

## **The Statement foreseen by Article 9(1)(b) summarising how environmental considerations and the opinions expressed have been taken into account**

Simultaneously with the preparation the Joint Operational Programme (JOP) the Joint Programming Committee (JPC) has taken fully into account and integrated into the Programme many of the received proposals by different authorities during the national public consultations and proposals from the Environment Report. The JPC discussed all comments and proposals received on the JOP content.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been carried out during the programming process with results reflected in the Environment Report. The elaboration of the Environment Report was initiated simultaneously with the preparation of the JOP in order to timely identify possible negative impacts on the environment. The JPC has been informed about the initial assessment (done by SEA expert).

It was very important to consult the representatives of national environmental authorities during the programming process in order to prepare the JOP in accordance with national environmental objectives. This was ensured in frames of public consultations for the JOP and the Environment Report. For both phases also public consultation meetings were held to discuss the SEA aspects. It should be noted, that in three occasions SEA aspects were discussed in JPC meetings organised within the Programme preparation process and valuable feedback and comments were received. The Environment Report has taken into account the comments and proposals received from the national environmental authorities during national public consultations.

Within the external impact analysis the impact of the Programme was assessed based on following criteria: impact to the Natura 2000 network area, impact on biodiversity, impact on the state of water-bodies, surface and groundwater quality, impact of noise and vibration, impact of air pollution, risk of environmental disasters, impacts related to waste management, impact to local and regional entrepreneurship, way of life and impact on the cultural heritage. According to current information the implementation of the Programme does not have significant negative impacts to the environment that would require monitoring measures or follow-up procedures, but such measures and conditions could be set to projects and plans compiled within the Programme. The above proposals were welcome and taken into consideration by the JPC. Alternative scenarios were not considered in preparation of the cross border cooperation programme within the period of current SEA. Comprehensive assessment with the 0-alternative (programme is not implemented) has been performed within the compliance analysis.

As a result of the compliance analysis, it can be said that regarding most of the criteria, the environmental benefits were clearer when implementing Programme activities. The criteria were best fulfilled regarding the nature environment and for those areas with wider impact. The impact was neutral regarding local criteria (health effects, noise and vibration). Programme activities are with neutral environmental effects regarding the criteria of the impact on the cultural heritage.

It is very important to protect the environment and promote different environment-friendly solutions while implementing the Programme. The proposals that are in the Environment Report will be discussed again while preparing other documentation of the Programme, for instance the Programme Manual. There are different possibilities in implementing the proposals outlined in the Environment Report. All the various possibilities will be discussed by both countries when finalizing the documentation of the Programme, and the selected measures applied to the Programme. It is important to include different environmental measures to the Programme also to be in line and promote national environmental objective of Estonia and Russia. Estonia will take all the provided recommendations within the Programme implementation phase, Russia will act in accordance to its national legislation, which would also allow to successfully taking on board the recommendations formulated in the Environment Report.

**The description of the measures decided concerning monitoring foreseen in Articles 9(1)(c) and 10 (monitoring)**

The Programme is determined to take possible environmental concerns very seriously, is willing to prevent, and if this is not possible – to identify at an early stage any unforeseen adverse effects of implementing the Programme and undertake appropriate remedial action as soon as possible.

Programme monitoring and evaluation will aim at improving the quality of the design and implementation, as well as at assessing and improving its consistency, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. Furthermore, the findings of monitoring and evaluations shall be taken into account in the programming and implementation cycle.

To identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects, and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action, the projects shall monitor their significant environmental impact on the environment. The projects which shall be required to monitor their significant environmental impact will be identified by the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) while selecting them for funding. Each such project must establish the most adequate environmental indicators for itself, and monitor these regularly. The JMC may require establishing additional environmental indicators to the selected projects besides what has been outlined in the Application Forms when applying for funding.

Project beneficiaries will submit progress reports to the JTS regularly. These reports will be the central source to monitor progress in implementation of projects. Detailed reporting procedure shall be described in the Programme Manual.

According to Environment Report the implementation of the Programme does not have significant negative impacts to the environment that would require monitoring measures or follow-up procedures. Nevertheless, all proposed measures and conditions will be set to projects and plans compiled within the Programme implementation period.

