

Title of the project:
The renaissance of sacral and cultural heritage

Project topic, keywords; knowledge transfer/ education/ trainings, tourism/ popularization of the LAG's territory, entrepreneurship development, reduction of climate change

Target groups

Local inhabitants, parishes¹, entrepreneurs, domestic and foreign tourists

Project objective

To develop and facilitate sacral and culture tourism in the region by highlighting cultural heritage of the region and introducing innovations

Description and feasibility of the project

In Latvia churches have always been places concentrating the values and wealth of the nation. For example, the Latgalian language (known as a historical dialect of the Latvian language, typically spoken in the Eastern part of Latvia) have been preserved in the region mostly by Church which used and maintained both its forms – spoken and written. Churches themselves are excellent examples of cultural, as well as architectural heritage. Considering that modern life has an impact on religion, as well as that the number of believers tend to decrease it can be said that Churches as cultural gems are generally underestimated. Accordingly, in many countries church reconstruction into tourism, recreational, SPA and other objects (even casino) becomes an increasingly developing trend as the architectural and historical value of the building ensures the attractiveness of the place in a combination of an unusual mode of exploitation. In Latvia, sacral tourism mainly is backed up by sacral touristic routes at a local, regional or even national level, however, such routes are thematically narrow and not attractive to majority of tourists. In order to find a balance between the sacral and the secular and develop an integrated tourism offer with added value, project will contribute to development of complex and improved tourism activities which would compete with foreign sacral tourism offers and which would enhance domestic and foreign tourists experience in terms of innovations and a maximum touristic service package. The problem defined is that there are several popular sacral tourism destinations which attract the majority of visitors, however there are many local destinations which are equally interesting and valuable, however, less known as they operate locally. Therefore it is planned to ensure experience exchange between the involved countries focusing on best practice examples and bringing the hidden gems to the surface – adding regional sacral tourism object extra value in terms of additional services, activities and innovation. Within the project there would be concluded collaboration agreements with local active parishes which are able to host tourists, as well as with local entrepreneurs, for example, a social venture which focuses on zero waste activities regarding reuse and recycle of paper and fabric and producing different kind of packaging. It is planned to involve also local farmers, producers, ancient craftsmen (artisans) – thus it would ensure maximum involvement and use of human and other types of local resources. Project activities include experience exchange visits to Partner's

¹ a society belonging to one Church

countries and as a result there would be elaborated a local integrated sacral tourism offer in Latvia (an/or in Partner's countries) which would contain innovations (sacral tourism brand development, ancient monastery cuisine and culinary heritage development, purchase of equipment for baking unique Christmas wafers for the needs of workshops, elaboration of a home page for parishes in order to reach potential tourists).

Expected results and beneficiaries

Development of sacral and culture tourism offer will lead to the following results: (1) one new tourism product in the region which would facilitate preservation of entrepreneurial, ancient crafts and cultural values.

Beneficiaries – local inhabitants (enhancing the sense of pride and belonging to the place), artisans and producers who will be able to offer their products and services within the framework of the elaborated sacral tourism brand and to participate in the project activities thus improving their capacity and international sales; domestic and foreign tourists, pilgrims who will be offered new opportunities and unique experience; municipalities and tourism environment in general; (2) strengthened culture and traditions: beneficiaries - all inhabitants who will have the opportunity to get introduced with history and cultural heritage; strengthened the inhabitants' sense of belonging and pride of their "roots"; preserved cultural heritage to be passed along to next generations; (3) development of sacral entrepreneurship, incl. development of sacral tourism brand and purchase of tea and fruit drying equipment; beneficiaries: parishes which would be able to more effectively ensure the necessary budget for their existence and functionality, attract more people, upgrade their activities, attract people's interest by closed-cycle economy example (growing plants and producing tea from them, as well as producing any other possible types of products and souvenirs); (4) improved parishes' flexibility and independence: purchasing Christmas wafers baking equipment it will possible for inhabitants to participate in their production, they could also produce wafers with native language texts on them what would make the wafers special, as well as would personalize the whole baking routine and contribute to the sacral processes and traditions.

Innovations

1) Elaboration of a sacral brand for using as a logotype, on souvenirs, packaging, wafers etc. This brand would help to associate with the products and services related to the project and particular region, and it also would attract the attention of visitors as the first sacral tourism brand and quality symbol;

2) Christmas wafers baking machinery will allow to organize workshops and incorporate wafer baking into tourism activities, as visitors will be able to take the self-made wafer with them as a precious souvenir. Such a personalized approach would facilitate tourism flow along with pilgrimage and would positively influence sacral entrepreneurship;

3) Monastery cuisine as a unique culinary heritage direction will contribute to tourism and pilgrimage development, and also will serve as a local specialty. Nowadays it is difficult to find a niche, however, monastery cuisine as a culinary heritage object will attract people's attention and bring the eaters to middle ages, giving unforgettable experience to cook the meal themselves, too (workshops would be organized in the

framework of experience exchange visits);

4) Zero waste approach will be used in making the packaging for teas, dried fruits et.al. – paper recycling and reuse workshops.

Budget: approximately 50 k euro (only Latvia)

Our planned activities which we have included in our project application and project budget:

1. **Experience exchange visits.** It is expected that the hosting partner provides basic catering and local transportation, as well as activities for the visitors (as you will see below) but the travelling Partners cover their transportation costs from their country to the Hosting country, accommodation costs and relevant allowances (according to the corresponding country's national regulation):
 - 1.1. Partners' visit to Partner 1 (Baltic Country/ neighbouring) in May 2019, **35** people from Latvia, by bus.
 - 1.2. Partners' visit to Latvia, ~September 2019 (35 people from Partner 1 and 10 from Partner 2 (equal to the number of visitors from Latvia)). We provide catering (monastery cuisine themed) and local transportation around the region, all the activities planned within the visit here, in Latvia, and we will make reservations for the Partners' stay (it is planned that they stay in a 18th century monastery premises which are adapted to accommodate visitors), but Partners are expected to cover travelling costs to Latvia and accommodation costs;
 - 1.3. Partner's visit to Partner 1, October 2019, 10 people from Latvia, by plane.
 - 1.4. From our side it is planned to buy Christmas wafers baking machinery, fruit and tea dryer, as well as to purchase all the necessary things in order to ensure workshops during Partners' stay in Latvia.
2. **Publicity and marketing.**