



Architecture competition task

„Concept for Central Area and Pedestrian Street in Valga – Valga Twin-Town Centre”

Organized by:

Valga Municipality Council



Valga Town government



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A. The task

1. The aim of the contest

The aim of the architecture contest is to find the best and most suitable design for the common public space, including a Central Area and a Pedestrian Street in the Twin-Town Centre of Valga-Valka. We want to gain a cozy and unique public area for our citizens and guests. We expect to have the Central Area for daily use with eventuality of a smooth transformation for different events like the Border Market, the Town Festival etc. We expect the new Pedestrian Street to connect Lugaži Church in the centre of Valka with Jaani Church in the centre of Valga. Both Central Area and Pedestrian Street should foresee space for small local businesses and for leisure time activities of citizens and guests, and thus revitalizing the Twin-Town Centre.

The Authors of the best and most suitable proposal will be entitled to receive a contract for the technical project development.

The contest is organized within the framework of the Estonian – Latvian Cross-Border Cooperation Program 2014-2020.

2. Estonia-Latvia Program 2014-2020

The objectives of the Estonia-Latvia Program 2014-2020 project „Valga-Valka Twin-Town Centre Development” are:

- to improve the physical connectivity between Valga-Valka Town Centers
- to improve the accessibility of the labour market and increase cross-border mobility of employees and the self-employed
- to strengthen cooperation in fields of employment and social inclusion
- to develop common a business area for encouraging and attracting private investments and the establishment of new enterprises and jobs

Investments in the public space of the Twin-Town Centre are one of the project activities.

3. Valga and Valka



Valga-Valka orthophoto, Source: Estonian Land Board, 2015

- For photos in full resolution see Appendix II: Ortho photo of competition area.

3.1. Location and area

The Twin-Town Valga – Valka is located at the southern border of Estonia and the northern of Latvia. The town of Valga is the administrative centre of Valga County, and Valka is the administrative centre of Valka District as one of development centres in Latvia. The town of Valga covers 16,65 km², the town of Valka 14,36 km². Both towns are united by Pedele-Pedeli River. The state border between Latvia and Estonia runs along the Varžupīte-Konnaoja – a creek of Pedele River, and therefore is a part of the project area.

Valga has more inhabitants - 13 322 (2015), than Valka 5 590 (2014).

3.2. History

Valga - Valka was first mentioned in 1286. It appeared in the credit register of the city of Riga, under the German name Walk. In 1584, Valga was granted a town charter and bylaws by Stefan Batory, King of Poland. In 1783, during the Regency of Catherine the Great, Valga County (Kreis Walk) was formed. The town went through a fast development period at the end of XIX and the beginning of XX century due to the establishment of a railway junction. In 1881, eight years before the Valga Railway Station was opened, the town population was 4200 inhabitants. By 1917, at the end of World War I, the population was already 20 371.

In 1920, after the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Estonia, the town was divided between both countries and the border was set in the middle along the Varžupīte-Konnaoja Creek. Each country started to develop a new centre and the border area turned from the town centre into the outskirts. Also, due to the new political situation, the railway junction lost its importance and the population declined.

During the Soviet occupation the physical border between the towns was non-existent, but each part of the city continued on its own. The town became an important industrial centre with a large Soviet army military base. Due to that, the population of the Estonian part of the town grew between the years of 1939 and 1989 from 10 419 to 17 700 with the peak in 1979 (18 474 inhabitants). The Latvian part followed a similar development. In 1991, after both countries regained independence, the border between Republic of Latvia and Republic of Estonia was re-established. The Soviet army left and industry went through structural changes. As a result of those processes both parts of the town lost a significant part of their inhabitants (Valga one third from its peak population). The populations of both Valka and Valga continue to contract.

In 2004 Latvia and Estonia entered the EU and in 2007 joined the Schengen Agreement. The physical border between the two countries was eliminated and free movement between countries renewed. But the urban area of the border hasn't reacted to these changes.

3.3. Comprehensive plans of Valka and Valga

The Municipality of Valka is currently working on a new territory plan for the town of Valka, and in its current edition (2010-2022) the Project area is included in central building area. The central building area in a city or town, is an area that historically was developed for mixed use. Central building areas in territory plans are marked with the aim to promote various uses of these areas, to provide flexible development conditions for correlative and non-conflicting functions like business, public common areas and housing functions, but to limit intensive manufacturing and utility buildings. Preferably this area should be used for: residential (low storey apartment buildings and family homes), administrative, cultural, religious, health and social care, science and education institutions, business and office, trade and service buildings, sport activities, parks and Areas, public places.

In Valga there is a valid comprehensive plan (introduced on 1 June 2007), which has been prepared by Tinter OÜ. The comprehensive plan foresees the general trends of land use in the town. This comprehensive plan enables the town extension with a lot of new development areas and thus is in strong contradiction with reality. At present the Valga town-government is working on a new, more suitable comprehensive plan.

The architectural competition is held in accordance with the fundamental principles of both town plans.

There are two valid master-plans in the Valga part of the competition area, one for the Raja 5 plot, second for Raja 12. Both are more than five years old and thus may require changes.

3.4. Identity and potential

The Twin-Towns Valga – Valka motto is „One city, two states” to acknowledge Valga – Valka as one common town for its inhabitants regardless of their nationality and whether or not they live to the South or North of the Estonia – Latvia state border. The aim of the new Central Area and the Pedestrian Street is to support cross border activity and create a new common urban space re-connecting both parts of the town.

Due to almost 90 years of separate development the Twin-Town Valga – Valka overlaps in many infrastructure objects such as a sport arena, culture centre or music school with each state having its own. This enables the organization of large scale international events in otherwise comparatively small towns, and the new Central Area should support such activities. We aim to improve public knowledge of Valga - Valka as a cultural and commercial hub connecting the best of Latvia and Estonia.

For every shrinking town question of local identity and interaction between each citizen and his hometown is a key issue. An unattractive, underused environment undermines such an interaction. As a result citizens are less active and less prepared to improve their environment—and the shrinking process accelerates. With the renovation of the town centre in Valga - Valka we aim to stop the decline. We want to create a vibrant heart of the town that inhabitants can and will be proud of.

4. Competition area and surroundings

4.1. Location

The competition area is the geographical centre of the twin town of Valga-Valka, which at the moment is a periphery of both towns. It lies on the state border and physically does not incorporate, but rather separates Valga and Valka. The current town centers are only a few hundred meters away from the planned joint town centre.

The Planned Central Area is situated partly on the territory of both countries. As such it makes border crossing easier and enables the organization of festivities and markets in both countries simultaneously. Customers can profit from the market displays of both countries.

The area has a triangular shape limited by Raja-Tartu Street on the East, Rigas Street on the North-West and Raina-Sõpruse Street on the South. The Varžupīte-Konnaoja Creek divides the area into two parts while at the same time it is the official Estonian-Latvian border. Both parts of the competition area are mostly flat, but at a different altitude. The difference in height between those parts is almost 2m (see Appendix II). The competition area on the North borders with the recreational area surrounding Pedele-Pedeli River.

4.2. History

Varžupīte-Konnaoja Creek marked the border of the town of Valga-Valka already in the middle ages. The town of Valga-Valka territory was to the East of the Creek; to the West was the territory of Lugaži parish. As such, Jaani Church was the town church and Lugaži Church was the parish church. On the Valga-Valka plan dated 1683 a few buildings are on the both sides of the territory. Lugaži church is the oldest of them and the only one to survive till today. On a plan dated 1870, both territories were fully built-up. Most of the buildings were destroyed in World-War II or were demolished after. Almost all of the territory on the Estonian side of competition area was occupied by the Valga Winery. The Winery was demolished at the end of XX century before the construction of the “Selver” shopping centre. Only Winery tower was preserved.

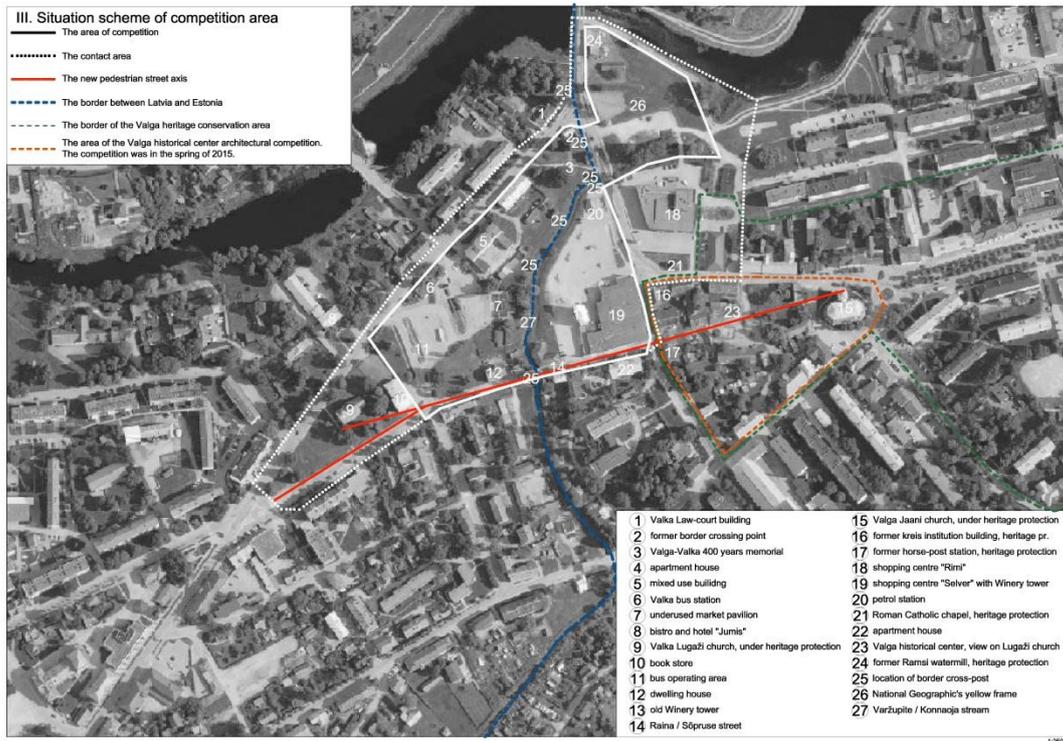
4.3. Building

On the Valga side, there are two shopping centers with their wide parking lots next to each other. “Selver” with abandoned former Winery tower is inside the competition area, while “Rimi” nearby is not. There is also a petrol station on the “Selver” parking lot. In close proximity to the project area is the historical centre of Valga with the former County (Kreis) Authority Building and the Roman Catholic Chapel, both under the heritage protection. The historical centre of Valga is undergoing renovation (see Appendix VI). The former Ramsi Watermill (under heritage protection, too) is on the riverside of Pedele-Pedeli (see Appendix III).

- For more detailed information about the Valga historical centre see Appendix V: First place draft design of Architectural competition for renovation of Valga historical centre.

On the Valka side of project area there is an underused marketplace with a pavilion. Next to this marketplace, there is the Valka Bus Station with the operating area for buses, and there are apartment blocks with their appendix buildings. The operating area for buses is larger than actually needed. On the West corner of the competition area, there is Lugaži Church and an office building with a bookstore (see Appendix III).

- For more detailed information about the area see Appendix III: Situation scheme of competition area.

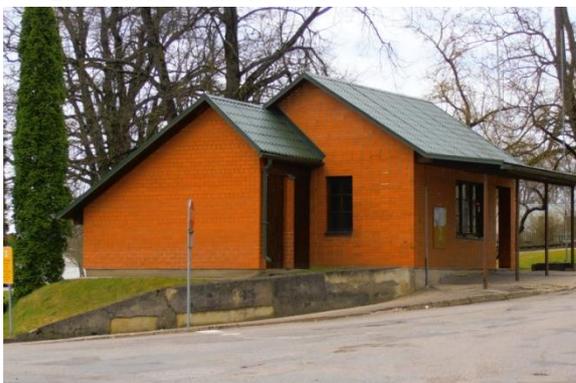


Appendix III: Situation scheme of competition area, Source: Authors

4.4. Photos of important objects in competition area and its surroundings



1. Valka Courthouse



2. Former Border Checkpoint



3. "400 Years of Valga-Valka" memorial



4. Residential building



5. Mixed use building



6. Valka Bus Station





7. Underused market pavilion



8. Bistro and hotel „Jumis”



9. Valka Lugaži Church (under heritage protection)



10. Bookstore



11. Bus operating area (view from Raiņa and Latgales street crossing)



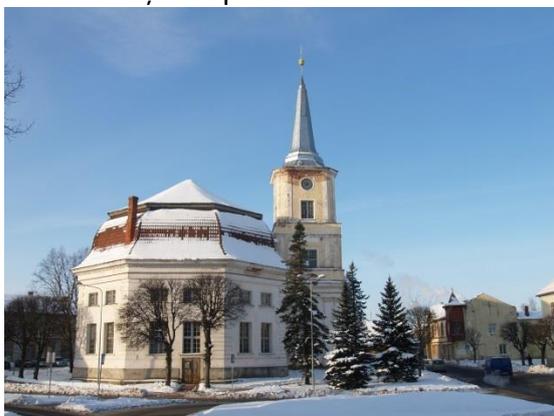
12. Residential building



13. Old Winery tower



14. Raina - Sõpruse Str.



15. Valgajaani Church (under heritage protection)



16. Former County (Kreis) Authority Building (under heritage protection)



17. Former Post Station (under heritage protection)



18. Bus station, market and shopping Centre "Rimi" (view from Lugaži Church tower)



19. Shopping Centre "Selver" with former Winery tower (view from "Rimi" roof)



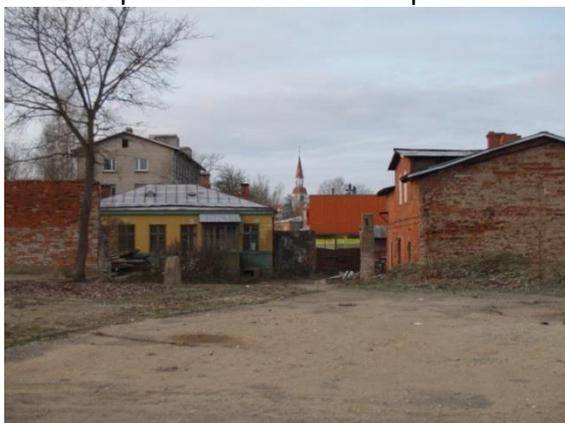
20. Petrol station (view from "Rimi" roof)



21. Roman Catholic Chapel (under heritage protection)



22. Apartment house on Sõpruse Str.



23. Valga historical centre with the view to Lugaži Church tower



24. Former Ramsi Watermill(under heritage protection)



25. Border-post



26. National Geographic's yellow frame



27. Varžupīte-KonnaojaCreek

- For photos in full resolution see Appendix IV: Photos of important objects in competition area or its surroundings.

4.5. Film of the competition area

You can follow this link to a film of the competition area:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0zuiq51Q2g>

5. The task

5.1. General information

The architecture contest is part of a larger project which is supposed to create a joint business incubator to support and encourage local entrepreneurship and traditional and local resource based services – local food and handicrafts.

We are looking for the best possible solutions for the development of Valga-Valka and the Estonian-Latvian border area. We expect to have the Central Area for daily use which can be easily adapted for different events like the Border Market, the Town Festival etc as needed. We expect new the Pedestrian Street to connect Lugaži Church in centre of Valka with Jaani Church in centre of Valga. The aim of the new Central Area and the Pedestrian Street is to support cross border activities and to create a new common urban space re-connecting both parts of the town.

We want to create a vibrant heart of the town that its inhabitants can be proud of. We aim to improve public knowledge of Valga - Valka as cultural and commercial hub connecting the best of Latvia and Estonia.

The fact, that the area includes a flowing water source (border creek) and its landscape is not flat, but includes the creek's banks at different heights, makes the area attractive for a creative and an attractive architectural solution. This attractiveness is even more underlined by the area's location on the international border, while at the same time, in the centre of this twin town.

- For more detailed information see Appendix VI: The competition task scheme.



- Appendix VI: The Competition task scheme, Source: Authors

5.2. Main tasks

- To design a multifunctional cross-border Central Area on the border of Estonia and Latvia including an area for open-air markets and festive events, playgrounds, innovative lighting systems, original urban space, furniture etc.
- To design a Pedestrian Street linking the churches in both town centers. The new Pedestrian Street should open the possibility for small businesses such as cafeterias, restaurants, different services, etc. This should re-activate the underused buildings along the street.
- To design new options for crossing the border at the new cross-border Central Area, thus giving the opportunity to break the border in peoples' minds, also. New crossings will unite the two towns on the border and improve the cooperation between Estonia and Latvia, as well
- To design an attractive area along the banks of Varžupīte-Konnaoja Creek, linking this revitalized green area with the actual greenway along Pedeli River – river, which crosses the border, also.
- To link actual buildings in the competition area with the newly established cross-border Central Area and Pedestrian Street with the goal to attract entrepreneurs to the area. To propose ideal functions for those buildings.

5.3. Specific tasks to design

- relief and pavement (Dignified, maintenance-free and durable pavement, which supports a variety of uses. Pavement should be designed as weather resistant and in accordance with the planned use.)
- small scale resting-places, outdoor lounges
- sculptures or any other interesting and attractive/interactive objects
- permanent trading places in the market area (6-10 counters, preferably removable)
- multifunctional building 50-100 m² to support trading and local community's events and activities, including public toilets (reconstruction of underused market pavilion is optional)
- reservation for future extension of the "Selver" shopping center up to 3060 m². One of possible solutions is marked on the competition task scheme.
- opportunity for extension of the "Rimi" shopping centre
- traffic solution for Valka bus station operation area. Safe and convenient entry and departure from the territory for transport as well as for pedestrians need to be ensured. Maximum bus size is 2.55 x 15.00 m. Transport operating area can be decreased up to 50% of existing bus operating area. The rest of area can be used for Valga – Valka Central Area needs. New buildings are not allowed on the territory of bus station. At least two departure platforms, one arrival platform and parking with 4 places need to be designed (see Appendix VIII. Approximate scheme of Valka bus station). Platforms need to be as

close as possible to existing building of Valka bus terminal. Building of Valka bus terminal need to be preserved but it can be redesigned and new function for building can be provided. Area for booking-office must be kept inside the building.

- supply solution for the “Selver” shopping centre. The Supply trucks are 14m long and their turning radius is 10m. The loading bay is on western façade of the shopping centre and trucks travel through Sõprusestreet. After the future extension of the shopping centre, the centre will be supplied via the new part of the building. The possible truck route is from Raja Street through Sõpruse street inside the new part of the shopping centre and then through the shopping centre parking lot to the crossroads of Raja and Riia streets.
- parking solution for the “Selver” shopping centre (so that in case of big events the area can be used for another purpose). The capacity of parking lot should be around 90 cars.
- parking solution for the “Rimi” shopping centre
- parking solution for visitors
- temporary parking solution for big events
- urban space lighting principles, lighting of important buildings, objects
- permanent or removable stage for cultural events
- sound playback solution for events
- information stand about the twin town of Valga-Valka
- design of green areas
- possible replacement of the National Geographic’s yellow frame from Raja 12 plot to better place
- swing over the border. A traditional Latvian and Estonian village inspired swing can be placed somewhere directly over the border.
- location for a Bikepark. If suitable within the overall design of the territory (see Appendix VII: Concept of Valka-Valga Bikepark) a bikepark can be proposed inside of the competition area or inside the contact area.

5.4. Urban space requirement

- The area on both sides of border creek (Varžupīte-Konnaoja) must be easily transformable so that on a daily basis it is of a scale comfortable for local citizens, but also, so that big events and festivals can be organized there, (with extra space for trading and craftsman, a small stage for leading events, concerts). We expect solutions for year-round usage of the area.
- Priority should be on the re-development of actual buildings but if needed, new buildings can be modestly added. Also, the area should be still functional in case the new buildings are not erected.
- To resolve passages to the competition area from all the surrounding streets.

- To respect the topographical height differences of the area
- To respect needs of people living in or nearby the competition area.
- Designed in accordance with accessibility requirements
- The actual border-posts are fixed by international agreement and as a such they can not be removed. Full visibility between border-posts need to be preserved. If necessary, border have to be possible to close. Mobile or removable barriers should be designed on the top of possible coverage of border creek.

6. The structure of proposals

6.1. Volume of draft design

Draft design has to include:

1. Graphic material (unlimited amount of display boards in A1 size) which includes:
 - Schemes of functional and urban connections in the competition area with its surroundings
 - Competition area plan using topography in scale 1:500 with marked:
 - Functional use of area
 - Topography and pavement of area
 - Transport and parking solution
 - Greenery
 - Placement of urban space inventory
 - Lightning
 - Characteristic sections
 - Design concept for urban space inventory
 - Visualizations (at least three 3D pictures which give an overview of the proposed solutions)
2. Explanatory note (A4 size) which includes:
 - Short description of design idea formation
 - Short description of functional use of area
 - Short description of greenery
 - Transport and parking solution
 - Urban space inventory description

6.2. Form of draft design

The form of the draft design needs to be composed in accordance with the following conditions:

- Graphic elements (drawings, diagrams, visualization, etc.) must be submitted on display boards and preferably under the rigid horizontal A1 format.

- Text elements (explanatory note, text appendixes, etc.) shall be presented in A4 format bound sheets.
- All the information must be handed in printed form and digitally – CD or any other information medium .doc, .xls, .pdf or .jpg format in logical understandable order.

7. Assessment criteria

- Architectural, compositional and visual quality of proposal.
- Functionality and compliance with the architecture competition task.
- Integrity and environmental suitability of the proposal.
- Practicability and feasibility of the proposal (the cost efficiency over the lifetime of the object, the feasibility of the solution, etc.).

Composed in 2015 by:

Jiri Tintera, authorized architect, Valga Town Government

Jolanta Kriviņa, Landscape architect, Valka Municipality Council