

Dear colleagues and partners,

First of all, we would like to express our regret for not being able to participate in person at the launching event of the Estonia-Latvia-Russia ENPI CBC programme.

Nevertheless, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the participating countries, all the partners and colleagues on the great work done so far over the past three years. The Joint Managing Authority, hosted by the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments of Latvia, with the support from partners in Estonia and Russia, and more recently with the support of the Joint Technical Secretariat, has carried out an excellent, albeit difficult, work.

The first Joint Task Force groups started their activity in 2007 and it took some time to launch the programme. However, the relatively slow start could also be explained by the innovative nature of the ENPI CBC programmes as compared to the Neighbourhood Programmes (2004-2006).

At the programme level, all the partners (Estonia, Latvia and Russia) are treated equally and decided together on the main priorities of the programme. At the project level, only one contract with one single budget will be concluded with the beneficiary and its partners on both side of the EU external border. There again, all partners independently of their origin (EU or not) will have equal rights in the management of projects.

The launching of the first call for proposals represents the culmination of the joint efforts undertaken so far. It is also a sign of the huge work that lies ahead of us. We are all conscious of the day-to-day implementation challenges that we

will have to overcome together. But we also know that these challenges will be addressed on an equal footing and we strongly believe that it is worth it.

In that sense, we hope to have the first projects starting their activities by the end of this year already. We also look forward to the partners launching Large Scale Projects, which will address common challenges in a variety of sectors. Concrete things must happen now; the programme must start delivering the results all the partners agreed upon.

We see this launching event as an excellent opportunity to meet partners and colleagues and share the positive accomplishments attained so far. We also see this conference as an opportunity to think of the tasks that lay ahead of us and of the ways which will bring this programme further and will make concrete actions begin. I fully trust that the Managing Authority and all the participating countries will come up with high quality projects to ensure that this programme will be a big success.

We wish you a fruitful event ahead and success to your programme.

Bodil Persson

Head of CBC Sector

On behalf of Europe Aid CBC team