Title of the Story: All you need is a roof over your head, but a proper one.

Destinations Name: (include any state, province or region)
Hiiumaa Island
Country: Estonia

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Nomination Category: (Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)

☒ Localizing the destination supply chain
☐ Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
☐ Culture & Communities
☐ Environment & Climate
☐ Nature & Ecotourism
☐ Tourism Reset & Recovery
☐ Other

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices in the Top 100 training module “Good Practice Story”.

Should you have any questions on your submission please refer to our FAQ page or contact top100@greendestinations.org
DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced
What was the problem/issue solved with the good practice? Click to add your text

Hiiumaa island in the Baltic sea has the reputation of a peaceful, calming, authentic and inspiring nature destination. The visitors expect to experience the magic of real nature throughout their stay on the island. They also expect privacy and authentic accommodation, but not for the price of abandoning all modern conveniences because Hiiumaa is not an extreme nature sight in some extreme spot, but a nice rural area with lots of alvars, woods rich in biodiversity and natural beaches and of course the local community living on the island all year long and very much aware of the untouched and well preserved nature they can enjoy here.

Tourism here is special, as we do not have any big hotels, resorts or hotel chains operating on our not so small island. Our way is to offer accommodation that resembles pretty much the accommodation the local live in themselves. Over-tourism is definitely not an issue on our island. We would gladly welcome a much bigger number of tourists if there were suitable accommodations and service providers available. We have space for new houses in private places “in the middle of nowhere” and a number of traditional old log houses suitable for accommodation but in desperate need for renovation. The key issue in renovating any house is the proper roof and in our case the traditional island roof - the thatched roof.

Although there is a saying “All you really need is a roof over you head” in our case it is not at all the same what kind of a roof it is.

The biggest problem of all was the lack of the traditional skills of rebuilding thatched roofs and the material, which grows on the island but was not used and processed here but imported instead as well as the craftsmen.

Here is the contradiction. We would like the tourism numbers to grow, but we do not want hotels or hotel chains to destroy the unique atmosphere of the island which is very authentic and has survived from the mass tourism impacts thanks to history of a closed border zone. We also want the population of the island to grow instead of decreasing like in most rural areas and this means that there must be work for all generations all year long.
Methods, steps and tools applied

How was the good practice implemented?

It all started some five years ago from one cottage where a thatched roof needed repairing. At first, the local Heritage Protection Organisation, who is a very active heritage studied the methods of traditional thatched roof building and found out it was doable. As a result at first a course and later a permanent study program for studying traditional roof building methods was formed at the local vocational school in Suuremõisa / Study programs/

It soon became clear that you can not restore the roof without knowing the traditional log house building methods. So a new course was formed for traditional log house building methods.

Information about the courses spread quickly around Estonia and soon there were many times more applicants to the courses than the course was designed to. Soon an extra course was opened, as it became clear that there are lots and lots oaf old log houses around Estonia in need of repair as the log house has been the traditional house type throughout centuries here.

Further more for the next year the traditional log house building course was added to the permanent study program of Hiiumaa Ametikool at Suuremõisa and is continuously a popular study program.

This is important because in order to survive, a rural vocational school on an island of less than 10 000 inhabitants needs permanently new students from outside of the island. But now back to the roofs.

For thatched roof you need a special building material that one can not buy in normal building stores. So what tot do? How did our ancestors do it without modern transportation possibilities – and remember Hiiumaa is an island 22 km away from mainland.

A little of negotiating, brainstorming and studying and it became clear that the raw material grew right in front of our nose – natural cane.

Cane can be gathered on many shores around Hiiumaa where it grows naturally. There was the need for the building material and some active entrepreneurs started a business of gathering and producing cane mats and piles for thatch roofs. It is a successful business now which also produces raw material for cane drinking straws and most important once again some young families get their live hood out of it and can stay on the island. Examples: Sikassaare, Roonit

One problem solved and some still to be solved – first the new private sustainable houses for visitors and locals with modern conveniences in middle of nowhere where there is no electricity – how ?

After many years, thanks to the roof and log house building courses at Suuremõisa we have again skilled carpenters and new building companies on the island and furthermore some new sawmills and building and landscape design companies too which now give work for many families here, but it does not yet solve the lack of electricity in far away places. We all are aware that electricity nowadays is pretty much a necessity whether you are outdoors.
somewhere far out or not.

As said before, we cherish privacy and so do the tourist here. They would very much like to spend their holiday in the “middle of nowhere” but they are not ready to spend their vacation totally without electricity—so how to overcome this problem in a natural sustainable way? The local LEADER group has been supporting man anew initiatives of sustainable solutions through their educational and financing programs. They also link together different stakeholder groups.

Some new islanders came out with solution of easily transportable smart house— a special solar roof vigvam minicottage. Now it is possible to build private accommodation almost anywhere and still have modern conveniences so much desired by our visitors. A video of the solution of smart houses in English is here.

Prototype was successful and idea owners turned to the local LAG for extra financing. As the project was innovative and sustainable— they got the financing and now they have started production. And the first solar roofed mini cottages are also exported to Latvia too.

**Key success factors**

What helped you tackle the issues? Click to add your text.

The success factors were the community, the financial help from local LAG who saw the bigger picture. Another important factors were the raw material—natural resources at sight, forgotten traditional skills that could be successfully restored and reformed to modern techniques and awareness of the values these traditional skills represent.

The basic need for change or development must be real, recognisable and understandable for everyone. You can not make a destination sustainable with slogans. It is only possible to achieve the goals when everybody can see and enjoy the results of the actions taken and can see the value these changes bring to their everyday life.

**Lessons learned**
While implementing the Good Practice what challenges were faced, and how were they overcome? Click to add your text

Speak up, talk with community members. There is always somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody who has the information you are seeking for.

Results, achievements and recognitions

What were the qualitative and quantitative results of the good practice? Has it received any rewards? Click to add your text

From clearly specified an unique need grew out numerous successful businesses which give work for locals and makes it possible to stay on the island.
Now we have it all, saved and live heritage of traditional building methods and modern solutions suitable for our unique island, work for different generations and satisfied tourists as they have the possibility to make sustainable choices and support the local community by doing so, without making extra efforts during their vacation. / Video: Tahkuna forest house /

Additional references

Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from Youtube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL.

| Traditional log house building at Suuremõisa vocational school in Hiiumaa | Smart houses - Modern wooden solarroof module cottages in LEADER group good broshure of smart solutions. |