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Политические науки и регионоведение

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Environmental cross-border cooperation between Karelia and Finland

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Аннотация. The article is aimed to examine the cross-border cooperation between the Republic of Karelia and Finland in the field of environment. The research helps to prove that the Republic of Karelia and Finland have an effective environmental cooperation due to the mechanisms and methods of working they use. Besides, the article provides the information about the program of cooperation in Karelia, what institutes of power are involved and what legal framework is used.

Ключевые слова: cross-border cooperation, environment, Finland, the Republic of Karelia, the European Union, Russian Federation

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At the present stage, interregional cooperation plays an important role in the development of any state. Interregional cooperation provides a framework for joint action and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors. Cooperation contributes to the harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the countries.

Currently, the environmental sphere has a great influence on the development of interregional cooperation. National states that strive to preserve their native nature and take care of it understand that together they will achieve great results in the issue of ecology. The same can be said about the Karelia region and Finland.

Historically Karelia and Finland had close relations due to the territorial situation. Modern relations between Russia and Finland are developing in the field of economic cooperation due to the growth of cross-border business. At the same time, countries pay special attention to improving living and working conditions. They strive to preserve the environment and create a diverse and unique culture. Karelia and Finland are the two most environmentally friendly regions, and this is the main reason why governments seek to interact and help each other in environmental matters.

During the research the main question was what mechanism countries can use for cooperation and solving joint problems.

The aim of the research is to find out and analyze main mechanisms and principles of interregional environmental cooperation on the example of Karelia and Finland.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to perform the following tasks:

To learn the main information about the interregional cooperation between Karelia and Finland

To determine the main actors and institutions in the process of interregional environmental cooperation

To learn and analyze the legal framework that is used to adjust the cooperation

The object of research is the process of interregional cooperation in the field of environment. The subject of research is the mechanisms and principles of cooperation work.

The research method comparative analysis with the use of functional elements.

The literature review shows that the boarder-cooperation in the Republic of Karelia is quite developed topic. There are works which are dedicated to the main cooperation

programmes. For instance, it is E.A. Shlapenko and K. V. Verkholtantseva's works. These articles contain the information about the history of region cooperation, the main information about participants, structure and the functions. Besides, these articles touch the perspectives of cooperation. However, it was found out that there is a lack of articles about the mechanisms of working and methods which help Russia and Finland to have an effective partnership. The Euroregion "Karelia" is famous as one of successful cooperation projects that helps to solve problems and improve the living conditions, so it is significant to understand how two countries work jointly.

Media materials, documents of cross-border cooperation programmes, constitutions of Russia and Finland and other regulatory legal acts, information from the websites of official authorities were used as data sources.

According to the official information, the Republic of Karelia is involved in two significant programmes. The first one is Euroregion «Karelia». It is a geographical region in the Republic of Karelia and Finland united by common interests in economic development, nature protection, preservation and development of culture. The Karelia Euroregion is located on the border of Russia and Finland and includes the provinces of Kainuu, Northern Karelia, Northern Ostrobothnia (Finland) and the Republic of Karelia (Russia). The main aim of the Euroregion «Karelia» is a common desire to improve the living conditions of the population on both sides of the border through cooperation. The Euroregion «Karelia» analyzes strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats to their activities and makes a programme of actions. The main spheres of the Euroregion «Karelia» activities are economy and the welfare production, but also the region is quite interested in environmental problems and joint cooperation for solving them. The main prospective result will be visa-free regime at the territory of the region. [Verholantseva, 1-2].

When the region was only at the stage of creation, one of the authors of the idea of creating the Euroregion

«Karelia», former Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Karelia, ex-chairman of the Executive Committee of the Euroregion «Karelia» Valery Shlyamin noticed one important thing. He said that they learnt the experience of different regions and understood that each territory developed its own principles and mechanisms of cooperation. [Verholantseva, 2].

The second programme which is involved more in environmental cooperation is cross-border cooperation Karelia. The programme has a lot branches of activity in economic, cultural and migration policies but also it develops in cooperation in sustainable exploitation of natural resources and environmental protection. For instance, this programme has the projects like «Improving water quality for local use of water resources and ecological status of transboundary rivers», «Green schools», «BIOKARELIA», «ECODIVE - Diverse and clean forests - successful bioeconomics»,

«EDUWATER – Education for sustainable water use» [CBC Karelia joint operational programme]. The analysis of the distribution of projects by spheres makes it possible to identify trends in the development of cross-border cooperation, to identify the main social groups to which the results of cross-border interactions are directed, and the range of problems that the border municipalities of Karelia solve together with neighboring territories [Shlapeko, 21]

Speaking about the main institutes which are involved in cooperation process there are local, regional, national and supranational levels of power. By supranational level of powers, the European Union is considered. The conservation of marine biological resources under the common fisheries policy is also should be mentioned as the European Union is also involved in cooperation and fishery policy is connected with environmental sphere. According to Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, it is exclusive competence of the EU. This means that only EU has the right to act within the limits of the competences conferred upon it by the EU countries in the Treaties [TFEU, Article 3]. So, the supranational institutes like the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission can also be involved in projects. The environmental sphere is the shared competences of the EU, so either the Member

States or the EU can act. [TFEU, Article 4].

These programmes have great hierarchies of different institutes. After the researching, it can be concluded that the main decisions are usually made at national and regional levels, as the representatives of the Republic of Karelia and Finland regions are also involved in different committees.

For effective cooperation, region has created the legal framework. It is based on the main legal acts, treaties, concepts, regulations of the Russian Federation, Finland and the European Union. For instance, the Concept for the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, the Strategy for the Social and Economic Development of the North-Western Federal District of the Russian Federation until 2020, Commission Implementing Regulation (EC) No 897/2014 of 18 August 2014 laying down implementing rules for cross-border cooperation programmes (CBC IR). [CBC Karelia joint operational programme]

Finally, the main question of the research can be answered. Due to the information mentioned above, it can be concluded that the cross-border cooperation is complex process. For effective work, countries use different methods. For instance, there are public hearings of projects at CBC Karelia. Environmental projects, firstly, are orientated on people, so the more people joint public hearings, the more ideas of development the programme has. During the research «Environmental issues in Local Welfare Production and Governance» between Petrozavodsk State University and Tubingen University, it was noticed that intercultural awareness is important. It is necessary to involve new people for exchanging ideas and using different skills of professions. Minor things can play a big role for others. Besides, there are different core topics and interests that can be conflicting. So, this method is essential in border cooperation. Moreover, the pandemic also influenced on the development of partnership and made it more complex. Fortunately, the new methods of virtual joint work were also found. Not only the meetings were in virtual format, but also new technologies for experiments were used. For example, drones were used to take samples of water from rivers and lakes. Thus, it can be summarized that even there are some barriers for joint work, countries are looking for new ways of cooperation for solving the ecological problems. [Official website of the CBC Karelia]

To summarize, it must be written that today there are two main programs of cross-border cooperation between the Republic of Karelia and Finland. They are aimed to work together for economic growth and to solve joint problems. Environmental sphere is also included and one of the main spheres of working nowadays. Environmental cooperation needs multilevel governance. Almost all levels of power are involved in working process. The main actors are national and regional authorities, but, for instance, the EU also plays an important role in this cooperation. As this is cooperation of two countries, the legal framework is also different. The legal acts, treaties, concepts of the Russian Federation, Finland and the EU, as Finland is a member state of the Union and the environment is a shared competence, are all used. As it was mentioned above, there are a lot of ways in use for cooperation and the Republic of Karelia and Finland are still searching for new one to continue work together.

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