

CONCLUSIONS OF THE SEMINAR “RENEWAL OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND SERVICES IN CROSS-BORDER CONTEXT

BEN project’s WP2.2 seminar took place on May 30-31 in Tallinn and Viinistu. The location itself – Viinistu village and Viinistu Art Gallery is an excellent example of public-private-partnership and the development of a local authority by uniting entrepreneurship and art. Altogether 74 representatives of mainly Estonian and Finnish municipalities participated in the event. There were also guest speakers from the oldest and the first Dutch-German cross-border organisation Euregio and from County Administrative Board of Stockholm.

A large part of the seminar was devoted to development of regions and especially common metropolitan region and its governance. The second large topic covered the next EU programming period and especially the Central Baltic Programme which is relevant for Estonia and Finland border area.

The main focus throughout the 2 days was on how to offer residents of a local authority good and secure living environment, how to create and assist entrepreneurial environment and how to develop local governments so that it would be good for everyone to live there. Several ideas were uttered how to prepare the next EU programming period to serve the cross-border cooperation area better. It was discussed hoe to raise and solve metropolitan area issues and how to find common solutions.

There were 4 workshops during the seminar.

1. Experiences of the mergers of municipalities

Moderator: Mr. Jüri Võigemast, director of the Association of the Estonian Cities

In this workshop the focus was on local government and its various roles and aspects. It was stressed that the role of a local government is to be a strong developer of the regions, the task is to network and relate activities important for citizens. The topic of a local authority as the bearer of local identity was mentioned several times. The prerequisites for merger include the common will and common aims. The local identity as well as the commitment of local people are very important. In Finland the local government is clearly the developer of the region, improve and guarantee services and development of local economic life. In Estonia the local governments have gone into details in their merger agreements. In Finland there has been more will, time and opportunities to generalise the processes. Thus, Estonia has this task still ahead. The suggestion was to make a comparative study of local government management processes in Estonia and Finland.

2. Metropolitan area governance

Moderator: Prof. Arno Allmann

The main statement of this workshop was the realisation that if the capital’s and metropolitan region’s arrangement and development issues can be solved, it would be good for the whole of Estonia and Finland. In Estonia there seems to be the attitude that if things are wrong in Tallinn than the rest of Estonia does well. This attitude definitely has to change. The local government arrangement issues can only be solved if the capital region is taken care of. We have to consider European global trends when discussing the local government models. The role of the central government and state diminishes and the role of the regions, especially capitals increases. The development of local government and selection of models requires a clear vision. In Tallinn we have a positive experience with vision conferences that has to be

continued. After those it is time to start compiling strategies which have to be followed by working out management models, which would correspond to new modern demands. Then we can think of the dimensions of the particular model from the social, legal, etc. point of view. It is not correct to do as in Estonia that to adopt a law first and then see what can be done with it. The good experiences are ca 70 km way from Tallinn and good cooperation ties can be developed via Helsinki-Tallinn Euregio. It is important to judge the experiences very critically and considering our own needs better.

3. Reforming provision of local government services

Moderator: Mr. Toomas Välimäe, Managing Director, Union of Harju County Municipalities

This workshop dealt with the issues of security and public transport. A very thorough overview of the public transport arrangement was provided about Helsinki, Uusimaa and Tallinn and the future of its surrounding area. The problems with public transport seem to be similar everywhere, namely people not buying tickets, a large number of political decision makers who do not reach agreements, technical conditions like standards, etc. It was noted that the common activities regarding public transport have to continue between Helsinki and Tallinn and there is a need to prioritise clearly the direction. There was a clear explanation that there will not be a common public transport ticket or a price in Helsinki and Tallinn in this decade. Helsinki city presented its security project which they would like to introduce in Tallinn and in the rest of Europe. The aim of the criminality reduction project is to increase the feeling of hometown by engagement of citizens, by activating people to communicate and cleaning their surroundings. The theory says that the fear for criminality increases even when the criminality itself does not grow. Thus, there is the need to decrease the feeling of fear. The people feel that they cannot do anything themselves to prevent the criminality but the surroundings can be prevented from degradation by activating people to clean and take care of their own houses and streets.

4. The New EU programming period and Estonian-Finnish cross-border cooperation

Moderator: Ms. Laine Valkama, Adviser of International Affairs, Uusimaa Regional Council

An example for the municipal level cooperation project “Kusti” (Interreg IIIA programme) was brought and discussed in the workshop. Each member of Euregio presented its visions and priorities for the next EU programming period especially in the context of the Central Baltic programme.