

The cultural history of Vidzeme has a unique value

The uniqueness of Europe and Vidzeme lies in its culture and history - small villages with a rich cultural heritage and picturesque scenery unique in their value. At the open conference "Historical Assets and Related Landscapes" which took place in Dikļi – one of the most beautiful venues in Vidzeme - experts and government representatives expressed their views and judgments on the sustainable management of Vidzeme's cultural heritage and the value of its landscape.

At the conference a number of valuable insights were shared about the landscape and its importance as a local identity builder as well as protection principles and the different cultural uses of historic sites. Conference participants came to the common conclusion that the characteristic landscape of Vidzeme must be protected. The participants stressed that more attention should be paid to the local cultural heritage and landscape, as they shape our identity - cultural and historical landmarks cannot be fully appreciated or understood without the surrounding landscape - together creating greater value.

In recent years the population in the rural areas of Latvia and Vidzeme has decreased. For various reasons people are choosing to live and work in the cities and this is having a negative impact on the management of the landscape and historical sites. Work on the preservation of cultural heritage can provide employment opportunities for local residents, as well as significantly increase the attractiveness of the area.

In order to achieve the project goals it is important for Vidzeme to learn from partners' experiences. For example, project partners "Marche region" and Vidzeme's planning region have both started work on new regional development programs which include a sustainable landscape/development strategy. To date Vidzeme Planning Region has developed a document "Landscapes of Vidzeme, their evaluation and characteristics", but this document does not include recommendations for the sustainable management and development of landscapes –an issue hopefully to be addressed as part of the project.

The HISTCAPE project is funded by the European Regional Development Fund and implemented by the program "INTERREG IVC" program. The main task of "HISTCAPE" is to find solutions to effectively and sustainably manage and protect cultural and historic sites and their landscapes in rural areas, whilst creating favorable living conditions.

The project has 12 partners, with the lead partner being the Rural Development Agency of Styria from Austria.

For additional information please contact Lelde Gavare, Project Manager of Vidzeme Planning Region, mob.: + 371 29266757, e-mail: lelde.gavare@vidzeme.lv.

Information compiled by

Anita Savoņi – Vaido

Public Relations Specialist, Vidzeme Planning Region

Mob. +371 26621391, E-mail: a.savoni-vaido@vidzeme.lv

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