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STUDY VISIT

Effective use of EU funding for sustainable development of cultural heritage

Mrs Inita KABANOVA

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, Public Relations department

The Ministry of Culture is the responsible authority of the EU Structural Funds administration in the domain of cultural and natural heritage. The Ministry ensures strategic planning of EU fund investments, creates the legal framework for project implementation, pre-selects the best project applications and participates in the monitoring of project implementation.

During the previous Programming Period (2007-2013), 27 ERDF projects to the sum of 53,000,000 € were implemented under the guidance of the Ministry of Culture. These projects were carried out within three activities. The first activity – creation of multicultural centres – resulted in three new regional concert halls (in Liepāja, Cēsis and Rēzekne), which have, over recent years, proved able to bring new life to their home cities, through culture.

The second activity was dedicated to supporting five national museums across Latvia. One of these five projects was the reconstruction of the Artillery Arsenal building to create the Daugavpils Mark Rothko Art Centre – today's host.

The third activity was implemented to support privately-owned cultural monuments. Such support is necessary, as owning a historical monument is a great responsibility that can be financially overwhelming.

Good results of the previous Programming Period have led to even more ambitious goals for the current Programming Period. This time the Ministry of Culture will carry out two activities, a programme for the revitalisation of Riga and one for cultural and natural heritage.

Within the programme for the revitalisation of Riga there are five large-scale culture infrastructure projects carried out to bring new life to degraded neighbourhoods of Riga:

- renovation of the VEF Culture palace in Teika neighbourhood. The palace was built in 1960 and named after the State Electrical Engineering Factory;
- reconstruction of the Daugava Stadium in Grīziņkalns neighbourhood, to ensure that it can host large-scale international sports events (athletics, football, ice hockey) and concerts;
- renovation of an old building in Brasa neighbourhood to create Riga Makerspace – a co-creation space for new designers, students of Latvian Academy of Arts and the Riga School of Design and Art;
- renovation of an old building in Brasa neighbourhood to create TabFab – a new home for the Latvian Academy of Culture, as well as a public space for cultural events and creative co-working; and
- a new stage and workshop for stage decorations for the National Opera in Šķīrotava neighbourhood.

The second activity is devoted to preservation and development of the cultural and natural heritage. The framework for this activity – the criteria for project applicants, aims, achievable results etc. – was defined by a team led by the Ministry of Culture. The team consisted of representatives from the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Regional Development and Environmental Protection, the Inspection for Cultural Heritage Monuments, and several associations representing local municipalities. The criteria for the project applicants set by this team reflect its definition of effective use of EU funding for sustainable development of cultural heritage.

The Programme for Cultural and Natural Heritage consists of 58 cultural or natural sites renovated or built anew; among them castles and castle ruins, manors, churches, nature trails and other sites.

To apply for EU financing the project had to have protected cultural or natural monuments on the list of objects to be renovated. Thus it was possible to make sure that the most valuable treasures are developed, done with the care and respect required. This criterion has resulted in 49 protected cultural monuments being supported by the programme.

Examples in Slides 13-15:

- Stāmeriena Palace – a manor residential building from the late XIXth century;
- Preiļi Manor from the late XIXth century;
- building in Daugavpils Fortress, XIXth century military fortification.

All projects have to be carried out through co-operation. Every project consists of multiple objects or sites and is implemented by project partners, who are owners or managers of the objects or sites.

Slide 17 shows a map of all 58 objects that are being renovated or developed within 10 projects.

Each project is led by one local municipality that has several partners. Thus, starting from the very first stages of project planning it is perceived as a cluster, fostering close co-operation in further tourism marketing activities. Investment of the EU structural funds can be sustainable only if the need for such investments is defined by local residents. Only the objects or sites that had already been included in development programmes or strategies of the representative local municipalities could apply to receive EU funding.

It was also a requirement that the objects to be restored are located on one of the seven cultural heritage routes in Latvia. These routes each have a historic background that gives a context or a story that can be used as a marketing tool. Location on the routes also grants the proximity of the objects and facilitates the planning of road trips that are rich with cultural heritage content.

Each renovated or constructed site has to be paired with new services, to ensure that visitors can engage with the cultural heritage. There will be new interactive exhibitions, guided tours, workshops and other services that allow visitors to have unique and personal experiences of local culture.

Slides 23-25: After renovation, the former Needle factory (industrial heritage) in Kuldīga will host an Art and Creative Cluster; the abandoned manor house in Pedvāle open air museum of contemporary art will become a residence for artists; one of the oldest timber residential houses in Liepāja will become an interior museum and provide unique experience of XVIIth century cuisine workshops.

Accessibility in the traditional sense is mandatory for the projects. Access to interesting but underdeveloped sites was welcomed. The projects foresee that many sites currently closed or having never been available will be opened to the general public, for example:

- the New Palace of Sigulda – previously mostly closed to general public;
- the bridge over the Irbe River – a path that could be the most convenient way to reach Oviši natural reserve;
- for the first time visitors will be able to enter the towers of the Basilica of the Assumption in Aglona, the most important pilgrimage destination in Latvia.
- for the first time visitors will be able to see the unique murals in former child sanatorium in Ogre.

As most tourists do not plan their routes choosing only cultural or only natural sites, the co-operation projects could include both cultural and natural objects. Thus, the three projects that are located on the coastline of the Baltic Sea and the Riga Gulf will provide for the journey into local culture and nature. Nature trails will be made to protect the fragile coastal ecosystems and tell the story of local residents. The coastline will also have seven open air stages renovated or built anew, to host cultural events.

[Powerpoint presentation](#)

<http://rm.coe.int/16808d42bc>