



The first Zemgales Storytelling festival in Latvia



Pilsrundāle, Rundāles county

2012



The first Zemgales Storytelling festival – an example of approach of work with the oral history bearers in Latvia

Insight Festival

Festival was organized by Latvian National Commission for UNESCO, Rundale Local Municipality, Pilsrundale's library and support from the EU lifelong learning programme Grundtvig. Storytelling festival was organized in order to bring together storytellers from Latvia, especially from Zemgale's region, and other countries. One of the objectives of this festival was to integrate local community and promote oral traditions as an important part of the intangible cultural heritage. Storytelling festival lasted for three days and it was organized with a specific focus on Saint Michael day, which is celebrated in Latvia in 29th of September. There was organized a specific Michaels's fair where participants were involved into traditional songs and play dances.

The approach of storytelling was various, depending on the place where we were. In the first day most of the stories were told in the town hall, where a special evening for local kids was organized. Most of the stories were adapted to the youth audience and performed together with puppets and workshop.

The second day of the festival activities took place around the pottery, where just baked pots were taken out (one of them was also a special "Storytelling festival pot"). Together with traditional folk group, participants and guests did played different games and shared their stories about childhood.

During the second day everyone went to the Michaels's fair, which was the official part of the first Zemgale's Storytelling festival. Professional storytellers, representatives of the UNESCO LNC network "Storytelling libraries" and partners of the project "Grand-treasures" were performing on the stage and told stories about different regions of Latvia (in a specific dialect) and other countries as well as fantastic and funny stories about misunderstandings. Foreign guest performed in English with a translation to Latvian.

During the storytelling festival there was a meeting for the "Storytelling libraries" network organized as well. Therefore festival was a great and valuable event for both – for organizers of the meeting and the audience which experienced the festival.

This festival was organized into the framework of the Grundtvig Project „Grand-treasures” and was both local activity and fourth partner meeting in Latvia. In total Storytelling festival brought together around 50 storytellers from different parts of Latvia and abroad as well as wide range of listeners. Participants were:

- UNESCO LNC network „Storytelling libraries” which is a network of 18 libraries;
- Local Storytellers;
- Storytelling experts from Latvia;
- Grundtvig project “Grand-treasures” partners from Galicia, Portugal and Estonia;
- Representatives of local community.



Example framework for organising the festival

Nr.	Task	Activity	Result
1.	Presenting the idea and developing the program framework	<p>Collecting ideas and discussing them with organizers and participants.</p> <p><i>During the process of planning of the Zemgale Storytelling Festival, ideas were shared and discussed in the seminar of the UNESCO LNC network "Storytelling Libraries". In this seminar everyone could generate ideas and put their effort in the development of the program framework.</i></p>	<p>Developed skills of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · presenting the idea and convincing the audience of its sustainability; · cooperating in order to achieve the common aim; · properly and fully using the expert recommendations to achieve the best result.
2.	Listing the potential participants of the festival and inviting them.	<p>Communication with potential participants whose professional career or/ and personal experience fits the thematic course of the festival.</p> <p><i>Festival participants were invited by the main organizers of the event: UNESCO LNC and Pilsrundale Library. Representatives of the Pilsrundale Library communicated with the local participants of the festival, while UNESCO LNC invited storytelling experts from Latvia and from abroad.</i></p>	<p>Identification of local traditions keepers and guests from abroad and mutual communication.</p> <p>Developing the skill of cooperation and implementation of tasks of the project.</p>
3.	Deciding on the place of the festival	<p>Exploring the place: adapting the planned activities to limitations of the place.</p> <p><i>During the Summer school in 2011 (organized by UNESCO LNC) one of the tasks was to plan the possible place of the festival and discuss the adequacy of the place for the festival activities.</i></p>	<p>Cooperation between the festival organizers and local organizations.</p>



4.	Involving local institutions	<p>Reaching out to local institutions that would be interested in the event and acknowledging their role in the project.</p> <p><i>One of the main organizers of the event was Pilsrundale Library. Its task was to communicate with local institutions, such as the Municipality of Rundale District, Sviltene Town Hall, organizers of the Saint Michael's day market, owners of the "Baltā māja" etc.</i></p>	<p>Developed skill of: communication with representatives of local institutions.</p> <p>Raised awareness of the importance of oral traditions in preserving the local heritage and emphasized the need to highlight oral traditions during different local events.</p>
5.	Attraction of funding	<p>Listing the possible sources of financing and the demand for financing.</p> <p><i>The first Zemgale Storytelling festival was a big scale event, that is why three different sources of financing were used:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme Grundtvig</i> - <i>Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia;</i> - <i>Municipality of Rundale District .</i> 	<p>Developed ability to prepare a reasoned application for funding.</p> <p>Acquired experience for further work with financial sources.</p>
6.	Adminstrating, coordinating and implementing the tasks of the festival	<p>Planning the tasks and the strategy for action.</p> <p>Clarification of responsibilities and setting the timetable (internal management plan).</p> <p><i>During the process of preparation for the festival, internal management plan was set up. It was used by the organizers to coordinate and share the responsibilities for different tasks.</i></p>	<p>Developed skills of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cooperation while taking in account the different time management of each organizer; - coordination of complex processes and implementation of internal management plan.



7.	Creating publicity	<p>Preparation of the informative materials and working with regional media. Channeling information through the existing channels of organizers.</p> <p><i>UNESCO LNC in cooperation with the Pilsrundale Library prepared information about the planned event. Information was distributed via local and regional media, as well as through the different networks available (partner institutions, colleagues, friends etc.)</i></p>	<p>Fostered the skill of cooperation with mass media and learned to create media friendly content for a wider audience.</p>
8.	Documenting the event	<p>The aim of the documentation of the event was to gather the information about the activities of the festival, as well as to archive the stories of keepers of the oral history.</p> <p><i>The event was filmed and recorded in audio format by Guntis Pakalns –one of the experts of UNESCO LNC and senior researcher, PhD, working at the Archives of Latvian Folklore, Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia.</i></p> <p><i>Visual documentation (photography) was done by the organizers themselves as well as the participants.</i></p>	<p>Involvement of experts in documentation.</p> <p>Ability to use existing resources to reduce costs (for example, human resources - colleagues, acquaintances)</p>
9.	Collecting results	<p>Evaluation of the event and recommendations for further activities.</p> <p><i>After the festival, UNESCO LNC network “Storytelling Libraries” organized a meeting where the evaluation of the festival was done. Opinions of organizers and participants were shared, but an important contribution was the expert recommendation and advice for further events.</i></p>	<p>Critical evaluation of the event and preparing recommendations on the further development of the festival.</p> <p>Experience of the involvement of experts in evaluation and assessment of the event.</p>



10.	Disseminating project results	<p>Collecting, processing and distributing the information and audio-visual material.</p> <p><i>Audio-visual documentation that was done during the festival was processed and edited in order to create a representative video-material about the festival. This video was distributed and shared among the organizers, participants and individuals. Information and photos were uploaded and shared via internet homepages of the organizers and partners.</i></p> <p>Results of the festival were widely shared in different seminars as an example of a good practice in working with local heritage and acknowledgement of the significance of the oral history on a local, as well as on a national level. This experience is internationally shared among the project partners.</p>	<p>Ability to work with information, distribute it to multiple channels, as well as to share experiences with other people who want to organize similar activities.</p>
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More information about the Network of „Storytelling Libraries” of Latvian National Commission for UNESCO - see in www.stastubliotekas.com.

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