

## Ecovillages project has delivered a number of significant results

The project “Ecovillages for Sustainable Rural Development” financed by the EU’s Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013, which started in February 2010, recently has approached its end and delivered a number of significant results. Aiming at fostering the development of ecovillages as a more sustainable way of living in rural areas of the Baltic Sea Region, the project has been implemented by project partners from Lithuania (the lead partner), Finland, Latvia, Poland and Sweden; in addition the project has involved associated partners from Belarus, Finland, Germany, Russia and Sweden.

The core project results include launching of 3 manuals on:

[eco-settlement practices and environmentally friendly technologies applied in ecovillages; socio-cultural aspects of ecovillage establishment and governance; and](#)  
[green business and entrepreneurship.](#)

By identifying and documenting many inspirational examples and case studies, the manuals aim at contributing to the further development, application and spreading of the sustainable solutions and innovations tailored in ecovillages and regaining the balance between the ecological, socio-cultural and economic dimensions of sustainable living on a broader society level. Manuals have been printed in 6 languages and are available for free download at project website.

Project team has also formulated of a set of [policy recommendations](#) and delivered it to responsible EU institutions. 6 issues (Energy, land use, planning & building regulation, Public funding & support, Alternative business & organizational models, Education, training, information dissemination & exchange, and more R&D focus on eco-living, alternative food production) as well as potential reforms to tackle these areas have been identified in the recommendations. They are addressed to national MEPs, EU institutions and other organizations on EU level in order to improve the development of ecovillages and to utilize their full potential as sustainable development drivers of rural areas. Recommendations have already received a positive feedback from the European Commission, considering the requests under the new legal framework for the 2014-2020 programming period.

In order to gather valuable knowledge accumulated through the Ecovillage movement and making it accessible to a broader public, as well as to facilitate learning for visitors, and income-generation for ecovillagers, the project has created Ecovillage road website which is a virtual platform for ecovillages, consultants and related eco-initiatives to showcase and offer their knowledge, services and products to the general public in a variety of thematic groups. Visit [www.ecovillageroad.eu](http://www.ecovillageroad.eu)!

On the same Ecovillage road website visitor can find a guideline for establishing an internship programme in ecovillages. The handbook is intended to assist ecovillages in establishing internships that have the intention to reach out to the wider society with the sustainable living practices, to strengthen the ecovillages themselves and to provide the opportunities to get to know ecovillages for the interested audience.

Another project result that is addressed to leaders of established or initiated ecovillages, is the [Ecovillage sustainability self-evaluation test](#)

which serves as a tool to: a) form a vision of the ecovillage; b) diagnose the real ecovillage

situation; c) assess the gap between vision and reality; d) identify what aspects of the ecovillage governance should be improved. There are short and long versions of the test in 6 languages which measure ecovillage's real and desirable situation on six main dimensions by using a 5 point scale.

Last but not least, one of the greatest contributions towards sustainable Europe that was not envisioned at the launching stage of the project is the formation of Baltic Ecovillage Network (BEN), which is a transnational umbrella of national ecovillages networks in the BSR. BEN offers a vehicle to continue the work started by the project towards the societal recognition of the values that ecovillages pursue and transition to sustainable living.

By delivering the results described, the project team is willing to greatly contribute to the fostering of ecovillages development both on a national and international level. For further inspiration and information about project results, please check the latest project [newsletter](#) and visit the project homepage at [www.balticecovillages.eu](http://www.balticecovillages.eu).