

# Bridging Waters



*Cooperation  
around  
the Baltic Sea*

# Swedish contribution to the development in the Baltic States

**S**WEDEN HAS CONTRIBUTED TO the transformation and development of Poland and the three Baltic States. Thousands of Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Poles have visited and have been inspired by Sweden. Now the programmes of cooperation supported by Sida will be gradually phased out as the countries approach membership of the EU.

Initially, the programmes of cooperation focused on immediate needs in the four countries when they decided to abandon their planned economies in favour of market economies. Subsequently, support was provided for democratic institutions and infrastructure.

Social issues have therefore had high priority in programmes of cooperation in recent years, since the process of transformation has led to growing social problems and wider gaps in incomes. Sweden is helping to build up a new pension system and a new social insurance system in Latvia. New social services are being developed in Lithuania, which will offer alternatives to institutional care and will integrate disabled children and adults into society.

The environment has been a central theme in cooperation programmes. Sweden's role has been to participate in major investments in waste water treatment, initially in the large cities and now in smaller towns. Discharges into the Baltic Sea have been reduced considerably. With the aid of extensive institutional support for water and waste water treatment plants, it has also been possible to secure the long-term environmental effects of these investments.

Stability requires an effective legal system. The legacy of the Soviet era – the

view of legal institutions as instruments of power – still exists. There have been a large number of programmes of cooperation with the police, courts, public prosecutors, and correctional treatment systems. It is expected that this will contribute to increasing confidence and trust in the legal system.

Many programmes financed by Sweden contribute indirectly to the development of industry, for example property registers, customs administration, chambers of commerce, etc. The aim of Sida's Start-East programme is to develop small and medium-size enterprises. Through this programme, some 250 Swedish and Baltic enterprises have been helped to cooperate with each other.

ONE IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE WORK in the field of democracy has been cooperation at local and regional level. A large number of twinned towns, counties, and regions are working actively with Sida-financed projects in the Baltic States and Poland.

Sweden has helped to prepare these countries for integration into Europe. Sweden is well placed to do this, as it is itself a relatively new member of the EU.

The Baltic States and Poland have assumed considerable responsibility for their development and have succeeded in making substantial improvements over a period of ten years or so. Sweden now intends to phase out cooperation gradually, since the four countries will soon be members of the EU and will thus have access to the Union's development funds. However, it is hoped that a great deal of the cooperation across the Baltic Sea will live on.

## FACTS

### COOPERATION ACROSS THE BALTIC SEA

The objective of Swedish development cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is to promote sustainable development, deeper integration, and partnership in the Baltic Sea area, based on the needs of the partner countries and with the utilisation of Swedish resources.

Sweden is one of the largest bilateral partners in cooperation with the Baltic States. Most Swedish support is channelled via Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). Support to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania has so far amounted to approximately USD 250 million. It is now in the process of being phased out.

Support to Poland has already been discontinued, but cooperation with Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine will increase. The funds come from a special budget for Eastern Europe, which is not part of the Swedish development cooperation appropriation. Activities cover six areas:

- common security
- deepening the culture of democracy
- economic transition
- social security
- environment
- education and research

Cooperation shall be governed by three guiding principles: to promote adaptation to the EU, to promote relations with Sweden, and to allow cooperation to be characterised by a gender equality perspective.

# 80 million people around a sea

The Baltic Sea Region comprises nine countries with borders to the Baltic Sea. Furthermore Norway, Ukraine, Belarus and the North eastern part of Germany are normally included in the region. Almost 80 million people live in the Baltic Sea drainage basin.

Many regional bodies and organisations form part of the frequent Co-operation across the sea, from the Council of the Baltic States to environmentalists, business people, trade unions etc.

An important part of the Co-operation is the twinning between towns, counties and municipalities that started immediately after the independence of the Baltic States.





Many farms in the Baltic States are storing farmyard manure in a way that allows leakage of nitrogen into the ground. Treatment of farmyard manure in a proper way is taught to farmers in a Sida-financed project.

# Manure fuels farm progress

**B**ALTIC FARMERS ARE RECEIVING help from Sweden to increase their incomes without harming the environment. Cultivation methods are being improved at the same time as legislation is being adapted to EU requirements and supervision of the environment is being extended.

Contacts between farmers in the Baltic States and Sweden have been intensive and many farmers in the area have been able to study Swedish agriculture. Ecological cultivation is also being taught.

One of the most important components in the Sida-supported project is teaching Baltic farmers to use farmyard manure, which is a very important element in modern sustainable farming. Methods of using farmyard manure without polluting ground and surface water are being shown at demonstration farms.

"No use was made of farmyard manure on the collective farms of the Soviet era," says Staffan Lund of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

in Uppsala, who is the coordinator of the Sida project. "Artificial manure was virtually free and farmyard manure was regarded as rubbish."

Farmyard manure was put in heaps and nitrogen escaped from the heaps into the watercourses. This affected the ground water and hence the drinking water and eventually even the Baltic Sea.

"It has been difficult to change the farmers' attitudes to farmyard manure," says Staffan Lund. "It has taken time, but we have been able to show its advantages on the demonstration farms, where farmers learn from other farmers."

STORAGE OF MANURE IS THE SUBJECT OF one of the environmental criteria set by the EU, which can be difficult for the Baltic States to meet.

The Sida project has led to a new project funded by the Global Environment Fund to help Baltic farmers finance the investments required for the new, environment-friendly methods.

## FACTS

### AGRICULTURE IN THE BALTIC STATES

**Baltic agriculture is not uniform. There are large modern farms with satellite-steered tractors. And there are small-scale farms where horses still are used.**

**Agriculture has undergone a dramatic process of transformation over the last ten years. Previously the Baltic States supplied St Petersburg and Moscow with agricultural products. At independence, the old Soviet markets disappeared and production fell by 50 per cent. However, it has now started to increase again.**

**This was the situation when the Sida project entered the picture to provide instruction in sustainable and environment-friendly farming – there was a risk that the farmers would have continued to use inefficient Soviet farming methods, which would have increased pollution.**



OLA JENNERSTEN

Forest productivity in Russia is low. A Sida-supported project introduces a new model for a sustainable forestry.

# Green revolution in Russia

**N**EW ECOLOGICALLY SOUND methods tried out with Swedish help in a forest in north-western Russia will make forestry in Russia more profitable and sustainable.

Located at Strugi Krasnye between St. Petersburg and Pskov is the “Pskov Model Forest Project”, introducing an environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable forest management model for Russia’s huge forests, which are still government-owned. With laws that stipulate clear cut and with no tradition of thinning, forest productivity in Russia is three to four times less and net profit per hectare of forest land is 10 to 15 times less than in Sweden. Thus Russian forestry faces severe problems, as this low economic output means that forest activities are not profitable for the people engaged in them.

“There is no conflict between keeping large areas of original forests in our country and intensive high-yield forestry on

the Scandinavian model in parts of Western Russia”, says project leader, Sergei Bourmistrov, explaining the thinking behind the project.

WITH THE PROJECT NOW BEYOND THE half-way stage, the first results can be seen. A number of demonstration areas have been laid out in the forest, showing the advantages of revolutionary new cutting and reforestation methods and forest landscape planning. For example, by removing all aspen and by thinning the forest on a regular basis, timber quality is raised substantially. When deforesting, a sufficient number of trees is left growing, which, together with brushwood left on the ground, helps in the process of natural forest regrowth and wildlife conservation. Thus, local biodiversity is maintained, without the costly planting of seedlings from other ecosystems.

The next step will be the initiation of voluntary forest certification, satisfying international standards. Certification im-

plies that production meets a high standard for environmental protection and social responsibility. The demand for certified forest products is increasing on the environmentally sensitive western markets.

The project involves local population in forest matters through public hearings and study visits from schools, as well as by disseminating information through the media and seminars, in order to improve the understanding of sustainable forest management and influence the process of modernising federal forest legislation.

## FACTS

### PSKOV MODEL FOREST

The project donors are Sida, the Finnish-Swedish Forest Company StoraEnso, and WWF (World Wildlife Foundation) Germany. WWF Germany and WWF Russia implement the project. The project area covers 46,000 hectares.

# Twinning involves the

**T**WINNING COOPERATION IS NOT just a matter for politicians or cultural workers. It involves the entire community and is based to a very great extent on the interest and commitment of individuals. Twinning cooperation between Sweden and countries on the other side of the Baltic Sea has become an important part of Swedish cooperation, as it is a concrete example of democracy.

When countries establish close ties, it is important that the ties are not only formed between cities or at the national level. There must also be contacts between counties, municipalities, small towns, and even villages.

When the countries on the other side of the Baltic Sea were opened up about ten years ago, a number of spontaneous contacts were made between people – contacts that eventually led to organised forms of cooperation.

The starting points of many of these contacts were often old family connections or ties of friendship.

Many of the twinning arrangements that were built up in this way have received significant support from Sida and have played a very important role in development cooperation between Sweden and countries in Eastern Europe. They

are important for maintaining close relations with Sweden now that the Baltic States and Poland are about to join the EU.

Apart from opening up new markets for Swedish business, these contacts with the Baltic countries have stimulated many Swedes to consider the way their own society has developed over recent decades and the values that have been lost in the process.



TWINNING COOPERATION HAS BEEN important not least for the development of rural areas in the Baltic States and for spreading development projects. Today twinning cooperation projects can be found all over the Baltic region and in all sectors of society. In the EU, cooperation will mainly be a case of large-scale cooperation between regions. There is a great danger that small places will be forgotten. This is another reason why cooperation at grassroots level is important.

Twinning arrangements are a unique form of cooperation, since twinning is not merely a matter of exchanges between politicians and civil servants or of cultural exchanges, but also covers exchanges between ordinary people: schoolchildren, professional groups, societies, businesspeople etc. Twinning co-



**A Polish school class is greeting their Swedish**

operation involves all parts of the community, since it often focuses on a broad range of concrete activities with something for everyone to participate in. For example, it is quite common for two municipalities to help each other implement Agenda 21 in order to improve the environment, something that can engage many people in a community, not least the young.



MARGARETA LEIJÖ

**Christmas market in Russian Karelia. The market is part of a Twinning project.**

## Democracy is best

**S**OME 200 SWEDISH NGO'S HAVE established contacts across the Baltic Sea in the form of intensive programmes of cooperation that are intended to contribute to strengthening the culture of democracy and civil society.

Today, disabled people's organisations and environmental organisations play an important role in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in raising the awareness of the general public and exerting an influence on legislation. This development was supported by Swedish NGOs that taught their brothers and sisters from the old Soviet system how to change society by organising themselves and campaigning.

Contacts and networks have been created by popular movements and organi-

sations that will continue cooperating with each other when the candidate countries have become members of the EU. There has been intensive cooperation between farmers' organisations and youth organisations, as well as between organisations working for democracy and human rights.

One successful programme of cooperation in the environmental field was the campaign against harmful detergents. In this programme the Swedish environmental movement coached its counterparts in methods of running campaigns. The result has been greater awareness of the environment in the Baltic States.

But it is not only the major national environmental organisations that are cooperating with each other. Even a small orga-

# entire community



ANNIKA HÖKERBERG

friends. Exchange of students plays an important role in twinning communities together.

Many people working with twinning cooperation confirm that it is the visible concrete results that encourage them to continue. Twinning cooperation gives a great deal of satisfaction and a number of personal contacts, and one thing often leads to another.

Most Swedish twinning cooperation has been between Sweden and the three Baltic States. Much of the Swedish go-

vernment's support for twinning cooperation with the Baltic States and Poland will now be reduced as those countries join the EU. At the same time, support for twinning projects in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine will increase.

One special case is Kaliningrad, the Russian exclave between Poland and Lithuania, formerly the base of the Soviet Baltic Sea fleet, today of the Russian

fleet. The Swedish government has given southern Sweden a special assignment to develop close cooperation with Kaliningrad. Many twinning arrangements are being developed within the framework of this programme of cooperation. Recently, 750 Russians and Swedes from all sections of society discussed democracy and cooperation at a large meeting, called Forum Kaliningrad.

Now that twinning cooperation has taken a step eastwards, much of the experience gained earlier will be very useful and many of the people in the Baltic States who have been engaged in the twinning cooperation programmes will be able to contribute their knowledge.

## FACTS

### TWINNING COOPERATION

More than 200 of Sweden's 289 municipalities have twinned municipality on the other side of the Baltic Sea and most of them have received funds from Sida. So far, SEK 250 million has been channelled to 500 projects. Initially the cooperation projects often had the aim of strengthening democracy, but the focus today is often on education, gender equality, and social issues.

# built from the bottom up

nisation such as "Save the Jay" works with other small organisations around the Baltic Sea that are also trying to save this bird, which is threatened with extinction.

Cooperation across the Baltic Sea has also been intensive between professional groups, for example farmers. Today, Swedish farmers are training Baltic farmers in running cooperative businesses and selling products on a free market.

Swedish organisations that focus on social work are active in Eastern Europe, developing alternatives to institutional care for children and young people. This includes, for example, supporting foster families that receive children from families that have broken up.

Other organisations are providing training in how study circles can be ar-

ranged, how people can make themselves heard in their dealings with the authorities, and how organisations can find funding and support for their activities.

This cooperation has succeeded in raising awareness and strengthening civil society. Today, states are starting to assume responsibility for allocating funds to activities that previously they could not afford, and to activities which they previously regarded as not being the responsibility of the state, including support for the disabled and for environmental projects.

In an evaluation made some time ago, it was established that "most organisations (in Eastern Europe) have developed democratic and sustainable structures for their activities and their independence has been strengthened".

## FACTS

### NGO SUPPORT

Today, a great deal of Swedish cooperation is devoted to showing organisations how they can apply for funds from the EU – something that Swedish organisations were obliged to learn fairly recently. In 2004, when Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland are expected to join the EU, Sida's support to these organisations will be discontinued.

However, support will still be given for activities in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, where it is expected that the activities of Swedish organisations will increase.

# Saunas and amber to tempt tourists

“IS THERE A SAUNA?” THIS IS OFTEN the first question asked by tourists when Edgars and Zaiga let a room. They realised that they had to provide a sauna to attract tourists. Last year they succeeded in getting a loan to build their longed-for sauna.

A Latvian sauna is not just a sauna and shower. Far from it. It also has to have a large room where people can eat, drink, and socialise between sweaty sessions in the sauna.

For Edgars and Zaiga the sauna means a job, an income – and a future! It gives them hope that their two sons will be able to stay at home instead of leaving for Liepaja or, even worse, the capital city, Riga.

TODAY THE MUNICIPALITY OF VERGALE, where Edgars and Zaiga live, is a depopulated area, far from the mainstream of Latvia. The young people have to leave, since there are no jobs here, at least not yet. But Vergale, like the entire 65-kilometre stretch of coast north of Liepaja, has something very valuable, just as valuable as amber – after which the coast is named – was in the past.

“We believe in tourism,” says Zaiga. “Without tourism I don’t know what we would do today. When we started to run our boarding house many people laughed at us. Today people treat us with respect and many want to follow suit.”

Zaiga is a member of Vergale’s women’s group, which is one of the results of the development project that is being run with funds provided by Sida. She has participated in a course on how women can run businesses. The group also runs courses in English and handicrafts. It is hoped that these courses will bring the traditional handicrafts back to life.

The aim of the project is to develop eco-tourism along the coast: a trail for hikers – the Amber Trail – that runs along

the beach will be staked out, maps will be drawn, kiosks and information centres will be built, parking places and camping sites will be organised, and management of the area will be planned.

“Now we have a golden opportunity to plan development and to decide on the sort of tourism we want to have,” says Albert Bachs, a Swedish environmental consultant with a Latvian background, who works with the Amber Trail project.

For him, tourism offers an opportunity for people living along the coast to find something meaningful to do and to earn an income. He sees what happens to those who do not keep up with the changes.

“Their living standards decline all the time. Many are socially excluded and live in dirty, ramshackle houses.”

COMPARE THIS WITH EDGARS AND ZAIGA, who have a clean and tidy home and have learnt the meaning of the word “service”. Ten years ago, they worked at the collective farm, the kolkhoz – as did everybody else in the district. He as a driver and she as a milkmaid. Today all that remains of the kolkhoz is just a few tumble-down buildings. Edgars was unemployed until the Amber Project started. They got two of their rooms ready for tourists and last year they had 109 overnight guests.

“It is mostly Latvians who stay here,” says Edgars, “but we have also had Germans, Australians, Swedes – and a Chinese who stayed a whole month.”

The project is directed towards people who most often have only had a 5 or 6 year elementary education. When they worked in the kolkhoz, they had to do the same thing all the time. Therefore, adult education is a central component in this project. People have to learn to take care of nature and to earn money, i.e. they need practical knowledge about the environment and tourism.





MATS SUNDGREN

The Amber Coast is 65 kilometers of untouched beach. With patience you can find plenty of amber here, says the Swedish consultants Peter Andersson and Albert Backs.

# New winds blowing over opened beach

**T**HE BEACH AT VERGALE IS EMPTY. This may be due to the fresh winds blowing in from the Baltic Sea or because the water is not yet warm enough for swimming. But there is a special reason why the people living close to the beach do not make their way there.

The people living here are quite simply not familiar with their own coast. Up to 1990, many of them had never been to the sea, despite the fact that they only lived 500 metres away from it. If they went down to swim, they were thrown into prison.

DURING THE SOVIET ERA, LIEPAJA AND the coast north of it was a military area and the beach was closed. Every evening the beach was raked to make it possible to see if anyone had come ashore. When the young people in the district wanted to make fun of the Russians, they walked backwards into the sea and then back again in their own footprints. Then the soldiers suddenly came to life!

The Amber Trail Project intends to change the people's lack of familiarity with their own coast, which, in fact, is their most important resource. But there is no time to lose. The new rich in Latvia are already exerting pressure. They want to build houses along the beach. So it is important to have rules.

To plan development in the area, a Swedish consultant, Peter Andersson, has helped to build up a digital geographical information system (GIS). This includes mapping the entire coast and its vegetation and it will be used to establish a nature reserve in the area, as well as for all planning, nature conservation, and infrastructure.

Latvia has not previously worked with GIS but, as part of the Amber Trail Project, some ten people from the Ministry of the Environment and the county administrative board in Liepaja have been trained in the information system.

"We see it as almost a world heritage site," says Peter Andersson. "It is important to make good use of Swedish know-how to build up a good and sustainable system which can then be copied along the entire coast."

## FACTS

### SWEDISH INVOLVEMENT

Many Swedish bodies, mostly in the province of Värmland, are involved in the Amber Trail Project. Sida's consultant, Envide, comes from Värmland, and a town in Värmland is twinned with Vergale municipality. A women's association has helped to build up a women's group in Vergale that has 50 members and a school has organised exchange programmes in the area.



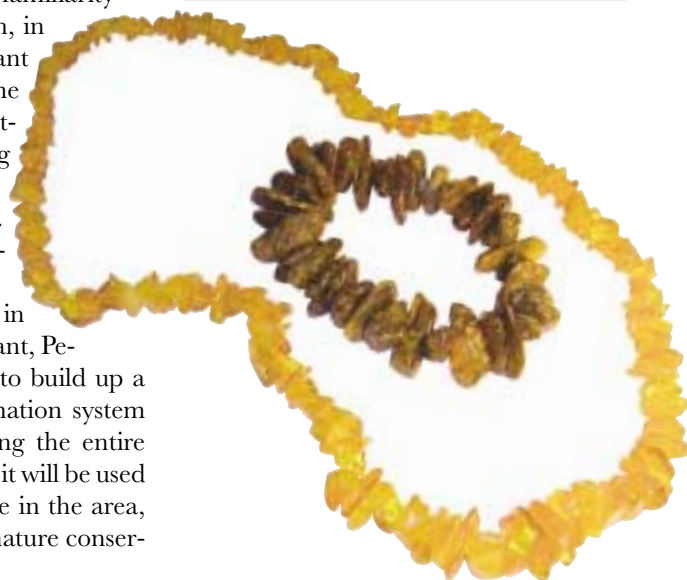
MATS SUNDGREN

Edgar and Zaiga outside their new sauna.



MATS SUNDGREN

At the County administrative Board in Liepaja the Amber Coast is surveyed with the help of digital maps.





In a prison project in Russia, supported by Sida, prisoners are engaged in forming their own future. They learn about the society outside and about the risks of being infected by HIV/Aids or TB.

# Sweden helps change unhealthy prison system



**P**RISONS IN THE FORMER SOVIET Union are overcrowded, unhealthy, and depressing. With the aid of twinning cooperation between Swedish and Baltic prison administrations, Sweden is supporting much-needed improvements to the prison system.

Recently 200 prisoners were found to be infected with HIV in a Lithuanian prison. This shows that the prisons can be veritable sources of infection for diseases such as HIV/Aids and tuberculosis.

Swedish twinning cooperation for prison administrations deals with problems in a very basic and practical way. It includes study visits by prison staff to Sweden, seminars, and the provision of some

equipment. The cooperation programmes are based on recommendations from the Council of Europe. The aim is to support the Baltic prison administrations in bringing their prison services into line with international standards, in particular with European prison rules.

Adapting prison conditions to these requirements is important from a human rights perspective as well as for the process of EU alignment.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RESULT OF THE cooperation has been the change in the attitudes of prison staff towards prisoners. Today, their attitudes are more humane and less violent. Additional occupations and vocational training for

inmates have been established in order to improve their chances of finding jobs when released. Improvements have also been made to living and hygienic conditions in the prisons.

IN LATVIA AND LITHUANIA, TRAINING centres for prison staff have been established with help from Sweden. These centres provide regular basic training in European prison rules. One of the aims is to raise the standing of the profession.

One aim of the programmes of cooperation is to reduce the number of people being put in prison. In Lithuania, for example, the number of prisoners is very high in relation to the total population. Three pilot projects on probation and pa-



© JOHN RANARD, 2002

# Society opens up for disabled people

**A**NDRIS ZLAUGOTNIS DIVIDES HIS life into two parts: before and after 1998. After 1998, he was no longer tied to his wheelchair in the village of Matkule in Latvia. Despite the fact that his health is constantly deteriorating as a result of the nerve disease that he has suffered from throughout his twenty-year life, he now lives a much more active life. He gets out and about with the aid of friends in the village, he goes to discos, the cinema, and cafes.



In 1998 the social centre in Kandava started to work actively with disabled people living in the municipality.

"The social centre in Kandava has brought me closer to the community and the community closer to me," says Andris when he receives us in his flat on the second floor of a block of flats on a dismal winter day in the Latvian countryside.

He is being trained in computers at the social centre and has bought a computer that he can handle himself, if with some difficulty. He attends an English group and welcomes us proudly in English.

But most important to him are the excursions that the centre arranges for him and other disabled people.

"People can see us now and get used to us," he says.

GUNTA KRECERE HAS BEEN ABLE TO SEE Andris develop. She is responsible for social rehabilitation at the social centre in Kandava. When the project at the social centre in Kandava started, she was a nurse. Since then she has trained in social work and has made study visits to the Swedish island of Gotland. One method she uses to break the isolation of disabled people is to cooperate with their associations. She also supports their families.

One person who helps her to break the isolation of disabled people is Andris Irbe, the chairman of Kandava's society for the disabled.

"The problem is to get them here," he says. "When they finally manage to get

here they like it, but they were isolated and locked up for so long during the Soviet period that they don't dare to go out."

One objective of the Kandava project is to get away from institutional care, which dominated during the Soviet period and is still very common in Latvia. Since the project started, Kandava has not placed a single old person, disabled person, or orphan in an institution. Instead, those in need of care are helped to stay in their home environment. A home help service has been established and foster parents have been recruited, a new phenomenon in Latvia.

Ints Leitarts also emphasises the importance of cooperation with the Swedish municipality of Gotland.

"Everyone working at the social centre in Kandava has been trained there. We have taken ideas from there and adapted them to the Latvian context and we have learnt from our mistakes with the aid of Swedish social workers.

## FACTS

### WELFARE REFORM IN LATVIA

The pilot project in Kandava is a part of the welfare reform in Latvia that Sida is financing together with the World Bank.

Sida is contributing SEK 45 million to help Latvia reform its social services and social insurance system. A Swedish consultant is working as an adviser to the project, and the municipality of Gotland is playing an important part for demonstration purposes and as a source of inspiration for social workers. (Gotland is twinned with the region, Tukkum, in which Kandava is located.)

At a conference on social issues held recently in Riga, the capital of Latvia, representatives of Estonia and Lithuania were also present. One result of the conference was that, for the first time, contacts were established between the three countries in the social field.



© JOHN RANARD, 2002

**Many young people are kept in overcrowded prisons. Infectious diseases like TB and HIV/AIDS are spread in a dramatic way.**

role have been started in the Lithuanian Prison Service. Sweden will support these projects.

However, Swedish cooperation in this field does not stop at prisons and probation. It includes the whole chain of criminal justice, from the police to prosecutors and the courts. For example, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention has helped the Ministry of Justice in Estonia to produce a handbook for local crime prevention work, including in schools.

The Swedish Ministry of Justice also offers support and advice to the Ministries of Justice and the Interior in the Baltic States to prepare them for EU membership.

# Noone to rely on

**A**LEXEI LIVES IN ST PETERSBURG: destitute and with no social safety net. He is small and slight with a wispy beard and beautiful eyes. He is sitting in the small room where he lives together with his girl friend, Natasha, and her three-year old son, Vitali.

Alexei is 23 years old and has spent most of his life in children's homes. Today, he has no contact with his mother or with any other relatives. Natasha, who is one year older, has a similar background: when her mother died she ended up in a children's home. Alexei and Natasha grew up after the fall of the Soviet Union. They are among the growing number of children and young people who have been placed in institutions, not to receive help but to be stored. The children's homes are strict and frugal.

Alexei's room smells of poverty. There are dirty clothes everywhere. There are large holes in the wallpaper. The child is at a neighbour's flat, watching tv.

Natasha works as a cleaner in a nearby shop four hours a day. The pay is minimal and she is also obliged to cook food for all the employees without extra pay. This means that, in practice, she is out all day.

Alexei formerly worked as a carpenter, but now he stays at home with the child. When he was discharged from the children's home he was given 80 roubles, just over three dollars. This was what he was



MATS SUNDGREN

**Alexei has spent most of his life in children's homes. At 23 he has great difficulties to cope with society.**

given to build his life with.

"Now we live on Natasha's pay and the child allowance, but it's not enough," he says. "Sometimes we get some money from different places, sometimes we borrow, but we have no one we can rely on."

SOMETIMES JULIA, A SOCIAL WORKER from an organisation working with social questions, visits them.

"Young people are discharged from children's homes with no knowledge whatsoever of how they can cope as adults," she says. "They end up in a hopeless situation, in debt and in poverty."

Today there are no functioning social services in Russia and, for people like Alexei and Natasha, no help is available from society.

Julia is trying to help Alexei and Natasha in different ways, for example by sorting out their debts and giving them advice about the child.

"They have absolutely no idea at all about how to bring up a child. In addition, they are in conflict with their neighbours. I asked a doctor to come here and look at the child but the neighbours didn't allow him into the house. They said that no one of that name lived here."

## More women in politics

**I**n Estonia the participation of women in local assemblies has increased – from 9 per cent in 1989 to 28 per cent after the last election. This is partly due to a project financed by Sweden, which has the aim of increasing the representation of women in politics.

The project was run by a Swedish consultant, Språngbrådan (the Springboard), which specialises in promoting women in Eastern Europe.

The other part of the project was based on a programme of twinning cooperation between Estonia and Sweden. Five Swedish municipalities, particularly active in promoting equality between women and men, were chosen for the programme. Politicians from Estonia visited their



MATS SUNDGREN

**Women training on computers at an institute in St Petersburg that has received support from Sida.**

twinning partners in Sweden to study the work being done to promote equality in the municipalities.

The project in Estonia has now been completed, but it has been spread to Latvia and Lithuania, where similar projects have started using experience and experts from Estonia. Seminars are someti-

mes held on a regional basis and mentors from Estonia are helping women in the other countries. A special effort is being made to encourage young women to become active in politics.

One of the objectives is to increase the participation of women in the next elections, at both regional and national level.

# Puppet on a string

**“YOU WILL BE SOLD LIKE A DOLL”** warns a puppet-girl in outdoor posters currently being displayed all over Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian cities.

An information campaign, financed by Sweden among others, is trying to counteract the increase in the trafficking of women and children from the Baltic region.

“Do not trust easy money abroad,” the same puppet-girl urges again, this time appearing on television. This human marionette, hung from her bare skin, is being used in an information campaign that has been launched to prevent trafficking in women from the Baltic States. It is designed to convey the situation of a trafficked girl – manipulated, coerced, helpless, and in pain.

MORE AND MORE WOMEN FROM THE Baltic States find themselves trapped by traffickers. Most of them go to Germany and other countries in central and southern Europe, but recently the Nordic countries have also become a destination for women from the Baltic region.

The issue of trafficking in women in the Baltic States, and especially Lithuania, is a fairly recent phenomenon, owing its novelty to the newly acquired freedom of international travel from these parts, and to the introduction of market economies.

Apart from the information campaign aimed at raising public awareness, the programme also includes protection and rehabilitation, enforcement of the law against trafficking, and networking in order to get all the parties concerned to cooperate.

Coordinating groups have been formed at government level in order to make the measures more effective.

Lithuania already has a National Plan of Action and the other two Baltic countries will soon sign the UN protocol against trafficking.

The Baltic campaign is being implemented by the International Organization for Migration, IOM, an international NGO that focuses on matters of migration and, increasingly, on the trafficking of women and children.

Sida also supports IOM campaigns against trafficking, similar to those in the Baltic countries, in Ukraine and Moldova, the home countries of a



Poster used in an information campaign against trafficking of women in the Baltic states.

considerable proportion of the almost half a million women who are trafficked into the EU each year.

# Pregnant fathers bear new ideas

**“NO, I AM NOT PREGNANT,”** says Björn Hoffman, sticking out his somewhat generous stomach. The ensuing laughter lightens the atmosphere at the seminar on “Pregnant Fathers” in Kiev. It is a provocative theme that has attracted a lot of people to listen to Swedish policeman and “father trainer” Björn Hoffman and his colleague, Vidar Vetterfalk.

But since training fathers and paternal leave are unknown concepts in Ukraine, it is important to convince the public that the father role is actually something to be taken seriously, even in a country with such sizeable problems as Ukraine.

Björn talks about his 30 years as a policeman, when he often came into con-

tact with criminal teenage boys. Eventually, he realised that behind every criminal teenager there was an absent father.

Training fathers in Ukraine could be one way of preventing many of the social problems related to divorces and children who have been led astray and fill the country’s prisons and institutions.

“There is a thirst for new ideas in Ukraine,” says Björn after the seminar.

Swedish “father trainers” are in Ukraine as part of a Sida-financed programme, “The Role of Men in Eastern Europe”, which is intended to help men form networks against violence and to push for a change in men’s role.

Similar courses are being run in Russia and Moldova.

## FACTS

### THE MALE ROLE

The traditional male role is in a state of crisis in Eastern Europe. In the transition from one social system to another, men have had greater difficulties than women in adjusting to the new system.

For example, men in Ukraine have the lowest life expectancy in Europe. Men die prematurely from alcoholism and other forms of substance abuse, or from accidents, often caused by this abuse. This critical situation for men has serious consequences for families, women, and children.



In the Baltic countries many people live in the countryside but unemployment will increase when they join the EU. The county of Alytus in Latvia has worked out an action plan for development in close cooperation with the County of Jonkoping in Sweden.

# A living countryside

**T**HE BALTIC COUNTRYSIDE IS FAR less developed than the urban areas: the standard of living is lower and unemployment is high. Sweden is helping to find models for sustainable rural development.

In the Baltic countries a relatively large number of people live in the countryside. In Lithuania, for example, 18 per cent of the population works in agriculture, a high figure compared to Western Europe. Unemployment will increase when the country joins the EU. There will be great pressure on Lithuanian farmers to find more effective production methods. Many will have to leave farming and more people will have to find other ways of earning a living.

The County of Alytus in Lithuania is a typical rural area, with typical problems. Unemployment is 18 per cent, high even by Lithuanian standards. People are tempted to move to nearby big cities, and drug problems are increasing among the young people.

In close cooperation with the Swedish County of Jonkoping, the County of Alytus has worked out an action plan to develop the county. This action plan is now being implemented.

The aim is to create jobs, to make it easier for people to stay. Up to now, the county has lacked the instruments and means to implement a regional policy. One of the aims of the project is to train the administration to apply for EU regional development funds.

THE SWEDISH MODEL USED IN ALYTUS gives everybody in the county a chance to influence the way in which the project is implemented. This "bottom-up" approach is something new in Lithuania, where everything used to be organised from above. All groups in society, not least young people, women, and business people, are involved.

"We have helped them to think in new ways," says Bengt Isacson, head of the project. "In one year so much has happened,

we have found the right people to work with and they are very active on their own."

THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME ALSO includes the university in Alytus, working in close connection with the International Business School in Jonkoping. It will be a centre of knowledge for the region, and will also serve parts of Poland, Belarus, and the Russian county of Kaliningrad. The aim is to gather knowledge and research on how to "retrain" institutions and people from the old Soviet way of organising and thinking and help them adapt to the new EU realities. One idea is to train "EU brokers" who will be experts on all the tricky EU rules and regulations. This will help Alytus to gain access to EU regulations, subsidies, and regional development funds.

The plan includes an IT faculty in Alytus, called BaltLab. It is intended that this faculty will develop into a centre for IT in the region.

# The water unites us

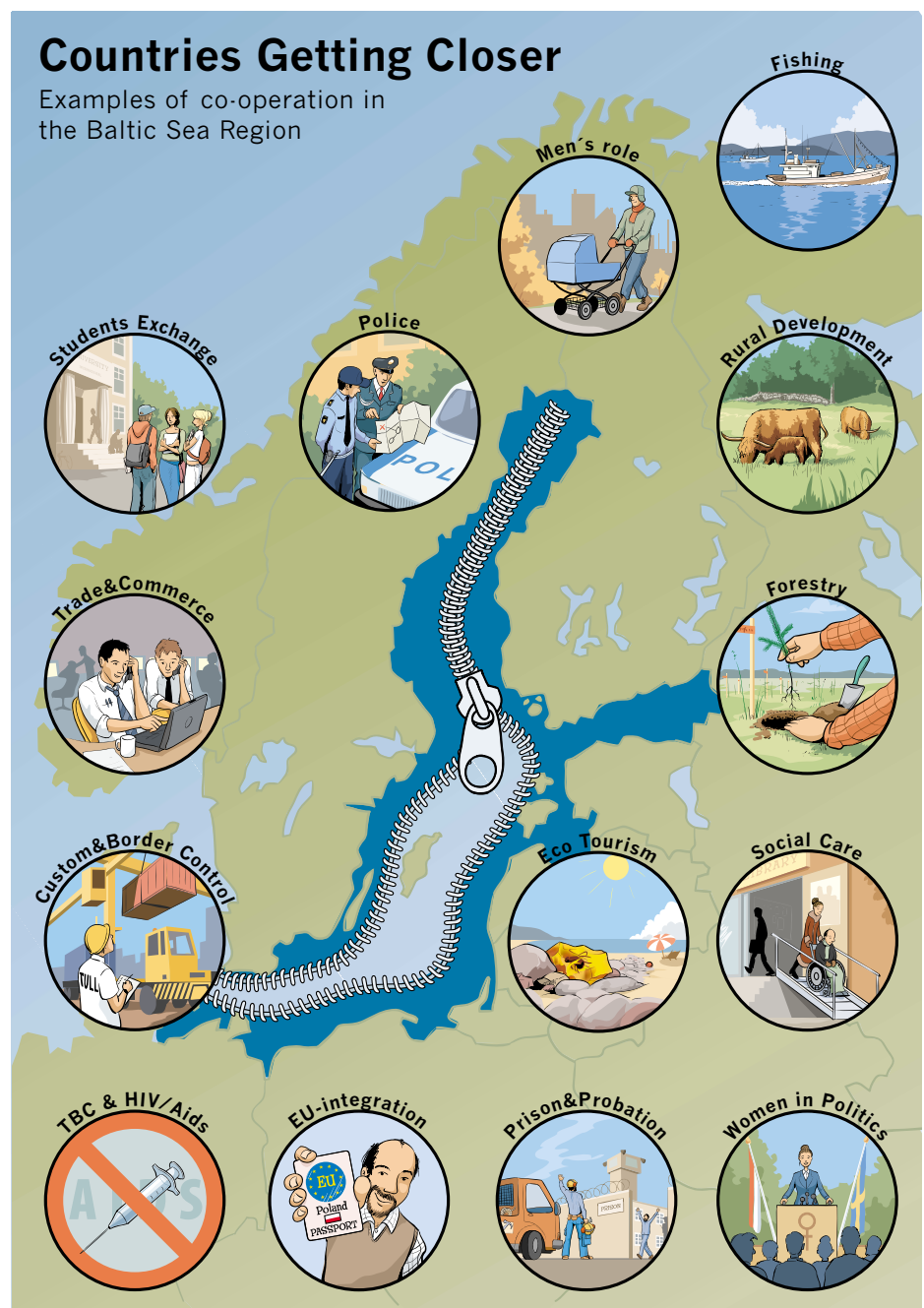
ONCE THERE WERE VIKINGS, who sailed from Sweden across the Baltic Sea (in Sweden called the “Eastern Sea” and in Estonia the “Western Sea”) to trade and to rob. When they reached the Baltic coast they penetrated into those countries via their numerous rivers and lakes.

The sea was a natural link with our neighbours to the east. The Baltic Sea was an important trading region and many of Sweden’s battles in those days were fought for control of the region. However, during the Soviet era, the Baltic Sea became a “closed” border to the east and a front line in the Cold War.

Many people came as refugees in small boats across the sea. They were welcomed with open arms and were well integrated into Sweden. Their hope of being able to return to independent home countries almost vanished as the years went by.

BUT SUDDENLY THE TIDE TURNED AND the Soviet Empire disintegrated. The other peoples around the Baltic Sea followed closely the struggle for independence of the three small Baltic countries. Today the water does not separate us anymore. It binds us together, with deep feelings of a common destiny. As before, our future depends on our ability to cooperate, trade, and exist peacefully together. One obvious common interest is the condition of the water in the Baltic Sea. But the condition of the people living beside the Baltic Sea is also of common interest. Crime, disease, and social unrest travel rapidly and threaten all of us. Sound neighbours are a country’s best security, not to mention the importance of having neighbours with dynamic economies. It gives us great satisfaction to note that economies are growing much faster on the eastern side of the Baltic today than on the western side.

The aim of the support given to these countries, once they gained their independence about ten years ago, has been to help them to exist and develop in a completely new setting. The process of change has been impressive. Their economies have grown faster than elsewhere in Europe and most of the rest of the world. Over the last six to seven years, the focus of development cooperation has been on supporting the efforts of the Bal-



tic countries, as well as Poland, to qualify for and join the European Union. But, from the very outset, the main thrust has been to establish long-lasting and close relations between people that belong together – connected by the sea.

ALONG WITH THE EXPANSION OF NORMAL relations, we are now in the final stage of our bilateral support programmes, which will be phased out completely when these four countries become members of the EU. For Sweden and Sida, bilateral support in the sub-region will in future focus on coo-

peration with Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus – also part of the Baltic Sea region.

This brochure gives a few glimpses of cooperation that have been financed by Sida. It is our hope that our experience will serve as an example of how countries bordering a sea can come closer to each other – to the mutual benefit of all concerned.

**STAFFAN HERRSTRÖM**  
Head of Sida's Department  
for cooperation with East and  
Central Europe





This brochure is published by Sida-East,  
The Department for Cooperation with East and Central  
Europe at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.  
Editor: Mats Sundgren. Design by A4. Cover photo by Ola Jennersten.  
Printed by Elanders Novum, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2002.

More information on [www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se)