

Welcome words by representatives of the Estonian and Russian National Authorities of the Programme at the public hearing webinar on 16 December 2021

Helena Musthalik, Advisor, European Territorial Cooperation Unit, Regional Development Department, **Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Estonia**

Dear colleagues!

I`m glad to see that interest in this webinar and new Estonia-Russia programme is so high. I would like to welcome you all on behalf of the Estonian Ministry of Finance.

I would like to use the opportunity and thank all these people from Estonia and Russia, who have contributed to the preparation of the programme – our colleagues from different ministries, the representatives of regions, all these people who participated in different discussions and seminars and helped us to identify the needs of the programme area.

I would especially like to thank all our Russian colleagues, with whom the cooperation has been really good who sometimes took time late in the evening to discuss urgent questions. The preparation of the new programme was a challenge also due to Covid. I suppose you all have experienced the same. It was not possible to meet in person and all meetings were organised online. It wasn` t easy at the beginning but people got used to it and we also found advantages of the new situation. As people didn` t need to find time for travelling, it was easier to find suitable time for meetings and it was possible to involve in discussion people who were in real life far from each other.

I hope you will find the time to read through the programme document and then fill the online survey, which is on the website of Estonia-Russia programme. Your feedback is very much welcome.

I suppose if you read the programme document you will find it quite ambitious, especially what concerns PO1- economic development. But now you have time to look up your old partners you have already worked together with from the other side of the border or new ones and then identify your common challenges or problems, which you could solve together in the joint project in the framework of the new Estonia-Russia programme.

I wish you strength and success in developing ideas, preparing and implementing new projects.

Thank you all!

Daniil Turlanov, Deputy Head of Division, the Department of development of integration projects and CIS countries, **Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation**.

Dear colleagues!

On behalf of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, I would like to cordially welcome all participants of the webinar for public hearing.

We highly appreciate the results of cooperation of the previous and current programme period of the «Russia–Estonia» Cross-border Cooperation Programme. Certainly, COVID-19 made its own adjustments to the project implementation in the current period. Until now, we have been forced to communicate online in most cases but we continue our cooperation. After we overcome the pandemic, definitely our work and cross-border cooperation will become more effective. Nevertheless, today we are pleased to present you the draft Programme document for the new program period 2021-2027.

The development of the program document was carried out for more than a year. There were many discussions, amendments, but finally we came to the common vision of the future development of the programme area.

In the new programme period, we propose to continue implementing projects in enhancing nature protection, including the promotion of the transition to a circular economy, improving wastewater management. There will be also such a specific objective as cross-border business cooperation and innovation in the program area.

The new specific objectives will include enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and cross-border tourism cooperation in the program area. These areas of cooperation were selected on the basis of a territorial analysis, which allowed us to identify the most relevant topics and problems for further joint cooperation and project implementation.

I would like to thank the Management Authority and the Joint Technical Secretariat for their fruitful work! Besides, I would like to thank Estonian colleagues for their professionalism and high interest in the future of our program. It was a pleasure to work in such a team! I am confident that in the new programme period 2021-2027 we will be able to preserve the positive experience of cooperation, to direct joint efforts for solving specific problems of border regions of Russia and Estonia.

We follow the principle of transparency and invite you to send your comments on the draft Programme document, which will be taken into account. Together we will finalize the development of the Programme document to send it for national approval.

Thank you for your attention!