

## LATVIA

# Implementing local development strategies

**Location**  
Kuldīga

**Programming period**  
2007 - 2013

**Axis**  
Axis 4 – LEADER

**Funding (EUR)**  
Total budget 10 245  
EAFRD 7 376  
National/Regional 1 844  
Other (local municipality) 1 025

**Project duration**  
2013 – 2014

**Project promoter**  
Forest Owners Association  
"Forests Consultants"

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A forest association promoting forest environmental education used RDP support to create a series of high quality educational material in order to attract the interest of children and their families.

## Summary

A Forest Owners' Association in Latvia is very active in providing public education and raising awareness about forest environment issues. The association organises excursions in forests, and works with children in schools and kindergartens. During these activities they realised how little informed children and their parents are about forests' ecosystems.



The association supported by a Local Action Group, used RDP support to develop a series of high quality educational materials including costumes, pillows and forests suitcases storing different artefacts and tools. The items became an indispensable part of the largest educational event on forestry in the country.

## Results

The association organises one of largest educational events in the forestry industry in Latvia, called 'Forest ABC'. In 2015, the event was attended by more than 3 000 participants and in 2017, by more than 5 000 participants.

The project contributes to the sustainable management of the forests in the counties Kuldīga, Alsunga and Skrunda.

More and more schools, kindergartens and hobby groups are interested to invite the association to run the educational program in their areas.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The identified need motivated the association to think and to create new and interesting materials, that are used for its activities, and thus improve the knowledge of the community on the potential of the area.
- ❑ The cooperation with the LAG was a key success factor as they significantly helped both at the preparation and implementation of the project.

### Context

The Forest Owners' Association, called 'Forest Consultants', is offering public education and awareness raising on forest environment issues. The association organizes excursions in forests, and works with children in schools and kindergartens. During those activities the staff of the association observed that children had limited knowledge and understanding of forests. Children preferred to spend their free time indoors playing videogames or other gadgets. At the same time their parents showed limited interest in rural areas.

The association understood that they needed to attract the attention and interest of children and their parents on nature and help them realise the importance of forests as ecosystems. To this aim, the association decided to develop new interactive educational tools and activities.

### Objectives

The objectives of this project were to:

- communicate in an interactive way with children and their parents about the trees, plants and animals of forests as an ecosystem;
- look for new opportunities to educate the next generation of forest owners, students and families;
- develop the necessary accessories and tools in order to organise interactive educational journeys in the forest.

### Activities

In order to implement such an awareness raising activity addressing both children and their parents, the association needed interesting and interactive educational materials of high quality. So they developed and submitted the project proposal on the 'Journey in the Forest' to the Local Action Group Darīsim paši!. The association had previous experience in cooperating with the LAG as they had already implemented successfully three RDP funded projects.

As soon as the project proposal was approved, the forest owners' Association started to implement the agreed activities.

They obtained specially designed forest costumes, pillows/pads and forest suitcases. The Latvian artists Ivars Mailītis and Inese Mailīte from the company 'Mailītis

A.I.I.M.' played a significant role in the design and making of the materials. 31 uniquely designed forest costumes were prepared. Special pictures were drawn and afterwards embedded in 45 pillows/pads. Such pads were new for Latvia, as the idea was developed during a study visit in Estonia. Ivars Mailītis also created 8 large forest suitcases for storing different artefacts and tools.

A website was developed in cooperation with the LAG to promote the activities of the association and facilitate online booking.



### Main results

The association now organises one of largest educational events in the forestry industry, called 'Forest ABC'. The event is very popular and it is attended by schools and families from all around Latvia. In 2015, 'Forest ABC' was attended by more than 3 000 participants and in 2017, by more than 5 000 participants.

The project helped to promote environmental education and create opportunities to contribute to the sustainable management of the forests in the counties Kuldīga, Alsunga and Skrunda.

More schools, kindergartens and hobby groups are willing to invite the association to run the educational programme in their areas.

### Main lessons

The identified need motivated the association to think and to create new and interesting materials, that are used for its activities, and thus improve the knowledge of the community about the potential of the area.

The cooperation with the LAG was a key success factor as they significantly helped both in the preparation and implementation of the project.

### Additional sources of information

n/a