



Need for small-scale Estonian – Latvian cross-border cooperation projects

Survey of border municipalities

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1 Introduction and background

Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation (Peipsi CTC) held a number of discussions with Estonian and Latvian cross-border cooperation stakeholders during the years 2017-2019 about Estonian – Latvian cross-border cooperation and the Estonia – Latvia Cross-border Programme.

It was repeatedly pointed out that there is a need for supporting small-scale people-to-people projects between Estonia and Latvia, because small projects are a perfect tool for bringing together local people on a cross-border level and strengthening the fabric of cooperation.

However, this need is not addressed by the Estonia – Latvia Programme 2014-2020, as it does not finance projects, which are commonly recognised as small projects.

The current paper provides an input to the programming process of the Estonia – Latvia Programme 2021-2027 and gives an overview, which cooperation topics would the local stakeholders want to address with the help of small-scale projects.

2 Approach and results of the survey

Peipsi CTC carried out a web survey among local stakeholders in the border municipalities of Estonia and Latvia in April-May 2019. The aim of the survey was to find out, in which fields would the people, who live in the immediate border area, want to cooperate, if Estonia – Latvia Programme 2021-2027 will support small-scale cooperation projects. The survey targeted:

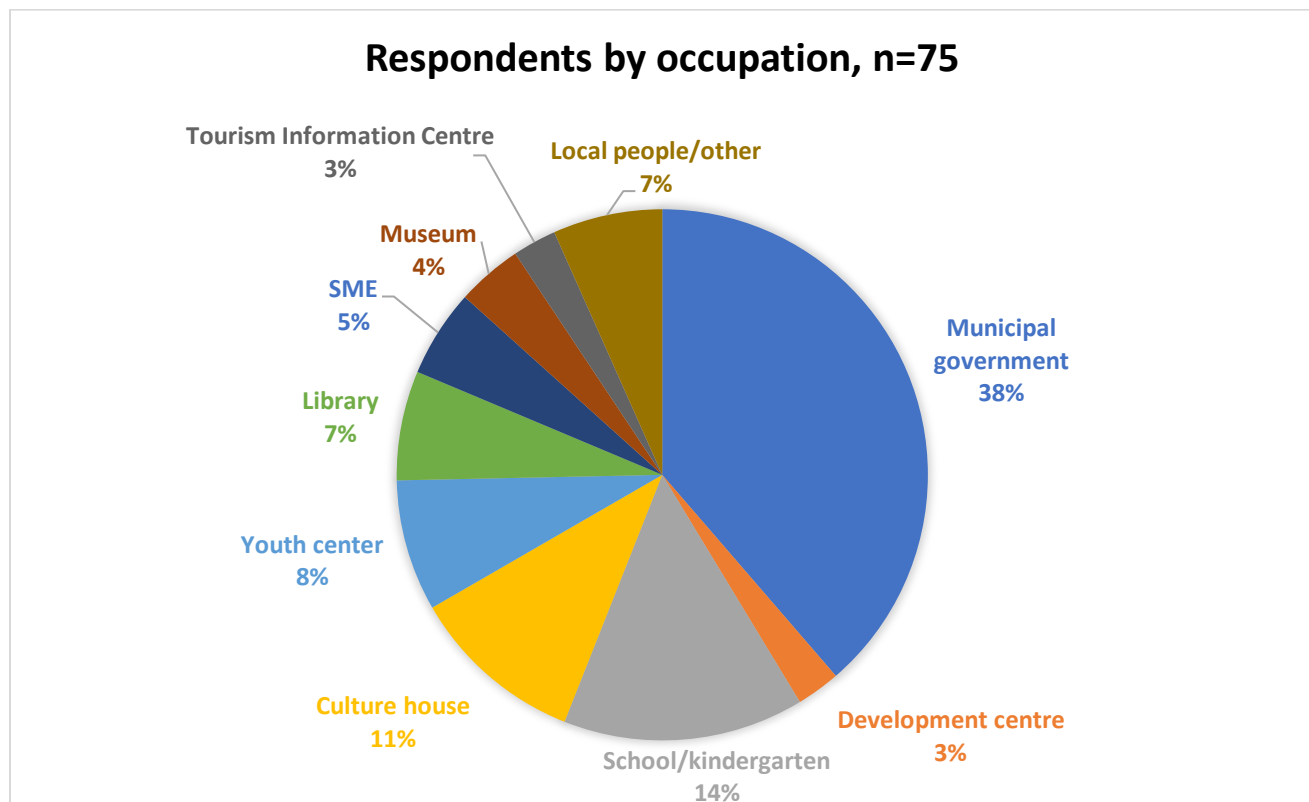
- a) potential idea generators and leaders of small projects, *i.e.* active people, who live in the municipalities that have a land border with Estonia or Latvia;
- b) their top themes for realistic cross-border cooperation in the frames of small-scale projects.

The target group of the survey was narrowed down to the people of the municipalities on the land border of Estonia and Latvia (8 in Latvia, 6 in Estonia), as their daily reality demands them to think also in transboundary context, and there is regular communication across the border between these municipalities.

However, it would be fair to assume that cross-border cooperation interests of the municipalities located on the border, reflect well also the cross-border cooperation interests of stakeholders located further from the border.

The survey was carried out using the questionnaires in the Latvian and Estonian language.

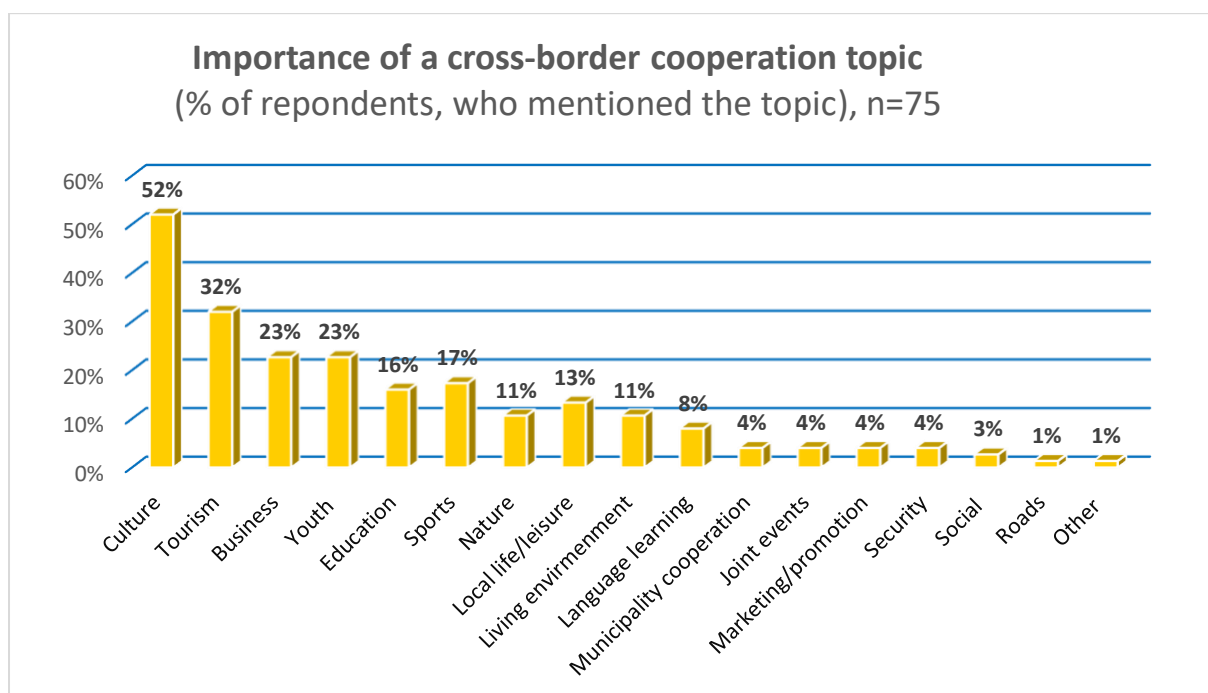
The survey was responded by 75 key stakeholders (44 from Latvia, 31 from Estonia) from 13 of the targeted 14 border municipalities (1 Latvian municipality did not deliver any responses).



The main question of the survey was: under which topics would it be most realistic and necessary to carry out Estonian – Latvian small-scale cooperation projects in your community/school/municipality?

The question was an open-end question. The web survey did not have a pre-defined list of cross-border cooperation topics offered to the respondents. All the proposed cross-border cooperation topics were generated by the respondents themselves.

The summary of the responses is presented in the figure below.



3 Conclusion and proposals

The high response rate of border municipalities to the survey confirms the earlier assumptions of Peipsi CTC that the inhabitants of border municipalities have significant interest towards the option to carry out grass-root cross-border cooperation in the frames of small projects, and they will be active applicants, if such projects are supported by the Estonia – Latvia Programme 2021-2027.

Based on the results of the survey we propose to insert in the Estonia - Latvia Programme 2021-2027 an option to finance small-scale cross-border projects.

The financing scheme for small projects in the Estonia-Latvia Programme 2021-2027 could follow these main principles used by cross-border Interreg programmes across Europe:

- programme support per project is up to 50 000 EUR;
- application and reporting of the projects is simplified compared to “ordinary” projects;
- the programme uses extensively financial simplifications (e.g. flat rates for staff and administration costs, unit costs and lump sums related to events, etc) for implementing the projects.

The total budget allocated for the small projects could be up to 10% of the total programme funds.