

Vidzeme Planning Region from international perspective

International cooperation is a significant part of the Vidzeme Planning Region activities. We care about our neighbours; we share our knowledge and gain a lot from our partners across Europe. Exchange of experience helps the Vidzeme Planning Region to improve regional policies for balanced regional and national development.

In 2012 the Vidzeme Planning Region continued to search for the most appropriate solutions for the development of entrepreneurship, environment and energy, information communication technologies, tourism and place marketing, vocational training and spatial planning of the region. Thanks to the partners' expertise and development of joint ideas, we have already achieved a lot.

The EU support has launched a variety of initiatives that make the Vidzeme region competitive not only in Latvia, but also beyond its borders. Mutual trust, unity and cooperation have a unique role in the implementation of common ideas and goals. And we are pleased to share our own experience and knowledge with our partners.

We are happy about a great number of project partners, as well as those who have trusted us for long-term cooperation and common development based on cooperation agreements.

Our partners help us to defend our mutual interests on the European level - we tackle similar issues and are looking forward to continue cooperation in the future. Only the unity forms well-considered development.

We believe that strong regions make strong Europe.

We believe in the success of future cooperation.

Nikolajs Stepanovs

Chairman of Vidzeme Planning Region Development Council



VPR cooperation with the General Council of Lower Rhine



The year of 2012 was significant for the partnership history of the Vidzeme Planning Region with the General Council of Lower Rhine because the cooperation agreement between the partners was re-signed for 4 more years. The official ceremony was held in Valmiera; it was attended by the Ambassador of France in Latvia, the Chairman and members of VPR Development Council, and members of the Lower Rhine Council. Since the beginning of the cooperation, a number of culture and tourism projects have been initiated and implemented. In 2013 we would like to widen the scope of our activities and to start cooperation in the business sector.



Signing of the cooperation agreement with Lower Rhine



Signing of the agreement with Pskov

Cooperation with Pskov



In 2012 the Vidzeme Planning Region signed a cooperation agreement with the Pskov District of the Russian Federation. The aim of the cooperation agreement is to promote the development of the social sector, entrepreneurship and culture contacts, as well as to facilitate the involvement of the local governments of Vidzeme.

In November the Vidzeme Days were held in St. Petersburg. This event was a great opportunity for the Vidzeme Region to tell their Russian colleagues about their offers and opportunities for tourists and to discuss cooperation prospects in the future. During the event, 23 entrepreneurs from Latvia met entrepreneurs from St. Petersburg and they discussed potential of cooperation.



Vidzeme Days in St. Petersburg

Food Cluster

The Vidzeme Planning Region (VPR) acts as a coordinator for one of the two cluster initiatives that are developing in the region – “Vidzeme high added value and healthy food cluster”. Development of this cluster initiative was started in late 2009 by three entities: the Riga Stradins University, the Research Institute of Biotechnology and Veterinary Medicine „Sigra” and VPR. Since then, the cluster initiative has been steadily growing, and now there are more than 20 entities participating in the cluster: food & drinks producing SME’s, universities, research institutes and associations.

Since early 2012, cluster is one of the partners in “Baltic Sea Region (BSR) Food Cluster Network” initiative, which is now approved as one of “BSR Stars Programme” projects. Project aims to help food producing SME’s in their international activities and efforts. The network is built up with stakeholders from countries around the Baltic Sea.

2012 for the Vidzeme food cluster was a year of active international cooperation and also a possibility to learn best international practices and cluster facilitating tools from one of the internationally most respected cluster development specialists Mr. Ifor Ffowcs-Williams (CEO “Cluster Navigators” Ltd. New Zealand). He conducted two workshops for cluster participants, sharing his rich practical knowledge on cluster development steps and cluster development examples across the world.



Cluster participants visit the LUA Science institute

Environment and energy



The aim of the MOG project is to support decision makers of mountain and rural areas on sustainable and efficient transport planning. Thanks to cooperation exchange of experience is organised among the partners to study the solutions implemented in the partner regions, with the objective of adapting those solutions to implement them in other regions. A specific emphasis is brought to the long-term social, environmental, and economical aspects during the project implementation.

In order to identify the current situation of the field of the public transport, in 2012 the Vidzeme Planning Region in collaboration with the company "IMINK" elaborated a state of play report. During the state of play report analysis of documents for public transport strategies were carried out. The obtained results will be included in the long-term development strategy of the region that will provide specific recommendations to the public transport system in the following years. [More information.](#)



MOG partners in Poland

BE CO SI

Benchmarking on Contaminated Sites

The industrial heritage of the Central Baltic countries has caused countless areas with contamination in soil, buildings, groundwater and surface water. Authorities have broadly three means of protecting citizens and environment from the hazards of contaminated sites: supervision that will result in remediation, spatial planning that will guide landowners towards remediation measures, and information that will help people protect themselves. In cooperation with project partners the goal of the BECOSI has set - project is to benefit a healthier and more environmentally friendly Central Baltic region by improving the work skills connected to contaminated sites administration.

Several seminars were organized during the project. The aims of them were different – starting with educating territory planning experts about planning of polluted places continued with creation of common understanding about the registration, classification and remediation of polluted places and other processes which are related to pollution. Seminars were held on international and national levels. In the summer of 2012, a GIS data layer about potentially polluted and polluted places was created in the territory of the Vidzeme Planning Region; it is a practical tool for territory planning. For more information click [here](#).



Ammonia barrels—they lie not far from the place where the seminar was held on 30.08. There is a serious pollution risk.



Building with high energy efficiency is one of the most important goals for high qualified construction experts. The importance of using renewable energy resources to raise energy efficiency in buildings is highlighted in Latvia. Only skilled professionals are able to construct buildings according to modern requirements. The Latvian planning regions and representatives from the construction sector participated in the project „Build up Skills – Latvia”, because there is a need to improve knowledge and skills of workers in the construction sector. The project partners are looking for solutions to the most successful action plan development and implementation. Organizing exchange visits to other EU countries, the project is achieving its main objective - to achieve equality in the professional qualification of workers across the EU.

The Vidzeme Planning Region has organized regional discussions about the situation in the construction industry in the region. We received several recommendations how to improve the situation for a better quality construction process. After the regional discussions, there was conference in Riga which was a conclusion for collecting all recommendations for better quality construction process and compile them in an action plan which will be elaborated at the end of the project. This action plan will be presented for all national institutions which are involved in the construction industry to explain what is needed to improve the situation in the construction sector. [More about project.](#)

Entrepreneurship



Information and communication technologies (ICT) develop fast and they influence other sectors, too. The audiovisual sphere is one of those that cannot be imagined without ICT. It is necessary to look for new ways and technologies how to be competitive in the information era. The aim of the project Medi@TIC is to promote international cooperation between project partners, regional entrepreneurs and universities. In cooperation with professionals in the audiovisual sector and developers of ICT solutions we will be looking for best experience in other countries and new ideas how to use technologies in the audiovisual sphere.

In 2012 the Medi@TIC project was looking for creative and successful solutions for ICT development in Vidzeme. Together with representatives from the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, the Vidzeme Television and the company „Ezata Studio” we visited the project partners in Spain, Norway and Italy. Vidzeme surprised representatives from 11 European countries with our professionals in the audiovisual sphere. Read [More](#).



Lunch event of Health4Growth in Eindhoven



The overall objective of the project in cooperation internationally is to improve the effectiveness of regional development policies regarding the operational environment of local and regional economic players within the health sector and promote their cooperation at regional and European level in order to exploit the growth and innovation potential of this sector.

In 2012 activities of the project “Health4Growth” were implemented and a number of entrepreneurs and health care sector players were identified in the Vidzeme region. The project experts have investigated the operating environment for local and regional businesses and health care workers in Vidzeme. Representatives of the Vidzeme Planning Region participated in the exchange visits organized by the project partners in the regions. For more information click [here](#).

Tourism and place marketing



Via Hanseatica is a tourism route that connects several cities in different countries – St. Petersburg, Narva/Ivangorod, Tartu, Valga/Valka, Valmiera, Sigulda and Riga. The aim of the project is to facilitate the territorial development of remote areas in Estonia, Latvia and Russia by using the potential of the Via Hanseatica tourism route.

One of the Via Hanseatica activities is to make small improvements to 12 tourism objects. In 2012 works in 5 objects in the Vidzeme region have been finished and now visitors can enjoy better services there. For more information about the project activities click [here](#).



Via Hanseatica partners in action during the workshop about Via Hanseatica travel guide



RitsNet partners at the conference about ITS



The concept of "Intelligent Transport Systems" (ITS) is a topical issue in the European Union transport sector. ITS mean innovative information and communication technology solutions that are used to introduce new services in transport and traffic management. ITS provide better access to information and ensure safer and smarter use of transport networks. The main aim of the project is to establish a joint methodology and to help the partner regions to develop individual ITS plans for integration into the general mobility plans of their countries.

During the project, a number of international seminars, trainings and exchange visits will be organized. At the end of 2012, two of them were held – in Vienna (Austria) and Pleven (Bulgaria). Representatives of the Vidzeme Planning Region presented the current situation and perspectives of introduction of ITS solutions in our region. The next event will take place in the Vidzeme region in February, 2013. You are welcome to visit the project website - www.rits-net.eu



HISTCAPE

The main task of the project "Histcape" is to find solutions for efficient and sustainable management and protection of cultural and historic sites and landscapes in rural areas, whilst creating favourable living conditions.

On June 25 the Vidzeme Planning Region organized together with partners from 11 different countries an open conference "Historical Assets and Related Landscapes" that was held in Dikļi – one of the most beautiful venues in Vidzeme - experts and government representatives expressed their views and judgments on the sustainable management of cultural heritage in Vidzeme and the value of its landscape. More about the project read [here](#).



Histcape partners in Dikļi



Grisi Plus Conference on usage of geomatics tools held in Amata



The main aim of the project "Grisi Plus" is to promote the economic development and attractiveness of rural areas by using potential of geographic information and geomatic instruments. Geomatics is the science direction, based on geographic information collection, processing and use.

One of the prerequisites for the development of rural areas is usage of offered opportunities of geomatics tools in order to promote the attractiveness of the area and the local product awareness. This message was expressed at the project "Grisi Plus" seminar in Amata municipality in 2012.

At the end of 2012, a research report "Evaluation of the Geomatics Situation in Vidzeme Region as a Tool for the Implementation of Rural Development" was elaborated. The report shows comprehensive picture of usage of geomatics tools in the Vidzeme region. For more information click [here](#).

TOURage

Every age is tour age

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in Europe and relatively remote regions have both: a lot of unexploited and unknown development potential in this regard. The project seeks to identify good practices on developing tourism possibilities for growing segment of elderly travellers. The main objective of the project is to advance regional economy by the means of senior tourism development and to support active and healthy ageing.

The Vidzeme Planning Region is one of the most Latvian regions in our country – 85% of all population are Latvians. We would like to tell our guests about the traditions that are alive in almost every Latvian family. In June 2012, the „Tourage” project partners visited Vidzeme to see the most significant tourism sites with special attention to senior people. Read more about Tourage [here](#)



CULT IDENTITY

Ancient cult places are very important elements of cultural heritage; however they are investigated, tended as well as published very little until now. It is the main reason why most of these objects are not identified as cultural-historical values that characterize the region, and they are not used for increasing environmental, cultural and historical awareness, for development of interesting destinations for tourists and development of local business environment by providing of different services.

The project deals with such ancient sites/sacred places that are determined to be nature environmental objects that are not related to sacred architecture.

The Vidzeme Planning Region together with the project partners from Estonia, Sweden and Latvia has established two ancient cult routes in the region. Both routes are suitable for small groups of people who travel by car. One of those routes is called „Vidzeme highlands - place of strength” and it is 145 km long. The other route is 175 km long and it is called „Tales and stories of nature sanctuaries in North Vidzeme”. The routes involve such objects as cult springs, Devil’s stones, sacred mountains and stones, trees, caves and also an island. You can find more information [here](#).



Projects which concluded in 2012



TRANS IN FORM

The project "Trans in Form" made us think about regional branding for the first time. The aim of the project was to introduce competitive development concepts for rural regions, smaller towns and cities. It raised awareness among both policy makers and citizens about regional attractiveness and potential. Project TIF has started thank to long term cooperation.

The Vidzeme Planning Region took an active part in all project activities. Thanks to the project „Trans in Form”, the region got a new logo and a slogan „The only way is up!"; there was also a campaign to find the most enterprising people in Vidzeme, the most interesting tourism object and the most creative entrepreneurs. A home page about success stories in Vidzeme was created during the project (www.vidzemesstasti.lv). [More about project.](#)



Garden Festival in Vidzeme



WOOD ENERGY

The project "Wood Energy" promotes wood as an energy source and improves knowledge about wood energy, eco-friendly techniques and clean technology. The project partners from Sweden, Estonia, Latvia develops regional action plans and strategies on how to promote the effectiveness of wood energy. The project aims to develop and introduce a flexible energy system combining wood with other materials, such as waste and straw.

Additional to the recommendations and guidelines for policy makers, the Vidzeme Planning Region organized trainings for school children and heat producers. Together with the innovation centre "Zinno" from Cēsis, VPR developed and implemented training for primary school children, as well as elaborated a workbook for children "Woody Story". In cooperation with the Ērgļi Vocational School, the Vidzeme Planning Region implemented first training course on sustainable energy usage in the heat production. The Vidzeme Planning Region also disseminated several video materials about wood and its energy about the wood and its energy (you can find them [here](#)). For more information click [here](#).





BALTIC TRAINING PROGRAMME

The project „Baltic Training Programme” supported internalization of vocational education and training, as well as cross-border entrepreneurship. The area of project activities was Estonia, Latvia and Eastern part of Sweden. The project was finalized in June 2012.

Some of the project participants successfully continue their work and develop their business ideas further. Two of the BTP participants - Artis Lielbārdis and Toms Bergs – have been nominated for the Swedish Business Awards in the category “Young Entrepreneur of the Year”.

Artis Lielbārdis participated in the educational module during the first project year. Afterwards his company „Valmiera Organize” Ltd. (growing and processing pumpkins) established its own trademark „Lucky Pumpkin” and it is becoming more popular in Latvian and also trying to enter the Scandinavian market. Toms Bergs, Director of the company „80 art” Ltd., took part in the BTP training in 2012. The company „80 art” offers an innovative approach to creating of radio commercials – customers can choose voices of their commercials, type texts and receive their trailers in e-mail after a few hours. [More information.](#)



The territory of the Vidzeme Planning Region is rich with waterways – rivers and lakes. It is important to manage them correctly and to look for the ways how to use waterways effectively. If rivers and their shores are not managed correctly or they are not managed at all, they lose their biological value and economic potential. Everyone should care about waterways. Within the project “Waterways Forward” VPR organized trainings for planning specialists of local governments and practical seminars for river owners and friends of nature.

In 2012, there was a repeated action “Put a stone in the river!” or “Tidy our waterways”. During the practical training, water experts from Latvia showed how to take care of rivers and their shores. Participants were advised how to make views from bridges, so that rivers can be seen from there. The event was very popular among the participants and media. Regional waterway development was possible thanks to the partners from 10 regions and municipalities. For more information click [here.](#)

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