



INTERNATIONAL LEADER COOPERATION PROJECT "IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES IN NATIONAL PARK/PROTECTED AREA REGIONS"

INTERIM REPORT

Reporting period: 01.09.2017 to 31.12.2018

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Compiled by Katrin Suursoo, Project Manager

Short title of the project: "Sustainable tourism development"

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. General project data

Project area:	Estonia (3 LEADER Action Groups) Latvia (2 LEADER Action Groups) Portugal (2 LEADER Action Groups) Slovenia (2 LEADER Action Groups)
Project Lead Partner:	LAG Development Centre NGO
Project partners:	LAG Green Riverland Partnership LAG Kodukant Läänemaa NGO LAG Cesis District Rural Partnership LAG Business Association of North Kurzeme areas LAG ATAHCA LAG ADRAMA LAG Between Snežnik and Nanos LAG Soča Valley
Start of project:	01.09.2017
End of the project:	31.08.2020
Total budget for the project:	EUR 624 000

1.2. General situation

The project "Sustainable tourism development" has progressed as planned. The objectives of the project have not changed.

There are no substantive changes in the planned operating plan and the work proceeds according to plan. The implementation of key activities has been successful.

Informing the public has been active. The project website seic.ee has been created and the project partners' websites have been updated with project information and are constantly updated. The project has been introduced at various events.

1.3. Assessment of achievement of project goals and work plan

There are no changes to the project objectives and the project is feasible. The project work plan has been prepared taking into account the potential risks to achieve the agreed results on time.

1.4. Problems encountered

Preparations for carrying out the works of 2017 and 2018 were thorough, therefore the planned work was carried out on time and of high quality and there were no problems.

Some activities were ranked in time based primarily on the capabilities of all partners and the logical sequence supported by the project.

The Slovenian partners received a negative decision from the Agency. However, the partners

decided to participate in a collaborative project from own resources.

The Portuguese partner, ATAHCA, was able to submit an application in the last quarter of 2018, as there were no earlier calls. The decision will be made in the late spring of 2019. No calls for proposals have been opened for Partner ADRAMA.

These problems do not affect the achievement of the project goal and the implementation of activities.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE PART

2.1. Description of project management

The team needed to manage the project was formed at the first international opening event in Roosta Holiday Village (in the area of activity of LAG Kodukant Läänemaa).

Project management team consists of the steering group (representatives from the LAGs) and the project manager. Changes in the steering group during the period: Kodukant Läänemaa 1 member has been changed.

Project management has been a successful. Project funding is guaranteed by partners' budgets, and the current budget execution has been correct and well planned.

The project's steering group has regularly evaluate the development of the project, with a total of 4 steering group meetings that have taken place within each international event.

After each event, participants have provided feedback on both the organizational and the substantive aspects. Estimates of project progress have been positive and progressive.

2.2. Project partners

The activities of the Estonian and Latvian partners have been carried out as planned during the reporting period. Slovenian partners have participated in all international events: summer universities, study visits and steering group meetings. The Portuguese partners have participated in the project in a virtual way and have organized the study trips to 2019 partners' regions in Portugal.

3. SUBSTANTIVE PART

3.1. Activities

Activities of Estonian partners in Estonia

In 2017, a project was launched and 2 international activities were implemented. In 2017, there were no events in Estonia. However, the activities of each project require thorough preparation (correspondence and communication by telephone) and thus the preparation of future activities, including seminars, study visits and summer universities, was ongoing. At the beginning of the project, more detail was agreed on future activities and timetable, the progress of the project partners was examined on a regular basis, the project communication activities were coordinated, a database of tourism entrepreneurs in the regions (potential

participants in the project) was created. In 1,5 years, a solid core group of the project emerged - recurring participants who have actively contributed to the project's goal.

In 2018, there were several activities in Estonia:

- In January, an agreement was signed with the Kogukonnakeskus NGO (Katrin Kull) to collect information on sustainable tourism and the products and services offered by other micro and small enterprises in the area of the LAGs participating in the cooperation project (9).
- In February, a sustainable tourism development strategy for the tourism area of Lahemaa National Park was started. The procurement was won by Pärnu College of the University of Tartu and the strategy preparation was started under the leadership of Tatjana Koor.
- In February, the customer behavior survey of the foreign tourists began in the area of two LAG: Development Centre and Green Riverland Partnership.
- In the first half of March, the opening seminar of the sustainable tourism development strategy of Lahemaa National Park was held in Tapa Cultural House. At the seminar, Nele Sõber (NGO Terra Maritima) gave an overview of sustainable tourism in protected areas and the importance of the EUROPARC certificate. Under the guidance of Tatyana Koor, the working groups gave an assessment of the current situation, the vision of the future was shaped, and the resources of the destination were evaluated. The fruitful work of the groups resulted in the initial input into the development strategy.
- In the second half of March, a development seminar "Development of Low Season Services" took place in Valgejõe Veinivilla, in Lahemaa, where participants from the project area of three project partners came together. At the seminar, entrepreneurs and organizations of sustainable tourism (a total of 8) from the three regions gave an overview of the development of low season services based on company / organization / region. Representative of the University of Tartu Pärnu College Tatjana Koor introduced participants to trends and factors influencing tourism and consequently opportunities to reduce seasonality. Sirje Kuusik gave an overview of the customer behavior survey of the target group of foreign tourists initiated in the areas of the Development Centre and Green Riverland Partnership. The seminar was completed with group work.
- At the end of March, an agreement was signed with public limited company Idea AD to integrate the project into seic.ee website.
- In April, the 2nd seminar on sustainable tourism development in Lahemaa National Park was held in the center of Lahemaa National Park in Palmse, during which the representatives of Pärnu College introduced the principles of sustainable tourism and gave an overview of the resources of the destination. The different target groups (public, private and third sector; local community, visitor) were analyzed and competitors identified. There was active group work and discussion.
- In the first half of May, the Environmental Board, in cooperation with Development Centre NGO, submitted an application for registration of the EUROPARC certificate.
- In the middle of May the 3rd seminar on sustainable tourism development in Lahemaa National Park was held at Kuivoja Holiday Center, where the future situation and trends of destination (based on SWOT and SOAR model), expectations, vision, development goals and restrictions were set within the framework of active group work and discussion.
- In the second half of May, Soomaa National Park and its sustainable tourism entrepreneurs and organizations were visited: Tipu Nature School, Klaara-Manni Holiday and Seminar Center, Matogard Ltd, Selja Village and Village Shop, Janno Lang Hunting and Furniture. During the study trip, a number of sustainable tourism opportunities were explored and an active discussion took place on various cooperation activities.

- At the beginning of June, the 4th seminar of sustainable tourism development strategy of Lahemaa National Park was held in Valkla Beach. An active group work and discussion took place at the seminar, where the vision, mission, development goals and goals of the Lahemaa National Park tourist area were discussed and the necessary actions, timetable and evaluation criteria were set.
- In the second half of August, Matsalu National Park and its sustainable tourism entrepreneurs and organizations were visited: Saueaugu Theater House, Tammejuure Organic Farm, Puise Nina Farm, Altmõisa Guesthouse, Lagleranna Hiking Trail, Matsalu Visitor Center, Karuse Station, Polli Farm Creative Center, Pivarootsi Windmill, and Surfhunt Wolf House.
- In September, the 5th seminar of sustainable tourism development strategy for the tourism area of Lahemaa National Park took place in Kuusiku Nature Farm. Presentation and improvement of the completed development strategy took place at the seminar, including the improvement of the action plan, clarification of the possibilities for further development of the strategy and introduction of a further process.
- In September and October, a Development Centre study trip to Mallorca to sustainable tourism objects took place as a non-project but related activity, in the context of the preparation and implementation of a sustainable tourism strategy for Lahemaa National Park.
- In October, an information day about the sustainable tourism development strategy of the Lahemaa National Park tourism area took place in Kolgaküla Folk House.
- At the beginning of November, a sustainable tourism strategy for the tourism area of Lahemaa National Park was completed, and on this basis the preparation of the EUROPARC certificate application was started.
- In November, three international project follow-up projects were launched.

Activities of Latvian partners in Latvia

- In May, a brochure "Ziemeļkurzeme. 4 takas daba" was issued. Link: <http://www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv/userfiles/files/287/Sliteres-CETRI-marsruti-i-nets.pdf>
- In June, a conference "Life in the National Park - Opportunities and Challenges" took place. Link: http://www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv/news/seminars-and-training/Ka_dzivojam_un_stradajam_dabas_aizsardzibas_nacionalo_parku_teritorijas
- In June, Slitere Travellers Days took place in Slitere National Park.

Activities of Slovenian partners in Slovenia

No any national project activities.

Activities of Portuguese partners in Portugal in LAG ATAHCA

- September to December 2018 - Elaboration and submission of the application of the transnational cooperation project "Implementation of sustainable tourism development principles in national park/protected area regions" to the Rural Development Program PDR 2020 of the National Authority in Portugal;
- November to December 2018 - Organization planning of the visit Study trip to Portugal to the LAG ATAHCA region for 2 days and EUROPARC seminar, 1 day, to be carried out in April 2019.

International activities

- In September 2017, the opening event and Summer University in Roosta Holiday Village took place in the LAG Kodukant Läänemaa area in Matsalu National Park. The opening event was structured around a number of presentations aimed at providing an overview of the project partners and their activities in nature education and tourism marketing in their national park/nature reserve areas. A total of 22 presentations were made from 9 activity areas. There was also an active discussion in working groups and visits to nature and cultural sites: Silma Nature Center and study trail, Haapsalu Castle, Lace Center and promenade. An important part of the international event was the Steering Group meeting, where the steering group team was defined and agreed on various project management points.
- In November 2017, the second Summer University in Slitere National Park was held in the North Kurzeme region, where a number of sustainable tourism destinations were visited: Dundaga Castle, Slitere National Park Hiking Trail, Kolka Cultural Center, entrepreneurs of Ance Village. There was active group work and interesting presentations. An important part of the international event was the Steering Group meeting.
- In May 2018, took place a study trip to the Triglav National Park in Soča Valley, Slovenia. During the visit, Triglav National Park hiking trails and other sustainable tourism objects were explored: Dom Trenta, Tranta Valley, Soča hiking trail, Pri Kuchu Soče Mountain, Valley Radnija, Ecofarm Plajer, Lake Bohinj, Bled, Triglavška Rose Bled, Hotel Kristal, Vogel Mountain Top, boat trip Ukanc, Ribčev Laz, TNP Bohinj center, guest house Pri Hrvatu, Tolmin, Čadrg village. Within the framework of the same study trip, discussions were held by the Development Centre about the Lahemaa strategy. An important part of the international event was the Steering Group meeting.
- In September 2018, the Development Centre held a study trip to the Cesis region of Gauja National Park in Latvia within the framework of Lahemaa strategy, where small businesses "Latnature", "Latvijas Ķiploks" were visited in Rauna region, Rauna Staburgi cliff, Priekuļi San Park, Fotest Brothers bunker, Ieriķe mill, Woodwork Museum, Vienkoči park and small business "Health Lab" in Gauja National Park. There was a debate on how to complement the strategy.
- In September 2018, the Summer University in the Gauja National Park in Cesis region in Latvia was held as a continuation of the previous activity. The Summer University introduced a number of sustainable tourism objects: Ratnieki Conference Center, Craftsmen Workshops, Apalkalns Campground, Raiskuma Benefit Center, Araisis Archaeological Museum, Guest House of Luck Līgzda, Līgatne Craft House and Craft Community, Vienkoči Park, Wood Craft Museum, Farm Food Market. There were also several presentations on sustainable tourism in the Gauja region, a Summer University seminar and an active discussion. An important part of the international event was the meeting of the Steering Group, during which the activities of 2019 and their schedule were set.

Completing the Estonian Partners Action Plan:

Activity Number	Activity Name	Implementation
Activities in Estonia:		
E1	Survey of customer behavior of foreign tourists	In progress
E2	Study trips in three regions	2 study trips have taken place, the third is in 2020
E3	Seminars for sustainable tourism development	2 study trips have taken

		place, the third is in 2020
E4	Drawing up a sustainable tourism strategy	The activity is mostly implemented
International activities:		
R1	Summer University in Estonia in LAG Kodukant Läänemaa region and cooperation networking seminar	Implemented
R2	Summer University in Latvia in the LAG Business Association of North Kurzeme areas	Implemented
R3	Study trip to Portugal to the LAG ATAHCA region for 2 days and EUROPARC seminar, 1 day	Implemented
R4	Summer University in Slovenia, LAG Between Sneznik and Nanos, 2 days	In preparation, will be held in May 2019
R5	Study trip to Latvia to LAG Cesis District Rural Partnership	Implemented
R6	Study trip to Madeira to LAG ADRAMA area	In preparation, will be held in September / October 2019
R7	Study trip to Slovenia to the LAG Soca Valley area	Implemented
R8	Study trip to Estonia to areas of the Development Centre and Green Riverland Partnership + 1 day networking and shared marketing seminar	In preparation, will be held in August 2019
R9	Shared from the region - to the region marketing	In progress, some of the activities are implemented
R10	Summer University and Final Event in Madeira, in LAG ADRAMA area	Planned for 2020

3.2. Project outputs

Output indicators for activities during the reporting period are:

- 5 international study trips and / or summer universities.
- 10 joint activities in Estonia.
- 7 seminar / info day / study trip for the sustainable tourism strategy of the Lahemaa National Park tourist area.
- A total of 526 people joined in all project events. An average of 30 people has attended an Estonian event and an average of 52 people at an international joint event.
- 1 EUROPARC registration application.
- 1 sustainable tourism strategy for the tourism region of Lahemaa National Park.
- 1 survey form for foreign visitors in 3 languages (Estonian, English and Russian).
- Seic.ee homepage integrated into the project.
- 1 work version of the follow-up project.
- The core group of the project is composed of 30 sustainable tourism entrepreneurs and a local action group from 7 areas of activity.

The number of participants in Estonian internal events is divided into the following activities:

Time	Activity	Number of participants		
		Development	Green	Kodukant

		Centre	Riverland Partnership	Läänemaa
12.03.2018	1st seminar of the sustainable tourism development strategy of Lahemaa National Park in Tapa Cultural House.	19		
TOGETHER		19		
21.03.2018	Development seminar "Development of Low Season Services" in Valgejõe Veinivilla.	26	6	2
TOGETHER		34		
09.04.2018	The 2nd seminar of the sustainable tourism development strategy of the Lahemaa National Park in the center of Lahemaa National Park.	30		
TOGETHER		30		
14.05.2018	The 3rd seminar of sustainable tourism development strategy of the Lahemaa National Park at Kuivoja Holiday Center.	24		
TOGETHER		24		
23.05-24.05.2018	Study trip to sustainable tourism businesses and organizations in Soomaa National Park.	14	7	4
TOGETHER		25		
04.06.2018	The 4th seminar of sustainable tourism development strategy of the Lahemaa National Park in Valkla Beach	30		
TOGETHER		30		
21.08-22.08.2018	Study trip to sustainable tourism businesses and organizations in Matsalu National Park.	29		
TOGETHER		29		
10.09.2018	The 5th seminar of sustainable tourism development strategy of the Lahemaa National Park at Kuusiku Nature Farm.	30		
TOGETHER		30		
17.10.2018	An information day about the sustainable tourism development strategy of the Lahemaa National Park in Kolgaküla Folk House.	38		
TOGETHER		38		
26.11.2018	Development seminar "Modern Tourism Marketing Tools" at the Port of Dirham.	17	6	14
TOGETHER		37		
TOTAL PARTICIPATION		296		

A total of 77 people participated in the seminars and study trips of the sustainable tourism strategy of the Lahemaa National Park tourist area.

- 31 entrepreneurs,
- 19 non-profit associations and foundations,
- 10 representatives of local governments,
- 9 representatives of public authorities,
- 4 people who are not representatives of the above organizations,
- 4 representatives of Pärnu College.

The number of participants in international events is divided into the following activities:

Time	Activity	Number of participants		
		Estonia	Latvia	Slovenia
25.09-27.09.2017	International Summer University “Nature education in sustainable tourism” in Matsalu National Park in the area of Kodukant Läänemaa (Estonia)	33	11	4
TOGETHER		48		
01.11-03.11.2017	International Summer University “Traveller days in National parks – important marketing tool for development of sustainable tourism in rural areas” in the area of North Kurzeme (Latvia)	26	29	2
TOGETHER		57		
07.05-11.05.2018	Study trip to Triglav National Park in Soča Valley (Slovenia)	28	13	5
TOGETHER		46		
13.09-14.09.2018	Study trip to Cesis (Latvia)	24		
TOGETHER		24		
14.09-16.09.2018	International Summer University in Cesis (Latvia)	37	15	3
TOGETHER		55		
08.04-12.04.2019	Study trip to the ATAHCA area (Portugal)	27	12	5 / Portugal 14
TOGETHER		58		
TOTAL PARTICIPATION		288		

3.3. Project Impacts / Participant Feedback

It is a pleasure to admit that good cooperation has now developed between all action groups - exchange of experience, cooperation and cooperation between companies / organizations, planning of new joint ventures (many follow-up activities are included in the strategy of sustainable tourism), creation of a new project as well as in the territory of the Environmental Agency and National Park cooperation among sustainable tourism entrepreneurs (still in need of development).

Lahemaa National Park is applying the EUROPARC certificate by the Environmental Board in cooperation with the Development Centre.

The EUROPARC values that Lahemaa receives thanks to the project are:

1. Nature conservation is a priority.
2. Supporting sustainable development.
3. Involvement of stakeholders.
4. Effective sustainable tourism planning.
5. Continuous improvement and development.

EUROPARC benefits for Lahemaa National Park:

- Well-managed sustainable tourism generates measurable benefits for the local economy, community and environment, with a more positive image of protected areas.
- Strongly reinforces collaboration and enhances relationships both within and across the community. In the tourism industry, raising the level of trust.
- Provides an opportunity to participate in a dynamic and comprehensive European network.

The benefits of EUROPARC for a business operating in the Lahemaa National Park:

- Explains the need for customers to value the environment and make the right decisions.
- Involves energy and water saving.
- Invites to produce and consume environmentally friendly products, incorporates into recovery and waste management, but also provides ideas for the development of new products.

The impact of the project can be assessed by feedback from participants from different project events. The following points can be pointed out from the feedback:

- Great value for such study trips is people and their activities.
- Certainly, these trips will make us compare how they have and what we have.
- Companies operating in the area affected by the National Parks have received ideas for joint marketing and joint service / product packages development.
- There are many good ideas on how to do better for the hiking trails.
- Ideas have been received also from a number of accommodation, catering and craft businesses.
- Local entrepreneurs and the community have been able to discuss cooperation with the Environmental Board and LAGs.
- Companies have become aware of the core values of sustainable tourism business.
- Many joint activities for the future have been established within the framework of Lahemaa strategy.
- Get ideas on how the local farm market works in an active partnership between businesses in the region and how this idea could be applied in its area of activity.
- Within the framework of study trips and Summer Universities, there has been a well-targeted collection of feedback from target groups on tourist attractions and guided tours. With this approach, every tourism entrepreneur can "look in the mirror" and complete its attractions if necessary.
- It has been confirmed that it is also possible to design rainy weather activities and to provide alternative programs.

- It was also learned that if the guide is sunny and cheerful person and visibly enthusiastic about what it introduces, it is easy to convince others. Gaining ideas for the future, receiving more of their sunny side to their customers.
- In addition to the opportunity to get to know the sights of the local area and local tourist businesses, the study trips attracted a multitude of work days to analyze and highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the various tourist services or locations from the perspective of completely different target groups. Got to share their thoughts in group work and listen to the much different expectations and desires of the same tourist spot or service. The whole set up of this task was perfectly planned and carried out. This created new thoughts in the participants, such as how different the expectations and wishes of the people may be and the differences between the target groups.
- Have learned that their target audience needs to be well-known and "step into their shoes". A foreign visitor would like to see - experience the local specialties of this region - be it food, life, traditions, local produce, which could be bought in memory if desired.
- Visiting sustainable tourism entrepreneurs broadened their horizons and provided an overview of different options.
- It was very interesting to see how entrepreneurs have developed through the EU Structural Funds support and thereby increased their sustainability.
- It turned out that the main concern of Estonian tourism developers is the seasonality of the field and the dark and cold weather of our climate. It inhibits the revenue of the tourism sector, but significantly increases the management costs. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on developing services offered in autumn and winter. In addition, the problem of high labor taxes, which does not allow the recruitment of the working-age population with a relatively high wage expectation, and in the long run this threatens the quality of service provided.
- Study trips as a whole are very impressive and inspiring.
- In order to develop their own business, it was encouraged that very simple solutions work well, mean that new services do not necessarily require very large investments.
- One of the most important factors for the development of the region as a whole is good cooperation between local businesses (people), and this is very well promoted by joint study trips.
- Study trips have a variety of places to visit, with companies of very different sizes and orientations. Also, companies are located in very different environments (next to the port by the sea, between junipers near the carriageway leading to the ferry, in the old railway station, next to the manor, etc.) and are in a different development phase.
- In the programs, there were also different actors opening up different aspects of sustainable tourism: from local food to active holidays, organizing events and cooperating with the community. For micro and family businesses, it is always useful to see and learn larger experiences.
- One goal was to have a better overview of the nature of the other major national parks. The study trips, that took place, gave this view and now everybody can look into what they need.

In detail, each event's feedback can be read from the event summaries.

3.4. Activities in the next period 2019-2020

Time	Activity
31.01.2019	Completion of the EUROPARC certificate application
04.02.2019	Submit an application for a EUROPARC certificate to the EUROPARC Federation by the Environment Board in collaboration with the Development Centre
08.04.-12.04.2019	International study trip to ATAHCA North Portugal
13.05.-17.05.2019	International study trip to Slovenia in the LAG Between Snežnik and Nanos area
14.08.-17.08.2019	International Summer University in Soomaa and Lahemaa National Parks
28.09.-05.10.2019	International study trip to Madeira for the area of activity of ADRAMA
06.-08.05.2019	The EUROPARC expert visits the Lahemaa region and evaluates the effectiveness of the strategy
December 2019	If everything goes well, the Development Centre and the Environmental Board will adopt the EUROPARC certificate in Brussels
2019	Creating co-marketing materials (the idea of what is being considered is creating a calendar)
2019-2020	Seic.ee continues to be managed by the Sustainable Tourism Project Steering Group
2020	Co-marketing material will be ready
May-June 2020	Development seminar "Story Telling" in Soomaa in Estonia
May-June 2020	Estonian study trip to Lahemaa National Park
2020	Summer University and Final Event in Madeira, ADRAMA
2019-2020	Further development and keeping of Seic.ee
2020	Completion and introduction of the study of foreign tourists