

SIGULDA. Promoting for economic development through cultural heritage valorisation

The Sigulda Castle Complex Project

Integrated revitalization of historical patrimony

THE CREATION OF AN ARTS AND CRAFT QUARTER IN THE OLD CASTLE COMPLEX OF SIGULDA IN A HANDS-ON APPROACH. IT SHOWS HOW THE VALORISATION OF SITES CAN NOT ONLY ATTRACT NEW VISITORS BUT ALSO PROMOTE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND JOB CREATION

The main focus of the Development Strategy of Sigulda Castle Complex 2013-2018 is on involvement of members of creative industries in the Sigulda Castle Complex by seeking the best scenarios and providing the most effective solutions in order to turn the Castle Complex into the creative quarter and place where creative entrepreneurships can successfully develop. To turn the area, which was considered degraded, into opened city space for a healthy lifestyle, which provides an opportunity both for the locals and the guests for recreation, education and work in a healthy and inspirational environment.



The three main objectives are the following:

1. development of the centre of creative activities for both the locals and the guests (interaction between local inhabitants, entrepreneurs, guests, ensuring openness, education, social responsibility and development);



2. integration of the Sigulda Castle Complex into tourism routes (a focused orientation inwards the planning process of tourism routes; development of tourism offers specific to various target groups);

3. Creation of environment for entrepreneurship and representation (to turn the Sigulda Castle Complex into a place where educational, private and corporative events and presentations can be held, where entrepreneurial activities can be developed).

The work on the Development Strategy of Sigulda Castle Complex 2013 – 2018 ensured a sustainable and integrated approach from the very start of the development process of Sigulda Castle Complex. All the stakeholders were involved and listened to before taking the final decision of which direction to take back in 2012. The process has resulted in a revitalized area opened to public where maintenance costs are covered by different private users of the buildings.

10 years ago Sigulda Castle Complex was a rather undeveloped area somewhat remote from the city center where few summer events were held in the medieval castle ruins. Now this previously degraded area has been turned into a lively part of the city where local businesses and craftsmen reside in the renovated spaces. However, to keep the place alive a packed calendar of events that are interesting not only to locals but also attracts visitors from the whole region as well as the capital city Riga is crucial. The events bring visitors and customers to the local businesses throughout the year thus maintaining (and creating new) workplaces and promoting development of new services.

Events held in Sigulda Castle Complex are crucial part of the site marketing strategy. There is an overall tourism strategy for city of Sigulda, including Castle Complex as one of priorities, but to ensure the site is visited and loved by local residents and people from neighboring cities unique events are organized throughout a year: concerts, gastronomy festivals, opera festival, outdoor cinema nights, markets etc.

A Hands-on touristic experience

Solution to empty spaces and maintenance costs – restoration of cultural monuments is very expensive; therefore, use of public money can only be justified if the restored spaces are used and at least the maintenance costs are covered through the usage – it can be income through ticket sales or rental cost.

In the case of Sigulda one part of the renovated spaces is all rented out to creative local businesses and the other part – the New Castle - will be opened to public providing new services - an interactive exposition, a wedding hall, an exhibition space, and the income of these newly created services will cover the maintenance cost of the cultural monument.



Solution to seasonality – the tourism season in Sigulda is summer and the first part of fall when there is a natural flow of visitors attracted by beautiful nature that surrounds the Castle Complex. However, for small businesses to stay alive there is an income necessary throughout the year.

Therefore, the smart selection of creative businesses that are complementary to each other and provide hands on experiences is crucial. During the low season these provide educational opportunities to school children and families. Other type of complementary businesses – co-working space, photo studio, etc., and events that are organized also in low season for the local public, like skating ring in winter, ensure there are people visiting and using the space throughout the year.



There are around 30 newly created work spaces in Castle Complex right now, and the number will increase as soon as all the spaces are rented out. Also there is an overall increase of number of visitors in Castle Complex and an increase in time they spend there.

There is an overall increase of number of registered visitors in Castle Complex by 12% yearly and an increase in time they spend there by 20% since beginning of implementation of Sigulda Castle Complex Development Strategy.

Increase in number of events organized by 55%, visitors – 80%.

Increase in number of businesses in the Castle Complex 75%.

What's Next?

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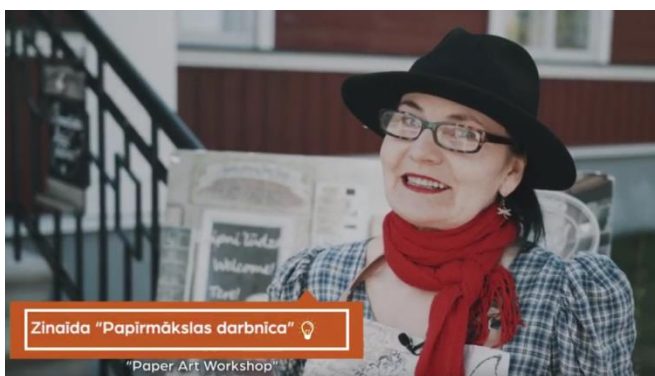
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The key to the successful event management is the integrated approach where all the involved parties work together: municipality team (culture, tourism, marketing, territory development departments), event organizers. Thus, ensuring that events are running smoothly starting from ticket sales and ending with the waste management during and after the event. Sigulda municipality has established an Event Planning Committee to ensure that all aspects are integrated and taken into account. City of Sigulda has developed a program to attract partners for events offering co-financing if proposed event meets municipality's priorities.



"Through the project I have obtained a place to work with high awareness within local residents as well as tourists. I never thought I could work in such place. In the beginning we had no clue, sometime we couldn't believe, but now I am pleased with everything I have put into this work and we are growing every year. I glad for everything that is happening in the Castle Complex"

Mrs. Marina, ULG Member, Leather Workshop



"The main benefit of the project is that we are all connected. We never know from where an idea comes to our mind and it helps to meet people on an everyday basis. Every person has a mission on earth and apparently mine is to do what I do and if somebody likes it too than I'm glad"

Mrs. Zinaida, ULG Member, Paper Art Workshop

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By Pedro Soutinho, INT-HERIT LE

Videos

Sigulda Vox pop video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLRDMIZI-9Q>

Revitalisation of Sigulda Castle Complex Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGnl_CUQY7c

Sigulda Transnational Meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bT6gGvzHqG8>

Info about the city: <http://tourism.sigulda.lv/news/3663/>

About the INT-HERIT Project

The INT-HERIT project is an Implementation Network under the Urbact Programme that identifies, collects and exchanges knowledge across nine small to medium-size cities sharing similar challenges when tackling cultural heritage protection, conservation or valorisation. Implementation has all sorts of constraints and variables that may influence the final results. New smart, low cost initiatives are being implemented to overcome these constraints by adopting an integrative and participative approach towards stakeholders aiming to increase the value created for the community through heritage conservation projects. This article provides an overview of some of the initiatives currently taking place in the city in order to contribute for a knowledge base of solutions that will be hopefully useful for other cities across Europe while managing their cultural heritage.

