

PAN-BALTIC HIKING ONLINE CONFERENCE

planning – developing – managing

November 9, 2021



The Pan-Baltic hiking conference will celebrate the success of the Baltic Trails (baltictrails.eu) – a network of long distance hiking trails connecting Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and putting a new destination on the hiking map of Europe.

With the Baltic Trails we have achieved great goals:

- the three Baltic countries are now linked with the European network of hiking paths as part of the routes **E9 and E11** having become a part of the European hiking community;
- strong identity of the Baltics is achieved as a **cross-border hiking destination**, with the same image, tourist information, trail marking and management based on local involvement;
- a convincing and **highly relevant hiking tourism product** is created attracting visitors to the region and taking them outdoors for healthy and active holidays in fresh air and beautiful nature in any season of the year.

WHO WILL PARTICIPATE

The conference will bring together a wide range of stakeholders: developers of hiking tourism products, trail planning specialists, municipalities and organisations responsible for trail maintenance, tourism organisations and hiking enthusiasts.

CONFERENCE TOPIC

The conference will share experiences and reflect on various aspects of the excellent cooperation that brought to existence the Baltic Trails – **the Coastal Hiking route and the Forest Trail**. The guest speakers will share experiences on hiking activities from Europe and Scandinavia and discuss trail planning and management, infrastructure development and maintenance, involvement and responsibilities of stakeholder organisations, specialised services for hikers, future trends in hiking, and other practical topics.

CONFERENCE AGENDA, NOVEMBER 9

9:30-10:00 Online waiting room

10:00-12:00: Conference

- Greetings from the conference moderator **Matijs Babris**
- **The Baltic Trails - experiences, challenges, solutions, future plans and expectations.**

Asnāte Ziemele, Latvian country tourism association „Lauku celotajs”.

- **„Development of the national framework for trails in Sweden - incorporating a 20-year experience”:**

- background of trails in the country
- connection between the trail criteria and practice
- recommendations

Guest speaker **Kenneth Joelsson**, Tourism in Skåne AB, Sweden.

- **Practical experiences in hiking trail development and management in Norway.**

Guest speaker **Trygve Sunde Kolderup**, Den Norske Turistforening, Norwegian Trekking Assosiation.

- Discussions.

12:00-12:30: BREAK

12:30-14:30:

- **Baltic Panel discussions** moderated by **Matijs Babris**:

- Local acceptance and support: how to build strong local hiking communities along the long distance hiking trails involving local stakeholders and supporters.
- Sustainability: how to manage and maintain long distance hiking trails after the end of project funding.
- Benefits: how local businesses can use the opportunities provided by long distance hiking routes; how to understand hikers' needs and provide services.
- Added value: how development of long distance hiking routes can impact the preservation of cultural and natural heritage.

Panelists:

Latvia: **Aija Neilande**, Kurzeme Planning region and **Edgars Ražinskis**, Riga Planning region.

Estonia: **Tõiv Jõul**, West-Estonia Tourism and **Raili Mengel**, Estonian Rural Tourism organization.

Lithuania: **Agne Vaitkuvienė**, Lithuanian Country Tourism Association and **Renata Kilinskaite**, Curonian Spit National park.

The conference working language will be English.



THE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION IS OPEN UNTIL 05.11.2021:
>>> [HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/HQIEAL5YBNP1J9G56](https://forms.gle/HQIEAL5YBNP1J9G56)

MORE INFO: ANNA@CELOTAJS.LV

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CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Guest speaker Kenneth Joelsson has been exploring trails around Europe since the beginning of the 21st century. This fascination inspired him to get involved with the development and maintenance of the Skåneleden trail, the most southern long-distance trail for hikers in Sweden, working as the trail manager for the county of Skåne. He has also worked as a consultant organizing trail destinations in other parts of Sweden. Right now Kenneth is involved in a national project for a framework for trails in Sweden. In addition, he writes guidebooks for outdoor enthusiasts and leads guided tours in the area around his home village Dalby.



Guest speaker Trygve Sunde Kolderup is the head of sustainability at the Norwegian Trekking Association. He is a former outdoor magazine editor and has written several books on Norwegian outdoor experiences and the World's best hiking. He is the co-founder and former Head of Development at a Norwegian hiking tour operator. In 2016 he was the initiator to Norwegian Scenic Hikes, an ongoing trail project which includes the most popular hikes in Norway. The concept is a criteria-based authorization system for 15-20 Norwegian hiking trails which aims to take care of the needs of hikers and guarantees a high standard. Trygve is educated in business and Nature Based Tourism, and has also worked in sustainable tourism. He is a member of Visit Norway's Advisory Board.



Asnāte Ziemele, Latvia, is the president and founder (1993) of the Latvian country tourism association. Her experience includes leading and participating in over 40 rural tourism product development, branding and marketing projects with partners in the Baltics, Europe and Scandinavia. As the association leader, Asnate has introduced the national eco-labelling system for rural tourism (since 2000) and maintains the dialogue between tourism and nature protection sectors. She is the initiator of the Baltic Coastal Hiking Trail and the Baltic Forest Trail, and linking both with the European long distance hiking path network.



Conference moderator Matijs Babris is a passionate adventurer, architect and co-founder of Latvian Nature Tourism association. Together with NGO Movement Spontaneous he organises weekly outdoor gatherings and larger expeditions in Latvia and abroad. During last 5 years Matijs has walked over 15 000 km along custom wild routes over Europe, India, China, South Korea and Africa. Among his most recent expeditions are 1800 km Northern Iceland coastline hike, Baltic coastline trail, Cyprus coastline trail and kayaking expedition around the Åland Islands. When not lost in nature, you can find Matijs curating hiking activities in public outdoor events such as LAMPA conversation festival, iNOVUSS festival and collaborative activities with Latvian universities and student organisations. His professional work and PhD research focuses on decentralisation of nature tourism through merging experiential architecture with outdoor activities at Riga Technical university Faculty of Architecture.



Aija Neilande, Kurzeme Planning Region. A person who has participated in all three projects as a project partner or a member of the steering committee and has taken part in the creation of both trails - The Baltic Coastal Hiking Route and The Forest Trail in their full lengths. During route inspections, she walked both trails in full length within the Kurzeme region (total most kilometers from all partners). Participated in route marking and involved local stakeholders. Coordinated routes with municipalities, cooperated with tourism information centers, actively involved entrepreneurs.



Edgars Ražinskis, Riga Planning region. Member of the Board of the Latvian Nature Tourism Association since 2020. Teaching promotion of tourism products in Vidzeme university of applied sciences. For the last 10 years worked in various companies related to the tourism industry. Creator of nature tourism blog 25wolves.com. Participated in the creation of the "Hiker-friendly" label. Has taken part in The Forest Trail route inspections, marking and initiated alternative trail routes. Special cases where the routes had to be coordinated with private territories. Participating in the creation of the Forest Trail community in the vicinity of Pierīga, which will be involved in the maintenance of the trail in the future.



Tõiv Jõul, West-Estonia Tourism. Partner in the Hiking route along the Baltic Sea coastline in Latvia - Estonia project. Responsible for the Pärnu and Haapsalu regions and the Estonian islands, which are off-route attractions. Coordinated the route, involved locals, collaborated with municipalities and national parks. Continues to maintain the results of the project cooperation with local municipalities, walks around Pärnu with route marking stickers in his pockets! :)



Raili Mengel, Estonian Rural Tourism organization. Partner in the long distance cross-border hiking trail "The Forest Trail" & Hiking route along the Baltic Sea coastline in Latvia - Estonia projects. Coordinates cooperation between the Estonian partners, provides information to entrepreneurs. Route planning and in some cases re-planning, cooperation with Estonian hiking organizations.



Dr. Agne Vaitkuvienė, Lithuanian Countryside Tourism Association leader since 2020. For more than 15 years has been researching local tourism, teaching tourism at Vilnius University and regularly participating in various local tourism promotion projects. Since 2004 runs a family organic farm and rural tourism business. In Lithuania, the Countryside Tourism Association is responsible for marking of the E-pahs (European hiking routes), and represents Lithuania at the European Ramblers Association.



Renata Kilinskaite, Curonian Spit National Park. Development of Forest trail In Latvia and Lithuania and expanding the Baltic Coastal Hiking route in Lithuania. Project partner. Route inspection, provided ideas for route solutions, route marking, involved tourism information centers and national parks - Curonian Spit National Park and regional nature park administrations.

PROJECT PARTNERS

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PROJECT PARTNERS:

LATVIA



ESTONIA



The project "The long-distance cross-border hiking route FOREST TRAIL" (04/01/2019 - 06/30/2021) is partly funded by the European Union and the Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 of the European Regional Development Fund.



EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional Development Fund

LEAD PARTNER:



Kaunas Regional Development Agency

PROJECT PARTNERS:

LATVIA



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Latvian Country Tourism Association "Lauku ceļotājs"



KURZEMES
PLĀNOŠANAS
REĢIONS

Kurzeme Planning
Region



Kuldīga County
Council

LITHUANIA



Lithuanian Countryside
Tourism Association



Žemaitija National Park
Administration



Curonian Spit National
Park Administration

Project LLI-448 "Development of Forest trail in Latvia and Lithuania and expanding the Baltic Coastal Hiking route in Lithuania" (Hiking project) is being implemented with the support of the European Union Interreg V-A Latvia-Lithuania Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. Total costs of the project are EUR 788,104. Co-funding by the European Regional Development Fund is EUR 669,888.



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