

Minutes of the 2nd meeting of the Estonian-Latvian Working Group for determining, prioritizing and coordinating the list of road sections for reconstruction in the border area

Participants:

Mr Vents Armands Krauklis, Chairman of Valka municipality
Mr Margus Lepik, Chairman of Valga municipality
Mr Andris Zunde, Executive director of Salacgriva municipality
Mr Jānis Liberts, Chairman of Ape municipality
Mr Artūrs Dukulis, Chairman of Alūksne municipality
Mr Enno Kase, Deputy Mayor for Municipal Property and Municipal Maintenance of Valga Municipality
Mr Urmas Kuldmaa, Traffic and road specialist of Valga municipality
Mr Valdis Barda, Chairman of Aloja municipality
Mr Imre Jugomäe, Chairman of Mulgi municipality
Mr Guntis Gladkins, Chairman of Rūjiena municipality
Mr Gundars Kains, Director of Development Administration of Latvian State Roads
Mr Hannes Nagel, Estonian Ministry of Finance

AGENDA

1. Overview of the IGC agenda issue as of December 2019
(*Information by Estonian Ministry of Finance*)
2. Overview of the road section priorities from the national respective authority perspective
(*Information by the Latvian State Roads*)
3. Round table discussion about the cooperation and solution perspectives in regard of covering the prioritized border area gravel road sections with black cover
4. Conclusions and decisions
5. Location and time of 3rd meeting of the working group

1. Overview of the IGC agenda issue as of December 2019

Mr Hannes Nagel of the Estonian Ministry of Finance informed the members of the informal working group about the progress after the November 6 Joint Session of the Estonian and Latvian Intergovernmental Commission.

2. Overview of the road section priorities from the national respective authority perspective

Mr Gundars Kains of the Latvian State Roads informed the members of the informal working group about the Latvian national priorities and methodology which is being used to compile the national road renovation list.

3. Round table discussion about the cooperation and solution perspectives in regard of covering the prioritized border area gravel road sections with black cover

Parties discussed the perspective of a joint Estonian-Latvian methodology for the national ranking systems in the border area and concluded that there is a need to acknowledge also the local point of view. It was concluded that the border area state roads would not have any chance in the near future if to consider only the national methodology which is used to compile the road renovation lists. The daily road traffic volumes on road sections are incomparable in comparison of the border areas, major centres and capital areas.

At the same time there is a clear need to provide an explained justification for any of the road section improvement proposal in order to initiative a constructive dialogue with the respective ministries. Furthermore, the possibilities and conditions for adding new road sections into the August 21, 2018 list of road

sections was discussed. Parties come to a conclusion that only once the final document has been prepared with the relevant justification and up-to date data this proposal is reasonable and ready to be submitted to the relevant ministries for recognition.

4. Conclusions and decisions

The parties consider it important to find a solution to the poor state of the state roads in the border regions. Improving border area state roads will help to revitalize the socio-economic situation of border regions, increase cross-border mobility, increase tourism and better connect peripheral areas with inland centres.

At the same time, parties acknowledged that in the near future it will not be possible to improve all road sections that are important for the border region municipalities, and it is important to consider both countries' budget resources.

Where possible, external solutions for Interreg programs should also be sought to address this obstacle. One option could be to consider a combination of mainstream programs and Interreg programs, which would still require a political decision and cross-border institutional cooperation.

The parties acknowledged that the list of national roads (please see page 5 of the [joint statement](#)) agreed at the 1st Joint Session of the Governments of the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Estonia on August 21, 2018 in Riga should be more clarified and supplemented.

Parties also acknowledged that black covering would allow the relevant national authorities of both countries to make also smaller-scale improvements to border area state roads in a more flexible way by taking into account the availability of different financial sources.

Thus, the informal Working Group established on October 3, 2019 and operating under the Estonian and Latvian Intergovernmental Commission (IGC), recommends the relevant national authorities focusing only on black cover instead of asphalt in regard of border area road improvements.

During the 2nd meeting of the working group it was decided that:

1. The prioritized list of border area state road sections shall consist of only state roads.
2. The the following road sections were high-lighted as priorities of the pre-liminary list:
 - i. Ērgeme–Omuļi–Kõrtsi–Tõrva;
 - ii. Gaujiena–Lejaskrogs–Taheva–Valga;
 - iii. Abja–Paluoja–Penuja–Lode–Rūjiena;
3. The final document shall include the following elements: A) statistics table, B) road section maps, C) summary table of road section justifications and D) specified investment table. The relevant and up-to date data in regard of the elements:
 - i. A and B shall be provided by the Latvian State Roads and Estonian Road Administration;
 - ii. C shall be prepared by each of the relevant border area Estonian and Latvian municipality and submitted to the Estonian Ministry of Finance;
 - iii. D shall be analyzed and prepared by the Latvian State Roads and Estonian Road Administration.
4. The border area municipalities neither require nor request the national governments and relevant authorities to cover the surfaces of the identified border area state road sections with asphalt. Instead parties expect the state road section improvement only to be carried out by black covering technique.

5. Each of the border area Estonian-Latvian cross-border municipality pair can submit only the most relevant cross-border state road section to the final list which is to be prioritized before submission to the respective Estonian and Latvian ministries for recognition.
6. The final document shall be prepared with the help of the Estonian Ministry of Finance by latest **January 15, 2020**.

5. Location and time of 3rd meeting of the working group

It was decided that prior the completion of the final document with the above mentioned content there is no need to meet. Interim written form and phone consultations shall be carried out based on the actual need.

The Location and time of the 3rd meeting of the working group shall be decided on **January 15, 2020**.