

2.5 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Leningrad Oblast can significantly boost its socio-economic development purposefully organizing the network of international and regional relations, by using competitive advantages of Leningrad oblast, its enormous economic potential and favorable geopolitical location.

The main directions of cooperation with international and domestic partners are: the development of the strategic partnership with European Union, the development of optimal bilateral ties with the friendly foreign territories and Russian Federation subjects, the intensification of the interaction with certain regions in Asia, the realization of the potential of cross-border cooperation with Finland and Estonia, the development of cooperation with some regions of CIS.

Developing its strategic partnership with EU Leningrad Oblast is actively establishing contacts with EU member-states. During the last the dialogue was continued with European colleagues on the issues of so-called "new neighborhood mechanism" as an element of "European neighborhood policy", suggested by European Union. Several new projects were developed with the participation of Leningrad Oblast government with the purpose to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation of the regions of different European countries. Several European countries: Denmark, Finland, Sweden cooperated with the Northern Investment bank and The Fund for ecological cooperation of the Northern Dimension in the realization in Leningrad Oblast of the multilateral project "Northern Initiative" as an element of Northern Dimension policy.

The opportunities provided by various EU international and national programs of technical support were also actively used. To name only the most important among them: Tacis, Interreg, Good Neighbors programs, "SPRILO program" (UK), "Cross-border Cooperation" (Finland, Denmark), The program of Swedish Agency for International Cooperation, some programs of Denmark government and ministries.

Investment programs for the reconstruction and modernization of water-supplying and overflow systems are realized in Kirovsk, Gatchina, Tikhvin and Pikalevo. The purpose of the majority of international program was economical development of the region, improvements in every day life of its population, preservation of the environment and the prevention of ecological catastrophes.

In the end of 2005 Leningrad Oblast has established sustainable partnership with 21 foreign regions. There were joint projects with Southern Morava region of Czech Republic, lehns Sedermanland and Wornland in Sweden, Lower Slask in Poland, Belgian province Antwerp, province Nurland in Norway, federal land Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Germany, Arhus province in Denmark, Southern province in Finland, Maryland state in USA, Lombardia province in Italy. Various aspects of cooperation included cooperation in social and economic sphere, in cultural issues and youth issues. Because year 2006 was announced as a "year of China" in Russia, a special attention will be paid to the contacts with Chinese province Habai and some other regions in Asia such as Chunhonnampo province in Republic Korea and prefecture Kyoto in Japan.

One of the high priority direction for the international and interregional cooperation is advancing integration with the member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In this vein Leningrad Oblast is developing cooperation with the regions of Belarus republic, Ukraine and Armenia. Cooperation with Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan is being considered. Currently cooperation of Leningrad Oblast with Belarus is the most intensive. Mutually beneficial economic cooperation is a solid foundation for the friendly relationship.

Border region cooperation has a significant potential for the development of the trade, economical, cultural and humanitarian cooperation. Special attentions is paid to the realization of the program "The concept of the border regions cooperation in Russian Federation". The purpose of the Program is cooperation in resolving of the economic, transportation, energy, humanitarian and other problems in the border regions and creation of the so-called "friendship and mutual understanding belt" on the border of Leningrad Oblast with Finland and Estonia and also the realization of some joint projects.

2.5.1 Participation of Leningrad Oblast in the Baltic sea region Neighborhood program 2004-2006

The purpose of the program is to increase spatial integration and competitiveness of the Baltic sea region by enhancement of economic and social cooperation and development in the region. The "Neighborhood program" supports projects in following spheres:

- Development of common strategies and actions for macro-regions;
- Supporting sustainable spatial development of various sectors of economy;
- Sustainable and integrated development of coastal zones, islands and other special territories;
- Supporting balanced development of polycentric settlement structures;
- Creation of the stable communications system to improve spatial integration;
- Improvements in management of cultural and natural legacy and preservation of unique landscapes;
- Transnational initiatives in the sphere of institutional development and in enhancement of potential of different organizations

Following countries and regions participate in the program:

- Denmark, Sweden, Finland
- Germany (North-Eastern lands)
- Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia
- Poland, Norway
- Belarus: Minsk, Grodno, Brest and Vitebsk regions
- Russia Federation regions and federation subjects: St. Petersburg, Murmansk oblast, Leningrad Oblast, Pskov oblast, Novgorod oblast, Kaliningrad oblast, Arkhangelsk oblast, Republic of Karelia, Nenets autonomous district.

6 projects with the participation of Leningrad Oblast were approved in the 8-th and 9-th calls of proposals of the "Baltic sea region Neighborhood program in 2004-2006":

Title of the project	The partner, representing Leningrad Oblast	Lead partner	Budget in Euros
Efficient Administrative Structures as a Prerequisite for Successful Economic and Social Development of Rural Areas in Demographic Transition (A.S.A.P.)	Committee for Economic Development of Leningrad Oblast, The Union of the farmers of St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast	Ludwigslust County (Germany)	1,776,888
Regional Economic Development - networking between South Sweden and Kaliningrad (RED)	Municipality of Gatchina region, Municipality of Tosno region	The Region of Blekinge (Sweden)	790,336
Intermodality and Interoperability in the Baltic Sea Region - InterBatlic (InterBatlic)	Municipality of Kingisepp region	Klaipeda science and Technology Park (Lithuania)	3,129,653

Maritime Tourism Marketing in the Baltic Sea Region (MARITOUR)	Municipality of Kingisepp region, Municipality of Slantsevski region, Municipality of Vyborg region	Local Authority Kletzer Winkel (Germany)	1,889,792
Baltic Euroregional Network-EAST (BEN-EAST)	Municipality of Vyborg	Nordic Council of Ministers Information Office in Saint-Petersburg	508,693
Business Support for Sustainable Development-Business Matryoshka	Leningrad Oblast Center for entrepreneurship support, Committee for the development of the small-scale and medium business and consumer markets	Foundation Riga Region Development Agency (Latvia)	347,000