

Presented by Aija Neilande

May 23, 2025



Involvement of Volunteers in Coastal and Forest Trail Maintenance, Establishment of Latvian Hiking Club



Latvia



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Interreg



Co-funded by
the European Union

Estonia – Latvia

When and how did it started?



02/01/2017 - 01/30/2020

Coastal Hiking Route along the Baltic Sea Coastline in Latvia and Estonia, Interreg Estonia - Latvia

06/01/2020 - 05/31/2022

Development of Forest trail In Latvia and Lithuania and expanding the Baltic Coastal Hiking route in Lithuania, Interreg Latvia - Lithuania

07/01/2023 - 06/30/2026

Forest and Coastal Hiking Trails' accessibility improvement for different social groups, Interreg Estonia - Latvia



- We have brought together **industry professionals** who know the need for such a route, its contribution to the local community and society as a whole.
- But do the society and the local community think so too, **do the citizens understand!?**



Why Local Community Acceptance Matters for Long-Distance Hiking Trails?



Access to Land and Infrastructure Many trails cross private lands, village paths, or community-managed areas. Community support ensures smoother negotiations for access rights, easements, or cooperation with landowners

Sustainable Maintenance

Local residents often become stewards of the trail, helping with maintenance, signage, and quick issue reporting. Without their involvement, long-term upkeep becomes challenging and costly

Economic Opportunities

If locals feel included and see potential benefits—like increased demand for guesthouses, food, crafts, or guiding services—they are more likely to support and promote the trail

Why Local Community Acceptance Matters for Long-Distance Hiking Trails?



Security and Welcoming Atmosphere

Friendly, informed locals enhance the safety and experience for hikers. Conversely, tension or resistance from the community can create discomfort or discourage visitors

Promotion and Word-of-Mouth

A supportive community becomes an ambassador for the trail—sharing stories, posting online, and encouraging others to explore the route

Resilience and Adaptation

In times of environmental or social change, trails supported by local communities are more likely to adapt, survive, and thrive because they're rooted in local ownership

Our idea how to achieve it!

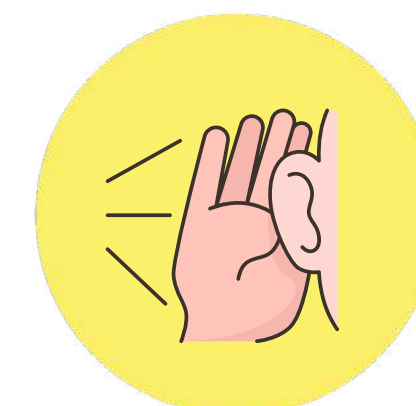
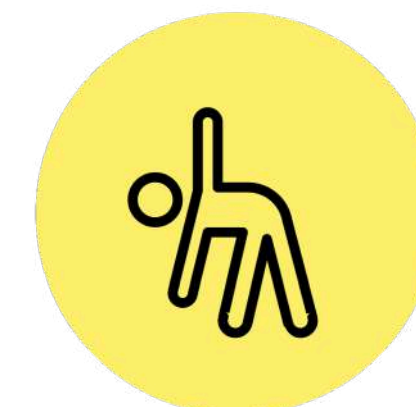
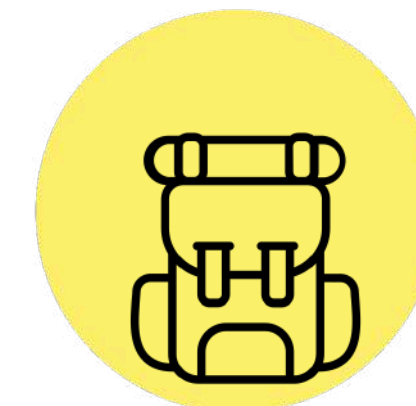


By participating!

- **Expeditions**, where we explored the route and prepared material for the guidebook, website ...
- **Trail marking events**
- **Free of charge hikings**

Communication – without judgement, no such thing as a stupid question

Responsive – we listen to pedestrians and seek solutions



A few events in between



11.05.2024

The first meeting on establishing the volunteer movement for the Jūrtaka and Mežtaka trails!

100 people signed up – 60 attended



November, 2024

Tourism representatives from Kurzeme explore Norway's experience in organising volunteer movements and maintaining hiking trails

Within the framework of the initiative "Baltic-Nordic exchange of experience in promoting volunteer engagement and inclusive tourism," implemented by Kurzeme Planning Region under the Bilateral Cooperation Fund of the programme "Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Cultural Cooperation" of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014–2021.

NGO

Latvian Hiking Club



Founded, January 2025



www.latvianhikingclub.lv



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www.facebook.com/LatvianHikingClub




What Has Been Done So Far

1. **Logo created** - Author Linda Jākobsone Viškere
2. **FB page created** - www.facebook.com/LatvianHikingClub
3. **Home page in progress** - www.latvianhikingclub.lv
4. **Three trail maintenance events** – including inspections, improved waymarking, and litter collection – have already taken place
5. Set annual **membership fee for individuals** - 12€
6. Set annual **membership fee for companies**, organisations, and legal entities - 120€.
7. There are **more than 100 contact persons** who have participated and are willing to participate in voluntary work.
10 of them are full members.



**LATVIAN
HIKING
CLUB**

Future plans - BIG ones

- 
- Work on attracting new members
- Obtain consent from all landowners for coordination once a year or once every five years
 - A ranger for each trail section
 - Trail angels
 - *And many more yet to come*

**All the volunteers
are crazy – in the
best way possible!**



THANK YOU

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