

Local Self Governments' Cross Border Cooperation in North Eastern Voivodships in Poland with Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation

Tadeusz Palmowski and Maciej Tarkowski

Authors present a general outline of local self governments' cross border cooperation of north eastern Voivodships in Poland with the Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation. They analysed the impact of European Union enlargement eastwards on the scope and form of the cooperation, identifying in detail barriers hampering development of mutual relations. Development of good cross border relations with the Kaliningrad exclave is an important factor in Baltic Europe integration.

The beginning of the nineties of XX century saw the development of a new international system of Baltic cooperation. Within more than a decade, countries around the Baltic developed a network of contacts, institutions and governmental programmes, self governmental and non governmental relations. These new international structures, organisations, unions though still at an early stage of development will in future consolidate relations between entities forming Baltic Europe. The over 50 year long political dilemma, starting from the times World War II, resulted in poor cooperation in the area.

By the decision of ruling powers approved in Potsdam, eastern Prussia was split into two at the Teheran conference: into the Polish part covering former Eastern Prussia and the northern Russian part, which after the war was named Kaliningrad Oblast. The Oblast is a Baltic exclave belonging to Russia, bordering only with Poland and Lithuania. Both parts introduced new administration divisions. The territory that fell to Poland became Olsztyńskie Voivodship, and part of the Eastern Prussia territory was assigned to Białostockie Voivodship and Gdańsk Voivodship. Following administrative restructuring in 1975, the territory became part of Olsztyńskie, Suwalskie, and Elbląskie Voivodships, and later restructuring in 1999 assigned almost the entire territory to the newly formed Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship.

On the Russian side the geographical range of the studies on border areas covered the entire Kaliningrad Oblast. The Polish side embraced two voivodships bordering with the Oblast: Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Pomorskie. The former shares a 200 km borderline with the Russian exclave whereas Pomorskie Voivodship shares a small fragment of land border on the Vistula Spit. It also has a common sea border on the Gdańsk Gulf. The methodological assumption facilitated collection of documents necessary for the study on Polish Russian cross border region. To the end of the eighties, Kaliningrad Oblast was the most westward oriented and strongly military part of the USSR. The situation of the area experienced a dramatic change on the verge of the eighties and the nineties. The disintegration of the Soviet Union brought the region again into the focus of European discussions. After Lithuania gained independence, the Oblast was cut off from Russia, first by one and then by several countries (Latvia and Belarus). The Oblast found its final shape on December 8, 1991 with the disappearance of USSR.

The position of Kaliningrad is unique in historical, economic and geopolitical terms. This former part of Eastern Prussia, which is part of Russia, is distanced 600 km away from the motherland. Warsaw and Berlin are closer to the region than Moscow. Thus, the Oblast is located relatively close to the well developed regions of Western Europe. The region enjoys the status of a free economic zone, and since 1996, that of a special economic zone.

Kaliningrad lies in Sambia on the eastern shore of the Gdańsk Gulf. The opposite shore houses the TriCity Metropolis. The Gdańsk Gulf and connected Vistula Lagoon with neighbouring land are the borderline between Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Poland. This is also the border between EU and Russia. Both settlements developing around the

Gdańsk Gulf for over fifty years, though distanced merely 160 km from each other, did not maintain noteworthy relations. In view of economic, political and social transformations in Poland and progressing integration with European and global regional policy, the regional policy is taking on a new dimension. This is expressed by a modern integrated approach to regional development. One of the key features of this approach is simulation of economic, scientific and cultural potential effected by cooperation, dialogue and coordination of activities of various players on the regional (internal integration) and international (external integration) scene, which leads to the development of complex networks.

The present changes taking place in the Pregolya River region give rise to hope and, to a minor degree, some anxiety. Contemporary Kaliningrad, part of Russia, is subject to continual transformations in all spheres of life. Cut off from the world for decades, it is now dynamically catching up in terms of economic and cultural neglect. The attempt to cut away from the past failed. We can see the trend of coming back to the roots, though of varied state and ethnic origin (JASIŃSKI 1994).

In the past Królewiec [Polish name of the city] held an important place in the history of Polish culture, particularly in the period XV to half of XIX century. The importance of the city as an infrastructure for the development of intellectual culture was enhanced in 1544 with the establishment of Królewiec University commonly called Albertyna. The development of typography and publishing marked the signs of its growing significance. Books were published in all languages of the region: in German, Polish, Lithuanian and even Old Prussian. The XIX century and the first decades of the XX century saw the publishing of 312 Polish books (CHOJNACKI 1961). Many Poles studied at the University, particularly in XVI and XVII century. Many of them came from Gdańsk, Elbląg, Braniewo, Tczew, Malbork, Grudziądz, Toruń, Osztynek and Ełk. The most famous student of Królewiec University was the poet Jan Kochanowski.

In the period of over four hundred years many renowned representatives of self-governments, administration, clergy, teachers and others, who played a significant role in the history of Pomerania, were educated at the university. The most famous among them was Florian Ceynowa. The most renowned figure in the history of Królewiec is Immanuel Kant, in Gdańsk Jan Hevelius, Artur Schopenhauer and Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit.

Contemporary Kaliningrad is an important Russian scientific and academic centre. Scientific research studies are progressed in many fields. The biggest among the six schools of higher education are: Immanuel Kant State University of Russia, Kaliningrad State Technical University and Baltic State Academy.

Kaliningrad from the economic perspective was and continuous to be very important for Russia. The Oblast has a relatively well developed transport system with a non freezing Baltic port and shipping lines linking the port directly with other Russian and Baltic ports.

The most important city of the Oblast is Kaliningrad, which concentrates 46 % of the population and 60 % of the industrial potential. Tourist and sanatorium centres have developed on the coast in Swietłogorsk, Zielenogradsk, Yantarny and Pioniersk.

Pomorskie Voivodship covers an area of 18 thousand km². The area is inhabited by a population of 2.2 million, with the majority of residents living in towns and cities. The capital of the region Gdańsk together with Gdynia and Sopot form an agglomeration called TriCity with nearly a million inhabitants. The economic potential of the Voivodship is linked with shipyards, refineries, food processing, machinery, furniture industries as well as transport and port services.

The sea ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia with a total cargo turnover of over 38 million tons is not only an important transport node but also an area for developing business involving both production and services. The opportunity for dynamic development of the Voivodship lies in stimulating the service sector and support for the development of small and medium sized enterprises.

A number of well known European and American companies invest in the region. The development of a favourable environment for the advanced technology sector is a key challenge for the Voivodship authorities. A good hinterland for developing advanced technology sectors are the higher schools of education such as the Gdańsk University of Technology, Gdańsk University and Gdynia Maritime University, just to name the leading education centres. Technology transfer centres and technology parks have sound grounds for development in this area.

The landscape together with numerous natural environment protective areas is a trump card for the region providing solid grounds for the development of tourism. The northern part of the Voivodship along the sea coast features many holiday resorts. The Voivodship plays an active role in developing cooperation of Baltic countries. The transit location is conducive to its participation in international cooperation and economic exchange. The accession of Poland to the European Union opened new perspectives for Pomorskie Voivodship.

The main strategic goal in developing conditions favouring progress of Pomorskie Voivodship is to strengthen the region's international position as a transport node by investing in upgrading the transport system, development of infrastructure and international exchange. Therefore, the construction of the motorway A-1, joining the northern part of Poland with the south, is of key importance, contributing to competitiveness of the ports in Gdańsk and Gdynia. It also provides space for seating various kinds of business. Another route important for the development of Pomerania is Via Hanseatica, which is designed as an express road along the Baltic to Kaliningrad and further to other Baltic ports.

Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship covers an area of 24.2 thous. km² and has a population of 1.5 million inhabitants with 60 % living in 49 towns. The area is among the most sparsely populated areas in the country - 60 persons/ km² (country average 124 persons/ km²). The region stands out on the national and European scale in terms of wealth of the natural environment. The cultural, environmental and landscape attributes, uniform town distribution network and present investments favour multifunctional development of the Voivodship, i.e. tourism, "clean" industry and foodstuffs sector.

The capital of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship is Olsztyn. The city has a population of 170 thousand inhabitants and an economy adjusted to the needs of an agricultural and tourist oriented region. It is also well known for numerous industrial and service companies. The city provides services on the local, regional and interregional level. It also boasts a significant scientific research potential connected mainly with the Warmińsko-Mazurski University. For years Olsztyn has also been an unquestionable leader in developing cross border cooperation with Kaliningrad Oblast. The location of the Voivodship in the Baltic Sea region favours multilevel cooperation with Baltic countries.

Political transformations at the beginning of the nineties of XX century contributed to rapid development of cooperation and new relations. Cross border relations gained impetus. They are exceptionally important as they have initiated a breakdown of barriers and mutual prejudice and have helped to establish official and non formal contacts, especially among local communities. Common historical heritage means functional and structural similarity of the areas, which initiated cooperation, gradual fading of the border effect and stimulation of economy in trans-border regions (BORYS & PANASIEWICZ 1977).

Polish border cooperation initiatives are progressed on three levels: local, regional and national. Legal grounds for Polish Russian cross border cooperation at the local originate at the transnational (Madrid Convention of 21 May 1980) and national level. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 states in Article 172: *"A territorial selfgovernmental unit can associate in local and regional societies and cooperate with local and regional societies of other countries"*

The following documents provide grounds for Polish Russian cross border cooperation on the local and regional level:

1. "Treaty between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Russian Federation on friendly and neighbourly cooperation" dated 22 May 1992;
2. "Agreement between the government of the Republic of Poland and the government of the Russian Federation' dated 2 October 1992;
3. "Agreement between the government of the Republic of Poland and the government of the Russian Federation on cooperation of Polish north eastern Voivodships and Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation" dated 22 May 1992;
4. Agreement between the government of the Republic of Poland and the government of the Russian Federation on cooperation of the Republic of Poland and the Sankt Petersburg Region of 2 October 1992;
5. Declaration on good neighbourhood, mutual understanding and cooperation between the Republic of Poland and the Russian Federation dated 10 October 1991 (MAŁECKA 2004).

These international agreements authorise local and regional self governments to undertake measures aimed at implementing agreement provisions in a given sphere and do not require approval of central authorities.

The agreements on border crossings also play an important role in cross border cooperation, including the agreement between the government of the Republic of Poland and the government of the Russian Federation on border crossings dated 22 May 1992, following which a border crossing in Bezledy was opened, facilitating contacts between Warmia, Mazury and the Kaliningrad Oblast.

An important step in developing good relations was the opening of the General Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Kaliningrad and operation of the Commercial Department starting 1994. A General Consulate of the Russian Federation has been operating in Gdańsk for quite some time.

Agreements on the international level supplement the agreements on cooperation which Kaliningrad Oblast signed with Polish Voivodships and towns. Some of the key agreements on cooperation include:

- Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship with Kaliningrad Oblast (2001)
- Pomorskie Voivodship with Kaliningrad Oblast (2002) (KULESZA 2004)
- Polish towns: Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot, Elbląg, Olsztyn, Białystok, Szczecin, Łódź with Kaliningrad Oblast.

Contacts between schools of higher education in Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodships and Kaliningrad Oblast are of considerable significance for cooperation of both regions. Gdańsk and Kaliningrad cooperate in many Baltic initiatives and programmes.

Territorial self governments along the Polish Russian border undertake cross border cooperation in many fields. These can be divided into three groups. The first can be classified as tangible and intangible services provided by the administration for the inhabitants and other entities. For example these refer to such municipal services as: education, social welfare, health care, transport.

The second type embrace measures of promotional and organisational nature. Self governments organise fairs within the framework of local and regional development policy, disseminate economic information and encourage business representatives to participate in conferences. These measures, assumed by self governments, coordinate cross border processes, support and indicate the trends in transborder relations of companies, inhabitants and nongovernmental organisations, and stimulate economic development of their areas.

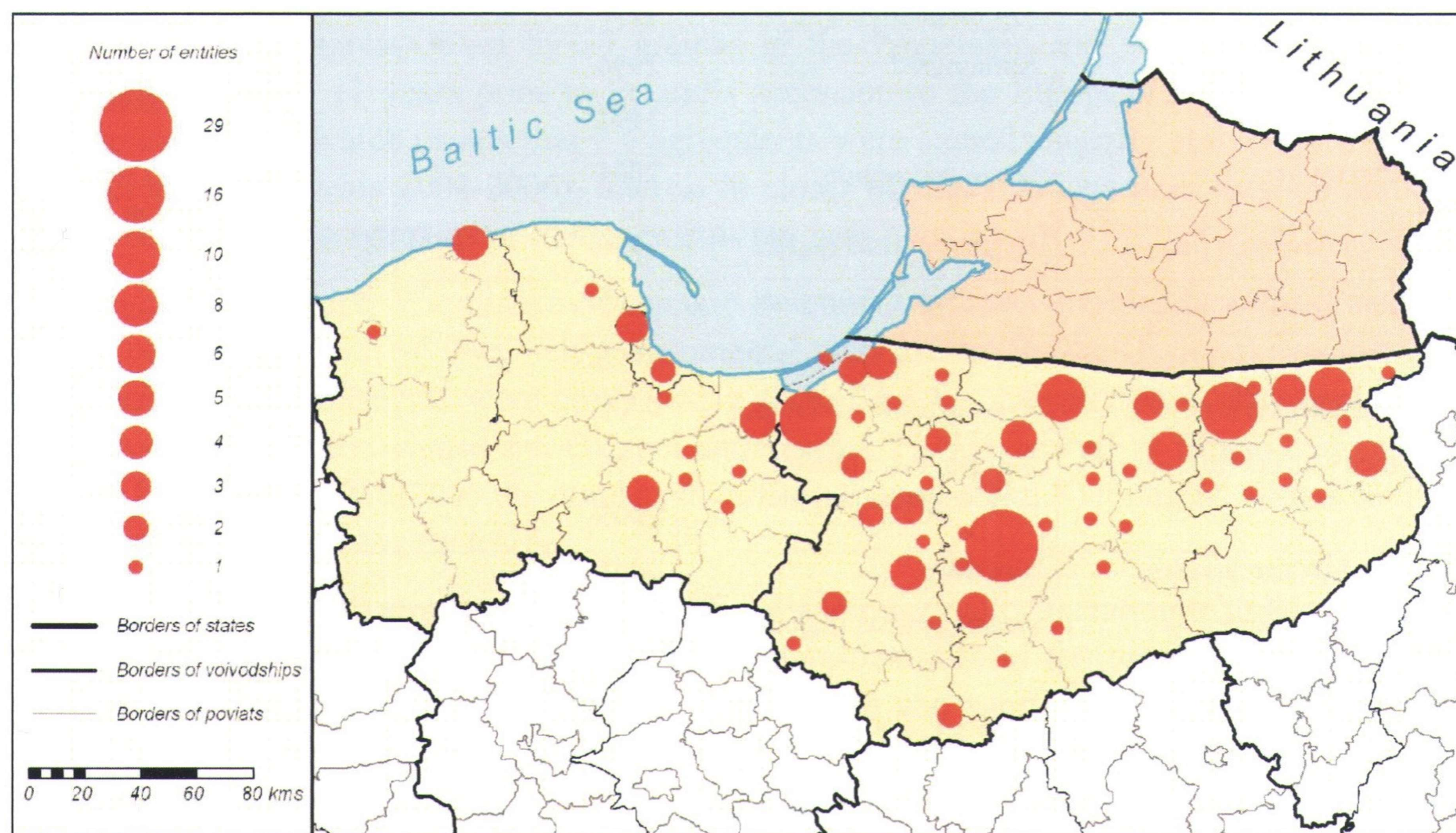
The third type of measures involve cooperation of poviats self governments with inspection and border guard services.

Survey studies were conducted in the second half of 2006 to define the terms and scope of Polish Russian cross border cooperation on the local level in gminas and poviats of Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodships. The study covered all poviats of Pomorskie Voivodship (16) and Warmińsko-Mazurskie (19) and all gminas of Warmińsko-Mazurskie (116 gminas) and 40 gminas of Pomorskie Voivodship. The criterion for selecting self governments in Pomorskie Voivodship was the membership in the Association of Gminas in the Baltic Euroregion. The survey study accounted for Polish and Russian cross border cooperation on the local level - official (based on bilateral or multilateral agreements on cross border cooperation signed by gminas and poviats with a chosen unit in Kaliningrad Oblast) and informal (based on personal contacts). Changes in conditions, forms and scope of cross border contacts connected with Poland's accession to the European Union in May 2004 were treated with special attention.

A decisive factor for establishing and intensifying cross border cooperation is the dynamic attitude of local authorities, their motivation and involvement. Real interpersonal relations established during meetings, events and projects strengthen cooperation ties. Individual contacts between Polish and Russian self government representatives generally remain good and very good (Fig.1).

Fig. 1:

Institutions in the Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodships involved in cross border cooperation with business entities from the Kaliningrad Oblast in 2007



Source: own study

From among 150 gminas in the Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodships, 29 territorial self governments formally cooperated in the survey period, whereas 86 gminas showed membership in Euroregional structures. Within the group, 78 gminas cooperate under Euroregion Baltic and the other 8 in Euroregion Neman. Informal cooperation can be seen in 13 gminas.

Tab. 1 (continued on next page):

Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodships cross border cooperation partners in Kaliningrad Oblast (state as of 31.12.2006)

Gminas	Official cooperation		Partners of informal cooperation
	Partners	Date of signing an agreement	
Banie Mazurskie (r)	Ozierski region	2001	
Barciany (r)	Żeleznodorożnyj	2003	
Bartoszyce (m)	Pioniersk Bagrationowski region	2000 2001	
Bartoszyce (r)	Pioniersk Bagrationowski region	2000 2001	
Biskupiec (m - r)			Kaliningrad
Braniewo (m)	Zielonogradski region	1994	
Braniewo (r)	Mamonowo	2005	
Dobre Miasto (m - r)	Prawdński region	2006	
Elbląg ¹	Kaliningrad Bałtijski town district/municipal oblast	1994 2000	
Frombork (m - r)	Swietłowski town district	2003 2006	
Gdańsk (m)	Kaliningrad	1993	
Gdynia (m)	Kaliningrad	1994 1997	Bałtijski municipal oblast/town district
Gołdap (m - r)	Gusiewski region	2004	Niestierowski region Ozierski region
Górowo Iławeckie (m)	Bagrationowski region	1996	
Górowo Iławeckie (r)	Bagrationowski region	1996	
Kętrzyn (m)	Swietłowski town district	2005	
Kowale Oleckie (r)	Krasnoznamieński region	2001	
Krynica Morska (m)	Bałtijski town district Zielonogradski region	1995 2005	
Lidzbark Warmiński (m)	Sowietsk	2001	
Łeba (m)	Zielonogradski region	2003	
Malbork (m)			Kaliningrad Bałtijski municipal oblast
Małdyty (r)	Ozierki	2006	
Miłomłyn (m - r)	Ozierki	2006	Gusiewski region
Nowy Dwór Gdański (m - r)	Swietłowski town district	2002	
Olecko (m - r)	Gusiewski region	2004	
Olsztyn ¹	Kaliningrad	1993 2003	
Olsztynek (m - r)	Polesski region	1998	Pioniersk Swietłogorski municipal oblast Gwardiejski region

Tab. 1:

Gminas	Official cooperation		Partners of informal cooperation
	Partners	Date of signing an agreement	
Ostróda (m)	Niemański region	2005	
Pieniężno (m - r)			Gusiewski region
Pruszcz Gdański (m)			Sławski region
Sępólno (m - r)	Prawdiński region	2001	
Sopot (m)			Swietłogorski municipal oblast Ozierski region
Srokowo (r)			Prawdiński region
Stare Juchy (r)			Niestierowski region
Starograd Gdański (m)	Kaliningrad	2000	Bałtijski municipal oblast
Sztum (-)			Poleski region
Węgorzewo (m- r)	Czerniachowski region	1996	

m - municipal gmina, r - rural gmina, m-r - municipal and rural gmina

¹ - towns on powiat rights

Source: Results of survey studies conducted by Department of Regional Development Geography of Gdańsk University

In the years 1993-2006, 36 cross border cooperation agreements were concluded with selected units of the Kaliningrad Oblast by 29 gminas of the Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship. Within 11 years prior to Poland's accession to the European Union (1993-2003) they numbered 26, which means that 2.4 agreements were signed annually at average. Following accession (the years 2004-2006), interest in closer official relations with Russian partners clearly rose - the average number of agreements per year grew to 3.3.

In the years 1993-2006 Warmińsko-Mazurskie Pomorskie gminas established official and informal cooperation with all local self governmental units except for the Guriewski region. The first cooperation agreements were concluded with Kaliningrad as early as in the years 1993-1994. Agreements were signed by: Olsztyn and Gdańsk (1993) as well as Elbląg and Gdynia (1994). In the years 1993-2006 the number of territorial units of the Kaliningrad Oblast cooperating with Polish gminas rose to 18.

Among the group of 37 gminas developing official and informal cooperation with Russian partners only 3 belong to Euroregional structures. Representatives of territorial self governments cooperated most often in the field of culture, education and sport. Joint cultural events were organised in 86 % of gminas in the period before EU enlargement and 83 % of the gminas following Poland's accession to the EU. In recent years sport events have gained on popularity (organised in 50 % of gminas prior to EU enlargement and 59 % following enlargement). The number of gminas organising inter school events remains at a similar level (57 % and 52 % respectively).

An important sphere of cooperation providing assistance for entrepreneurs showing interest in the Kaliningrad market is joint organisation of fairs and exhibitions with foreign partners, though lately this kind of relations have shown a falling trend (43 % and 31 % gmina share, respectively). Economic cooperation between Kaliningrad Oblast and Poland's north eastern Voivodships are sustainable and clearly show a developing trend (18% gminas before and 21 % after EU enlargement), though they encounter many problems, legal and administrative changes

relating to visa traffic and Russia imposed embargo on Polish meat. Polish capital involvement in Kaliningrad Oblast is not so high.

For the majority of gminas development of tourism is an important objective. Its significance has been on the upswing as many gminas are interested in cooperating with Russians to promote the attractiveness of their tourist offers. Before EU enlargement 21 % of gminas organised tourist events, whereas following enlargement the percentage of gminas involved in developing cross border tourism rose to 38 %. A factor limiting the development of tourism in the Polish Russian transborder region is the low income of a significant number of the area's inhabitants, long waiting periods at border crossings and anxiety relating to high crime risk, particularly on the Russian side. Nevertheless, inhabitants of the Oblast area show rising interest in travelling (also collectively) to Mikołajki and Sopot. Recently, joint cycling and cross border kayaking excursions are gaining on popularity. Russians apart from their interest in Mazury and TriCity are also attracted to Zakopane.

The number of cultural events, which constituted 38 % of all Polish Russian projects on the local level, jumped from 83 in the period prior to accession (the years 1993-2003) to 94 after accession (the years 2004-2006). The years 2004-2006 featured in total 42 sport events, 25 inter school events, 24 fairs and exhibitions as well as 17 joint tourist projects. The most active gminas include Bartoszyce, Górowo Iławeckie and Lidzbark Warmiński as well as Gołdap, Kowale Oleckie and Olsztynek.

Cooperation on environmental protection is incomparably less effective as compared to the needs (merely 3.5 % of gminas) though several scattered projects are under implementation. Joint projects promote protection of the natural environment, environment friendly behaviour, especially among young people. The attempts to initiate cross border cooperation in agriculture have not up to date been successful. However, the process of training in agro business and agro tourism continues. There are few projects on spatial planning and municipal economy - they concern mainly joint sewage treatment plants, landfills and water supply and sewage works.

In the years 2000-2006, no special changes were noted in Polish Russian cooperation on the local level. The most popular areas, from the start of developing mutual relations were culture, education, sport and youth exchange programmes. Cooperation in other spheres continues to play a minor role. Survey studies indicate that view of available opportunities the scope of cooperation is nevertheless diversified. New areas of developing cooperation include health protection, palliative care, integration of the disabled and social aid.

Survey data indicates that Poland's accession to EU resulted in closer official ties with Russian partners. It stimulated a flow of application for financial means for the development of cross border cooperation with Kaliningrad Oblast placed by gminas. Before accession 43 % of gminas cooperating with the Oblast applied for EU assistance (87 % obtained grants), after accession this percentage rate rose to 54 % (89 % of gminas obtained financial assistance). According to 44 % of territorial self government representatives, it is easier to obtain financial grants for developing cooperation, 50 % believe that this fact has no impact on financial assistance gained. 84 % of the subjects surveyed declare that gmina authorities have staff adequately trained to prepare grant applications. Cross border cooperation with Kaliningrad Oblast in the pre accession period was assisted by means from PHARE Fund and in the later period from INTERREG III A (Lithuania, Poland and Kaliningrad Region of Russian Federation Neighbourhood Programme), INTERREG III B, and on the Russian side TACIS CBC.

From among representatives of powiat self governments in Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Pomorskie Voivodships 11 out of 35 rural powiats, with 10 from Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship and 1 from Pomorskie Voivodship, undertook cooperation with self government units of the

Kaliningrad Oblast. Membership to Baltic, Neman and Łyna-Ława Euroregions is declared by 15 poviats.

Tab. 2:

Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodships cross border cooperation partners (state as of 31.12.2006)

Poviats	Official cooperation		Partners of informal cooperation
	Partners	Date of signing an agreement	
Bartoszycki	Bagrationowski region	2001	
Ełcki	Ozierski region	2003 2005	
Giżycki	Niestierowski region Kaliningrad	2005 2006	
Gołdapski			Kaliningrad Gusiewski region Gwardiejski region
Kętrzyński	Prawdiński region Kaliningrad	2004 2004	
Lidzbarski	Bagrationowski region	2000	
Olecki	Guriewski region	2004	
Olsztyński			Kaliningrad
Ostródzki	Prawdiński region	2004	
Starogradzki	Polesski region	2005	
Węgorzewski	Ozierski region Czerniachowski region Prawdiński region	2003 2003 2005	

Source: Results of survey studies conducted by Department of Regional Development Geography of Gdańsk University

Powiat self government activity in cross border cooperation covers both independent initiatives and projects organised jointly with gminas - cultural, educational, sport events, tourist promotion, environmental projects, support for local entrepreneurs interested in the Kaliningrad market, measures aimed at developing border and transport infrastructure, exchange of experience in the functioning of local administration and cooperation of rescue services.

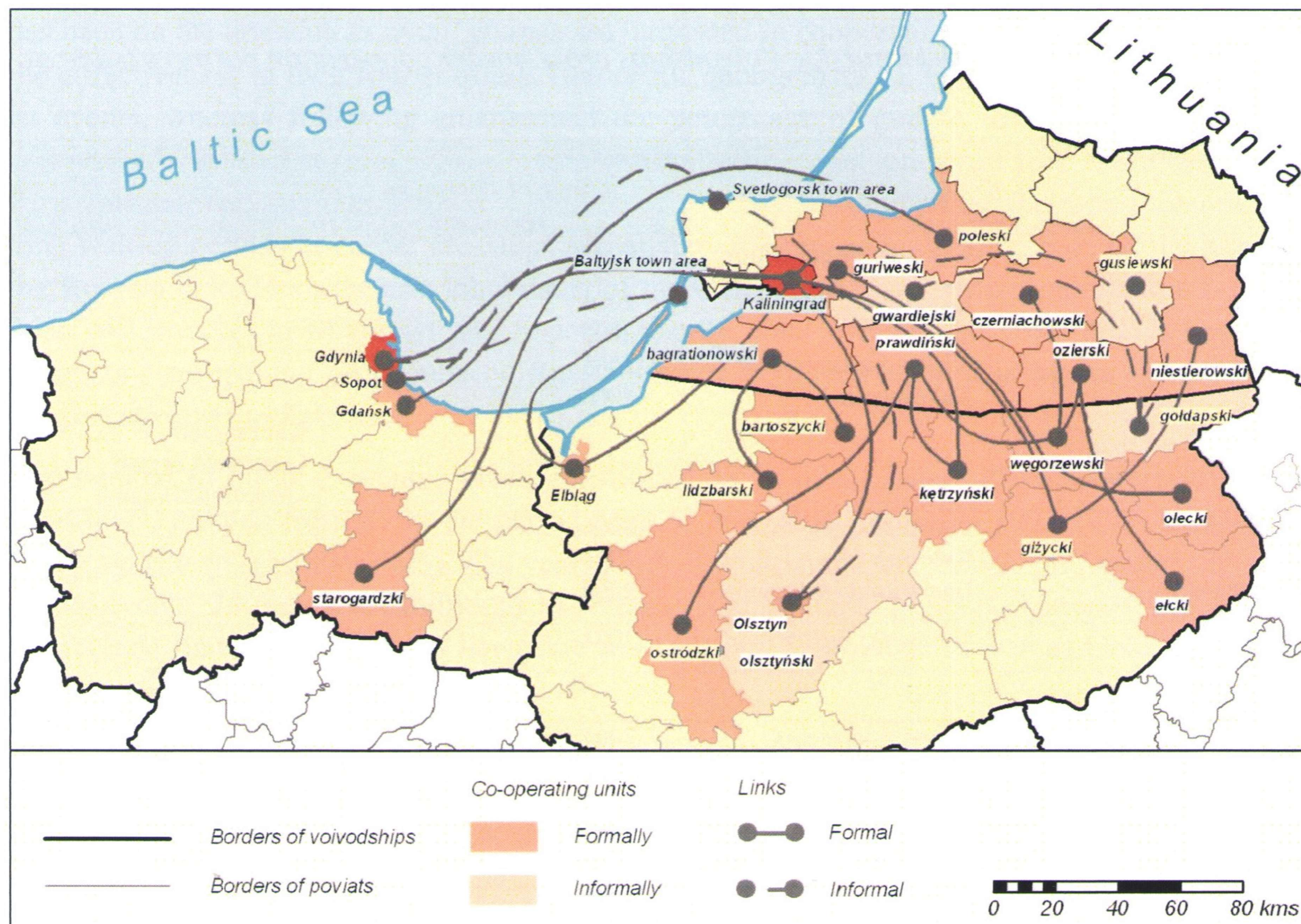
Cooperation in poviats engages such institutions and organisations controlled by starostwo as schools, cultural centres, museums, powiat labour offices, homes and others. The most common forms of cooperation include exchange of experience and information, joint organisation of events and study visits (Fig. 2).

A significant factor in cross border cooperation is the location of a given gmina or locality regarding border crossings. Border crossings are a key factor in local development. Introduction of visas with 1 October 2003 complicated and impeded crossing borders. (66 % of the surveyed appraise the decision as hampering cross border cooperation of Polish gminas with Kaliningrad Oblast). The number of Polish Russian border crossings decreased by nearly 21 %. This short lived drop was followed by a systematic increase to 3.8 million in 2005.

Common efforts to create a border crossing are a driving force for cross border cooperation with Russians in case of gminas lying on the border. As of today, only gmina Gołdap has been successful in its efforts. The development of road and rail infrastructure aimed at upgrading border crossings can be a significant factor for local and regional development. To develop cross border relations, representatives of border gminas postulate opening of border crossings in, among others Michałkowo-Zeleznodorożnyj, Piaski-Bałyjsk, Rapa-Oziersk, and the river border crossing Łyna-Ława.

Fig. 2:

Powiat cooperation in Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodships with business partners in Kaliningrad Oblast in 2007



Source: own study

Accession of Poland to EU, according to self government representatives, had a beneficial influence on developing cross border cooperation both on the Polish and Russian side. The majority of barriers have waned, except for legal administrative, political and financial barriers (on the Russian side). Prior to Poland's accession to EU the greatest barrier hindering mutual acquaintance, economic relations and cultural exchange on both sides of the border was lack of state support for cross border cooperation. Following accession legal administrative and financial barriers were deemed to be of the same importance. Political factors are also seen as creating significant barriers. Tension on the governmental level influences Polish Russian cooperation on the local level. Central authorities have not been capable, up to now, of solving one of the key problems of Vistula Lagoon relating to the functioning of the sea river port of Elbląg and other lagoon localities - freedom of sailing across the Russian part of the Vistula Lagoon. On the Russian side, lack of state support for cross border cooperation, legal and administrative barriers (restricted independence and freedom of administration units in scope of cross border cooperation, dependence of local and regional authorities, inconsistent law, complicated border procedures, lack of sustainable regulations in the Oblast) create the biggest problems, with shortage of financial means for developing cooperation by territorial self governments. In the majority of cases the barriers on the Russian side of the border have been assessed as weightier than on the Polish side.

The least significance is assigned to psychological barriers (dislike of Poles/Russians, negative stereotypes) and language problems. Russians are also perceived as having lesser problems than Poles in finding foreign partners for cooperation and access to information about foreign partners.

According to the surveyed, the greatest progress during the last few years was noted in Poles and Russians overcoming problems in preparing EU grant applications. The developing experience in cross border cooperation on both sides of the border is also important. On the Polish side - special attention is assigned to reducing the most serious problem in developing cooperation, i.e. support of the state, and on the Russian side - access to foreign partners what may show evidence of growing awareness of Russians about the competencies of local self governments Poland.

The postulated measures at the central and regional level supporting cross border cooperation include: credit guarantees for Polish entrepreneurs, financial aid in projects with foreign partners, further infrastructural investments (building cross border crossings, access roads, water supply networks, sewage treatment plants) elimination of bureaucracy in cross border cooperation as well as organising conferences and seminars for potential entities involved in cross border cooperation.

Self governmental authorities expect serious support of governmental authorities for cooperation with the Oblast, and above rely on support in eliminating formal bureaucratic barriers in cross border cooperation, and on improved diplomatic relations between Poland and Russia.

The superiority of this option, i.e. Kaliningrad opening to regional cooperation, may be an important step towards full integration of Baltic Europe. Building of Kaliningrad's future requires sustainable development in economic, social and political terms. Will cross border cooperation following enlargement of EU, as one of many forms of regional integration, contribute to economic progress and improvement of life standard of societies on both sides of Gdańsk Gulf so that in the Baltic and European integration process the region is not pushed aside to the margin of economic space? To some extent it depends on top level politics but to a significant degree it also depends on scientific, economic, cultural and organisational activity of local society, in other words on ourselves.

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