

Project partners visit Zemgale to gain experience in creating gardens for different community needs

On 28 and 29 May, representatives of municipalities, scientific and educational institutions from Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland visited Latvia, Zemgale as part of the Baltic Sea Region Programme project "Interactive Gardens" to learn about gardens in the region and discuss what's been done in the project so far.

The project partners discussed the use of garden therapy, the use of digital solutions and virtual environments in the project, the maintenance of the gardens and the reception of visitors.

Inese Ebele, Director of the Institute of Horticulture, told the audience that it is important for the Institute to find ways to open the gardens to the public not just for science and the laboratory. One such way is to organise events such as the Lilac Blossom Festival, which usually takes place in May, with a cherry picking in July and an apple and pear festival in autumn.

During the meeting, colleagues learned about Latvia's experience in creating gardens for different needs of society. The visit included a visit to the lilac garden of the Institute of Horticulture, a garden in a historical building at Abgunste Manor, a Baroque Garden at Rundāle Palace and an open-air rhododendron collection in a forest landscape at the Rhododendron Breeding and Testing Nursery "Babīte" of the University of Latvia. The meeting was enriched by the Riga Association for the Visually Impaired and Blind "See Me", helping to understand how people with vision problems perceive their surroundings and others.

The purpose of the project is to develop gardens accessible to the public for maintaining health, getting the sense of a garden and educating visitors both by using smart and innovative tools and by seeing and feeling the plants and environment around them. The project partners will also take care of the exchange of information between the neighboring countries, so that the various activities in the gardens are better known and they are easier to find. The project is managed and supervised by specialists from the Zemgale Planning Region. The project has started with the development of a virtual garden model, various improvements, planning and design work in the partners' gardens, which will be demonstrated to other gardeners.

Project no. #C036 "Integrated System for Interactive Public Garden Development in Baltic Sea Region", or "Interactive gardens" is implemented in the Baltic Sea Region Program 2021-2027. The total financing of the project is 2,790,120 (including ERDF co-financing of 2,232,096 euros).