



bringing neighbours closer

Dear Partners and Friends,



On behalf of the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments of the Republic of Latvia I have a great honour to congratulate you on this first edition of Latvia – Lithuania Cross Border Cooperation Programme Newsletter.

The cross border cooperation has become significant across the entire European Union as it promotes the European integration by smoothing the socio-economical diversities, as well as consolidates the multilevel Europe.

The Latvia – Lithuania Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2007 – 2013 was elaborated with the aim to strengthen a potential of border regions in a more effective way, to reduce negative impact on the border, to promote the cooperation between citizens of border regions and local governments, as well as to improve the economical situation and growth of border regions in order to make them more capable to overcome the challenges.

I sincerely hope that the continued cooperation in the framework of this Programme will promote a welfare and growth for our regions.

Sincerely,

Edgars Zalāns

Minister for Regional Development and Local Governments of the Republic of Latvia

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Lead Applicant Seminar

Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) is organizing a seminar for Lead Applicants planning to submit applications to the Latvia – Lithuania CBC Programme.

The Lead Applicant Seminar will take place on 29 – 30 May in Hotel "Romantic", Panevezys, Lithuania.

During the seminar JTS team will provide Lead Applicants with detailed information on how to fill in the Application Form, explain the most important project implementation procedures, and provide opportunity for individual consultations.

The language of the seminar is English.

The deadline for registration is **26 May 2008**. In order to register for the event, the participants are requested to submit the Project Information Form along with the Registration Form. The Registration Form and the Project Information Form is available on website www.latlit.eu and must be sent to e-mail: info@latlit.eu or fax: +371 6735 7372.

Seminar will start at 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, 29 May 2008. Address of the Hotel "Romantic": Kranto str. 24, Panevezys, Lithuania.

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1st Joint Monitoring and Steering Committee Meeting

On 13-14 March 2008 in Riga the 1st meeting of the Programme Joint Monitoring and Steering Committee took place. The Committee took decisions on various Programme implementation issues, including the launching of the 1st Call for Proposals. Also, the application pack, as well as Programme logo and motto were approved during the meeting.



Follow-up to the Information Seminars

During spring the JTS has organized 14 seminars in Latvia and Lithuania about the Programme general information, elaboration of project, fulfilment of Application Form, project assessment criteria. There was great interest about the Programme and many questions were asked.

In order to make the clarifications and answers to the question available to the widest possible target audience, the frequently asked questions section with answers to those will be established on the Programme website.

During the Information Seminars the potential applicants also expressed wish to receive assistance with finding appropriate partners. In order to assist in the process of partner search, the JTS has published on the website a Project Idea and Partner Search Form, as well as the lists of the participants of the Information Seminars.

The potential applicants looking for the partners are kindly asked to submit the filled in Project Idea and Partner Search Form to the JTS for publishing it on the web for the attention of potential partners.

In case there are further questions, applicants are welcome to send them to the JTS via email: info@latlit.eu and they will be answered at an earliest convenience.

1st Call for Proposals

1st call was launched on 14 April 2008 during the Programme Opening Conference.

The deadline for submission of proposals is 30 June 2008.

During the July and August the evaluation of the applications will take place and finally, the decision on the projects to be approved will follow on 15-16 September at the 2nd meeting of the Joint Monitoring and Steering Committee.

It is expected that contracting of selected projects will take place during November 2008 – January 2009.

Individual Consultations

Individual consultations are available every Wednesday in JTS Riga office.

In order to participate in consultations please register via email: info@latlit.eu or phone: +371 6735 0622.

We kindly ask the potential applicants before applying for the consultations to carefully read the Programme Manual. It is also encouraged that a brief project idea description is submitted prior the consultation. This will enable JTS staff to provide quality advice.

Programme web page

www.latlit.eu

The new Programme website is currently under development. However all the information related to the application, as well as most important information about the Programme is available at the temporary site which can be accessed through the above address.



Latvia–Lithuania Cross Border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013

Latvia - Lithuania CBC Programme is implemented under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective.

The Programme has been prepared jointly by Latvia and Lithuania. The Latvian Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments and Lithuanian Ministry of Interior have been following the principle of partnership in developing the arrangements for preparing and implementing the Programme.

The Programme was approved by the European Commission on 17 December 2007 (Decision No K (2007)6295).

Programme Area

Latvia: Kurzeme, Zemgale, Latgale.

Lithuania: Klaipeda, Telsiai, Siauliai, Panevezys, Utena and Kaunas as adjacent region.



Programme Objective

The Programme main objective is to promote sustainable and equal socio-economic development in border regions to make it competitive for economical and business development and attractive for living and visiting.

Programme Priorities

The Programme has two thematic priorities.

Priority 1 – Encouragement of socio-economic development and competitiveness of the region.

This priority promotes entrepreneurship, labour market and R&T development and improvement of internal and external accessibility of the border regions.

Priority 1 is divided into two directions for support.

Direction for support 1. Facilitating business, labour market and R&T development.

Direction for support 2. Improvement of internal and external accessibility of the border region.

Priority 2 - Attractive living environment and development of sustainable community.

This priority promotes enhancing joint management of public services and natural resources, increasing the attractiveness of the border region and development of active and sustainable communities.

Priority 2 is divided into three directions for support.

Direction for support 1. Enhancing joint management of public services and natural resources.

Direction for support 2. Increasing attractiveness of the border region.

Direction for support 3. Development of active and sustainable communities (small project facility).

All projects should demonstrate clear cross border impact on the border region.

Funding

The Programme is financed from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and cofinanced by project partners. The total ERDF budget of the Programme for the period 2007 to 2013 is ca 75.2 million EUR.

Co-financing from the Programme can be up to 85% of the total eligible costs.

Project Duration

If requested ERDF grant does not exceed 200.000 EUR, project duration can be up to 18 months.

If requested ERDF grant exceeds 200.000 EUR, project duration can be up to 30 months.

Partnership Requirements

Projects have to involve at least one Lithuanian and one Latvian partner, which is registered or permanently located and actively operating in the eligible area of the Programme.

Project partners must be local and regional public authorities, national institutions, public equivalent bodies governed by public law or non-governmental organisations.

How it all Started? INTERREG IIIA Priority South



The Latvia – Lithuania Cross Border Programme follows into the footsteps of the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG IIIA Priority South.

INTERREG IIIA Priority South supported the cooperation between the border regions of Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus. It was financed from the ERDF (EUR 10,4 millions, co-financing rate - 75%) and Tacis (together with Priority North indicative funding in the period of 2004 – 2006 for both Priorities was EUR 7,5 millions) Programme.

The implementation of the South Priority is approaching its finalisation. All programme funds have been committed and no more calls for proposals will be launched. Altogether there have been five calls for proposals, the first one being launched already in Autumn 2004.

Altogether 53 projects were approved in the INTERREG IIIA Priority South. More information about the projects is available on Programme's website www.bsrinterreg3a.net.

Project Examples:

One of the most significant project that was supported within the Priority South was "Bay Watch". Within this project the lifeguard teams of Liepāja, Jūrmala, Saulkrasti (Latvia) and Klaipėda, Palanga, Neringa (Lithuania) were trained and the necessary equipment was purchased and upgraded in order to ensure the safety for the visitors of Latvian and Lithuanian beaches.



Also the contribution to the culture life of small towns was ensured within the Priority South. For instance in the scope of the "NICE" project two amateur artist festivals in Pure and Babsai.



We hope that the partnerships and good cooperation ideas that started during Priority South will find their continuation in Latvia - Lithuania CBC Programme.

What's Different?

If we compare two Programmes, we can see that Latvia-Lithuania CBC Programme provides:


- More funds
- More targeted cooperation area: cooperation now targets the border regions of two EU member states and the cooperation territory has also been reduced
- Different Programme Priorities and Directions for Support
- Possibility for financing bigger projects
- Increased cofinancing rate from the ERDF
- Longer project implementation period
- Projects are expected to follow four main principles of cooperation: joint development; joint implementation; joint staffing; joint financing
- There is greater focus on quality results: projects are asked to describe how they will ensure achievement of quality results and how these will be measured during project implementation
- An obligation to conclude Partnership Agreement

What is different in the Application Form?

- Automatic error messages indicating fields which are not filled
- Different Budget Lines
- The requirements towards preparation costs have changed
- Applicants are asked to fill in a list of pre-defined project output and result indicators.

Past Experience: What to Avoid?


This short list of the most frequent mistakes derives from the JTS experience working with INTERREG III B projects.

 *Too little or too much information given in the Application Form*


Sometimes the Lead Partner and the project partners do not know the exact meaning of all the stated activities and outputs in the Application Form. It is obvious that it is not possible to evaluate, monitor and implement something that is not clearly described.

 *Too ambitious plans*


The outputs and results stated in the Application Form are too ambitious to be reached within the partnership, budget and duration of the project. Many activities seem easy on the paper but their practical implementation does not work.

 *Too little knowledge about the partners and the conditions in the partner countries*


Often, only one or few project partners develop project proposal. The knowledge about the other partners, joining the project, or about the pre-conditions in the partner countries (e.g. existing laws) is not always good. Sometimes partners do not have a clear common understanding of the project targets. Some partners in some countries could have difficulties in reaching planned outputs and results. Planned outputs and results may also not be relevant for all the project partners.

 *Weak commitment of some partners to the project*

Some project partners are not actively participating in the project implementation due to above mentioned reasons or problems related to financial or personnel issues.

 *Projects are not ready for unexpected development of external and/or internal factors in the project's environment*

Project's environment may change in a way that causes problems to a project's implementation or weaken the interest in planned results: e.g. administrative and financial changes concerning the project partner organisations, new laws, political decisions etc. The Lead Partner has to be prepared to minimise negative effects of these changes.

 *"Project generator" organisations as project partners*

For some organisations that are dependent on outside financing the generating of projects and taking part in the projects is an issue of own existence. These organisations may offer a good expertise. However, very often, these organisations produce studies and concepts in order to employ their own staff and the usefulness and quality play a minor role.



Recommendations for Project Development

Relevant Partnership:

The number of Project Partners involved in your project is not the criteria determining if the project partnership is ideal or weak. More important is Project Partners' expertise and authority necessary to carry out the planned activities. The topics that project is addressing define also the profile and type of organisations that could be involved in the project activities.

Timely involvement of project partners already from preparation of application ensures more successful project implementation and achievements.

Careful Budget Planning:

Your project will be monitored on the basis of payment forecast. It is therefore important that the project:

- prepares a realistic spending forecast;
- starts project implementation as soon as possible after project approval;
- monitors these aspects effectively during implementation and;
- ensures regular, timely and full reporting.

Realistic Project Budget:

The Lead Partner and its Project Partners are encouraged to develop a realistic project budget and spending plan from the very start. In this respect, the following experiences could be useful:

1) The spending rate of an average three-years-project is lowest at the beginning of the project, because the early stage of the project is dominated by planning and preparation. It increases towards the end of the implementation period, where it reaches its highest level.

2) Higher spending rates, especially in the beginning, are appreciated, but they can only be fulfilled if the project implementation is speeded up right from the beginning. For this purpose, the key staff for project co-ordination should be available shortly after the meeting of the Programme JMSC for selection of projects. In addition the kick-off meeting and detailed project planning meetings should be preferably arranged soon after this date.

3) Allocation of a significant part of the budget to the last project Reporting Period can be critically evaluated during the assessment of the project application.

Realistic Project Outputs and Results

Applications receive funding to implement activities and achieve a set of their promised outputs and results. Therefore it is important both to be realistic in their estimation (i.e. are there 500 municipal planning specialists in project region that one would be planning to train?) and specific in a sense that the outputs should be identifiable, measurable and possible to check afterwards (i.e. number, parameters, location should be indicated).

„Identify“ Your Target groups

Think carefully about your target groups as your most precious „clients“: who exactly will benefit from the project results? Have you identified them and even assessed their needs (e.g. research or interviews were car-

ried out). The more clearly and precisely you describe and quantify them, the more realistic is your application and the need for your project implementation is evident.

Ensure Durability

The aim of the Programme is to develop sustainable solutions that will bring economic and social benefit to border regions and increase their competitiveness as well as create favourable conditions for living and visiting. Therefore your project is encouraged to propose activities that will be sustainable and continue after project end. In this regard, it is recommended to pose these questions: who will own the project results? Who will be responsible for their maintenance and operation? Will your prepared documents be used further on?



Look for Innovative Approach

This concept is related to two aspects:

1. innovative solutions;
2. no repetition of existing solutions:

Your project is expected to be innovative, in a sense that it proposes innovative solutions available at the time: i.e. think what is happening in the field at the moment; will the proposed solution still be relevant in one or two years? Is the proposed technology the latest available? Is the

method or approach selected still relevant, e.g. do most people book their trips via tourism agencies or they prefer individual planning via internet?

Make a small research of your own: check what has already been done in your region, what projects have already been supported? This information is available at the website www.bsrinterreg3a.net as well as from information sources of the national, regional or local authorities. It is expected that your project will propose outputs that are either non-existing at the start of the project or developing/ improving and bring new quality to the ones existing.



Latvia–Lithuania Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Opening Conference

The Opening Conference of the Latvia – Lithuania Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2007 – 2013 was held in Jelgava on 14 April 2008.

The Opening Conference was focused on Latvia – Lithuania cooperation, introduced the programme and gave an opportunity to participants to find potential partners for projects.

During the conference participants could take part in three contact making and partner search sessions.

The main objective of the working sessions was to provide and explain information on directions of support as well as to promote establishment of partnership and generating project ideas.

All working sessions were organized in 4 parts:

1. Introduction of the participants.
2. Presentation on general information about the directions of support and overview of preliminary experience of the project and ideas in set fields.
3. Presentations provided by experts from the field.
4. Group works - discussion in smaller groups about the project ideas which could be further developed and supported within the Programme.

1 working session - CULTURE, EDUCATION, TOURISM

Moderator: Līga Kalvāne, JTS

Expert: Jolanta Klišāne, *Chief of the Department of Educational Development, Arts Education Centre of Latvia*

During this session Ms Jolanta Klišāne provided presentation on problems and prospective for future development in field of professional education – Ms Klišāne pointed necessity to develop the education services in terms of development of life-long learning system, to develop and improve educational programmes in compliance with market de-

mand and integrate creative industries into the national economy and educational system.

During the work in smaller groups some project ideas were identified: development of cooperation among local museums in Latvia and Lithuania, development of water tourism, restoration of cultural heritage objects, and experience exchange among different tourism operators.



2 working session - TRANSPORT, LOGISTICS, FACILITATION OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATIONS, IT.

Moderator: Gints Pīpiķis, JTS

Expert: Valdis Avotiņš, *Director of Engineering Research Centre Ventspils University College; Advisor to Director of LIAA, Latvia.*

Mr V.Avotiņš presented brief overview of innovation process, described examples and impact of the process.



Before closure of workshop participants represented their potential project ideas, biggest interest was shown in fields of business facilitation and development particularly in creation of business incubators.

3 working session - PUBLIC SERVICES

Moderator: Birute Markeviciute, JTS

Experts: Dagnija Ūdre, Head of Development and Planning Department, Valka Town Council, Latvia; Audrone Alijošiute, Director of the Environmental Centre of Administration and Technology, Lithuania.



During the session, Ms Audrone Alijošiute provided presentation on problems and prospective for future development in environmental field. Pointed that sustainability is a key concept at the moment, although not fully clear what it means in reality. Two aspects of sustainability are relevant: waste and climate change. The latest trend is to think of "0 waste" cities which draws our attention away from wasteful consumption. Thus the focus is more on preventative measures than on treatment of waste: better to produce less waste from the beginning than to manage or recycle it. The demand is growing for municipalities to ensure good living conditions for inhabitants. There is a Waste Framework directive under preparation in EU which will request waste prevention programmes to be adopted – public authorities should think about it already now.

On the other hand Ms Ūdre gave presentation on their implemented projects. She is representing Valga, the only twin town with Valka on Latvia Estonia border. Noted that historically it was one city but was divided in 1920. The cooperation therefore is very natural in all possible fields – social care, health care, spacial planning, transport, culture, etc. Both town and district councils meet regularly to

discuss development of Valka-Valga. A special NGO has been established in LV side to inform and coordinate activities on both sides. The ideas are to ensure that public transport crosses both cities, to have joint spacial planning, join the road connections across the border. In future – plan to ensure emergency cars serving both towns, yet question of financing is not so easy to solve. One of their implemented project was related to exchange of doctors – for that purpose even local language courses of EST and LV were held.

Participants about the conference

In order to give all participants the possibility to provide the feedback on the conference, feedback questionnaires were distributed. The returned questionnaires indicate that almost all respondents found the conference being organised at the right time.

The information given on the Latvia – Lithuania Cross Border Cooperation Programme and the conference in overall was considered as useful, very useful and even extremely useful by the greatest part of the participants. Concerning the work in partner search sessions, in overall it was found as very useful as well. Especially appreciated were the presentations given by the key speakers of working sessions. They were considered as very comprehensive, interesting and useful.



Some of the participants indicated that they expected to have more time provided for the communication in the working sessions in order to share the project ideas and find the partners. At the same time 24 participants indicated that they have found the partner during this conference.

Latvia – Lithuania CBC Programme Joint Technical Secretariat

Ieva Kalniņa

Head of Riga Office



Ieva Kalnina has more than 15 years of practical experience in the areas of project management, public administration and regional development. Since 1995 she has been involved in managing the EU financed territorial cooperation programmes covering the Baltic states, the Baltic Sea Region and the whole territory of the EU.

As Head of Riga Office Ieva is responsible for overall management and coordination of the territorial cooperation programme teams operating in Riga

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Birute Markevičiute

Project Manager



Birute Markeviciute graduated in international relations and political science from the Vilnius University. She completed EU training course and worked at the Regional Policy Department of the Ministry of the Interior of Lithuania. For the past 4 years she has been working as INTERREG IIIA Latvia-Lithuania-

Belarus Project Manager.

In Riga Office Birute is responsible for management and administration of INTERREG IIIA South Priority (cross-border cooperation between Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus) and Latvia – Lithuania Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013.

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Līga Kalvāne

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Līga has graduated from University of Latvia in Law and currently studies in MBA programme. Līga's previous professional experience is related to implementation of different financial instruments (EU Programme Culture 2000, EU structural funds, EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism) in Latvia.



In the Riga Office Līga is responsible for the monitoring of projects financed from IIIA Priorities of the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B Neighborhood Programme and for implementation of the Latvia-Lithuania Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007 – 2013.

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A graduate of Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania, with a major in Lithuanian, Latvian Philology and a minor in Business Administration. At her Alma Mater and University of Latvia and Vytautas Magnus University Monika gave lectures on Lithuanian Language and Culture. She has knowledge of managing and coordinating Lithuania – Latvia cooperation projects.



As a Project Manager of Riga Office, Monika is responsible for management and administration of Lithuania–Latvia Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2007–2013.

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Gints has Bachelor degree in Business Administration from University of Latvia. His previous professional experience has been in the field of 1st level control of territorial cooperation projects in Latvia.

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Gintas has more than 10 years of practical experience in the areas of business and finance consulting, training and project management.

He has been involved in managing of Phare, 5th Framework, Leonardo da Vinci, INTERACT and INTERREG projects.

In the JTS Gintas is responsible for the financial management of Latvia-Lithuania CBC Programme.

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Laura Melne

Information Manager



Laura Melne graduated Ventspils College as BA in Business Administration with specialization in Marketing Management and Latvian University of Agriculture as MA in Sociology of Organization and Public Management. For over three years she worked

as a Head of the Information and Communication Department in the State Regional Development Agency of Latvia.

As Information Manager in JTS Laura is responsible for coordination of information activities. Laura ensures the fulfilment of information and publicity measures in accordance with the EU legislation and the Programme documents by organizing the information events, developing and ensuring the publication of the information materials, establishing and constantly maintaining the information on the Programme's website.

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Programme Assistant

Ilze graduated from the Riga Stradiņš University, where she studied International Relations and European Studies. This year she is going to obtain the MA degree in the project management from the Latvian University of Agriculture. Previously she has been working with the „Fiscalis 2003 – 2007” programme in the State Revenue Service of the Republic of Latvia.

In the JTS Ilze is providing assistance to Latvia-Lithuania CBC Programme team to ensure smooth day-to-day operation of the office.

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