

ESTONIA

Diversify the rural economy

Location

Seto Külävüü

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 3 & Axis 4

Measure

M313 - Encouragement of
tourism activities, LEADER

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 12 061

EAFRD 7 237

National/Regional 1 809

Private 3 015

Project duration

2013 – 2014

Project promoter

MTÜ Setomaa Turism /NGO
Setomaa Tourism

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Estonian tourism operators used EAFRD funding to install road signs to promote the local Seto culture and help visitors find interesting landmarks .

Summary

A group of Estonian tourism operators were concerned that visitors could not easily find local landmarks on the Seto Külävüü tourist route. They decided to install road signs, information points, maps and some picnic spaces. They wanted to promote the local Seto culture and encourage more tourists to come.

The group used the EAFRD funding to plan, construct and install the signs and information points along the Seto Külävüü route. They also needed to negotiate different regulations covering the installation of road signs in order to obtain permits. As a separate part of the project, they installed picnic areas.



Results

130 road signs were installed on the Seto Külävüü route and 3 signposts in three villages (Värskä, Obinitsa, Tsiistre).

12 regional and Seto Külävüü route maps were installed as well as 17 information stands and 7 picnic places in different locations.

Visitors could find interesting landmarks more easily and learn about the local culture.

The route to the border checkpoint with Russia is now clearly indicated.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The group did not expect to have to deal with so many regulations. This made the workload in the preparation phase a lot bigger.
- ❑ Once they had implemented the project, many local people were thankful to see more signs on the road. Cooperation with locals is therefore important, especially in village regions.

Context

The NGO Setomaa Tourism was created by the tourist operators of Setomaa in South-eastern Estonia in 2006, with the aim of marketing the unique culture of the Seto people. They jointly created a Seto Külävüü tourist route in 2011, presenting the highlights of Seto culture. It is about 100km long and is set in two administrative counties of Estonia (Põlvamaa, Võrumaa). But they were worried that visitors cannot easily find their way to the landmarks placed on the Seto Külävüü tourist map as the route passes from one village to another. They wanted to ensure such places could be found easily in the landscape.

It is especially important for foreign visitors who visit the Seto region to listen to Seto polyphonic singing that belongs to the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Local people would probably not be able to understand foreigners' questions. The programme wanted to ensure the signs and directions could help.

Objectives

The purpose of the project was to make tourists' trip on the Seto Külävüü route more enjoyable, when they do not have a local guide to show them around. First they agreed on the approach i.e. what needs to be present in the landscape to facilitate tourism. They agreed on the need for: signs (village signs, attractions), sign posts in bigger villages, maps (Seto Külävüü map and regional map with all data), picnic places and information stands.

They divided the work into three phases to make the workload manageable. The current project presents the phase of creating road signs.

Activities

It is complicated in Estonia to put signs on roads, especially in the case of large quantities of signs. Signs are the responsibility of the Road Administration and covered by several regulations. The local county officers check all applications and authorise permits.

The group knew from the start that signs are expensive. Their initial wish-list for signs was long, probably over 200 pieces. The Road Administration told them there should be as few signs as possible so as not to disturb the driver. The group had another opinion – there should be many signs to help the driver.

They made several site visits to check locations and

reviewed the texts on signs. They therefore took quite a while to reach agreement on the final list. The list was then approved by local municipalities and the Road Administration. The production and installation of road signs took place in the summer of 2013.



Main Results

130 road signs were installed on the Seto Külävüü route and 3 signposts in three villages (Värskä, Obinitsa, Tsiistre).

In the other elements of the project, they installed 12 Seto Külävüü and regional maps, 7 picnic places in different locations and 17 information stands. The total budget was around 60 000 EUR.

The changes were very important to keep visitors on the Seto Külävüü route and in the region as well as to give them a positive experience on their visit. For example, they no longer have upset visitors asking the way to the border checkpoint to Russia at the tourist information point. The road to the checkpoint is now better signposted. They now have more time to answer other visitors' questions.

Key lessons

They did not expect there to be so many regulations. This made the workload in the preparation phase a lot bigger.

Once they had implemented the project there were many local people who were thankful that more signs were on roads. Cooperation with locals is therefore important, especially in village regions.

In rural tourism one must have a clear focus and be consistent in actions. Once the focus is set and projects well-done, then you may expect results. Seto Külävüü is our focus, we have worked on that through several years.

Additional sources of information

www.facebook.com/visitsetomaa

www.instagram.com/setokylavyv