



CENTRAL BALTIC
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Minutes of the kick-off meeting of project Promoting the use of cultural heritage in service design of rural tourism (CB54)

February 9, 2012

Riga, office of "Lauku celotajs"

Participants: participant list attached

Agenda and topics:

1. Subsidy contract.

Project co-ordinator Silja Lehtouu introduced main topics of Subsidy contract.

Partners discuss underspending rule: 1st year allows for 40% of underspending. As the project was planned to start in November 2011 but neither official statement nor subsidy contract were received by that time, the partners did not start spending according plans. Spending started after receiving the official statement on the 7th of December, however, by the end of the 1st project calendar year, the time was too short to spend according to plan. Partners regard the fact that official statement was received more than one month after the planned start of the project a condition beyond partner control and discuss with the JTS after summarizing the actual partner costs spent by the end of 2011.

2. Project web site

Partners agree that web sites are mainly for information exchange and download of results, therefore no sophisticated solutions are chosen for the project web site.

Partner 3 will put a link from its web site to the official project web site and will send 4 pictures and a summary article about project info seminars in Latvia. Partners agree to put one news item every week to update the project web site. Next week (13-17 February, 2012) the consultation program for rural tourism providers will be announced in Estonia.

3. Arrangement of Steering Group meeting in 28.03.12 in Estonia - topics and practical issues

In Estonia the project steering group (SG) includes members from the board of the project lead partner and rural organizations. In Latvia – representatives from the Ministry of Culture and from the State Inspection for Cultural Heritage. The SG meeting will take place at 12:00 on 28.03.12. in Ojako tourism farm, Pärnumaa and will be preceded by project partner meeting in the morning, at 09:00. SG member travel costs are eligible. During the meeting the SG must be informed about expert services, purchases in the project, who is the service provider, size of contract, what is done in the project and what are plans for the next 6 months till the 2nd SG meeting. SG will approve the list of rural tourism businesses selected by selection committee for consultation programme.

4. Results of information days in Estonia and Latvia - feedback and opinions from businesses

4 introduction seminars took place in Latvia, altogether 200 participants – RT providers. Participants were interested to involve in the project and asked questions. The seminar programs were practical, with examples of heritage products from other countries and LV.

In Estonia 2 seminars took place, attended by 60 participants. One info day will take place in TourEst travel fair during the professionals' day.

5. Joint seminar of quality system in 29.03.2012 in Pärnumaa- agenda, participants, practical issues

Klaus Ehrlich from Eurogites has made best offer for presentation about different quality and classification systems used in other European countries, partner 3 will ask him to tell about different systems – why and how they work. 30 min introduction and 1,5 hours for practical cases. Project coordinator will prepare draft agenda.

On 29.04. – quality seminar will take place with participation of rural tourism quality experts, some board members of Estonian Rural Tourism and other participants. The seminar program will start at 11:00 and will end at 17:00. There will be a presentation from Estonian tourist board and Lauku Celotajs. Brief introduction of LV and EE rural tourism quality systems will be given. The seminar will include exchange of ideas about how soft criteria should be included in the quality system.

Quality expert travel and accommodation costs are not eligible, it should be included to their fee.

6. Training of service design for businesses- Estonian Rural Tourism will receive the topics of trainings

In Estonia service design training (2 groups) will take place in April, the rest in autumn. Partner 2 is seeking for price offers. Partner 3 does not have to organize a tender for service design trainer as the contracting amount is below the ceiling set by the national legislation.

Training should be practical about how services are designed in a tourism farm. A rural tourism provider representing a case study of good heritage product could also be invited to give a presentation. Partners discussed about the aim and content of the training. Partner 3 suggests to include the topic of slicing customer complaints in the programme. The target audience is basically the existing businesses who are willing to improve existing services. Businesses to be selected for consultation programme should participate. Partners discuss how service design should be linked with heritage and stress that that training program should show how to integrate heritage in service and product design.

7. Training programme of other trainings for rural tourism farms- sharing ideas, discussion

Training programs for other topics will start in October 2012 and partners will share ideas about the training in partner meeting in May. Partner 3 would like to use the same professionals in the consultation program and in the training because the training contents should be practical. The staff of LC and external experts will also be involved in training.

Partners will organize tender for trainers, decide dates. The prices have to be negotiated. As the training has to be practical, also partner staff can participate, in addition to trainer, with presentations, pictures, examples. Training programs and times shall be coordinated between partners in EE and LV.

8. Criteria and application form for consultation programme- discussion of draft, agreement about final version. Arrangement of consultation programme, dissemination of information, selecting businesses-decisions about deadlines, selection procedures, information exchange between partners.

Partners coordinate criteria for participation in the consultation programme:

Turnover of 1200 EE is put to prevent hobby farms who are not serious businesses. It is low turnover. The criteria will be introduced also in LV competition. New beginners who want to

participate in the program to do things right from the start need to present a serious and realistic business plan to prove that they will not just disappear after the project.

Partners discuss eligibility of state owned tourism businesses in the context of fair competition. Partners agree that consultation programme is extended only to private businesses – accommodation, catering and activity (cultural tours, workshops, handicraft). State-owned companies can attend training seminars. This will be introduced as a new criteria.

The competition shall be announced by EE and LT partners between 13-17 February, 2012.

Partners will choose the newspapers to place ads. Partner 3 will put an announcement in the professional web page and will send e-mail to the list of RT properties. In Estonia the deadline for application to consultation program is March 1.

Partners discuss the evaluation table and scores of the criteria. The biggest score goes for motivation. Partners discuss that each point in the scoring table must have a reference to the application form for easier assessment. Partners agree that applicants can add pictures, links to videos, etc. to the application form/motivation letter. Applications should be submitted electronically, if e-mail is not accessible, applicants can send by post by March 1 (post office stamp). Results will be announced in the partner web sites after SG meeting, 30.03.2012. Cooperation agreements will be signed with the farms to participate and achieve results. Partner 3 suggests that cooperation agreement draft should be ready by the competition application date so that the applicants know their responsibilities. **There should be one sentence in the call about commitment: if you fail to comply, you have to compensate cost already spent by the project.** If there is a force majeure and a winning applicant cannot participate, the next applicant in the row is admitted. The list of the selected farms will be sent to the JTS with the project report.

Partners discuss to include in the application form a question about cooperation with neighbors. If no cooperation exists, the applicant is asked about the reasons.

The assessment committee meetings will take place in EE and LV between March 12-16. The Steering Group members will be informed about the competition deadlines and selection criteria before announcement, and will approve the list of selected business.

9. Finding experts/consultants for consultation programme- discussion of joint approach, discussion of requirements for tender documentation

Project coordinator has prepared the draft of tender for other consultants – architects, designers catering specialists etc. Partners discuss details.

Estonian partner will put separate tenders for separate experts. Associations of architects, designers, educational institutions etc., will disseminate the calls for tenders to their members. Partners are concerned if the lowest price offer has always be selected. There have to be other criteria and justification of the choice.

Consultant selection:

60% of the decision depends on the price offer, and 40% - experience, knowledge and other qualifications. The lowest price should not be the only decisive factor as it is important to select experts that are not only professionals in their area but are also able to produce good written reports and be respected by rural tourism providers.

Several experts in the same field can be attached to one rural tourism business. The same, one expert can consult several businesses. Expert contracts are signed on work amount and other

conditions in each of the tourism businesses after matching what businesses need what consultancies. In April-May the best experts are selected and contracted. Partner 1 will announce the tender of experts/consultants after 1. of March, when there is more information about needs of businesses, who have applied.

Experts will write reports on their work with businesses. Partners agree that these reports should form part of the handbook as case studies and can be produced together with tourism experts. The project coordinator notes that the partners have to prepare some contents structure for expert reports. Partners agree that expert advices and recommendations to businesses have to be drafted in written form. At least 2 working days on site in a rural tourism business will be a part of an expert contract. Experts need to be informed that their reports will be used for handbooks. It must be noted, probably in contracts, that experts should provide pictures with their case reports.

Project coordinator will send updated tender documentation, and Partner 3 will make the LV specific changes.

10. Joint training/workshop about consulting for experts and consultants- presentation of price offers, decision about the date (18.05.12) and other practical issues

Experts have to be contracted by the training workshop. If possible, they have to participate also in service design training in the end of April. The workshop/seminar will prepare the consultants how to work with RT providers. Partner 2 has conducted competitive procedure for trainer for a full day. Price offers were received from 3 service providers: Kera OÜ (960 EUR), Loom UÜ (1 080 EUR), Baltic Corporate Training (1 680 EUR). The bidding of Kera OÜ was selected as trainer. If experts understand English, the training will be provided in English. If not, training is provided in Estonian language, with consecutive translation. If the training is in English, handouts are also in English. If the training is in Estonian, the handout materials will be in Estonian, translated into Latvian.

11. Finding experts for quality system - discussion of joint approach, discussion of draft tender documentation

Partners discuss tender conditions for experts. Applicants should quote the costs per consultation day including all costs, incl. VAT. Partner 3 has to translate and send to the project coordinator the criteria for quality expert. New criteria/improved quality systems have to be ready by November, and the quality expert will present it to the members by November.

12. Joint study tour to Finland in May 2012- discussion of draft programme, sharing expectations and ideas, practical issues

A preliminary program is ready and presented to partnership. Study tour will take place 14.-16. May 2012. Partner 3 asks to include in the program a visit to a "Uniquely Finnish" property to learn specifically about how this sign is run and marketed.

It has to be re-checked with the FLC if quality expert costs can be covered for study trip to Finland and which experts can participate.

Partner 2 will search for information about options for bus rent- whether is it cheaper to rent the bus from Tallinn, Riga or Finland.

13. Design the logo of cultural heritage products in Latvia.

Partner 3 presented the logo – it is not the final version and remains to be seen how to make it – how the farms will expose it. The logo should be of simple form.

14. Participation in fairs

Partner 2 and 3 will participate in 10.-12. February 2012 in Riga Balttour fair and promote heritage tourism products available in Estonia and Latvia to visitors. After the fair partners should compose short overview about the results.

Silja Lehtpuu
Project co-ordinator