



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

Farmers value rural library webinars

Klintaine Public Library, Latvia

IMPACT CASE STUDY

The library's 'Hand in Hand: Enhancing E-inclusion of Farmers at Rural Public Libraries' project hosted eight webinars to improve farmers' livelihoods. The project –

- Demonstrated that webinars are a cost-effective, efficient way of reaching farmers with vital information.
- Convinced the Ministry of Agriculture to use webinars for live webcasting of regional agricultural conferences.
- Inspired the library's main partner organization, the national Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre (LLKC), to adopt the library's approach for its distance education programmes with farmers.
- Won recognition for the public library network's role in serving farmers.

About 38% of Latvians live in rural areas, where farming is the main source of income. Crops include wheat, barley and rye, fruit and vegetables, and farmers also keep livestock. Incomes are low, unemployment is high, and rural development is a national priority. However, the global financial crisis has led to cutbacks in many rural services and the Ministry of Agriculture's outreach officers are unable to visit all rural areas. Libraries, equipped with ICT, have become important rural information centres. A 2011 study found that 34% of library internet users in Latvia searched for information about agriculture, and librarians report daily requests for help from farmers wanting to use e-government services, contact local authorities and conduct research. 'Hand in Hand' seeks to meet farmers' information needs.

With a grant of US\$15,000 from EIFL-PLIP to cover equipment and some operational costs for a year, the library bought a multimedia projector and screen, a web camera, a digital camera and printer, and marketed the webinar series through Latvia's rural public library



"Modern technologies brought local farmers together and connected us with experts from different parts of the country." – Farmer who attended a webinar in Klintaine Public Library.

"In November 2012 a series of conferences organized by the Ministry of Agriculture attracted participants not only in the conference halls but also on the web. The webcasting of these events would not have been possible without the experience we gained working with Klintaine Public Library." – Andis Kursitis, head of the LLKC.





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network. Farmers could attend webinars in their local libraries or log in online, from their homes.

In less than a year, the library...

- Organized 8 live webinars for farmers and rural entrepreneurs, in co-operation with 20 rural public libraries and the LLKC, and webcast them, attracting 1,878 viewers.
- Helped farmers learn about accessing European Union (EU) support, government subsidies, farm accounting and tax reporting; agri-environmental measures and the pros and cons of organic farming.
- Established a strong partnership with the LLKC, whose specialist trainers presented interactive webinars, stimulating debate and responding to farmers' questions during webinars and afterwards, via email.

The future

Klintaine Public Library's innovative idea has taken root, and several agencies will work with rural libraries to organize webinars in 2013. LLKC has already scheduled eight webinars for farmers and will also use webinars to train farm extension staff in its rural offices. The Association of Latvian Organic Agriculture, a non-governmental organization, and Aloja-Starkelsen, a company manufacturing starch, will work with rural libraries to host webinars on cultivation of organic starch potatoes. The library has built confidence in the ability of public libraries to serve rural communities, and officials from Plavinas Municipality have approached the library for advice in planning future projects.

The EIFL-PLIP grant was awarded in November 2011. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the service. Information presented here is based on the library's impact assessment. For further information contact Ms Alita Klusa, head of the library, at klintainesbiblioteka@inbox.lv, or Mr Andrejs Breidis, andrejs.briedis@inbox.lv.

EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to enabling access to knowledge through libraries in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) supports libraries to implement community development projects. Learn more at www.eifl.net/plip. EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme is supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Public libraries - partners in development

Janis Bergmanis owns a medium-sized farm near Klintaine. During the webinar on EU grant programmes he heard about an equipment grant opportunity. At a later seminar, he learnt how to prepare a proposal. The application was successful, and now he uses the new equipment to work his forest more efficiently.

Veronika Kadakovska, a small-scale farmer, learnt during a webinar that land reclamation maps could be obtained over the internet. Now she comes to the library to use the free internet to download maps instead of travelling all the way to the State Land Service office.

Liga Rudzite who farms in the neighbouring municipality of Aiviekste, travelled over 20 km to Klintaine public library so that she could watch webinars on the big screen with other farmers. She says the group discussion helped her understand complex accounting issues.

"In our region different government institutions are located in different centres. Now that I have learnt how to solve issues using the internet, I will not have to spend time travelling to several centres in future, and I will not have to depend on their office working hours." – Janis Liepins, farmer.