



Ex-Post Evaluation - INTERREG III 2000-2006

PROGRAMME: INTERREG IIIA Southern Finland-Estonia

"Traditsiooniline ja väärtuslik vana maja" ("Traditional and Valuable Old Buildings")

Project Good Practice Study

Project Study: "Traditional and Valuable Old Buildings" ("Traditsiooniline ja väärtuslik vana maja")

1. General Information

Keywords: Exchange of knowledge, best practices, care for traditional materials

Region: Southern Finland – Estonia

Programme strand: INTERREG III 2000-2006 Strand A

Duration: 02/2006–12/2007

Funding: The project had a total budget €315,180 of which €175,201 (55.59%) was funded by ERDF and €139,971 (44.41%) was project co-financing.

Lead Partner: NGO Estonian Heritage Society (MTÜ Eesti Muinsuskaitse Selts)

2. Project Aim

The aim was to improve co-operation and promote best practice and knowledge transfer between NGOs in the field of heritage preservation. The project encouraged exchange of experience and learning about improving the care and preservation of traditional buildings, and incorporating the use of traditional materials in renovations. The partners sought to bring together like-minded organisations and heritage specialists from across Finland and Estonia.

3. Project Description

The project "Traditional and Valuable Old Buildings" was aimed at exchanging knowledge and developing partnerships across the borders in the field of heritage preservation. Project activities included establishing an information service/library at the Centre of Sustainable Renovation of the Estonian Heritage Society (SRIK) in Tallinn to educate people on Finnish maintenance of old homes, as well as a similar information centre in Billnäs, Finland, to introduce Estonian experience and practice. The project also planned to set up an information room at the Sustainable Renovation Centre in Tallinn, to create a website, to publish two issues of a joint booklet, to promote the care and maintenance of traditional buildings, and to organise three 'restoration camps' and seminars in Estonia and Finland.

In Estonia there remains a particular handicraft tradition that has been lost in Finland. One of the most important aims of the project was to share and import some of this knowledge to Finland. Involving local government organisations both in Finland and in Estonia would give the project a greater potential for long-term sustainability and maximise its political and strategic impact.

4. Political and Strategic Context

Previously no co-operation in the field had been carried out by the two countries despite the fact that, historically, both countries have similar heritage traditions. Before the project Estonia had partners in other Scandinavian countries but no greater interest had been shown in learning from each other's experience and know-how. There was considerable ignorance about exactly what particular knowledge each partner had and which specific heritage interests the countries had in common.

With society paying more attention to the environment and to cultural values, it seemed like opportune timing to put together a cooperation project.

Considering the difference in the size of the partner countries (Estonia and Finland), the impact on Estonia at country level was very wide, also from the local, political and strategic point of view. For Finland this impact was slightly more modest but still positive. For example, the Turku Provincial Museum has built up considerable experience in co-operation with traditional, self-taught artisans who transfer their art and skills to the younger generations, but has less experience in working with modern, professional artisans - this was an issue on which Estonia was able to offer considerable value.

5. Project Implementation

A preparatory project was conducted to identify roles and agree upon tasks. The partners identified the long-term sustainability of the project as a potential problem, and saw that successful implementation would depend on engaging stakeholders beyond the formal partnership, such as local government organisations.

All organisations involved in the project were non-profit organisations with considerable experience of implementing heritage projects. A website was created for the project, however, due to the high costs that maintaining a website brings, it has since been integrated into the website of the Information Centre for Sustainable Renovation (www.renoveeri.net). This ensures the website contains up-to-date information and is easily found by the interested persons.

The lead partner had queries concerning the actual expenditure of the partners, and there may have been some initial confusion about the application of grant rates – whether an average rate was applied across the partnership or whether individual partner grant rates applied. The application of the average rate meant some partners, including the lead partner, may not have received full reimbursement of costs incurred. It was difficult for the NGO to cover these costs itself.

Project results were disseminated during a conference at the Open Air Museum in Rocca-al-Mare, where mutual experiences and best practices were shared. Future plans and needs were discussed as well as possibilities for future co-operation.

6. Project Results

Two information centres were established in Estonia and Finland: the information centre promoting Finnish experience in Tallinn and the centre for educating the public about Estonian experience Billnäs. Both centres put on exhibitions that were open to the public and some materials remain on site for future display. Roughly 10,000 people visited the exhibition in Finland and 3,000 in Estonia. The exhibitions have ended but the library in Tallinn remains open to the public and contains a great deal of information from Finland on heritage, such as books, professional magazines, CDs, samples of suitable building materials and techniques etc. An information room was established at the same spot that is open to the public on Wednesdays and supplies readers with expert literature from Finland. The project organised seminars, training sessions and 'restoration camps' aimed at raising awareness about maintaining buildings of cultural heritage and training specialists.

Renovating buildings with highly valued architecture, history and location is expensive. Therefore, the potential value of the Information Centre for Sustainable Renovation, in terms of providing costs savings, was significant even if it was not

immediately appreciated. The project helped improve the image of organisations promoting sustainable renovation.

The rate of renovating old buildings in both countries, by investing in preservation work has increased significantly. In the period until the end of 2008 the partners recognised a peak in the renovation of old houses. The project's awareness-raising campaign contributed to this increase, though other factors such as improvements in the economic climate, and, hence, people's greater financial ability to undertake investments may also have played a role.

In Estonia, the project consequently had an effect on the national political and administrative processes. In Finland the project was unable to affect the national level largely because of the local nature of the project and its partner. The project created two jobs in the project lifetime, and these posts are still being occupied (at the time of this report, March 2010).

In the absence of Interreg funding, the activities would only have been carried out in Estonia, not in Finland, drastically limiting the exchange of best practice and transfer of knowledge in heritage preservation. Given the potential sustainability of the current project, another project application is under preparation as a follow-up in the INTERREG IV Programme.

7. Key Success Factors and Lessons Learnt

The lead partner recognized the value-added of a good preparatory project, in terms of laying the foundations for a good, cooperative partnership. It also saw the importance of agreeing on roles, tasks, objectives and strategy, at an early stage to guarantee effective project implementation. Ideally, in a cooperation project, each action should encourage joint working methods and engage all partners to ensure strong partner relations and knowledge transfer.

Accordingly, the project was well analysed (including SWOT) and the partnership felt that what it had drawn up was realistic in terms of time, resources and the action plan. From experience, the lead partner felt that preparatory actions should always really focus on partner search activities, in order to really identify and bring together the right organisations, before proceeding with the actual project.

The project showed that even a small NGO can make a difference and have an impact on local, regional and national policies, especially if done within a wider partnership. Cooperation projects should not be limited to formal partners but encourage the participation of other organisations, in order to maximise project impact. Involving local government organisations helped secure political support and contact with actors on the ground. Involving educational institutions also added to the long-term sustainability of the project.