

# Northwest Russia: Facts and Events

Newsletter by the Stockholm Region Office in St. Petersburg

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## Days of St. Petersburg in Stockholm-Mälars Region



On 2-5 December the Days of St. Petersburg were held following the Cooperation Agreement signed between the Counties of Stockholm, Södermanland, Uppsala, Västmanland and Örebro and the City of St. Petersburg in February 2006. Two years later in February 2008 the Agreement was extended in a Working Plan setting up concrete collaboration steps for the period of 2008-2009. One of those steps was the Days of St. Petersburg.

The Days of St. Petersburg were opened on 2 December by an Official Reception hosted by Stockholm County Governor Per Unckel at Tessin Palace. The main event of the Days was a St. Petersburg – Stockholm-Mälars region bilateral collaboration conference held on 3 December. The City of St. Petersburg also organized a seminar on St. Petersburg investment attractiveness and a Russian Language Outside Russia Programme at the School of the Russian Embassy in Kingdom of Sweden.

The St. Petersburg delegation also had a chance to join thematic visits to different parts of Stockholm-Mälars region: Social Issues in the Municipality of Solna, Public Health in the County of Örebro, Environmental Issues in the County of Uppsala, Cooperation between Innovation and Academy in Kista Science City and the County of Västmanland, and a visit to the Ports of Stockholm.

The delegation of St. Petersburg, headed by Vice Governor Ludmila Kostkina, comprised over 50 representatives of the City of St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg universities, enterprises and mass-media.

On 4-5 December Governor of St. Petersburg Valentina Matvienko paid an official visit to Stockholm, hosting a Reception at Embassy of Russia. During the visit Valentina Matvienko had a meeting with Per Unckel, Stockholm County Governor, and invited him to St. Petersburg for the Days of Stockholm-Mälars region. Per Unckel thanked for the invitation and commented that Stockholm-St. Petersburg axis is vital for overall cooperation in the entire Baltic Sea region.

The Governor also had a meeting with Gunilla Carlsson, Minister for International Development Cooperation, as well as representatives of the Swedish business community at the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce. Valentina Matvienko stressed that St. Petersburg is interested to develop cooperation with Swedish companies in different sectors, including power industry, utility services, transport infrastructure and innovations. Economic collaboration with Sweden is a priority for the City of St. Petersburg in its work with Northern Europe. Currently there are about 100 Swedish companies operating in St. Petersburg. Valentina Matvienko also stressed that economic relations are not the only priority for St. Petersburg, contacts in the fields of healthcare, social work, environmental protection, education, science and culture are also very important.



The programme of the Days of St. Petersburg is a result of joint work of the Stockholm County Administrative Board and the City of St. Petersburg. The Stockholm Region Office in St. Petersburg took an active part in the arrangements.

Source: Stockholm Region Office in St. Petersburg, [stockholm.office@stockholm.spb.ru](mailto:stockholm.office@stockholm.spb.ru); City of St. Petersburg, [www.gov.spb.ru](http://www.gov.spb.ru)

## Workshop: EU-Russia Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region



On 11 December a workshop on problems and prospects for EU-Russia cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region took place in St. Petersburg. The programme of the event included several sessions with participation of the European Commission, federal bodies of Russia, the City of St. Petersburg, regional bodies of the Northwest Federal District, experts, researchers, diplomats and mass-media.

The first session focused on the development of infrastructure to promote EU-Russia cooperation. The participants touched on the following matters: infrastructure development barriers; ways of overcoming those barriers, for instance by increasing project funding; priority regions for cooperation development; and the role of Northern Dimension partnership in the field of transport development.

Session "Innovation opportunities in the Northwest Federal District of Russia" focused on innovations boost through practical regional development; stimulation of innovations in the Baltic Sea Region through competition and cooperation between regions and countries; advantages of innovative development in the Baltic Sea Region considering globalization; cross-border innovation clusters; and the role of European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

The discussions at "Investment attraction in Northwest Russia" session were centered upon two main questions: How can Northwest Russia attract more investments take advantage of not only EU resources?; How can less developed regions attract investors, and how does interregional cooperation level up development differences? The closing discussion was dedicated to prospects and strategic goals of EU-Russia interregional cooperation.

The workshop was organized by Leontief Centre, City of St. Petersburg, Carnegie Moscow Centre – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Swedish Institute of International Relations.

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## Visa-Free Regime for Ferry Passengers



On 21 September the State Duma of Russia adopted in the third reading a law providing visa-free regime for ferry passengers coming to the country for a period of up to 72 hours. So far only cruiser passengers have had this right. The new law will come into force after 90 days from its official publication.

The new law is quite beneficial for St. Petersburg, where the first stage of a new sea port *Marine Facade* with a passenger capacity of 2.5-5 thousand people was put into operation (the new sea port accepted its first vessel on 10 September 2008).

According to Maxim Sokolov, Head of the St. Petersburg Committee for Investments and Strategic Projects, it will bring St. Petersburg some extra EUR 150 million revenues over a three-year period.

Last year St. Petersburg accepted over 300 cruisers with over 350 thousand tourists. This year the plans are to accept 320 cruise ships and 400 thousand tourists accordingly. Whereas the regular ferry connection between St. Petersburg and other Baltic cities was interrupted in 2004-2005 due to existing visa regulations, and the loss of opportunity amounted to EUR 150 million. On 1 August 2008 the ferry connection between Helsinki and St. Petersburg was renewed after a long brake. *Julia* ferry was launched by the Finnish operator *Stella Lines*. On 8 October *Stella Lines* had to close the ferry line due to the world financial crisis.

Sergey Korneev, vice-president of Russian Union of Travel Industry, commented that the new law on visa-free regime provides a good opportunity to start substantial negotiations with international ferry lines operators.

Source: Russian Union of Travel Industry, [www.ratanews.ru](http://www.ratanews.ru)

Photo: [www.interpress.ru](http://www.interpress.ru)

## Gold Palm Award for Russian Vodkaroom # 1



Leaders Club International awarded Russian Vodkaroom # 1 and Museum of Russian Vodka with Gold Palm for the best restaurant concept in Russia. Now the restaurant will represent St. Petersburg in Lyon in January 2009 where it will compete with 8 other nominees from Belgium, France, Germany and Russia for the 3d International Foodservice Award. For more information: <http://foodserviceexchange.eu/NOMINEESNomines.aspx>

The place was opened in September 2008 in the very heart of St. Petersburg and unites under its roof a restaurant and a museum. Visitors are taken for an exciting journey through the history of Russian vodka. This helps one understand the role of vodka in Russian culture. After the exhibition they are invited to vodka tasting with traditional Russian vodka accompaniments - "zakuski".

After the guided tour visitors can continue their acquaintance with Russian life style in a restaurant where they are served traditional Russian dishes: from Peter's the Great Kasha (Baked Buckwheat Groats with Porcini Mushrooms and Chicken Hearts) to the Soviet culinary hit – Chicken Kiev. For more information about Vodka museum: [www.vodkamuseum.su](http://www.vodkamuseum.su)



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## Ice Sculptures Competition at Hermitage



Source: [www.interpress.ru](http://www.interpress.ru)

# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The archive of the newsletters can be found at [http://www.stockholmregion.org/website1/sd\\_page/16/1/index.php](http://www.stockholmregion.org/website1/sd_page/16/1/index.php)

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