

Landscapers' international project transforms stormwater ditch and its surroundings into an inviting green space

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An international project launched last year investigating the knowledge landscapers need in changing climate environment, will yield tangible results this spring as an unattractive stormwater ditch in Valga transforms into a more capable drainage buffer with cascades and greenery, creating a pleasant environment for recreational area visitors.

Green transition has changed perceptions of environment and urban greenery, and due to climate warming there is rapidly growing demand for sustainable solutions in urban landscaping. Examples of current topics include building vertical and rooftop gardens, innovative methods for managing stormwater, ensuring drought resistance, and preserving and enhancing biodiversity.

Initiated by training company Yebisu Estonia, the project partners include Estonian Landscapers Association, Latvian Landscape Architects Association, and the Finnish Green and Landscape Contractors Association. The project is funded by the European Union and supported by Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Agency. To identify the new skills landscapers need in changing conditions, surveys were first conducted with landscapers in Estonia, Latvia, and Finland.

In Estonia, interviews were conducted last summer with 19 landscapers by the Estonian Landscapers Association. It emerged that landscapers foresee the following topics becoming increasingly relevant over the next three to five years:

- Floodwaters, droughts, and rainwater usage. How to adapt to new conditions when there is heavy rainfall or prolonged droughts? Water as a natural resource.
- Planting trees in public spaces.
- Knowledge of plants and materials. Understanding soils, substrates, plants, and various materials.
- Sustainable and high-quality maintenance. Maintenance manuals exist, but they are not widely used, and for instance, road maintenance personnel are not aware of their existence at all.
- Digital and technical solutions for organizing everyday work on sites. For example, sensors near trees that assess watering needs remotely and prevent unnecessary travel.

Sensors and technical systems to collect information about the implemented solution and evaluate how they are functioning.

- Digital and technical solutions for landscapers' teamwork and communication.

As a summary of the research from the three countries, the topic of stormwater management was selected, and an in-service training program has been developed for it.

Estonian Landscapers Association is tasked with conducting actual on-site training for the international landscapers' team in Valga this spring.



During the construction process, the existing ditch will be divided into five zones based on the project by Gen Mandre, all of which will enhance the ditch's capacity for buffering, slowing down flow velocity, and purifying pollutants:

- Zone 1: Rapids slowing down flow velocity.
- Zone 2: Partially planted/landscaped and slightly sparser section of the rapid that slows down the flow rate.
- Zone 3: Decorative slower-flowing section landscaped with flowering plants.
- Zone 4: A deeper sediment area that cleans the water.
- Zone 5: The area raised from the excavated soil with a slope towards the Pedeli beach area.

In Valga, three mixed teams of three members each from Estonia, Finland, and Latvia are working during practical training sessions.

On **May 25th**, everyone interested will have the opportunity to observe the construction, exchange ideas on-site, and see what landscapers are doing and how the stormwater ditch and its surroundings near Lake Pedeli get a new lease of life. The Knowledge Day “[Landscapers as Creators of Well-Being](#)” on Saturday is a part of the European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 main programme.