

Aviation lovers' Paradise in the middle of a potato field

In Haaslava Parish near Tartu, namely in Veskioru, there is the biggest private owned aviation museum of the Nordic Countries. A fulfilled one man's dream helps to kindle the passion for aviation among the raising generation.

The author, initiator and leader of Tartu Aviation Museum is Mati Meos, a man of great love for aviation. In 2002, he opened an aviation museum on an allotment where he used to raise beetroot and potato. Founding the museum was driven by the fact that it had become almost impossible to find any room for the models of planes he had collected throughout the decades.

The museum was founded with the purpose to inspire interest in technology and promote aviation education among the young. The aspect of entertainment is not less important. "The main emphasis of the exposition is laid on the planes which were based on Estonian territory, on the fighters of the World's jet plane era and on the collection of plane models," Mati Meos guides a tour around the museum.

First planes were brought from the Ukraine, only transportation had to be paid for. „Now the Ukrainians require market price for similar planes," Mati Meos explains the complicated way the exhibits are procured „meaning that the Aviation Museum is a stronger partner for them." In autumn 2008, visitors can already see 13 planes and two helicopters in the museum as well as model planes and pilot uniforms.

Initially, Meos financed the procurement of the museum's showpieces himself. Financing from the



Photo: Mati Meos

Program for Strengthening of the Competitiveness of Regions helped to create modern infrastructure for the museum. The Aviation Museum has more friends who have contributed to the undertaking. When talking about prices of the museums, Meos recognized that the wealthier the country to buy one from, the more favourable the price because vendors in poorer countries always try to get the most out of scrap metal.

Procuring exhibits for the museum may at times become almost a foreign policy issue. Here we present Mati Meos's description of getting the Swiss fighter Mirage to the Aviation Museum:

„First we sent a letter to our Ministry of Defence, the letter was passed on to the Swiss by our Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well. We received a positive reply from Switzerland at once upon our first application." By the way, three fighters and one helicopter have been given as a gift to Tartu Aviation Museum by Poland.

The museum grounds are vast; there is a lot of space there. Mati Meos replies to the question about how many flying machines are there to be taken to the museum further more: „We have many plans, but procurement of interesting machines is getting more difficult as time goes on, financially as well as in the sense of uniqueness."

The Aviation Museum received support under the Program for Strengthening of the Competitiveness of Regions for the implementation of the second stage of the development plan of the museum. Building the main entrance, constructing the main building and hangars for exhibits and supplementing the exposition were the objectives of the project. By virtue of the aid, museum visitors are now welcomed in the museum's main building that has 450 m² of space for the exhibition floor, lecture hall and necessary service rooms. According to Mati Meos, the aim is to establish a knowledge-based entertainment centre, the rich content, environment formation and quality of which should guarantee its fame and rising attendance. To Mati Meos's assessment, in order to reach the goals, the chosen direction is correct. „The conditions for the Aviation Museum exhibition have been significantly improved, its reputation has risen and we get positive feedback from tourism developers.” In addition to the exhibits, enthusiasts can participate in Summer Aviation Days in Veskiõru.

Bearing the future in mind, also a second application has been approved by Enterprise Estonia under the Program for Strengthening of the Competitiveness of Regions to get financial aid for implementing the third stage of the Aviation Museum development plan. The objectives of the project include: final determination of the size of the territory of the Aviation Museum and buying its own land property, buying hangars for all planes, constructing extreme attractions, creation of the recreation area, building a tourist information point, procurement of new aviation exhibits, revision of Estonian and the World's aviation history and preparing relevant displays.

Program for Strengthening of the Competitiveness of Regions



ERDF support:

II stage
5 343 878 kroons

III stage
39 006 503 kroons

Applicant: Estonian Aviation Museum

Supported activities:

- Construction and furnishing of the main house
- Supplementing the exposition
- Construction of hangars and standing places for aviation technique

Total project cost in II stage:
6 825 000 kroons

Project duration:

I stage 2004-2005
II stage 2006-2007
III stage 2008-2011

