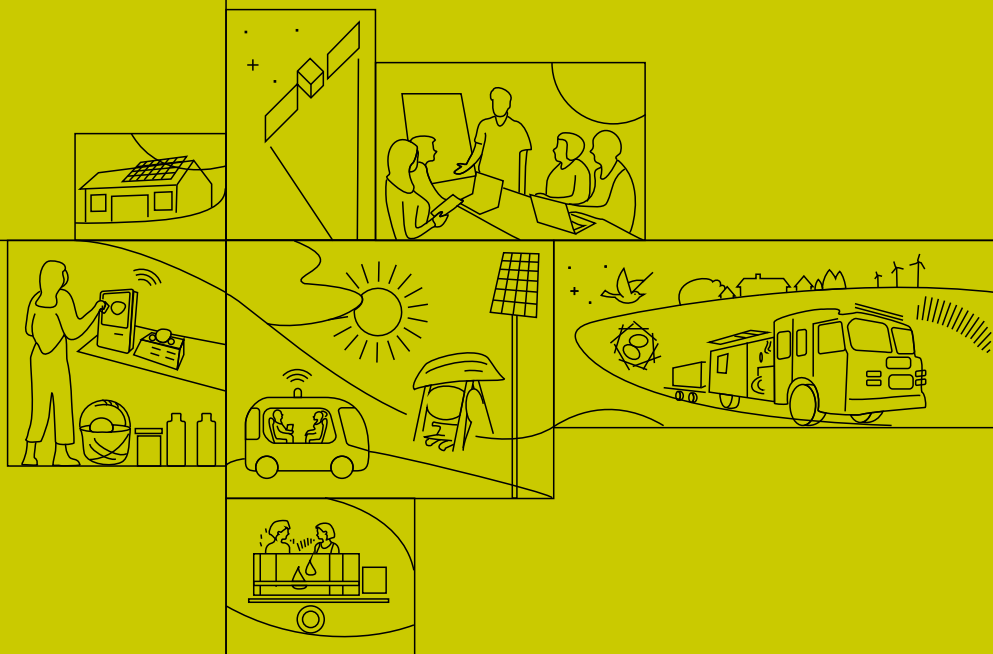


Smart villages and communities

Projects of the Estonian Rural Development Plan
2014–2020 LEADER measure



METIK
Centre of Estonian
Rural Research
and Knowledge


ESTONIAN RURAL NETWORK

LEADER
ESTONIA



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Issued by: Center of Estonian Rural Research and Knowledge

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ISBN: 978-9916-9325-3-7

The publication has been supported by the technical assistance resources
of the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan 2023–2027.

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Smart Villages in Estonia and Europe

What is a smart village?

In the rural policies of the European Commission, the approach of a smart village is a relatively new concept, starting from the Cork 2.0 declaration “A Better Life in Rural Areas” proposed in 2016. The Commission highlights the smart village approach as an essential opportunity to help local communities address issues related to providing broadband connection, job opportunities, and services clearly and comprehensively.

The smart village approach is a community-centered operation that considers the region’s needs, specificities, strengths, and opportunities. The keywords are community, cooperation, joint action, modern and digital solutions use, and sustainable use of local resources and opportunities. Each community can be smart in a way that is within their power, focusing on the areas that need the most attention in the joint exchange of ideas among community members.

A separate support program has not been created in the European Union to boost smart villages. Still, it is encouraged to use existing national, local, or private initiative funds and support schemes of the European Union.

To date, the theme of smart villages has developed further both in Europe and Estonia. Several pilot projects that prove that the smart village method can be successfully used to develop rural areas are nearing completion.

LEADER and smart villages

The smart village and LEADER have many features in common. In Estonia, several activities aimed at community involvement, cooperation, and sustainable development have been supported by the LEADER measure. Supporting the strategy process of the smart village, exchanging experiences, and creating networks are the goals of the cooperation projects of several local action groups.



**Smart villages are our future villages,
and they support the holistic development
and way of thinking of rural areas!!**

In this publication, you can find 31 initiatives supporting the smart village concept from all over Estonia, which have received support from the LEADER measure of the Estonian Rural Development Plan 2014–2020. All projects are unique and inspiring, focusing on different topics: youth, culture, community development, mobility, local food, environment, development of remote work, crisis management, tourism, connecting generations, etc. These projects are just a small part of the smart activities that contribute to our rural areas, improve the living environment, and increase cooperation between rural communities.

Activities supporting the rural network

The Estonian Rural Network started its activities in 2007. From 2023, the tasks of the rural network unit will be performed by the rural network service of the Center of Estonian Rural Research and Knowledge. The Rural Network has tried to support the smart village approach in Estonia with various activities. Information about the European and Estonian smart village fields is mainly mediated and shared, and good practices and project examples are collected and distributed. Various parties are brought together by organizing seminars, information days, discussion groups and study tours to create fertile ground for cooperation and networking.

Instrumental in the spread of the concept of smart villages in Estonia was the participation of the village of Virtsu as a pilot village in the European Commission project “*Smart Rural 21*”. Several other European initiatives have also had an impact, including the smart villages working group of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), the long-term vision of rural areas and the Rural Pact of the EU, the “*Smart Rural 27*” project, *Startup Village*, etc.

Smart villages are our future villages, and they support the holistic development and way of thinking of rural areas!



Table of Contents

Smart Villages in Estonia and Europe.....	2
The Smart Village Programme increased the capacity of local communities.....	6
A mobile youth center in a sea container inspires the youth of Toila.....	8
Shared values and endeavors foster a sense of community.....	10
An open kitchen expands community life and food culture.....	12
The smart traveling cinema of Hiiumaa brings arthouse films closer to home.....	14
The warm rooms of Paadrema Village Center enliven community life.....	16
A mobile power generator ensures readiness in a crisis situation.....	18
In Lohusuu village, one can rent a mobile barrel sauna contact-free.....	20
Community-based entrepreneurship is being developed in Umbusi.....	22
United Oisu community.....	24
Mobile hot water.....	26
EstPol – for community sustainability.....	28
The delicious goods of the Kloostrimetsa farm shop are available at any time.....	30
Creation of a multi-purpose community center in Otepää – synergy between community activists, entrepreneurs, and creative people.....	32
Busy, educated, and cooperative Lipa neighborhood.....	34
Special opportunities to work indoors and outdoors in Loovusait.....	36
The community center of Lubja offers joy to the locals all year round.....	38



Let's grab the hammers – a workshop open to the community with modern equipment and tools.....	40
Creation of a remote workplace in Röpina.....	42
The realization of a long-standing dream of the Valgma village society – a self-sufficient village house.....	44
A knowledgeable and learning community in Vana-Vigala.....	46
Increasing community resilience and effective functioning in crises.....	48
The development of a unified visitor infrastructure in Soomaa increases community cooperation.....	50
The meetings of the three villages added a new lease of life.....	52
Smart solutions in public spaces help reduce the carbon footprint.....	54
Young people from Laekvere meet at the skate park.....	56
When the playground becomes a community meeting place.....	58
The renovated Kangsti village house improves the community's living environment and cooperation.....	60
The multifunctional bus stop shows the ingenuity of the villagers.....	62
Laimjala Bus Shelter inspires people all over the world.....	64
The renovation of the community center gave the wind in its sails.....	66
Index of keywords.....	68





Cooperation project partners:

Tartu County Development Association,
Valga County Partnership,
Western-Harju Partnership,
Jõgeva County Cooperation Chamber,
Võrumaa Partnership Assembly,
Pärnu Bay Partnership,
Järva Development Partners,
LAG PAIK, East-Harju Partnership,
Põlva County Partnership Board,
Green Riverland Partnership,
North-Harju Partnership,
Virumaa Koostöökogu

Participating villages/regions:

Region of Eassalu-Neitsi villages, Kamari Educational Society, Kilingi-Nõmme region, Kilti-Ebavere-Väike-Maarja, Koeru region, Kose-Uuemõisa village, Kriilevälja village, Kuremaa small town, Kääpa village, Lubja village, Luunja municipality, West-Harju community, Meeri village, Navi village, Neeme village, villages of Otepää municipality, Purtse village, Ravila Village Development Society, Region of Green Riverland villages, Taevaskoja village, Taheva region, Uuesalu village, Vajangu region, Venevere-Paasvere-Laekvere region.

The Smart Village Programme increased the capacity of local communities

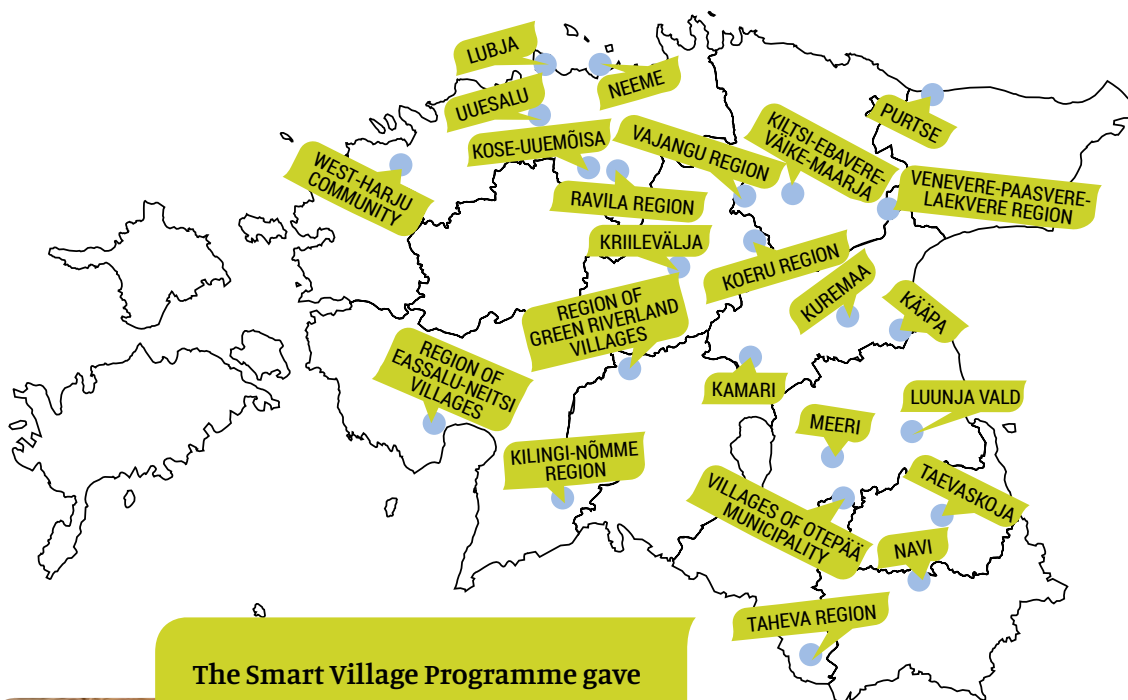
The Smart Village Programme is the largest LEADER cooperation project supporting smart villages in Estonia so far, which offered support and training activities to 24 villages and communities to create a smart village strategy. As an added value, a network of Estonian smart villages was created to increase the capacity of local communities and awareness of rural areas development potential.

The training activities of the programme focused on various topics, such as social innovation, digital solutions, the green transition, the development of cross-border services, smart transport and logistics solutions, self-sufficiency capabilities, and business services. Study trips took place both in Estonia and abroad to gain knowledge and exchange experiences.

In addition, each village was provided with a separate support for the implementation of pilot activities. Thus, the Kääpa community in Jõgeva County, which participated in the program, has launched a series of workshops focusing on recycling. A pop-up childcare center has been set up in the village of Navi in Võrumaa to alleviate the lack of kindergarten places. A village cinema was launched in the village of Neeme in Northern Harju County, and a community kitchen was created in Kamari in Jõgeva County. The Smart Village Programme gave impetus to many great initiatives.

Smart villages are gaining momentum!





The Smart Village Programme gave impetus to many great initiatives.



Beneficiary: Tartu County Development Association (lead partner)

Project location: Estonia

Website: leaderliit.eu/arukad-kulad/

Main activities of the project: training activities, mentoring support for the villages/regions participating in the program to create smart village strategies and implement pilot activities

Timeframe: 2021–2023

Total support: €200 342



A mobile youth center in a sea container inspires the youth of Toila

The mobile sea container youth center was completed as a result of the crazy determination and courage of the youth of Toila municipality and the cooperation of several good people, companies, and the municipality. A 20-foot sea container has been converted into a mobile youth center, which is located in different areas of Toila municipality during the summer. The youth center offers a service with an innovative and sustainable approach to the youth of Toila municipality between the ages of 7 and 26, which empowers and supports the development of independent, initiative-taking, entrepreneurial young people who contribute to society.

The mobile youth center in a sea container is located in various regions of Toila municipality during the summer periods.



The concept of the youth center was created in cooperation with young people and based on their wishes, needs, and interests. The sea container can be moved to different areas where young people gather, including those who have otherwise no access to the services offered by youth work who have moved away from them. The attractive appearance of the sea container youth center also adds to its appeal.

This is the first time in Estonia the mobility of youth work has been approached in this form. This project is an indicator of how to create innovation in rural areas in cooperation with young people.





A good example of how to create innovation in a rural area in cooperation with young people!

Beneficiary: Toila Municipal Government

Local Action Group: North-East Coast Partnership

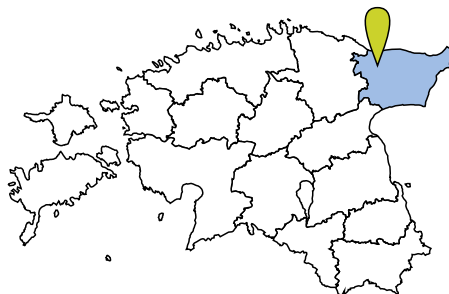
Project location: Toila municipality,
Ida-Viru County

Website: facebook.com/Toilavallanoortekeskused

The main activities of the project: Development of
mobile youth work service in Toila municipality

Timeframe: 2022–2023

Total support: €24 997



Shared values and endeavors foster a sense of community

In order to unite the community of Kuusalu municipality and increase the activity of the residents of the region, the Non-Profit Organisation (NGO) Kolgaküla Selts initiated a community project. The initiative grew out of Kolgaküla's traditional painting camps and family days.

The project emphasizes intergenerational cooperation. There are events and activities for community members of all ages. While family days and art camps are primarily aimed at children, club evenings and a history conference bring joy mainly to the older residents of the municipality.

Community events bring together residents from nearby villages. Children make new friends, and seniors meet old acquaintances. In addition, the project brings new life and application to Kolgaküla community house, increases cooperation between non-profit organizations of Kuusalu municipality, and stimulates creativity.

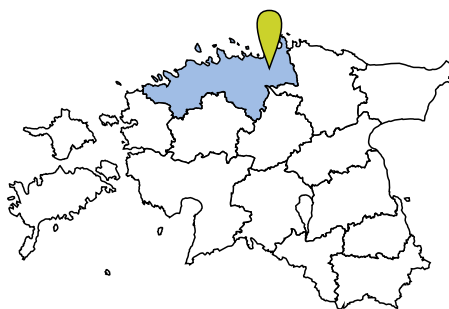
Thanks to this initiative, the residents of Kuusalu municipality have the opportunity to spend quality time with the whole family close to home, learn art, and feel the joy of being together and sharing common values.



Thanks to the initiative, the residents of Kuusalu municipality have the opportunity to spend quality time with the whole family close to home, learn art, enjoy being together, and share values.



Beneficiary: NGO Kolgaküla Selts
Local Action Group: Development Center
Project location: Kuusalu municipality, Harju County
Website: facebook.com/Kolgakylarahvamaja
The main activities of the project: Organizing events for the residents of the region within the framework of the Kuusalu municipality family project 2019–2020 and 2022–2024
Timeframe: 2019–2024
Total support: €19 305



The community kitchen is built following the “open kitchen” principle, which creates an excellent environment for experiential learning and collaboration. The activities of the Tuula Community Center diversify the local food culture and encourage the residents of the region to start businesses in the catering field.

A modern kitchen featuring a rustic stone wall and brick arches. The kitchen includes a large island with a light-colored countertop and dark stools, a long counter with a sink and faucet, and white cabinetry. The wall is made of rough-hewn stone, and there are two brick arches, one over a window and one over a doorway. The floor is covered in a patterned rug.



In the community kitchen, local hobby chefs can learn together, provide catering services, and organize food events, training, and events involving the community.



Photos: Silver Raidla

Beneficiary: NGO Tuula Tutulus

Local Action Group: Nelja Valla Kogu

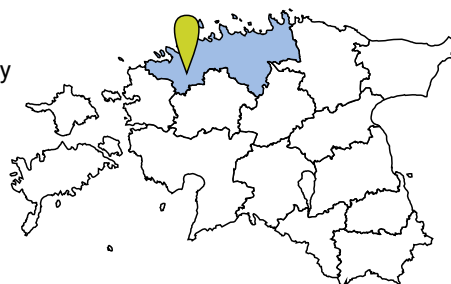
Project location: Tuula village, Saue municipality, Harju County

Website: tuula.ee

The main activities of the project: Creating a service area next to the community kitchen and purchasing and installing hall chairs and hanging rails

Timeframe: 2020–2023

Total support: €23 682



The smart traveling cinema of Hiiumaa brings arthouse films closer to home

Residents of Hiiumaa no longer have to travel to the mainland to see new films because digital cinema technology allows them to enjoy the cinema experience locally. As part of the initiative of NGO Hiiumaa Cinema, digital traveling cinema equipment was acquired in Hiiumaa County, which enables the showing of any film obtained by digital cinema in different places.

Hiiumaa is the municipality with the lowest population density in Estonia, and the insular conditions limit convenient access to large centers. Therefore, smart solutions are important to improve community services. Digital cinema technology allows the cinema to get closer to people and offer them both blockbusters and arthouse films on the spot. Joint visits to the cinema and film festivals increase community cooperation and significantly improve the living environment. Since culture enthusiasts no longer have to go to the mainland to watch movies, it helps them to save time and fuel and contribute to a sustainable lifestyle.



In the implementation of the project, the community and friends of the cinema society offered important support – with their help, the funds for the project's self-financing were collected. Traveling cinema brings Hiiumaa villages together, strengthening the sense of community.

Traveling cinema brings Hiiumaa villages together, strengthening the sense of community.



Digital cinema technology allows the cinema to get closer to people and offer them both blockbusters and arthouse films on the spot.



Beneficiary: NGO Hiiumaa Cinema

Local Action Group: LAG Hiiumaa

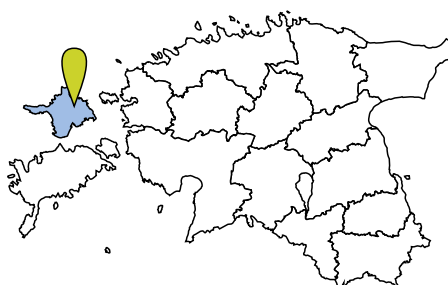
Project location: Hiiumaa

Website: hiiumaakino.ee

The main activities of the project: Acquisition of digital cinema equipment in Hiiu County

Timeframe: 2017–2020

Total support: €41 442



The warm rooms of Paadrema Village Center enliven community life

Paadrema village center in Pärnu County is the only gathering place for the 13 villages of the Paadrema region, where various activities and events take place. Since heating the five ovens and stoves took a lot of time and was quite difficult as voluntary work, it could happen that the house was not warm enough for some activities during the winter period. That is why the village association undertook to update the heating system of the village center - it is more pleasant to operate in a warm room.

Air-water radiator heating was installed in the Paadrema village center building, which helps to maintain a stable temperature in the house, and now it is possible to engage in various hobby activities in a warm room at a time convenient for the participants. In addition, thermostats controlled by

phone via WiFi were installed on the radiators, which helped reduce heating costs.

Thanks to the new heating system, the community is more united. Even in cold weather, the villagers have the opportunity to operate in a warm and cozy village center. The old and reliable stoves are still there in the village center and can always be used in a crisis situation or during exceptional frost.



Thanks to the new heating system, the community is more united and working together. The villagers have the opportunity to operate in a warm and cozy village center even in cold weather.



Beneficiary: NGO Paadrema Village Society

Local Action Group: Pärnu Bay Partnership

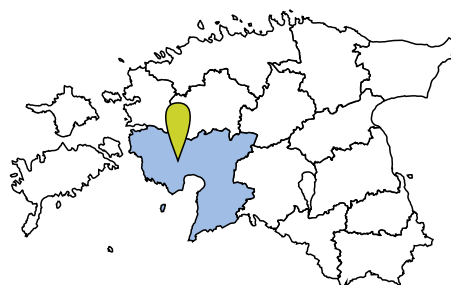
Project location: Paadrema village,
Lääneranna municipality, Pärnu County

Website: paadrema.ee

The main activities of the project: Design and
installation of a new heating system
for the village center

Timeframe: 2022

Total support: €28 577



A mobile power generator ensures readiness in a crisis situation

Residents of the Alansi-Harmi-Köue-Habaja region of Kose municipality will now receive help from a mobile power generator in case of power outages. In the absence of electricity, the normal functioning of households suffers: rooms are cold, the water supply is low, and communication services, cooking, and hygiene are disrupted. Coping with a crisis situation requires good preparation and cooperation among community members.

The Alansi Voluntary Rescue Society mapped community centers and possible evacuation points in the area, which can be covered simultaneously thanks to the mobile power generator. With the help of the project, an electric generator that can be moved on a passenger car trailer and a tank for consumption and extinguishing water with the necessary technical equipment were acquired.

Almost 500 people live in the Alansi-Harmi-Köue-Habaja area, to whom the Alansi Voluntary Rescue Society can provide essential help faster thanks to mobile devices. Ensuring autonomous electricity and drinking water allows one to cope in a crisis or dangerous situation!



A training day with the rescuers of the Kose commando to practice using a generator to provide electricity to the Harmi school.

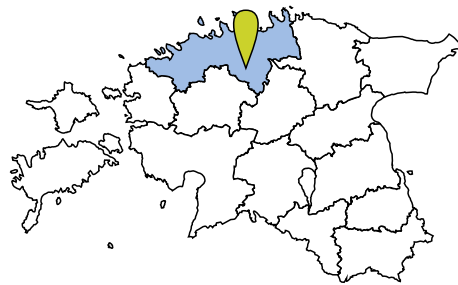


The provision of autonomous electricity and domestic water enables us to cope with crises and dangerous situations!



Rescue vehicle with a container water tank and generator in Habaja.

Beneficiary: NGO Alansi Voluntary Rescue Society
Local Action Group: East-Harju Partnership
Project location: Alansi, Kose municipality, Harju County
Website: facebook.com/alansivpk
The main activities of the project: Mapping possible evacuation points in the Alansi area, acquiring a mobile power generator, fuel tank, and container water tank
Timeframe: 2022–2023
Total support: €51 504



In Lohusuu village, one can rent a mobile barrel sauna contact-free

Sauna traditions and culture have had an important place in Estonian everyday life. The sauna plays an important role in rural communities and villages because it brings people together, heals them, and relaxes their senses.

Lohusuu company Lorest OÜ has brought innovation to the sauna landscape of the region. A contact-free mobile hot tub and barrel sauna rental service has been created. During the project, a building was erected in which rental objects (saunas, barrels, grills, party tent) could be stored, maintained, and rented out contact-free. The building can be opened remotely. The customer can rent and return the desired inventory without coming into contact with other people. This makes the service more accessible, and there is no need to hire a separate person to interact with customers on-site.



The project contributes to the sustainability and rapid development of the company and gives the residents of the region the opportunity to use a new and convenient service that diversifies leisure time. Sauna connects communities!

Sauna connects communities!



Residents of the region now have the opportunity to use a new and convenient service.



Photos: Lorest OÜ

Beneficiary: Lorest OÜ

Local Action Group: Peipsi-Alutaguse Chamber of Cooperation

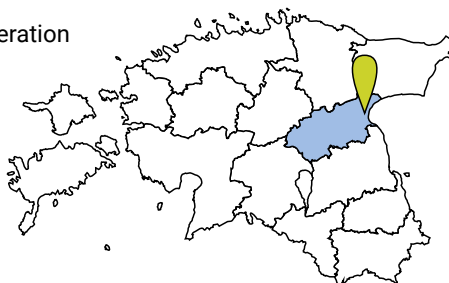
Project location: Lohusuu, Mustvee municipality, Jõgeva County

Website: peipsisaunad.ee

The main activities of the project: Making the rental service of hot tubs and barrel saunas contact-free

Timeframe: 2022–2023

Total support: €32 142



Community-based entrepreneurship is being developed in Umbusit

The Umbus Village Society and the Khordong Association have taken the promotion of Umbus Village life to heart. Various topics of village life are approached in a communal way, be it by organizing barn-raising campaigns, sharing transport, watching the neighborhood, or organizing the annual Umbusi Day.

Many villagers have their own yards and gardens that need to be mowed and cultivated, but it is not wise to buy or rent larger equipment for this alone. Thus, it was found that the village could have its own tractor with the necessary accessories to ensure the mowing of natural grasslands, the management of small agricultural land for the cultivation and production of local food, the management of wasteland in hard-to-reach places, and forest management with the possibility of making firewood.



The village will acquire a tractor and, as accessories, a front loader, a bucket, a maintenance mower, and a tiller, with which it will be possible to offer services in the community for cultivating garden land, mowing grasslands, and forest maintenance.

Thanks to the tractor and the accessories, the self-sufficiency of households increases, as well as the ability to develop small businesses.



Thanks to the tractor and its accessories, the community's capacity for self-sufficiency increases, as well as the capacity for small business development.



Photos: NGO Khordong Association in Estonia

Beneficiary: NGO Khordong Association in Estonia

Local Action Group: Jõgeva County Cooperation Chamber

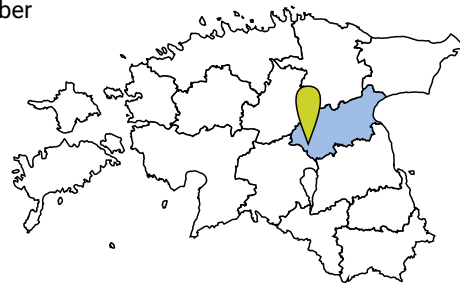
Project location: Umbusi, Põltsamaa municipality, Jõgeva County

Website: umbusikeskus.wordpress.com

The main activities of the project: Development of community-based entrepreneurship – acquisition of a small tractor with necessary accessories

Timeframe: 2023–2024

Total support: €6 246





The Oisu community has achieved a united mind and perception!

United Oisu community

The village of Oisu in Järva County has been given a new lease of life - joint events are held, cooperation is carried out both within the community and with neighboring villages, and the cultural heritage of the region is proudly highlighted. The Oisu community has achieved a united mind and perception!

The community project of the NGO Oisu Culture and Development Society contributed to the activation of community life in Oisu. The purpose of the initiative was to unite the people of the Oisu area through interesting joint activities and regional events, to expand the activities of the Oisu library as a community gathering place and to increase its importance, to bring the residents closer to their hometown through joint recollection, the development and preservation of traditions, and the storage of history.

A total of over 800 people participated in the project's events, and as a result of joint action, cooperation intensified on several levels - between the members of the non-profit organization, between the villagers and the association, and between local institutions. Local social life became livelier, and the willingness to work together increased. Several new joint activities and traditional undertakings have been organized.



More than 800 people participated in joint events.



Beneficiary: NGO Oisu Culture and Development Society

Local Action Group: South-Järvamaa Partnership

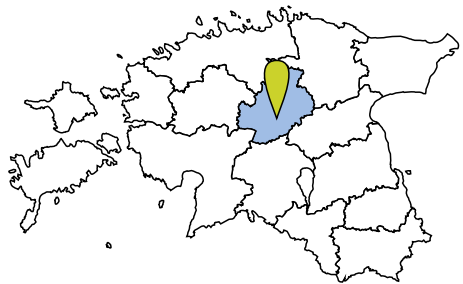
Project location: Oisu, Türi Municipality, Järva County

Website: facebook.com/oisualevik

The main activities of the project: Activation of community life in Oisu through the organization of events, digitalization and display of cultural heritage, acquisition of necessary means for organizing events and sports activities

Timeframe: 2018–2021

Total support: €8 236



Mobile hot water

Exciting events (handicraft and old goods days, fairs) and children's excursions are organized all year round in the Veski Farm located next to Kolga-Jaani, and the museum is open. During the virus crisis, maintaining hygiene became very important, but there was no opportunity to wash hands with warm water at outdoor events and large gatherings. A mobile hot water washing station was developed to solve the problem.

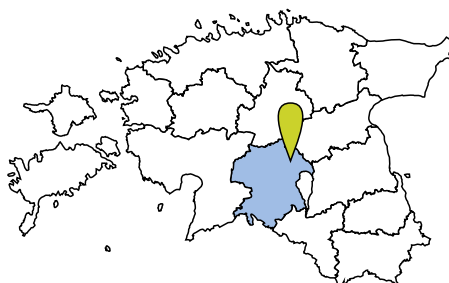
In order to obtain hot water, a factory-made domestic hot water system, "Nutikas", with all safety requirements, was installed on a trailer. The system uses solar energy to heat water, in case of cloudy weather there is a possibility to use electricity. The solution also allows the device to be connected to the building's water systems and used as an outdoor shower. The device can be transported and used at various community events and construction sites, but also in case of power outages near residential buildings. In the future, it is planned to change the system so that it would store energy and add batteries. Hot water anytime!



Hot water anytime!



Beneficiary: NGO Veski Ajaratas
Local Action Group: Võrtsjärve Association
Project location: Vissuvere, Viljandi municipality,
 Viljandi County
Website: Facebook - Veski farm
The main activities of the project: Development
 of a mobile hot water device
Timeframe: 2021–2023
Total support: €2 689



EstPol — for community sustainability

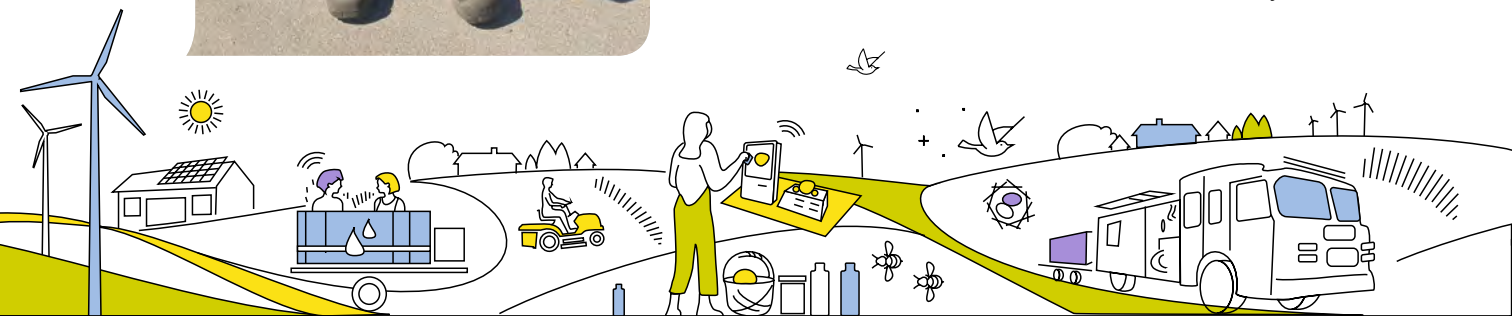
Several communities face leadership burnout and generational issues. By learning from each other's experiences and sharing the bottlenecks associated with different activities, it is possible to find the best solutions. It was for this purpose that Kodukant Läänemaa and Nelja Valla Kogu joined forces and launched a national cooperation project.



The project started with a bottom-up approach. A meeting was organized where residents of the area could share their concerns and ideas and propose new approaches to solving old problems. This gave the participants the opportunity to see their situation through the eyes of an outsider and to get new inspiration for the implementation of further activities.

With the help of the project, a five-module development seminar for community leaders, a conference on the internal security of communities, and a co-operation conference were organized. In addition, a study visit was arranged to acquire skills and knowledge from Maltese volunteers.

The project supported the creation of sustainable communities in rural areas through the use of local resources and exchange of experience, increased the activity of the residents of the area of operation and the number of participants, and improved awareness of activities related to local security.





Community Conference II. Photo: Aune Lillemets

Beneficiaries: Kodukant Läänemaa and

Nelja Valla Kogu

Local Action Groups: Kodukant Läänemaa and

Nelja Valla Kogu

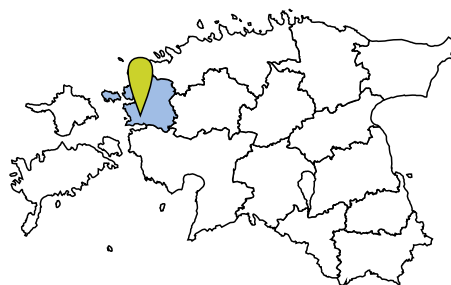
Project location: Lääne County and Harju County

Website: kklm.ee

The main activities of the project: Organization of development seminars, conferences, and study trips abroad

Timeframe: 2019–2023

Total support: €32 588



The delicious goods of the Kloostrimetsa farm shop are available at any time

The self-service *pop-up* sales counter had been operating for many years, was successful, and worked well, but the drawback was that goods could only be paid for in cash. In addition, the wish was to sell various farm products and cider in a contact-free manner. However, the sale of alcohol has its own conditions, which could not be met by the roadside.

With the help of the project, a small garden house was acquired, which was furnished with the necessary equipment - shelves, a table, a showcase refrigerator, a self-service cash register with a card payment terminal, and an integrated scale. In addition, there is also a luggage locker for those who pre-order.

The assortment of the tiny shop is extremely wide: cider vinegar, cider jelly, various jams, syrup, vegetables, honey, Camelina oil, beers, cheeses, spicy sauces, eggs, various herbal teas, porridge flakes and flours, raw buckwheat, etc. In the new season, the selection of products will definitely be expanded.

The Kloostrimetsa farm shop is innovative and allows customers to self-service without a salesperson at the smart cash register – cost savings, revenue growth for the salesperson, and greater flexibility and product selection for customers. Everyone is happy and fed!



The Kloostrimetsa farm shop is innovative and allows customers to self-serve at the smart cash register without a salesperson.



Everyone is happy and fed!



Beneficiary: Limited partnership Kloostrimetsa Fideikomiss

Local Action Group: Western-Harju Partnership

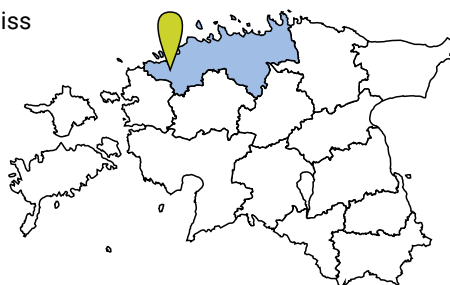
Project location: Korjuse-Vanapere, Määra village,
Western-Harju municipality, Harju County

Website: kloostrimetsa.eu

The main activities of the project: Acquisition of
a farm shop and the necessary inventory

Timeframe: 2023

Total support: €5 358



Creation of a multi-purpose community center in Otepää - synergy between community activists, entrepreneurs, and creative people

In Otepää, there was a shortage of rooms where collaborative activities could be organized in such a way as not to cause significant expenses for room rent and catering – it was decided that a new but underutilized market building would be put into use. A brainstorming session was organized for community leaders, small producers, and the local government to find out the services of the new community cooperation center.



Based on the results of brainstorming, the project was used to establish a multifunctional community center that offers four new services:

- community kitchen and cafe for organizing workshops and joint cooking;
- a training and collaboration area suitable for holding various meetings;
- children's playroom for playing and organizing events;
- a quiet room that can be used both for remote work and, for example, for participating in online training.

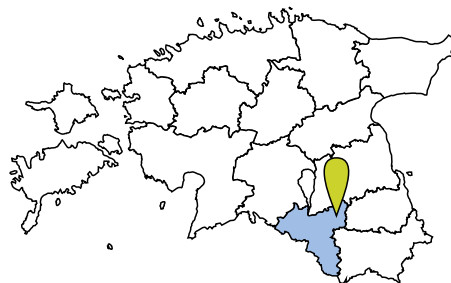
The Otepää community center has proven during its short period of operation that it is on the right track. People have embraced the community center, and a lot of work has been done on a volunteer basis. It is the multitude of possibilities and the availability of services that invite people to organize their meetings or just have a good time here.



The idea of establishing a multifunctional community center started with brainstorming.



Beneficiary: NGO Otepää Community Market
Local Action Group: Valga County Partnership
Project location: Otepää, Valga County
Website: facebook.com/otepaakokkonnakeskus
The main activities of the project: Establishment of a multifunctional community center
Timeframe: 2023
Total support: €43 664



Busy, educated, and cooperative Lipa neighborhood

Since educational activities no longer took place in the Lipa school building, the building was underutilized. Only a small kindergarten group and the Raikküla leisure center operated in the building. Lipa's neighboring village, Keo, is small but has contributed quite a lot to the development of the community in a short time.

The joint project with three partners - the NGO Lipa Village, Keo Village Society, and Raikküla Leisure Center – allows expanding the circle of beneficiaries and increasing community activity, offering new solutions for increasing the identity of the locality valuing culture and history.

With the help of the project, a total of 17 different activities were organized for community members of all ages: training, adventure days for children, and sports and cultural events. The largest activities were the organization of events for the 170th anniversary of Raikküla's educational life, the 110th anniversary of the building of the Raikküla Ministry School, and the 110th anniversary of Uku Masing's birth.

Organized events have united and expanded the active community and offered various experiences to the residents of the area.



With the help of the project, a total of 17 different activities were organized for community members of all ages.





Beneficiary: NGO Lipa Village

Local Action Group: Rapla Partnership

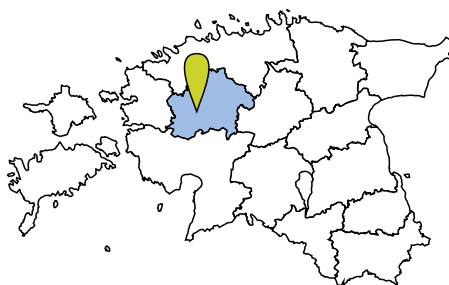
Project location: Lipa, Keo, and Raikküla villages,
Rapla municipality, Rapla County

Website: facebook.com/mtulipa.kula.3

The main activities of the project: Organizing
trainings, conferences, sports, and cultural events
for community members

Timeframe: 2018–2022

Total support: €18 320





Special opportunities to work indoors and outdoors in Loovusait

The main goal of Loovusait was to create an innovative brainstorming and collaboration environment.

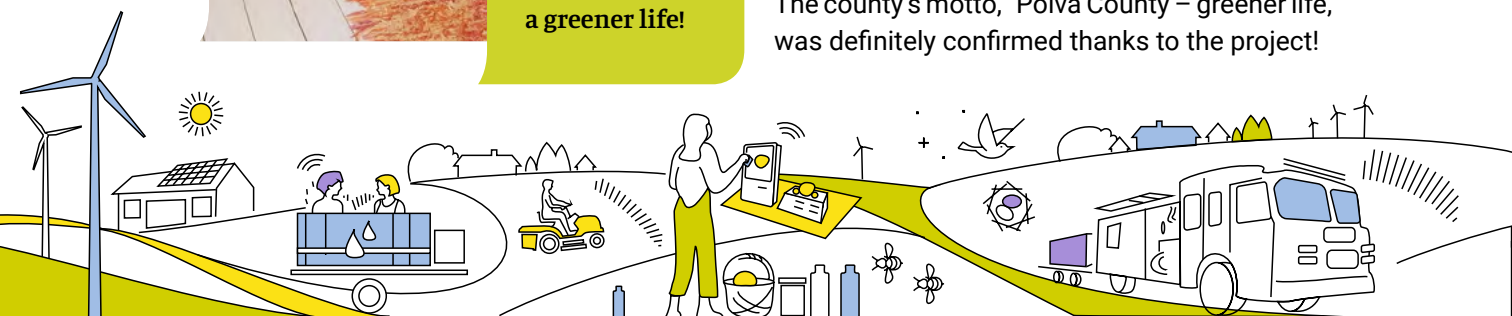
With the help of the project, a remote work office with amenities was built for year-round use, which can also be used for organizing various gatherings. Since it is a place of natural beauty and it has been scientifically proven that being in nature makes people more creative and movement (in nature) makes the brain work, the possibilities of working outdoors were also developed – outdoor furniture, a parasol, and gas heaters were purchased.

As a result of the project, Põlva County now has a distinctive and unique remote work and cooperation center and a sauna area for relaxing on the lake shore. This will definitely add value to the area and bring in new business customers who would otherwise be unlikely to come to the area.

The county's motto, "Põlva County – greener life," was definitely confirmed thanks to the project!



**Põlva County –
a greener life!**



Põlva County now has a distinctive and unique remote work and cooperation center and a sauna area for relaxation on the shore of the lake.



Beneficiary: Indrek Maripuu, Loovusait OÜ

Local Action Group: Põlva County Partnership Board

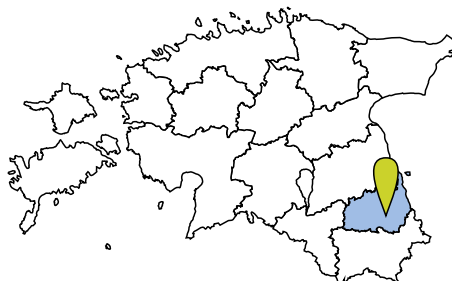
Project location: Neitsijärve farm, Uibujärve village, Põlva municipality, Põlva County

Website: loovusait.ee

The main activities of the project: Installation and furnishing of an office building, ordering and installation of objects in the sauna area, and acquisition of inventory

Timeframe: 2018–2022

Total support: €23 849



The community center of Lubja offers joy to the locals all year round

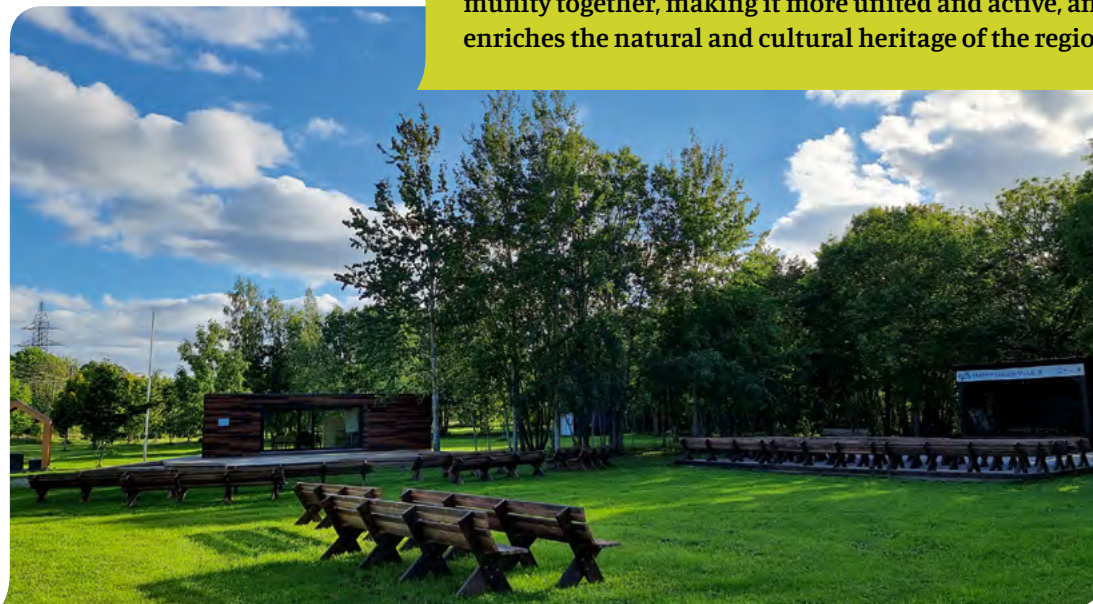
Until now, there was no place in Viimsi to hold major open-air events. The open-air community center located on the Lubja cliff ledge solved this problem – the Ingli property on the cliff ledge is an ideal environmentally valuable place for this purpose. It was good that the property also had a stage with a shelter, but everything needed renovation.

With the help of the project, the toilets, stage, and shelter were renovated, and benches were built. The created community center now allows joint events to be held throughout the year - an outdoor kitchen, campfire food infrastructure, and tents create a perfect combination. The modular house allows the center to be used all year round. There is a kitchen and seating area with modern display equipment. There is a large and spacious terrace around the modular house, next to which there is a smart bench specially made and installed as part of the “Smart Village Development Program,” which tells the history of the Viimsi area.

With the help of the project, a unique and innovative meeting place has been created, which brings the community together, making it more united and active, and enriches the natural and cultural heritage of the region. The project has deepened the connection of the locals with their home place, increasing their care for it.



With the help of the project, a unique and innovative meeting place has been created, which brings the community together, making it more united and active, and enriches the natural and cultural heritage of the region.



Beneficiary: NGO Lubja Village Society

Local Action Group: Northern-Harju Partnership

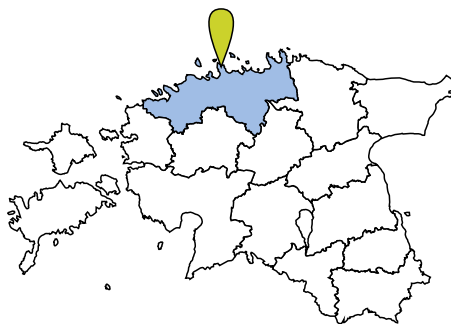
Project location: Lubja village, Viimsi municipality, Harju County

Website: Facebook – Lubja Külaselts MTÜ

The main activities of the project: Development of an open-air community center on the Lubja cliff ledge

Timeframe: 2022–2023

Total support: €56 500



Let's grab the hammers — a workshop open to the community with modern equipment and tools



Men's Shed Haapsalu Kuur started its activities at the end of 2021, and its purpose is to stand for men's well-being, health, and communication, reduce loneliness, maintain craft skills, and promote men's shed principles in Estonia.

Not all households often have the necessary tools and enough space for various carpentry and repair work. The association had a workshop and a certain amount of equipment before the implementation of the project, but in order to offer higher quality and more versatile service, the conditions of the room were improved, and the equipment fleet was supplemented.

The project helped me acquire a format saw, a chip extractor, a battery and electric hand tools, and a set of hand tools.



Photos: NGO Men's Shed Haapsalu Kuur

With the help of the project, a format saw, a chip extractor, a battery and electric hand tools, and a set of hand tools were purchased.

As a result of the project, the capacity of the carpentry workshop increased, and the indoor climate improved due to the reduction of dust, which in turn enabled high-quality and meaningful leisure time, the development of carpentry skills, and the recycling of wood materials.





The purpose of the Men's Shed Haapsalu Kuur is to stand for men's well-being, health, and communication, reduce loneliness, and maintain craft skills.

Beneficiary: NGO Men's Shed Haapsalu Kuur

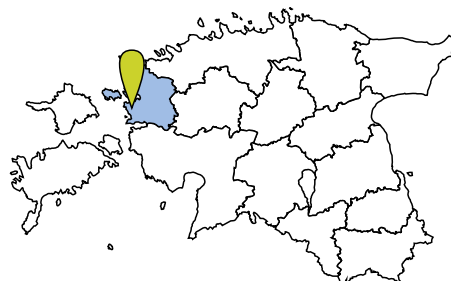
Local Action Group: Kodukant Läänemaa

Project location: Uuemõisa small town,
Ridala municipality, Lääne County

The main activities of the project: Acquisition of
equipment necessary for the provision of community
services for the carpenter workshop

Timeframe: 2023

Total support: €4 320





Creation of a remote workplace in Rāpina

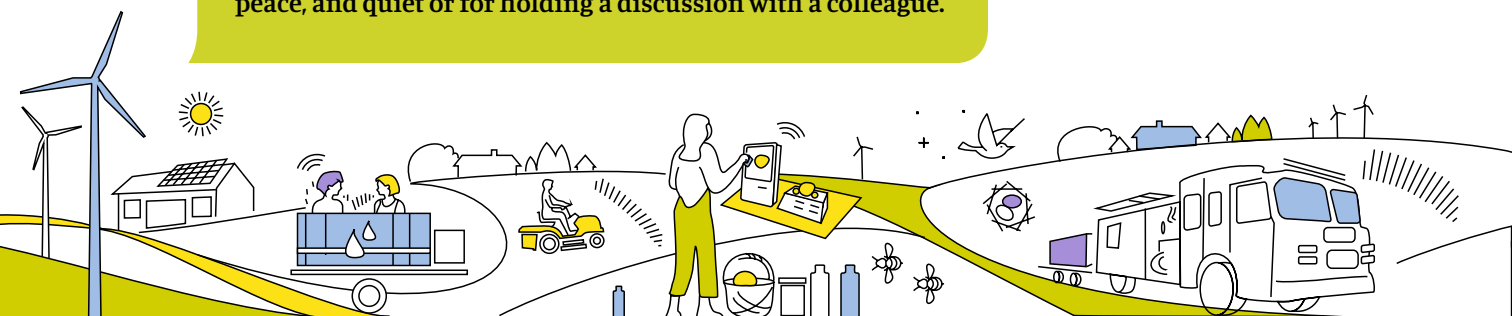
The need to work remotely has now become the new normal. People are increasingly mobile, and jobs are further away from home. Because the conditions at home are not always good enough, communities in rural areas have started to create remote work offices.

In Rāpina, there was a need for a place for remote work, too. With the help of the support money, two workplaces in one room of the Koiva house were furnished with office furniture and the necessary office equipment. The service is intended for residents of the area.

In cooperation with the Põlva County Development Center Foundation (remote work network Kupland) and local entrepreneurs, the residents of the surrounding area now have the opportunity to use the remote work office in Rāpina, where good opportunities are guaranteed to do

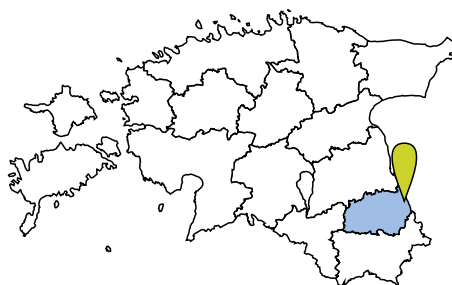
work that requires concentration, peace and quiet or to have a discussion with a colleague.

Residents of the region have the opportunity to use the remote work office in Rāpina, where good opportunities are guaranteed for doing work that requires concentration, peace, and quiet or for holding a discussion with a colleague.





Beneficiary: Räpina Incubation Center Foundation
Local Action Group: Borderland Leader
Project location: Jõe tn 4, Räpina, Põlva County
Website: ariabi.ee
The main activities of the project: Furnishing the office space with office furniture and necessary equipment
Timeframe: 2020–2022
Total support: €2 428



The realization of a long-standing dream of the Valgma village society — a self-sufficient village house

The village house of Valgma was a big dream of the village society from the very first day of operation. People wanted a place close to home where they could meet all year round and organize pleasant and community-uniting activities that support the community's mental and physical health and offer children the joy of action.

With the project, the attic on Valgma village square was reconstructed into a village house. During the works, the walls were built and insulated, the ceiling, floor, and terrace were built, doors were installed, and utility networks were laid. One important goal when building the village house was that the house must pay for itself, and with the help of the earned income, it is possible to organize events.

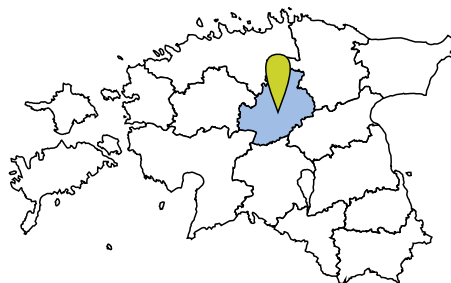
At the end of 2021, the self-sufficient village house was completed and has been filled with good energy and happy people ever since – a good example for other village societies as well!



Valgma's self-sufficient village house is filled with good energy and happy people.



Beneficiary: NGO Valgma Village Society
Local Action Group: Järva Development Partners
Project location: Valgma Village, Paide City, Järva County
Website: valgmaselts.ee/valgma-kulamaja
facebook.com/valgmaridakula
The main activities of the project: Construction of a self-sufficient village house in Valgma
Timeframe: 2020–2021
Total support: €15 000



A knowledgeable and learning community in Vana-Vigala

The more active villagers turned to the NGO Sustainable Vana-Vigala with the desire to organize concert evenings with well-known Estonian artists in the Vana-Vigala manor. In turn, new needs grew out of these events: promoting health, learning about local history, acquiring new skills, and developing entrepreneurship.

In order to expand the fields, several local partners were involved in the project, who would help with advice and strength – Vana-Vigala Technical and Service School, Vana-Vigala Basic School, Vana-Vigala Community Center, and Heltan OÜ.



As a result of the project, several events took place: manor concerts, meetings, and lectures with interesting people, a health day, workshops on building bird nest boxes and making desserts in local schools, and a study trip to the local LEADER region to get inspiration from their activities and projects. In addition, a publication of the points of reference of the old-time- Vana-Vigala was completed.

In addition to acquiring new knowledge and skills, the project has also strengthened the sense of community. The study trip broadened the horizons of the participants and gave them new ideas for starting their own activities. The impact of the project is not limited to the borders of one's own village because the outreach activities also set an example for distant villages.

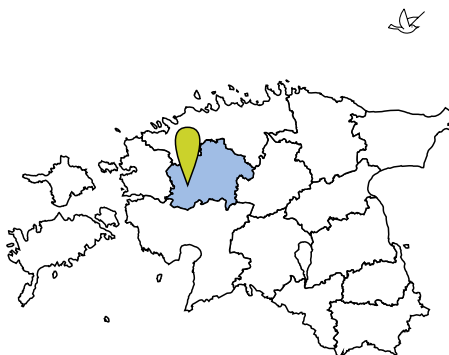




Training on how to make desserts.
Photos: M. Üürike

In addition to acquiring new knowledge and skills, the project has also strengthened the sense of community.

Beneficiary: NGO Sustainable Vana-Vigala
Local Action Group: Rapla Partnership
Project location: Vana-Vigala,
 Märjamaa municipality, Rapla County
Website: jatkusuutlik.ee
 Facebook - MTÜ Jätkusuutlik Vana-Vigala
The main activities of the project: Organizing
 concerts, training, workshops, and study trips and
 issuing publications
Timeframe: 2019–2022
Total support: €14 187





Increasing community resilience and effective functioning in crises

Volunteer rescuers and the local community must be well prepared for crises and accidents. The purpose of community resilience is to maintain efficient functioning, safety, and continuity of essential services regardless of whether the situation is a crisis or not. The Pärnu-Jaagupi Firefighting Society has made it a priority to prepare the community for crises.

In the course of the project, the necessary equipment for the organization of training, a mobile electricity generator, and a crisis room were furnished for crisis accommodation. The trainings take place continuously because, in addition to general knowledge, volunteer rescuers, municipal employees, and other community members have to consider different roles in dealing with a crisis situation.

The electric generator can be transported to a place where there is a critical need for objects important to the community: school buildings, kindergartens, nursing homes, family medical centers, water and sewage pumping stations. The crisis room must give people the opportunity to be warm and quickly recover from situations caused by nature or people. The room will be furnished with field beds, mats, sleeping bags, and bed linen. Volunteer rescuers have not had the means and opportunities requested in the project before.





The purpose of community resilience is to maintain efficient functioning, safety, and the continuity of essential services regardless of whether it is a crisis situation or not.

Beneficiary: NGO Pärnu-Jaagupi Firefighting Society

Local Action Group: Green Riverland Partnership

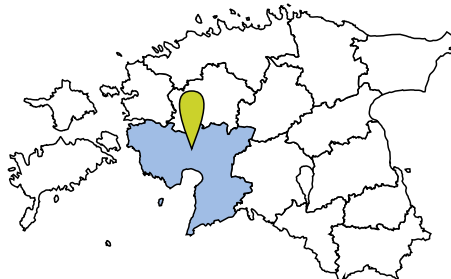
Project location: Pärnu-Jaagupi, Põhja Pärnumaa municipality, Pärnu County

Website: Facebook - Pärnu Jaagupi Tuletõrjeselts

The main activities of the project: The necessary equipment for conducting training, a mobile electricity generator, and resources for crisis accommodation were acquired.

Timeframe: 2022–2024

Total support: €30 000



The development of a unified visitor infrastructure in Soomaa increases community cooperation

Soomaa is known as a nature tourism destination in Estonia, the Baltics, and beyond. The rivers and swamps here, with their water regime, create a distinctive fifth season, especially during the spring flood season. The ever-increasing number of visitors requires a well-thought-out vision and proper infrastructure, which requires cooperation between all municipalities and various sectors in the region. In addition to the unique natural landscape, residents also want to offer local food and services.

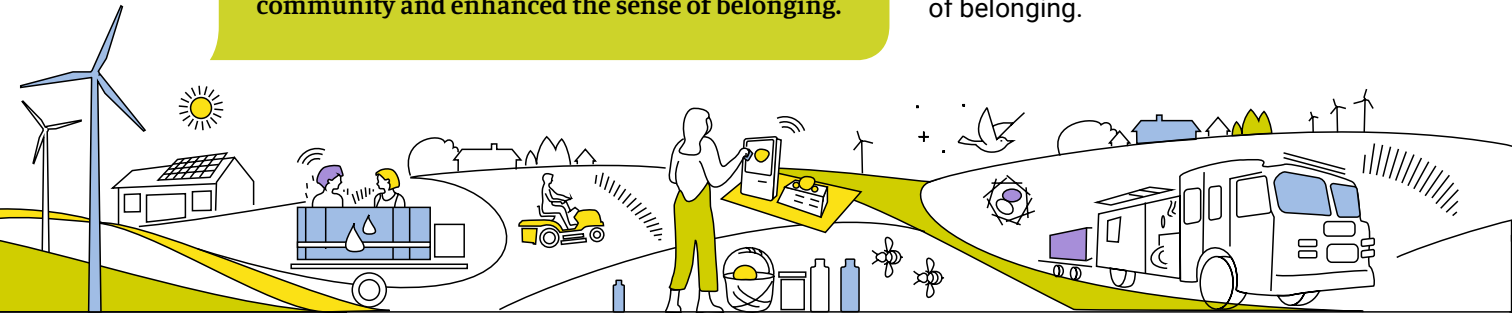
The visual appearance of the region's signs and website was organized under the leadership of the Green Riverland Partnership. The Soomaa region received specially designed gates to Suure-Jaani and Tori, O-shaped information cards, border markers, and signs marking the Soomaa flood record.



The joint development of a marketing strategy for the homestead strengthened relationships in the community and enhanced the sense of belonging.

At the Soomaa gate, flower meadows of wildflowers, which are not mowed, were established. In order to improve the quality of services, event organizers and hiking guides were trained to ensure knowledge of water safety to strengthen cooperation between entrepreneurs and service providers.

The joint development of a marketing strategy for a beautiful homestead strengthened relationships in the community and enhanced the sense of belonging.



The rivers and marshes of Soomaa create a unique fifth season during the spring floods.

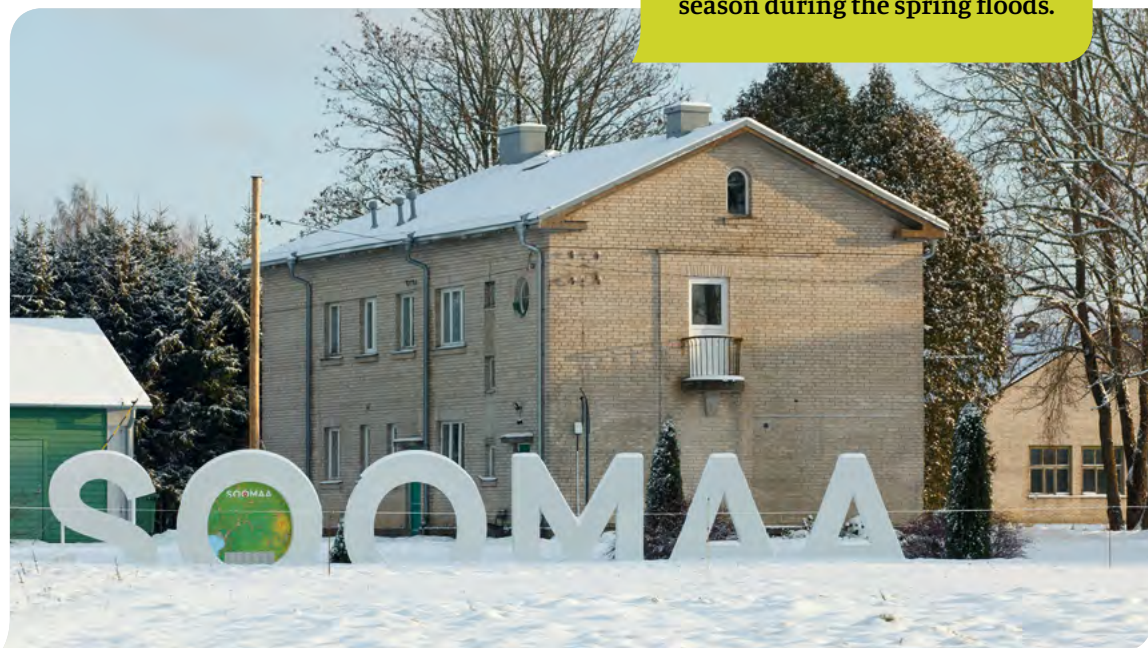


Photo: Ülo Soomets

Beneficiary: Green Riverland Partnership

Local Action Group: Green Riverland Partnership

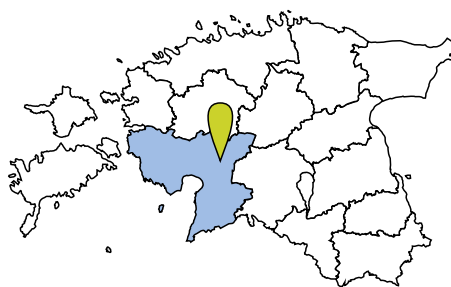
Project location: Green Riverland region

Website: jõemaa.ee

The main activities of the project: Development of cooperation and establishment of a unified visitor infrastructure in the Soomaa region

Timeframe: 2020–2022

Total support: €60 000



The meetings of the three villages added a new lease of life

The people of the three communities of Tõrva municipality – Taagepera, Ritsu, and Riidaja villages – succeeded by involving young people, working-age people, and pensioners in joint activities. This is not so little when knowing that the households in the villages are scattered, people go to work far away, and there is not much daily communication.

The goal of the joint activities of the three villages was to share the experiences and knowledge of the villages and thereby involve more people in the activities of the local community. It was innovative that the communities jointly initiated and wrote a project with different activity options for the people of their communities.



The clay workshop. Photo: Pille Valner

Thanks to the events (ceramics workshop, study trip to Latvia, nature walk, and chat room), interest in cooperation increased in the territory of the municipality. In addition, people had the opportunity to learn about the activities of other communities and their homesteads. The project provided skills and knowledge to ensure a united mind in the communities, developed social communication, strengthened the village communities of Tõrva municipality, and increased entrepreneurship. It is a pleasure to note that the young people of the villages now communicate more with the young people of other communities.

Working together, it was once again confirmed that local activities and social life are crucial for the survival of villages when working in the centers of attraction.



By working together, it was confirmed that local activities and social life while working in the centers of attraction are crucial for the survival of the villages.



On a study trip to Latvia in August 2022. Photo: Marten Letlane

Beneficiary: NGO Taagepera Village Society

Local Action Group: Mulgimaa Development Center

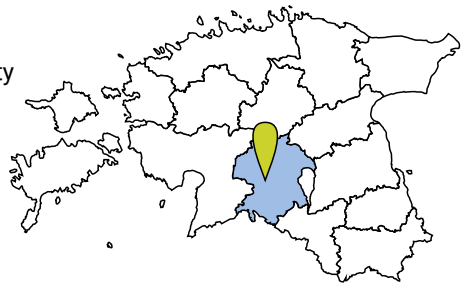
Project location: Taagepera village, Tõrva parish, Valga County

Website: Facebook - Taagepera Village Society

The main activities of the project: Organizing a ceramics workshop, a study trip, a nature walk, and a chat evening for community members

Timeframe: 2022–2023

Total support: €6 323



Smart solutions in public spaces help reduce the carbon footprint

The adoption of energy and environmentally sustainable solutions is a growing trend in a world facing climate change. Public space is a guide. There are solar-powered garbage cans in Ulvi village in Vinni municipality, as well as composting devices that use renewable energy in Ulvi Kodu nursing home and kindergarten.



Photo: Kadri Kuusmik

The garbage can is made of 100% recyclable materials and is vandal-proof thanks to the 3 mm steel material, and the lid is opened with a foot-operated pedal. A smart garbage can with a built-in press compresses waste 5 - 8 times, being connected to a remote control platform through sensors and a GPS system, through which the need to empty is signaled.

The composting device helps to reduce the amount of bio-waste sent to the landfill, thereby reducing the amount of methane gas generated from organic waste and the emission of carbon dioxide, i.e., the carbon footprint. The waste input capacity is 4-5 kg per day, with a waste reduction of 80-90%, requiring compost removal only once a week.

We are happy to note that smart garbage cans and composters have also received positive attention from the media and residents.



Smart garbage cans and composters have received positive attention from the media and residents.



In order of composting. Photo: Gustav Saar

Beneficiary: Vinni Municipal Government

Local Action Group: Virumaa Koostöökogu

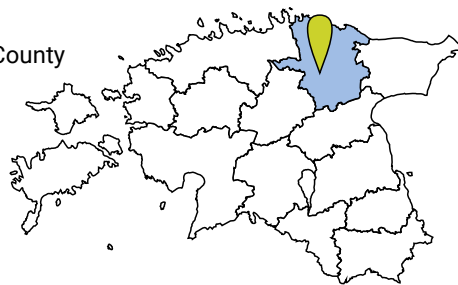
Project location: Ulvi village, Vinni municipality, Lääne-Viru County

Website: vinnivald.ee

The main activities of the project: Energy saving and nature conservation – purchase and installation of solar powered bins and composting equipment using renewable energy.

Timeframe: 2022–2023

Total support: €14 999





Young people from Laekvere meet at the skate park

The town of Laekvere now has a modern skateboard park, which provides activities and delights the local youth. The idea of building a skate park started during the regional strategy discussions.



During the joint discussions of the residents of the region and the employees of the municipality, two topics came up: to demolish the building, which has been empty for years and has become dangerous, and to create more outdoor leisure opportunities for the whole community. The demolition freed up 600 square meters of free space, where the sports facility was well suited. Elements of a skate park, two posts with LED lights, a security camera, and wooden borders were installed there. The complex also includes a wooden shelter and a bicycle rack. Those who are not attracted by the activities of the skate park can do activities in the fresh air: use the outdoor table tennis set, play chess, or have a picnic on a table with chess squares.



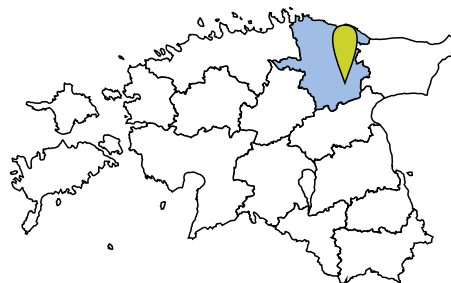
In Laekvere, the area has now been used for many years, security has increased, and versatile leisure opportunities have been created.



In Laekvere, the area has been used for many years, security has increased, and new and exciting leisure opportunities have been created.



Beneficiary: Vinni Municipal Government
Local Action Group: PAIK
Project location: Laekvere small towns Vinni municipality, Lääne-Viru County
Website: pandivere.eu, vinnivald.ee
The main activities of the project: Development of the skate park
Timeframe: 2022–2023
Total support: €49 999



When the playground becomes a community meeting place

Haljala's family playground offers fun for all ages, with plenty of space for sports, games, and relaxation. The ice rink, open in winter, attracts hockey fans, and one can go sledding on the slopes.

In Haljala, a small town, there was a lack of children's playground attractions for different age groups, where there would be activities for both children and parents at the same time. According to the previous detailed planning, the property was already the land under the recreation facility. Since the land was underutilized and spoiled the visual of the living environment, the goal of building the new square was to create a whole in the public space in order to diversify the movement habits of the residents and increase the attractiveness of the living environment.

The busy Tahmaküla community, which has been organizing the Tahmaküla street festival for several years, was now at the forefront of the initiative. The project started with soil planning and

relief design. Swings for children of different ages, a drawing board, a carousel, balance, and climbing areas for different age levels, a hammock, an exercise ground, various activity walls, a tunnel and a playhouse for small children, a table tennis and chess table, a futsal, a toy ship representing an old fishing boat, a bicycle rack, benches, etc. were installed on the family playground.

We are happy to say that during the work that took place in May 2023, community members planted a spruce hedge on the square.



The aim was to diversify people's mobility and enhance the attractiveness of the living environment by creating an integrated public space.



Beneficiary: NGO Klots

Local Action Group: The Partners

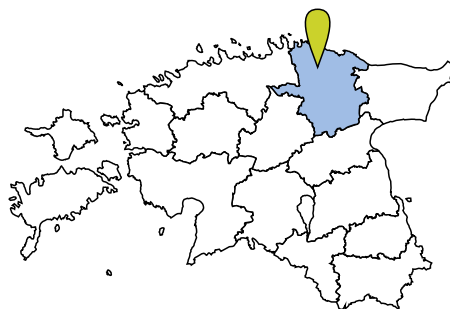
Project location: Haljala village, Haljala municipality, Lääne-Viru County

Website: Facebook – MTÜ KLOTS

The main activities of the project: Construction of a family playground and acquisition of inventory

Timeframe: 2022–2023

Total support: €49 998



The renovated Kangsti village house improves the community's living environment and cooperation

The Kangsti Village Society has been operating for over 20 years and has been involved in organizing the social and cultural life of the community, building and furnishing village grounds intended for public use, and used them to organize traditional village and outdoor events.

The Naadi tavern building, which had been empty for many years, was a good fit for the village house. After the renovation, the use of the building for community activities increased. Owning a house and a good space creates added value, increases the quality of the living environment, and increases the motivation of young people to stay in the area.

The newly renovated house can be used for training courses, hobby groups, farm food workshop and it is possible to open a small cafe and rent books. In the future, there are plans to organize children's birthday parties and offer other community services. Thanks to a proper village house, cooperation, and information exchange in the community improved. In a crisis situation, the village hall is an essential headquarters and information-gathering place for residents. The building has a fast internet connection, which also improves the quality of the living environment.



The renovated village house diversifies the activities of the village and offers good opportunities for joint activities, contributes to intelligent community development, and increases the motivation of young people to stay in the area.



The renovated village hall diversifies the activities of the village and offers good opportunities for joint activities, contributes to smart community development, and increases the motivation of young people to stay in the area.



Beneficiary: NGO Kangsti Village Society

Local Action Group: Võrumaa Partnership Assembly

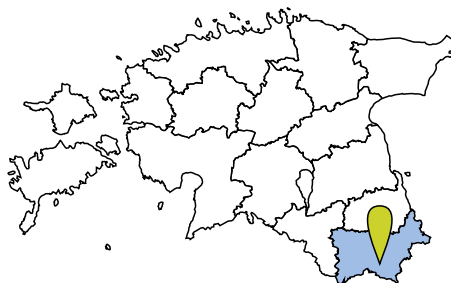
Project location: Kangsti village, Rõuge municipality, Võru County

Website: facebook.com/kangsti.kulaselts.5

The main activities of the project: Renovation of the former Naadi tavern building into a village house

Timeframe: 2022–2023

Total support: €47 163





The multifunctional bus stop shows the ingenuity of the villagers

The humor of the islanders can be easily perceived when you drive to the Atla village bus stop. Even the bus stop information board has a look typical of a fishing village: the roof is shaped like a boat, and the sides of the board are shaped like a fish, which provides good protection from the wind.

The need for a lighted and sheltered bus stop came to the fore when the number of families in the village of Atla increased and the number of school-going children increased. In addition to the passengers, the bus drivers also needed lighting in order to better maneuver the buses on the narrow road with deep ditches.

The active village association found out that there were many needs for better organization of village life. In addition to a bus stop, there was a lack of a village notice board. That's how we came up with the idea that the new information stand could be multifunctional, with mailboxes, a shelter with a bench for waiting for the bus, and, of course, the possibility to hang notices.

Locals are of the opinion that the appearance of the old fishing village has now become more attractive and modern, and the lighted bus stop helps to increase the community's sense of security.



Now, the appearance of the old fishing village has become more attractive and modern, and the illuminated bus stop helps to increase the community's sense of security.



Beneficiary: NGO Atla Village Society

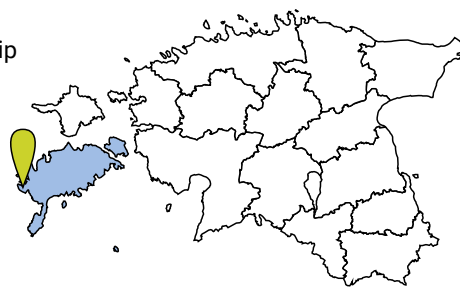
Local Action Group: West-Estonian Islands Partnership

Project location: Atla village, Saaremaa municipality, Saaremaa

The main activities of the project: Construction of an information stand-bus stop with an autonomous lighting pole

Timeframe: 2019

Total support: €6 164





Laimjala Bus Shelter inspires people all over the world

What is the best way to introduce local alluvial plants and butterflies and to teach nature conservation and environmentally conscious behavior? All along with outdoor learning and at the bus stop! No kidding, the islanders have done it well. For this purpose, a dingy bus shelter, almost half a century old, was renovated, the walls of which were painted with beautiful alluvial plants.

The village of Laimjala has developed well in the last decade. Several significant objects, such as the village store, Laimjala community center, outdoor library, etc., have received a new look, but the bus shelter caught the eye with its appearance. Laimjala Nature Friends Society came to the rescue, under the leadership of which the pavilion was renovated into an interactive outdoor learning place for both locals and the guests of the island. In addition to the aesthetic and functional improvement, the bus waiting pavilion now has the option of sorting garbage, a new limestone floor and oak benches, 64 alluvial vascular plants, and 12 butterflies with scientific names in Estonian, English, and Latin were painted on the interior surfaces of the building with exact species characteristics.

The Laimjala village initiative has received a lot of attention in Saaremaa and around the world.

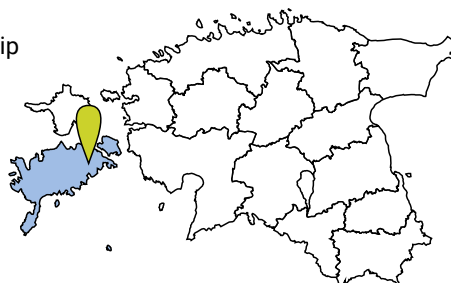
The initiative of Laimjala village has received a lot of attention in Saaremaa and around the world: the international group *Illustrious Botanical Illustrations* has given the bus stop more than 1,000 recognitions. In addition, several European and American actors have been inspired by the islanders' initiative.



The bus waiting pavilion was renovated into an interactive outdoor learning place for both locals and guests of the island.



Beneficiary: Laimjala Nature Friends Society
Local Action Group: West-Estonian Islands Partnership
Project location: Laimjala village,
 Saaremaa municipality, Saaremaa
Website: facebook.com/laimjalaloodussopradeselts
The main activities of the project: Renovation
 and design of the bus shelter
Timeframe: 2020–2021
Total support: €10 512



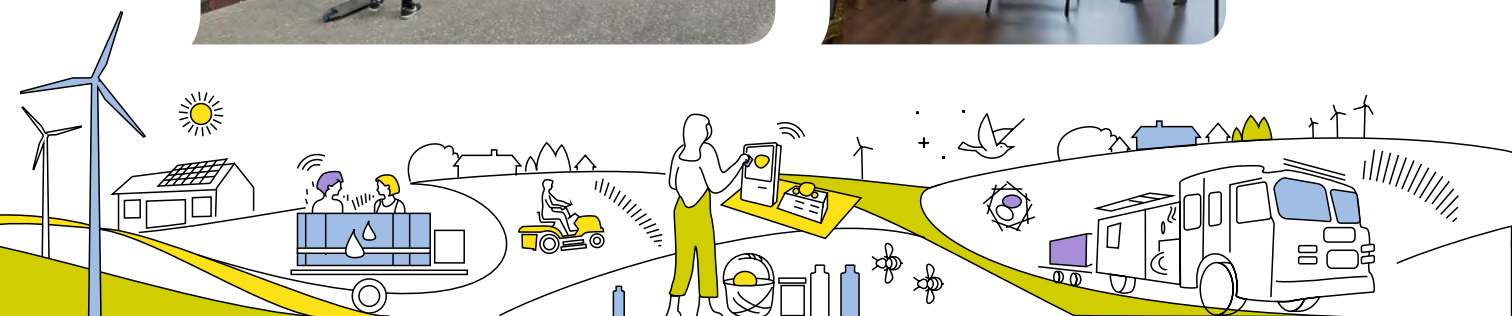
The renovation of the community center gave the wind in its sales

With the help of the project, the community of Lohkva got the premises of the renovated community center and thereby added a number of activities for both young people and adults.

Until now, the Lohkva region did not have enough modern premises to deal with hobbies and youth work. Renovation of rooms that were unused and in poor condition gave new opportunities for different age groups to participate in community activities.

The finished gym with washrooms allows young people from the age of 16 who cannot find activities to their liking in a regular youth center to practice sports.

According to the locals, the renovation of the community center raised a new level for offering different services and getting together. A youth center and an open youth employment service have started rapidly. In addition, various leisure opportunities are offered for both young people and adults - yoga for pregnant women and the elderly, a community kitchen, a sewing workshop, and the possibility to rent rooms for various events. Thanks to this, local businesses have also revived.



According to the locals, the renovation of the community center created a new level of offering different services and getting together.



Beneficiary: NGO Lohkva Village Society

Local Action Group: Tartu County Development Association

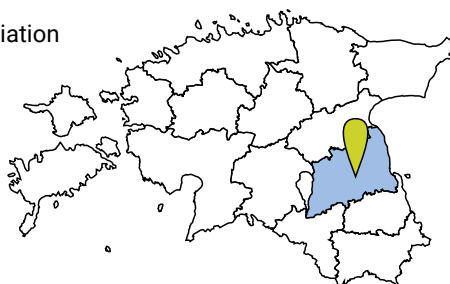
Project location: Lohkva village,
Luunja municipality, Tartu County

Website: Facebook – NGO Lohkva Village Society

The main activities of the project: Renovation of
the room on the 1st floor of the Lohkva
community center

Timeframe: 2020–2021

Total support: €41 206



Index of keywords

Bus stop 62, 64
 Change of generations 28
 Cinema 14
 Climate change 54
 Community 10, 12, 22, 24, 48, 52
 Community integration 28, 38, 40, 46
 Community safety 62
 Community center 12, 16, 32, 38, 44, 60, 66
 Community service 22, 26
 Connecting the community 6, 32, 34, 44, 52
 Connecting generations 10, 66
 Cooperation 6, 8, 10, 22, 24, 28, 32, 34, 50
 Crisis management 18, 48
 Cultural heritage 24
 Culture 10, 14, 24, 52
 Digitality 14
 Energy efficiency 16, 54
 Entrepreneurship 20, 30, 32, 36, 42
 Farm shop 30
 Fire department 18, 48
 Handicraft 40
 Heating system 16
 History of the region 24, 34, 38
 Hygiene 18, 26
 Increasing engagement 28, 32, 34, 38, 40, 46
 Information stand 50, 62
 Leisure time 20, 56, 58
 Local food 12, 30
 Men from rural areas 40
 Mobility 8, 14, 18, 20, 26
 Natural environment 36, 64
 Nature tourism 50
 New services in rural areas 14, 20, 30, 32, 42
 Outdoor education 64
 Playground 58
 Rescue 18, 48
 Remote work 36, 42
 Rural tourism 12, 50
 Self-sufficient 22, 44
 Skate park 58
 Smart village strategies 6, 38
 Solar energy 54, 62
 Trainings 6, 32, 34, 46, 48, 60
 Village development 44
 Village house 16, 44, 60
 Young people 8, 10, 56, 58
 Waste management 54





