

Estonia – Russia cross-border cooperation programme 2021-2027

Online discussion on tourism development

5 March 2021, Zoom

9:00 – 11:00 AM Estonian time / 10:00-12:00 AM Russian time

New Estonia – Russia programme is being prepared and the programme document that sets the strategic framework for the programme is scheduled to be finalised in 2021.

The Joint Programming Committee (JPC) has preliminarily agreed on the potential fields of action that could be supported by the next cooperation programme.

Among other topics the JPC would like to support tourism development.

Based on desktop research, stakeholder consultations, JPC discussions and collection of ideas that have taken place in Estonia and Russia in 2020, joint challenges and lists of activities have been proposed.

IDENTIFIED MAIN CHALLENGES

1. One of the key challenges is related to the increase of the number visitors and overnight stays, especially in the regions closer to the border. Currently, many regions of the programme are just driven through or passed by when driving towards bigger destinations for example on St. Petersburg – Tallinn or St. Petersburg – Riga road.
2. The tourism development stakeholders of the programme area lack regular professional cross-border contacts between regional and thematic tourism developers, clusters and networks, especially in public sector. At the same time existence and regular use of such contacts and knowledge is of utmost importance, when building cross-border tourism routes, packages or designing marketing activities.
3. Large majority of the tourism enterprises of the programme area are too small to make attractive offers, carry out effective marketing or regular service or product development activities. Often the same applies to public sector tourism development organisations. At the same time, there is willingness to contribute to larger tourism development initiatives.

The power of such synergy should lead to more solid joint offers and packages, where different products and services are combined based on a thematic or geographical focus. In addition, it would be easier to market, promote and create an impact both domestically and internationally (for example at the important foreign markets in Germany, Finland and Latvia) based on such joint offers and packages. Belonging to international routes or packages is an important selling argument for tourism businesses both in Estonia and Russia, which raises self-confidence, significance and visibility especially of the tourism developers of more remote regions of the programme area. Besides, tying the scattered tourism sites into joint routes or packages encourages tourism developers to find solutions for the connectivity problems in the programme area, *i.e.* how to travel conveniently between rural and regional sites in case a visitor does not have the private transport.

On 5 March the following questions are put for joint discussion:

1. What is your opinion on the identified challenges? Would you like to bring out additional cross-border challenges?
2. Do you think the proposed activities are realistic and meet the challenges and needs of cross-border area? Are those activities appropriate for strengthening the cooperation links and networks in the border regions?
3. What kind of change could be brought along in the tourism field through cross-border cooperation?
4. Are there organisations that have interest and capacity to implement proposed activities in the cross-border area?
5. Are there any common needs of some type of tourists, which are not met in the cross-border area?

Questions, additions, amendments, corrections and any other feedback are most welcome.

The programme aims at geographically broader tourism development initiatives, which focus on development, promotion and marketing of larger territories.

The activities should aim at the challenges listed above, horizontally considering sustainable tourism development principles, digitalisation, and whenever possible, promote using common standards for tourism monitoring systems, indicators and assessment of tourism development.

The eligible **activities** could include, but are not limited to:

- 1.1. creation and development of joint routes, packages and offers, for example based on a theme, geographic territory, specific target group, etc.
- 1.2. organisation of marketing activities at foreign and domestic markets, for example (social media) campaigns, FAM trips, contact events, engagement of influencers and journalists, production of content for marketing activities, etc.
- 1.3. creation of new and development of existing tourism products and services;
- 1.4. small-scale investments in tourism infrastructure, for example parking, charging and resting places, tourism signs, information dissemination points (combined with other local services, where relevant), etc.
- 1.5. improving the quality of tourism services and raising the professional and e-skills of the service providers, for example about product and service development, guiding, quality assurance, (cross)marketing, data management for product and service development, sustainable business development models, piloting IT solutions for sustainable tourism, etc.