



VIDZEME

THE ONLY WAY IS UP!

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IN THIS ISSUE

Being successful through cooperation

by **Hardijs Vents**, Head of Vidzeme Planning Region Development Council



Welcome to the second issue of the Vidzeme Planning Region's international newsletter! 2013 has been successful year of cooperation with our international partners, and the New Year has arrived with lots of energy and spirit to accomplish great things together.

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

improve regional policies for balanced regional and national development.

We are very happy to have expanded our cooperation with foreign partners in 2013. Collaboration with our long-term partners General Council of Lower Rhine in France and Pskov region in Russia is successfully developing. We are also maintaining an active link to the 145 project partners in 29 countries. The name of Vidzeme has become increasingly known in Europe! We have 31 projects which have been in start-up, implementation or post-implementation phase. Project topics are diverse - from tourism and business to the transport system development, landscape planning and contaminated sites, but they share one goal - to increase the region's ability to make full use of internal resources and development potential. And we are pleased to share our own experience and knowledge with our partners. To continue our successful work and implement important projects, we are always open to new partnerships and new project ideas!

Year 2014 in Latvia is a year of culture because our capital Riga is becoming the European Culture Capital where hundreds of unique events will take place. We invite you to visit and enjoy charming cultural spirit of Riga and Vidzeme.

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LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS



Cooperation with Pskov (Russia) successfully continues

In the middle of November 2013 representatives of Vidzeme Planning Region municipalities together with several entrepreneurs visited Pskov in Russia to hold meetings with representatives of the Pskov regional administration and the business community. The visit was organized in accordance with the cooperation agreement which was signed between Vidzeme Planning Region and Pskov District of the Russian Federation in 2012.

The delegation of 60 people was invited to participate in a discussion on cross-border cooperation leading to insight about possible models of cooperation. Participants were informed about investment opportunities in Pskov and cross-border cooperation perspectives. It was very useful to gain practical information on required documentation and to find answers to other questions which are highly important to help foreign entrepreneurs to start business in Russia.



A separate panel discussion was organized both for entrepreneurs from Vidzeme Planning Region and Pskov region to provide them with information on tax policy, business registration procedures and other useful information for entrepreneurs. It was useful to listen to the experience of those Latvians who already run their business in Russia. The meeting was highly appreciated among the entrepreneurs and the representatives of municipalities of Vidzeme Planning Region!

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Fruitful cooperation with the General Council of Lower Rhine (France)

Summer of 2013 was a fruitful time in our cooperation with the General Council of Lower Rhine. We welcomed back our long term partners – a traditional arts group from Berstett city and hiking specialists from *Federation du Club Vosgien*. Berstett's traditional arts group visited the dance group from Jaunpiebalga municipality *Piebaldzēni* and performed in the city festival *Izvēlies Piebalgu*. This cooperation will definitely continue.

Hiking specialists from *Club Vosgien* were invited by the municipality of Alūksne to participate in a seminar where they shared their knowledge in trail marking and their experience in popularisation of hiking with Vidzeme municipalities and tourism specialists.

This was the first year when we widened the scope of our activities and started cooperation in the business sector. Read more on that on page 5.



Photo: Guna Bērziņa

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VIDZEME PLANNING REGION TAKES PART IN EU OPEN DAYS 2013



In October 2013, in Brussels, a representative from Vidzeme Planning Region (VPR) Kristaps Ročāns took part in 11th annual EU OPEN DAYS* workshop *Smart Clusters for a new Industrial Revolution*. The workshop was organized by the partnership of seven European regions: Basque Country (ES), Eindhoven (NL), Extremadura (ES), Flanders (BE), Picardie (FR), Tampere Region (FI) and Vidzeme Planning Region (LV). The workshop was moderated by Mr. Fabian Zuleeg, Chief Executive of the European Policy Centre. More than 150 participants took part in the workshop, which focused on sharing good practice examples of industry cluster development from partner regions, innovative public - private communities such as factories of the future, innovation hubs, and smart specialization strategies as a key elements, fostering industrial revolution and EU competitiveness

During the discussions and expert presentations, it was concluded that clusters, cluster cooperation networks, innovation platforms such as *Demola* and regional smart specialization strategies, are key pillars that need to be further developed and strengthened in the next planning period, in

*The OPEN DAYS – European Week of Regions and Cities is an annual four-day event during which cities and regions showcase their capacity to create growth and jobs, implement European Union cohesion policy, and prove the importance of the local and regional level for good European governance. The event was created in 2003 and has become a European networking platform for experts in regional and local development. Over the years, the OPEN DAYS have grown into the key event on EU Regional Policy. It welcomes some 6 000 participants in Brussels, in October each year (local, regional, national and European decision-makers and experts) for more than 100 workshops and debates, exhibitions and networking opportunities. In addition to the Brussels-based workshops, some 250 local events are run from September to November all over Europe.

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order to boost European industrial competitiveness, that is based on innovation, specialization, industry – academia cooperation and knowledge transfer.

An OPEN DAYS local event – workshop: *Connected regional smart clusters – building blocks for industrial development*, was also organized by the Vidzeme Planning Region, and took place on 23 October, in Latvia, the city of Valmiera. The workshop focused on sharing good practice solutions from the Brussels workshop, showcasing examples of successful clusters operating in Latvia: food, tourism, logistics and ICT clusters, and finding cross-industry collaboration points among them, in order to improve specialization and cross-industry innovation. More than 50 participants were present at the event.

GOBIERNO DE EXTREMADURA



NORDIC PARTNERS VISITING VIDZEME FOR THE EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE

Business delegation from Denmark meeting Vidzeme food cluster

On 17th of September, 2013, the Vidzeme Planning Region, together with Vidzeme Food cluster company *Ltd. Valmiermuižas alus*, welcomed a delegation of 15 entrepreneurs, development specialists and municipality representatives from Sorø Municipality, Denmark.

The Business visit by Sorø Municipality to Latvia was carried out as a part of the Nordic Council of Ministers co-financed project, implemented in Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Business and Industry, in order to strengthen the Danish-Latvian business collaboration.

During the visit Danish partners learned about development experience of Vidzeme food cluster, met CEO's of cluster companies and chairman of Vidzeme Planning Region Development Council, discussed possible business cooperation interests and had an inspiring presentation and tour in the premises of *Ltd. Valmiermuižas alus* – a rapidly developing niche brewery located near the region's largest city Valmiera.



The Sorø Municipality has adopted a strategy for its economic development for the years 2012-2015, and a priority of this strategy is the establishment of two clusters of food and health care companies. In the development of these business clusters, Sorø is interested in a cooperation with other successful clusters in Denmark as well as Baltic countries, therefore the goals of the Danish visit to Vidzeme was to give the business community in Sorø a valuable insight into the Latvian experience with business clusters, provide the participants with updated information on the market opportunities and boost the business links and enduring cluster network relations.

During the meeting partners came to the conclusion was made that both Food clusters in Sorø and Vidzeme are very similar in terms of priorities, activities and challenges. Both parties are interested in further

co-operation that lasts beyond the visit. This could take place in terms of a Latvian visit to Sorø, a joint project or an enduring network relation. Participants saw a perspective of strengthening relations between the Danish and Latvian food producers, regional and local governments. Partners had discussions on possible town-twinning and maybe even an official cooperation agreement between Vidzeme and Sorø. Vidzeme Food cluster participants were kindly invited to Visit Sorø in a similar business trip in 2014.

Visitors from Finland with Focus on Development of Cultural Tourism

On September 13th, 2013, the Vidzeme Planning Region welcomed a visitor from the city of Joensuu, North Karelia, Finland - Dr. Erja Lehtikoinen, Project Manager of the project "Contemporary Old City: Enhancing cultural tourism across the border". Her visit to Cēsis was part of a longer study trip through Estonia and Latvia and was supported by the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme.

The main objective of the study visit was to learn more about good practices related to the development and improvement of the tourism offer, and, especially, for the Russian tourists as a specified target group and with special focus on local and regional cultural resources and heritage. She was also interested to share experiences, to get peer reviews concerning the created strategies, development initiatives, implemented activities as well as developed services and products, including digital materials, virtual environments and mobile services.

Dr. Lehtikoinen was especially interested in the achievements of the project *Via Hanseatica* implemented within the Estonia-Latvia-Russia CBC Programme. She had a meeting with Laila Gercāne, Head of Development and Project Department, and Dagnija Ūdre, Project Manager.

Both the North Karelia project and the *Via Hanseatica* project are represented at the international tourism fair MATKA 2014 in Helsinki, Finland, and both the projects are launching their new web portals during the fair. On March 17-18, 2014, there is an international conference on development of culture tourism in Joensuu and Erja Lehtikoinen invited the project *Via Hanseatica* to present its new tools, such as a mobile application and a travel portal, there.

INTERNATIONAL FOOD COOPERATION

Food cluster of Vidzeme Planning Region

VPR acts as a coordinator for the development of *Vidzeme high added value and healthy food cluster* (Vidzeme Food Cluster). Cluster was initiated in 2010 and currently is a “triple helix” network of more than 28 partners: food and drinks sector SME’s, R&D institutions and supporting public entities. Cluster fosters development of new products, promotes knowledge transfer, allows development and implementation of new projects and helps SME’s to internationalize their activities and find business partnerships in Baltic Sea Region. Cluster is also a partner in the BSR Stars project: *BSR FOOD: BSR Food Cluster Network around the Baltic Sea*.

2013 has been a year of growth for the Vidzeme food cluster, in terms of activities and new participants, which have joined the cluster. External cooperation of the cluster has been very active last year. Work on the development of the *BSR Food House* project application was started together with *BSR Food* cluster network partners from Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Estonia and Lithuania. The project idea is to establish efficient international cluster network in the Baltic Sea Region that would help food sector SME’s develop their export and product strategy capacities. Two project development workshops were held in Riga, and one in Lund, Sweden.

New cooperation initiatives and work on future projects have also started together with cluster organizations from *Baltfood* cluster network and Soro Municipality in Denmark. Meeting with manager of *Foodregio* cluster (Germany) happened in August in Riga, and business delegation from Denmark visited Vidzeme in September.

Successful project was implemented in the *Leonardo da Vinci* programme, which allowed specialists from 4 cluster companies to participate in 2 week internship in France, where they learned technologies of the ecologic drinks and cider production that they will be able to implement in the Latvian market.

Cluster development example was also presented in the Brussels, during EU OPEN DAYS workshop: *Smart Clusters for a new Industrial Revolution*.

The work on new projects, cooperation activates among cluster participants and cluster branding will be carried out in 2014. Vidzeme food cluster is an open network that welcomes new participants and seeks new cooperation partners in Europe.

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Vidzeme companies learning from French experience



In 2013 in cooperation with the General Council of Lower Rhine four drink manufacturers from *Vidzeme high added value*

and healthy food cluster had an opportunity to participate in an internship in drink manufacturing companies in France. EU Lifelong Learning Programme’s *Leonardo da Vinci* project gave a chance to representatives of [Ltd. Valmiermuižas alus](#), [Ltd. Very Berry](#), [Ltd. Valmiera Organize](#) and [Ltd. Smiltenes sidra darītava](#) to acquire new knowledge of juice and cider brewing techniques, to see the production process in different sized companies and inspired them to develop new products.

In preparing for the internship, the participants learned the basics of French language and improved their knowledge of French culture in order to be well prepared for their 2 weeks stay in France – a week in Alsace region where they specialized in juice making methods and a week in Normandy region where



they studied cider brewing techniques. That gave the participants a good insight in the French ecological drink market and the French consumer preferences.

The newly acquired knowledge has already been put to use in *Ltd. Smiltenes sidra darītava* where the Normandy’s cider method has been tried on this year’s harvest. *Ltd. Very Berry* is also planning to develop a new export product. The internship has encouraged discussions inside the *Vidzeme food cluster* on the necessity of a larger involvement from the researchers in order to improve the product quality.

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Looking for partners and new cooperation ideas

Vidzeme Planning Region has led and co-participated in an increasing number of projects. Looking forward to the next planning period 2014-2020, we **have already developed 15 project ideas**. We invite you to become our partner in these projects and work together on new ones.



www.tourage.eu

CHECK OUT OUR 15 UPCOMING PROJECT IDEAS AND JOIN!



www.viahanseatica.info

We have experience working with:

- Tourism projects (water tourism, senior tourism, tourism routes, ancient cult sites)
- Educational training modules
- Environment maintenance ,polluted areas
- Innovation economy
- Increasing skills in building sector (energy efficiency)
- Geomatics
- Sustainable landscape management
- Sustainable transport systems and developing intelligent transport systems
- Networking for enterprises
- Cluster development
- Audiovisual sector, etc.

Vidzeme Planning Region is planning to operate in the following programs:

- Estonia-Latvia Programme
- Latvia-Russia Programme
- Central Baltic Programme
- Baltic Sea Region Programme
- Interreg Europe
- Urbact II
- Horizon 2020
- Erasmus+, etc.



Our 15 project ideas

PROJECT IDEA #1: CENTRAL BALTIC OPEN INNOVATION NETWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF REGIONAL SMART SPECIALIZATION STRATEGIES IN NON-METROPOLITAN REGIONS

Main Objective: Strengthening cooperation and role of universities in Central Baltic region, as central hubs for smart and specialized regional economic development.

Specific Objective: To create systematic open-innovation network between regional universities and regional administrations in Central Baltic region, in order to develop and implement innovative regional smart specialization strategies.

Activities include development of Central Baltic area regional university knowledge-exchange network (workshops, conferences, and knowledge exchange visit), smart specialization strategies and joint innovation management study program and modules. Smart Innovation Grants Program will be created.

PROJECT IDEA #4: ESTABLISHMENT OF GREATER VIDZEME- SOUTH ESTONIA GREENWAY (NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION) NETWORK

Main Objective: To streamline non-motorized transportation road network in the Vidzeme region and South Estonia, in order to foster development of the nature and active tourism in the cross-border regions.

Activities include construction of greenways and resting places along the greenways ~390 km of greenways constructed;

PROJECT IDEA #2: "LATVIA –ESTONIA HIGH ADDED VALUE NICHE FOOD PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER COOPERATION NETWORK"

Main Objective: To enhance the competitiveness of small and medium-sized niche food producing companies in Latvia and Estonia, through cross border cluster cooperation.

Specific Objective: Develop functional cross-border food cluster cooperation network in Latvia and Estonia, to enhance competitiveness, high added value niche product development and export capacities of small and medium-sized niche food producing SME's.

Activities include development and coordination of functional cross-border food cluster cooperation network, cross-border knowledge transfer, etc. as well as development of niche products.

PROJECT IDEA #5: LIVONIA ROADS (TOURISM ROUTE IN THE BORDERS OF THE HISTORIC LIVONIA)

Main Objective: To enhance competitiveness of the Vidzeme region in the tourism sector, through improvement of services quality, development of SME's, including small farms and craftsmen.

Activities include place branding, adjustment of the tourism infrastructure, training craftsmen and small farm owners for the provision of tourism related services and organizing craft fairs.

PROJECT IDEA #3: BALTIC SEA REGION BUSINESS INCUBATION COOPERATION NETWORK

Main Objective: Development of Baltic Sea Region regional business incubator cooperation network, in order to strengthen growth and export capacity of start-up companies

Activities include development of the regional business incubator cooperation network; joint cross-border trainings for the start-up companies and business incubator operator teams.

PROJECT IDEA #6: ESTONIA-LATVIA CROSS BORDER WORK BASED LEARNING SYSTEM (WBL)

Main Objective: Promote youth employment and labor mobility by development of cross-border work based learning system.

Specific Objective: Implementation of cross-border work based learning system in the project area, ensuring adequate education supply for the workforce demand.

Activities include development of learning system, preparation of the education institutions for the WBL system implementation and usage and training of pilot-groups of young people as well as development of policy recommendations.

PROJECT IDEA #4: CREATIVE AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE ENTERPRISES

Main Objective: Strengthening competitiveness and innovation capacity of enterprises, promoting creative and socially responsible business development.

Activities include development and implementation of training program for companies, in order to develop creative and socially responsible business practice in regionally important industries; development of new creative business solutions.

PROJECT IDEA #7: MODERN TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION TO REVIVAL OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN RURAL AREAS

Main Objective: To promote cultural heritage revival and promotion, using innovative solutions and creative industries expertise.

Activities include environmental installations and innovative solutions for cultural heritage in pilot areas, involvement of architecture, urban planning and design students in provision of creative and innovative solutions for revival of cultural heritage and exchange of experience between different stakeholders. The project will also include activities aimed at raising awareness and understanding of the historical heritage, its importance in city/town development.

PROJECT IDEA #7: PLANNING AND MONITORING OF THE FLOODED TERRITORIES FOR MITIGATING FLOODING RISKS

Main Objective: To enhance planning and monitoring of the flooded territories in order to mitigate flooding risks

Project idea is to seek new solutions for the mitigating of flooding risks by improving monitoring and planning of flooded territories, as well as enhance cooperation among municipalities and regional administrations.

PROJECT IDEA #8: CENTRAL BALTIC COOPERATION FOR PROMOTION OF THE "GREEN HERITAGE" FUTURE PARKS

Main Objective: To increase capacity and specific knowledge of maintaining and developing culture and natural heritage in Central Baltic region.

The project aims to address the problem of sustainable management of the culture and natural heritage in the region.

Activities include exchange of experiences, organization of training and capacity building activities for the local authorities, investments in pilot sites and establishment of cooperation platform of stakeholders for knowledge-sharing and promotion of natural and cultural heritage.

PROJECT IDEA #9: PLACE RESILIENCE

Main Objective: To gain deep and practical understanding of cooperation ties in the project territories and their ability to react to inner and outer threats and shock.

Activities include analysis of cooperation ties between public, social and economic areas in municipalities of Vidzeme Planning Region in order to understand the strength of place economic resilience towards external and internal shock (like economic crisis, bankruptcy of large regional company), by using CLES methodology (developed in the UK);

PROJECT IDEA #10 "TRANSPORT ON DEMAND"

Main Objective: To enhance mobility of the inhabitants, by providing nature friendly and specifically adjusted transport services in the less populated territories of the Vidzeme region.

Activities include joint solutions for innovative public transport services in rural areas by profiling existing transport systems. Sustainable public transport pilot schemes will be developed and implemented in rural areas to do the pilot scheme evaluation later. To administer the proposed scheme in the area, an interregional public transport system tool and coordination center will be established.

PROJECT IDEA #11: DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOGISTICS RESOURCE CENTER IN THE VIDZEME REGION BORDER TERRITORIES

Main Objective: Development of the services related to the transport flow and logistics

Activities include development of the "Logistics resource center" at the transit crossing between State road network roads: A-2 (E-77) Rīga – Veclaicene - Pskov, and Rēzekne – Tartu and services provided in the center: storage, carwash, repair shops, catering and accommodation.

PROJECT IDEA #12: DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION COMPETENCE IN CENTRAL BALTIC AREA "ENVEDU COMPETENCE"

Main Objective: To develop network of Environmental Education Competence Centers equipped with joint regionally adapted educational materials, to increase understanding of the state of regional ecosystems and nature processes and to raise the number of inhabitants', especially young generations' environmental awareness.

This communication based project is aimed to raise youth's awareness on environmental issues and stimulate students and general public to reduce environmental impacts.

Activities include development of training system for trainers and preparation of environmental education tools; elaboration and translation of educational materials; development of pilot environmental education infrastructure and joint environmental education camps for students from partner institutions.

PROJECT IDEA#13 SMART UTILIZATION OF ENERGY RESOURCES

Main Objective: To promote smart management and utilization of local energy resources.

Activities include development of sustainable forest management model, development of efficient and modern pulp yield technologies, development of systematic cooperation among power - generating pulp producers, local governments, SME's and renewable energy producers, experience exchange and knowledge transfer activities.

FOR ANY PROPOSALS:

Please contact Vidzeme Planning Region Head of Development and Project Department Ms Laila Gercāne, laila.gercane@vidzeme.lv to receive more information about project ideas, possible future cooperation or to exchange experience!



COMPLETED AND ONGOING PROJECTS

To see what we are doing at the moment, please find small summaries of projects Vidzeme Planning Region is currently implementing and some that has been finished recently.



For two years Vidzeme Planning Region is working on implementation of the project **HEALTH4GROWTH**. The target of the project is to explore and develop new models to improve the cooperation infrastructure between all players involved in the health sector and find solutions for regulatory problems hindering commercialization of new technologies. Report on regional business development potential in the health sector, has been delivered. The report outlines the Vidzeme regions' profile by providing information on major trends in the development of science, innovation, technology, economy and health. Successful conference on health sector cooperation potential in the region was organized in spring 2013 in which more than 70 representatives took part to become familiar with the ways in which different sectors and organizations could collaborate in health and business fields.

In October we had the chance to host international seminar - workshop in Latvia where professionals of the field learned about advantages of specialization and got acquainted with successful experience of Italian food cluster development and approach to health care commercialization adapted in University of Debrecen (Hungary). After the discussions, strengths and weaknesses of successful development of health sector were defined. In May 2014 project partners from across the Europe will visit Vidzeme to discuss further development of policy recommendations.

More: www.health4growth.eu

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Tourism project **VIA HANSEATICA** has developed a popular and qualitative tourism route connecting Russia, Estonia and Latvia. Project has strengthened the knowledge of tourism entrepreneurs as well as encouraged new tourism products to be created. During year 2013, time and work has been invested to create a new webpage www.viahanseatica.info, mobile application, tourism map and tourism guide to promote the Via Hanseatica route. The perception of being an important part of the route has been raised among tourism entrepreneurs by organizing training modules to increase their knowledge. In year 2014 Via Hanseatica will be promoted in tourism exhibitions in Finland, Germany and Russia.



Crossroads of
Baltic nature and culture



More: www.viahanseatica.info

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Senior tourism becomes more and more essential in Europe. The rising rate of elderly travelers puts us into perspective of the demographic changes that Europe is facing right now. Although demographic

changes bring many challenges, it also can benefit to the regions of Europe. Project **TOURage** is all about seizing opportunities. We collect good practices and exchange experiences to develop tourism possibilities for growing segment of elderly travelers in all partner regions. Regional analysis on demographic changes and senior tourism has been developed. Also survey about local and foreign tourist needs has been completed and will be disseminated in the very beginning of year 2014 among project partners. The results of the survey gives an understanding about senior tourism in wider European perspective and the interests and needs of more than 10 European countries. In 2013 project partners have organized local seminars-workshops in their regions to inform about latest actualities as well as to involve seniors themselves when discussing the possible solutions to help senior tourism become more essential and taken into account when planning regional policies in tourism. In 2014 work will be continued to develop implementation plans in each region to enhance regional economy by the means of senior tourism development and to support active and healthy ageing. It is planned that project will give joint policy recommendations for politicians within EU to give more detailed view about senior tourism in partner regions, product development for senior tourists, their needs and expectations.

More: www.tourage.eu
Contact: Gatis Teteris, Project Manager
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Water tourism project **RIVERWAYS** has started only in April



2013 but has already been very successful by realizing several infrastructure activities near most popular rivers in Latvia and Estonia. Project will continue to develop new water tourism products and expand the

common tourism supply of Latvia and Estonia. Places to rest, a viewing platform and a pontoon dock have already been created. In 2014 the work to reconstruct or set up more places to rest will be continued. Assessment of water tourism services has started and opinions of entrepreneurs involved in the field are being collected. Series of discussions about local rivers are being held in Estonia and Latvia to involve different stakeholders and find out most important common problems, come up with solutions and begin new cooperation. When representatives of different areas come together it helps to find out different points of view in order to strengthen cooperation between stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, landowners and tourism



 information center representatives who don't have the opportunity to meet on a daily basis and discuss relevant issues. These types of meetings are great tool to bring all parties together. Currently the team of the project is working on marketing materials. It is planned to issue river



maps/guides for water tourists, create videos of rivers, and organize interactive game to promote water tourism. The project is intended to promote rivers of Vidzeme among local and foreign tourists to facilitate the development of business.

More: www.facebook.com/Riverways
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In May 2013 project Build up Skills Latvia was completed. During this project the action plan for construction industry was created to raise educational qualification among workforce. Project implementation was positively evaluated by representatives of the European Commission, highlighting projects impact at the national level by evaluating various stakeholders such as trade organizations, government institutions and others involved in this project. Currently work on the new project **BUILD UP SKILLS FORCE** has started. This is a much needed continuation to previous activities. This time project aims to promote availability of skilled workforce which has excellent knowledge of low-energy buildings and renovation and stressing the importance each worker has on the energy efficiency of the building. It is planned to organize trainings and pilot learning program.

More: www.buildupskills.eu

Contact: Gatis Teteris, Project Manager gatis.teteris@vidzeme.lv



In 2013 Vidzeme Planning Region initiated activities within EU program *Youth in Action* to promote youth policy in rural areas. Project *Promoting youth entrepreneurship*

skills and dialogue about nature-friendly, sustainable and innovative entrepreneurship development opportunities in rural regions was VPR initiative to motivate young people to start their own entrepreneurship and create new job opportunities for themselves and other inhabitants of the region. The project lasted 9 months and 30 young people aged 18-30 years and having a will to start their own business took part in this project. During a 7 day training course participants gained knowledge on how to start and develop new business and what are the main obstacles. During project a document *Policy recommendations for entrepreneurship policy makers* was created to improve entrepreneurship on municipal, regional and national level. Project activities were organized at local level achieving very good results and providing experience for the implementation of youth projects in the future. In the end of the project international discussion with Scandinavian stakeholders and representatives of local governments were organized to present project progress and talk about future cooperation at international level. Mairis Gailums, one of the participants, said: „All we do here is extremely useful and important as nowhere else I could have gained this knowledge totally free of charge. This is like a gift from my municipality and I am grateful for that!”



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The main goal 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. Vidzeme Planning Region's Grisi PLUS team organized a seminar for local municipality specialists about attractiveness of territory which was highly attended and very well received. We are happy that we have the opportunity to share knowledge we have gained through our project partners and bring it to Vidzeme. After seminar, municipalities gained new perspective on how to attract new inhabitants, tourists and investors. During project several good practices were selected and in the spring of 2013 work on developing good practice Implementation plan were started. The aim of the document is to define long term and mid-term priorities of Vidzeme Planning Region and actions which should be undertaken in order to use geomatic instruments to develop attractiveness of rural areas as well as actual implementation of two good practices – [Soho Solo](#) and [Made in Galway](#).



More: www.grisiplus.eu

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Project **CULT IDENTITY** was completed in August 2013. The aim was to provide accessible information and raise knowledge about ancient cult sites in Latvia and Estonia, as well as to promote environmental activities and increase interest about ancient sacred sites as a valuable cultural heritage. To attract and inform tourists', tourism routes in Latvia, Estonia and Sweden were created. Information about regional objects was collected to register the location, condition and accessibility to tourism purposes. Topic related information such as Folklore, local stories and materials from archeological research were explored. A digital map of objects and pilot routes were developed. A lot of ancient sites became objects of geocaching which not only allowed people to enjoy the process of finding them but also provided information about the objects themselves. We are glad that it is positively evaluated among geocachers and has raised common interest about ancient sites in the society.

More: www.ancientsites.eu

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The project **BECOSI** was finished in the autumn of 2013. The aim was to provide benefit for a healthier and more environmentally friendly Central Baltic region by improving the work skills connected to the administration of the contaminated sites. 2013 was the year when main activities of the project were undertaken. In the beginning of the year territory spatial plan development conception of contaminated site in city Cēsis was developed. The plan will serve as a methodic material for planning of the contaminated sites and their integration into city territories. Also a handbook for municipality spatial planners has been created. The invaluable experience of our foreign partners' benefited tremendously in creating these documents. In September, Vidzeme Planning Region hosted a seminar for local spatial planners to discuss results of the project and practical usage of the elaborated document.



Benchmarking on Contaminated Sites

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The main goal of the project **MOVE ON GREEN** is to develop solutions for sustainable and environmentally friendly transportation options in Vidzeme. 2013 was the year of experience exchange. One of

the most useful visits was to Hungary in October where group of experts had a chance to learn more about mobility of social care services and a mobile post office. At the end of November team from Vidzeme Planning Region (VPR) went to Austria where they were introduced with very valuable experience – transport on demand. Due to the fact that Vidzeme is the largest region in Latvia by its territory but the smallest according to population, public transportation issues are very important. That is why transport on demand would be good solution for further organization of transport system. In the middle of December we had the pleasure to welcome partners from Austria who were interested in our narrow-gauge train, which is a successful example because it combines preservation of historic heritage, tourism development and environmentally friendly transportation.

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 favorable living conditions. Project team has started



developing policy recommendations for landscape planning and management which will serve as good planning tool for local and regional professionals. These recommendations will help to understand the main aspects of landscape protection as well as planning and management. This topic in recent years has been neglected in Latvia. In September there was a seminar held for local development planners of Vidzeme municipalities. Development planners discussed important topics related to the comprehension of landscapes and different levels of landscape planning and its management in Latvia and Vidzeme Planning Region. This discussion was very essential to gather opinions and suggestions of local professionals in order to develop better policy recommendations about landscape planning and management. Together with our partners we also developed joint recommendations to improve EU landscape protecting policy.

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More: www.histcape.eu

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The aim of the project **Medi@TIC** is to promote international cooperation between project partners, regional entrepreneurs and universities to learn from partners the best ways on improving audiovisual sector. 2013 was year of research where main work was carried out in developing analysis of audiovisual sector potential in Vidzeme region. Developed prerequisites of audiovisual sector growth and estimated institutional support and funding were discussed in the document. Also SWOT analysis of the sector was created. The work on policy recommendations development is



ongoing. To improve these recommendations Vidzeme Planning Region organized several discussion for stakeholders in the sector to determine the needs and necessities of professionals. VPR also had an opportunity to visit project partner meetings and participate in study visits which contributed in new knowledge and perspectives to incorporate in further project implementation. In March of 2014 we will introduce audiovisual sector of Vidzeme to our project partners in meeting which will be held in Latvia.

More: www.mediatricproject.eu

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In February 2013 a thematic seminar *Intelligent transport systems for traffic management and mobility* was held within the project **RITS-NET** to discuss possible solutions of intelligent transport systems in order to ensure optimal transportation system in Vidzeme Planning Region. Representatives from 9 countries were present and shared their experience on using instruments of intelligent transport systems, focusing on planning the traffic in big cities and managing traffic on big motorways. Most attention was paid to traffic management and control centres and also ways to organize public transport on a demand in rural areas. This is a possible solution which has become very plausible in different projects implemented by VPR. Vidzeme Planning Region has participated in different seminars all over Europe to collect experience and a feasibility study is being elaborated to explore the situation and develop future options to initiate intelligent transport systems in the region.

More: www.rits-net.eu

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