

Elva railway station old building has new life and it offers various experiences



Photo: Kayvo Kroon

20 May 2008 was the re-opening day of a historical railway station building in Elva, revived to new life. Besides its basic function, the renovated station building serves now as leisure and travel centre. The old railway station building is today better known as Elva Hiking Centre. Elva railway station building plays a significant role in history of the town, as Elva was founded due to Tartu-Valga railroad construction (1886–1889). The first to mention Elva railway station is newspaper “Olevik” in December 1886. The historical railway station was ready in 1889.

The Hiking Centre opening was a great event not only for the habitants of the building. „Opening of the Hiking Centre had positive effect on the whole town, providing favourable conditions for developing and implementing tourism marketing



Photo: Merike Järv

plan that brings about rise in the number of visitors to the district,” says Merike Järv, manager of the renovation project. „Firms are interested in selling their products and services in the Hiking Centre.” The Hiking Centre contributes to developing the town area and stirring up cultural life. There is added where there is – founding the centre helped to increase investments to the town planning and development. The fact that Elva’s citizens chose

renovation of the railway station as the Achievement of the Year 2007, shows how highly they appreciate the work completed.

The only interactive exposition of surrounding nature and culture in Tartu County is displayed here, in the Hiking Centre. The exposition introduces visitors with sporting and hiking possibilities in Elva recreation area. The most exciting part of the exposition is an interactive

tour which enables a visitor to get acquainted with local hiking paths with the help of simulators. Without leaving the room, one can enjoy a bicycle tour or go canoeing and familiarize him or herself with local landscape and nature. The exposition tells about foundation and formation of settlement in Elva and gives an overview of cultural and sport events that are held there. According to an article in the newspaper „Tartu Postimees”, the modelled landscape is simulating natural bends of the River Elva and rises and downhills in Vitipalu bulge-like elevation.



Photo: Merike Järv

Old railway station building has several functions: one can visit an exhibition of nature and neighbouring places of interest, enter a studio or a tourist information centre. Tourists and hikers may use a luggage room and take shower, they can also rent walking sticks and bicycles in case of need. A studio is opened in the Hiking Centre which is working place for local artists and master-craftsmen. It is interesting to see pieces of art being completed before your eyes in the studio- if you please, you may buy original local handwork and art here. The Open Studio is also

targeted to conduct seminars, trainings, presentations and days of study. The room is furnished comfortably and equipped with modern technique. Starting in October 2008, a shoemaker began his practice in the Hiking Centre, introducing his work methods; he also mends camping outfit quickly and perfectly. The Hiking Centre serves tourists as well as permanent population, part of the station building is used as passenger waiting room.

During the renovation, the eternit roof was replaced with rolled metal roof, skylight frames dating from Soviet times were replaced with late 19th century style frames, rotten timber trunks and clapboards were replaced, and interior and exterior hues that are similar to the original ones, were restored. Works were completed within the framework of the Program for Strengthening of the Competitiveness of Regions.

Stamina and patience is that Merike Järv would suggest her counterparts engaged in completion of such projects. It is essential to make everything clear concerning one's desires and the exact result – what it must look like and how it must function.

As for the Hiking Centre, the follow-up project in on its way. It is focused on arranging a park around the Centre, leading the travellers, hikers and tourists to different paths and towards various destinations.

Program for Strengthening of the Competitiveness of Regions



ERDF support:

7 605 563 kroons

Applicant: town of Elva

Supported activities:

- Elva railway station and its outhouse were renovated
- Water supply and sewerage system, and also heat pipeline were constructed
- Furniture, permanent exhibition and technological solutions for exhibitions were procured for the Hiking Centre

Total project cost: 9 506 954 kroons

Project duration: 2006 to 2008

