

**Non-technical Summary of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Estonia-Latvia-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme within European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument 2007-2013**

The Environment Report of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Estonia – Latvia- Russia 2007-2013 is carried out based on the contract signed between the Ministry of the Regional Development and Local Government of the Republic of Latvia (acting as the Joint Managing Authority) and the association “Baltic Environmental Forum-Latvia” on 6 July, 2007.

This version of the Environment Report is prepared for the Estonia- Latvia - Russia CBC Programme 2007-2013 CBC draft version of January, 2008 which has integrated the results of the public hearing. The Environment Report has also integrated relevant comments received during the consultation process. The Environment Report has been prepared in English.

The Estonia-Latvia-Russia CBC Programme will be implemented as a part of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument supporting implementation of the EU Neighbourhood Policy for 2007-2013.

The overarching strategic objective of the CBC Programme is to promote joint development activities for the improvement of the region’s competitiveness by utilising its potential and beneficial location in the cross roads between the EU and Russian Federation. The specific objective is to make the wider border area an attractive place for both its inhabitants and businesses through activities aimed at improving the living standards and investment climate.

Although the CBC Programme does highlight neither sustainable development nor environmental protection in its objectives, the several relevant statements with regard to vision of the Programme have been included. It declares that business related infrastructure is developed in compliance with European environmental requirements and best practices thus ensuring that environmental resources are not further degraded and the current values preserved. Further on, it states that the main task of the Programme thus is to address the common challenges in the way that would be mutually benefiting for the whole region and contribute to sustainable development of the Programme area.

Based on the assessed trends and tendencies of the area’s socio-economic situation and reviewed strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats, the Estonia-Latvia-Russia CBC Programme has defined **three priorities** each of these covering several directions of support: i) Socio-economic development; ii) common challenges and iii) Promotion of people to people co-operation.

According to the priorities the Estonia-Latvia-Russia CBC Programme 2007-2013 has defined the measures to be supported as well as directions of support. The programme specifies whether support will include investments or soft projects. The strategic

environmental assessment and this Environment Report assess only the measures and the directions of support as specified by the Programming document.

The Environmental Report reviews potential positive or negative effects of the Estonia-Latvia-Russia CBC Programme 2007-2013 on the following identified relevant environmental issues: **air quality, climate change, maintenance of the biodiversity, maintenance of the landscape and cultural heritage, water resources, waste management and contaminated sites.**

In general, the measures of the CBC programme can be assessed as **positive** towards the climate change issue and maintenance of landscape and cultural heritage. One of the measures will deal with improvement of energy efficiency and promoting use of renewable energy resources. The preservation of the cultural heritage is another separate priority measure.

The CBC Programme will contribute **positively** to several aspects of the **general environmental management** by supporting environmental monitoring, managing together nature areas and organising joint pollution control. Moreover, the Programme recognises the importance of environmental awareness, research, needs for cooperation among the services of the region.

It is rather **uncertain** about the cumulative effect of the CBC programme on the maintenance of biodiversity, water resources, waste management. To avoid irreversible effects, the environmental assessment of individual measures, particularly related to business support, transport development, or tourism's development in nature areas would be recommendable.

The CBC Programme can be assessed as **neutral** towards the air quality since its activities having potential effect on the air quality (e.g., transport development) are focused at the border areas where air quality has not been recorded as the environmental problem. However, the **positive** contribution could be if a support would be granted to improvement of public transportation related activities, especially in the cities.

During November and December, 2007 the competent authorities organised the public consultation and hearing. The draft Estonia - Latvia - Russia CBC Programme 2007-2013 and the draft Environment Report were published on the relevant websites, various stakeholder meetings held. The results of the public consultation process were reviewed at the Joint Task Force meeting held in Riga on 19 December, 2007.

The CBC programme foresees regular monitoring and reporting. It shall also ensure that the programme monitors the effects of the measures on environment. For that reason, a set of environmental indicators has been proposed.