

Strengthening the Regional Competitiveness of Small Cheese Makers through Networking and Knowledge Exchange

Nordplus Adult 2026 (NPAD-2026/10032)

17.06.2026.

Co-funded by the Nordplus Programme of
the Nordic Council of Ministers.



Project Partners and Project Duration

- LCTA – Latvia, Lead partner
- HANEN Norway - NGO of SMEs
- EE Association Estonia - NGO of SMEs
- SOIRA – Latvia, cheese producer, Ltd.

Project duration: **24 months 05/2026 - 05/2028**

Project Aim:

- Baltic-Nordic network of cheese producers and experts.
- Training material for cheese producers on high-quality craft and premium cheeses.

Activities:

- 1. Network building*
- 2. Involvement of experts*
- 3. Events in Cheese sector*
- 4. Training material structure*
- 5. Training material contents*
- 6. Dissemination*

3 Partner Meetings

1st meeting - online, project launch 17.06.2026

2nd meeting - Latvia

- **approve structure of the training material**
- Including visits to local craft and artisan cheesemakers.
- Time: **by project month 6 (by Oct/Nov, 2026)**

3/4rd meeting - Estonia

- **approve the training material content**
- Including visits to local craft and artisan cheesemakers. Any cheese events?
- Time: **meeting by spring, 2027**

3/4th meeting - Norway

- **approve the dissemination strategy**
- Including visits to local craft and artisan cheesemakers. Any cheese events?
- Time: **to be agreed later - meeting by Autumn, 2027**

Activity 1: Network Building (M1-M3)

Reach craft cheese producers in partner countries to initiate their network for knowledge exchange and collaboration.

Outcome: partner contact lists of cheese makers
- network participants in partner countries for communication and information exchange.

Deadline: 31 Jul, 2026.

Activity 2: Involvement of Experts (M1-M22)

Identify and involve experts in quality craft and premium class cheese to form a team for the development of the training material structure and content.

Experts will be involved at any stage of the training material development, as necessary.

Outcome: Expert input provided for the training material.

Activity 3: Events in Cheese Sector (M1-M24)

Attend and participate to relevant **events in cheese sector** to develop contacts and source contents for the training material. The partners will coordinate the events and participation.

Outcome: contacts established and maintained, and specific content or experience gathered for the training material.

Deadline: 30 Apr, 2028.

Activity 4: Training Material Structure (M4-M6)

Partners consult with cheesemakers in own country. The lead partner summarises all inputs and defines the structure proposal.

The final structure agreed by all partners during the 2nd partner meeting in Latvia.

Outcome: formulated structure for the training material.

Deadline: 31 Oct, 2026.

Activity 5: Training Material Contents (M6-M22)

Texts and visuals from each partner country - photos, 6 videos (2 from each partner), 2-3 reels.

In consultation with cheese producers.

Translate the content in project partner languages.

Partners divide responsibility for specific parts of the content, editing, designing for online and printed purposes, providing visual material, and making the material available online.

Outcome: Training material "Guide to Quality Craft Cheese Production and Marketing".

Deadline: 29 Feb, 2028.

Activity 6: Dissemination (M3-M24)

Each partner is responsible for **dissemination** in own country and for international dissemination, according to possibilities.

Social media, press releases, webinars, EPALe, web updates.

Project months 3 - 24 (Aug 2026 - Apr 2028)

Training Material Content Structure - from project proposal (1)

1. Value of Organic and Species-Rich Grasslands

How pasture composition affects milk flavour, composition and seasonal variation.

2. Assessing Milk Quality and Suitability for Your Cheese Style

Matching milk characteristics to cheese type, milk chemistry, measurement of acidity and pH.

3. Essential Tools and Equipment for Small-Scale Cheesemaking

Hygienic design, safe materials, and maintenance.

4. Cultures, Bacteria and Fungi

Roles of starter cultures, adjuncts, ripening moulds and yeasts.

Training Material Content Structure - from project proposal (2)

5. Cheese Types and How to Choose What to Produce

Overview of major families (fresh, soft-ripened, semi-hard, hard, blue, whey cheeses).

6. Developing and Adjusting Cheese Recipes

Core variables (temperature, acidity curve, cutting size, stirring, cooking, pressing). Troubleshooting common defects.

7. Maturation and Affinage Basics

Environmental control (temperature, humidity, airflow). Rind development and cave management.

8. Food Safety and National Regulatory Requirements

Hygiene rules, documentation, traceability, sampling and audit expectations. Small-scale producer exemptions and obligations.

Training Material Content Structure - from project proposal (3)

9. Packaging Choices

Food-safe materials, shelf life, cost considerations, sustainability. Protection of rind and flavour.

10. Branding and Product Positioning

Creating a story around place, milk, animals and craftsmanship. Labelling essentials and visual identity.

11. Pricing strategies for artisanal cheeses.

13. Participation in international competitions as a valuable tool for enhancing the recognition of cheeses both internationally and locally.

14. Videos showcasing best-practice businesses (two per country, on selected topics) represent an innovative element of the training tool.

Next tasks

1. Agree on the next partner meeting dates: 5-6.11.2026
2. Contact lists of SMEs
3. Identify and involve experts
4. Finalise the content structure of the training material by Oct 31, 2026 (M6)