

Northwest Russia: Facts and Events

Newsletter by the Stockholm Region Office in St. Petersburg

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Concluding Conference of the EU Project *E-Skills for Russian SMEs – Phase II*



On 21-22 November the Concluding Conference of the EU Project *E-Skills for Russian SMEs* took place in St. Petersburg.

The current conference relied on the experience of previous *E-Skills for Russian SMEs* project, which covered only St. Petersburg and Novgorod during the years 2005-2006. The new project expanded these operations that included nine regions in the Northwest Federal District. Its main aim is to prepare SMEs for Russia's upcoming joining of the World Trade Organization and to improve their competitiveness in this new environment.

Dr. Hans Van Vliet, head counselor of the thematic section of the European Commission Delegation to Russia, participated in both conferences and in short speeches emphasized that an e-Government is the one of conditions for the development of civil society in Russia and that the outcome of *E-Skills for Russian SMEs: Phase II* provides an example for other Russian regions.

The conference was organized by the *EU Project E-Skills for Russian SMEs – Phase II*, the *Northwest SMEs Support Centre*, and the *International Centre for Social and Economic Research - Leontief Centre*.

Source: 'E-Skills for Russian SMEs', www.e-skills.spb.ru

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Baltic Meetings Annual Event



On 4 December the annual reception of the *Baltic Meetings* project, opening new prospects for cooperation between St. Petersburg and the Baltic Sea States, took place at the Ambassador Hotel in St. Petersburg. This year the event was hosted by the Republic of Poland, which presented its tourist routes and a cultural programme with national dishes and a folk ensemble "Kovtovo". Besides, a round table discussion devoted to cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region was held in the frames of the event.

The *Baltic Meetings* project, jointly organised by the St. Petersburg Committee for External Relations and the Ambassador Hotel, is aimed at developing business and humanitarian cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. The project was launched in 2006, and in 2007 over 30 conferences, round tables and discussions devoted to the problems of the region have already been held. Among the most remarkable of them are the Days of Turku and Riga, the Days of Central Finland, Tallinn's Meetings, the round table "St. Petersburg as Business and Political Area" etc.

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Reference

St. Petersburg prizes its ties with its international partner cities, which date as far back as 1953, when the earliest such partnership was cemented with Turku, Finland. Today, St. Petersburg is partners with 71 cities worldwide. List of partner cities you can find here: http://www.kvs.spb.ru/en/activity/international/partner_cities.

Source: www.kvs.spb.ru

St. Petersburg – Helsinki High-Speed Railway



In November the Government of Russia made a decision to invest RUR 28 billion (app. SEK 7.5 billion) in high-speed railway passenger service between St. Petersburg and Helsinki. The total investments in the project will amount to RUR 79.7 billion (app. SEK 21.3 billion). *Russian Railways Company* will cover RUR 51.7 billion (app. SEK 13.8 billion). After the project is accomplished the rail traffic is planned to grow 2.4-fold to 480 thousand passengers a year.

Source: *Delovoy Peterburg* newspaper, November 2007, www.dpgazeta.ru

Photo: www.interpress.ru

International Educational Seminar *Culture and Creative Sector in St. Petersburg*



The International Educational Seminar *Culture and Creative Sector in St. Petersburg* took place on 26-27 November. The objective of the seminar was to analyze opportunities for development of contemporary Russian-Finnish projects.

Among the participants of the event were specialists from Finland – leaders of business and creative industries – and managers of the following organizations and institutions of St. Petersburg: State Hermitage, Mariinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg State University, Consulate General of Finland in St. Petersburg, *Baltic First Line* magazine, *Machiavelli Luxury Group*, North-West Business Development Center *Nordica*, Association for cooperation with Nordic countries *NORDEN*, Leningrad Region Center for

Entrepreneurship Support and others.

The seminar was jointly organized by the Institute for Cultural Programs (St. Petersburg), Institute for Art, Development and Education (Helsinki) and the University Consortium of Pori.

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Photo: *Institute for Cultural Programs*



Smartphone Will Help Travel Around Sweden



Saint-Petersburg-based *Speereo Software* Company is approaching to develop 18 Languages phrase-book (which will include Swedish<->Russian<->English as well) for the latest Sony-Ericsson P990 and P1i Smartphones. *Speereo Software* are expecting that this future phrase-book will be useful for Russian and foreign travellers during business or vacation trips to Sweden.

The *Speereo Voice Translator* is an innovative phrasebook for traveling on business or leisure that provides translation for about 4,000 commonly used phrases (including some idioms and slang) including business, technical, medical and legal terms. These phrases are arranged in 16 main categories and 87 sub-categories – subjects include Travel, City, Food, Shopping, Health and Entertainment.

Languages supported will be: - Swedish, Russian, English, Spanish, German, French, Italian, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), Turkish, Portuguese, Korean, Japanese, classic Arabic, Finnish, Polish, Danish, Norwegian.

Other useful services for travelers such as travel guides, flight schedules and online status information, weather forecast, currency converter, world time, calculator, city

event guides are also available.

The *Speereo Voice Translator* will be launched approximately at the end of January 2008. The 15 days trial version will be available for free and anybody can put it on a web site. *Speereo Software* plans starting a new project in creation of new travel guides for major cities in Sweden in various languages.

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World Biggest Open-Air Skating Rink at Palace Square



On 1 December the world biggest open-air skating rink was opened at the Palace Square in St. Petersburg. The total area of the rink is 5000 sq. meters and it can take up over 5000 persons per day, which makes it the biggest skating rink in the world. Apart from the very rink, there are nice changing rooms, cafés and first-aid post.

The skating rink was constructed by the Mobile Ice Fields department of the *Rusenergomontag* Company with the help of the unique technology, allowing to preserve ice irregardless of the weather.

The rink will be open till the beginning of March.



Source: *Metro* newspaper, December 2007

Photo: www.interpress.ru

The archive of the newsletters can be found at http://www.stockholmregion.org/websites/stockholm/sd_page/274/3/index.php?

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