

FINNISH-RUSSIAN  
TRANSBOUNDARY  
COOPERATION  
*WITH VUOKSI RIVER AS A CASE*

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# From conflict to successful cooperation

## VERY DIFFICULT STARTING POINT

WW2: Finland lost land to Soviet Union =  
Vuoksi River Basin became transboundary,  
and Finland lost its new hydropower stations

- Finnish-Russian transboundary cooperation,  
with Vuoksi River as its backbone
- Now recognised as the most successful  
transboundary cooperation in the world  
(e.g. Strategic Foresight Group 2017)



Altingoz, Belinskij et al. 2018: Promoting Development in Shared River Basins (World Bank)

# Joint treaties as a foundation

## General treaties

### YYA treaty 1948

- Re-established the relations between Finland and the Soviet Union after the war

### Frontier treaty 1960

- Included rules also for frontier watercourses, including the provision to keep them clean, and the exchange of information

## Water-related agreements

### 1959 Inarinjärvi agreement

- Trilateral treaty between Finland, Norway and the Soviet Union; some elements transferred to the 1964 agreement

### 1964 Frontier watercourses agreement

- Applies to all transboundary water-courses between Finland and Russia
- Led to the establishment of the **joint Finnish-Russian Commission on the utilization fo forntier watercourses**

## Vuoksi-related agreements

### 1972 Svetogorsk-imatra hydroelectric agreement

- "Ensuring efficient use of the two hydroelectric stations", the treaty notes the energy loss that Svetogorsk hydropower station in Russia causes to Imatra hydropower station in Finland, with electricity loss of 19.900 MWh per year.
- "The Soviet party shall compensate the finnish party for this loss on a permanent basis": this continues as of today.

### 1989 Vuoksi discharge rule (VDR)

- Creates clear rules and limits for the discharge in Vuoksi and lake saimaa: main rule is to maintain natural water level and discharge as defined by normal zone for saimaa water level.
- When water level is forecasted to go beyond normal zone, discharge may be gradually increased or reduced with the help of Tainionkoski hydroelectric dam in finnish side.



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# Unique(?) characteristics

1964 Watercourses Agreement very advanced, even unique(?) globally

- Covers all transboundary watercourses between the two countries
- Includes a compensation mechanism (later further elaborated)
- Implemented through a joint Commission that has no Secretariat: operates through thematic Working Groups
- Well-established mechanisms to include private sector
- Has endured unchanged the tumultuous times between the two countries, including the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991

# Enabling factors for the success

- Well-established regulatory framework and institutions, with formal and informal cooperation supporting each other
- Long-term, step-by-step process for building trust & cooperation
- Focus on technical aspects, but with strong political support  
→ Particularly important at the beginning
- Focus on broader benefit sharing and minimizing joint harm, and clearly defined compensation mechanisms
- Engagement of all key parties, including private sector actors



Thank you!  
Kiitos! Спасибо!

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