

*There are several EU funds available to help site managers to finance their projects. One of these funds is the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This fund has three objectives; one of them is European Territorial Cooperation, better known as INTERREG. Eurosité's European Facilitation Service has explored the funding possibilities of this objective for site managers and presents several project examples. In each example a member from the Eurosité network illustrates a project, funded by Interreg, in which they were involved. More project examples and more information on Interreg can be found on [www.eurosite.org](http://www.eurosite.org).*

# RUOKO.FI

## Reed Strategy in Southern Finland and Estonia

### Basic information about the project

#### EU Programme

Interreg IIIA/ Baltic Sea (Southern Finland and Estonia sub-programme)

#### Programme priority

Environment 3.2: Bilateral maritime cooperation across the Baltic Sea

#### Duration

35 months

#### Project period

15.03.2005 – 28.02.2008

#### Budget

Total budget: € 992 000 / ERDF contribution: € 558 500 (56%)

#### Partnership

1. Southwest Finland Regional Environment Centre (Lead partner; Finland)
2. Turku University of Applied Sciences (Finland)
3. Southeast Finland Regional Forest Centre (Finland)
4. Cursor Ltd (Finland)
5. Tartu University (Estonia)
6. Estonian State Nature Conservation Centre (Estonia)

#### Link to Eurosité

Iiro Ikonen was involved in the RUOKO.FI project as the project manager on behalf of the Lead partner Southwest Finland Regional Environment Centre. Iiro Ikonen also works for the "Association for Traditional Rural Landscapes in Southwest Finland", which is a Eurosité member

#### Project focus

Creating a strategy to establish a balance between the utilisation and preservation of reed beds and the restoration of coastal meadows



## Project example Interreg IIIA: RUOKI.FI

### Overall objective

To create a sustainable strategy for coastal areas of Southern Finland and Estonia, indicating:

- Where to utilise reed;
- Where to restore reed beds into coastal meadows;
- Where to leave reed beds untouched.

### Project summary and activities

The project sought to establish a **balance between the utilisation and preservation of reed beds** and the **restoration of coastal meadows** and had an interdisciplinary approach in trying to find solutions for problems and possibilities concerning common reed (*Phragmites australis*). The project focused especially on questions connected with the following five themes:

1. Water protection;
2. Biodiversity;
3. Construction and building;
4. Bio-energy;
5. Culture, landscape, farming and recreation.

All these themes were connected together in order to create the reed strategy for the pilot areas of the project. Pilot areas were the city of Turku, the bay of Halikonlahti (in the municipalities of Salo and Halikko) and the Estonian Väinameri coastal areas. The project also carried out innovative planning and management actions in other coastal areas of Southern Finland and Estonia.

The area of managed coastal meadows in Finland has declined from 57 000 hectares (1950s) to ca. 4000 hectares. This decline has led to an aggressive expansion of reed beds in Finnish coastal areas over the past few decades. This process of meadow decline leading to reed bed expansion is mainly caused by the termination of grazing, followed by overgrowth of reed. In the current situation there is not enough meadow area to keep up favourable conservation status of coastal meadow species.

The project outcome estimated that it could be possible, out of the total of 30 000 hectares of reed beds in South Finland's coastal areas (not including those in inland waters):

- To utilise about 12 500 hectares for bio-energy and construction materials;
- To restore 7 500 hectares of reed beds and turn them into coastal meadows, supported by grazing.

If planned well, the restoration of reed beds will enhance biodiversity, help to protect the waterways and the air, and encourage the use of the coastal areas for leisure purposes. Achieving this win-win situation was a central goal of the strategy.

Other outcomes of the project included recommendations to:

- Implement the overview planning used in the pilot areas more extensively in other Baltic coastal areas, and at the same time establishing harvest chains.
- Present the calculations of a cost and benefit analysis of ecosystem services of an optimally managed coastal reed



## Project example Interreg IIIA: RUOKO.FI

bed- meadow network to decision makers. A good example in this regard, is the deterioration of the water retention ecosystem service of the Archipelago Sea. This deterioration, caused by ditching of forests/bogs, straightening waterways and intensified agriculture, leads to increased solid material and eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. The importance of the restoration of these services should be recognized and become known, to stimulate action.

### Achieved outputs and results

- The project's main publication is a book called "Read up on Reed!" and is available through the following link: <http://www.ymparisto.fi/default.asp?contentid=247909&lan=fi&clan=fi>
- The publication of 19 theses, several exhibitions and many other publications (including strategies).
- Also, the project resulted in a Parliament question, making the Finnish Minister of Environment interested in the topic. Subsequently, the Finnish Ministry of Environment asked the Southwest Finland Regional Environment Centre (Lead partner) to prepare an advice for summer and winter reed harvesting in spring 2008.

### Relation between project and site management issues

Most big reed beds are Natura 2000 sites, and the project assisted in creating management plans.

### Project initiative

The Lead partner Southwest Finland Regional Environment Centre initiated the project.

### Gain for own organisation

- Sustainable planning of coastal zone and;
- A new financing incentive to ensure progress.

### Lessons learnt

- Take care when composing your partnership: make sure that each partner is really interested in the topic and in working together;
- Find good and skilled people to manage your project. A creative mind is very helpful;
- Interreg can be very demanding: many meetings, seminars etc.;
- Interdisciplinary projects are interesting and educational. Individuals, especially experts, get the possibility to broaden their views on certain themes.

### Follow-up

There are several new projects planned, including the establishment of an international Euroreed-network by 2010 (also part of the Finnish Programme of Measures). This network could aim at exchange of knowledge between European coastal areas, especially for Natura 2000 sites, and managers of coastal areas in Europe.



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### For more information

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