



VIDZEME

THE ONLY WAY IS UP!

VIDZEME PLANNING

REGION

INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER #4

2015/2016

Expanding knowledge

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Vidzeme Planning Region's (VPR) International Newsletter! 2015 was a successful and fruitful year for our work together with wide range of partners all across Europe.

Similar to other organisations that work intensively with international project implementation, 2015 was crucial for us. VPR started implementation of several international projects, continuing to expand its network of partners. Seven new projects in tourism, environment, cross-sector co-operation, social entrepreneurship, transportation and energy efficiency have already begun, other project applications still wait for approval. Furthermore, on national level, we engaged in new functions, therefore expanding our activity to social services and entrepreneurship development domains.

We cherish the international cooperation, since it is the best way to learn experiences, to acquire new knowledge and to benefit a larger community. As a regional institution, we see the potential of cross-border cooperation – it leads to cohesion of Europe and benefits us all.

As some of you may know, Vidzeme Region is a part of a beautiful Northern European country Latvia. As a regional planning and development institution, we provide services at national, regional and municipal level and represent regional development interests of 25 local municipalities and Valmiera city. Our mission is to act as a development platform for the region. We foster long-term balanced growth of Vidzeme and implement development projects. We have experience in implementing both: large scale EU funded cross border projects and also national and local level cooperation projects.

Year 2016 starts with several challenges for Europe, however, we are sure that cooperation is the solution to every problem. Dialogue and mutually beneficial partnership is the key to better future for all of us!



Hardijs Vents

Head of Vidzeme Planning Region Development Council

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<http://www.vidzeme.lv/en/>

NEW EU CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROJECTS

The thing we worked on the most in 2015 was elaboration of new European Union (EU) cross border cooperation projects and partnerships to promote development of Vidzeme region. Since most of the EU cross border cooperation programs launched their first calls in 2015, it was an intense year of creating new ideas and developing new projects.

In compliance with *Vidzeme Region's Long-term Sustainable Development Strategy 2014-2030* the project priority fields were **business and innovation, sustainable and attractive living environment, transport and mobility, tourism, environment and energy efficiency**. Partnerships established in the previous programming period has let us develop our ideas not only on regional, but also on a European level.

For some project application we are still waiting for results, but others have brought us good news – **7 projects have been approved** and are now in the implementation phase. See more about our new projects in this Newsletter!



5FOREXCELLENCE

Consortium of 5 partner organizations, one of which is VPR, is implementing cluster cross-sector cooperation project **5FOREXCELLENCE (Five for Cross-industry Value Chain Excellence)** in the *EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) – COSME 2014-2020*. Within the project VPR, as a member and international cooperation coordinator of the Latvian high added value and healthy food cluster, will develop this cluster's management excellence.

Evaluation of cluster management and training of cluster facilitators by international experts will be carried out for involved ICT, logistics and food clusters. With the help of cluster development experts, new and/or improved services within the clusters will be planned and developed; experience exchange workshops and international conference will be organized and cluster management excellence strategy will be elaborated. All five clusters will also be benchmarked accordingly to European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI) methodology.

The most important added value of the project will be the enhanced management skills and practices of involved clusters and developed new services, which will help clusters to achieve better results and performance in the long run. A very important

BUSINESS AND INNOVATION

innovation of this project is the development of cross-industry (food, logistics, ICT) collaboration, which will enable development of innovative solutions for food logistics and greater ICT integration in logistics and food sectors.

In the project VPR will develop the cluster's management excellence and will channel project results to the cluster companies, will ensure cluster's international benchmarking and foster development of new and/or improved services within the cluster, for the benefit of food sector SME's. VPR will also facilitate cross-industry collaboration among food, ICT and logistics sectors.

Project 5FOREXCELLENCE will contribute to the COSME program's key action area: *Creating better framework conditions for competitiveness of enterprises, by promoting the development of world class clusters in the EU, fostering cluster excellence and internationalization with an emphasis on cross-sectoral cooperation, notably in support of emerging industries.*



Kristaps Ročāns
Project Manager





NEW EU CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROJECTS



INSURE

Project **INSURE (Innovative Sustainable Remediation)** aims at decreasing the impact of hazardous substances to the environment from contaminated sites. The idea is to decrease leakage from contaminated sites to ground and surface water to reduce the inflow of hazardous substances and toxins into the Baltic Sea, thus contributing to the Central Baltic programme's



Specific Objective *Reduced nutrients, hazardous substances and toxins inflow into the Baltic Sea.*

As a result, best practice for remediation and sustainable solutions will be worked out for contaminants. The project will contribute through sustainable remediation, management methods and innovative technical tools for visualisation.

Five contaminated areas in Sweden, Finland and Latvia are used as pilot areas to test different on-site remediation techniques, demonstrate their sustainability and cost effectiveness compared to present excavation of contaminated sites.

As the mission of VPR is to coordinate and promote long-term and well-balanced development of the Vidzeme region, the environmental approach and the ambition to develop and maintain sustainable and innovative waste remediation technologies is part of the Region's strategy. VPR is involved in the project as a partner with pilot sites where remediation methods will be tested. Two territories of former pesticide storages in Burtnieki and Vecpiebalga municipalities will be investigated.



Maija Rieksta
Project Manager

SUSTAINABLE AND ATTRACTIVE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

HANSA



Cross-border cooperation is the only way to give impact for small destinations on the international tourism market.

The **HANSA (Hanseatic Approach to New Sustainable Alliances)** project will develop the Hanseatic heritage in the small Hanseatic towns in Sweden, Estonia and Latvia.

The project will do branding activities, create materials, and disseminate information online and via tourism organisations and info centres promoting the Hanseatic history as well as the Baltic Sea region as an attractive place to see and learn more about it. The project will also strive for linking the local attractions to a



wider European context of Hanseatic history.

The project outcomes will include more tourism packages based on cross-border cooperation, more

visitors to the destinations, a prolonged tourism season as cultural tourism is all-year-round tourism and improved economy including more jobs.

In the project VPR will give input from its previous experience implementing projects connected with Hanseatic heritage and will share its tourism promotion expertise.

HANSA will give input in the Central Baltic programme's Specific Objective *Natural and cultural resources developed into sustainable tourist attractions* by improving the awareness of Hanseatic heritage in the Baltic Sea region and by developing HANSA as the key sustainable tourism brand in this region.

TOURISM



Rūta Vasermane
Project Manager



NEW EU CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROJECTS



TENTacle



The TEN-T core network corridors (CNC) is a new instrument of the EU transport policy, aimed to resolve bottlenecks on major transport axes across Europe. The CNC approach has a large potential to stimulate development not only in the direct neighbourhood but also in more remote geographical areas, with advantages for the whole macro region.

Project **TENTacle (Capitalising on TEN-T core network corridors for prosperity, growth and cohesion)** aims to improve stakeholder capability to reap benefits of the CNC implementation in the Baltic Sea region (BSR) for the prosperity, sustainable growth and territorial cohesion in the BSR through joint response to identified capacity challenges and transnational cooperation.

VPR as the project partner will develop the *Vidzeme regional mobility investment plan 2030* providing recommendations how to trigger and sustain growth impulses in a rural and declining region through an improved access of residents and businesses to urban centres and transport nodes (incl. seaports) on the North Sea-Baltic Corridor and how to thereby improve transit location of the region to Estonian, Russian and Belorussian markets.

TENTacle project complies with the Interreg *Baltic Sea Region Cooperation Programme's* specific objective *Interoperability of transport modes*. It seeks methods to adjust the CNC implementation process to the specific development conditions of the BSR. In effect, the worked out approaches to capitalise on the CNC for the prosperity, sustainable growth and territorial cohesion in the BSR will lead to a strengthened common identity of this functional macro region.

TRANSPORT



Rita Merca
Project Manager

In 2015 VPR has joined the European network of cities and regions in support for sustainable urban mobility ([ENDURANCE](#)).

PANEL 2050



The aim of **PANEL 2050 (Partnership for New Energy Leadership)** project is to create durable and replicable sustainable energy networks at local

level, where relevant local stakeholders collaborate for the creation of local energy visions, strategies and action plans for the transition towards low carbon communities in 2050.

The PANEL 2050 will focus on the creation of sustainable local energy networks in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, where this type of networks at local level is almost completely absent. The ambition of this project is to create sustainable energy networks at local level that will connect and involve all relevant stakeholders that are present at local level into the local policy development and implementation. The created durable sustainable energy networks in a number of local communities in different CEE countries will also be a replicable example that can be spread to other communities in CEE countries. Introducing stakeholder concept to energy planning will help generate sustainable energy policies and create more sustainable future for Europe.

VPR is involved in the capacity of a regional partner and representing also regional municipalities. The influence of the project and involvement of local shareholders will be based on trained forerunners. The role of the forerunners is to lead and inform local communities and become local sustainable energy policy development centres.

PANEL 2050 is aimed to tackle the Societal Challenges of Horizon 2020, namely - to enhance Secure, Clean and Efficient Energy and Low Carbon Technologies in particular.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY



Henrijs Rūsis
Project Manager



NEW EU CROSS BORDER COOPERATION PROJECTS



SEBCO

Continuous development of human capital and the free flow of ideas in the Baltic Sea region is an important factor in creating economic growth and competitiveness in the region. Europe is facing challenges that require solutions that combine economic, social and environmental prosperities.

Project **SEBCO (Social enterprises in partnership with the business community)** aims to build knowledge and confidence in social enterprises, and to find methods to make social entrepreneurship visible as a vital sector of society. This project also compares how partnerships between social enterprises and the business community at large operate in the different partner countries and looks at the success factors.



Project partners from Latvia, Sweden and Poland.

The main project result will be at least 1 new project proposal developed for submitting in one of the EU cross boarder programmes with the overall goal of creating a strong and competitive social sector in each partner country (Sweden, Latvia and Poland).



Lelde Ābele
Project Manager

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

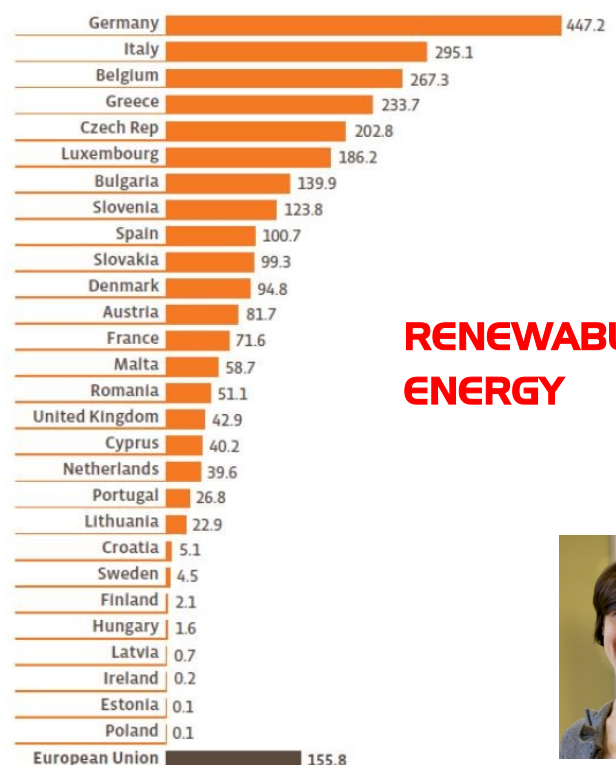
SOLINVEST

The aim of **SOLINVEST** project is to establish a network in the Baltic Sea area within the domain of solar power for knowledge exchange and future collaboration together with Swedish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian and Polish partners. As a result, an application for a full scale project in promotion of solar power usage within some of the EU programmes will be elaborated.

VPR is actively participating in elaboration of the project idea, in formulating project's goals and activities and gathers information from Vidzeme Region's institutions and enterprises about their needs and problems that prevents them from a more intensive usage of solar power for power supply. VPR's vast experience in regional and EU programme projects helps it to develop macro regional solutions for local problems and to define more precisely the local needs in the Baltic Sea region cooperation context.

Graph. n° 1

Photovoltaic capacity per inhabitant (Wp/inhab.) for each EU country in 2013



Source: EurObserv'ER 2014.

RENEWABLE ENERGY



Laila Gercāne

Head of Development and Project department

PROJECT OF COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL SERVICES LAUNCHED IN VIDZEME

NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN 2020



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social
Fund

INVESTING IN YOUR FUTURE

Taking into account European tendencies of implementing community-based social services, Latvia has started deinstitutionalization (DI) process that will be implemented by all Planning Regions. VPR has started implementation and is naming this project **VIDZEME INCLUDES**. The main aim of the project is to increase community-based social services.

Plan of DI will be developed and implemented during the project. The plan will contain three components: assessment of current situation, recommendations for optimal and sustainable development of existing social services and suggestions for the transformation of social care institutions.

VIDZEME INCLUDES focuses on the society's most vulnerable groups of people. There are three target groups of the project:

- adults with mental disabilities;
- children in out-of-familial care;
- children with disabilities.

DI can be defined as the replacement of long-stay institutions with smaller, less isolated community-based alternatives for the care of mentally ill people.



The main priorities of DI in Latvia - shifts in disability policy:

- from passive medical to human rights and inclusion;
- from institutional to community-based services;
- from disability to functionality;
- person's needs as priority - not infrastructure;
- from person with disability to person, who can take care of himself.

Community-based services for projects target groups will provide opportunities to receive services in their own home or community.



VPR is interested in cooperation with international partners on projects for deinstitutionalization and community-based social services.

If you have any cooperation offer, please contact project manager Ms Ineta Puriņa (ineta.purina@vidzeme.lv).



Ineta Puriņa
Project Manager

LATVIAN HIGH ADDED VALUE AND HEALTHY FOOD CLUSTER

2015 was the first year for VPR coordinated *Latvian high added value and healthy food cluster* working under the new legal status - membership association - which allowed a more direct members' involvement in the cluster management processes and opened up new possibilities to attract resources for its development. The management structure was developed and three key focus areas for the cluster were defined:

- **Technology and product development**
- **Export promotion**
- **Training and knowledge exchange**

A great way to further develop the cluster's management excellence is the new project **5FOREXCELLENCE** that is starting in 2016. The project will ensure cluster's international benchmarking and foster development of new and/or improved services within the cluster. Read more about the project on [Page 2](#).

present them and get a valuable feedback. Gained knowledge, contacts, experience and inspirations are already put to good use in all participating companies, after the Project. Companies have started the development of new, innovative taste solutions for their products, and are considering several options about new product development in the future. Collaboration with *Agro Tech* and *Ideon Agro food* has been strong already before, and this particular Project showed that such collaboration is very beneficial for food SME's and allows them to tap into new knowledge and expertise that can greatly help them advance their competitiveness.



Work on taste and product development in the Agro Tech Foodture lab

3rd Cluster-to-Cluster Conference and Matchmaking
Innovation by Combination
Copenhagen, September 17-18



For the second time Cluster was represented in the 3rd Cluster-to-Cluster Conference and Matchmaking event *Innovation by Combination* that took place in Copenhagen. Conference was addressed by cluster representatives and development experts. It was a great opportunity to present the cluster, to meet existing partners and to find new cooperation partners and useful contacts. Cluster's coordinator Kristaps Ročāns met with food clusters from Spain and Germany, with packaging cluster from Sweden, design cluster from Denmark and others. The video retrospect of the conference can be found [here](#).

Another important milestone in the cluster's development in 2015 was its participation in the project *Enhancing market competitiveness in food SME's - Develop new methodologies and better interaction (EMCF)*. Food and drink manufacturers from 3 cluster companies – *Valmiermuiža* beer, *Very Berry* juices and *Felici* musli had an opportunity to learn about Danish and Swedish food market and to explore Danish and Swedish experience in product development, positioning and product advancement to gain new ideas for new and interesting products. Latvian food and drink professionals worked on new taste and product development together with professional chefs and experts in areas of taste, consumer experience, beverages and gastronomy. In the facilities of *Agro Tech Foodture lab*, companies were able to work in groups and develop new product concepts and also

2016 will be a busy year working on *5FOREXCELLENCE* project - developing new services for cluster companies, creating the strategical framework for further development and organising inside workshops and trainings for cluster companies. Cluster has already welcomed new members and will work to attract more new companies and institutions. Cooperation with other clusters in Europe and internationalization has been one of the top priorities for the cluster, and development of new collaboration projects together with other like-minded clusters in Denmark, Sweden, Germany and other EU countries will also continue in 2016.



LATVIAN HIGH ADDED
VALUE AND HEALTHY FOOD
CLUSTER



Kristaps Ročāns
Cluster coordinator

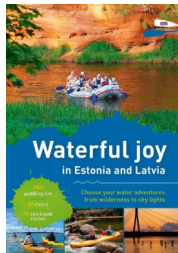
TOURISM COORDINATION IN THE REGION

VPR had an active year in different tourism projects. We had all-round experience: one of the projects – **Riverways** - reached the finish line, other – **ViaHanseatica** - successfully tackled the challenges of life after an active project and the third – **HANSA** - had just started. We see that the next year will be quite similar - we will continue to implement HANSA project, work on preserving and developing project ViaHanseatica results and work on new project applications.



Project **Riverways**, that ended in 2015 and was implemented in *Estonia-Latvia RIVERWAYS cooperation programme*, had a great input in promoting water tourism in Latvia and Estonia. Vidzeme region's municipalities profited from the project by building new infrastructure by the Gauja, Salaca and Vaidava rivers, water tourism companies profited by acquiring new client service skills and learning experience from their colleagues in Estonia, Lithuania and Finland, and paddlers got new and easier ways to choose and plan their paddling trips.

To get inspired for your next paddling trip in Vidzeme, you can check out the project brochure and watch the video.



If you have decided upon the river, you can plan your trip in our online route planner (www.riverways.eu) and check the maps that can be printed out from [here](#) or can be found in the Tourism information centres.



Project **Via Hanseatica** lasted until the end of year 2014, however the cooperation between project partners from Latvia, Estonia and Russia still continues. Already existing partners were joined by several more and a new partnership agreement was signed to continue working on Via Hanseatica improvement. In 2015 [Via Hanseatica website](#) was improved with some new features. Also the cooperation with tourism

professionals was continued. There was a presentation of Via Hanseatica at *Association of Latvia Travel Agents and Operators (ALTA) Annual conference*. 17 ALTA members showed a great interest and visited tourism objects and service providers in Amata, Cēsis, Valmiera, Burtnieki, Valka, Valga, Strenči, Kocēni and Pārgauja municipalities.



ALTA members' visit to Via Hanseatica tourism objects.

In 2016 Via Hanseatica will continue work with stakeholders, such as local/national authorities, tourism professionals and entrepreneurs. An important goal is to prepare a new project for further development of Via Hanseatica route. VPR will also look for possibilities to attract other financial resources.



One of the ways to continue development of the Hanseatic heritage in the region is working on other projects with similar goals. One of these projects is **HANSA**, that began in October 2015. 11 partners from Latvia, Estonia and Sweden joined together to facilitate the values of the historical Hanseatic League, which still can be found among the member cities. Furthermore, partner organizations will closely collaborate to create and develop new tourism products to make the HANSA the leading tourism brand within the Baltic Sea Region.

To achieve project goals two study tours are organised at the beginning of the project. One of them took place in the beginning of October 2015, when partners visited all nine project cities and evaluated the Hanseatic heritage and its promotion in each city.

The second study tour is planned in April 2016 when partners will visit and learn the experience of Hanseatic cities Lübeck, Lemgo and Luxembourg. They will learn how the citizens have been involved to promote and explore tourism products and see how Hansa visibility is used for tourism benefit.



Ilze Liepa

Tourism coordinator

VPR PARTICIPATES IN EUROPEAN INITIATIVES

VPR YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – THE BEST ERASMUS+ PROJECT IN LATVIA

In 2013 VPR implemented an *Erasmus+* project to motivate young people to start their own business. European Commission noticed it and nominated our project as the best *Erasmus+* project from Latvia to participate in the Youth Projects Awards Ceremony and the Youth Projects Exhibition during the *European Youth Week* in Brussels in May 2015.

The project participants had a chance to get to know the best Youth projects from all around Europe, to present VPR's Youth Entrepreneurship Development project and to participate in



Latvian delegates with Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia

European level debate *Enhancing youth participation to prevent intolerance and antidemocratic behaviour*. The need to involve young people in the decision making process, thus allowing them to realize their value in the society, was the main topic in the discussion. It was also one of the goals in VPR's youth project that you can learn more about in the *European good practice projects'* brochure [here](#).



VPR TEAM WINS SPRING '15 SEASON OF DEMOLA LATVIA

DEMOLA LATVIA

Young people from several Latvian universities and schools developed a solution that promote regional development priorities and goals to the general public in modern way - using audio-visual solutions.

Team developed a visual example / prototype of a web-based platform for daily communication with the audience about the



strategic goals of the regional planning documents. Vision included visualizations as well as interactive tools to use.

"It is never easy to communicate complex content. We are very thankful to our DEMOLA Latvia team for the innovative solution that they created. We've received modern, interactive and attractive ideas for the ways of conveying information on regional development priorities and goals," confirms Guna Kalniņa-Priede, Head of Administration of VPR.

DEMOLA is an international organization that facilitates co-creation projects between university students, companies and researchers, both locally and internationally. DEMOLA is operating in Finland, Lithuania, Hungary, Sweden, Slovenia, Latvia, Spain, Russia and Mexico.

Such companies as Nokia, Intel, ABB, Nokian, Sony, Canon, Ruukki and many more from all around the world entrust DEMOLA to solve their challenges.



Laila Gercāne

Head of Development and Project department



GET TO KNOW COLLEAGUES AT VIDZEME PLANNING REGION

We do not only work hard, we also actively spend time together here in Vidzeme region outside of work.

Paddling and being close to nature was our favorite leisure time activity last year.

Get to know our events in 2015!



1. At the end of 2015;
2. Bend of the Gauja River;
3. Paddling in Vidzeme;
4. Walking in Līgatne Nature Trails;
5. With younger generation of VPR in Easter.

IN BRIEF

Some facts about VPR in 2015



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