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### “The neighbors on the roof of Europe” strengthen friendly relations



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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to analysis of Russian-Norwegian conference “Potential of town twinning for the effective development of the Northern territories” held in Arkhangelsk on the 22nd of September 2017. The review article examines the results of discussion about conditions and prospects of cross-border cooperation in the Northern areas of Russia and Norway. Special attention is paid to the innovative inter-regional projects with the participation of business, academia and municipalities of two countries, and studying the experience of the parties in the social, economic and cultural spheres.

**Keywords:** *Russia, Norway, regions, municipalities, business forum, cross-border cooperation, business, innovation, projects*

“With good intent” — this winged expression of the head of the department of culture, tourism and sport of the administration of the Pinezhsky district of the Arkhangelsk region L.A. Zhytov, taken from the ancestors who supported active cooperation with Norwegians as far back as the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, became the leitmotif of the plenary meeting of the Russian-Norwegian conference “Twinning Potential — for the Effective Development of the Northern Territories”, held in Arkhangelsk in the framework of the famous Margarita Fair September 22 th-year-end.

By the performance of the national anthems of Russia and Norway, the International Forum solemnly opened the combined orchestra of the musicians of Arkhangelsk and Tromsø.

The conference in the form of a business twinning dialogue between the representatives of the seven municipalities of Northern Norway and nine municipalities of the Arkhangelsk region was organized jointly by the Archangelsk Municipality, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Arkhangelsk, the Norwegian Consulate General in Murmansk, the Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of Norway in Arkhangelsk A.A. Shalev and the Barents Secretariat.

The participants of the conference were welcomed by the Head of the Assembly of Deputies of the Arkhangelsk Region V.F. Novozhilov and the head of the city Duma V.V. Syrova. In her

welcome speech, Valentina Syrova stressed that, in the context of the expanding sanctions policy of a number of states with regard to Russia at the regional level, the interaction of the two countries is taking place in an atmosphere of mutual interest and the establishment of partnership and business ties. In support of this, the deputy noted the importance of geographic, historical and socio-cultural factors that prevail over the political aspects in the relations between Russia and Norway.

The Consul General of Norway in Murmansk Eric Szedal, as well as mayors of sister cities of Arkhangelsk and Vardø — Igor Godzish and Robert Jensen, spoke about the importance of twinning of northern municipalities for strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation between the regions of Northern Norway and the Arkhangelsk region.

Consul General of Norway in Murmansk Erik Szedal noted the special place of Archangelsk in the field of cross-border cooperation between the two countries, pointing to the ever-increasing interest of Norwegians to interact with their neighbors. One of the factors contributing to the strengthening of the interaction of the two peoples, E. Sveadal called the god-experience of profitable traditional Pomor trade.

In their speeches I. Godzish and R. Jensen also stressed that since the first Russian-Norwegian twinning agreement between Arkhangelsk and the Vardø commune was achieved in 1989, significant results have been achieved in the implementation of bilateral projects in the educational and cultural spheres, as well as in the sphere of interaction between the youth of the two countries. I. Godzish drew the attention of the guests to the fact that due to the rich experience in international relations, Arkhangelsk occupies a leading position among the municipalities of the Arkhangelsk region in the development of international relations and is ready to make every effort to create a new impulse for the development of interregional relations between Russia and Norway.



Fig. 1. Chairman of the Arkhangelsk City Duma Valentin Syrov and Deputy Chairman Maxim Korelsky.

M.A. Preminin, the 3rd secretary of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Arkhangelsk, spoke at the plenary session with an analysis of the all-round cooperation between Russia and Norway, stressing that the trade turnover between the two countries in 2017, despite the sanctions foreign policy, tends to growth. Thus, in January–April this year the volume of bilateral trade increased by 9.2 percent compared to the same period in 2016. "Regional cooperation and especially brotherly ties in the north of Europe are a unique phenomenon," stressed Maxim. "Their importance in the current conditions is steadily increasing and responding to the current and long-term interests of both Russia and Norway". The deputy mayor of Arkhangelsk, N.V. Evmenov, informed about the growing dynamics of cooperation.



Fig 2. Head of Arkhangelsk Igor Godzish and Consul General of Norway in Murmansk Erik Svedal (3rd right).

Kristin Raimo, Mayor of Tromsø municipality, stressed: "The whole world is looking at us. And our task is to justify the hopes of the world community for the sustainable development of the Arctic. We also played a significant role in the development of Arctic tourism. According to a survey conducted in the PRC, about 300 million Chinese people would like to get acquainted with the Arctic, and we need to strengthen cross-border cooperation to help them realize this desire. It is very important to show unity in practice, not in words, but in practice, considering our common responsibility for the Arctic macroregion as "neighbors on the roof of Europe".

President of the Arkhangelsk Chamber of Commerce and Industry V.Yu. Sidorovsky proposed extending the text of the resolution to the section "Economic Cooperation", actively using the channel of commercial and industrial representations of Russia and Norway for this purpose.

The need for a balance between official and popular relations was spoken by the deputy of the regional meeting of Finnmark Remi Strand: "From polite phrases of officials — to true cooperation between the peoples of the northern regions of Norway and Russia with the support of Moscow and Oslo, this is how we can convince all categories of the population in the important and the profitability of cooperation between Norwegians and Russians, "the deputy stressed.

The plenary meeting, thus, gave the start to the work of sections, master classes. Great success was enjoyed by the exhibition of books in the Arkhangelsk Regional Scientific Library named after N.A. Dobrolyubova, dedicated to the history of cooperation of the countries of the Barents Region: from the navigation of Scandinavians across the White Sea to the Russian North in

the 9th century. and the development of pomor trade before the signing of the Kirkenes Declaration on 11 January 1993. Visitors could get acquainted with the study of K.F. Thiander's "Journeys of the Scandinavians in the White Sea", published in 1906, with photographs of the nature of the Barents region and with research in various fields, as well as with the fair "Ideas of Russian–Norwegian Projects".

The cultural program ended in the evening of Friendship.

