

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### FOLKLORISTS AS PARTNERS IN AN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION PROJECT OF SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM

On 25–27 February 2018, the team of the Nordplus project “**Sustainable Tools 4 Trainers**” (T4T) held its concluding meeting in Klaipeda, Lithuania, where the final results of the project were presented to the target group and plans for follow-up projects were made.

The project (2016–2018) joined six organisations from Iceland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland, who as a consortium aimed to collaborate to develop adult education materials under the heading “Tools for Trainers in Sustainable Tourism”. The role of the Estonian Folklore Institute was to give expert advice in how to involve local folklore and traditions in the tourism experience offered by rural tourism enterprises.

The kick-off meeting of the project took place in Sandgerði (Iceland), on 23–26 August 2016, and laid the foundations for further work. The aim of the project was to promote innovation, and to exchange experience and know-how between various types of organisations in Nordic and Baltic countries involved in adult education, venturing to support



*The project team merged from top to toe into the medieval traditions of the Jaunpils Castle, Latvia. Photograph by Jukka Kallio 2017.*

the creation and dissemination of best practices in rural tourism. The main tangible result of the project is a topical online toolbox (<https://t4t.yolasite.com>) – a collection of materials and best practice examples from the project partners and other organisations. These tools can be used as a practical instrument in the work of adult educators in project partners' and other stakeholders' organisations, and also disseminated among a wider audience.

During the second project meeting in Riga (Latvia) in 2017, the project team put together a plan for creating the toolbox and divided the work between project partners. The role of the Estonian representative Reet Hiimäe was to prepare illustrated materials about the possibilities of using nature and place lore, local folk belief and legends, and traditional celebrations of holidays in contemporary rural tourism. The third project meeting in Nelijärve (Estonia) in 2017 enabled us to get feedback from the target group and continue developing the toolbox in a more clearly focused way (e.g. adding short training videos). We hope that the toolbox will help to increase the quality of rural tourism services and the competences of the participants as well as the project target group.

Reet Hiimäe

## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF HUMOUR RESEARCHERS IN TALLINN**

On 25–29 June 2018, the conference of the International Society for Humour Studies (ISHS), under the heading “Humour: Positively (?) Transforming”, took place in the Astra building of Tallinn University, Estonia. The conference assembled 265 scholars from 38 countries, with an aim to analyse the essence of humour and its expressions. The conference started on 25 June with a doctoral seminar day (jointly with the GSCSA – Graduate School of Culture Studies and Arts – and Tallinn University). 98 people attended the doctoral school, with university students having prioritised participation.

Humour reacts to changes in society flexibly, bluntly, and quickly, providing unexpected insights into problematic issues, such as migration, censorship, intolerance, stereotyping, etc. The five conference days dwelt on topical issues which could also be of interest to a wider audience, and every day open lectures, plenary sessions, and workshops took place.

Four plenary speeches were given at the conference: Jessica Milner Davis, Australian sociologist and culture theorist, talked about why political satire has gained more and more popularity throughout times, and why humour about Donald Trump has both raised and lowered his status. After the plenary speech, Jessica Milner Davis was awarded the lifework prize by the ISHS.

US folklorist Elliott Oring showed how humour can be studied with the help of universal global theories and scripts.

US folklorist Trevor Blank, whose main research domain is internet humour, talked about scandals concerning Bill Cosby and other celebrities, which have a strong humour potential.

Israel sociologist Limor Shifman was interested in quickly globalising humour. One of the carriers of this trend is memes spreading all over the internet, and Shifman's research is concerned with their differences by cultures.

A separate session on 27 June was dedicated to the connection between humour and artificial intelligence. The discussion group tried to find out whether artificial intelligence is able to joke like humans and also understand jokes or whether humour created by artificial intelligence would be more understandable mainly among other artificial intelligences.

On 29 June, recognised scholars of different domains discussed the specific features of Estonian humour on the basis of Andrus Kivirähk's novel "The Man Who Spoke Snakish". Does a foreigner regard this book as funny or as tragic? How do people from other countries characterise Estonians' sense of humour?

In addition to a number of special panels, one three-session-long panel dedicated to Christie Davis took place. For the first time Christie Davis's award was handed out; it was given to Hannah Baldwin from the United Kingdom, who delivered a plenary lecture on Philogelos's compatibility with Davis's theories of humour.

Researchers of the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum (ELM) also made several presentations: researcher Saša Babič (What is the Difference Between an Orchestra and a Cow? Exploring the Idiosyncrasy of Musicians' Humour), researcher Reet Hiimäe (Negotiating Personal Spirituality Through Humour), senior researcher Mare Kalda together with Astrid Tuisk (School Memes: The Estonian Case), senior researcher Liisi Laineste (Joke Tales and Their Targets: The Clergy in Estonian Jokelore), and Piret Voolaid together with Kalle Voolaid (Sports Commentators' Gaffes as a Type of (Un)Intentional Humour in Estonia).

The main organiser of the conference was Liisi Laineste, senior researcher of the Department of Folkloristics of the ELM, and the secretary Anastasiya Fiadotava; the members of the organising committee were Carlo Cubero, Mikhail Fiadotau, Mare Kõiva, Anne Ostrak, Kristel Toom, and Piret Voolaid.

The homepage of the conference can be found at <https://www.folklore.ee/rl/fo/konve/ishs2018>, and in Facebook (ISHS 2018).

The conference was organised by the Estonian Literary Museum, the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies, and Tallinn University, and it was supported by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (Enterprise Estonia, Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies), the Estonian Research Council (research project IUT 22-5), and the Estonian Cultural Endowment.

Piret Voolaid, Liisi Laineste