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GeoEdu 2025–2027

LEADER Transnational Cooperation Project Plan &
Preliminary Partnership Agreement

Between the LEADER Groups

Organisation:
Aktiivinen Pohjois-Satakunta ry (Leader Pohjois-Satakunta)

LAG Code:
FI-031

Address:
Kuninkaanlähteenkatu 12
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Signatory Details:
Name: Juha Vanhapaasto
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And:

Organisation:
Organisation: NGO Western- Harju Partnership

LAG Code:
80239761

Address:
Valitsejamaja, Padise küla Lääne-Harju vald Harjumaa 76001

Signatory Details:
Name: Marje Suharov
Function: Chairman of the board
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And:

Organisation:
Organisation: LAG Suupohjan kehittämisyhdistys ry

LAG Code: FI-037
Address: Puistotie 51, 61800 Kauhajoki
Signatory Details: Pihlajaniemi Hanna-Leena
Name: Hanna-Leena Pihlajaniemi@leadersuupohja.fi
Function: Executive director

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1. **Purpose of the Agreement**
   1.1. The purpose of this Agreement is to define the cooperation between the Parties in the implementation of the project *GeoEdu between Local Action Groups* (hereinafter referred to as the **Project**) during the period from 19.05.2025 to 18.05.2027.

2. **Terms of Cooperation**
   2.1. **The Parties:**
   2.1.1. The Parties undertake to finance the Project in the scope agreed upon in this Agreement and to participate in preparatory and organizational activities, including meetings, discussions, and other related tasks.
   2.1.2. The coordinating Local Action Group (Lead Partner) is ***Aktiivinen Pohjois-Satakunta ry (Leader Pohjois-Satakunta)*** (hereinafter referred to as the **Lead Partner**).
   2.1.3. New partners may join this cooperation agreement, provided they can be meaningfully integrated into the Project's activities and their participation does not hinder the actions of the existing partners. The inclusion of new partners shall be formalized as an annex to this Agreement, signed by the Lead Partner and the new partners, and the Lead Partner shall inform all existing project partners of the addition.

Short Description of the Cooperation Project

This Transnational Cooperation Project, implemented under the LEADER Cooperation Measure of the respective National Rural Development Programmes, brings together three partners with the shared aim of enhancing knowledge and awareness of educational themes related to UNESCO Global Geoparks or aspiring Geopark areas, with a particular focus on rural regions and environmental education. Each partner will carry out locally tailored activities aligned with the overall project theme, while also engaging in jointly planned transnational actions. These activities will be implemented according to each partner's local project plan and within the scope of their respective funding frameworks.

The project partnership consists of Local Action Groups (LAGs) that host aspiring Geoparks or established Geoparks with regional or UNESCO Global Geopark status. In addition, external Geoparks may join the developing project as associated partners and/or contribute through their own side funding.

This environmental education project aims to raise awareness and deepen understanding of the Earth's geological heritage by utilizing the unique learning environments offered by UNESCO Global Geoparks. These parks are not only areas of outstanding geological significance but also serve as living models for sustainable development, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation. By engaging students and local communities with these natural landscapes, the project fosters a sense of global responsibility and encourages concrete action toward environmental sustainability. The transnational cooperation component facilitates the exchange of ideas, sharing of best practices, and joint efforts to address common challenges and develop shared solutions.

Environmental education is a cornerstone of sustainable development within a UNESCO Global Geopark. By enhancing awareness and understanding of natural and cultural heritage, it enables local communities, schools, and visitors to develop a deeper connection with the landscape. This connection cultivates pride, a sense of responsibility, and active stewardship—crucial elements in

protecting geological features, biodiversity, and ecosystems. Environmental education also strengthens the Geopark's mission by promoting sustainable tourism, preserving local knowledge, and empowering residents to engage in conservation and decision-making. In this way, education lays the groundwork for lasting environmental, social, and economic resilience in the Geopark region.

The **"GeoEdu" project** focuses on developing and testing tangible approaches to environmental education in UNESCO Global Geoparks and aspiring Geopark areas. Environmental education plays a vital role in the sustainable development of these regions by increasing awareness and understanding of natural and cultural heritage. It helps local communities, schools, and visitors form deeper connections with the landscape—fostering pride, responsibility, and stewardship essential for the protection of geological features, biodiversity, and ecosystems.

GeoEdu supports the mission of Geoparks by encouraging sustainable tourism, promoting local knowledge, and empowering communities to engage in conservation and decision-making. Through this, education becomes a cornerstone for long-term environmental, social, and economic resilience.

The project builds on existing local knowledge while promoting cross-border collaboration to exchange best practices and foster a shared learning process. This collective effort aims to strengthen the potential of Geopark areas and enhance their role as dynamic learning environments.

Project Objectives and Themes

1. **Support for Local Geopark Development**
   Rural LAGs and partner stakeholders express a strong interest in developing locally relevant Geopark-related initiatives that enhance regional identity and environmental education.
2. **Exchange of Knowledge and Best Practices**
   Each participating region brings unique geographical and cultural characteristics. Through the creation of a dynamic platform for networking and collaboration, the project will facilitate the sharing of ideas and successful initiatives. This exchange will promote long-term sustainability education aligned with the multifunctional goals of Geoparks and contribute to the growth of nature and education tourism sectors.
3. **Long-term Sustainability and Growth**
   Cross-border cooperation among rural communities strengthens knowledge exchange in environmental education, sustainable tourism, and cultural preservation, ensuring long-term benefits for all involved areas.
4. **Improved Services for Locals and Tourists**
   By enhancing educational opportunities and tourism services, the project aims to improve the overall quality of life for local residents while creating more engaging experiences for visitors.

Key Thematic Areas and Joint Activities

- **Best Practices**: Identification, documentation, and dissemination of effective environmental education and Geopark-related initiatives.
- **Cooperation**: Strengthening partnerships across regions to support innovation and collective problem-solving.

- **Study Visits and Youth Camps**: Organizing transnational study visits, as well as youth environmental and geological camps, to inspire the next generation and foster deeper connections with the natural environment.

Main Goals of the Cooperation Project

- **Enhance Knowledge and Awareness on Sustainable Development**
  Develop and test new teaching methodologies and pedagogical approaches to foster deeper understanding of sustainability concepts, particularly in the context of Geoparks and environmental education.
- **Strengthen Local Cooperation**
  Foster collaboration among local stakeholders in participating regions to increase awareness and interest in Geoparks, as well as in educational, nature-based, and geological tourism.
- **Promote International Collaboration and Networking**
  Facilitate the exchange of best practices across borders and establish lasting networks among project partners to support innovation and mutual learning.
- **Boost Education-Based Tourism**
  Leverage educational initiatives to enhance tourism offerings, attract new visitor groups, and promote sustainable travel experiences linked to Geopark regions.

LAG Aktiivinen Pohjois-Satakunta and LAG Suupohjan Kehittämisyhdistys
Local Objectives:

- Promote environmental education aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in regional schools.
- Support early childhood education and care centres in line with the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.
- Develop a **Geopark School Model** and **Day-Care Education Concept** tailored to the region.
- Integrate the SDGs into all levels of education to foster sustainability-oriented learning.
- Establish long-term educational cooperation with European Geopark areas.
- Strengthen the region's reputation as a geo-education leader by enhancing its role in educational tourism.

Measures to Be Taken

At the Local Level:

- Develop a **Geopark School Concept** and a **Day-Care Centre Model** by applying best practices from existing initiatives.

- Create a comprehensive **task and activity set for all school levels** based on the environmental education plan.
- Implement **pilot projects** and **camps for youth** to test and refine educational content.
- Facilitate **joint projects and exchanges** between schools and young people within the participating areas.

At the International Level:

- Organize **school visits** to Odsherred UNESCO Global Geopark (Denmark), Reykjanes UNESCO Global Geopark (Iceland), and other partner regions.
- Carry out **joint youth activities** such as international camps, awareness campaigns, and the co-creation of educational content.
- Conclude international cooperation with a **climate change youth camp** hosted by Muskauer Faltenbogen UNESCO Global Geopark (Germany/Poland) in August 2026, where young participants will present and compare project outcomes from their regions.

Hosting Partners:

- Partner Geoparks will host **Geopark-themed working groups** and facilitate knowledge exchange, testing, and joint development of educational content.

Themes for International Cooperation

The project aims to foster cross-border collaboration under the following thematic areas:

- **Landscaping and Habitat Management**
  Focus on meadows, fields, wetlands, and large-scale landscape restoration (e.g., Neoen-type cooperation). Opportunities include guest involvement in monitoring, participation, and development using digital tools such as AR-guided information boards.

- **Environmental and Sustainability Education**
  Sharing and developing approaches for effective environmental education aligned with sustainable development goals.

- **Endangered Species Monitoring**
  Activities include monitoring of species like crayfish, with a proposed project launch in cooperation with ELY Centre and the University of Jyväskylä (JYU) in spring.

- **Water Quality and Environmental Surveys**
  Use of diverse measuring equipment to conduct water surveys, including analysis of microplastics in fish and related research.

- **Climate and Weather Monitoring**
  Studies using a variety of instruments, including microclimate loggers, to better understand climate patterns and support environmental data collection.

- **Biodiversity and Species Research**
  Fieldwork and monitoring using tools such as plant grid systems and bat detectors, with academic partnerships where relevant.

- **Geological Research and Education**
  Comparative studies of geological sites and regional geological history to support learning and heritage promotion.

- **Renewable Energy Production**
  Exploration and promotion of sustainable energy practices in relation to local environmental goals.

NGO WESTERN HARJU PARTNERSHIP

The local activities during the GeoEdu project in the Western-Harju Partnership focus on enhancing geology education and promoting the unique geological features of the region. These activities include:

1. **Field trips and excursions**: Exploring local geological sites like Paemurru, Padise, and Pakri, highlighting the area's unique rock formations, fossils, and natural history.
2. **Educational workshops and materials**: Developing teaching resources and hands-on activities for local schools to help students learn about geology and rocks.

   The project involves the creation of 5 educational geological animations for the Western-Harju Geopark, aimed at illustrating various geological processes and phenomena in an engaging and accessible way. The animations will cover three main topics: the general formation of Estonia and sedimentary rock formation, fossils (including why dinosaur bones are not found in Estonia), and the creation of the North Estonian Klint and the use of limestone in the region.
   Each animation will be 2 minutes long, with 2D visuals, supporting maps and infographics, and subtitles in English and Russian. The process includes scenario development, storyboard creation, animation production, voice-over recording, and sound effects, followed by quality control and final editing.

3. **Collaborations with teachers**: Gathering input from local educators on the materials and tools they need for teaching geology, particularly for younger students.
4. **Study trips**: Organizing exchange visits for teachers to international geoparks, such as the Lauhanvuori-Hämeenkangas UNESCO Global Geopark in Finland, to gain new insights and share best practices. Western/Harju Partnership will organize one study trip to Finland and host one study trip within Estonia.
5. **Public outreach**: Hosting seminars and events to raise awareness about the GeoEdu project and the educational opportunities available through the Western-Harju Geopark.

These activities aim to foster a deeper understanding of the region's geological heritage while enhancing teaching methodologies and local community engagement.

Project Target Groups

- Youth in rural areas, educational institutions, and Geopark-related local actors
- Community organizations and associations
- Local residents
- Municipalities
- Regional administrative bodies

Main Project Activities

Joint Activities:

- **5 Study Visits and/or GeoEdu Youth Camps**
  Organized to foster learning, international exchange, and engagement with Geopark-related themes.
- **Compilation of Best Practices**
  A digital catalogue showcasing successful methods and approaches in environmental and Geopark education.
- **Knowledge Sharing Outputs**
  Creation and dissemination of best practice examples through video content, online webinars, and seminars.

Planned Study Trips Timeline

1. **First Visit** – 2025 Finland
2. **Second Visit** – 2026 Estonia
3. **Third Visit** – 2026 Denmark
4. **Fourth Visit** – 2027 Iceland
5. **Fifth Visit** – 2027 Poland

Study Visit Arrangements and Responsibilities

The partners have agreed to organize one program in each participating area, including visits to enterprises, farms, and Geopark destinations. Detailed programs will be developed during the course of the project.

The hosting partner is responsible for covering the costs related to meeting room rentals, local program activities, one joint dinner, honorariums, and transfers between study visit locations during

the partnership meetings. All other expenses, including travel, accommodation, and meals outside of the official program, are to be covered by each partner individually.

Synthesis of Best Practices

A synthesis of best practices will be jointly developed by all partners during the project. The final output will be published in formats appropriate to each local area—such as electronic publications, webinars, or other agreed channels.

Communication, Visibility, and Media Outputs

Project partners commit to promoting the project and its outcomes through various media channels. Common social media tools and communication strategies will be jointly defined and agreed upon during the project to ensure consistent and effective visibility across all regions.

Roles and Responsibilities of Each Partner

Lead Partner
The lead partner is responsible for the overall coordination and management of the project. Its main responsibilities include:
• Leading and coordinating the design and planning of the project
• Steering and overseeing the implementation of project activities and ensuring tasks are carried out by each partner as agreed (including organising exchanges, joint deliverables, etc.)
• Monitoring progress, evaluating outcomes, and communicating achievements both internally and externally

Project Partner
Each project partner has the following responsibilities:
• Identifying relevant actors and stakeholders within their respective territories, including those from the public, private, and third sectors
• Organizing and facilitating study trips for the relevant actors, enabling exchange of best practices between them
• Organizing meetings, workshops, and activities for target groups both locally, inter-territorially, and transnationally

Each partner territory is responsible for hosting study trips related to the project for communities and other stakeholders, showcasing its best expertise, and addressing the development needs of the partner areas as outlined in the project plan. Participating LAGs will attend these events with relevant delegations. Additionally, each partner may organize individual actions within their territory that align with and support the joint actions.

Each partner is responsible for covering their own costs related to:
• Organizing a project event (seminar, workshop, etc.) in their region, including costs for venues, local transportation, possible translation services, refreshments, etc.
• Travel and accommodation when attending events organized by other partners in different regions
• Any other activities planned by each respective partner for inclusion in the project

Each partner is allowed to bring a maximum of 8 participants per LAG to project events held in other partner areas or countries. The host partner may limit the number of participants if necessary.

Steering Group
To support the activities of the Lead Partner and involve the other partners in managing the shared

activities, a steering group will be established. The steering group will consist of one or two representatives from each partner, along with a substitute.

The composition of the steering group is as follows:

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The composition of the steering group is as follows:
Steering Group Composition:

- **Finland:** Krista Antila, LAG Aktiivinen Pohjois-Satakunta ry, and Project Manager
- **Estonia:** Marje Suharov LAG NGO Western Harju Partnership, and Project Manager
- **Finland:** Hanna-Leena Pihlajaniemi LAG Suupohjan Kehittämisyhdistys ry and Mirka Kuronen
- Additional partners will be added to the steering group as needed, depending on their eligibility for signature and partnership by funding terms.

Meetings:

- The steering group will hold **face-to-face meetings** during the project, coordinated with the knowledge-building trips.
- If necessary, **electronic meetings** (e.g., via e-mail, Teams, or Zoom) can be organized.
- The partner areas may establish **domestic steering groups** for local project implementation if required, depending on the administrative needs of the project.

Budgets of Each LAG/Partner Project

Lead Partner:

LAG AKTIIVINEN POHJOIS-SATAKUNTA RY

	Measures	**Budget €**
1.	Project managing (estimated)	16746,45
2.	Indirect costs (estimated)	28343,50
3.	Travel costs and costs for hosting 1 visit (estimated)	15500,00
4.	Agreed common actions	7166,50
	TOTAL	**61870,22 €**

Total amount (100 %)

EU + State (80%) 49496,08 €
LEADER-Municipalities (20%) 9899,22 €

LAG NGO Western- Harju Partnership

	Measures	**Budget €**
1.	Project managing & LAG members	4000
2.	Indirect cost	1000
3.	Travel cost & cost for hosting 1 visit	7000
4.	Agreed common actions	18000
	TOTAL	**30000 €**

Total amount (100%)

EU + State + LEADER Municipalities 90 % and
Private money 10 %

LAG Suupohjan kehittämisyhdistys ry

	Measures	**Budget**
1.	Project managing, salaries (estimated)	10253,55 €
2.	Purchased services (estimated)	16633,48 €
3.	Other expenses (estimated)	5886,30 €
4.	Indirect costs (estimated)	5108,55 €
	TOTAL	**37.881,88 €**

Total amount (100%)

EU + State + LEADER Municipalities 90 % and
Private money 10 %

Additional Rules and Legislation

- Working Language:
  The agreed working language for all project-related communication and documentation will be English.
- Duration of the Agreement:
  This agreement will be valid starting from the subscription date and will remain in effect until the expiration date of the activities under the Programming period 2023–2027.

Verification and Filling of Documents

- **Document Retention and Verification:**
  Each Partner is responsible for keeping all documents related to the verification of the project's implementation and the admissibility of expenses incurred. These documents must be made available to the competent parties and institutions for verification purposes.

- **Document Retention Period:**
  All documents must be retained for the entire duration of the project and for 5 years after the project's conclusion date.

Confidential Documents

- **Definition of Confidential Information:**
  The term "confidential" can apply to various types of information exchanged among the Partners during the project implementation. However, only those documents or data that are explicitly marked as "confidential" will be treated as such.
- **Authorization for Handling Confidential Information:**
  The treatment and handling of confidential information require explicit authorization from the owner of that information. No confidential information can be shared or utilized without the proper consent from the designated owner.

Results of Common Activities

- **Sharing of Results:**
  The results of common activities, such as reports, documents, studies, electronic data, and similar outputs, can only be distributed without any associated costs **after the conclusion of the project**.
- **Ownership of Project Reports:**
  The project reports and related deliverables are considered the **common property of all the Partners**. This means that all Partners share ownership and rights to the results produced as part of the project.

Non-Fulfillments or Delay

- **Notification of Delays:**
  Each partner must **promptly inform the Lead partner** if any event arises that prevents or delays the implementation of the project. The partner must provide relevant details about the issue.
- **Warning and Resolution:**
  If a partner fails to fulfill their obligations, the **Lead partner will issue a warning** and request that the partner rectifies the situation within a reasonable timeframe, which should not exceed **one month**.
- **Further Action in Case of Non-fulfillment:**
  If the partner continues to neglect their obligations, the **Lead partner will present the issue to the assembly of partners**. The assembly will then decide on the next steps, including the possibility of requesting **indemnity to cover expenses** incurred due to the failure and **expelling the defaulting partner** from the agreement.

- **Modification of the Agreement**
  This agreement can only be modified through an **updated attachment** to the agenda, which must be **signed by all parties** involved.
- **Force Majeure**
  No party will be held responsible for failing to fulfill the obligations outlined in this agreement if the failure is due to **force majeure**. In the event of force majeure, the affected

partner must **immediately inform** the **Lead partner** and the other project partners about the situation.

- **Nullity**
  If any clause in this agreement is declared **null** or **invalid** under the national law of any of the partners or the applicable law governing this agreement, the remaining clauses will **remain valid** and enforceable. The invalidity of one clause does not affect the rest of the agreement.

Applicable Law and Competent Court

This agreement is governed by **Finnish Law**. In the event of a disagreement between the co-signatory parties, they shall first attempt to find an **amicable solution**. If an agreement cannot be reached, the parties will consider adopting the solutions proposed by the **Managing Authority** of the country of the **Lead partner**, **Aktiivinen Pohjois-Satakunta ry**, before whom the issue will be brought.

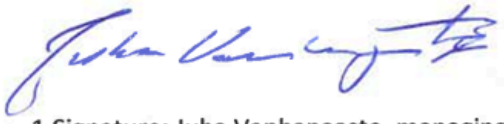
If the disagreement persists, the matter will be subject to the jurisdiction of the **ordinary courts of Finland**, and the records concerning the execution of this agreement will fall under their jurisdiction.

SIGNATURES:

Signed individually by each partner, indicating their commitment to the terms and responsibilities outlined in this agreement.

Aktiivinen Pohjois-Satakunta ry (Leader Pohjois-Satakunta)

LEAD Partner of the project:



1.Signature: Juha Vanhapaasto, managing director

Date and place: Kankaanpää 12.05.2025, Finland

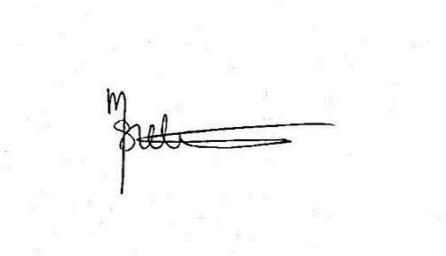
Euroopan unionin osarahoittama

LEADER Pohjois-Satakunta

LAG NGO WESTERN HARJU PARTNERSHIP

PARTNER LAG 1. of the project:

Signature: Marje Suharov, Chairman of the Board



Date and place: 12.05.2025, Estonia, Padise

Kaasrahastanud Euroopa Liit

LÄÄNE-HARJU KOOSTÖÖKOGU

LAG Suupohjan kehittämisyhdistys ry
PARTNER LAG 2. of the project:

Signature: Hanna-Leena Pihlajaniemi

Date and place: 12.05.2025, Kauhajoki

LEADER

Suupohja

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