

INTRODUCTION



The Baltic Sea region serves as a crossroads, an intersection of economic, political, cultural, and other connections between the Russian Federation and the European Union. The region exhibits all the necessary prerequisites to become a 'bridge' bringing together Russia and the EU. The previous issues of the *Baltic Region* discussed opportunities and problems of transborder cooperation, the development of relations in the field of energy, regional aspects of the demographic development of the Baltic region, i. e. numerous problems that Russia and the European Union have in common.

When handling this or that topic related to the development of the Baltic Sea region, we often addressed legal aspects. This issue contains a special section dedicated to them. It offers articles analysing the interrelation between the EU, Russian and international legislation, legal regulations in the field of environmental protection of the Baltic Sea, as well as opportunities for the development of Russian and EU legislation, current initiatives and approaches of the parties to the current legislative issues.

Special attention is paid to the analysis of possible consequences of the Eastern enlargement of the European Union. Despite the fact that the development of cooperation between the European Union and the Russian Federation has been declared by both parties, discussions on the consequences of the EU enlargement still continue. The main economic and political motivations of the states of Central and Eastern Europe and EU member states relating to the Eastern enlargement of the European Union are analysed in this issue of the *Baltic region*.

The previous issue was dedicated to Russia's international cooperation in the field of innovations. It goes without saying that the development of innovations requires a continuous analysis of the features stimulating research and technological development in other states of the Baltic Sea region as well as their national innovation systems. This issue of the *Baltic region* offers articles focusing on the influence of macrogeographical factors on communicative behaviour as national economic step on the path of innovative development, the comparison of research and innovative potential of Russia and the Baltics, and the assessment of opportunities for cooperation in this field.

A separate section of this issue presents articles addressing an important topic in international cooperation- the right to free movement. The authors do not only analyse the problems of the existing visa regime, but also consider certain steps taken by Russian and the EU on the way to solving urgent migration problems.

It has to be noted that some articles published in the journal are of debatable nature, and the opinion of the authors does not necessarily represent the opinion of the editorial council and editorial board of the *Baltic region*.