

Acronym: **B2B**

1. PRIORITY: FACILITATION OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

1.1. Support strand: Facilitation of socioeconomic development and support for entrepreneurship

Project applicant: Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Riga, Latvia)

Project partners: Belarussian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Minsk, Belarus), Panevezys Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (Panevezys, Lithuania), Daugavpils University (Daugavpils, Latvia)

Financial support: LATVIA, LITHUANIA and BELARUS Cross-border Cooperation programme within the European Neighbourhood and Partnership instrument of 2007

Aim – to facilitate long-term cross-border cooperation and common innovative entrepreneurship, to balance the general conditions for regional business development, development of cross-border exchanges of good practices as well as the increase of circulation of goods and services.

One of the project activities is a cross-border experience exchange, participation in activities that facilitate entrepreneurship in Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus.



PARTNERSHIP OF NEIGHBOURS



Šo projektu finansē Eiropas Savienība
This project is funded by the
European Union



Logistics, construction, food production and innovation - key areas of the business forum in Rezekne. Contact exchange focused on promotion of long-term cross-border cooperation between Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus. Entrepreneurs from Lithuania and Belarus met Latvian entrepreneurs, Rezekne municipality representatives as well as the management and specialists of the Special Economic Zone. They also visited laboratory of the Rezekne Higher Education Institution Faculty of Engineering and two companies: SIA Verems and SIA LEAX Rezekne.

Asta Puodziuniene, Chief expert of Panevezys city municipality Economy and property management department (Lithuania)

It is the first time I am in Rezekne. I like it here. These meetings with entrepreneurs and municipality professionals are valuable and I had an interesting visit to the Rezekne Higher Education Institution. The Special Economic Zone status is the asset of Rezekne. There are a lot of projects being implemented. We should stop competing with one another and start working together. We should learn from each another and implement the best practises.

Nikolai Afanasyev, OAO "Белсплат" Chief Engineer (Belarus)

The meeting at the Rezekne Higher Education Institution was significant. They have a very friendly attitude towards the students there, modern study programs and advanced technology. In many other places students are taught with physically and morally outdated technologies. But there it is another story. I was pleasantly surprised. There are companies in the city and its surroundings that have found their business area and their place in the market. The city of Rezekne itself looks nice and it has a potential.

During the meeting I met entrepreneurs working in my field. We exchanged contact details and talked. Is the first time we expand our network this direction. We cooperated with Russia, but not with the Baltics so far. We produce intercom systems used in apartment blocks. I am surprised that here they use a mechanical code system. In this respect, Belarus is ahead. Latvian entrepreneurs are interested in the products which are made by my company. I think that there will be cooperation. That would enrich our countries. Latvia will have new products and Belarus - new jobs and the idea of moving forward.

Igor Sinickiy, "Belprom Bauplan Consult GMBH" Deputy Director, Architect (Belarus)

The first time I have been to Rezekne in the 80s of the previous century - it was during the Soviet times. Today, I am surprised by what I saw in Rezekne. As a professional architect working not only in Belarus, but also in the European Union, I can say that the city has left a nice impression on me. The children and youth centre "Zeimuls" is impressive. This is a unique and also a social project at the same time. There are many young people in the city who don't spend their free time only entertaining. They engaged in different interest groups. Zeimuls is also an exemplary architecture. It fits into the landscape



besides the castle hill. The modern and expensive project has proven itself to be worthy. This is a European level project. The Concert hall "Gors" is also a significant development. The city is organised, many beautiful places have been created. In my opinion it is important.

In the framework of this project I also visited Panevezys. Networking is crucial for me as I run a large architectural-engineering office in Belarus. We develop projects for Belarus as well as for the European Union. I am a licensed architect in Germany, I work in Belgium, Austria and Germany. I'm interested in the Lithuanian and Latvian products. We have cheaper labour here, which allows for the creation and introduction of competitive products in the "old Europe".

Valentina Kirilova, Support Association of Business Women (Belarus)

One of the most important achievements is the understanding each other that we gain here. People have a chance to meet and talk with each other. The format of dialogue allows for both to hear and to listen. Dialogue makes it possible to establish a direct contact. It is an opportunity for us to develop, not because someone requires it from us, but as a free choice to communicate. Matchmaking allows you to meet in person.

We have already discussed four specific projects. The arts incubator,

which already exist in Lithuania. Belarusian information centre. There is a program of contemporary and historical art. Exchange of exhibitions. We have an idea to develop business tourism: it is a chance for a person who is on a business trip to expand their horizons with an insight into culture of the country visited. Now we are identifying the appropriate project activities and methodologies. This is like a master-class, we learn about the solutions for design, production process, involvement of certain people with their tasks. Regarding Rezekne, I think it is important that the city is located at the crosspoint of important transport links. The same applies to Vitebsk that is also on the intersection of both historic and transport routes. There is something special about the border cities.

Sanita Puncule, Project Coordinator (Latvia)

It is an important project for the city of Rezekne. The city has participated in many fora, the representatives went to other countries to learn about the best practises and widen the networks. It is the first time in the last 7-8 years that such a large project takes place in Rezekne with entrepreneurs from Belarus and Lithuania. This time, our entrepreneurs have the leading role at the matchmaking.

Forum in Rezekne was held at the right time and the right place. Had it been taking place four years ago, Rezekne at that time would not have had so many new buildings and innovative projects that can attract new investors. As for the results of the project as a whole, each entrepreneur has at least one project in mind now. Several entrepreneurs gained new contacts and will share with them in their own countries. We will see what will be the practical outcomes from these fora and how the cooperation will develop - where joint ventures will evolve, where production will take place, who will supply the raw materials, etc.

The most comprehensive result is the exchange of the most up to date information. Now the participants are busy thinking if it is possible to work here and what would be the next steps. The next level is joint projects, where the ideas can be developed further. Some of the forum members already have found reliable partners and they can already conclude first contracts. The first forum was in May this year, it took several months for the first results to appear.

Roman Mokrecov, Project Coordinator (Belarus)

This was a good opportunity not only to simply meet, but to get good business contacts and further cooperation opportunities. In each city we got to know another sector: in Daugavpils forum - road construction equipment, Panevezys - construction, design, food wholesale, in Minsk, however, - agriculture and agritourism.

In my opinion this cross-border cooperation is crucial. The forum in Rezekne was very useful as the program was designed for the cross-border cooperation. Vitebsk, Vitebsk region - Rezekne, Latgale region. It is vital to focus on regions. The discussions were meaningful and the ideas - interesting. These are the initial contacts that can lead to the conclusion of a contract as well as new businesses and production.