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# On the Future Role of Kaliningrad Oblast of Russia as an “International Development Corridor”

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**Abstract:** *Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation has a unique position in the Baltic Sea Region due to its physiographic situation and, thereby, it plays an active role in geopolitical and economic processes that occur in the Baltic Sea Region. This, first of all, happens owing to its exclave position that causes to a great extent a necessity for close cross-border integration for the developing economy of the Oblast. The article considers new spatial forms of international economic integration (NSFIEI) contributing to the development of border regions; distinguishing of the border regions as international “development corridors” has been substantiated within the general region classification; the place of Kaliningrad Oblast regarding the level of economic development and maturity of external relations among the border regions of Russia has been shown; its role as an “international development corridor” of Russia and EU has also been viewed. The comparative method and the technique of economic geography classification have been applied.*

**Key words:** *border regions, international development corridor, Kaliningrad Oblast of Russia*

## **Introduction**

Kaliningrad Oblast - a Russian exclave in the Baltic Sea Region with an area of 15 thousand km<sup>2</sup> and population of 970 thousand people - has both disadvantages and advantages related to its geographic position. The advantages are quite objective, i.e. they exist regardless of any market-determined factors. These are seaside location, natural conditions favourable compared to most Russian regions, neighbourhood with the EU countries and relative proximity of economically developed regions of Russia. At the same time, the disadvantages (exclave region) are subjective, as they are associated with changing political relations between Russia and other countries of the Baltic region, especially those where transit communication routes between Kaliningrad Oblast and other Russian regions run. This article examines the possibility of using the objective advantages in the development of Kaliningrad Oblast, in this context their full-scale implementation is

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possible only provided elimination of the subjective drawbacks represented by the current deterioration of political relations between Russia and the EU countries.

### *The concept of “development corridor”*

Developers of development strategies for Kaliningrad Oblast relate its socio-economic prospects, in most cases, with increased cross-border cooperation. It is referred to participation of existing or emerging new spatial forms of international economic integration (NSFIEI) in the activity. The specific character of internal and external cross-border links enables researchers to distinguish various forms of territorial socio-economic systems as NSFIEI. At the macro level they are represented by large regions, growth triangles, mega corridors, and transboundary coastal zones. The meso-level comprises European regions, development corridors and Scandinavian groups. At the micro level, cross-border industrial-districts, transboundary clusters, polycentric border bridge regions can be distinguished<sup>4</sup>. All of them are nuclei of the cross-border meso- and micro-regions formed around them.

Unlike the inner regions formed within a country, cross-border regions often have less close ties between their parts belonging to different countries, as compared with these parts' ties with neighbouring regions of their own country. However, they largely determine not only the internal economy structure and special character of social life of national border regions, but also, in some cases (for example, when it comes to international regions - development corridors), a place in the domestic territorial division of labour.

One of the forms of international integration is a bipolar territorial system - Tricity (Gdansk - Gdynia - Sopot) - Kaliningrad, developed by Polish professor Tadeusz Palmovsky.<sup>5</sup> He substantiated the concept of the bipolar territorial system. With the view of developing this idea, Kaliningrad scientists proposed to form a tripolar system including Klaipeda as well and development of production functions of the European regions (**Figure 1**).<sup>6</sup> The establishment of cross-border clusters on both sides of the border of Russia and EU countries is so well argued.<sup>7</sup> There are proposals aiming at joint use of resources of Vistula and Curonian Lagoons and their coasts by Russia, Poland and Lithuania.<sup>8</sup> A number of works has been devoted to improvement of cross-border cooperation forms engaging Kaliningrad Oblast and neighbouring Polish and Lithuanian regions.<sup>9</sup> Consecutive development of these concepts resulted in substantiation of the formation of cross-border regions.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Nikolay Vladimirovich Kaledin et al., “Networking as a Fundamental Factor in Cross-border Region Formation,” *Geology, geography. Newsletter of St. Petersburg State University* 4 (2008): 130-139.

<sup>5</sup> Tadeusz Palmovsky, “New Baltic Bipolar Model of Inter-regional Cooperation,” *Newsletter of the Kaliningrad State University* 6 (2004).

<sup>6</sup> Valentin Sergeevich Korneevets and Gennady Mikhailovich Fedorov, “European Regions – A New Interaction Format,” *Cosmopolis* 2, 21 (2008): 78-85.

<sup>7</sup> Anadey Sergeevich Mikhailov, “International Cluster Geography in the Baltic Region,” *Baltic region* 1, 19 (2014): 149-163.

<sup>8</sup> Elena Gennadijevna Kropinova, “Cooperation between Russia and EU in the Field of Innovative Tourism Development by the Example of Cooperation Programme ‘Lithuania – Poland – Russia’,” *Baltic region* 4, 18 (2013): 67-80.

<sup>9</sup> Nikolay Maratovich Mezhevich, *Cross-border Cooperation and Activity Practice of the European Regions in the North-West of Russia and Belarus: Practical Experience, Legislative Support* (St. Petersburg: SPb University Publishing House, 2009); Nina Yurievna Oding and Gennady Mikhailovich Fedorov, “Russian Participation Activation in the Cross-border Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region,” *Newsletter of I. Kant RSU* 3 (2009): 63-69; *North-west of Russia in the Baltic Sea Region: Problems and Prospects of Economic Interaction and Cooperation*, ed. Jacek

**Figure 1.** *The tripolar system: Tricity (Poland) – Kaliningrad (Russia) – Klaipeda (Lithuania).*



**Source:** Gennady Mikhailovich Fedorov, *Do you know the Kaliningrad region?* (Kaliningrad: IKBFU publisher, 2009), 178.

Another interesting idea is related to development of the concept of the regions – “development corridors”, where various NSFIEI can be combined. The regions can be divided into certain types depending on their qualitative characteristics that determine the direction and rate of development. According to the well-known classification of John Friedmann, the notion of international “development corridors” dates back to the classification of regions proposed by Friedmann who identified the following types of regions: core regions, upward-transition regions, downward-transition regions, resource-frontier regions, and development corridors. Friedmann’s classification was made in terms of known centre-periphery concept, involving polarisation of the regions amplified at all territorial levels. According to this concept, marginal, peripheral, i.e. border areas most often become depressed. The most effective is cooperation between of countries and border regions of different countries in the event that each of them has a fairly high level of socio-economic development. However, the border territories of two neighbouring countries, which have different but complementary resources, developing their cross-border cooperation may turn into new growth poles.

The greatest effect, in accordance with the concept of “growth triangles”, can be provided subject to implementation of a joint development strategy by three neighbouring regions, each of which has one of the following resources - natural, human, financial (and / or technological).<sup>11</sup> The “development corridors” are rapidly developing since they are

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Zaukha et al. (Kaliningrad: IKBFU publisher 2008); Aleksandr Anatolievich Sergunin, “Russia and the European Union in the Baltic Region: Thorny Path to Partnership,” *Baltic region* 4, 18 (2013): 53-66; Gennady Mikhailovich Fedorov et al., *Russia in the Baltic Sea Region: 1990-2012* (Kaliningrad: IKBFU Publisher, 2013), 252.

<sup>10</sup> Valentin Sergeevich Korneevets, *International Regionalization in the Baltic Sea Region* (St. Petersburg: SPb University Publishing House, 2010); Gennady Fedorov and Valentin Korneevets, *Theoretical Aspects of Forming the Trans-border Regions. Human Resources — The Main Factor of Regional Development* (Klaipeda: Klaipeda University Press, 2010), 46-52; Gennady Fedorov, “Border Position as a Factor of Strategic and Territorial Planning in Russian Regions in the Baltic,” *Baltic region* 14, 21 (2014): 71-82.

<sup>11</sup> John Friedmann, *Regional Development Policy* (Cambridge: Mass.: MIT Press, 1968).

located between the “core regions” and in their development they use the innovations that are created in each of them.

Fedorov and Klemeshev introduced the notion of an “international development corridor”. According to the researchers, a border region can potentially become such a development corridor if certain conditions are fulfilled. Among those, we can name the international relations and active cooperation in the sphere of services, and developing market relations.

International regions - development corridors of neighbouring countries include, first of all, business entities, connected by means of close economic ties - not so much aimed at meeting the needs of the border regions themselves, but at the transit service between two countries. Accordingly, the political cooperation between the authorities, political organisations of neighbouring states and cultural relations between the entities of education, science, health, sports and culture get closer. All of these cross-border ties are formed on an equal basis, i.e. they are horizontal. They provide for international networks formation, which are localised as sector and cross-sector international clusters and, ultimately, the territorial system in the form of cross-border region - an international network covering the whole territory of cooperating border regions of neighbouring countries.

### ***Russian border regions and “development corridors”***

Table 1 shows the breakdown of Russian border regions (with land border) in terms of the level of economic development (by the value of gross regional product) and the level of foreign trade development (by the foreign trade turnover).

**Table 1.** *The breakdown of border regions of the RF according to the level of economic development and the degree of involvement in the RF foreign trade.*<sup>12</sup>

<i>Level of economic development</i> GRP, thousand roubles per capita, 2013	<i>Level of foreign trade development</i> Foreign trade turnover, thousand US dollars per capita, 2012			
	20.00 – 5.01 <i>With extremely active foreign trade</i>	5.00 – 1.01 <i>With active foreign trade</i>	1.00 – 0.51 <i>Poor development of foreign trade</i>	0.50 – 0.01 <i>Extremely poor development of foreign trade</i>
550 – 376 <i>Highly developed</i>	<b>Leningrad, Belgorod, Tyumen Oblasts</b>			
375 – 226 <i>Medium developed</i>	<b>Kaliningrad Oblast</b>	<b>Republic of Karelia;</b> Krasnodar, Khabarovsk, and Primorski Krai; <b>Murmansk, Orenburg, Kursk, Voronezh, Novosibirsk, Amur, Samara, and Chelyabinsk Oblasts</b>	Omsk Oblast	Jewish Autonomous Region
225 – 151 <i>Less developed</i>		Republic of Buryatia; Bryansk, Astrakhan, Saratov; <b>Pskov, Smolensk, Rostov, and Volgograd Oblasts</b>	Altai Krai, Zabaykalsky Krai; Kurgan Oblast	

<sup>12</sup> Note: The regions bordering on the EU countries are marked in bold.

150 – 76 <i>Least developed</i>			Karachay-Cherkess Republic	Republics: Kabardino-Balkarian, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Altai, and Tyva
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**Source:** Compiled by authors based on the data of: “Federalnaya Slujba Gosudarstvennoy Statistiki” [Federal State Statistics Service], accessed April 20, 2015, <http://www.gks.ru/>. Highly and medium developed subjects of the Russian Federation with most dynamic foreign trade, i.e. highly developed in terms of economy, qualify, first and foremost, for the regions – international “development corridors” (Tyumen, Leningrad, and Belgorod Oblasts) and the medium developed Kaliningrad Oblast.

Tyumen Oblast can be excluded from the study owing to the fact that it is not involved in the cross-border trade and does not export hydrocarbons to Kazakhstan which it borders on. Therefore, the main conditions for the establishment of the “development corridor” are not fulfilled here: there are no mutual goods and capital flows.

In connection with the latest political events, the intensity of the international cooperation between Belgorod Oblast and the border Kharkov Region of the Ukraine has declined significantly. Until recently, a typical “international development corridor” has been shaping up here. Both regions are economically advanced; they were involved not only in the cross-border trade, but also in the exchange of technologies, labour resources, innovations, etc.<sup>13</sup> A distinguishing feature of the cooperation was also the establishment of joint ventures on both sides of the border. Thus, for example, as of data of the year 2011, among all the foreign entities in Belgorod Oblast approximately 70 % were enterprises with Ukrainian capital<sup>14</sup>. At present, these relationships have been basically terminated, in consequence of which the region has lost its functions of an “international development corridor”.

In the long term, the medium developed regions featuring dynamic foreign trade can transform into “international development corridors”. These regions on condition of the intensification of international cooperation with border regions will be able to approximate to the indices of Kaliningrad Oblast. For the subjects of the Asian part of Russia (Khabarovsk and Primorski Krai; Orenburg, Novosibirsk, Amur, Samara, and Chelyabinsk Oblasts), this seems feasible provided that the border regions of Kazakhstan and China, which now feature an average and low level of economic indicators, are developing. The Primorski Krai can today be considered as a forming “international development corridor”. While at the moment it is, like in the case of Tyumen Oblast, mainly functioning as a transit area for the export of natural resources, it is also dynamically developing as a common centre for international cooperation in the other spheres in the Far East. For the Russian regions bordering on Ukraine (Krasnodar Krai, Kursk and Voronezh Oblasts) this will be facilitated by the rehabilitation of the cross-border relations and cooperation.

The formation of “international development corridors” in this group's subjects (Republic of Karelia and Murmansk Oblast) bordering on the European Union and Norway seems difficult at the moment. This is to a certain degree connected with a

<sup>13</sup> *Russian-Ukrainian Borderzone: Twenty Years of Divided Unity*, ed. Vladimir Aleksandrovich Kolosov and Olga Ivanovna Vendina (Moscow: Novy Hronograf, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> “Federalnaya Slujba Gosudarstvennoy Statistiki” [Federal State Statistics Service], accessed April 20, 2015, <http://www.gks.ru/>.

relatively close position of Leningrad Oblast and St. Petersburg which are centres of the main flows of commodities, services, capital etc. Besides that, the Republic of Karelia and Murmansk Oblast as well as the bordering regions of Finland and Norway feature a low level of the population density and that of the infrastructure development which also hampers cooperation intensification.<sup>15</sup> The Leningrad Oblast has for a long time been considered as a “development corridor” along with St. Petersburg which has the status of the only “core region” in the North-West Russia. It is only Kaliningrad Oblast that can compete with St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region as regards the role of “development corridor” (which is confirmed by the data in **Table 2**).

***Specific character of Kaliningrad Oblast***

Kaliningrad Oblast does not have a considerable internal natural and economic potential; it is developed under difficult environmental conditions.

**Table 2.** *Strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the economic development in the Kaliningrad region.*

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Strengths:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Similarity to developed regions of Russia.</li> <li>2. Similarity to developed countries of Europe.</li> <li>3. Mild climate (as compared to some other parts of Russia).</li> <li>4. Access to the sea.</li> <li>5. Availability of mineral resources (amber, oil).</li> <li>6. High intensity of land-utilisation.</li> <li>7. Dense transport network.</li> <li>8. Well-developed market conditions (as compared to the other regions of Russia).</li> <li>9. High level of public education.</li> <li>10. Availability of scientific and research potential.</li> <li>11. Regulations of the Special Economic zone and the Federal Special Program of regional development</li> <li>12. Cooperation with neighbour states.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Weaknesses:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Spatial isolation.</li> <li>2. Differences in land-utilisation conditions.</li> <li>3. Cold climate (as compared to the average European).</li> <li>4. Lack of deep-water ports.</li> <li>5. Poor energy supply.</li> <li>6. High power load.</li> <li>7. Poor quality of transport communications.</li> <li>8. Poor-developed market conditions (as compared to the European countries).</li> <li>9. Disbalance between the specialists’ training and the needs of the economy.</li> <li>10. Poor demand for science.</li> <li>11. Unstable conditions of economic activity.</li> <li>12. Geopolitical inconsistency.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Opportunities:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access to the Russian market.</li> <li>2. Development of external relations.</li> <li>3. Low salaries and wages.</li> <li>4. Use of cheap marine transport.</li> <li>5. Exploitation of local raw materials.</li> <li>6. Intensification of social and economic relations in the region.</li> <li>7. Gateways to European transport network.</li> <li>8. High pace of development.</li> <li>9. Integration in the European education system.</li> <li>10. International scientific and research</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Threats:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Autarchy.</li> <li>2. Difficulties in entering the EU market.</li> <li>3. Heightened costs.</li> <li>4. Competition on the part of the Baltic countries ports.</li> <li>5. Potential obstacles in the energy delivery.</li> <li>6. Accute ecological problems.</li> <li>7. Removal of the region from the European transport network.</li> <li>8. Decreasing pace of development.</li> <li>9. High unemployment rate and low labour</li> </ol>

<sup>15</sup> Valentin Sergeevich Korneevets, *International Regionalization in the Baltic Sea Region* (St. Petersburg: SPb University Publishing House, 2010).

projects. 11. External relations development. 12. Baltic sea – “sea of peace”.	productivity. 10. Degradation of scientific and research potential. 11. Economic stagnation. 12. Potential threat of conflicts.
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The ambiguity of development conditions determines existing numerous strategies and proposals for the region’s development, whereas it is the strategy of international “development corridor” that seems to be very promising to us. It enables us to take Strengths into account and eliminate Weaknesses, use Opportunities and avoid Threats. A distinguishing feature of the Kaliningrad Oblast as a “development corridor”, whose characteristics have already been considered by the *Eurolimes* journal earlier<sup>16</sup>, is the fact that it is located not between the Russian regions but between the regions of Russia and those of EU. That is, the innovation flows for it can take place both from Russian and West European regions. On the basis of this, the Kaliningrad Oblast (as well as any other region with similar functions) can be named a “development corridor”. The aim to penetrate the economic space of the Baltic Sea Region was set as early as in 2003. All the strategies of the socio-economic development of Kaliningrad Oblast have been considering external economic relations as an important factor of the regional development.

***Kaliningrad region as connecting point of cultural and tourism development within the “development corridor”***

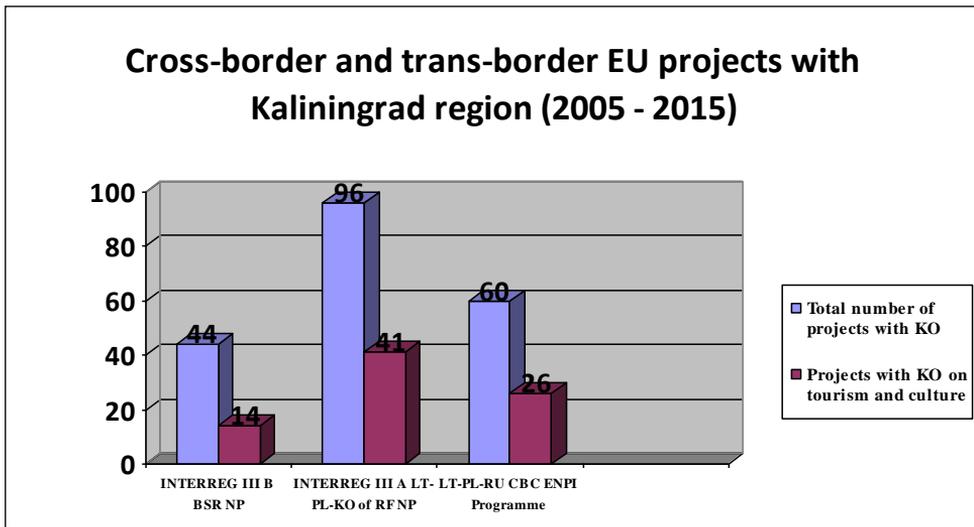
A crucial condition for the implementation of favourable prerequisites of the Kaliningrad Oblast development<sup>17</sup> (that is also typical of other border regions) is the commitment of neighbours living on both sides of the border to intense and mutually beneficial economic cooperation and tourism development. This factor is taken into consideration in the strategy of the socio-economic development of the Oblast [Strategy of the socio-economic] and other documents regarding the region's development.

The Kaliningrad region, as the border exclave of Russian Federation, is active actor of different cross-border and trans-border joint projects within different Programmes co-financed by the European Union. It is important to pay the attention to joint projects implemented for tourism development and heritage protection. During 15 years, within the period from 2005 till 2015 there were 200 joint projects with Kaliningrad region were implemented, 81 of them aimed on tourism development, culture and heritage protection within three Programmes as INTERREG III B BSR Neighbourhood Programme, Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013, South Baltic Programme, Lithuania-Poland – Kaliningrad Region of RF INTERREG III A Neighbourhood Programme, CBC ENPI Lithuania-Poland-Russia Programme 2007-2013 (**Figure 2, 3**).

<sup>16</sup> Yuri Rozhkov-Yuryevsky and Gennady Fedorov, “The Correlation between the Barrier and Contact Functions of the Kaliningrad Section of the Russian Border,” in *Eurolimes 15, A Security Dimension as Trigger and Result of Frontiers Modifications*, ed. Giuliana Laschi et al. (Oradea: Oradea University Press, Spring 2013), 77-90.

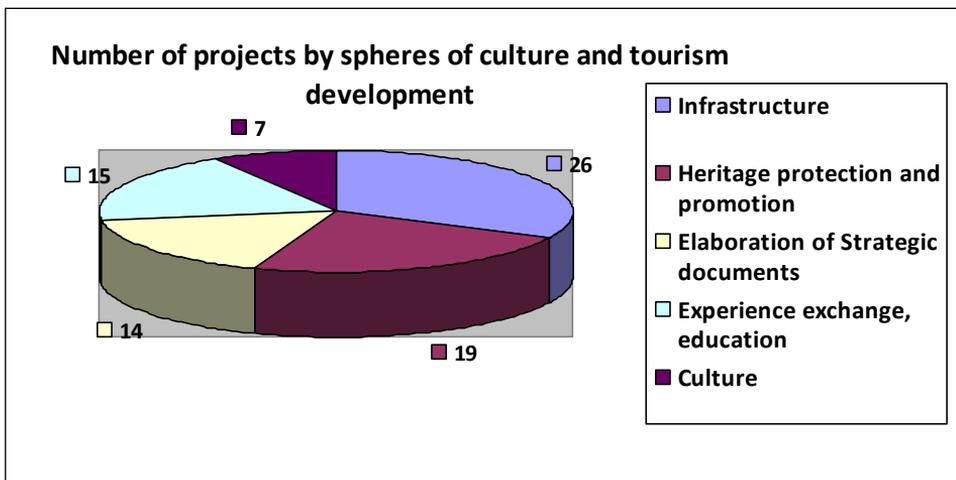
<sup>17</sup> Konstantin Konstantinovich Gimbitsky et al., “The Development of Kaliningrad Regional Economy: A New Stage of Restructuring,” *The Baltic Region* 1, 19 (2014): 41-53, accessed April 15, 2015, [http://journals.kantiana.ru/eng/baltic\\_region/1713/4874/](http://journals.kantiana.ru/eng/baltic_region/1713/4874/).

**Figure 2.** Cross-border and trans-border EU projects with Kaliningrad region in period 2005-2015 years.



**Source:** Compiled by authors based on the data of official web pages of Programmes: “Baltic Sea Region. INTERREG III,” accessed May 20, 2015, <http://www.bsrinterreg.net/contacts.html>; “Triple Jump. Projects of Lithuania, Poland and Kaliningrad Region of Russian Federation Neighbourhood Programme,” accessed May 20, 2015, [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/archive/country/commu/docoutils/interregiii\\_triplejump.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/country/commu/docoutils/interregiii_triplejump.pdf); “Lithuania-Poland-Russia ENPI Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013,” accessed May 20, 2015, <http://lt-pl-ru.eu/en,11>.

**Figure 3.** Number of EU projects implemented with Kaliningrad region on different spheres of tourism and culture development.



**Source:** Compiled by authors based on the data of official web-pages of Programmes: “Baltic Sea Region. INTERREG III”; “Triple Jump. Projects of Lithuania, Poland and Kaliningrad Region of Russian Federation Neighbourhood Programme”; “Lithuania-Poland-Russia ENPI Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013”.

Most of those projects were soft projects, and a lot of tourism products, Strategies and Programme documents were elaborated within the projects, as well as experience exchange and educational seminars and workshops. Last Programme, CBC ENPI Lithuania-Poland-Russia Programme 2007-2013, brought the opportunity to implement the infrastructure projects and make the new objects as for tourism development, culture and traditions promotion, as well as heritage protection. Most significant infrastructure projects are follows:

- 1) CROSSROADS 2.0 – Lagoons as crossroads of tourism and interactions of people of South-Eastern Baltic.

The new interactive tourism object was constructed in Kaliningrad region – the open-air museum of Viking epoch, “Ancient Sambia”. This museum was constructed as a small settlement of Viking age on Curonian Spit of Kaliningrad region. The interactive excursions are organising in this museum, and, mini-festivals “Days of Ancient Handicrafts”, representing the historical reconstruction of ancient life within the region. The next object of tourism and heritage infrastructure is reconstructed museum Fishing Farmstead in Neringa, Lithuania. The next soft, but very important activity of CROSSROADS 2.0 project is organisation of the huge event – festival of historical reconstruction and music “People of Ancient Baltic”. The festival was organised annually, in 2013 and 2014 in Kaliningrad region and Poland. And, as the sustainability indicator, it is important to mention that in 2015 this festival was organised without project financial support.

- 2) Baltic Amber Coast. Development of cross-border area through building up and modernisation of tourism infrastructure.

The wooden promenade was constructed in Kaliningrad region (Yantarny settlement), which became an attraction as for guests of the Kaliningrad region, and for its inhabitants.

- 3) Next project (case-study), which is important to mention, is project “Museums over borders”.

This project was implemented with partner from Elblag, Elblag museum. The main infrastructural effect of the project is reconstruction of museum from Kaliningrad region, Fridland Gate. For this moment the interest to the museum Fridland Gate is quite high, and the number of visitors increased.

Among the competitive advantages that promote the further development of tourism and culture in Kaliningrad Oblast as an “international development corridor” the following can be identified:

- a large number of state border crossing points (the Oblast ranks first in Russia);
- a developed transport infrastructure (the construction of a deep-water port is being considered that will increase the cargo handling capacities); and
- a high migration attractiveness of the Oblast.

One of the steps towards the Oblast's development as a “cooperation corridor” was the establishment in the summer 2012 of the local border traffic between the Kaliningrad Oblast and the neighbouring Polish regions, which created new opportunities for culture and tourism development of border regions.

### ***Conclusions***

Border regions are often referred to as lagging behind, being less profitably located in the national marketplace. However, in the face of active international ties connecting primarily core regions and advanced regions of some countries with the corresponding region types in other countries, there emerge specific types of border regions serving these ties, namely the international development corridors. Those include,

among the Russian regions belonging to the North-West Federal District, above all, St. Petersburg with the Leningrad region and Kaliningrad Oblast. Adjoining territory of foreign countries also belong to the type of regions - international development corridors. Speaking about Kaliningrad region as “development corridor”, it is obviously, that the region is very active in implementation of common international projects co-financed by the EU. And the tourism development and promotion activities play significant role in cross-border and trans-border cooperation between Kaliningrad region and Poland.

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