

## Upside-Down House in Smārde

LEADER funds award-winning Latvian agri-tourism Upside-Down House visitor attraction.

### EAFRD-funded projects

**Country:** Latvia

**Location:** Tukums, Smārdes county

**Programming period:** 2014-2020

**RDP Priority:** P6. Social inclusion and local development

**Focus Area:** Local development

**Measures:** MM19. LEADER CLLD

**Funding:**

Total budget	133 494 (EUR)
EAFRD	44 200 (EUR)
National/regional	20 800 (EUR)
Private/own	68 494 (EUR)

**Timeframe:** 03.2021- 12.2022

**Project promoter:** Ltd. MultiSales grupa

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### Summary

A family farm in Latvia's rural municipality of Tukums, Smārdes county, were searching for ways to diversify their activities and decided to create a visitor attraction. The Upside-Down House and surrounding infrastructure (parking, reception, events space, etc.) were created with the support of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funds from the Partnership for Rural and the Sea Local Action Group (LAG). Tapping into a relatively new tourism trend of Instagram-friendly attractions, the Upside-Down House has brought new visitors to the area and national media attention to the wider, regional tourism offer.

### Project results

- The project created a new visitor attraction and three new full-time jobs.
- The Upside-Down House has attracted more visitors to the area and to other nearby attractions.
- The project was selected as the most unique LEADER project of 2022 at the LEADER Dižprojekts awards ceremony organised by the Latvian Rural Forum and Latvian LAGs.

### Lessons & Recommendations

- It is particularly important that cooperation with local stakeholders (i.e. other attractions and service providers, tourism agencies, etc.) starts early on in the project.
- The builders were obliged to be quite inventive in the way that they approached the construction of this unusual building. It was a challenge for them.



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## Context

The MultiSales grupa family farm is located in Latvia's rural municipality of Tukums, in Smārdes county. The family were searching for innovative ideas to diversify their activities and use their land differently when they came up with the idea of creating a visitor attraction. Being well located: just 60km from Riga and also close to the Ķemeri National Park nature trails, there seemed to be potential in the idea of establishing a new attraction in the area, although this would be the first time that this family farm business would venture into the 'days out' tourism sector.

## Objectives

The aim of this LEADER project was to develop a new and unusual visitor attraction on a disused portion of the family's farmland and create new forms of employment in the local area.

## Activities

Supported by the Partnership for Rural and the Sea Local Action Group (LAG), the family constructed an upside-down building which, similar to other attractions of this kind, consists of a two-floor family house (with a living room, bedroom, children's room, kitchen, toilet and bathroom) where everything is presented upside down and all fixtures and fittings are attached to the ceiling. The floors are set at an angle, which creates a disorienting feeling and makes it challenging for visitors to find their balance as they make their way through in small groups.

As with other 'Insta-Tourism' attractions, the Upside-Down House provides visitors with an opportunity to take fun and playful photographs of themselves together. It was constructed along with a ticket office/visitor welcome building and events hall, as well as a parking area.

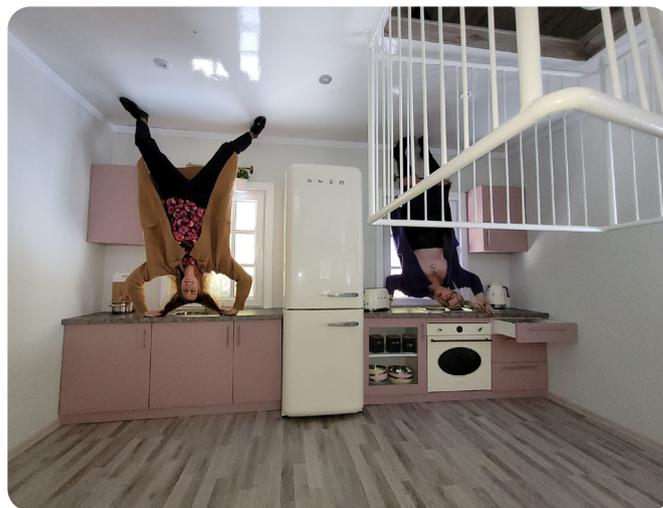
Activities funded by LEADER were:

- The purchase of construction materials for the construction of the upside-down building and the welcome/events building.
- The improvement of the surrounding territory and the addition of supporting infrastructure.

Private / own funds were used:

- To cover the labour costs of the construction. The family hired a Latvian construction company for this purpose.
- To organise a launch event and campaign to introduce the attraction to potential and existing stakeholders, as well as to the press.
- To organise various events such as a science show and a Christmas charity gala for children from low-income families.
- To implement different marketing and publicity activities across various media channels.

The municipality and other local entrepreneurs also supported the farming family to join the local tourism offer and business community.



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## Main results

- The project has created three new full-time jobs. It also provides opportunities to local youth to gain their first work experience during the summer.
- The project was selected as the most unique LEADER project of 2022 during the LEADER Dižprojekts awards organised by the Latvian Rural Forum and Latvian LAGs.



- The Upside-Down House is open daily and the event hall can be hired for various private functions, small conferences, training programmes, etc. for up to 50 people.
- The Upside-Down House attracts new visitors to the area and to other nearby tourism attractions. It has also raised awareness nationally, about the municipality and the opportunities available from LEADER.
- The Upside-Down House has inspired the local community, who actively participate in its events and initiatives.
- The success of this project has encouraged the project holders to continue developing. Using their own funds, they are creating a mirror maze and a 'tornado tunnel' at the house. They have also submitted an application for a new LEADER project to build a new upside-down element at their attraction: an 'Inverted Garage'.

## Key lessons

- For the new attraction to become part of the broader local visitor offer, the project owners needed to establish cooperation with other attractions and visitor service providers in the area, as well as with the local tourism agency. It is particularly important that such cooperation starts early on during project implementation.
- A tight-knit support network has been formed off the back of this ambitious new business endeavour thanks to the warm-hearted and efficient cooperation between the Local Action Group, the MultiSales grupa family farm and the many other stakeholders from the local area.

## Additional information:

<https://apgrietzamaja.lv/>

<https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/society/16.05.2023-upside-down-house-is-a-topsy-turvy-tourist-attraction.a508830/>

