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REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE RIGA PLANNING REGION



RIGA
PLANNING
REGION



**Local
Flavours**
Interreg Europe

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PART I – GENERAL INFORMATION

Project: Authentic tourism based on local cultural flavours (***Local Flavours***)

Partner organisation(s) concerned:

- Institute of Advanced Studies – lead partner (***Hungary***)
- Harghita County Council (***Rumania***)
- Institute for Tourism (***Croatia***)
- Municipality of Vittorio Veneto (***Italy***)
- Department of cultural heritage, University of Bologna (***Italy***)
- Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch (***Netherlands***)
- Waterford City and County Council (***Ireland***)
- Riga Planning region (***Latvia***)
- Savonlinna Development Services Ltd. (***Finland***)

Country: Latvia

NUTS3 level

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Part II – Policy Context

The Action Plan aims to impact: € Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed:

The Riga Planning Region Development Programme for 2014-2020

Introduction of the Policy Instrument

The Riga Planning Region Development Programme for 2014-2020 is a regional mid-term spatial development planning document, which sets out priorities for the regional development, the objectives to be achieved and the set of measures to implement the strategic goals set out in the Riga Planning region Sustainable Development Strategy for 2014-2030.

Elaboration of the Development Programme under management of the Riga Planning region (RPR) administration was launched in 2012, involving planning specialists, experts from different areas, local government specialists, scientific institutions, public administration and non-governmental sector representatives from the local authorities belonging to RPR in the development process. There is ongoing elaboration process of RPR Development Programme for 2021-2027. It is planned that new planning document will be developed and approved by RPR Development Council in the end of May 2022.

Regional Action Plan developed in Local Flavours project is significant for policy change in RPR Development program for 2014-2020 to include new approach and activities in RPR Development program 2021-2027 that helps to create successful regional tourism base in Riga Planning region.

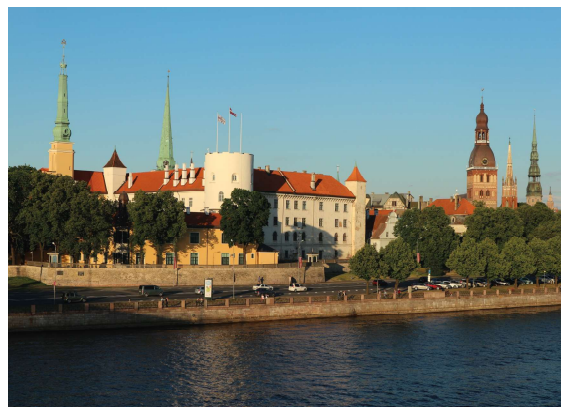


Photo: Panorama of Old Riga (S.Skudra)

The situation analysis elaborated before Action plan development by means of the KRAFT method has contributed significantly to the RPR vision of the necessary improvements to the policy instrument - RPR Development Programme.

Following the report, looking at the overall RPR characteristics, the RPR overall situation in the development of tourism sector is clearly readable, where, on the basis of overall statistics, natural, cultural heritage and landscape values are having significant role and preconditions for the development of tourism historically and also at present, but all its potentials are not used completely.

However, the KRAFT method has helped to discover, better to see and to assess majority of other potential, different specialization lines and the range of issues relevant to successful development of the tourism products.

On the basis of the views and information provided by local authorities, an ethnographic study of RPR's 48 tourism organizations (identity, ecosystem, characterization, etc.) was carried out by organizing interviews of the representatives. In the preparation of interview questions and in a targeted analysis of the situation, the KRAFT method was particularly useful, as well as the parameters, indicators it include in order to assess the qualities that are available to us at the moment to which development parameters we should be guided.

Now, as part of the regional situation study, we have identified, on a more purposeful basis, the potential for tourism development in one of the region's less understood areas, Pierīga (around Rīga), where cooperation links have not been sufficiently developed, and there has been insufficient understanding of the necessary lines of cooperation, while currently a number of actions and activities to be incorporated in the content of the policy instrument. So in this case there is a need for policy change in that region constantly is building and coordinating network of tourism product holders from public (state, municipal) and private sector and NGO's. So far policy was focussed to support field of tourism with investments in products and its infrastructure not so much for building regional tourism network and its development issues.

Since most of the municipalities still growing in terms of population in Pierīga area are still in search of their identity, the values of the potentials familiarized closer in the Status Quo study may constitute a good basis for further identification and strengthening of the identity of these municipalities.

More than 80% of respondents acknowledged that the digital environment plays a major role in attracting customers, while only 7% use efficient digital marketing tools.

Creating the environment and tools for networking tourism products, with other tourism products, local government authorities and tourism products under the responsibility of the State and local government authorities, as well as with representatives of other communities, thereby providing additional added value, expertise and visibility. Providing educational programmes for tourism, digital and other necessary skills and other competences to organizations already active in the tourism sector or having the potential to focus on the tourism business.

Important policy change that should facilitate regional tourism development in Riga planning region relates with such activities, as supporting sale and marketing activities for tourism products, particularly in cooperation with MICE and incoming tourism agencies; Promoting marketing and sales activities of Pierīga tourism products in Rīga; Promoting cooperation between tourism products and educational establishments, thereby ensuring the development of innovative and skilled products and attracting students from educational establishments as clients.

Part II – Policy Context

How implementation of actions contribute to policy change?

As mentioned before, the Riga Planning Region Development Programme for 2014-2020 sets out priorities for the regional development, the objectives to be achieved and the set of measures. There is no real instruments that could help to achieve objectives and measures set for Riga Planning region (RPR). There is ongoing elaboration process of Riga Planning region development program 2022-2027 were planned actions will be integrated and measures set to insure improved governance.

All achievements depended on success of Riga planning region coordination work, as well as municipalities and entrepreneurs, on their capacity and desire to follow that policy, recommendations and proposed activities.

Three actions defined in RPR Action plan directly contribute to policy change! Riga Planning region had not played attention enough to plan and implement this kind of actions, so implementation of these actions will improve governance and field of tourism will show better qualitative and quantitative data.

Action 1:

Research and mapping of regional tourism ecosystem (database and network map)

Thanks to the lessons learnt in Local Flavours project region is aware of the need to map and coordinate regional tourism ecosystem in RPR. According to that need region will improve and change management of the policy instrument like Type 2: change in the management of the policy instrument (improved governance), that will insure that by implementation of Action 1 the base for development of regional tourism will be provided and objectives and measures set in policy will be achieved.

Action 2:

Broadening of mental maps, to improve connectivity. Promotion of alternative and more sustainable accessibility of Pierīga RPR tourism objects with railway, bus and bicycle infrastructure.

There will be enhanced motivation to improve connectivity and tourism products that was not considered as a part of touristic roots. Policy change will be promoted by this action because of improved governance which will lead to higher numbers of visitors in regions tourism destinations, as well as, our products will be better recognized in regions, neighboring regions and countries. Because of broadened mental maps improvement needs of connectivity and tourism products will be set in applications for ERDF grant aiming at RPR municipalities and companies. As well as, action 2 in a simple way follows the course of European Green Deal. According to that this action is like Type 1 (new project).

Action 3:

Development of digital guide and mentoring model

Thanks to the Status Quo analyses and lessons learnt in Local Flavours project region has clear indications about the need for advanced digital skills in small and medium-sized enterprises. Similar as in case of Action 1, also in case of Action 3 region will improve and change management of the policy instrument like Type 2: change in the management of the policy instrument (improved governance), to develop digital guide and coordinate mentoring model in Riga Planning region.

Region must improve and change management of the policy instrument like Type 2: change in the management of the policy instrument (improved governance), that will insure the base for development of regional tourism, to achieve objectives and measures set in policy.



Photo: Mrs. Wolf

PART III – THE PROJECT’S BACKGROUND

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Major tourism attractions are emerging as internationally acclaimed hubs of visits and services, leading to oversight of other cultural sites and to non-sustainability of most-visited destinations. At the same time tourists are upgrading authentic cultural heritage, offering specific experience rooted in local history and the preserved cultural legacy of communities, adding unique flavours and excitement to their adventure.

Small and medium sized towns with rich but undervalued cultural heritage possess the potential to offer new, unique and authentic experiences, but suffer from either the dominance of major attractions in their vicinity, or from their relatively remote locations. Positioning them as authentic destinations can simultaneously sustain local cultural heritage and create better prospects for locals. The attraction of tourists to less recognized places can create a more even distribution of tourism and more cohesive regional economies.

Local Flavours’ objective is to improve policies supporting places unable to fully exploit their cultural legacies due to less-advantaged locations.

The project will help partners to meet the challenge of identifying the most effective ways to support unique local sites with an innovative analysis toolkit, extensive knowledge sharing and with assisted interaction with local public and private stakeholders.

This way the specific local and regional potentials and bottlenecks can be properly explored and used to elaborate the right policy frameworks elevating and positioning new authentic destinations.

As a result of the cooperation of the international partnership, 8 Action Plans will be produced as main outcomes, targeting various policy instruments (ERDF Operational Programmes, development and marketing strategies) supporting the addressed locations in their pursuit to become more integrated and integral players in regional tourism, based on their recognized and properly used authentic cultural assets.

PART III – THE PROJECT'S BACKGROUND

PROJECT PARTNER: RIGA PLANNING REGION

The RPR is the capital region of Latvia. Location in the center of the Baltic States, on the border between European and eastern cultures, has formed the region of Riga as a bridge between different countries and their inhabitants. The region is characterized by the dynamic capital Riga, in which the impacts of various peoples have become organically incorporated.

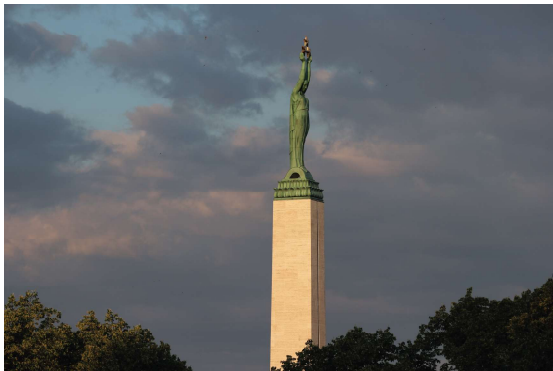


Photo: The Freedom Monument of Latvia (S.Skudra)

RPR, within the framework of competence of the authority, the development planning, coordination of the capital region, cooperation between local authorities and other government authorities in the region, represents one of five planning regions in Latvia, which indirectly while significantly affects development of the tourism sector. Being responsible for regional development planning, monitoring development planning in regional local authorities and organizing cooperation among stakeholders, the RPR is largely responsible for creating favourable conditions for the development of major sectors, including the tourism sector.



Photo: The Great Kemeru Bog Boardwalk

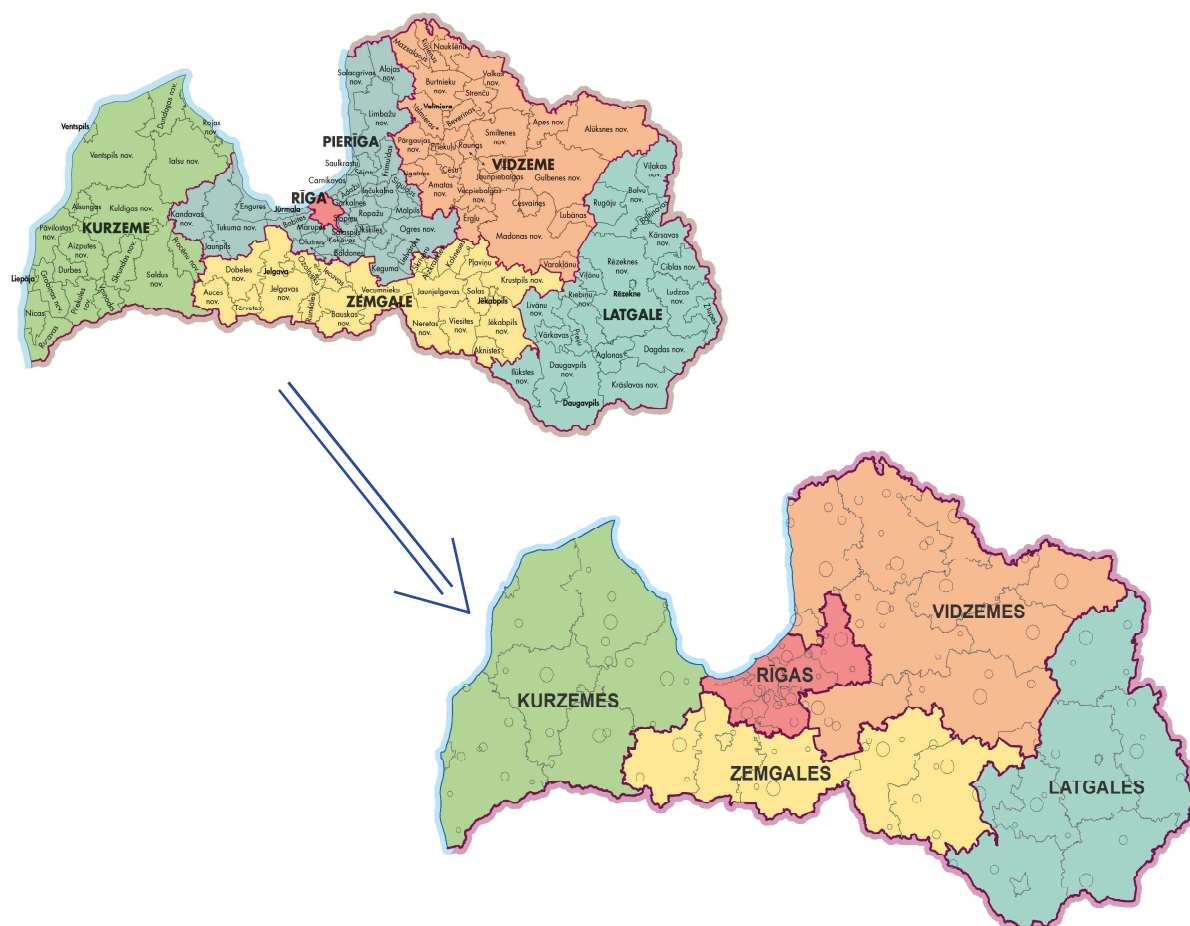
Riga Region is distinguished with a very rich diversity of residential areas – Riga's diverse urban environment, which includes a large proportion of multi-storey residential housing, the villages of Pierīga's new residential houses and rural farm-steads, large-season housing areas – allotment garden villages, Jūrmala and other places with a bright additional recreational function. Such a multiform spectrum, size and range of living spaces have not been dated in other regions of Latvia.



Photo: City Jurmala wooden building (S.Skudra)

PART III – THE PROJECT'S BACKGROUND

TERITORIAL CHANGES IN RPR during project implementation



Scheme: Actual changes in the territories of Planning Regions (right) since 1st July 2021 (created by the authors)

There are 43 local municipalities in Latvia after administrative territorial reform instead of the previously. This is approved by the Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas, which entered into force on 23 June 2020. In July 2021 the new municipality councils started their work.

A parallel discussion was also taking place on changes in the territories of the Planning Regions and a review of the functions assigned. There are 9 new local municipalities in RPR – capital region instead of 30 and territory is reduced from 10 438 km² to 3335,13 km², but total population in region still is close to 1 million inhabitants instead of previously a bit more than 1 million.



Scheme: Territorial coverage of the Riga metropolitan area, functional urban are (created by the authors)

SUMMARY MATRIX OF THE ACTIONS

#	NAME OF ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME		Coordinator	STAKEHOLDERS	COSTS	RESULT INDICATOR(S)
		Start date	End date				
	Research and mapping of regional tourism ecosystem (database and network map)	01.2021.	12.2027.	RPR			
1.1.	Compilation and evaluation of organizations belonging to the RPR tourism ecosystem(including NGOs, state, municipal,scientific and educational institutions, etc.)	01.2021.	12.2022.	RPR	Regional tourism policy makers, The Riga Investment and Tourism Agency, Tourism information centres, Pieriga tourism association, local initiative groups and communities	Covered by annual budget of RPR – staff costs for the expert and coordinator in field of tourism 22 000 EUR per year in total, 11 000 EUR for 1.1. and 1.2. activity	Approved database development plan and strategic application. Database structure and detailing developed. Collected ideas for cooperation of tourism objects and products (clusters,common products, routes)
		01.2023.	12.2027.	RPR			Adaptation, integration and synchronization of the database through the regional and international partners tourism product sales, advertising and mobility tools and channels.

1.2.	Mapping of collected information	08.2021.	12.2022.	RPR			Agreement with cooperation partners. Map content is defined, prepared, collected and included in the map.
		01.2021.	12.2027.	RPR			Synchronization of map content with international tourism navigation and mobility applications. Twice a year, new tourism products and routes are tested. An RPR Sustainability Award has been established, the criteria for which are based on KRAFT.
2.	Broadening of mental maps, to improve connectivity. Promotion of alternative and more sustainable accessibility of RPR tourism objects with railway, bus and bicycle infrastructure.	01.2021.	12.2022.	RPR		Covered by annual budget of RPR – staff costs for the expert and coordinat	
2.1.	To develop a model for sustainable tourism mobility. Linking the RPR tourism objects and products with the train, bus, bike routes, rental and co-sharing services.	09.2021.	12.2022.	RPR	Regional tourism policy makers, The Riga Investment and Tourism Agency, Tourism information centres, Regional business associations, Pieriga tourism association, major tourism objects and destinations (for example: Babīte rhododendron garden, Olaine museum, Turaida, Carnikava lamprey festival, etc.) and public transport operators.	or in field of tourism 22 000 EUR per year, 4 000 EUR for 2.1. activity	Concept of Green mobility. Designed Green mobility map. Agreement with public transport organizers. Guidebook for tourism based on sustainable mobility. Gathered information required for the development of marketing and public relations materials (infographics).

2.2.	Development of Pierīga tourism information booth in Riga.	05.2020.	12.2022.	RPR	The Riga Investment and Tourism Agency, Regional tourism policy makers, Tourism information centres, Regional business associations, Pieriga tourism association, major tourism objects and destinations.	Covered by annual budget of RPR – staff costs for the expert and coordinator in field of tourism 22 000 EUR per year, 4 000 EUR for 2.2. activity Project partners' contributions	Approved Pieriga tourism booth development, financing and partnership model.
		01.2023.	12.2027.	RPR			Booth (including online) is successful in serving both local and foreign residents.
3.	Development of digital guide and mentoring model.	03.2020.	12.2022.	RPR	Tourism entrepreneurs, regional tourism policy makers, The Riga Investment and Tourism Agency, Tourism information centers, regional business support institutions, Pieriga tourism association, local initiative groups and communities, Pieriga digital marketing agencies and their specialists.	Covered by annual budget of RPR – staff costs for the expert and coordinator in field of tourism 22 000 EUR per year, 3 000 EUR for 3. Activity; Need to attract State or EU funding 70 000 EUR to develop digital guide and finance masterclasses and mentoring work	Evaluation of digital skills and development potential of organizations involved in the field of tourism in Pieriga. Create a model for acquiring and improving digital literacy for Pierīga tourism organisations and mentors. List of potential mentors.
		03.2020.	03.2022.	RPR			200 organizations trained. A sustainable mentor network.



Photo: Shutterstock



Photo: Sigulda aizrauj

PART IV – DETAIL OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED

ACTION 1

Research and mapping of regional tourism ecosystem (database and network map)

1. Relevance to the project

The current tourism offer in Region is diverse, but unevenly distributed, poorly cooperating and losing popularity to other regions of Latvia. The support of Riga Planning region (RPR) municipalities for the tourism industry and infrastructure also differs significantly. Taking into account the historical experiences and events of the place, the rapid migration experienced in recent years and other factors, tourist attractions are often weakly connected to the local community and local identity. **The aim of the first activity is to identify and summarize the participants of the RPR tourism environment, as well as to evaluate the possibilities and potential for their improvement.**

We drew inspiration for this set of actions from the good practice submitted by Waterford City and County Council: “Opportunity Study Approach - Communities of Place”. We learned more about good practice through presentations and the documentation describing the good practice. At the conference “Creative Cities and Sustainable Regions” organized by the IASK in Koszeg, we had an opportunity to meet and discuss the conditions, challenges and the goals to be achieved in person. We are implementing in our action plan the mapping of the values of local communities and places, revealing the tourism potential of these places and communities.

2. Nature of the action

The activity includes:

- 1. Development of a database of organizations belonging to the tourism sector.**
- 2. Involving stakeholders evaluation of the local tourism potential, based on the sustainable use of nature, culture and historical heritage.**
- 3. Create a map of existing and potential communities in the Riga planning region, that share common values and development plans.**

3. Players / stakeholders involved

Regional tourism policy makers, The Riga Investment and Tourism Agency, Tourism information centers, Pierīga partnership, partnership Zied Zeme, Stopiņu-Salaspils partnership, Gauja partnership, Ropaži-Garkalne partnership, Pierīga tourism association, local initiative groups and communities.

4. Timeframe

Implementing activity January 2020 – December 2022

Improving and continuing activity taking into account achievements in 2022 January 2023 – December 2027

5. Costs - 11 000 EUR

6. Indicative funding sources

Covered by annual budget of RPR – staff costs for the expert and coordinator in field of tourism 22 000 EUR per year in total, 11 000 EUR for 1.1. and 1.2. activity

PART IV – DETAIL OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED

ACTION 2

Broadening of mental maps, to improve connectivity. Promotion of alternative and more sustainable accessibility of Pieriga RPR tourism objects with railway, bus and bicycle infrastructure.

1. Relevance to the project

Several studies indicate that there is a lack of information on the availability of tourism services in Riga Planning region. Riga City neighbouring area - Pieriga, with a few exceptions, is not traditionally considered as popular tourist destination. **Travelers most often uses privat transport for travel.** Currently, only Sigulda and Jūrmala can be considered as popular tourist destinations, which are reached by public transport.

The aim of the action is to change the mental maps of society by offering sustainable mobility solutions, creating a network of tourist destinations and to involve the tourist destinations in marketing activities. **We found inspiration for this activity in the Museum card project (Finland) through knowledge Exchange Template for Good Practices.** This good practice demonstrates the method of attracting customers over large areas by bringing together in the network one type of tourism attractions – museums, associated in one product (Museum cards) with unified marketing strategy.

2. Nature of the action

Develop, in collaboration with train and bus operators and infrastructure managers, intuitive and easy-to-use visual information materials on tourism services in the vicinity of transport networks. A similar goal is to inform the public about the availability of available and planned cycling infrastructure and the tourist attractions and services in immediate vicinity. **One of the most important sub-goals of the project is to develop model of information booth, which would provide information and about tourism products and attractions around Riga (digital form as well).**

3. Players / stakeholders involved

Regional tourism policy makers, The Riga Investment and Tourism Agency, Tourism information centers, Business associations, Pieriga tourism association, major tourism objects and destinations (for example: Babīte rhododendron garden, Olaine museum, Turaida, Carnikava lamprey festival, etc.) and public transport operators.

4. Timeframe

Implementing activity: January 2020 – December 2022

Improving and continuing activity taking into account achievements in 2022: January 2023 – December 2027

5. Costs - 8 000 EUR

6. Indicative funding sources

Covered by annual budget of RPR – staff costs for the expert and coordinator in field of tourism 22 000 EUR per year, 4 000 EUR for 2.1. activity and 4 000 EUR for 2.2. activity.

PART IV – DETAIL OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED

ACTION 3

Development of digital guide and mentoring model.

1. Relevance to the project

80% of the surveyed tourism entrepreneurs admitted that they are not satisfied with the quality of presence of their products in the digital environment and admitted that digital marketing and other digital tools have significant potential for attracting customers and optimizing processes. About 50% of them admitted that they did not see the time, money and knowledge resources that could improve their digital skills and representation in the digital environment in the near future.

The inspiration came from Savolina's good practice "Digital steps - Growth to the business" presentations and good practice documentation. At the conference of "Creative cities and sustainable regions" organized by the IASK in Koszeg, we had the opportunity to meet with representatives of Savolina and learn more about the project. **The next step was a remote meeting with the parties involved in the project on 12 October, during which extensive information was provided on the progress of the project, the challenges and future plans. During the meeting, it was agreed with the Finnish partners that RPR could adapt the digital manual in Latvian.**

2. Nature of the action

The aim of this activity is to monitor the digital representation, knowledge and skills of tourism organisations in the Riga planning region, identifying gaps and potential. Based on the obtained results and guidelines for the development of tourism, we want to develop a guide to the acquisition of digital literacy, to improve digital skills, as well as to provide improvement of digital skills for regional business mentors available for tourism organizations.

3. Players / stakeholders involved

Tourism entrepreneurs, regional tourism policy makers, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences The Riga Investment and Tourism Agency, Tourism information centers, regional business support institutions, Pierīga partnership, partnership Zied Zeme, Stopiņu-Salaspils partnership, Gauja partnership, Ropaži-Garkalne partnership, Pierīga tourism association, local initiative groups and communities, Pierīga digital marketing agencies and their specialists.

4. Timeframe

Implementing activity January 2020 – December 2022

Improving and continuing activity taking into account achievements in 2022 January 2023 – December 2027

5. Costs - RPR 3 000 EUR and Attracted funds 70 000 EUR

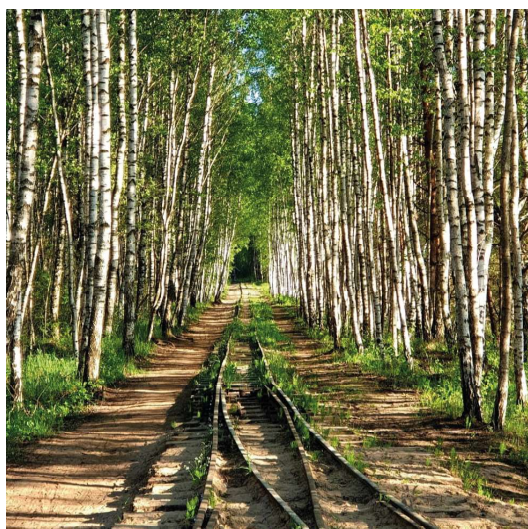
6. Indicative funding sources

Covered by annual budget of RPR – staff costs for the expert and coordinator in field of tourism 22 000 EUR per year, 3 000 EUR for 3. activity; Need to attract State or EU funding 70 000 EUR to develop digital guide and finance masterclasses and mentoring work.

7. RESULT INDICATORS

Name of the indicator	Action 1	Action 2	Action 3
A complete, easy-to-use database suitable for efficient supplementation of information	X	X	X
Map characterizing the regional tourism ecosystem	X	X	X
Guidebook for tourism based on sustainable mobility		X	
Information required for the development of marketing and public relations materials (infographics)		X	
Pieriga tourism booth development, financing and partnership model		X	
Characteristics and map of regional digital literacy			X
Digital guide and mentoring model			X

Photo: Society "Friend's Club of Bānītis"



8. RISK ASSESSMENT

#	Risk classification	Risk description	Impact Severity (1-5)	Risk Probability (1-5)	Risk Score (Impact x Probability)	Contingency Plan	Responsible
1.	External Risk	Changes in the tourist behaviour	2	3	6	To promote the adaptation of tourism service providers to the local market and diversification of the services provided.	Responsible for performing the RPR tourism function.
2.	Project Execution Risk	Interruption in funding	4	2	8	Development and implementation of a diversification plan for potential funding sources.	Responsible for performing the RPR tourism function.
3.	Project Execution Risk	Low prioritization of planned activities by RPR	3	2	6	Involve the departments of education, entrepreneurship and mobility in the implementation of the action plan, indicating common goals and gains.	Responsible for performing the RPR tourism function.
4.	Stakeholder Risk	Low involvement of stakeholders	2	2	4	Foster relationships with stakeholders. Involve stakeholders in the initial planning and implementation of development activities.	Responsible for performing the RPR tourism function.
5.	Regulatory Risk	Non-inclusion of the sustainable use of cultural heritage in tourism objectives in strategic documents	2	2	4	Active communication with the Latvian investment and development agency, advisory board and other stakeholders on the need for such activities.	Responsible for performing the RPR tourism function.

9. IMPACT

#	Name of the Actions	Policy instrument	Self-defined performance (result) indicator	Impact (on society and/or policy)
1.	Research and mapping of regional tourism ecosystem (database and network map)	The Riga Planning Region Development Programme for 2014-2020	1. Map and database of RPR tourism environment (incl. communities, values, organizations, attractions, etc)	Discovering the potential of good practice and community cooperation. Revealed values and development potential
2.	Broadening of mental maps, to improve connectivity. Promotion of alternative and more sustainable accessibility of RPR tourism objects with railway, bus and bicycle infrastructure		1. Green mobility map and app 2. Green mobility champions award 3. Digital and physical RPR tourism booth	Ecological sustainability. Alternative mobility
3.	Development of digital guide and mentoring model		1. Mentoring model 2. 200 trained organizations 3. Network of digital mentors	Digital literacy, sustainable knowledge transfer



Date: _____

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available):
