



European Union  
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# **State of the Art of**

# **Vidzeme Planning Region**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Methodology**

State of the Art of Vidzeme Planning Region has made by Project Manager Lelde Ābele, Project Experts - Lienīte Priedāja-Klepere and Ieva Vītola.

The materials of Vidzeme planning region, consultations with sector experts, information posted on homepages of state and local government institutions, studies and publications on tourism, cultural heritage and nature protection objects, as well as topical issues were used for preparation of situation research.

The following methods were used in the research development process - collection, summarizing and analysis of data and information, consultations and discussions with sector experts and representatives of the institutions involved.

### **1.2. Sources of information**

The sources of information used in the State of the Art:

- *Brastiņš E.* Latvijas pilskalni. Vidzeme. Rīga, Pieminekļu valde, 1930;
- *Caune A., Ose I.* Latvijas 12. gadsimta beigu – 17. gadsimta vācu piļu leksikons. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2004;
- *Caune A., Ose I.* Latvijas viduslaiku baznīcas. 12. gs. beigas – 16. gs. sākums. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2010;
- Development of water tourism as nature and active tourism component in Latvia and Estonia. RIWERWAYS. Application Form, Estonia – Latvia Programme, 2013;
- Development of water tourism as nature and active tourism component in Latvia and Estonia. RIWERWAYS. Materials of the Project. - [http://www.vidzeme.lv/lv/projekti/udensturisma\\_ka\\_dabas\\_un\\_aktiva\\_turisma\\_komponentes\\_attistiba\\_latvija\\_un\\_igaunija\\_riverways](http://www.vidzeme.lv/lv/projekti/udensturisma_ka_dabas_un_aktiva_turisma_komponentes_attistiba_latvija_un_igaunija_riverways).
- INTEREG IVC projekts WATERWAYS FORWARD. Iekšējo ūdeņu ietekme uz Vidzemes reģiona ekonomisko attīstību. Pētījums. SIA „NK Konsultāciju birojs”, 2010;
- Interview with Egils Kurpnieks, Executive Director of Municipality of Līgatne – 28.11.2016;
- Interview with Liene Krūmiņa, Ginta Gailīte and Kristīne Lāce, Municipality of Strenči. – 3.12.2016;

- Interview with tourism expert, dr.geog. Andris Klepers (Assistant Professor of Vidzeme High School) – 25.11.2016;
- *Johansons A.* Koku pludināšana Latvijā, 1944;
- Lūka M. Par tūrisma politikas prioritātēm un Latvijas Tūrisma attīstības pamatnostādnēm, 2016.- <http://www.lps.lv>;
- Policy Recommendations for the Region of Vidzeme. Project "Historical values and their associated landscapes" (HISTCAPE), 2014;
- Statistical Data of of the Central Statistical Bureau – [www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv)
- Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģija 2030. Vidzemes plānošanas reģions, 2014.  
[http://www.vidzeme.lv/upload/lv/Attistibas\\_planosana/Pazinojumi/VPR\\_IAS\\_300\\_32015.pdf](http://www.vidzeme.lv/upload/lv/Attistibas_planosana/Pazinojumi/VPR_IAS_300_32015.pdf);
- Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona pašreizējās situācijas analīze, 2015;
- Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona teritorijas plānojums 2007-2027;
- Vidzemes Tūrisma asociācija. INTEREG IVC projekts CHARTS. Vidzemes kultūras tūrisma politikas ieviešanas plāns. Projekta CHARTS rezultātu integrācija vietējā reģionālā kultūras tūrisma politikā. Vidzeme, Latvija, 100 lpp., 2014.gada novembri;
- Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Latvia, Operational Programme “Growth and Employment”, 2013
- Latvijas Republikas Finanšu ministriju, Vadošās iestādes un Sertifikācijas iestādes funkciju un procedūru apraksts, 2016

### 1.3. Definitions and acronyms

Considering, that nowadays waterways in the territory of Vidzeme planning region don't have economic functions anymore neither in transportation of passengers, nor in transportation of goods, a framework and definition of waterways were determined in cooperation with sector experts, which is necessary for the research work and situation analysis. The following waterways and places in Vidzeme are considered as inland waterways in Vidzeme planning territory and in the framework of the SWARE project:

#### 1) Historic waterways:

- The old Gauja River waterway of the Hanseatic Union and its dry land branches (Straupe, Valmiera, Cēsis, Rauna, Smiltene, Gaujiena, Alūksne, Burtnieki, Rūjiena);

- wood materials driving waterways (Gauja, Vaidava, Tirza, Brasla, Rauna, Amata, Palsa, Vija, Vidaga; Salaca, Burtnieks, Seda, Rūja; Aiviekste, Pededze, Bolupe, Veseta, Liede, Kuja, Ogre Rivers);
  - Formerly populated lakes (Lake Alūksne with Pilssala and Cepurītes island, Lake Alsviķi Indzeris with an island, Lake Āraiši with a lake castle etc.);
- 2) Rivers and lakes, which are nowadays used for recreation as active recreation waterways (Abuls River, Līgatne River, Lake Kāls, Lake Vaidava, Lake Ungurs, Lake Alauksts, and Lake Lizdole etc.).

The main acronyms used in the State of the Art:

CF - Cohesion Fund

CFCA - Central Finance and Contracting Agency

ERDF - European Regional Development Fund

ESF - European Social Fund

EU - European Union

GDP - gross domestic product

GNP - Gauja National Park

ha - hectare

km<sup>2</sup> - square kilometre

LR - Latvian Republic

NGO - Non-governmental organization

OP - Operational Programme

RTD – Research Tehnology and Development

SMEs - Small and medium-sized enterprises

VPR - Vidzeme Planning Region

YEI Youth Employment Initiative

## 2. The regional context

### 2.1. The geo-institutional context



Source: *Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona teritorijas plānojums 2007-2027*

Vidzeme Planning Region (VPR) is in the north-east of the Latvian part of the border with Estonia (290 km) and the Russian Federation (46,4 km). VPR territory has 25 counties, 116 parishes and one national level city – Valmiera. The coverage of the region is 15 245,43 km<sup>2</sup>. Vidzeme region is the largest in terms of area (23,6 % of the national territory), but it has the lowest population - 13 people per 1 km<sup>2</sup> (2016).<sup>1</sup>

In compliance with the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 28 April 2004 "On statistical regions of Republic of Latvia and administrative units included in them" (Amendments: Order No 381 of Cabinet of Ministers (03.06.2009); Order No 759 of Cabinet of Ministers (28.12.2010).) and the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS3) of the European Union, the data are calculated on 6 statistical regions: Riga region (Riga city); Pierīga region; Vidzeme region; Kurzeme region; Zemgale region; Latgale region.

<sup>1</sup> Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2016 – [www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv) – 3.12.2016.

The four statistical regions Kurzeme, Latgale, Vidzeme and Zemgale align with the planning regions of Latvia, but Rīga and Pierīga statistical regions comprise the territory of the Rīga planning region. The five planning regions of Latvia are created for regional development, planning, coordination and local cooperation.

Due to Administrative Territorial Reform (1 July 2009) administrative districts no longer exist as administrative units in Latvia. Municipalities and parishes amalgamated and formed new LAU 2 units – municipalities. The five planning regions of Latvia - Riga, Vidzeme, Kurzeme, Zemgale and Latgale are created for regional development, planning, coordination and local cooperation.

Vidzeme is the European Union border region, which is crossed by several significant international transport corridors, ensuring direct contacts of Vidzeme with the largest regional centres in neighbouring countries - Tartu and Tallinn in Estonia, Pskov, Novgorod and Saint Petersburg in Russia. Significant strategic development areas for integration of the Baltic Sea region are forming around these transport corridors - Via Hanseatica development corridor, the Southern Baltics Circle development corridor, as well as VIA Baltica. Vidzeme does not have direct access to the Baltic Sea or its ports, and there is also no airport.<sup>2</sup>

The largest area of Vidzeme region is covered by forest land, its proportion constituting 51.7%, with agricultural land occupies 34% of the total area. Vidzeme is the richest region in Latvia in forest land.

Vidzeme planning region territory includes 26 municipalities - one republican town Valmiera and 25 regions: Alūksne, Amata, Ape, Beverīna, Burtnieki, Cēsis, Cesvaine, Ērgļi, Gulbene, Jaunpiebalga, Kocēni, Līgatne, Lubāna, Madona, Mazsalaca, Naukšēni, Pārgauja, Priekule, Rauna, Rūjiena, Smiltene, Varakļāni, Valka and Vecpiebalga regions. The elements of region population structure are towns, villages and messuages. Vidzeme planning region contains 16 towns (the largest towns - Valmiera and Cēsis), more than 950 villages in rural territories, and rural messuages. Compared to other regions, Vidzeme planning region has a characteristic uniform national composition of population. It is the most Latvian region in Latvia, as in total 86.7% of the population are Latvians.

Vidzeme region is traditionally considered as one of the richest territories in scenic landscapes in Latvia. In the course of centuries of interaction of nature and people a characteristic landscape has developed in Vidzeme, the so-called mosaic

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<sup>2</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona pašreizējās situācijas analīze, 2015.

landscape, which is formed by messuages, rural areas, forest clusters and water bodies. Particularly special and attractive landscapes can be observed in Vidzeme and Alūksne highland, Gauja River old valley and Salaca River valley. The region has one of TOP7 destinations of Latvian tourism – Gauja National Park.

Vidzeme has a characteristic preserved originality of rural areas – the clean and low-polluted environment, visually expressive and distinctive landscapes, natural and cultural values. The spatial structure of rural areas is based on high proportion of natural territories, which is created by agricultural land, forest territories and water bodies. The green areas has an important sanitary and hygienic function, which reasonably increases the efficiency of ecological services.<sup>3</sup>

Vidzeme region has relatively high quality of environment, which is a significant value both on the regional and national level. Compared to many regions around the world and in European countries, Vidzeme region has economically the least affected environment, more stable balance of ecosystems and lower environmental pollution.<sup>4</sup>

## **2.2. Socio-economic context**

Vidzeme region has the lowest population density in Latvia - 195 998 people (2016). Population in the last 4-5 years decreased rapidly due to emigration to foreign countries or regions.

Compared to year 2010, the population of Vidzeme planning region (218 208 people) has decreased by 10.2 % or 22.21 thousand people.

In 2014, 86.8 thousand people were residing in towns and 115 thousand people in rural areas of Vidzeme region, in terms of percentage - 43.03% were residing in towns, 56.97% - in rural areas. Vidzeme region has the lowest proportion of town inhabitants among regions, and the highest proportion of inhabitants in rural areas.

The fastest growing age group in the region are pension age inhabitants (inhabitants older than 65 years of age), whereas the fastest declining group – young people 15-29 years of age.<sup>5</sup> The total number of people in working age in VPR decreased from 153,5 thousand people in 2007, 134 231 thousand people in 2011 down to 120,46 thousand in 2016.<sup>6</sup>

Vidzeme region has the lowest proportion of economically active inhabitants in the overall regional structure of population. 64.5 % of population aged from 15 to 64 were

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<sup>3</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģija 2030. Vidzemes plānošanas reģions, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona pašreizējās situācijas analīze, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona pašreizējās situācijas analīze, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2016 – [www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv) – 3.12.2016.



employed in Vidzeme region in 2015,<sup>7</sup> which is significantly lagging behind the quantitative objectives of Europe 2020 (75%).

The level of unemployment in Vidzeme planning region in 2015 was relatively high (7.5%) aged from 15 to 74<sup>8</sup>. Vidzeme planning region has the second highest proportion of long-term unemployment (38.2%), which exceeds the average indicator in Latvia. Vidzeme region has one of the lowest average wages among regions of Latvia - EUR 480 net (2015).<sup>9</sup>

According to the data of the Central Statistical Bureau, the proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) of Vidzeme planning region constituted 6.2% of GDP of Latvia in 2013, which 1 416 181 thousand euros. GDP per capita was 6 944 euros.<sup>10</sup> The GDP indicator of Vidzeme region is traditionally the lowest among regions.

Among Latvian regions, Vidzeme has the lowest value added – EUR 1 258 million, which is only 6.22% of the total value added produced in Latvia. The value added per one employee in Vidzeme region is higher than the average indicator in Latvia.<sup>11</sup>

Vidzeme planning region has a relatively high number of economically active units in the market sector per 1,000 inhabitants, outpacing all other regions of Latvia, except Riga city. Also the number of commercial companies per 1,000 inhabitants is high in Vidzeme region among other regions, outpaced only by Pierīga. Entrepreneurship in the region is concentrated around national and regional development centres and their surroundings. Most of companies are situated around territories of largest towns and in the large towns - Valmiera, Cēsis, Smiltene.<sup>12</sup>

According to the type of activity (NACE rev. 2) The highest number of economically active units in Vidzeme region in 2015 were operating in the forestry and logging sector, as well as in plant cultivation and livestock farming:

<i>Economic Sector</i>	<i>2015</i>
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	5 842
Trade	1 757
Services	3 159

<sup>7</sup> Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2016 – [www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv) – 3.12.2016.

<sup>8</sup> Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2016 – [www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv) – 3.12.2016.

<sup>9</sup> Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2016 – [www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv) – 3.12.2016.

<sup>10</sup> Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2016 – [www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv) – 3.12.2016.

<sup>11</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona pašreizējās situācijas analīze, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona pašreizējās situācijas analīze, 2015.

Industry	1 105
Environment and Energy	106
Building	1 058
Finance and Insurance	93
Health	516
Education	263
Other	2 557

Source: Central Statistical Bureau, 2016

In 2015, there were 83 economically active statistical units of the market sector per thousand inhabitants. There are mostly self-employed persons (7 848), commercial companies (5 536) and farms (2 297) operating in Vidzeme region.<sup>13</sup> In Vidzeme there is proportionally the highest number of farms and fishermen farms operating among all regions. Economic activities in agriculture are diversified with such types of operation as biological agriculture and craft.

Compared to year 2009, increase in the number of companies can be observed in almost all areas. The most rapid increase in the number of economically active units was observed in the areas of agriculture, forestry and fisheries (+391), professional, scientific and technical services (+197), education (+84), construction (+82), processing industry (+75) and information and communications services (+55). Decrease in the number of companies can be observed in areas of operations with real estate (-50) and financial and insurance operations (-8).<sup>14</sup>

### 2.3. Governance

The main regulatory enactment for water management and protection in Latvia is the Water Management Law, developed according to requirements of the European Community Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).

Borders of water objects do not match with administrative borders; therefore, the territory of Vidzeme planning region according to the River basin classification determined in the Water Management Law falls under Gauja River and partially also Daugava River basin district:

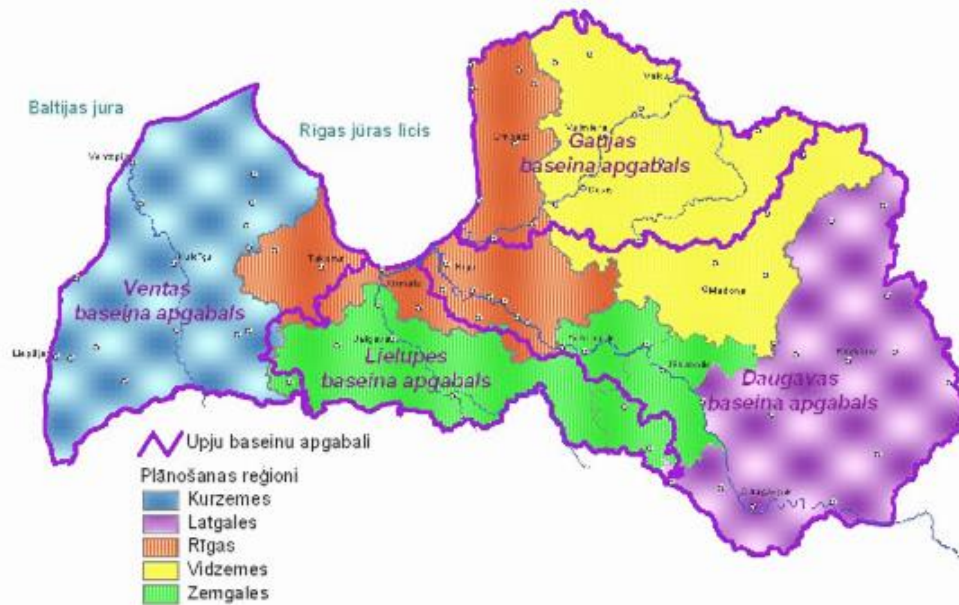
- Gauja River basin district covers 13.051 km<sup>2</sup> or 20.2% of the territory of Latvia. It is formed by catchment basins of Gauja River, Salaca River and small Rivers

<sup>13</sup> Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2016 – [www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv) – 3.12.2016.

<sup>14</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona pašreizējās situācijas analīze, 2015.

flowing into the Gulf of Riga, as well as Lake Burtnieks with its tributaries. Gauja River basin district has many special areas of conservation, a large area is covered by Gauja National Park and Northern Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve;

- Daugava River basin district covers 27.062 km<sup>2</sup> or 41.09% of the territory of Latvia, partially located also in Vidzeme planning region – with the upper course of Aiviekste River, as well as the upper course and tributaries of Ogre River.<sup>15</sup>



Source: *Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona teritorijas plānojums 2007-2027*

The leading state administration institution in the sector of environmental protection is the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. There are several environmental protection and climate changes regulatory laws adopted in Latvia - the Environmental Protection Law, the Law “On Pollution”, Waste Management Law, Natural Resources Tax Law etc. Environmental protection and climate changes regulatory enactments of Latvia are developed according to requirements of EU Directives. The Nature Conservation Agency is subordinated to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The objective of this agency is to promote implementation of unified nature conservation policy in Latvia, and to facilitate efficient management and administration of special areas of conservation in Latvia. The Agency has six territorial structural units - administrations of Latvian national parks and reserves, including administrations of Gauja National Park and Northern Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, which are situated in Vidzeme planning region.

<sup>15</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona pašreizējās situācijas analīze, 2015.

Water management is under the competence of local governments. Involvement of local governments in solving of water management and development issues is mainly related to increasing of drinking water quality, collection of waste water etc.

The responsible authority of Latvia for designing and implementation of national policy for tourism development is the Ministry of Economics, which is the leading authority in the tourism sector. The Investment and Development Agency of Latvia is subordinated to the Ministry of Economics. The Department of Tourism, a structural unit of the Agency, is responsible for implementation of tourism policy in Latvia.

The priorities of Latvian tourism policy are defined in Latvian Tourism Development Guidelines (2014-2020), determining, that the objective of Latvian tourism development policy is development of sustainable tourism, promoting increase of competitiveness of tourism products in foreign markets.<sup>16</sup> Currently, a new Latvian tourism marketing strategy for next year's is developed.

Promotion of tourism on the regional level is implemented by Vidzeme Tourism Association, and on the local level – by local tourism information centres and local governments. Attraction of tourists and promotion of entrepreneurship is among the priorities of local governments. Vidzeme Tourism Association within the framework of INTEREG IVC project CHARTS in 2014 has developed Vidzeme cultural tourism policy implementation plan, which emphasizes the values of cultural historical heritage of Vidzeme in the context of tourism and assists local governments, tourism entrepreneurs, owners and managers of cultural monuments to develop sustainable cultural tourism in Vidzeme.<sup>17</sup>

The Tourism Cluster EnterGauja of Gauja National Park (GNP) operates in Vidzeme region, which is the largest tourism cluster in the Baltics (see more in paragraph 2.4.2.). The cluster creates a long-term cooperation model between GNP and the parties interested in development of surroundings tourism: merchants, local governments, nature protection, educational and research institutions. The main guiding document of this cluster is the strategy of Gauja NP cluster, as well as documentation of brand management and marketing strategy.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ekonomikas Ministrija, 2016. Politikas plānošanas dokumenti:

[https://www.em.gov.lv/lv/nozares\\_politika/turisms/dokumenti/politikas\\_planosanas\\_dokumenti/](https://www.em.gov.lv/lv/nozares_politika/turisms/dokumenti/politikas_planosanas_dokumenti/)

<sup>17</sup> Vidzemes Tūrisma asociācija. INTEREG IVC projekts CHARTS. Vidzemes kultūras tūrisma politikas ieviešanas plāns. Projekta CHARTS rezultātu integrācija vietējā reģionālā kultūras tūrisma politikā. Vidzeme, Latvija, 100 lpp., 2014.gada novembris.

<sup>18</sup> Gaujas NP stratēģija 2012 – 2019. <http://tourism.sigulda.lv/gaujas-np-t%C5%ABrisma-klastera-strat%C4%93%C4%A3ija/>

Protection and preservation of cultural heritage in Latvia is under the competence of the Ministry of Culture. Protection of cultural monuments is under the responsibility of the State Cultural Monuments Protection Inspectorate, preservation of intangible cultural heritage is dealt with by the Latvian National Centre for Culture, both authorities being subordinated to the Ministry of Culture.

Both on the level of local government and on the national level there is no unified institution in Latvia, which is generally responsible for or gives recommendations about planning and development of inland waterways and recreational waterways. The main problems, which are delaying management and development of inland waters are: absence of unified measures; insufficient financing for water management; public passivity.<sup>19</sup>

Planning of waters as resources and territories in Latvia is not implemented in a balanced and integrated way: specialists of each sector are relatively properly solving issues, which refer to and are under the competence of the particular sector; however, they do not cooperate sufficiently with representatives of other sectors, sometimes even ignoring interests and development possibilities of other sectors.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, Vidzeme planning region has a massive role, as its main task is to ensure planning and coordination of the region, as well as cooperation of local governments and other state administration authorities. It is expected, that implementation of SWARE project will facilitate beneficial changes in cooperation among involved parties, and initiation of discussions on sustainable management of cultural and natural heritage. Also the positive attitude towards the tourism sector in Latvia has great significance in promoting closer cooperation among organizations, because each organization understands the significance and influence of tourism in the economic and regional development.

## **2.4. Tourism and Culture**

The identity of Vidzeme is closely related to the cultural and natural heritage of the region, including the intangible cultural heritage. These are significant sources of development of Vidzeme, which are significant to be preserved and developed, promoting conservation of unique cultural environment, development of economy of

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<sup>19</sup> Iekšējo ūdeņu ietekme uz Vidzemes reģiona ekonomisko attīstību, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Iekšējo ūdeņu ietekme uz Vidzemes reģiona ekonomisko attīstību, 2012.

local communities, craft and creative industries, especially in rural areas, thereby strengthening their competitiveness potential.<sup>21</sup>

#### **2.4.1. Natural heritage sites**

The biggest Rivers in the Vidzeme region include the Gauja (452 km), the Salaca (95 km), and the Pededze (131 km in Latvian territory from the whole length of 159 km) and the Aiviekste (114 km). Latvian Rivers are scenic – there are several impressive sandstone outcrops of Devonian age exposed in Riversides, falls and riffles at separate stages of the Rivers in Vidzeme.

The largest lakes in Vidzeme are Burtnieks (40,1 km<sup>2</sup>), Lubāns (80,7 km<sup>2</sup>), and Alūksne lake (15,4 km<sup>2</sup>).

Inland waters in Vidzeme are mostly used for water tourism and recreation by promoting niche product development in the specified region. Only a few Rivers in the region have an economic significance, those where small hydro power stations have been built (Gauja, Brasla, Ogre, etc.), but their energy and economic potential is fairly small.

There are 188 specially protected natural territories and nature monuments in the Vidzeme region (total in Latvia - 632), and together these occupy 29,9% of the total specially protected nature areas. 87 of the 336 Natura 2000 Latvian places are located in the Vidzeme region.<sup>22</sup>

One of the four Latvian national parks is located in Vidzeme – The Gauja National Park (established in 1973). Most of the Gauja National Park territory (total area 91 790 ha) is included in the VPR territory – the districts of Amata, Beverīna, Cēsis, Līgatne, Pārgauja, Priekule and Kocēni.<sup>23</sup> The Gauja National Park provides nature, landscape, and historical tourism in the Vidzeme region. The park and nearby districts have been identified as one of the most competitive areas of Latvian export tourism according to the average numbers of foreign tourists who stayed overnight between 2009-2012.<sup>24</sup>

The North-Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve (established in 1997) is located in the VPR territory (Rūjiena, Mazsalaca, Naukšēni district, part of Burtnieki, Kocēni, Strenči, and Valka district), and is the only specially protected nature territory of its kind in

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<sup>21</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģija 2030. Vidzemes plānošanas reģions, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona pašreizējās situācijas analīze, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Dabas aizsardzības pārvaldes mājas lapa – [www.dap.gov.lv](http://www.dap.gov.lv).

<sup>24</sup> Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģija 2030. Vidzemes plānošanas reģions, 2014.

Latvia. It covers a large area (total 475 514 ha, of which 457 708 ha is land and 17 806 ha is sea) where all the international significant nature and landscape values are preserved in order to provide long-lasting social and economic development. The North-Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve includes 25 Nature Reserves, several of which are located in the VPR territory (Augstroze, the grasslands of Burga, the grasslands of Lake Burtnieku, Kārkli swamp, Oleri swamp, the grasslands of Randas, lower Rūja, Seda swamp, Vidusburtnieks (Middle Burtnieks), Northern swamps, the Blue Mountain (Zilais kalns), etc.), and 1 national park – in the Salaca River valley.<sup>25</sup>

There are 42 nature parks in Latvia; these include specified values of natural areas and heritage sites. Typical landscape is to be preserved in the nature parks, also social education and recreation is provided, and biodiversity is maintained. There are 5 nature parks in the VPR territory – Lower Aiviekstes, Driksna woods, Gaiziņkalns mountain, and the Kuja and Salaca valleys.<sup>26</sup>

There are 9 protected nature areas in Latvia. These are large expanses of outstanding beauty with a variety of scenery and a cultural environment unique to Latvia. There are four protected landscape areas in the regional planning of Vidzeme:

- Veclaicene (with Nature Reserves – Avoti woods, Dēliņkalns, and Korneti-Peļļi, and geographic formations – Grūbe dolomite outcrop and Ziemeri oak alley);
- Vecpiebalga (with the Sproģi Nature Reserve);
- Vestiena (with the Gaiziņkalns national park, the Nature Reserve at Ilziņa lake and Kāla lake islands, and geographic formations at Bolēni Eye Spring and Vestiena manor alley);
- Ziemeļgauja (with geographic formations – Rāmnieki sandstone outcrop, Randāti rocks, Tilderi dolomite outcrop, Jaunžagatas cliffs, the cliffs at Randāti and Tilderi, Vizla downstream outcrops, the great stone at Žākļi, Slikšņi dolomite outcrop, dendrology plantations and alleys – Gaujiena “Vārpas” larch alley, Vidaga larch alleys, and plantations).<sup>27</sup>

There are 4 Nature Reserves in Latvia, and two of them are located in the VPR territory: Teiču Nature Reserve, which is in the district of Madona and Varakļāni (established in 1982, area 19 779 ha) and Krustkalni Nature Reserve (established in the 1977, area – 2978 ha) in the district of Madona.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Dabas aizsardzības pārvaldes mājas lapa – [www.dap.gov.lv](http://www.dap.gov.lv)

<sup>26</sup> Dabas aizsardzības pārvaldes mājas lapa – [www.dap.gov.lv](http://www.dap.gov.lv)

<sup>27</sup> Dabas aizsardzības pārvaldes mājas lapa – [www.dap.gov.lv](http://www.dap.gov.lv)

<sup>28</sup> Dabas aizsardzības pārvaldes mājas lapa – [www.dap.gov.lv](http://www.dap.gov.lv)

There is an increasing appreciation of beautiful scenery and heritage in society, which is essential for the development of tourism.

The most popular and accessible nature objects for tourists in the regional planning of Vidzeme nearby waterway are Žagatas and Randāti riffs, Sietiņezis, Ērgļi rocks, Red rocks, Līči-Laņģi riffs, Kūķis rock at Gauja, Zvārta rock on the coast at Amata, Skaņākalna national park with nearby Salaca, Rauna Staburags at the Rauna Riverside, the meadows at Lake Burtnieki and the Silzemnieki observation tower, and the Vējiņi underground lake (the only underground lake in Latvia) at Brasla Riverside.

#### **2.4.2. Water system and water network**

As far as the economy is concerned, waterways are not used for transport in the regional planning of Vidzeme. The only exception is the Līgatne ferryboat, which carries passengers across the Gauja in the Līgatne district (see below in paragraph 4).

There are a relatively large number of people in Latvia who use the waterways in different ways for relaxation, and with future improvement in the national economic situation this number is likely to grow significantly. The aspects mentioned above have to be reconsidered properly in the documents of territorial planning. For example, so far, recreational craft, including yachting, have only been accepted as promoting the tourism industry in theoretical guidelines, but its development still does not include any practical planning.<sup>29</sup>

Leisure trips with boats and motorized floats in the territorial planning of Vidzeme are offered at only four places – in the park lake located in Cēsis, where locals and tourists can take a trip with the ferry “Kārlis”, the “Gauja tram” in Valmiera across the Gauja River, the “Marienburg” ferry across the lake at Alūksne, and the motorized float “Donald of Rūja” across the Rūja River.

The Rivers of Vidzeme are suitable and are being used for tourism activities. Tourism, especially active and adventure tourism, is one of the most prospective fields in Latvian economics, and its development is especially important for Latvian regions. Many active tourism service providers are located near areas of water and water tourism is becoming more popular, often being the main resource that provides business and tourism development in the specified area.<sup>30</sup> However, inland waters altogether don't have any essential financial impact on the economic development of region, as the fields connected to them are seasonally affected (in spring and summer).

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<sup>29</sup> Iekšējo ūdeņu ietekme uz Vidzemes reģiona ekonomisko attīstību, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Iekšējo ūdeņu ietekme uz Vidzemes reģiona ekonomisko attīstību, 2012.



The main water recreation resources in Vidzeme are Rivers and lakes. The most popular activities connected to them are:

- water tourism (canoe, boats, rafts, etc.);
- nature tourism (walking and bicycle routes along or near the water, and ski trails, fishing (incl. ice fishing, birdwatching, swimming);
- active tourism (watersport - powerboating, water skiing, sailing, kiteboard, etc.).<sup>31</sup>

**Water tourism.** Currently, in the regional planning of Vidzeme, the majority of excursions or boating takes place on such Rivers as the Amata, the Brasla, the Gauja, the Salaca, the Ogre, the Rūja, the Seda, the Abuls, the Aiviekste, and the Pededze. The boating season is split into two parts – spring, when the water level is especially high in the Rivers, and is more suitable for sportsmen and professional boatmen, and summer, when there are boat tours for lovers of active recreation on the Rivers of Vidzeme starting from May through until September. The most popular place for water tourism in Latvia and Vidzeme is on the Gauja, especially at the stage between Valmiera and Sigulda. Boating on Latvian Rivers is free of charge, and when using the waterways, water tourists don't have to buy a permit or pay tax. In 2015 the Latvian – Estonian project “Riwerways” was completed. Within this project a lot of things were done in order to develop and promote water tourism (more information in paragraph 4).<sup>32</sup>

**Nature tourism.** Waterways are a valuable resource and a good base for the formation and development of nature tourism routes. Walking trails and cycling routes for recreation are available along almost all the Riversides Vidzeme (the Salaca, the Gauja, the Aiviekste, the Amata, the Vaidava, the Rauna, the Vidaga, the Ogre, the Rūja, the Brasla, etc.). Routes for walking, cycling, Nordic walking and skiing have been made here. Themed nature routes are offered – routes for watching salmonid fish, animals, birds, plants, and mushrooms. Different tourism routes in Vidzeme are being made both at international (Euro Velo, Enter-Gauja nature routes), national, regional (for example, cross-border bicycle routes), and local level (local government, tourist information centres, or routes and activities designed by entrepreneurs).

- **Fishing.** Burtnieks, Ungurs, Alauksa lake, Alūksne lake and other bigger and smaller lakes are popular fishing places in Vidzeme. Many lake shores have fishing and recreational areas. The Gauja, the Salaca, the Brasla, and the Ogre

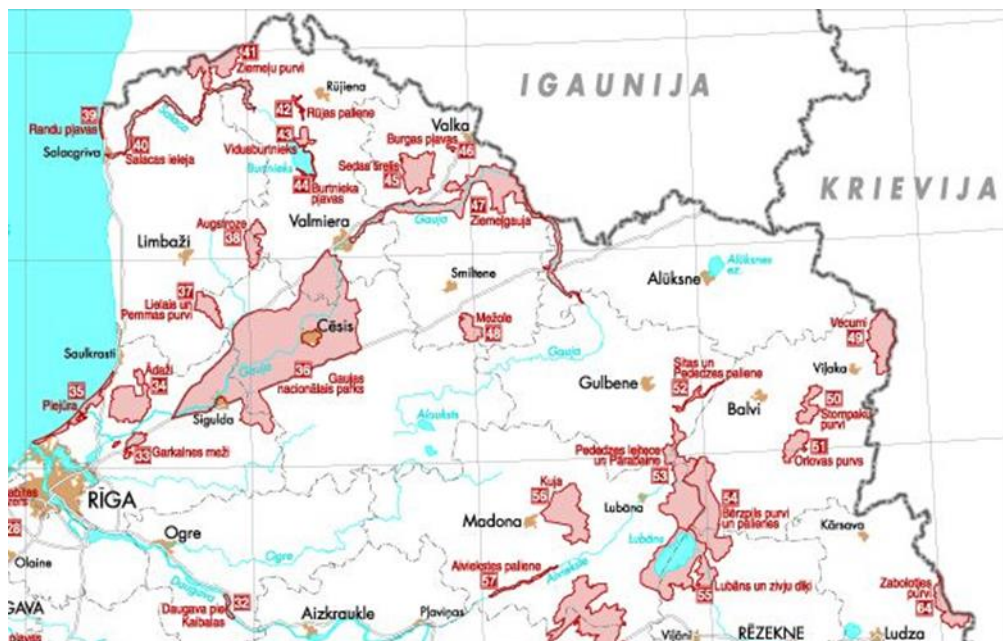
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<sup>31</sup> Iekšējo ūdeņu ietekme uz Vidzemes reģiona ekonomisko attīstību, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Projekta “Riwerways” mājas lapa - [www.upesoga.lv](http://www.upesoga.lv)

are also popular fishing places in Vidzeme. Licensed fishing is in operation in several Vidzeme municipalities. Since 2015, thirteen municipalities of Vidzeme have been made partners of the “Gauja Sustainable Development Society”. Its aim is to restore fishing resources, to cultivate the Riverbanks of the Gauja, to arrange small tributaries and to implement licensed fishing in the Gauja after some time.

- **Swimming.** Rivers and waters are often used for swimming mostly in summer. In Vidzeme Region are no official public swimming places, even though all the preconditions are. The main reason is that the municipality does not want to take responsibility and spend money on site improvement, pool maintenance, recreational safety, water analysis etc.
- **Birdwatching.** Significant places for birds in the Vidzemes region are: the Gauja National Park, North Gauja, Augstroze, Salaca alley, lower Rūja, Vidusburtnieks (Middle Burtnieks), Pededze, Lubāns, Aiviekste, as well as several swamps and meadows.



Significant places for birds in the Vidzemes region. Source: [www.lob.lv](http://www.lob.lv)

**Active tourism.** Since 1964 water competitions have been taking place on the Amata – the fastest River in Latvia, which is only suitable for boating during the spring flood period. However, for sports activities in the Vidzeme region lakes are mainly used. The most popular place for water sports is Alūksne lake. Alūksne district municipality agency “ALJA” is responsible for Agency Watersports and organizing recreation, and its main aim is the efficient and effective maintenance of public lakes and Rivers located in the Alūksne district, and holds the annual windsurfing event,

“Burtnieks regatta”, which take place at Lake Burtnieks. In 2015 Latvian Summer Youth Olympic sailing competitions took place at Lake Burtnieks. There is a wakepark, “Rancho Park”, near an area of water at Little Ansis, located in the Rubene district of Koceni, which was established by the recreational society “Rebo” in order to promote development of water sports in Latvia. In 2015 the only free wakeboard school in Latvia was opened here.

Unfortunately, Latvian legislation has not been arranged yet – many places do not include requirements for the use of motorized water vehicles on inland waters. This creates dangerous situations for other holidaymakers, for example, jetskis threaten both swimmers and boaters.

### **2.4.3. Cultural heritage sites**

Water has always attracted people. A lot of heritage sites and industrial infrastructures (bridges, ferries, mills, etc.) are located near water. This encourages water tourism and often serves as a basis for organizing various cultural events near water.

The regional planning of Vidzeme arranges a number of events, mostly in the summer season. Among them are both city and district festivals (in Straupe, Valmiera, Cēsis, Rauna, Mazsalaca, Rūjiena, Alūksne, Smiltene, Ērgļi, etc.). Festivals take place in the cities of Vidzeme: The Cēsis Art Festival, The International Winter Music and Theatre Festival in Valmiera, Music Days of J.Vītols in Gaujiena, The Ungurmuiža Festival, in the annual Valmiermuiža celebration, the Day of Indriķis in Rubene, etc. The Museum Night is widely visited every year in May.

Celebrations directly near water take place in Alūksne, where there is an open-air stage, located on Lake Alūksne – here all the cultural life activities of Alūksne starting from June through until September take place – concerts, outdoor parties, and open-air performances.<sup>33</sup>

A special place for organizing cultural events in Valmiera is the old town, which is located near the Gauja. Not only are Valmiera castle ruins of Middle Ages located here, but also the Museum of Valmiera Regional History with various cultural and educational events. Simjūda fair at Valmiera Town Square takes place every second Saturday of October, which historically is the last major market before winter.

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<sup>33</sup> [http://www.aluksne.lv/03\\_01\\_02.php](http://www.aluksne.lv/03_01_02.php)

The waterways of Vidzeme are increasingly being used for cultural events. Pleasant music concerts take place on water floats, both on Valmiera Mill lake and on the pond near Sēļi manor in Mazsalaca district. For example, the event at Smiltene city was dedicated to Smiltene waters in 2016, and all the celebration activities took place nearby – music concerts, a water acrobatics show, etc.<sup>34</sup>

Also, every summer at the Āraiši lake and Āraiši Archaeological Museum Park, folk concerts, experimental archeological camps, workshops and presentations, Museum Night events, etc. take place.<sup>35</sup>

In recent years, a special event brings together several thousands of people at Lake Kala in Madona district, “Lake sounds”, where people go boating on the lake in the middle of the night. From the darkness and silence all around the first light objects and sounds, increasing with the light and culminating at the sunrise.<sup>36</sup>

In the context of historical waterway heritage another significant annual event in Valmiera is the Gauja Raftsmen Festival in Strenči (see paragraph 4 below). On the third Saturday of May 2017, it will celebrate its 20th anniversary.<sup>37</sup>

#### **2.4.4. Built heritage sites**

In the region of Vidzeme there is a rich and varied cultural and historical heritage, which not only represents Latvia, but also the cultural heritage of Europe. In the region of Vidzeme, according to data from the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, there are 1725 state protected cultural monuments, including:

- 816 archeological monuments (448 of national importance, and 368 of local interest);
- 539 architectural monuments (269 of national importance, and 270 of local interest);
- 29 historical monuments;
- 3 urban monuments of national importance;
- 2 industrial monuments of national importance;
- 336 art monuments.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.smiltene.lv/kultura/open/6099>)

<sup>35</sup> <https://araisuezerpils.wordpress.com/pasakumi>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.ezeraskanas.lv/index.php>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.strencunovads.lv/gaujas-plostnieki/gaujas-plostnieku-svetki>

<sup>38</sup> [www.mantojums.lv](http://www.mantojums.lv); Vidzemes plānošanas reģiona pašreizējās situācijas analīze, 2015

Most of the cultural and historical heritage objects can be found near the waterways of Vidzeme – hillforts, medieval castles, manors, and churches.

Hillforts. 96 hillforts are located in the territorial planning of Vidzeme. Among these 18 ancient sites, which are located near areas of water:

- Tanīsa hillfort on the banks of the River Rauna (Rauna district),
- Peka hillfort on the banks of the River Gauja (Beverīna district),
- Staldi hillfort on the banks of the River Gauja (Ape district),
- Kvēpene hillfort on the banks of the River Gauja (Pārgauja district),
- Kaudži hillfort on the banks of the River Gauja (Gulbene district),
- Doles hillfort on the banks of the River Amata (Amata district),
- Celītkalns on the banks of the River Vija (Valka district),
- Kābele – hillfort on the banks of the River Rūja (Naukšēni district),
- Skanstes hillfort on the banks of the River Ogre (Ērgļi district),
- Skaņkalne hillfort (Kolberga hillfort) with sacrificial caves on the banks of the River Salaca (Mazsalaca district),
- Visagals hillfort (Brākaļi mound) on the banks of the River Aiviekste (Lubāna district),
- Liedes Mounds on the banks of the River Liede (Gulbene district),
- Batarejas Mound on the banks of the River Brasla (Pārgauja district),
- Vējiņi hillfort on the banks of the River Brasla (Pārgauja district),
- Panūte hillfort (Krančkalns) on the banks of the River Brasla (Pārgauja district),
- Templis Mound on the banks of Lake Alūksne;
- Vaidava hillfort on the banks of the Lake Vaidava (Kocēni district),
- Urele hillfort (Church Mound) Ungurs lakeshore (Pārgauja district).

Most of the hillforts are located mainly in areas which are under the management of private owners and there is no free accessibility, and only some of them have direction signs and are marked on the map. Exceptions to this are hillforts located in the centres of towns or cities – Tanīsa Hillfort in Rauna, Skanste Hillfort in Ogre, and Templis Mound in Alūksne. The Peka Mound in Beverīna district, Vaidava Hillfort in Kocēni district, and Vējiņi Hillfort in Pārgauja district all have good visibility and are accessible.

**Medieval castles and ruins.** There are altogether 28 medieval castles (dated from the end of the 12th century to the 17th century) in the territorial planning of Vidzeme, 15 of which are ancient fortifications and are located near areas of water:

- Rūjiena medieval castle on the banks of the River Rūja (Rūjiena);
- Valmiera medieval castle on the banks of the River Gauja (Valmiera);
- Gaujiena medieval castle on the banks of the River Gauja (Ape district);
- Lielstraupe medieval castle on the banks of the River Brasla (Pārgauja district);
- Mazstraupe medieval castle on the banks of the River Brasla (Pārgauja district);
- Rauna medieval castle on the banks of the River Rauna (Rauna district);
- Ļaudona medieval castle on the banks of the River Aiviekste (Madona district);
- Ērgļi medieval castle on the banks of the River Ogre (Ērgļi district);
- Baltava medieval castle on the banks of the River Ogre (Ērgļi district);
- Skujene medieval castle on the banks of the River Amata (Amata district);
- Tirza medieval castle on the banks of the River Tirza (Gulbene district);
- Burtnieki medieval castle on the banks of Lake Burtnieks (Burtnieki district);
- Alūksne medieval castle on the banks of Lake Alūksne (Alūksne);
- Trikāta medieval castle on the banks of the River Abuls (Beverīna district);
- Smiltene medieval castle on the banks of the River Abuls (Smiltene district).

Most of the medieval fortifications are currently in a state of ruins, apart from Rauna medieval castle where one of the renovated castle towers as well as an exposition retelling the history of the castle, is available for visitors. Although buildings have changed from their original appearance, two of them are still occupied – there is a medical institution in Lielstraupe castle, and an elementary school in Mazstraupe castle. Medieval mounds in Rūjiena, Valmiera, Gaujiena, Burtnieki, Alūksne, and Trikāta all have good visibility and are accessible.

**Medieval churches.** In the regional planning territory of Vidzeme there are 16 medieval churches (dated from the end of the 12th century to the beginning of the 16th century), 6 of which are located near the water:

- Burtnieki St. Maria Church at Lake Burtnieki (Burtnieki district);
- Mazsalaca St. Maria Church on the banks of the River Salaca (Mazsalaca);
- Rubene Evangelical Lutheran Church at Lake Vaidava (Kocēni district);
- Lielstraupe Church on the banks of the River Brasla (Pārgauja district);
- Valmiera St. Sīmanis and Jūda Church on the banks of the River Gauja (Valmiera);
- Rauna Evangelical Lutheran Church on the banks of the River Rauna (Rauna district).

All of these buildings are fully-functioning churches with active congregations and they welcome visitors. Most of them are used as sites for cultural events. There are organized concerts and themed events related to cultural history and local identity. The churches at Burtnieki, Valmiera, and Rubene churches are included in local excursions and thematic routes to attract cultural tourists.

**Manors.** Many manors used to exist in the regional planning territory of Vidzeme, and evidences of their economic centres can still be observed in the landscape of Vidzeme. There are currently at least 20 well-preserved, managed, and accessible manors in the regional planning of Vidzeme, These are operated either by municipality institutions (schools, cultural centers, museums) or by private or public organisations in order to provide tourism services. There are 10 objects near the waterways of Vidzeme:

- Alūksne New Castle on the banks of Lake Alūksne (Alūksne),
- Valtenbergi manor on the banks of Lake Salaca (Mazsalaca),
- Naukšēni manor on the banks of the River Rūja (Naukšēni district),
- Litene manor on the banks of the River Pededze (Gulbene district),
- Kārlis manor on the banks of the Amata River valley (Amata district),
- Gaujiena castle on the banks of the River Gauja (Ape district),
- Cirsti manor on the banks of the River Ogre (Vecpiebalga district),
- Ungurmuiža, near Lake Ungurs (Pargauja district),
- Burtnieks castle, near Lake Burtnieks (Burtnieki district),

- Veļķi manor, on the banks of Lake Vaidava (Kocēni district).

**Ancient towns.** In the regional planning of Vidzeme the ancient centres of the cities of the Hanseatic League still exist – the ancient town of Valmiera on the banks of the River Gauja (national cultural monument protection nr. 2503) and the ancient town of Lielstraupe on the banks of the River Brasla (national cultural monument protection nr. 6276).

Many unique ancient sites on the banks of Rivers and lakes can be attributed to the archeological heritage of Vidzeme:

- on the northern banks of Lake Burtnieks, near the Fishermen's houses, was one of the oldest settlements in Latvia, which dates from the Stone Age. This is called Fishermen I and Fishermen II settlement (protection nr. 2510). A huge cemetery was discovered here during archeological studies, where the oldest burial in Latvia has been found, dating back to the 7th century BC.<sup>39</sup> At the point where the Salaca meets Lake Burtnieks one more unique archeological object is located - Riņņukalns settlement and Upurakmens cult place (protection nr. 2511);
- only near the lakes of Vidzeme can a unique type of archeological residences be found in Latvia – ancient Lake Hosts or Lake Castles. Such ancient sites are found in 10 lakes that are located in the regional planning of Vidzeme (Lake Auļukalns and Lake Dūķi in Rauna district, Ižezers, Lake Liezēre, Lake Salu (Island lake), and Lake Bakani. In Madona district, Lake Ušuri, Lake Lisa, Lake Lūkāņi in Amata district, Lake Brici in Jaunpiebalga district, and Lake Vārņi in Alūksne district). The most popular Lake Castle, where archeological studies and a reconstruction of Lake Host has been organized, is located at Lake Āraiši in Amata district and the Āraiši Archeological Museum Park can be found there;<sup>40</sup>
- there are 3 lake islands known to be inhabited in Vidzeme – Pilssala (Castle Island) at Lake Alūksne, where in the 14th century a medieval castle was built – Marienburg, Cepurīte island at Lake Alūksne, where an ancient settlement was found, and an inhabited island at Lake Indzers in Alsviķi.

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<sup>39</sup> [www.burtniekunovads.lv](http://www.burtniekunovads.lv)

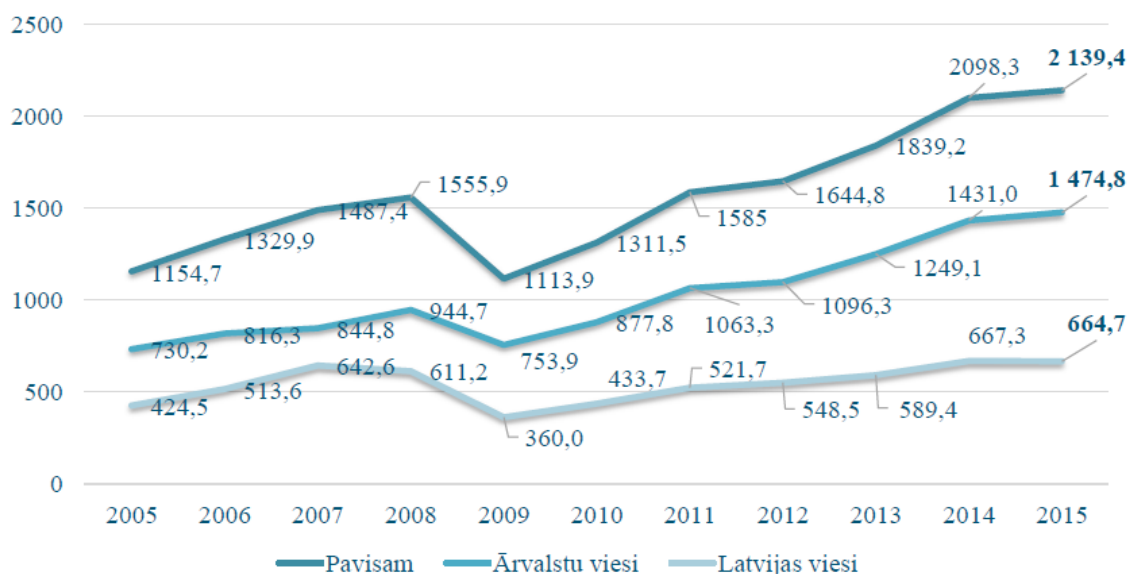
<sup>40</sup> [www.amata.lv](http://www.amata.lv)



In recent years the heritage of the Soviet Union heritage is becoming more and more imperative, its artifacts and sites are being used to create tourism products. In the regional planning of Vidzeme the most popular Soviet-era products are located in the Līgatne district – in the basements of the rehabilitation centre “Līgatne” is a secret bunker from Soviet Union times, where refreshments, guided tours, Soviet parties, and reality games can be enjoyed by visitors.<sup>41</sup> Also, near the Seda swamp and River is Seda city is located, unique evidence of Soviet times – an inhabited site near a peat factory, which was established in 1953. Seda has typical architecture of the 1950s, with its wide streets, wood alleys, and Stalin period type houses.<sup>42</sup>

#### 2.4.5. Characteristic of tourism and culture

Tourism is an essential part of the Latvian economy, it forms 8% of total employment in the country and provides almost 75000 jobs. The number of tourists in the last five years has increased by 65%, a recovery from the rapid decline in tourism during the global financial crisis in 2008.<sup>43</sup>



Foreign overnight travellers in Latvian tourist homes (thousands), 2005 – 2015.

Sources: Lūka, 2016

The export of tourism services in Latvia increased by 9,3% in 2015, compared to the previous year, and reached EUR 1023,4 million. Latvia has one of the highest

<sup>41</sup> [www.bukurs.lv](http://www.bukurs.lv)

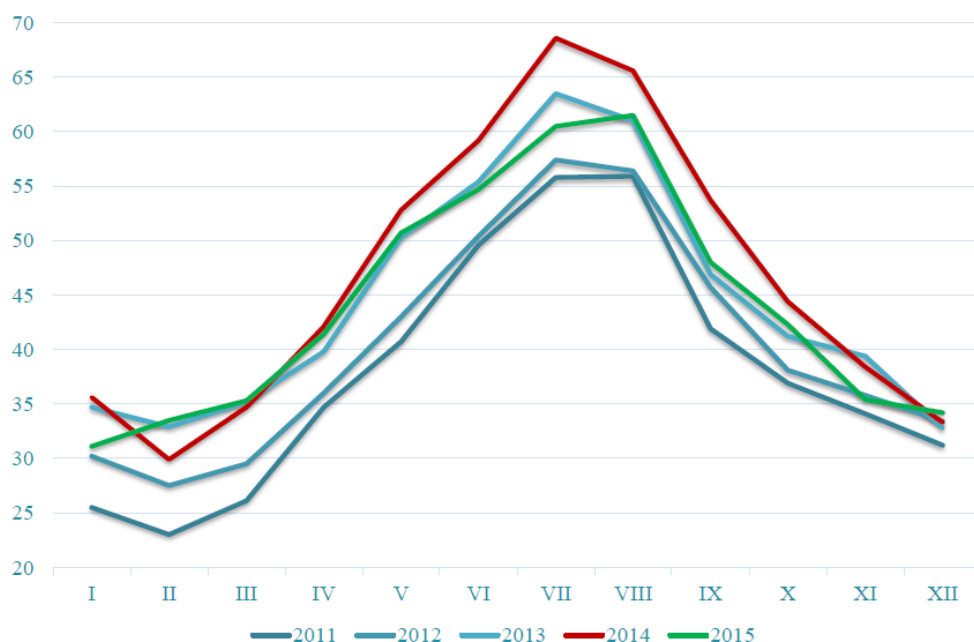
<sup>42</sup> <http://www.strencunovads.lv/?p=7331&pp=10107&lang=1357>

<sup>43</sup> Lūka M. Par tūrisma politikas prioritātēm un Latvijas Tūrisma attīstības pamatnostādņēm, 2016.

increases in the number of international tourists in Europe since 2015 – European average growth is 2,9% per year, Latvian – 4,6%.<sup>44</sup>

In 2015, Latvia was visited by 6,8 million foreign travelers, both from tourists travelling directly to Latvia and tourists travelling through the country. 2 million of them stayed in Latvia for more than a day, furthermore a third (33,5%) visited Latvia for the first time.<sup>45</sup>

The majority of travellers (67,5%) arrived in Latvia by land transport, 26,2% - air transport, 5,1% - maritime transport and only 1,3% by rail. 30,3% of all foreign travellers visited Latvia for recreational purposes, 16,2% visited friends or relatives, but 11,7% came for business trips.<sup>46</sup>



Hotel occupancy in Latvia 2011 – 2015. Source: Lūka, 2016.

In 2014, Latvia saw its highest hotel occupancy (average occupancy in 2015 – 44,0%, in 2014 – 45,5%, in 2013 – 44,4%).

Tourism infrastructure is well-developed in the Vidzeme region, especially various types of accommodation and dining facilities. In the Vidzeme region in 2010,

<sup>44</sup> Lūka M. Par tūrisma politikas prioritātēm un Latvijas Tūrisma attīstības pamatnostādnēm, 2016.- <http://www.lps.lv>

<sup>45</sup> Lūka M. Par tūrisma politikas prioritātēm un Latvijas Tūrisma attīstības pamatnostādnēm, 2016.- <http://www.lps.lv>

<sup>46</sup> Lūka M. Par tūrisma politikas prioritātēm un Latvijas Tūrisma attīstības pamatnostādnēm, 2016.- <http://www.lps.lv>

there were 37 hotels and motels with 1083 work places, 98 guest houses with 2200 beds and 64 holiday homes with 649 beds. The region had 35 youth accommodation facilities with beds for more than 1000 young people. In 2010, a total of 244 houses of the region could accommodate more than 5000 tourists. In 2015 in the regional planning territory of Vidzeme there were 394 tourist accommodation facilities with 2294 rooms and 8850 beds.<sup>47</sup> In 2015 were 260 000 persons served, of which 65 000 were foreign travellers.

Most tourism activities are concentrated in Vidzeme, in the Gauja National Park (GNP), and nearby. Here the EnterGauja Tourism cluster of the Gauja National Park operates, which is the largest tourism cluster in the Baltics with more than 50 partnerships working together to achieve a common goal. These are mostly tourism businessmen, nine municipalities, Vidzeme High School, and the Nature Protection Agency. The GNP tourism cluster endeavours to increase competitiveness in the international market, to increase the numbers of visitors, to reduce the impact of seasonal tourism, to develop quality of service, to provide long-lasting and optimal uses of available resources, to promote a culture of cooperation and decision-making by all parties involved, to engage in research in the implementation of innovations, as well as other challenges<sup>48</sup>.

An important factor in the development of tourism is the higher education programs that are available in Vidzeme High School, Valmiera. These produce highly qualified specialists in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The High School is represented in two clusters (the Gauja NP tourism cluster and the Latvian sustainable tourism cluster), which have a significant strategic role in developing tourism. The High School cooperates with entrepreneurs by involving students in practical and theoretical course work, annual projects, and bachelor and master studies.

Credit must be given to the cooperation shown between tour operators, municipalities and representatives of protected nature areas, for example, by forming routes, channeling tourist traffic, and managing infrastructure efficiently. More and more attention is being paid to net strategies in Vidzeme where several geographically close tourist attraction sites and municipalities cooperate to achieve the effective management of tourist destinations.

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<sup>47</sup> Lūka M. Par tūrisma politikas prioritātēm un Latvijas Tūrisma attīstības pamatnostādņēm, 2016.- <http://www.lps.lv>

<sup>48</sup> Gaujas NP stratēģija 2012 – 2019. <http://tourism.sigulda.lv/gaujas-np-t%C5%ABrisma-klastera-strat%C4%93%C4%A3ija/>

In recent years tourism trends in Latvia and Vidzeme have been connected to the development of gastronomy tourism. In 2017, Riga-Gauja will become a European gastronomic region. With the cities of Riga, Sigulda, Cēsis, and Valmiera working together a special concept “Wild at palate” will be created in order to tie together a variety of gastronomy. Gastronomy tourism is not only about enjoying food and drink, but also a lot of other activities in the field of tourism. By implementing gastronomical activities, the main value is being paid to education, cooperation of cities and villages, healthy food and nutrition issues, food traditions, the meaning and culture of hospitality, and entrepreneurship and innovations in gastronomy.<sup>49</sup> The dignity of European gastronomy region Riga-Gauja region ranks Latvia amongst the most favourite gastronomy tourism destinations in Europe. This will certainly increase the popularity of gourmet tourism in Latvia by increasing the flow of tourists into Vidzeme and Latvia.<sup>50</sup>

## 2.5. Strengths and weaknesses of tourism, heritage management and culture

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Knowledge needs
<b>Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-level &amp; cross-sectoral governance structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No integrated general policy-making, e.g. common development plans, strategies for waterways regions in Latvia;</li> <li>No bottom-up initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measures encouraging cooperation, exchange of experience stakeholder's;</li> <li>Improving knowledges, attitude change about resources such as water, heritage, local cultural values, landscape feature;</li> <li>establish single recreational waterway planning methodology</li> <li>Public-private participatory policy-making</li> </ul>

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.rigagauja.lv/lv/9178-par-eiropas-gastronomijas-regionu>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.rigagauja.lv/lv/9178-par-eiropas-gastronomijas-regionu>

			<p>model for tourism development, management, promotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supporting innovative potential of SMEs &amp; microenterprises;</li> <li>• boosting local/regional (green) employment,</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety tourist routes</li> <li>• Variety level of catering and entertainment industry (hotels, other type of accommo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate quality – uncomfortable stops, polluted recreational areas, lack of information signs, difficult accessibility - overpriced private property protection, overgrowth etc.,</li> <li>• floodplains are threatened by tourism infrastructure</li> <li>• Missing complex offers with different prices levels,;</li> <li>• Unstable service quality of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public participation of places arrangement, e.g. cleanup, voluntary participation etc.;</li> <li>• Income from boating permit cards;</li> <li>• public education on environmental issues, nature protection;</li> <li>• new infrastructure projects with solutions of adapted and transportable constructions, materials</li> <li>• Active promotion, market researches, development of new products</li> </ul>

	<p>ation, restaurant s, theatres, museum etc.)</p>		
<b>Marketing and PR methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New general marketing and PR methods for promoting the region, e.g: tourism cluster Enter Gauja, European Region of Gastronomy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No long – term funding (project financing);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation between the stakeholders and policy making organisations;</li> <li>• Support of national and local level government</li> </ul>
<b>Services and actions</b>	<p>Varied natural and cultural heritage sites and objects, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Archeological museum-park Araishi,</li> <li>• festivals and events, e.g. Raftsmen's festival of Gauja, musical, visual and metaphysical event on Lake Kāla before sunshine etc; local products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No enough related services and actions, limited promotion,</li> <li>• low demand and visibility;</li> <li>• Seasonality;</li> <li>• degradation of the environment - excessive tourism pressure (water consumption, pollution, disturbance of nature features)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce measures and new tourism products that reduce the impact of seasonality</li> <li>• Training and experience exchange on innovative solutions and methods, e.g. establishment of ski trek, ice skating in winter, sailing on ice, tour in the dark, at sunshine etc.,</li> <li>• interactive promotion of local product - gastronomic tourism of fish food, herbal tea etc.,</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient funding (incomes from tourists do not cover property maintenance costs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• innovative tourism destination structures, e.g. corporate events, workshops in nature, on the water etc.</li> <li>• creation of regional and international tourism network</li> <li>• Adaptation of tourism products for the export market</li> <li>• Additional financing (EU, national, local government, donations);</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
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### 3. Policy instrument addressed in the SWARE

#### 3.1. General overview of the policy instrument

**The name of the policy instrument:** National Operational programme "Growth and employment".

**Main features of the Operational Programme:** Operational Programme (OP) sets the investment principles of European Union funds, the results to be achieved and areas of support for the entire acquisition period. The program approved by the European Commission in 11/11/2014.

The OP provides a significant support to the economic growth and employment, with a particular focus on the competitiveness of Latvia's economy.

**The topics addressed by the policy instrument:**

- Support RTD and innovation;
- Promoting information society;
- Supporting the competitiveness and innovation of SMEs;
- Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors;

- Environment, sustainable use of natural resources and adaptation to climate change;
- Development of sustainable and efficient transport infrastructure
- Promoting employment and work force mobility;
- Education, skills and lifelong learning;
- Social inclusion and fight against poverty.

**Geographical coverage of the policy instrument:**

National Operational programme of Latvia "Growth and employment" entire territory of Latvia (including five planning regions of Latvia: Vidzeme Planning Region, Riga Planning Region, Zemgale Planning Region, Latgale Planning Region, Kurzeme Planning Region).

**Financial allocation of the policy instrument (in total)**

Total OP budget: 5,192,801,939.00 €

Total EU contribution: 4,418,233,214.00 €

**The objectives of the policy instrument (overall objectives and thematic objectives, priority axes)**

The Latvian single multi-fund Operational Programme "Growth and Employment" aims at achieving key national development priorities along with the "Europe 2020" objectives. By combining support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the specific allocation for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), the OP will provide a significant support to the economic growth and employment, with a particular focus on the competitiveness of Latvia's economy.

According to the operational "Growth and Employment" programme, the thematic priorities are followings:

- Technical Assistance;
- Research and innovation;
- Education and training;
- Better public administration;
- Information and communication technologies;
- SMEs competitiveness;
- Low-carbon economy;



- Climate change and risk prevention;
- Environment and resource efficiency;
- Transport and energy networks;
- Employment and labour market;
- Social inclusion<sup>51</sup>.

### **3.2. Implementation of the policy instrument**

#### **3.2.1. Management and control**

**The European Union (EU) funds Managing Authority** in Latvia is the **Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Latvia**, which is in charge for effective and transparent implementation of EU funds according to principles of sound financial management. The Managing Authority, in cooperation with responsible institutions and consulting with social, NGO and regional partners, develops EU funds programing documents thus ensuring compliance with the partnership principle in the development of programming documents, as well as ensuring intersectoral coordination of EU funds. The Managing Authority also performs functions of EU funds management, evaluation, communication management etc.

**The Responsible Authorities** are 10 (ten) **ministries of the Republic of Latvia** and **State Chancellery of the Republic of Latvia**:

- Ministry of Finance,
- Ministry of Economics,
- Ministry of Education and Science,
- Ministry of Justice,
- Ministry of Agriculture,
- Ministry of Culture,
- Ministry of Welfare,
- Ministry of Transport,
- Ministry of Environmental protection and Regional Development,
- Ministry of Health,
- State Chancellery.

In EU funds 2014 – 2020 programming period, the **Central Finance and Contracting Agency (CFCA) administrates** the projects co-financed by European Social fund, European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund.

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<sup>51</sup> Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Latvia, Operational Programme “Growth and Employment”, 2013

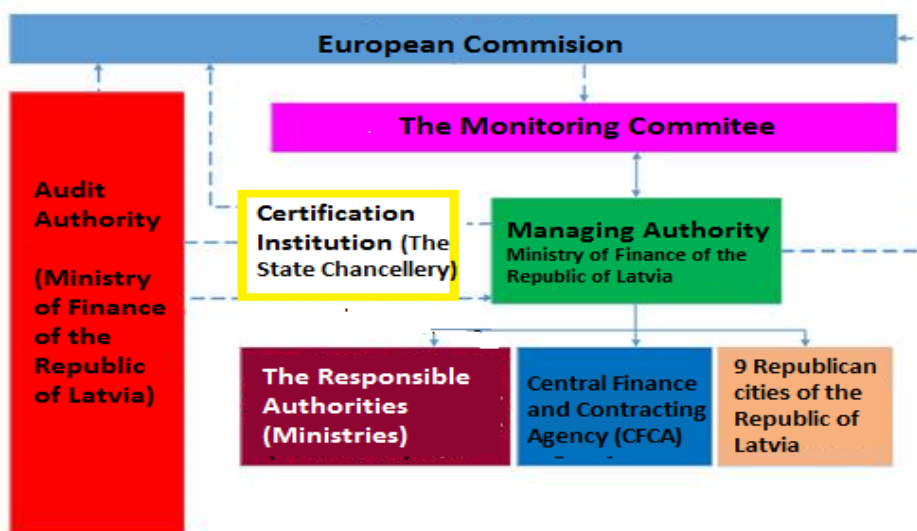
**Republican cities of the Republic of Latvia:** the function is carried out by the delegation contract which is signed between 9 republican cities of the Republic of Latvia.

Functions of the European Union funds and foreign financial assistance **Audit Authority** are carried out by the **Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Latvia**.

**Certification Institution** functions are carried out by **State Chancellery of the Republic of Latvia**

**The Monitoring Committee** - is a collegial institution involved in the management of European Union funds, which operates pursuant to by laws approved by the Cabinet. In the monitoring committee are involved different stakeholders – state institutions, NGO's, etc. The monitoring committee shall take administrative decisions and other regulatory enactments regulating the management of European Union funds.

Please look the management and control system of Operational Programme of the Republic of Latvia in the scheme below.



The scheme of the management and control system of Operational Programme of the Republic of Latvia<sup>52</sup>

Source: *Latvijas Republikas Finanšu ministriju, Vadošās iestādes un Sertifikācijas iestādes funkciju un procedūru apraksts, 2016*

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia and Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia are responsible bodies of Operation Programme of Priority axis 5, measure 5.5.1. of the OP aims “To preserve, protect and develop the important cultural and natural heritage, as well as the development of related services”. In the project “SWARE” context responsible ministry

<sup>52</sup> Latvijas Republikas Finanšu ministriju, Vadošās iestādes un Sertifikācijas iestādes funkciju un procedūru apraksts, 2016

is the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia is leading investments for the coastal territory, but the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia is leading investments the rest of the territory. Municipalities of Vidzeme Planning Region can claim for investments which are leading by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia. The Ministry of Culture is the state governing institution, which organizes and coordinates state culture policy and cultural-educational policy.

### **3.2.2 Project cycle** (No relevant)

### **3.3. Priority axis(es) related to SWARE**

The Operational Programmes aims at achieving key national development priorities of Latvia, along with the EU2020 objectives. Priority axis 5, measure 5.5.1. of the OP aims "To preserve, protect and develop the important cultural and natural heritage, as well as the development of related services".

The purpose of investments is to preserve, protect and develop insufficiently utilised areas and sites of natural and culture heritage by making them more attractive and available, as well as extending their content and creating new functions for them and promote qualitative use of these functions. Investments into cultural and natural heritage have direct influence on the growth of cultural and natural tourism which creates long-term social and economic benefits.

#### **3.3.1. Actions, target groups and expected result**

Investments will be made according to the municipality development programme of the area concerned in municipalities and areas where such investments are reasonably considered as economic development priorities, envisaging not only the development of the respective site of cultural and natural heritage, but also its interlinking with other public and private investments into the area concerned taking into account local conditions and potential, envisaging balanced sustainable long-term development of the area. Investments in cultural heritage object are also subject to return on investments long-term action strategy for the respective site which substantiates the demand for the services provided by the site, as well as envisages long-term maintenance of the site without additional financial burden on the municipality or state. Investments in infrastructure objects must comply with the conditions of the socio-economic benefits that outweigh the costs of their maintenance.

**Target group:** municipalities, providers of related services (SMEs), population, local and international tourists.

**The expected results and indicators<sup>53</sup>:**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measurement unit</b>	<b>Target value (in 2023), expected results</b>
Number of supported Natural and Cultural heritage sites	Number	15
The number of created services in supported cultural and natural heritage objects	Services	15
Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and tourism objects in places where support is provided	Visits a year	140 000

**3.3.2. Projects** (not relevant)

**3.4. Strengths and weaknesses of the policy instrument**

	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Knowledge needs</b>
<b>Preparation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stakeholder involvement (local municipalities) during the preparation phase</li> <li>- Bottom up approach - policy instrument actions developed mostly according identified local (municipalities) needs</li> <li>-Appraisal of socio-economic analysis – main focus (investments) on objects with more economical potential. During the preparation period was classified target areas in 4 groups, thus investments are intended for areas with the highest development potential – places of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The two relevant ministries (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia and Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia) are responsibility bodies of this priority of the policy instrument. At the beginning of the preparation phase was not clear division of responsibilities among both ministries.</li> <li>-Political pressure or lobbying from local politicians to include</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During the preparation phase were organized two step analysis (in the first step responsibilities bodies asked to the all municipalities their needs, but in in the next round clarified that investments could receive only the joint projects (the 1<sup>st</sup> step was totally excessive and took too much time and resources). At the very beginning phase missing more oriented strategical approach for project (object) selection</li> </ul>

<sup>53</sup> Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Latvia, Operational Programme “Growth and Employment”, 2013

	<p>concentration of cultural and historical areas and landscapes</p> <p>-Investments provided only for the joint (cooperation) projects between municipalities (support for more economical oriented projects with higher added value). This approach allows funded more projects (objects).</p>	<p>specific objects as target area</p> <p>- Particular joint (cooperation) projects were developed in artificial cooperation</p> <p>- Responsible bodies for the socio-economic analysis spent too much time which could spent for implementation phase</p>	
<b>Relevance of the policy instrument</b>	-The analysis contains recent and relevant information	-Policy instrument mostly focus on cultural heritage, but natural heritage almost is neglected	- Necessity linking the protection of cultural and natural heritage. By regarding heritage as both cultural and natural. Necessity for inter- and multi-disciplinary conservation and preservation efforts.
<b>Rationale and Consistency of the policy instrument</b>	-Priorities appropriately address the needs identified in the socio-economic analysis: investments will be made according to the municipality development programme of the area concerned in municipalities and areas where such investments are reasonably considered as economic development priorities, envisaging not only the development of the respective site of cultural and natural heritage, but also its interlinking with other public and private	-Significant historic sites and objects with low economical potential (which can't reach expected results and indicators determined by the priority) are excluded from investments	-Responsible body (-ies) should provide or take care of other support instruments and/ or investments for the objects (territories) which are excluded from this priority investment support

	investments into the area concerned taking into account local conditions and potential, envisaging balanced sustainable long-term development of the area		
<b>External and internal coherence</b>	-The policy instrument is coherent with the relevant external and internal papers, strategies - policy instrument along with the EU2020 objectives, the municipality development programme, Cultural Policy Guidelines „Creative Latvia” for 2014 – 2022, Latvian Tourism Development Guidelines 2014–2020, Coast Spatial Development Guidelines for 2011–2017 and Guidelines of Regional Development 2013.-2019. integrally marked places of concentration of cultural and historical areas and landscapes with perfect cultural and natural values and existing flows of visitors, including on the coast of the Baltic Sea which are integrally marked in Latvian Tourism Development Guidelines 2014–2020.	The policy instrument is coherent with the relevant external and internal paper, lack of tourism development strategy with a shared vision for a common natural and cultural heritage.	Drafting the policy instrument it is important to take into account all levels – local, regional, national and international papers, strategies for the coherence.
<b>Implementation</b>	-Cross-sectoral governance structure - Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia and Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia are	-The roles and tasks of the various structures are partly described  - The communication channels with and among other stakeholders (i.e. private companies,	-Should be more effective communication among all involved parties to reach better results of the priority  - Should link to public-private partnership cooperation structures

	responsibility bodies of concrete priority	<p>civil organisations) are fragmented</p> <p>-Control system or monitoring system is unclear</p> <p>-Missing public and private cooperation of activity implementation</p> <p>-Not very clear description of the project requirements</p> <p>- lack of communication among all involved parties about the rules for submission</p>	
<b>Results and impacts</b>	<p>- Goals of the policy instruments are relevant, and can be achieved</p> <p>- The indicators, expected result are real and can be achieved</p>	<p>- Not clear measurement methodology of the expected results monitoring system</p> <p>- Expected results are already reached (planners did not take into account the overall tendencies of the tourists flows)</p>	<p>- To each supported project (invested objects) should obligatory provided specific measurement equipment to monitor results – in current situation this condition isn't an obligatory requirement from responsible authority</p>
<b>Finance</b>	<p>-The policy is cost-effective (the investments go there were more potential)</p> <p>-The allocation of financial resources is in line with the policy instrument objectives and planned actions</p>	<p>-The expected total numbers of the projects is not adequate - demand for the investments exceeds the supply</p>	<p>- Missing the public-private model for investments. Investments for particular objects should receive from the private investors as well to bring specific added value while developing cultural and natural heritage related services in the region</p>

### 3.4. The influence of the policy instrument

The Operation Programme (OP) aims at achieving key national development priorities of Latvia, along with the EU2020 objectives. Priority axis 5, measure 5.5.1. of the OP aims "To preserve, protect and develop the important cultural and natural heritage, as well as the development of related services".

Sustainable management of the natural environment and cultural heritage can foster regional development in case the regional actors define coordinated, placebased strategies balancing measures of preservation with sustainable exploitation. Still, in Vidzeme, integrated strategy development is to be improved. The coordination of the municipalities gathered by Vidzeme Planning Region (VPR) is well organized and has deep traditions, but the collaboration and the communication channels with and among other stakeholders (i.e. private companies, civil organisations) are fragmented, leading to a lack of systematic approach towards the rich heritage assets in Vidzeme, just like in other similar regions in Latvia.

However, this challenge is not properly reflected in the OP. Therefore, VPR wishes to influence the OP in a way that it puts more emphasis on bottom up multi stakeholder engagement with regard to projects to be financed under measure 5.5.1. Furthermore, the good practices of other SWARE partners linked to public-private partnership cooperation structures are to bring specific added value while developing cultural and natural heritage related services in the region (as explicitly envisaged in the measure targeted).



## 4. Good practises

### 4.1. Case study 1.

#### *Ferry across the river Gauja*



*Photo: [www.jenculaivas.lv](http://www.jenculaivas.lv)*

#### **OVERVIEW**

**Country:** Latvia

**Region:** Vidzemes Planning Region

**Topic:**

1. Involving (protected) natural areas into touristic routes

**Duration of the project:** Since 1949

**Funding program:** Ticket revenue and local government financing

**Total budget:** Information is not applicable

**Key partners:** Municipality of Līgatne, Municipality of Pārgauja, The Nature Conservation Agency

**Current status:** A unique object of cultural historical heritage – the only ferry in Latvia and the Baltic states that operates by using the force of river stream, and it is included in the list of machinery historic monuments. Līgatne ferry is used both by local residents and tourists to get across the river Gauja. Līgatne ferry is a popular travel attraction object in Līgatne district and in the territory of the Gauja National Park. It is frequently included in the destination route.

## **Why can it be used as a good practice?**

1. Specific topic
2. Special, unique solution for an existing problem

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Problems before implementation:**

Līgatne ferry was constructed after the World War II, when the bridge across the river Gauja was destroyed. Local residents were unable to get to their jobs and school, because the closest bridges are located ~ 20 km away.

### **Preparation:**

Since renovation of the bridge required large investments and was time-consuming, it was more beneficial to restore the ferry across the river Gauja, which was constructed by the German army for the war front needs at the beginning of World War II.

### **Project objectives and purposes:**

Initially, the main purpose of this ferry was to ensure transport possibilities for local residents, whereas currently, by local governments subsidizing ferry costs, the objective is to preserve and maintain a unique object of cultural historical heritage on the shores of the river Gauja.

### **Project beneficiaries:**

Local people use the ferry when going to pick mushrooms and berries, and for transportation of products produced in their backyard farms – milk, eggs, vegetables. Also local and foreign tourists include a ride with the ferry in their destination route.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Project activities:**

The ferry ensures transferring of residents and guests of the region, as well as passenger cars, from one shore of the river Gauja to the other shore for a determined charge. It is well accessible by car transport from both shores of the river. The carrying capacity is 6 tonnes. Working hours of the ferry: each day from 6:00 AM to 11:00 PM; in the winter season – each day from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

This ferry is registered in the Latvian Ship Register.

An information stand is installed near the ferry, which provides an insight in the history of this cultural historical object and data about the rules for using the ferry, working hours, prices etc.

### **Management:**

Līgatne ferry is owned by The Nature Conservation Agency, but managed by two local governments – Līgatne region and Pārgauja region. Three ferrymen are employed on the ferry, whose salary is comprised by income from tickets and subsidies of both local governments. Operation of the ferry is not profitable, so both local governments divide the amount of losses (~ 60-70%) equally.

The ferry services are offered and advertised mainly by local tourism companies and tourism information centres, on the homepage of Līgatne region and social networks, as well as the tourism cluster of the Gauja NP EnterGauja, recommending this place for tourists.

### **Monitoring and evaluation system:**

Līgatne ferry is used by 9,000 - 10,000 people each year. The number of passengers is rising in the recent years, because Līgatne ferry has turned from a daily transport communication of local residents into a tourism attraction. Due to development of technologies, information about the ferry is distributed broader, therefore, local and foreign tourists, who travel around Vidzeme, in majority of cases choose the ferry service as an exotic additional adventure for their travel.

### **Obstacles and problems:**

The operation of Līgatne ferry mainly depends on weather conditions. The ferry is closed, if the water level in the river Gaujais too high or too low, as well as during ice movement. During the period of flooding, the ferry is taken out of the river, and access ramps are renovated on both shores each year. The ferry is painted and maintained in a good technical condition for passenger safety and for preservation of this cultural historical object.

The operation of the ferry also depends on the season – the largest number of passengers is in summer, when sometimes even queues of cars are forming on one or the other shore of the river.

Līgatne ferry till 2013 was managed by The Nature Conservation Agency, which is State agency and has not economic function, also including providing local transport. Therefore, The Nature Conservation Agency to give up management of ferry to local Municipality.

### **Problem solving practices:**

The latest changes in the working hours of the ferry are notified by roadside information signs, on social networks and in the Tourism Information Centre of Līgatne.

Careful maintenance and servicing is ensured for preservation of this machinery monument.

Līgatne ferry is included in various tourism routes and offers in order to raise the audience of those guests of the region who use the ferry not only as a transport when going across the river Gauja, but also appreciate this exclusive opportunity – to have a ride on a machinery monument – the only ferry preserved on the river Gauja.

Last three years management of the ferry going trilateral cooperation between Municipality of Līgatne, Municipality of Pārgauja and The Nature Conservation Agency. It is the best solution; otherwise ferry of Līgatne would become a historic tourist attraction on the bank of river Gauja.

#### **Innovative elements and novel approaches:**

In addition to the basic profile Gauja ferry offers various other services, for example, wedding programmes. A few years ago a competition “Visas upes plūst uz jūru!” (“All Rivers Flow to the Sea”) was organized in cooperation with “Tallink”, where visitors of the ferry participated in a lottery for a trip on “Tallink” ferry.

Also a new attraction – Folk Fishery Craft Museum – was opened next to the ferry on the shore of the river Gauja in 2013. Also places for recreation as well as embarkation-disembarkation place for water tourists are located nearby the ferry. There it is possible to use services offered by the canoe camping.

### **TRANSFERABILITY AND LESSON LEARNT**

#### **Evaluation results:**

Currently, while a bridge across the river Gauja is not built, connecting Līgatne region and Pārgauja region, Līgatne ferry has a significant role in transportation of local residents and tourists. Over the years, Gauja ferry has turned from a practical and economic necessity into a recognized, unique cultural tourism object, which offers an authentic, local traditions based experience to visitors of Vidzeme region.

#### **Lessons learnt:**

Cooperation of two local governments and state agency. Gauja ferry is a good example for how, on one hand, local residents are provided with transport facilities and, on the other hand, financing of the local government is invested for subsidizing preservation of cultural historical heritage – operation of Līgatne ferry. The Nature Conservation Agency engages in territory improvement through the European funds.

Heritage potential. Gauja ferry is the only waterways object in Vidzeme, which has preserved its initial economic function and over the years has become an object of cultural historical heritage, which attracts tourists and is used for establishment of new tourism products.

**Success factors:**

The success of Līgatne ferry is based, firstly, on its authenticity and uniqueness, secondly, on the practical necessity to get conveniently and quickly across the river and, thirdly, cooperation of Līgatne and Pārgauja regions for ensuring operation of the ferry.

## 4.2. Case study 2.

**Title: Riverways (Development of water tourism as nature and active tourism component in Latvia and Estonia)**



### **OVERVIEW**

**Country: Latvia**

**Region: Vidzemes Planning Region**

**Topic:**

- 9. Public-private participatory policy-making model for tourism development, management, promotion;
- 1. Involving (protected) natural areas into touristic routes;
- 8. Heritage related awareness raising & community engagement (e.g. voluntarism);
- 12. New marketing and PR methods for promoting the region.

**Duration of the project:** 01.2013. - 01.2015.

**Funding program:** Estonia – Latvia Programme

**Total budget:** 2 168 674, 70 EUR (Vidzeme Plannin Region - 195 130 EUR)

**Key partners:** Leader Partner – Kurzeme Planning Region. Project partnership consists of 39 partners - 3 Planning Regions, 4 Counties Development Agencies (representing also 17 Local municipalities), 3 Non-Government organisations (representing also 7 Local municipalities) and 29 local municipalities (2 from EE and 27 from LV).

**Current status:** Several rivers were cleaned in Vidzeme within the framework of the project (rivers Amata, Rauna, Abuls, Brasla), new ideas for water tourism products were created, accessibility of water resources was improved, developing the

infrastructure along rivers – recreation places and boat stops (alongside the river Salaca – in Burtnieki, Mazsalaca, alongside the river Vaidava – in Ape, alongside the river Gauja – in Valka, Strenči), and new water tourism maps and other informative materials were created. The cooperation among the project partners still continues.

**Why can it be used as a good practice?**

1. Specific topic
2. Special, unique solution for an existing problem
3. Preparation methods, elements
5. Management system
10. Communication

**BACKGROUND**

**Problems before implementation:**

In Latvia water tourism is part of active and nature tourism with high development potentials. Existing tourism offers so far is limited to the local market and is concentrated in most popular areas, but the number of rivers suitable for boating is larger, accessible starting from early spring till late autumn, decreasing also problem of seasonality. Domestic target market has great potential to grow.

**Preparation:**

While planning increase of tourism flow and wise management of it, it is necessary to plan also proper infrastructure, in order to reduce negative impacts and load on nature resources and to ensure sustainable use of resources. The preparation of project took place in cooperation with municipalities, tourism entrepreneurs, tourism experts. Discussions were organized to identify problems and find proposals for competitive development of water tourism destination and establishment of new tourism products alongside rivers of Vidzeme.

**Project objectives and purposes:**

The overall objective is to improve conditions for sustainable water tourism development and to increase competitiveness of water tourism in the Programme area. Specific objective is to develop programme area as attractive water tourism destination.

**Project beneficiaries:**

Nature and active tourism tourists (families with children, 1- 5 day leisure boaters, adventure seekers etc.), fishermen, boating tourism operators and other tourism stakeholders, foreign tourists from Lithuania, Finland, Russia and Germany.

### **IMPLEMENTATION (*max 2500 characters*)**

#### **Project activities:**

Project has 3 main fields of action:

- (1) Product development and quality raising through experience exchange visits, expeditions in project area and identification of new products, businesses, potentials in water, nature and active tourism.
- (2) Improvement of water tourism related infrastructure - revitalizing rivers through cleaning, establishment of resting areas, floating bridges, footways and footbridges, improvements of access roads, building of steamship and piers and resting areas near coastline.
- (3) Implementation of targeted marketing strategy to promote water, nature and active tourism opportunities in domestic markets as also in foreign markets.

#### **Management:**

Project infrastructure activities were covering Kurzeme, Riga and Vidzeme Planning regions, South-Estonia and Lääne County in West-Estonia. Marketing activities were coordinated by Foundation South-Estonia Tourism in cooperation with Planning Regions in Latvia. Close cooperation was be established with Latvian Tourism Development Agency and Estonian Tourist Board. Meetings of working groups, seminars, experience exchange trips and collective works for cleaning of rivers took place within the framework of the project.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation system:**

Updating of information on the project homepage [www.upesoga.lv](http://www.upesoga.lv) and Facebook account still continues. Tourism entrepreneurs are using the results obtained during the project – routes, river maps – in their tourism offer. It can be noticed, that boating season on the river of Vidzeme has extended, water tourism products are used also in spring and autumn. It is known, that communication is still maintained and cooperation takes place among project participants in Latvia and Estonia.

#### **Obstacles and problems:**

In general, implementation of the project went smoothly and successfully. Some activities planned within the project had to be postponed due to nature protection restrictions, for example cleaning of rivers couldn't be implemented during fish



spawning. Also additional time resources had to be spent for communication with private owners, who own properties on river shores.

### **Problem solving practices:**

In projects, the activities of which have to be implemented in nature territories, it is recommended to involve nature protection experts, whose competence and experience allows avoiding situations, when it is impossible to implement any activities within the planned term due to any nature protection restrictions. Also it has to be considered, that summarizing of information for water tourism routes on river boating possibilities, infrastructure, objects and service providers on river shores requires more time than summarizing of similar information for overland routes. It is related to weather conditions, water level, accessibility of objects (not all objects are accessible by overland routes, especially, in low populated territories).

### **Innovative elements and novel approaches:**

An unprecedented, but very useful handbook for water tourism service providers “Vai klientam vienmēr taisnība?” (“Is the Client Always Right?”) was prepared with suggestions for qualitative provision of water tourism services and establishment of a competitive company, and with good practice examples from other countries.

An informative boating routes planner was compiled within the project. On the homepage, materials in several languages can be viewed and downloaded in one place – a brochure on water tourism possibilities in Latvia and Estonia, and detailed river water tourism maps.

Great importance in publicity of the project and rivers of Vidzeme was for the project video clip “Vidzemes upes – piedzīvojums aiz katra līkuma” (“Rivers of Vidzeme – an adventure behind each turn” - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXGVlh\\_-bDQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXGVlh_-bDQ)), which was published in social networks and had great success. Instead of usual natural landscapes, the authors of this video little ironically, but positively described a modern water tourist, calling everybody to get into a boat, explore and enjoy rivers of Vidzeme.

## **TRANSFERABILITY AND LESSON LEARNT**

### **Evaluation results:**

Main findings of project - 15 new or improved joint tourism products or services and ca. 300 local tourism entrepreneurs benefiting from project at improving the business environment. A lot of rivers in Latvia and Estonia were vitalized and made suitable for boating (by cleaning the riverbeds and riverbanks and installation of boating stops and resting areas). Water tourism was promoted as active tourism component within Latvia

and Estonia domestic market as also in Lithuania, Russia, Germany, Finland in order to achieve the increase of number of leisure tourists.

### **Lessons learnt:**

Public and private partnership – implementation of “Riwerways” project revealed the possibilities and potential of this cooperation model. Through cooperating with local governments, providers of tourism services and private owners, it is possible to achieve significant and tangible results.

Versatile and motivated team. The project results are closely related to professional knowledge, interest and enthusiasm of project implementers. Therefore, it is important to attract to the project team such partners who are really interested and ready to work actively for implementation of the project. A good example of this aspect in Vidzeme planning region is Mazsalaca Regional Municipality, which developed water tourism infrastructure alongside the entire stage of the river Salacain the territory of the region during the project.

Individual approach and communication. “Riwerways” project showed that individual approach is important for implementation of tourism and waterways infrastructure projects, developing communication with water tourism entrepreneurs and private owners on river shores. Entrepreneurs are interested in preparation of precise information about those river stages where they provide their services. More ideas and proposals are expressed during a direct conversation. It is advisable to commence cooperation with private owners timely, precisely determining activities of owners themselves and all project activities in private territories or next to them, coordinating such activities individually and, it is advisable, in writing.

Cooperation between neighbouring countries. Implementation of the project made contribution in the offer and recognition of active tourism services in Latvia and Estonia. The project became recognized by the general public with the campaign “Upes oga” (“River Berry”), which was aimed to encourage people to go on boating trips in popular river routes or explore something new in rivers of Latvia and Estonia. Registered participants of the campaign who had completed at least one boating route in Latvia and one route in Estonia had a chance to win valuable prizes.

### **Success factors:**

Project success to a large extent depends on good and enthusiastic project management. Aiga Petkēvica, the manager of “Riwerways” project is a water tourism activist herself, and her personal experience while boating at least 100 km each year

was very useful in understanding water tourism both from the organizational and the service user point of view.

Involvement and interest of water tourism service providers, local governments, land owners and nature protection specialists in implementation of project activities was also a significant factor. Discussions about development of water tourism on different rivers of Vidzeme were widely attended. The participants involved in the project highly appreciated the opportunity to explore experience of other people and to learn from successful solutions in Latvia, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania.

#### 4.3. Case study 3.

##### Title: Gauja Raftsmen Festival in Strenči



Photos: [www.strencunovads.lv](http://www.strencunovads.lv)

#### **OVERVIEW**

**Country:** Latvia

**Region:** Vidzeme Planning Region

**Topic:**

4. Integrating intangible cultural heritage (e.g. traditions, local products) into L&H services;

9. Public-private participatory policy-making model for tourism development, management, promotion (e.g. destination management organisations including municipalities, SMEs, NGOs).

**Duration of the project:** Since 1998

**Funding program:** Municipality of Strenči, donations

**Total budget:** ~ 7000.00 EUR

**Key partners:** Municipality of Strenči, NGO "Gaujas polstnieki", local entrepreneurs

**Current status:** Each year on the third Saturday the Gauja Raftsmen Festival takes place in Strenči in order to preserve and honour the craftsmanship of Gauja river loggers and to popularize the raft making tradition. Three days prior a log raft is made

and an expedition of raftsmen starts – rafting downstream the river Gauja. On the Saturday morning the raft is awaited and raftsmen are greeted. Throughout the entire day a diverse cultural programme, fair and sports games are offered, and at the end of the day – evening music on the river Gauja and the first open-air dance party at Strenči open-air stage.

**Why can it be used as a good practice?**

3. Specific topic
4. Special, unique solution for an existing problem
5. Preparation methods, elements
6. Problem solving practices

**BACKGROUND**

**Problems before implementation:**

Strenči is situated alongside the river Gauja. Already since old times forestry has been one of the main activities at this locality and in Vidzeme in general. Previously wood materials were transported by river logging them as rafts or loose downstream. River logging is the oldest type of transport of wood materials in the world. River logging ended on the river Gauja at the beginning of 70s of the 20th century, when waterways were not used anymore for transportation of wood materials in Latvia due to the transport development. Thus the traditional occupation of local people disappeared, similar as raft making and river logging skills. In 1998, the first Gauja Raftmen Festival was organized, inviting all former wood drivers and their successors in order to collectively restore and promote this tradition so characteristic of Vidzeme.

**Preparation:**

Each year Strenči Regional Municipality creates a working group (6-7 employees) for organization of the festival. The local government cooperates with the society “Gaujas plostonieki” and local entrepreneurs.

**Project objectives and purposes:**

Their objective is to preserve the intangible heritage of Vidzeme, promoting the old craft – river logging on the river Gauja, honouring of the old raftsmen and their successors, as well as creating the identity and international recognition of Strenči provincial town in relation to this tradition.

**Project beneficiaries:**

Visitors of this event are mainly local residents, raftsmen, their children and relatives ~ 400 – 1000 people. The festival is also visited by guests, mainly local tourists from

Vidzeme region. Approximately 20% of all visitors of this event are foreign tourists who are in one or another way related to river logging in other countries and to the International Timber Raftsmen Association.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Project activities:**

The festival in Strenči town takes place on the third Saturday of each year, whereas raft making starts three days earlier, when a raft is made at Spicu bridge and a two-day rafting downstream the river Gauja takes place. On the festival day, the town organizes a fair, collective awaiting of the raft at the New and the Old oak on the shore of the river Gauja, various sports and cultural events, concerts, exhibitions, attractions in the raftsmen style both for children and adults. The traditional Raftsmen soup and “Raft's joy” (alcoholic drink) can be enjoyed on the raft. On the evening, the festival ends with evening music on the river Gauja, fireworks or light show, and the first open-air dance party, which continues until dawn. All activities during the event are free of charge, except the open-air dance party.

### **Management:**

Gauja Raftsmen Festival is organized in Strenči by Strenči local government in cooperation with the society “Gaujas plostnieki”. The main task of this society is to organize the raft making and the rafting on the river Gauja, gathering experts of this old craft and other guests. Activities organized by the society are practically the only in Latvia, which ensure preservation of skills and knowledge of river logging craft already for 19 years. Over the years the society has made research about the history of river logging and skills of raft making, which has encouraged activities by school children and activists of studying of local history of Strenči region, thereby ensuring succession. The society takes care for maintaining the essence of this festival, whereas the local government is responsible for the form and promotion of the festival. The local government of the region ensures successful progress of the festival in the course of three days – the festival programme, as well as publicity of the festival and communication with former river loggers and supporters of the festival.

Logs necessary for rafts are supplied by SJSC “Latvijas Valsts meži” and JSC “Strenču MRS” free of charge. Also cooperation with other entrepreneurs is ensured, using the financing provided by sponsors mainly for acquisition of prizes and gifts.

During the preparation process, collective cleaning works are organized on the shores of the river Gauja and at venues of the raft expedition. Collective works are organized together with local residents, members of the society and employees of local government in order to clean the river shores from natural obstacles and waste.

**Monitoring and evaluation system:**

In the course of time this festival has turned from a small scale local event into a three-day festival with a diverse programme. It is the main cultural event of the year in Strenči, where the existing and former local people gather together. The publicity and attendance of the event has grown, starting from 2009, when Strenči became a regional centre. Since 2014, the festival is attended also by international audience – delegations from the International Timber Raftsmen Association.

Strenči region has actively engaged in the preservation of Gauja river logging tradition, not only creating and maintaining a separate section “Raftsmen of the river Gauja” on its homepage, where information and photos from the festival are available, but also maintaining a database with contact information of raftsmen – festival participants. The Tourism Information Centre of Strenči region collects materials about this traditional craft.

**Obstacles and problems:**

One of the problems in organization of the festival and maintaining this tradition is the insufficient financing, which increases each year, although the number of old raftsmen shrinks.

Problems are caused also by concurrently organized other events elsewhere in Vidzeme, for example, Entrepreneurs' Days in Valmiera, also Salaca raftsmen festival in Northern Vidzeme, The Museum Night.

Since Strenči is a provincial town, there are insufficient catering and accommodation possibilities, during the festival.

**Problem solving practices:**

Strenči Regional Council and the society “Gaujas plostnieki” use every opportunity to attract additional financing from local and international project funds. The festival programme is improved each year with something new and unseen, for example, a wood sculpting workshop for creating wood sculptures from timbers was organized in 2015, also various creative workshops take place, artists are carefully selected for the evening music event on the river Gauja, etc.

During the organization of the festival, cooperation with tourism entrepreneurs in neighbouring regions is implemented, several catering service providers are attracted at the venue of the festival.

#### **Innovative elements and novel approaches:**

The programme of Gauja Raftsmen Festival is diversified each year. In the course of 19 years, since this festival was started to organize, the year 2011 is particularly special, because Strenči was granted the status of International Raftsmen Town. In its turn, in 2014, the General Assembly of the International Timber Raftsmen Association was held in Strenči, attended by members of the association from 10 European countries. In that year several wood sculptures were installed on the shore of the river Gauja in honour of raftsmen, and an informative stand “River logging on the river Gauja” was opened.

Each year Strenči region invests in improving of the festival venue – shores of the river Gauja. The festival venue has become a popular place for local residents to spend their leisure time, and an attraction for guests of the region.

#### **TRANSFERABILITY AND LESSON LEARNT**

The organization of the festival makes a significant contribution into preservation of the intangible cultural heritage of Vidzeme. During the event, on one hand, the old occupation – river logging – is promoted into nowadays and, on the other hand, the tradition characteristic of Vidzeme is preserved – raft making and driving skills, raftsmen songs, dishes, beverages etc. This festival is a moment, when raftsmen of respectable age and their craftsmanship are honoured. At the same time, it is a chance to meet enthusiasts of river logging, among them raftsmen and their successors, acquire new knowledge and skills, share own experience and spend a great time.

#### **Lessons learnt:**

Cooperation of the non-governmental sector and the local government. Gauja Raftsmen Festival would not become an annual long-term event in Vidzeme, if the cooperation between the society “Gaujas plostnieki” and Strenči Regional Municipality would not be so successful and stable. The capacity of the non-governmental sector is limited both in terms of the available financing and time resources, whereas the local government has better frameworks and opportunities for organization of ambitious events. Strenči Regional Municipality is among the members of the society “Gaujas plostnieki”.



Festival as a type of preservation of intangible cultural heritage. By organizing Gauja Raftsmen Festival, the old traditions of rafting on the river Gauja have been revived in Vidzeme. Increasingly more interest about the history of river logging and raft making skills is shown by students of Strenči Region Secondary School and activists of studying of local history. In raftsmen schools, organized by the society “Gaujas plostnieki”, pupils become acquainted with the history of river logging and raft making skills. After attending the Raftsmen School, some pupils express their will to continue participating in activities of the society and to participate in the expedition of Gauja Raftsmen Festival.

Intangible cultural heritage as a creator of identity of provincial town. Strenči is the place of the oldest and largest mental hospital in Latvia, which, although does a blessed job and employs many local residents, determines a specific identity of this place. The restoration of Gauja Raftsmen Festival and river logging traditions has changed the recognition of Strenči both locally in Vidzeme and Latvia, and internationally. Strenči has become the capital of raftsmen, and Gauja Raftsmen Festival – the dominating symbol of the provincial town.

**Success factors:**

Gauja Raftsmen Festival will take place already for the 20th time in Strenči on 20 May 2017, becoming a traditional and major event in Strenči. Such sustainability of this festival is based on the interest of raftsmen and their successors themselves, as well as the region in preservation and popularization of the river logging tradition. For raftsmen themselves and for Strenči provincial town belonging to the river Gauja and river logging is important and significant, so the motivation to meet each year on the shores of the river Gauja and remember the old times and skills continues from year to year.

## 5. Conclusions

Nowadays waterways in the territory of Vidzeme planning region don't have economic functions anymore neither in transportation of passengers, nor in transportation of goods, a framework and definition of waterways determined in cooperation with sector experts, which is necessary for the research work and situation analysis.

The following waterways and places in Vidzeme are considered as inland waterways in Vidzeme planning territory and in the framework of the SWARE project:

1) Historic waterways:

- The old Gauja River waterway of the Hanseatic Union and its dry land branches (Straupe, Valmiera, Cēsis, Rauna, Smiltene, Gaujiena, Alūksne, Burtnieki, Rūjiena);
- wood materials driving waterways (Gauja, Vaidava, Tirza, Brasla, Rauna, Amata, Palsa, Vija, Vidaga; Salaca, Burtnieks, Seda, Rūja; Aiviekste, Pededze, Bolupe, Veseta, Liede, Kuja, Ogre Rivers);
- Formerly populated lakes (Lake Alūksne with Pilssala and Cepurītes island, Lake Alsviķi Indzeris with an island, Lake Āraiši with a lake castle etc.);

2) Rivers and lakes, which are nowadays used for recreation as active recreation waterways (Abuls River, Līgatne River, Lake Kāls, Lake Vaidava, Lake Ungurs, Lake Alauksts, Lake Lizdole etc.).

The main water recreation resources in Vidzeme are rivers and lakes, the most popular activities connected to them are - water tourism (canoe, boats, rafts, etc.); nature tourism (walking and bicycle routes along or near the water, and ski trails, fishing, birdwatching, swimming), active tourism (watersport, powerboating, water skiing, sailing, kiteboard, etc.).

Water has always attracted people. A lot of heritage sites and industrial infrastructures (bridges, ferries, mills, etc.) are located near water. This encourages water tourism and often serves as a basis for organizing various cultural events near water. The waterways of Vidzeme are increasingly being used for cultural events; pleasant music concerts take place on water floats.

The rivers and lakes of Vidzeme are suitable and are being used for tourism activities. Tourism, especially active and adventure tourism, is one of the most prospective fields in Latvian economics, and its development is especially important for Latvian regions. Many active tourism service providers are located near areas of water and water tourism is becoming more popular, often being the main resource that

provides business and tourism development in the specified area. However, inland waters altogether don't have any essential financial impact on the economic development of region, as the fields connected to them are seasonally affected (in spring and summer).

Inland waters in Vidzeme are mostly used for water tourism and recreation by promoting niche product development in the specified region. Both on the level of local government and on the national level there is no unified institution in Latvia, which is generally responsible for or gives recommendations about planning and development of inland waterways and recreational waterways. The main problems, which are delaying management and development of inland waters, are: absence of unified measures; insufficient financing for water management; public passivity.

The identity of Vidzeme is closely related to the cultural and natural heritage of the region, including the intangible cultural heritage. These are significant sources of development of Vidzeme, which are significant to be preserved and developed, promoting conservation of unique cultural environment, and development of economy of local communities, craft and creative industries, especially in rural areas, thereby strengthening their competitiveness potential.

Tourism is an essential part of the Latvian economy; it forms 8% of total employment in the country and provides almost 75000 jobs. On the one hand, tourism infrastructure is well-developed in the Vidzeme region, especially various types of accommodation and dining facilities, infrastructure of water tourism. On the other hand, there is a lack of tourism development strategy with a shared vision for a common natural and cultural heritage.