

CITIZEN'S SUMMARY



Interreg
Estonia-Latvia
European Regional Development Fund



EUROPEAN UNION

The Cooperation Programme Interreg VA – EE-LV – Estonia – Latvia is the continuation of the Estonia – Latvia Programme 2007-2013. The programme area covers South and West Estonia and Kurzeme, Vidzeme and Riga Planning regions as well as Pierīga in Latvia. It supports activities within five priorities, which were agreed by the participating countries and approved by the European Commission:

- 1) **Active and attractive business environment**
- 2) **Clean and valued living environment**
- 3) **Better network of harbours**
- 4) **Integrated labour market**
- 5) **Technical Assistance**

Each priority has 1-3 specific objectives (SO), which are more elaborated below in the text. The content and objectives of the priority axes are in more detail described in the Cooperation Programme, which was adopted by the European Commission on 4 December 2015, in the Programme Manual and a short overview is given in the Citizens Summary 2015. For the beneficiaries and applicants, the Programme Manual together with its annexes is the main tool explaining all the programme's rules and requirements. All documents are available on the web page www.estlat.eu.

The total budget of the programme is 45,654,342.00 EUR of which the ERDF contribution is 38,020,684.00 EUR.

The main decision-making body of the programme is Monitoring Committee (MC), which consists of the representatives of different institutions on national and regional level in Estonia and Latvia. In Estonia, the Ministry responsible for the programme is the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Estonia and in Latvia the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia. Each MC member also brings along expertise relevant for the areas the programme finances.

The implementing bodies of the programme - Managing Authority (MA), Joint Secretariat (JS), which is the main contact point for applicants and beneficiaries, as well as Audit Authority are located in Estonia. The financial control bodies, whose task is to check the eligibility of expenditure against submitted reports, are built up separately in Estonia and Latvia.

In 2016, the main focus of the programme was carrying out the first call for proposals. In submitting the applications, for this first call, two-phase approach was applied. At first the applicants had to submit the project idea, which was a rather short form only with core information on the project content, partners and budget. The project ideas were assessed by the JS and MC and based on the assessment, the applicants were recommended to submit or not to submit a full application. The recommendation, however was not binding so the applicants who received negative feedback could also submit a full application. This procedure was applied to ensure better quality of the projects and to save the applicants from the workload of preparing the full application form as the practice of the previous programme showed that about 1/3 of all submitted applications were approved by the MC.

As a result of the 1st step of the call, **123 project ideas** were submitted by deadline, which was 22 April 2016. Following the technical eligibility check, 108 project ideas passed on to quality assessment. The most popular was the 1st priority "Active and attractive business environment" with 69 ideas. It was followed by the 2nd priority "Clean and valued living environment" with 37 ideas. However, for the priority 4, "Integrated labour market" only 2 ideas were submitted. Following the assessment and selection by the MC, **35 project ideas** were recommended to continue with the submission of the full application but ultimately **43 full applications** were received by the submission deadline, which was 7 October 2016. After technical eligibility check, **38** of them reached the quality assessment phase.

The programme can be proud as many interesting and innovative project applications were received as a result of the first call. Below, the activities the projects aim to carry out in different areas are briefly introduced.

Under **Priority 1 Active and attractive business environment SO 1.1 Increased entrepreneurial cross-border cooperation in the programme area**, aims at supporting business environment, starting new businesses to develop ideas that support cooperation across the border. The project applications received within this SO represented a wide range of activities from traditional ones like farming, food production, handicraft, wood and furniture industry to life sciences, biotechnology and even space technology

as well as creating more wide-based cooperation platforms for entrepreneurs for future business development. For this SO 21 project ideas were received and 10 ideas were recommended to submit a full application. Eventually 11 project applications were received.

SO 1.2 More jointly developed products and services in the programme area is targeted primarily at supporting existing businesses in joint product and service development as well as joint marketing activities. Here the received project applications disclose that the partners would like to develop variety of new products and services. The objective of some projects is creation of new

IT services Two submitted projects target their activities towards children: production of organic candies was the objective of one project and audio-learning books of another. Similar to the previous programme, the partners would like to continue cooperation in the health and medicine sector, which should result in two new products: next generation hand-held spectrometer and PET-precursor used in positron emission tomography for cancer, Alzheimer or Parkinson diagnostics. 48 project ideas were submitted within this SO, the applicants of 12 ideas were recommended to elaborate their ideas into full application. Ultimately 19 project applications were submitted.



Priority 2 Clean and valued living environment includes three SOs and aims at promoting values and supporting wise use of natural resources and tangible and intangible cultural heritage by developing their potential for tourism and recreational activities.

The goal of the projects submitted and supported under SO 2.1, More diversified and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage, should be promotion of values and wise use of natural resources and tangible and intangible cultural heritage by developing their potential for tourism and recreational activities.

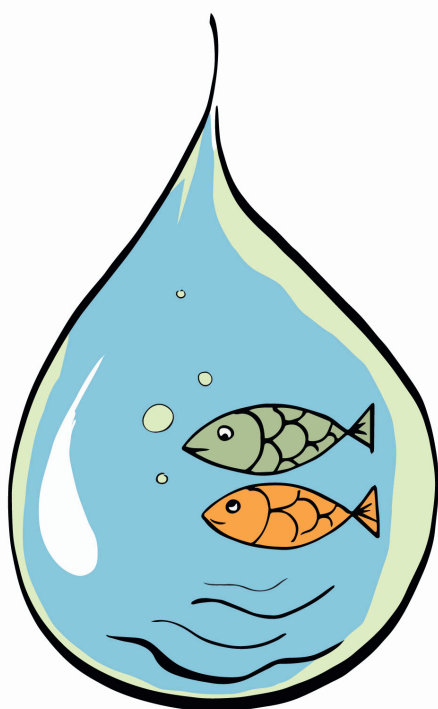
While reading the submitted project applications it is evident that there is still a lot of potential in developing or preserving natural and cultural heritage sites and turning them into sustainable public attractions. Creation of new and attractive tourism routes some of them with a specific touch like joint industrial heritage route with thematic sub-routes like mills and hydro-electric power stations, old manufacturing sites, railway heritage and lighthouses was the objective of a couple of projects. If lucky, all local people and visitors can enjoy a traditional Livonian food in the future as the tourism and development organisations from Estonia and Latvia would like to create a special Livonian culinary route. If materialised, it would be definitely worth of visiting and getting to know Livonian traditional tastes. For this SO 22 project ideas were received, the applicants of 5 project ideas got the recommendation to compile a full project application, and also

5 full project applications were submitted. The somewhat low rate of recommended project ideas compared to the submitted ones can be explained by the fact that still many ideas were not well considered and not sustainable also in some cases the activities were of ad-hoc nature.

Environmental awareness and water management has always been an important area for the programme and responsible behaviour in this field is further ensured with the help of the projects to be supported under **SO 2.2 Increased awareness of energy saving, sorting waste and re-use, and the more efficient management of common water resources.** Increasing awareness and promoting best practices for energy efficiency as well as methods of waste reduction in public events were the main topics of submitted projects in the energy saving area. In the field of water management the goal of the projects is mainly to improve water purity and environmental security in the coastal and marine area of the Gulf of Riga. 14 project ideas were submitted under this SO and the applicants of 6 project ideas were asked to develop a full application from their idea, which they did and submitted for assessment.

The goal of the **SO 2.3 More integrated Valga-Valka central urban area** is the revitalisation and renovation of the joint urban area of the Valga-Valka twin town. As the result of the project, the joint area should have a new look and become a place with many facilities for business and entertainment activities where the people would like to come, either to work or spend their free time. It is also expected that the project will further boost the cooperation between the two towns and why not between the two countries. One project idea was received here, and it was decided to ask the applicants to develop a full application, which was also submitted.

Under **Priority 3, “Better Network of harbours”** there is one SO – **“An improved network of small harbours with good levels of service”** According to the Cooperation Programme, in the framework of this Priority and SO, one pre-defined project will be implemented. Hopefully by the end of the project we have a nice network of harbours with similar services along the coast of Pärnu Bay and Gulf of Riga, which is attractive to the tourists and local people.



Priority 4 Integrated labour market has also one SO

- 4.1 “Improved conditions for accessing jobs across the border” The objective is to promote employment possibilities, accelerate the completion of vacancies and improve the availability of information for the job seekers and employers across the border.

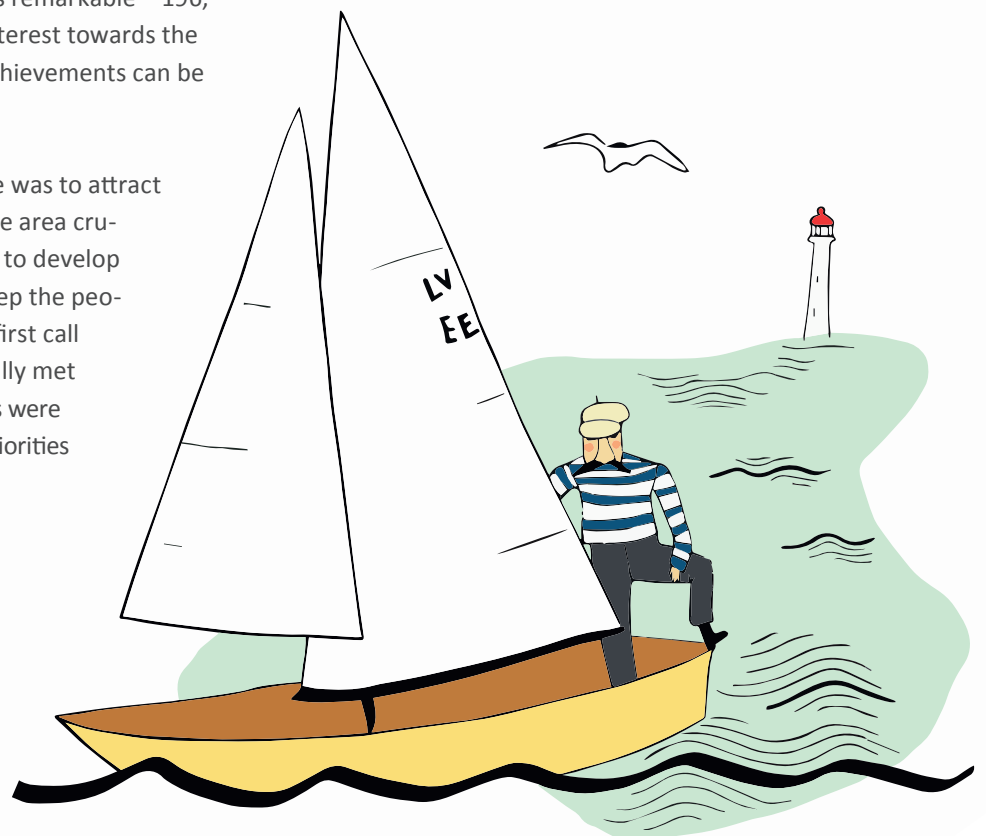
Development of cross-border employment opportunities has appeared to be quite a tough topic where the cooperation is not that easy. That is much because of different legislation and requirements in two countries. It may be the reason why only two project ideas were received and the applicants of one idea got a recommendation to submit a full application, which was also done. With the help of this project labour mobility and employability in cross-border area should be improved by carrying out research about business environment, promotional activities of cross-border labour market and other relevant activities.

In conclusion it may be said that the preparation period and the first call for proposals were both successful. The applicants were waiting for the programme to be launched and actively participated in the seminars where the programme was introduced. Also, the number of consultations provided by the JS was remarkable – 196, which is another indicator of high interest towards the programme. Hopefully some nice achievements can be reported already next year.

One of challenges of the programme was to attract private companies as the programme area crucially needs entrepreneurship boost to develop the business environment and to keep the people in the region. The results of the first call show that the programme successfully met this challenge as 149 private partners were involved in 108 project ideas under priorities 1 and 2.

On the programme level, the biggest innovation was the introduction of the electronic monitoring system (eMS), which is the programme’s electronic data exchange system. On one hand, e-cohesion is a requirement set by the EC for the period 2014-2020, on the other hand, electronic information exchange should make the communication easier and faster and is, as well known, much more environment friendly. Today we can happily say that the eMS worked out well and currently all official communication between the Lead partners and programme bodies is carried out via eMS.

As of June 2017, where the financed projects are known and listed on the programme website there is a justified hope that all projects with their determined partners will be successfully implemented and after some years we can enjoy nice results, which will make the programme area an even better place than it currently is. Surely all programme bodies are ready to give their contribution to it as well in supporting and advising the beneficiaries.





Interreg VA – EE-LV - Estonia-Latvia
Cooperation programme under European territorial cooperation goal
Annex to the Annual Implementation Report 2016

June 2017