



**TOHMAJÄRVI**  
Rajattomat mahdollisuudet



# Neebor

**11th September 2009 Tohmajärvi**

Mr. Olli Riikonen, municipal manager, municipality of Tohmajärvi





# Tohmajärvi today

Population 5126 (31.7.2009)

- The most "russian" municipality in Finland > 3 % mother language
- Area 895 km<sup>2</sup>, water 58 km<sup>2</sup>

## Population change 2008:

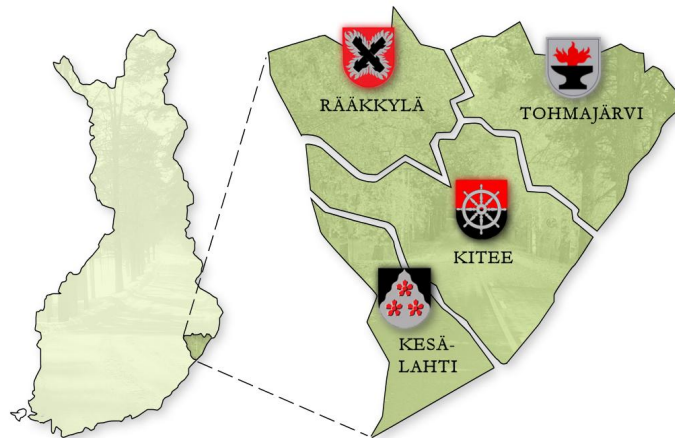
• Fertility	36	Mortality	87	Net - 51
• Moves in	224	Moves out	299	Net - 75
• Immigration	45	Migration	4	Net +41
• Total population change				Net - 85

## Jobs (31.12.2006)

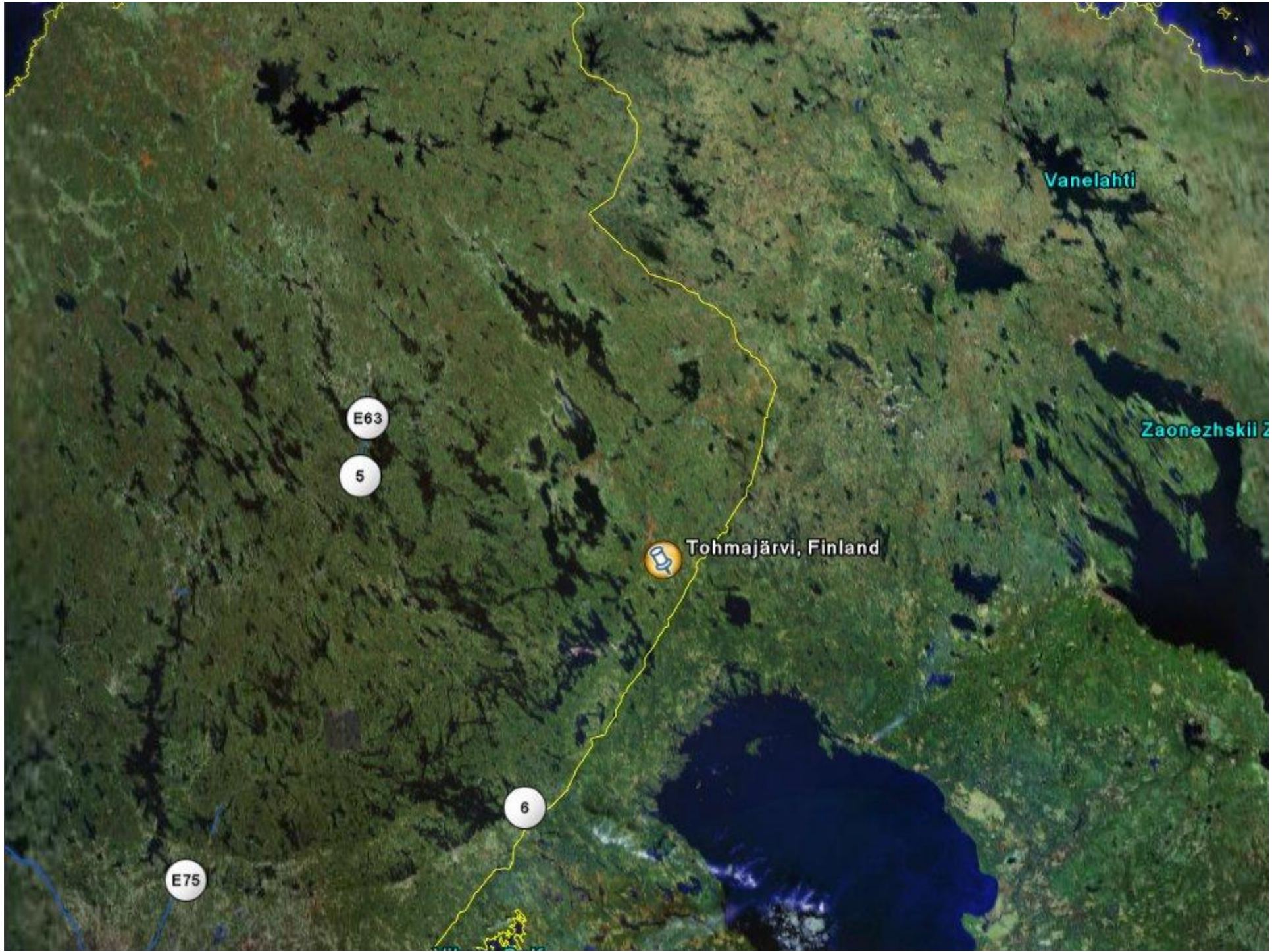
- Agriculture and forestry 19,4 % (319)
- Industry etc. 11,0 % (178)
- Service sector 67,7 % (1091)

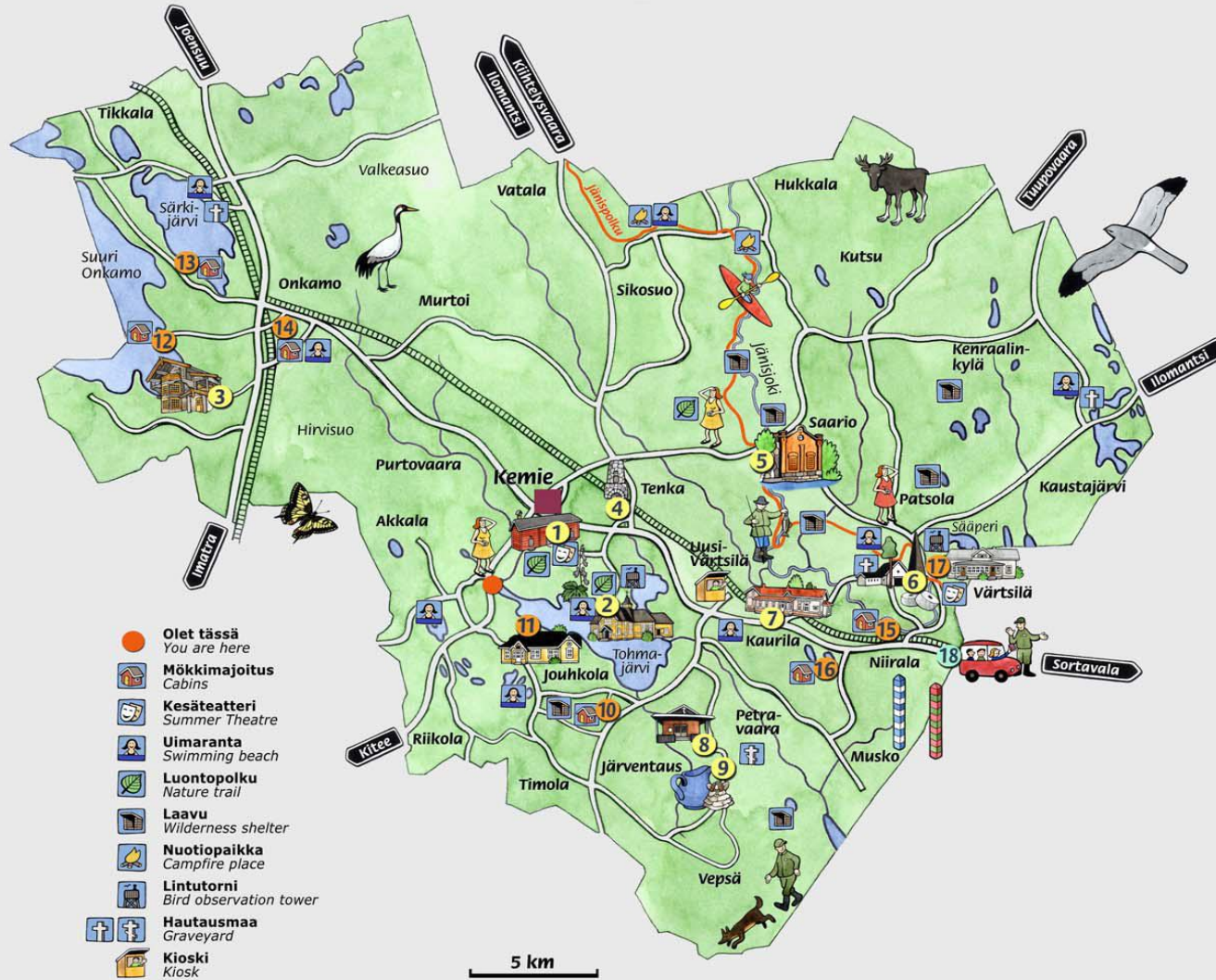


# Tohmajärvi - location



- Central Carelia  
"neighbourhood"
- North Carelia region  
(main city Joensuu)





**Kunnan keskusta, palvelut**  
Municipal Centre, services  
центр  
Tohmajärven Matkapalvelu,  
(013) 622 643, 684 300  
Tourist Agency/Information  
информация для туристов

**Nähtävyyksiä** Sightseeing  
достопримечательности

- 1 Nymanin talo ja museoalue, Käsiyökeskus, Pajupiha**  
Nyman House and Museum, Handicrafts centre
- 2 Kirkkoniemi**  
Wooden Church and Memorials
- 3 Puun Sielu -näyttely**  
Wood Art Exhibition
- 4 Lahdensillan taistelujen muistomerkki, War Memorial 1808—1809**
- 5 Saarion voimalaitosmuseo**  
Power Plant Museum
- 6 Värtsilän kirkko, myllymuseo**  
Värtsilä Church
- 7 Kaurilan kylätalo ja koulumuseo**  
School Museum
- 8 Petravaaran tsasouna**  
Orthodox Chapel
- 9 Galleria Savipaja, Pottery**

**Majoitusta** Accommodation ночлег

- 10 Junnulan Tupa**  
Holiday Farmhouse
- 11 Jouhkolan Hovi**  
Manor Hotel B&B
- 12 Suur-Onkamon Loma**  
Holiday Cabins
- 13 Reijo Koskelon mökit**  
Holiday Cabins
- 14 Onkamon Leirintäalue**  
Campsite
- 15 Jänisjoen Tuvat**  
Holiday accommodation
- 16 Matkailutila Ellilä**  
Holiday Farmhouse, B&B
- 17 Majatalo Sinilintu, Inn, B&B**
- 18 Niiralan raja-asema**  
Niirala Border Crossing Point  
международный пункт  
пересечения границы

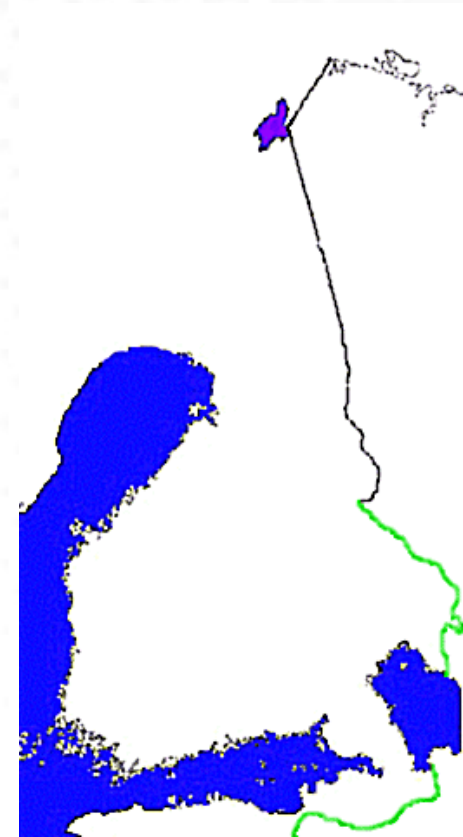
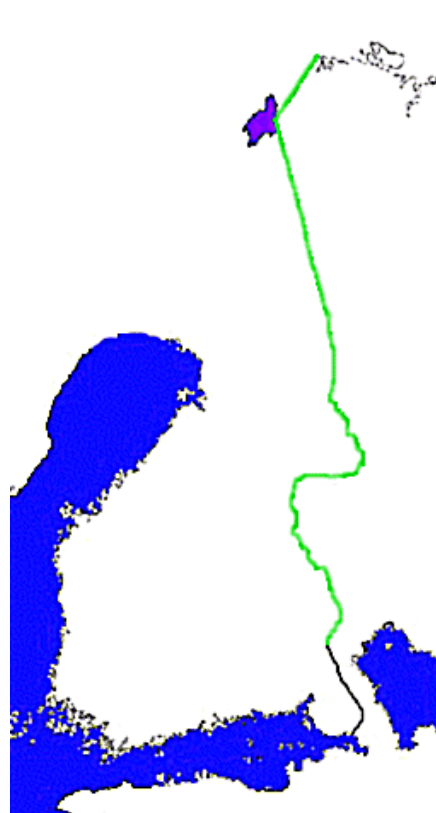
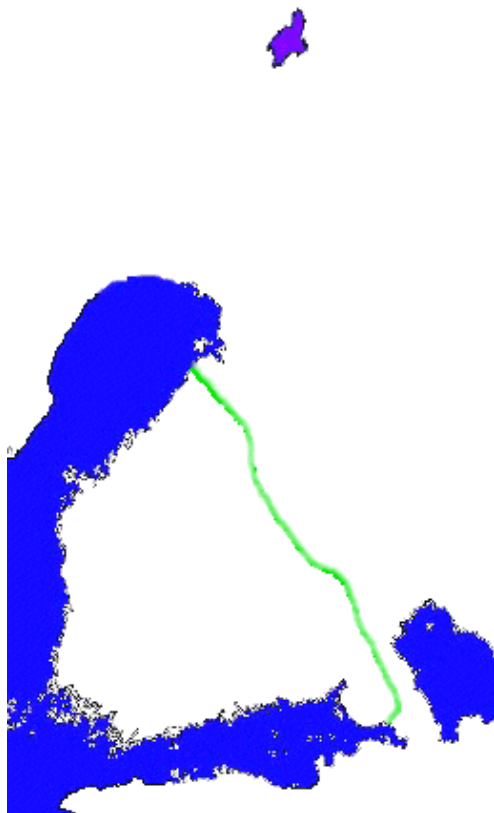


# Border between Finland (Sweden) and Russia

1323

1595

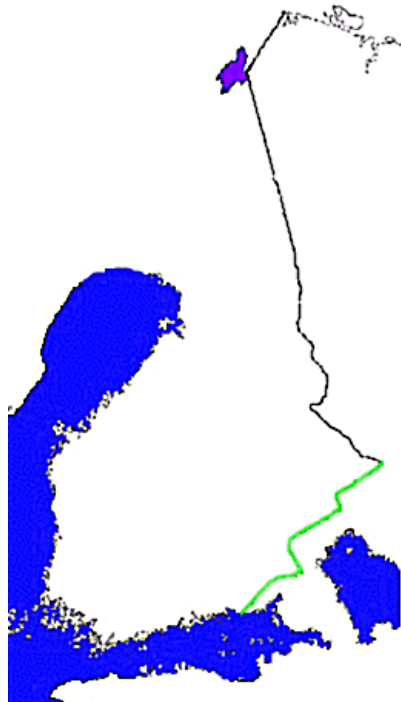
1617



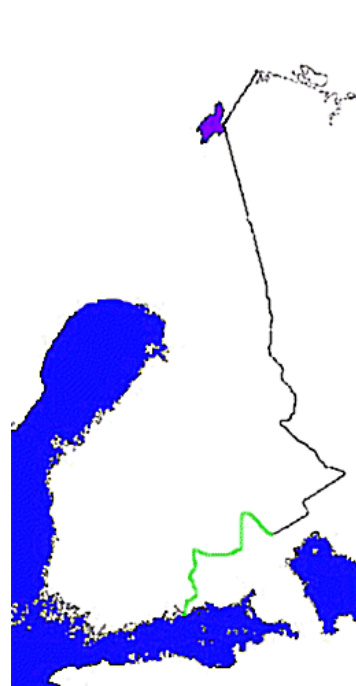


## Border between Finland/Sweden and Russia

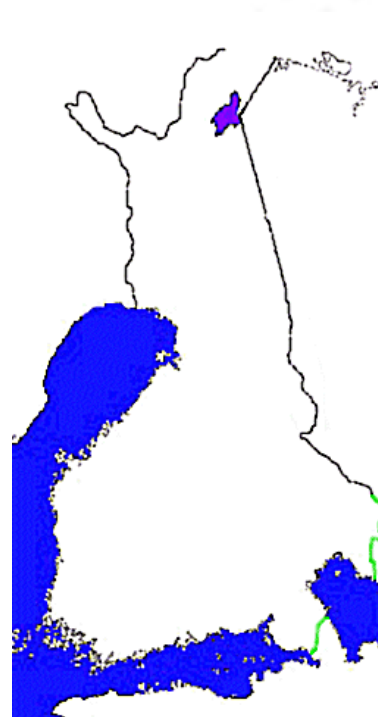
1721



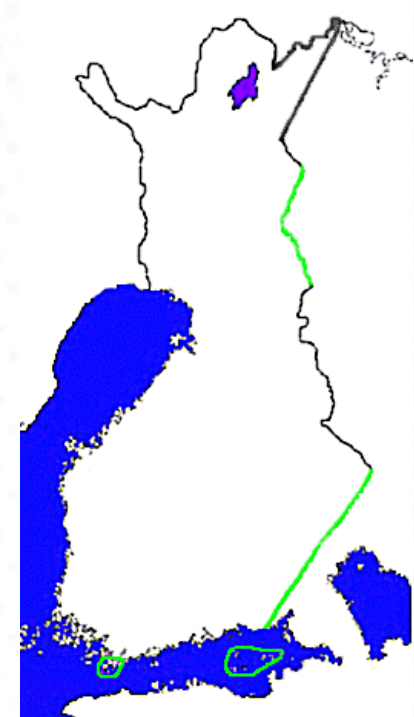
1743



1812



1940-





# Niirala border crossing point





# Niirala border crossing point history

- 1944 – 1989 open for cargo trains and wild animals only
- since 1989 limited visits
- since 1992 official border crossing point status
- since 1995 international border crossing point





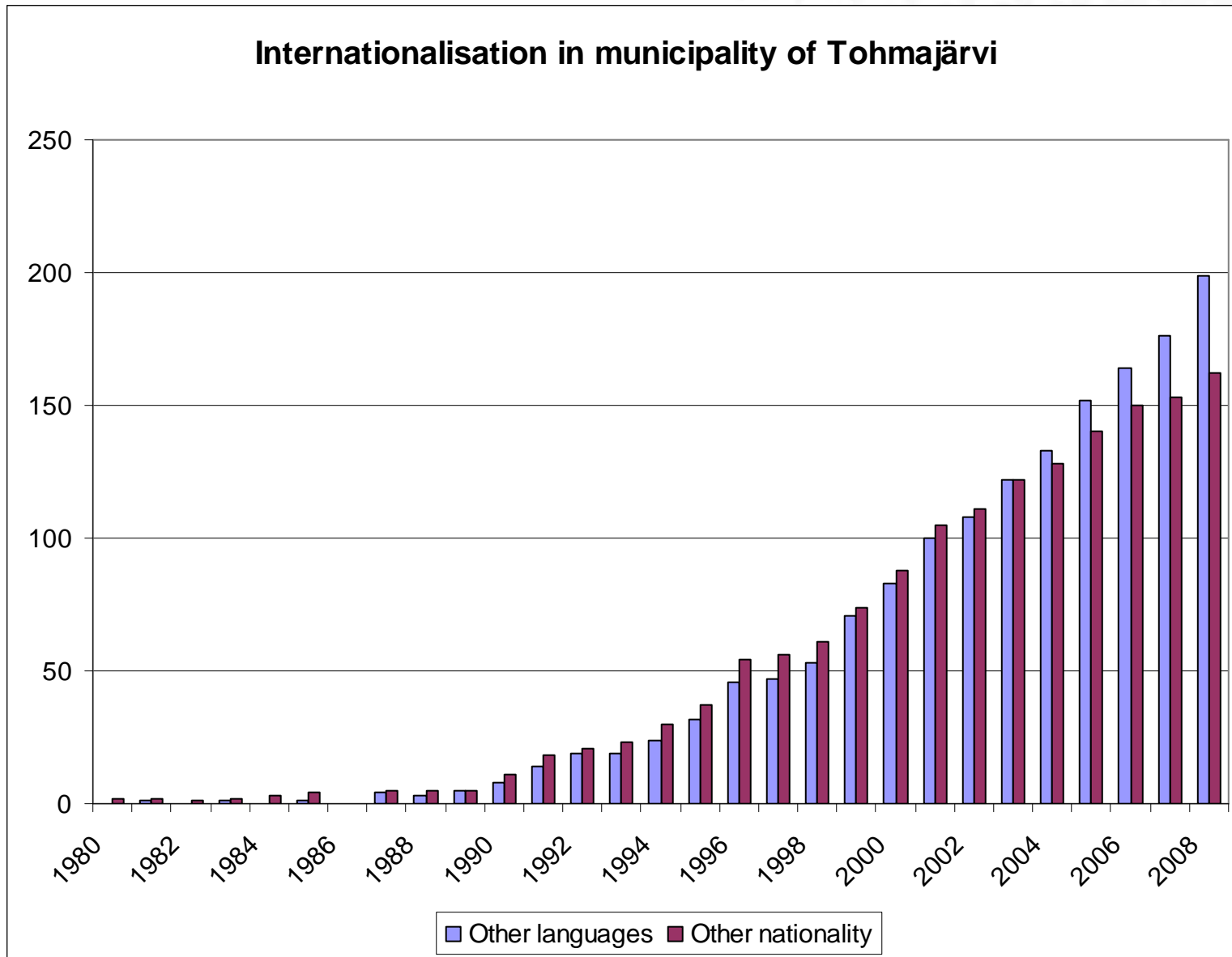
# Niirala border crossing point now

- The eastest external international border crossing point in the continent EU
- Open 24/7 since 1.10.2005
- Almost 1 million crossings per year (about 50/50 % FI/RU)
- Distances:
  - Värtsilä (3.000 inhabitants), 3 km
  - Sortavala (30.000 inhab.), 65 km
  - Petroskoi (300.000 inhab.), 300 km





### Internationalisation in municipality of Tohmajärvi





# Jobs at Niirala border

- Customs – 35 employed
- The Border Guard - 100 employed



# Seppo Rätty – the most famous customs officer in Niirala

- Olympic Games
  - Bronze 1988, Soul
  - Silver 1992, Barcelona
  - Bronze 1996, Atlanta
- World Championships
  - Gold 1987, Rome
  - Silver 1991, Tokyo
- European Championships
  - Silver 1994, Helsinki





# Nurminen Logistics in Niirala

- Logistical services and jobs
  - export and import
  - terminal services
  - railway transports
  - 15.000 m<sup>2</sup> terminal halls
  - 35 jobs





# Experiences

- Changes have been dramatic (positively) during 20 years:
  - Soviet Union has collapsed
  - border is open (also for russian people)
  - normal (almost) human interaction over the border is possible
  - the world is a circle again – it does not end to the wall (border) any more

# Systematic cooperation

- Active and systematic cooperation between local and regional authorities
  - based on an agreement (new one signed in June 2007)
  - new practice after that: twice a year "Border Forum", meeting/seminar
  - representatives of different authorities (local and regional, customs, frontier guard), economic life and friendship organisations from both sides of the border
  - Main idea is to promote positive development on the both side of the border region getting all important actors around the same table for interaction

## Cooperation during 20 years

- Many common projects in all branches: social- and helthcare, education, sports, infrastructure
- Humanitarian aid from Finland especially in the beginning of 1990's
- Many old boys have got russian wives

# Problems

- Language barrier – translators needed
- Standard of living in the Russian Karelia has grown slowly – lack of money
- Centralised governance and low interest by the Russian Federation limits regional development
- Unpredictable and bureaucratic laws, rules, authorities, practises (customs, passport control, export-import limits etc.)
- Need for visa limits tourism, business contacts and other normal human activities



# Big things in our municipality

(based on the border)

- import of raw wood and wooden products
- export and import by Nurminen Logistics
- import of wives, gasoline, alcohol and tobacco
- short-time tourism and shopping on both sides of the border
- close cooperation between municipalities over the border



## Sights in neighbourhood in Russia

- Lake Laatokka
- Valamo monastery-island (fastferry-transport during summertime)
- Finnish architecture in Sortavala
- Russian infrastructure
- War history





## Russian interests in Finland

- Safe, clean and silent environment and wide services and activities for holidays
- Shopping – high quality, even nicer prices in some products

# Finnish companies operating near behind the border

- Stora Enso (saw mill, Impilahti)
- KarLis (saw mill, Värtsilä)
- Rapala (fishing equipment, Sortavala)
- Leseko Group (wood products, Sortavala) →
- Kesälahden maansiirto (Sortavala)





## Goals, initiatives...

- Investments and jobs both sides near the border
- Common region for economic and human cooperation without barriers
- New roads:
  - Tohmajärvi – Niirala (Finland)
  - Sortavala-St.Petersburg (Russia)
- Joensuu-Petroskoi –passenger train connection
- Increasing tourism via Niirala
- Increasing export – import via Niirala
- Better employment and standard of living
- Visa freedom – at least for short-term tourism
- Rights to study russian language instead of swedish at least in Tohmajärvi and maybe even in other municipalities beside the eastern external border



## ...and dreams

- Niirala-Värtsilä international Finnish-Russian Golf Course
  - possibility to hit a hole-in-one from Finland to Russia and vice versa





# Vision

- North-Ladogan-Carelia is an attractive region for entrepreneurs and tourists
- Region, where people's welfare increases, cooperation is easy and direct, border is low and spirit is high 😊