Latvian population to receive health care services in Valga hospital in a different order, as it is currently defined in Directive 2011/24 EU. LV Ministry of Health proposes the Emergency Medical Service of Latvia and Valga hospital to seek for collaboration options in provision of the emergency services in following cases:
  - 1) Emergency medical assistance for the inhabitants of Valka when transport to the Vidzeme hospital in Valmiera is not possible or the travel time can be critical to patient's life;
  - 2) Emergency help provided by Latvian medical brigade to Estonian citizens in territory of Latvia when according to medical indication hospitalization is required.
 The Estonian delegation proposes to revise and update the “Ambulance Services agreement between Emergency Medical Service of Latvia and the Estonian Emergency Response center” 2010 cross border cooperation contract.
- Issues concerning the **realization of the fire-fighting and rescue operations** the Estonian delegation proposes to find a solution for a joint and secure radio communication channel in the border and to sign a contract between the fire-fighting and rescue service agencies for the automatic help calls responding. The Latvian delegation proposes to proceed dealing with this issue as this is actual also extending and strengthening the spectrum and quality of the rescue service. According to the Estonian proposal the Latvian delegation agrees to the 1<sup>st</sup> Estonian proposed topic “to find a solution for a joint and secure radio communication channel in the border”, meanwhile leaving the 2<sup>nd</sup> proposed topic “to sign a contract between the fire-fighting and rescue service agencies for the automatic help calls responding” for the discussions on the operational level between State Fire and Rescue Service of Latvia and Estonian Rescue Board and exclude it into from the IGC list of tasks.
- The Latvian delegation is of opinion that improvement of the Fire-fighting and Rescue Services, Development and Equipment of Fire Stations in Border Areas should be territorially broaden in order to cover the safety in the maritime areas as well. The Estonian delegation proposes to continue follow-up projects in order to solve the lack of necessary equipment and organize joint exercises in the border region. Both delegations propose to keep these topics in the IGC agenda in order to co-operate with the coastal and maritime cross-border water transport development, living environment, safety and availability of rescue services; development of small harbours etc.
- Based on the recommendations of the national delegations there is a proposal to keep issues such as Valga-Valka, transport, tourism, culture, education, cross-border labour movement and social issues in the IGC agenda. At the same time there is a proposal to

exclude issues concerning **development of social care institutions and social entrepreneurship** from the list of tasks of the IGC as both legislative frameworks are yet to be developed or elaborated on national level in Latvia.

- The issue of **asphalting of smaller cross-border gravel roads** could also be excluded from the list of tasks of the IGC as in 2014 a meeting was held between Estonian Road Administration and state joint stock company “Latvian State Roads” where both parties agreed to continue co-operation within cross-border projects. The Valka municipality council submitted application for the co-funding of the Valka’s transit street reconstruction to the Latvian Ministry of Transport which has been approved by the Latvian Ministry of Transport and included into the 2016-2017 financing plan. Since there is neither an active nor on-going **development of the gas pipeline** to Valka and **restoration of the cross-border bus service** that would be a fully commercial project without companies showing interest in serving the line, the delegations propose to exclude these topics from the list of IGC tasks.
- In regard of the **development of the project “Rail Baltica”** in each country national studies are being conducted. Three Baltic States have established a joint venture RB Rail AS who is responsible for preparation of CEF application and further coordination of RB Project. Three Baltic States and RB Rail AS carry out necessary activities in order to prepare and submit a joint application for the first part of the financing of the EU within the framework of the CEF by February 26, 2015. Although a third passenger train between Tallinn-Tartu-Valga was launched in May 2014 there is still no operational **Tallinn-Riga passenger train**. As the Estonian delegation would like to further map possibilities in establishing the line, the Latvian delegation is concerned in the sustainability of this venture as on the line Riga-Tallinn operates about 20 buses, ensuring comfortable driving at different times of the day and a train line would not be able to provide offer such flexible driving times as buses currently do. The “Rail Baltic” and the Tallinn-Riga passenger train topics could remain within the IGC list of tasks at least for a year in order to reach final conclusion whether a contribution or a solution could be provided by the IGC.
- In regard of the **availability of public transport information** the “peatus.ee” link is still missing on the webpage “1188.lv”. Both delegations propose to exclude this topic from the IGC list of tasks as it is more a technical issue.
- **In regard of the joint planning in border areas**, the Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of Latvia reviewed and amended “The Methodological Recommendations for Preparation of the Development Programmes at Regional and Local Levels”. At the same time in Estonia a new planning law is to be adopted in 2015 and the Estonian ministry of the Interior sees a solution for the cross-border co-operation in joint cross-border planning in a methodological approach. **Both activities point out the recommendation and need to consider the plans of the surrounding territories within the state and neighbouring areas on the other side of the national border** and evaluate the opportunities for cooperation and interaction, thus providing coordination for investments aiming at improving the accessibility of services and developing mobility. Since the issue has been solved it should be excluded from the list of IGC tasks.
- As of 2014 there haven’t been any negotiations regards the possible **train Riga - St. Petersburg re-routing through Estonia**. Few years ago the Latvian side contacted the Russian railways about possible re-routing as it is more dependent on them. Currently the Koidula border-crossing point on the Russian side is guarded only at daytime and not during the night which makes the route change of the Riga – St. Petersburg train impossible. Both delegations propose to keep the issue under surveillance.

- In regard of the coastal and maritime cross-border water transport development**, the new Estonia-Latvia CBC programme is planning to support the development of small harbours in the Gulf of Riga by establishing a network of small harbours with improved services. In total 6.7 million euros are available for investments. Furthermore, the programme may provide additional investment possibilities in the nature and environmental protection. Both delegations propose to keep this topic in the IGC agenda.
- **The joint visiting centre of Valga and Valka** is being re-intended within the Valga and Valka spatial planning. Since 2014 Latvian language can be studied in Estonia as the statute of the Valga Vocational Training Centre was adopted and in Latvia the legislation now allows to include additional subjects into curriculums if there is a demand for it. **The Joint Latvian-Estonian Institute** continues to operate and new financing is being planned for present year. **The co-operation between the Estonian and Latvian higher education institutions** is currently ongoing within certain co-operation projects and thus out of the scope of the IGC.
  - In regard of the working group “Education, Tourism and Sports” delegations suggest to exclude the following topics such as the **development of Valga-Valka joint visiting centre, development of competitive and open higher education, Estonian-Latvian language courses for borderland area inhabitants and development of the Joint Latvian-Estonian Institute** from the list of tasks of the IGC. The co-operation within the “Memorandum of understanding on creating possibilities for Latvian students to study at the Valga County Vocational Education Centre” could continue.
  - In regard of the working group “Cross-Border Labour Movement and Taxation” delegations agree that the **development of the Valga Free Economic Zone** should be excluded from the IGC list of tasks since Valga is already planning to use finances within the internal Regional Competitiveness Improvement Programme in order to develop the zone.
  - Issues concerning **free workplaces in border areas and labour movement** could also be excluded from the list of tasks of the IGC as cooperation between relevant institutions has been established and it is ongoing. In fact in October 2014 a joint job fair was held in Valga where 24 companies and 9 partner organizations participated. In total 168 vacancies were offered out of which 81 were formalized into contracts. Thus both tasks have been solved.

The Report was followed by a brief introduction about the changes in the Rules of Procedure.

During the discussion the following ideas and proposals were presented:

- to adopt a new version of the Rules of Procedure of IGC;
- to synchronize the membership of the national delegations of both countries in the JS of IGC with the relevant authorities and specialists;
- to disband four current Working Groups
- Upon necessity and with the purpose of better flexibility and efficiency create ad hoc Working Groups for solving the issues raised by the IGC for the current year, involving relevant specialists and field experts,
- to invite relevant specialists and partners if needed into the work of the Working Groups as additional non-permanent members;
- to include the following new issues to the IGC agenda for the year 2015:
  1. **health care and health care related public services in cross-border regions;**
  2. **vocational education, life-long learning and retraining of the unemployed;**
  3. **development of cross-border railway connection (Tallinn – Riga);**

4. **gravel roads in border regions;**
5. **fire-fighting and rescue services in border-regions and maritime areas;**
6. **development of tourism;**
7. **planning of joint events in border regions (e.g. Centenary of Estonia and Latvia);**
8. **taxation issues in border regions;**

## **CONCLUSIONS AND TASKS TO THE IGC BY THE CHAIRMEN**

*by Chairman Mr Hanno Pevkur, Estonian Minister of the Interior*

*by Mr Kaspars Gerhards, Latvian Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development*

The Chairmen and the national delegations recognized the need for the work of IGC to continue in the following years. The frequency of the IGC meeting remains once a year, but the monitoring of progress will be done once a year by the Chairman of the Working Group who will present a report on the fulfilment of the tasks assigned to the Working Group, together with the proposals to amend or harmonise the legislation of the countries or to conclude agreements between the countries in the work area.

### **THE JOINT SESSION DECIDED:**

- 1) to adopt the updated version of the Rules of Procedure of the IGC (Annex 3);
- 2) to synchronize the membership of the national delegations of both countries in the JS of IGC (Annex 1) with the purpose to involve the relevant authorities and specialists, based on the recommendations of the national delegations;
- 3) to disband four current Working Groups;
- 4) upon necessity and with the purpose of better flexibility and efficiency to create ad hoc Working Groups for solving the issues raised by the IGC for the current year, involving relevant specialists and field experts;
- 5) to invite relevant specialists and partners if needed into the work of the Working Groups as additional non-permanent members;
- 6) to include the following new issues to the IGC agenda for the year 2015:
  - **health care and health care related public services in cross-border regions;**
  - **vocational education, life-long learning and retraining of the unemployed;**
  - **development of cross-border railway connection (Tallinn – Riga);**
  - **gravel roads in border regions;**
  - **fire-fighting and rescue services in border-regions and maritime areas;**
  - **development of tourism;**
  - **planning of joint events in border regions (e.g. Centenary of Estonia and Latvia);**
  - **taxation issues in border regions;**
- 7) to further specify the new issues selected for the year 2015 in order to compile a focused list of actions and solutions for the challenges.

**ENDING OF THE IGC JOINT SESSIONS IN 2015**

*by Chairman Mr Hanno Pevkur, Estonian Minister of the Interior*

Mr Hanno Pevkur thanked all the participants for a good working day and closed the meeting. The next meeting of the Joint Session of the Estonian-Latvian and Latvian-Estonian Intergovernmental Commissions for Cross-Border Co-Operation shall be held next year in Latvia.

Adopted at Taagepera on 20 of February 2015 in two equally binding copies, each in English.

Hanno Pevkur  
Minister of the Interior  
of the Republic of Estonia

Kaspars Gerhards  
Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional  
Development of the Republic of Latvia