



CBC  
IN MY REGION

# ANNUAL EVENT 8.12.2021

## STAKEHOLDER'S KEYNOTE

*Petri Haapalainen, Ministerial Adviser*

*Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland*

Dear participants of this event, Ladies and Gentlemen

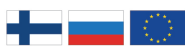
I am delighted to be with all of you to take part the 3rd Annual Event of the South-East Finland – Russia cross-border cooperation programme. I would like to thank all the organizers for gathering us to this online event, to take a closer look where we are with the implementation of the current 2014-2020 SEFR programme. This event also provides us a good forum to see what opportunities for cross-border cooperation the new programme period 2021-2027 offers.

The current South-East Finland – Russia CBC programme is an important tool for boosting regional growth and social and economic development in the border regions. Cooperation in the fields of education, R&D and business and SME development is in the core of this programme. The programme also successfully promotes cross-border mobility and clean environment. Many of these themes also bridge the current programme to the new 2021-2027 SEFR programme, that is just being finalized by the programming committee. Continuity makes reaching long-term goals in regional development possible.

The continuous call for proposals of the current programme was closed end of 2020 as the total funding of the programme had been committed. In total 224 project applications were submitted, of which 63 development projects were awarded. In addition, 9 Large Infrastructure Projects (LIPs) of the programme have started their activities.

As we all know, the overall circumstances have been very challenging for cross-border cooperation during the past two years, as national borders have been to a large extent closed and restrictions have prevented people from gathering to joint events. The pandemic has had an impact not only on the CBC projects, but also hindered the development in border regions in a much broader sense.

Despite the obvious challenges, it seems that the CBC projects have been able adapt to the situation, overcome obstacles and find alternative ways to implement their activities. This, to my eye, demonstrates both the strong competence of the project actors and their commitment to work with their neighbors across the border also in these new challenging circumstances.



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Cross-border cooperation programmes have been an important instrument for border regions to mitigate common challenges. The pandemic and restrictions related to it formed a new significant challenge, but I am confident that with cooperation done in the framework of the current and future CBC programmes has a positive impact for the recovery of the regions.

City of Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad region have been and remain to be appreciated partners for the Finnish regions on the other side of the border, namely Kymenlaakso, South Savo and South Karelia. This particular cooperation has a long history of working together to reach mutual goals.

The significance of the CBC cooperation of the border regions is the establishment of networks, exchange of experiences and information between different actors. As the participation to today's Annual Forum demonstrates, numerous stakeholders like cities and municipalities, universities and research institutions, SMEs, regional economic development and environmental actors and non-governmental organisations are able to address the topics of joint interest.

For the upcoming programme one of the goals has been to broaden this network of beneficiaries and attract new stakeholders to take part in cross-border cooperation. Opening targeted calls for smaller projects is a new element in the future SEFR 2021-2027, and it has been created to strengthen the local-level people-to-people contacts across the border.

In addition to this, the new programme will support environmental actions to support reaching the EU Green Deal targets, strengthen economic development in the regions, enhance cooperation in the fields of research and innovations, make the regions more accessible and put new emphasis on cross-border tourism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have said this many times before, but I will say it again: for Finland, Russia is an important neighbor and remains a significant partner in regional cooperation. The cross-border cooperation programmes implemented on the Finnish-Russian border are an important instrument for the border regions to mitigate common challenges and seize common opportunities. Finland looks forward to continue the good cooperation done within the framework of the CBC programmes with our Russian partners also in the future.

Thank you for your attention!

Благодарю за внимание!



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