



*Improving Life Quality of Rural Area  
Residents in Sūduva Land*

**Sūduva** is a region in southern-south-western part of Lithuania. Sūduva is ethnic land of Sudovians, who segregated themselves from larger Baltic unit Jotvingiai in the middle of millennium I. Sudovians were mentioned in written sources of history earlier than residents of any other present Lithuanian ethnic regions.

From Sasna and Višakis rivers, which flow in Šešupė, the largest river of Sūduva land, in the West to Kazlų Rūda, Plutiškės and Sasnava forests in the East people of the land have always been hard-working, clever and full of initiative. They work and create welfare to themselves and their land.

Since the beginning of millennium I the main occupation of Jotvingiai-Sudovians has been agriculture. Even corvée was abolished in Sūduva earlier than in any other region of Lithuania, since rich soils favourable to agriculture and diligence of people allowed residents of the land to become the richest Lithuanian farmers in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Sudovians are famous for their rationality, cleverness and thrift - even some jokes about their thrift have been created, however, this does not prevent Sudovians from being hospitable and accepting guests wholehearted.

Sudovians bake tasteful bread on leaves of sweet calamus and enjoy singing single-toned songs with fanciful melodies. At present they sing songs after work in festivals organized by rural communities rather than during campaigns.

Sūduva is a land of wide plains and rich soils, in which stone is a difficult thing to find. Homesteads surrounded by trees scattered in great reaches of fields look like green isles.



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# I. SŪDUVA LOCAL ACTIVITY GROUP

## 1.1. Formation History

Sūduva LAG territory has had live community traditions since long ago. First rural community organizations (Plutiškės, Bebruliškės, Antanavas and Jūrė villages) were registered in early 2002 and the main purpose of such organizations was to activate rural residents, strengthen public spirit and jointly improve life conditions of community members. There were 12 community organizations in 2003 already.

Possibility to use European Union funds to improve life quality has often prompted village people to take some actions. When LEADER+ program had started in Lithuania most active village people, communities and institutions began to cluster in local activity groups (LAG) to be able to get finance for schools, rural area strategy preparation and, in case of luck, project implementation.

To systematize and balance the most important decisions for developing Suvalkija ethnographical rural territory reasonably, Suvalkija local activity group combining 5 municipalities (Kazlų Rūda, Marijampolė, Kalvarija, Šakiai and Vilkaviškis municipalities) was established in 2004. Suvalkija land LAG Board meeting (27 June 2006) participants discussed activity of Suvalkija land local activity group after it had appeared that Suvalkija LAG had failed to be financed for implementation of tentative strategy. We realized the territory was too large and the interests were too different. This encouraged us to initiate natural disintegration processes. Šakiai, Vilkaviškis, Sūduva and Kalvarija local activity groups were established in 2006 and Marijampolė local activity group was formed in 2007.

Sūduva LAG represents rural territories of Kazlų Rūda municipality and Sasnava eldership of Marijampolė municipality. This makes 554 km<sup>2</sup> of Kazlų Rūda municipality and 131.97 km<sup>2</sup> of Sasnava eldership rural territories. There are about 11 thousand residents in Sūduva LAG territory.

Founders of Sūduva LAG:

1. Legal persons:
  - a) Kazlų Rūda Municipal Community Association, represented by its Chairperson Reda Kneizevičienė;
  - b) Antanavas Community, represented by Board Member Romas Liutkus;
  - c) Bagotoji Community, represented by its Chairperson Zanė Krupavičienė;
2. Natural person Vilius Bastys.

Sūduva local activity group was established on 8 August 2006. Since according to regulations for “LEADER+ Type Instrument” LAG territory had to cover minimum 10,000 people, first task of

the Sūduva LAG founders was to find partners because there are only 7,500 residents in rural area of Kazlų Rūda municipality. We are happy to have our invitation accepted and common activity organized by Sasnava eldership of Marijampolė municipality with its 4 communities (Tautkaičiai, Gavaltuva, Sasnava and Puskelniai).

General meeting of 14 September 2006 stimulated active local residents, organizations, village businesspeople and farmers to join activities of the group.



**Figure 1.1 Participants of 14 September 2006 general meeting**

Representatives of 26 different sectors participated in the meeting: village communities, businesspeople, farmers and Kazlų Rūda and Marijampolė Municipality Administration officers. 8 participants signed pledges to submit admission documents to Sūduva LAG before September 19. General meeting of members was summoned on 26 September 2006 in Public Company “Kazlų Rūdos verslo inkubatorius” and the members elected the Board, i.e., management body of 18 members, LAG chairperson (Reda Kneizevičienė), Board Chairperson (Vilius Bastys) and Supervisory Commission (3 persons). 13 persons of 18 Board Members are from Kazlų Rūda municipality and the rest 5 – from Sasnava eldership of Marijampolė municipality. Activity plan was prepared in 2006 and application to prepare strategy was submitted on 28 August 2006.

Board session was held on 18-10-2006; its participants discussed education program, selected topics for seminars to be organized and planned member activation instruments.

Local municipal elections in 2007 have changed composition of Kazlų Rūda Municipality Council and Administration: local authority sector representatives changed and it was decided to limit number of Board members to 16 (8 social partners, 4 local municipality representatives and 4 business representatives) and to change business sector representation in general meeting as of 23-11-2007. Individual business representatives have agreed to become members of Sūduva LAG, while business sector representatives in the Board are Kazlų Rūda Business Club, Public Company “Kazlų Rūdos verslo inkubatorius”, R. Mažeika’s firm “Avansas” and K. Kirna’s ecological farm.

## 1.2. LAG Mission

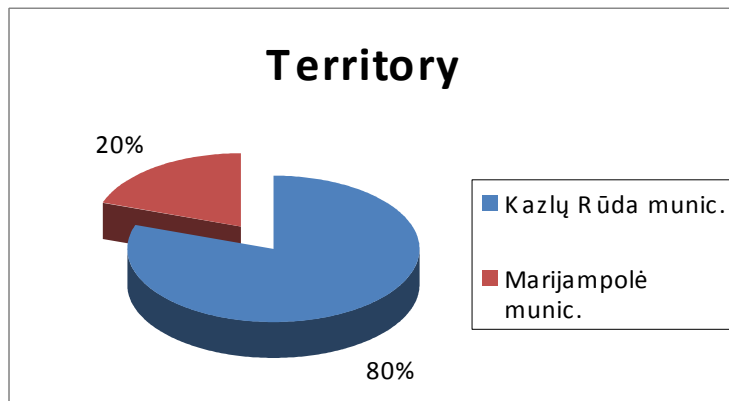
Sūduva LAG vision was approved on 10-08-2007, when generalized seminar ideas were put forward in the Board Meeting. Vision and mission had been formed following the LEADER principle “from bottom to top”. Each community had been forming its own visions and missions and giving offers on general Sūduva LAG mission and vision. Seminars project teams and Board members had discussed all offers and the present mission and vision on the basis of consensus was approved by General Meeting on 23-11-2007.

### **Sūduva LAG mission:**

1. To strengthen partnership between various sectors to achieve balanced development of rural areas.
2. To promote public and community spirit in order to educate responsible citizens.
3. To refresh village heritage and enshrine ancient trades.
4. To consult and give methodological assistance to village development activists and organizations implementing local development strategy.

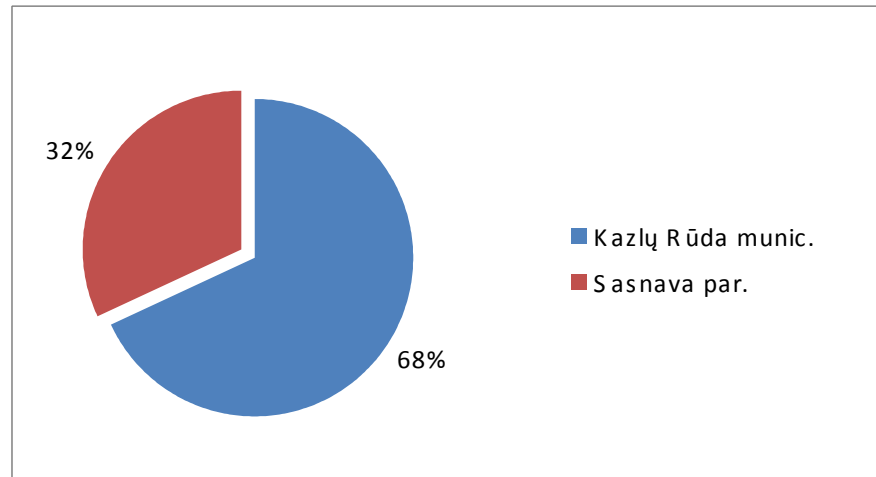
## 1.3. LAG territory representation

Sūduva LAG represents rural areas of Kazlų Rūda municipality and Sasnava eldership of Marijampolė municipality. 14,750 people live in Kazlų Rūda municipality: 7,477 of them live in rural areas and 7,273 - in Kazlų Rūda city (i.e., the numbers exceed the required level of 6,000 residents). Sūduva local activity group represents only the rural part of Kazlų Rūda municipality territory and Sasnava eldership of Marijampolė municipality.



**Figure 1.2 Sūduva LAG territory distribution under municipalities**

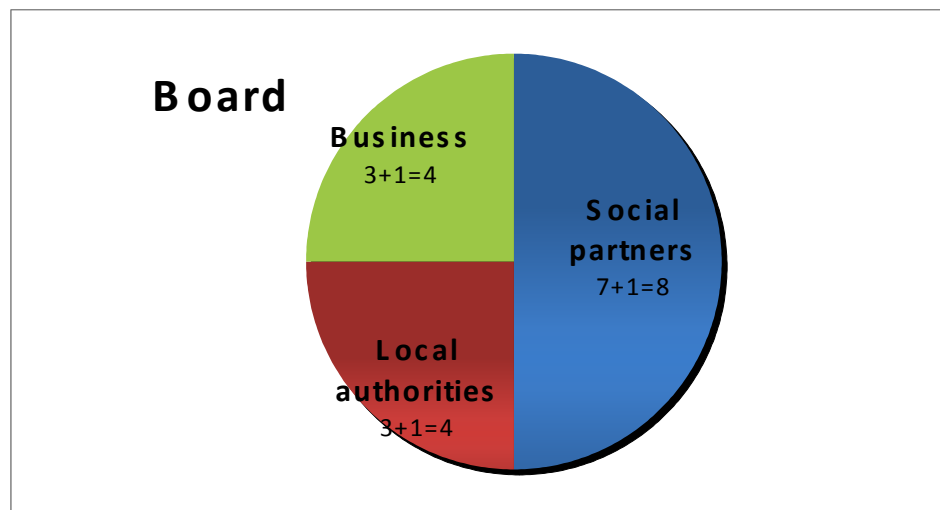
According to data available to the Statistics Department there lived 7,477 people in rural area of Kazlų Rūda municipality and 3,500 people in Sasnava eldership in 2006. Total 10,977 people reside in the territory of Sūduva local activity group.



**Figure 1.3 Distribution of residents in LAG territory**

As it was mentioned already, following the Board offer general meeting as of 23-11-2007 has changed number of board members from 18 to 16 persons. Reason: easier distribution under the represented territory and sectors. On the other hand, since the LAG territory is smaller, it can be duly represented by less people in the Board. The board of 16 members has been formed (4 representatives of local authorities, 4 business representatives and 8 social partners). CVs of board members are appended hereto. The board comprises of 12 representatives of Kazlų Rūda municipality and 4 representatives of Sasnava eldership of Marijampolė municipality. The management body of Sūduva local activity group, the Board, comprises of: 50 per cent social and economical partners (8 members), 25 per cent – representatives of local authorities (4 members) and 25 per cent – business representatives (4 members).





**Figure 1.4 Distribution of Board members under the sectors**

The management body maintains gender balance. 7 of 16 Board members are men and the rest 9 are women. This makes 43.75 per cent of men and 56.25 per cent women. The management body has two persons younger than 25 years of age: representative of the Youth Club Vilius Bastys and the young farmer Tomas Krepenkas. There also is a person competent on environment control issues, namely, environment controller Roma Cikanienė. One third of LAG members have qualification improvement certificates issued under informal extended education program “Local activity group formation and Leader+ type instrument strategy preparation principles”.

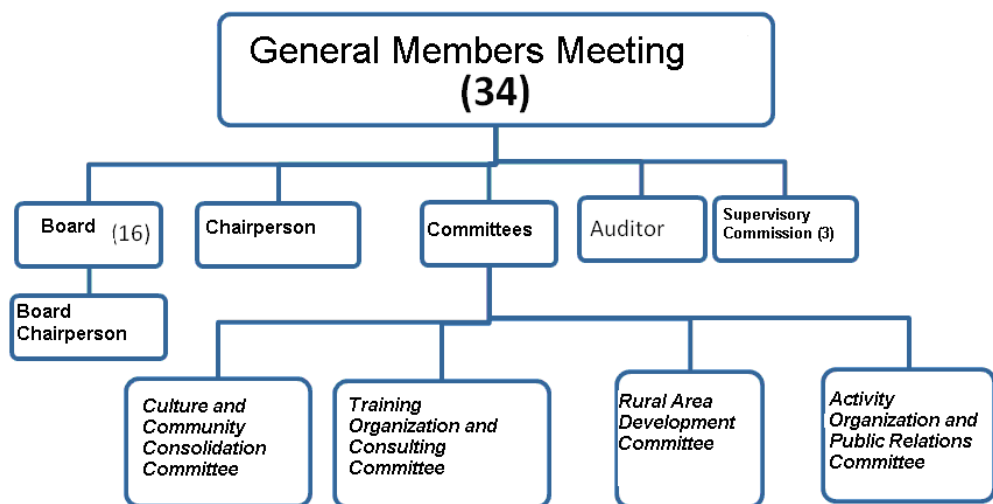
**Table 1.1 Board members of Sūduva local activity group**

No.	First name and surname	Represented organization and post	Represented sector
1.	Reda Kneizevičienė	Community Association of Kazlų Rūda Municipality	Social partners
2.	Zanė Krupavičienė	Bagotoji community	Social partners
3.	Aidas Vaišnora	Natural person	Social partners
4.	Stasys Arcikauskas	Ažuolų Būda community	Social partners
5.	Norgenija Steponaitienė	Society “Viltis”	Social partners
6.	Virginija Bulotienė	Gavaltuva community	Social partners
7.	Dalia Dailydienė	Tautkaičiai community	Social partners
8.	Roma Cikanienė	Environment controller	Social partners
9.	Rasa Avietynienė	Kazlų Rūda municipality	Local authorities
10.	Arūnas Žemaitis	Kazlų Rūda municipality	Local authorities
11.	Rūta Gudelevičienė	Kazlų Rūda municipality	Local authorities
12.	Nijolė Smilgienė	Marijampolė municipality	Local authorities
13.	Kęstutis Kirna	K. Kirna’s farm	Business
14.	Renata Mažeikienė	Š. Mažeika’s company “Avansas”	Business
15.	Judita Simonavičienė	Kazlų Rūda’s business incubator	Business
16.	Algimantas Bučinskas	Kazlų Rūda’s business club	Business

At present Sūduva LAG has 34 members: 13 village community organizations, 1 youth club, 1 disordered intellect society “Viltis”, environment controller, 3 natural persons, 3 village tourism representatives, 5 representatives of local authorities (representatives of Kazlų Rūda and Marijampolė Municipality Administrations and the Centre of Culture), 2 legal business partners (Kazlų Rūda Business Club and Public Company “Kazlų Rūdos verslo inkubatorius”), 2 ecological farm representatives, 2 representatives of PL JSC and 1 representative of private company.

#### 1.4. LAG Management Structure and Functions

Management structure of Sūduva LAG is illustrated in the chart below (see Figure 1.5). General meeting is the highest management body, which elects the collegial management body (the Board), single-person management body (a chairperson) and Supervisory Commission.



**Figure 1.5 Organizational chart of Sūduva LAG management**

Board members meeting as of 21-02-2007 introduced strategy preparation schedule and budget, approved public purchase policies and regulations, elected the commission and appointed persons responsible for public purchases. The meeting also approved project administrators (manager and bookkeeper) and discussed strategy preparation publication instruments.

Board meeting as of 27-04-2007 formed project team of 6 persons of various sectors and decided to form an expert group, which would be familiarized with team work results to give their comments.

**Table 1.2 Project team functional distributions in preparing the strategy**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Represented sector</b>	<b>Area of responsibility</b>
1.	Reda Kneizeivičienė	Social partners	Strategy preparation administration, cooperation with LAG of Lithuania
2.	Vilius Bastys	Social partners	Public relations, work with communities
3.	Rūta Gudelevičienė	Local authorities	Compatibility with strategic plan of Kazlų Rūda municipality, situation analysis in Kazlų Rūda municipality
4.	Nijolė Smilgienė	Local authorities	Compatibility with strategic plan of Marijampolė municipality, situation analysis in Sasnava eldership
5.	Renata Mažeikienė	Business	Analysis of business needs
6.	Judita Simonavičienė	Business	International cooperation

Board meeting as of 10-08-2007 approved board operating regulation (See Addendum 1), file nomenclature and territory development vision and had discussions regarding Sūduva LAG activity trends, mission, SWOT analysis and board member contribution size. Since composition of municipality council had changed, other changes became inevitable as well; therefore, discussions on board composition started. Following board offer, general meeting as of 23-11-2007 changed number of board members to 16 persons.

**General Members Meeting** of the local activity group replaces statutes, makes decisions on LAG liquidation, sets number of board members, elects (for two years) and recalls board members, elects LAG chairperson for two years, approves activity program, annual financial reporting and local activity group activity reports, may appoint an independent auditor, reviews and approves chairperson's reports, sets entrance fee and membership fee amounts and payment policies, approves document and other information delivery to other members rules and official instructions, makes decisions on establishment of other legal persons or becoming a part of an existing legal person as well as works on other important issues, which are not contradictory to local activity group statutes (see Sūduva LAG statutes). The meetings are summoned minimum once a year.

The Board implements decisions of the meeting, approves Council activity programs, organizes planned events, elects board chairperson for a two-year service and engages in other activities provided in point 32 of the statutes.



**Figure 1.6 Board meeting**

Board sessions are managed by a board chairman elected by and of the board members. The board may be dissolved if simple majority of local activity group members wins the vote of censure.

**Table 1.3 Activity trends of Sūduva LAG**

No.	Activity trends	Purpose	Result	List of works	Responsible branch
1.	LAG activity administration	To strive for the set goals and timely fulfil the assumed tasks	Uninterruptible LAG activity ensures balanced village development in the region	LAG management; Human resource management; Communication inside LAG; External communication; Labour organization; Finance management.	Activity Organization and Public Relations Committee
2.	Activity publication	To inform society	Transparent activity	Article writing; Leaflet publication; Meeting organization; Information transfer to media; Internet website creation; Logo creation.	
3.	Goals projecting	To project community goals and activity trends	Implementation of community activity strategies	Needs analysis; Priorities prediction; Vision; Goal, task and instrument establishment; Maintenance and control works; New strategic trends formation.	Strategic Rural Area Development Committee
4.	Project initiation, preparation and evaluation	To attract funds, prepare qualitative projects and successfully implement such projects	Village development	Information on various support funds search and spread; Appointment of persons for project administration; Partner and sponsor search.	

5.	Training organization	To deepen and renew knowledge	Professional community	Situational needs analysis; Seminar and training organization; Methodical material preparation; Practical sessions.	Training Organization and Consulting Committee
6.	Consulting	To provide constant and qualitative consulting services	Successfully engaged activity	Member distribution in consulting areas; Self-improvement, knowledge deepening in particular areas.	
7.	Community spirit formation	To strive for member unity and consensus	Common activity instruments strong community	Common events and celebrations; Various social groups involvement in activities; Good practice spread and excursions; Communication between communities.	Culture and Community Consolidation Committee
8.	Heritage preservation and transfer to future generations	To preserve, revive and nourish values	Preservation of ethnic culture of the land	Search of local resource; Revival of traditions and crafts; Markets, marts, May festivals, etc.; Exhibition organizing.	

Board members have distributed tutorship areas of Sūduva LAG activities. The following committees have been formed: a) Activity Organization and Public Relations Committee meant to administer and publish LAG activity (responsible LAG chairperson is Reda Kneizevičienė); b) Rural Area Development Committee meant to project goals and initiate, prepare and evaluate projects (responsible LAG board chairperson is Vilius Bastys); c) Training Organization and Consulting Committee (responsible board member is Rūta Gudelevičienė); d) Culture and Community Consolidation Committee meant to form community spirit and preserve heritage (responsible board member is Zanė Krupavičienė). The Committees have intended activity trend goals, results to achieve and lists of first works to do (see Table 1.3).

LAG activity is based on values. Meeting participants had discussed LAG values, which were later approved in the general meeting as of 26-09-2006. Values of Sūduva LAG:

- 1) Each person is value;
- 2) Liability for words and works;
- 3) Honesty;
- 4) Patience;
- 5) Sense of duty;
- 6) Confidence;
- 7) Justice;
- 8) Persistence;

- 9) Sincerity;
- 10) Consistency.

## **1.5. Main Procedures**

### **1.5.1. Decision Making**

Sūduva LAG statutes read the decisions of general meeting are to be made by simple majority of votes of participating local activity group members; yet on 26-09-2006 it was decided that all decisions shall be made by consensus. Ppts. 22-27 of the statutes describe ordinary and extraordinary meeting summons procedures.

Decision making is also one of the functions of the collegial management body, the Board. It organizes works under the pre-planned schedule with meeting themes, dates and persons responsible for presentations as well as other board works. LAG board meetings must be summoned minimum once a month. Types of board meetings:

**1. Ordinary.** They discuss issues under the quarterly plan offered by the LAG manager and approved by the board;

**2. Extraordinary.** Any board member and the LAG manger (if he/she is not a board member, who addresses the board chairperson in written on summons of an extraordinary board meeting and thereby submits draft meeting decisions) are entitled to summons an extraordinary board meeting. Chairperson presides board meeting, if he/she is absent, such duty falls on the vice-chairman.

Board members unable to participate in meetings may express their opinion on the discussed issues in written. LAG manager must be invited to board meetings and have an advisory voice. Other employees, members of other management bodies, an inspector and an auditor may also be invited. LAG employees prepare meeting material. Experts (specialists and consultants) may be invited to speak on rare specific issues. Agenda of the forthcoming meeting is discussed in the end of each meeting. Board members and LAG manager can give suggestions on meeting agenda. Board chairperson, vice-chairperson or any other board member must opt out, when issues possibly able to raise a conflict between LAG and personal interests are discussed in a meeting.

Board operating regulation and board member contribution setting methodology (see Appendices) was approved in the board meeting as of 10-08-2007. Conflicts of interests shall be resolved during discussions in small groups having heard different resolution alternatives regarding a relevant issue.

### **1.5.2. New Member Admission to and Secession from LAG Policy**

Following law provision members of a local activity group can be natural and legal persons, who favour goals of the local activity group. Local activity group members have equal rights irrespective of entrance or membership fee they pay or support they provide. A person willing to enter the group shall submit written application to board of the local activity group. Legal persons shall submit decision of a body entitled to approve applicant's decision to become member of other legal entities and a copy of legal person's registration certificate together with the application. CV and motivation letter shall be submitted together with the application and the applicant shall also fill in the LAG member contribution card. One becomes a member as soon as he/she receives positive written board's decision and pays the entrance fee.

Local activity group may have members of honour, who shall be elected by general members' meeting for merits brought to the local activity group.

Local activity group membership terminates when a person leaves the group or fails to comply with statutes of the local activity group. Members willing to secede from local activity group shall inform board of the local activity group in written. Membership of persons failing to comply with statutes of the local activity group shall be suspended or terminated by the board of the local activity group by making a decision due. The board decision may be appealed in general members' meeting. In case of secession or membership cancellation entrance fee, membership fee and transferred assets shall not be returned. According to the approved board regulation, board members must keep commercial secrets of LAG confidential and shall be liable for disclosure of such secrets against the law.

### **1.6. Activity Spread and Residents Activation**

Following the activity plan approved by the general meeting as of 26-09-2006 meetings with communities of Kazlų Rūda and Marijampolė municipalities have been organized to make people familiar with the LEADER program, finance possibilities and the strategy under preparation.



**Figure 1.7 Meeting in Sasnava eldership**

On 30-04-2007 there was a meeting in Kazlų Rūda municipality, where representatives of local authorities were introduced with strategy preparation plan and probable threats and discussed liabilities of consultants, LAG members and municipality representatives.



**Figure 1.8 Meeting with officers of Kazlų Rūda Municipality Administration**

LAG board and general meeting as of 14-05-2007 planned consultant meetings in village elderships. Such meetings have been organized in Antanavas, Sasnava and Gudeliai village of Kazlų Rūda eldership.

General members' meeting as of 23-11-2007 approved activity trends of Sūduva LAG, which had intended to pay much attention to publication. It was decided to arrange publication around two axes: LAG labour organization and LAG activity publication. LAG chairlady and Project Manager Reda Kneizevičienė is responsible for public relations.

Since we unite two municipalities, a common discussion was organized in Marijampolė Municipality Administration on 21 January 2008. It was important to agree on based on what principle strategy funds are to be assimilated. Participants of the meeting discussed finance given for implementation of Sūduva LAG strategy in 2007-2013 approved by order No.3D-544 of the Minister of Agriculture as of 11 December 2007. The Minister approved 6.33 million Litass, 1.33 million Litass



of which is planned to be reserved for projects implemented by the communities of Sasnava eldership and other organizations. Need for municipality co finance for future projects of Sasnava eldership organizations was also discussed.



**Figure 1.9 Meeting with Marijampolė municipality Mayor, Administration Director and members of Marijampolė LAG**

Meeting and publication works have been discussed in each board meeting. On 21-01-2008 there was an extended board meeting with business representatives organized to present strategy of Sūduva LAG and discuss business sector representation in LAG board. It was decided that business sector shall be represented by legal entities Kazlų Rūda Business Club, Public Company “Kazlų Rūdos verslo inkubatorius”, R. Mažeika’s firm “Avansas” and K. Kirna’s ecological farm. General meeting as of 01-02-2008 approved suggestions on business representatives’ delegation to the board, SWOT of Sūduva LAG territory and its logo.

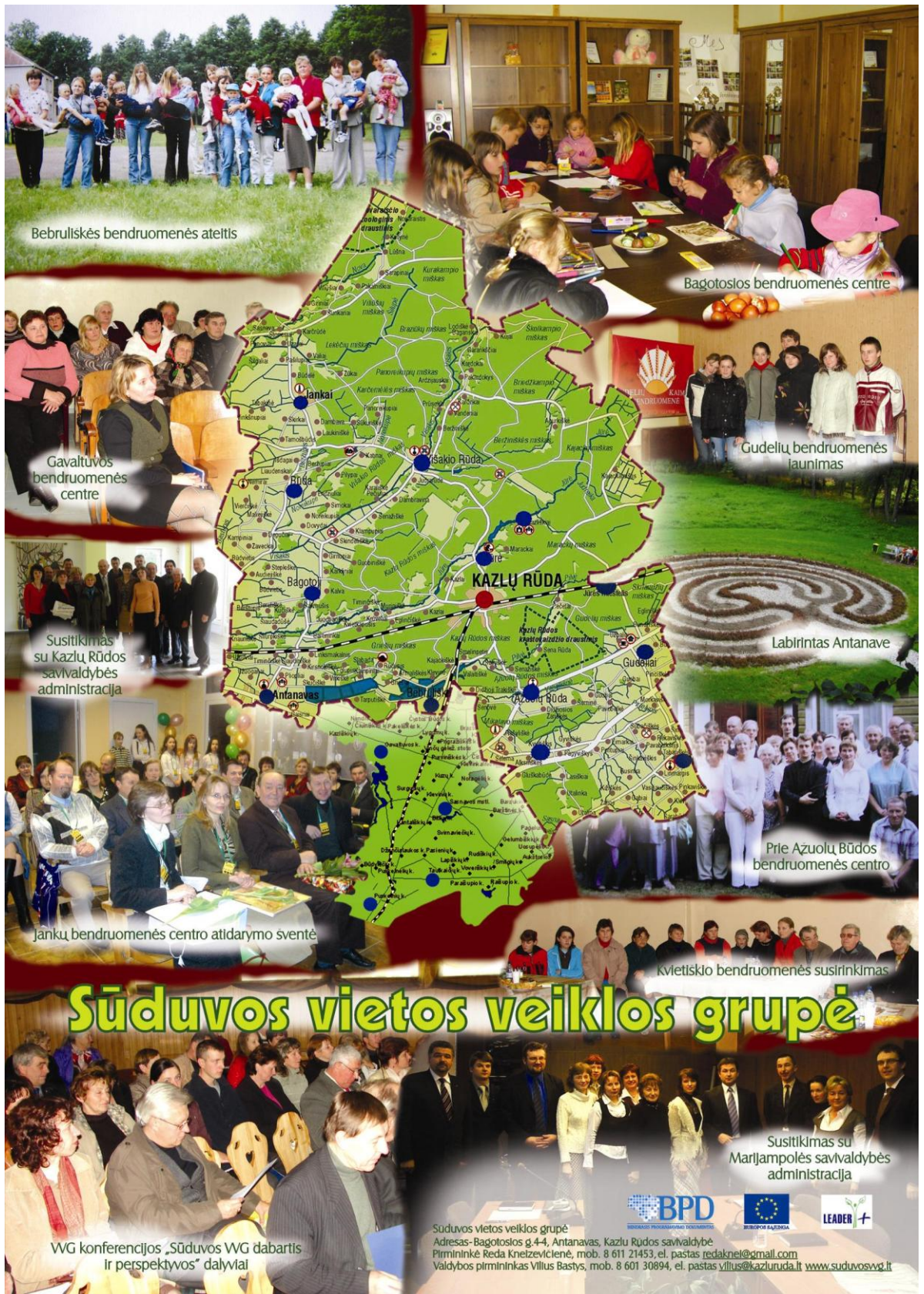


Figure 1.10 LAG poster printed for project publication

Various activity publication instruments have been employed since the very beginning of activity, including articles in regional newspaper “Suvalkietis”, Kazlų Rūda municipality papers



“Kazlų Rūdos laikraštis” and “Kazlų Rūdos kronika” and informational articles and articles on strategy preparation and publication events in internet websites [www.kazluruda.lt](http://www.kazluruda.lt), [www.marijampole.lt](http://www.marijampole.lt), [www.krb.lt](http://www.krb.lt), [www.3sektorius.lt](http://www.3sektorius.lt) , [www.savivaldybes.lt](http://www.savivaldybes.lt).

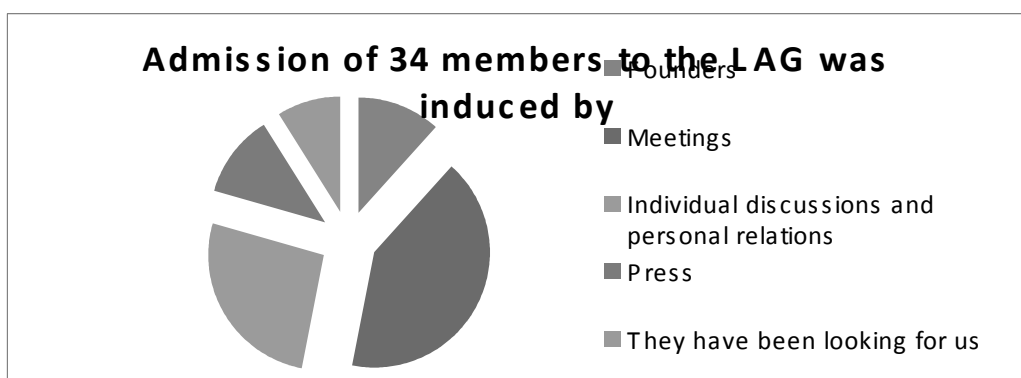
Two publications, flyers and the poster for publication events were made in strategy preparation period; all these were dispensed during the events. There were two conferences organized: “Sūduva LAG: present and perspectives” in 2007 in Kazlų Rūda, in which representatives of Prienai, Vilkaviškis, Marijampolė and Kaunas LAGs shared their experiences and paid much attention to accountability sharing between all three sectors (NGO, local authorities and business). Strategy priorities, instruments and distribution of funds were presented in the conference

“Presentation of integrated Sūduva LAG rural area development strategy” on 18 July 2008, Rural Area Development Department Directress J. Stakėnienė talked about village development perspectives in 2007-2013 and guests from Šilalė, Kupiškis, Tauragė, Pasvalys, Šilutė and Marijampolė shared their experiences in the conference too. Activity of Sūduva LAG and its development was discussed on national Lithuanian radio broadcast “Gimtoji žemė”, interview in LTV broadcast “Gimtoji žemė” and Marijampolė regional television reportage on final conference introducing the prepared land development strategy.



**Figure 1.11 Participants of the 18 July 2008 conference**

The figure below illustrates information sources, which had induced new member entrance to Sūduva LAG.



**Figure 1.12 Member admissions to LAG motives**

Various future residents' activation actions have been intended as well. All information on Sūduva LAG activity shall be kept in internet website at [www.suduvosLAG.lt](http://www.suduvosLAG.lt). This allows public spread of information to institutions interested in rural area development and persons interested in activities of the local activity group and strategy implementation process. This internet website enables active communication with Lithuanian and foreign partners. Organization activity of publication events and periodical meetings with residents shall be continued. Regular meetings of the entire local activity group to look for various forms of activity publication shall be organized. Diligent teamwork and constantly learning and developing LAG members shall make use of all possible human resource and financial investment striving for the balanced rural area development vision.

Information shall always be provided and potential project applicant shall be consulted in the newly furnished Sūduva LAG office premises. One particular day in a week is planned for consultations in Sasnava eldership.

### **1.7 Socially Vulnerable and Isolated Persons Involvement in Rural Development Processes**

Community Association of Kazlų Rūda municipality, Antanavas community and Plutiškų community take active part in activities of the elderly people's organization "Gabija". Society of the disabled has its departments in rural areas and implements various projects under the needs of its members. Norgenija Steponaitienė, vice-chairlady of the society of people with disordered intellect, who is also a board member of Sūduva LAG, was responsible for preparing strategy for cooperation with socially vulnerable and isolated persons.

Priority II, Instrument 1 of the Strategy "Community spirit education and good practice experience sharing" intends to sponsor social integration projects under implementation and involve representatives of all social groups in intense social activities.

### **1.8. LAG Competence**

Sūduva LAG initiates application to Kazlų Rūda municipality Council to furnish the NGO centre in former police station building, in which the premises may be used by various NGOs of Kazlų Rūda municipality (youth clubs, ladies' clubs and other NGOs). Office premises of Sūduva LAG are also planned to be furnished in the building.

In 2007 Sūduva LAG received support from Public Support for Village Communities and Local Activity Groups for the project "Sūduva LAG material base consolidation and internet website

creation”, thanks to which laptop and multimedia equipment was obtained and the internet website [www.suduvosLAG.lt](http://www.suduvosLAG.lt) was created.

Sūduva LAG is a partner in Šakiai euro region tourist information centre project “Partnership network and nongovernmental organizations consolidation and development in “Šešupė” euro region” to receive support from European Economic Area (hereinafter - EEA) and Norwegian finance instruments. The project intends to obtain some equipment, organize intense English courses and go to France and Norway to establish partnerships.

7 village communities of Sūduva LAG territory implemented projects sponsored by the Public Support in 2006; value of such projects equals 110,492.33 Litas. Another 8 projects were prepared and implemented in 2007; their value equals 129,835.87 Litas. 12 other projects at the value of over 28,000.00 Litas were prepared in the year 2008. The funds have been used for repairs of community premises, furniture, computers and other office machinery purchases, event organizing and publications.

Višakio Rūda community has been implementing old traditions nourishing projects of the Ministry of Culture for several years already. Antanavas community has been implementing the project “Antanavas children day centre “Draugai”” of Social Security and Labour Ministry. Thanks to resource of the said Ministry the community has also equipped shower and obtained washing machine. Since March 2008 it provides washing and bathing services. Plutiškų community has been implementing the Holland fund project since 2008 and furnishing community centre premises. Bebruliškė community implemented the Netherlands Fund project and obtained bodybuilders for the youth in 2007. The communities administered the said projects themselves.

There were cooperation agreements with Marijampolė circuit LAGs (Kalvarija, Marijampolė, Vilkaviškis and Šakiai), Šilutė LAG “Lamatos žemė” and Prienai LAG in 2008.

Representatives of Poland LAG visited Sūduva LAG in April 2008.



**Figure 1.13 Visit of Poland LAG “Warmia”**

Cooperation agreement with Poland LAG “Warmia” was signed on 18 July 2008 during the strategy presentation conference. This allows participation in international cooperation of the Baltic Sea region and over-frontier cooperation between Lithuania-Poland and the Russian Federation projects, whereas our Polish partners belong to the Baltic Sea region and are in Kaliningrad region frontier area.



**Figure 1.14 Representatives of Poland LAG “Warmia” and Šilalė, Tauragė, Kupiškis and Pasvalys LAGs have signed cooperation agreements**

Cooperation agreements were also signed with Šilalė, Tauragė, Kupiškis and Pasvalys LAGs during the said conference as well.

### **1.9. LAG Board Members’ Competence**

**Reda Kneizevičienė.** Sūduva LAG Chairlady, Project Manager of the project “Integrated Sūduva LAG rural area development strategy preparation”. Represents association of Kazlų Rūda municipality communities and is a Chairlady of Antanavas community. She is responsible for Activity organization and Public Relations Committee. She has been working as a head of Antanavas Culture House for over 20 years and has experience in organizing cultural activities for people of various age groups. Psychology knowledge obtained studying religious sciences in Vytautas Magnus University and adult teaching qualification helps organizing works in community and Sūduva LAG. In 2008 she finished equalization studies at Rural Area Development and Administration Department of Lithuanian University of Agriculture and entered MA studies in the said university. She has been participating in NGO activity since 2001 and administering 15 different projects (Baltic-American partnership program, Lithuanian adult education centre, Agriculture Ministry, Social Security and Labour Ministry, the Ministry of Interior, the World Bank projects) since 2004. Reda has participated in many seminars on rural area development and community organization topics, has been giving presentations to village communities on LEADER program topics and leading such seminars as “Legal environment of an NGO”, “Basic computer literacy” and “Project administration”. Under the

BAPP project “Development of philanthropy in Lithuania” she has been working on probation in Poland and Germany and achieved expert philanthropist qualification.

**Judita Simonavičienė.** She is a board member who represents business sector. In 2003-2007 she worked as Mayor’s adviser for public relations and foreign relations. Judita is an MA student of public administration program in Mykolas Riomeris University. At present she is a Directress of the Public Company “Kazlų Rūdos verslo inkubatoriaus” and a member of Kazlų Rūda municipality council. In Sūduva LAG she is responsible for public relations with foreign partners, since she is fluent in German, Russian, Polish, English and French languages. Judita is an ambassador of the association “Žinių ekonomikos forumas” in Kazlų Rūda municipality and has much experience in implementing enterprise promoting projects sponsored by the EU.

**Aidas Vaišnora.** He is a board member and chairman of Sūduva LAG Supervisory Committee. He finished the MA public administration studies in Kaunas University of Technology. Topic of his MA thesis was “Peculiarities of decentralization and centralization and their effects on self-government in Lithuania”. He was a Vice-Mayor in 2000-2004 and Mayor of Kazlų Rūda municipality in 2004-2007, Kazlų Rūda Municipality Council member in 2000-2003, 2003-2007 and 2007-2011, Marijampolė Regional Development Council member in 2000 – 2007, true member with observer rights of Lithuanian delegation in the EU Regional Committee since June 2003, true member of the EU Regional Committee in 2004-2006, true member and Committee Bureau member of the EU Regional Committee in 2006-2010 and Council member of “Šešupė” Euroregion in 2004-2007. At present he works as a Technical Service Manager for PL JSC “Girių Bizonas”.

**Renata Mažeikienė.** She is the board member who represents business sector. She works as a Manageress for PL JSC “Avansas” and plays up in Sūduva LAG activities. She has been Sasnava township community chairperson for six years and Project Manager for Public support to village communities and local activity groups in 2007 and 2008. Renata is a member of Marijampolė business club and has lots of business partners in Lithuania. Preparing Sūduva LAG strategy she was responsible for business situation analysis.

**Kęstutis Kirna.** He is a board member, who represents business sector (he owns an ecological farm and grows bees). Kęstutis is a Chairperson of Kazliškės community and organizer of the festival “Bardų naktys” (“The Nights of Bards”). He has visited the EU member states many times, was interested in their experience in implementing the LEADER method and offered some innovative ideas in the area of local resident enterprise promotion in strategy preparation process.

**Roma Cikanienė.** She is a LAG board member and environment controller. Roma finished Bachelor studies in Environment Engineering at the Faculty of Chemical Technologies in Kaunas University of Technology. She has attended specific courses regarding resolution of environment

control issues by strategic planning. At present she works as a technologist for PL JSC “Jūrēs ažuolas”. She is responsible for environment control. Since the company uses bio fuel for blank drying, particular attention is paid to pollutants being exhausted to the atmosphere. One of the basic goals of the work is to achieve minimal effects of technological process on nature by implementing modern cleaner production technologies and duly doing repairs and maintenance works of technological and cleaning equipment. Roma is responsible for improvement of environmental activity organizing in cooperation with partners.

**Nijolē Smilgienē.** She is a LAG board member who represents local authorities sector of Marijampolē municipality. She has higher university economist-organizer education, has been working as a head of Sasnava eldership since 2002 and participates in activities of Sūduva land eldership heads club. Nijolē had participated in activities of Suvalkija LAG and as it broke she now works for Sūduva LAG. The head of eldership is an active participant of community events and the first helping hand in resolving local problems. Thanks to her initiative four communities have been established in the eldership. She has participated in many various seminars on community cooperation and project administration issues and always shares her experiences with village communities.

**Zanē Krupavičienē.** She is a LAG board member, chairlady of Bagotoji community, vice-chairlady of association of Kazlų Rūda municipality communities and a member of ladies’ club of Bagotoji village. Zanē is a primary school teacher in Bagotoji prime school. In 2006 and 2007 she administered projects of Bagotoji community financed from Public support funds and established a village activity centre with village community, ladies’ club and youth club “Bigeris”. On the initiative of the community chairlady annual continuous project “Kuriame grožį visiems” (“Creating beauty for all”) is implemented in Bagotoji village, thanks to which recreation park and children playgrounds are under construction.

**Stasys Arčikauskas.** He is a LAG board member who represents Ažuoluų Būda community and is a former chairman of the community. Thanks to him community centre is being established in eldership house and fellow-countrypeople’s feast is organized annually. Having worked as a collective-farm chairman for a long time the former member of the Council and the eldership chairman is well acquainted with problems of village infrastructure and possibilities to resolve them.

**Norgenija Steponaitienė.** She is a LAG board member who represents the disordered intellect society “Kazlų Rūdos Viltis”. In course of strategy preparation process she was responsible for cooperation with socially vulnerable and isolated persons. The DIPG community “Kazlų Rūdos Viltis” unites children, youngsters and adults with the disordered intellect, their families and foster-parents and other persons acting at their interests in the territory of Kazlų Rūda municipality and



promotes their versatile integration in society. The community implements various health and social integration projects and provides non-stationery social services.

**Virginija Bulotienė.** She is a LAG board member and the board member of Gavaltuva community. Virginija is an active community member and event organizer. In course of strategy preparation process she was responsible for relations with communities of Sasnava eldership. Virginija has participated in all seminars organized by LAG, gained some experience and prepared project for the Ministry of Agriculture for reception of public support in 2008.

**Alvydas Miliauskas.** He is a LAG board member and a member of Taukaičiai community of Sasnava eldership. At present he is finishing culture management studies in Marijampolė College. Since Alvydas is a master of slip cutting interested in traditional crafts of Sūduva land, in the process of preparing the strategy he was responsible for promotion of Sūduva land crafts development. Thanks to him folk artist symposium is organized each year in Taukaičiai barn theatre and wood carving traditions of Sūduva land are nourished.

**Algimantas Bučinskas.** He is a LAG board member who represents business sector. At present he is a Director of PL JSC “Šamoto centras”. In 2000-2004 and 2004-2007 he was a member of Kazlų Rūda municipality council and therefore is well-acquainted with rural part of Kazlų Rūda municipality. He has been a chairman of Kazlų Rūda business club since 2007 and a member of Kazlų Rūda community council. The company he represents is a common sponsor of village community events.

**Rasa Avietynienė.** She is a LAG board member and the head of Economical Development Department of Kazlų Rūda municipality. In 1986 she received an economist-organizer's bachelor diploma of Lithuanian University of Agriculture. In 2006 she achieved Master degree in Management and Business Administration in Kaunas University of Technology.

Since 2000 she has been working for Economical Development Department of Kazlų Rūda municipality as a head of department. Being a public servant R. Avietynienė systematizes and analyzes information on planned, prepared and implemented projects financed by the EU Structural Funds and other international programs as well as projects to receive support from programs and funds existing and administered in the Republic of Lithuania.

She organizes procedures of preparing applications for financial support from the EU Structural Funds and other international programs as well as programs and funds existing and administered in the Republic of Lithuania. She coordinates implementation process of the approved projects and organizes preparation of projects with social and economical partners.

She also organizes preparatory and correction works of Municipality Strategic Development Plan and coordinates implementation of village community support programs and small and medium companies support program.

**Rūta Gudelevičienė.** She is a LAG board member and the Chief Specialist of Economical Development Department of Kazlų Rūda municipality. Rūta has worked for Kazlų Rūda municipality since 2001. From 2006 she is a Chief Specialist of Economical Development Department. She has higher education and Bachelor degree in business management.

Being a public servant Rūta implements the municipal community support program, municipal small and medium companies support program and administration, management and control policies of common Euroregional projects co financed from the EU Structural Funds.

Within the appurtenant competence she provides information necessary to implement projects of the Euroregion to an officer responsible for spread of public information and is liable for particularity, correctness and timely delivery of such information to communities. She prepares implementation and correction methodology for the strategic development plan and municipal strategic development plans preparation policies. She knows Russian and English and has good computer work skills.

**Arūnas Žemaitis.** He is a member of LAG board and vice-head of Economy Department of Kazlų Rūda municipality. In 2006 A. Žemaitis acquired Bachelor degree in Electric Engineering in Kaunas University of Technology. His position covers the following functions:

- Qualitative account of assets owned, trusted to and obtained by the municipality council;
- Coordination and control of activities of municipal budgetary offices in power supply and water control areas and consultations to such offices;
- Consultations to municipal budgetary offices and residents on power supply issues;
- Organization of exploitation, technical maintenance and repairs of water supply, liquid waste drainage and cleaning equipment; ensuring provision of electric power, heat and other sources of energy to consumers;
- Keeping inventory records of municipality assets and economical objects; preparation of documents for their legal registration;
- Taking care of exploitation of municipal real estate objects and structure maintenance; preparation of draft non-residential premises rent and use agreements;
- Quality and course control of construction-mounting works done by municipality real estate contractors, responsibility for compliance of such works with project requirements and other construction documents;
- Participation in implementation process of projects sponsored by the EU and other sources.

Before accepting the office in Kazlų Rūda municipality he worked as an electrician, master and energetician in various Lithuanian companies. He knows Russian and German and has good computer work skills.

**Vilius Bastys.** He is a member of LAG board and represents the youth. He works as a Chief Specialist of Economical Development Department of Kazlų Rūda municipality.

In 2007 V. Bastys acquired Master degree in management and business administration in Lithuanian University of Agriculture. He has studied rural area development administration in Administration and Rural Area Development Department of LUA Faculty of Economics and Management. He is a founder of two NGOs: the association “Sūduva local activity group” and Antanavas village youth organization “Draugai”.

He has been working as a Chief Specialist of Economical Development Department of Kazlų Rūda municipality since 2007. Achieving strategic goals of the municipality he prepares applications to receive financial support from the EU Structural Funds and other international programs as well as programs and funds existing and administered in the Republic of Lithuania and coordinates and administers implementation procedures of projects being implemented in the municipality.

He also receives community applications for finance from municipal community support program, maintains relations with communities established in the territory of the municipality, and provides them with information and methodical assistance on project preparation and application filling issues.

Since 2004 he has been consulting village communities on financial support from national and the EU Structural Funds reception and NGO activity organization issues.

Vilius has prepared 12 project applications to national programs and funds and another two applications (in cooperation with social partners) for finance from the EU Structural Funds.

Implemented projects:

1. EU, GPD 2004 – 2006 project “Preparation of integrated tentative Suvalkija LAG rural area development strategy, the years 2004-2006: Project Manager.
2. Project under the national program “Renewal of CO Jankai community hall” of LR Ministry of Agriculture: Project Manager.
3. Project under the national program “Renewal of CO Gudeliai village community hall” of LR Ministry of Agriculture - Project Manager.
4. Physical culture and sports finance fund project “Consolidation of Kazlų Rūda city stadium material basis” – Manager.

He speaks Russian, German and English and has good computer work skills.

Competences of each member of the LAG board supports the idea that the board as a unit has sufficient skills in project administration, environment control and cooperation areas.

### **1.10. Planned Strategy Implementation Publication Actions**

It is planned to make an explanatory stand with contact data of Sūduva local activity group, stages of integrated area development strategy implementation, sources of finance, partners and sponsors as soon as the project starts. The explanatory stand shall be mounted near office building of Sūduva LAG.

Implementing integrated Sūduva LAG area development strategy biddings to submit applications under the instruments intended in the strategy shall be announced. Biddings to submit applications shall be published in local press and internet websites of Marijampolė and Kazlų Rūda municipalities as well as of Sūduva LAG. Information on strategy implementation, local projects under implementation, strategy sources of finance and social and economical partners shall also be periodically announced in media.

To ensure observance of transparency principle repetitive informational events shall be organized by Sūduva LAG to make society familiar with LAG activities, strategy implementation effectiveness and use of projects under implementation for village people.

To ensure spread of information booklets and posters with information relevant to village people, village businesspeople, farmers and other activists of rural area development activity willing to submit applications under the biddings announced by Sūduva LAG shall be prepared periodically.

## **II. ANALYSIS OF SŪDUVA LAG TERRITORY SITUATION AND NEEDS**

### **2.1. Solidity of Sūduva LAG Territory**

Sūduva local activity group is one of the few Lithuanian LAGs, territory of which does not match administrative partition of the state (municipality boundaries). However, having looked at a map, it is a compact and solid territory joined by many things including history.

Kazlų Rūda peasantry was established in 1930; on 1 January 1931 its centre was shifted to Kazlų Rūda. The peasantry covered 63 villages merged in 14 elderships. Kazlų Rūda became a true centre of trade and business. In the year 1950, when it was decided to atomize administrative partition of Lithuania, Kazlų Rūdos region with 12 circuits and one township was established. In 1962 Kazlų Rūda and major part of the former region territory was merged to the contemporary Kapsukas region, which was later called Marijampolė region. Territory of present Sasnava and Antanavas elderships was one single eldership before dividing Marijampolė region. In late 1999, when administrative territorial reform was made in the Republic of Lithuania, it was planned to divide Marijampolė region by establishing new administrative territorial units (Kazlų Rūda and Kalvarija municipalities), thereby reducing territory of Marijampolė municipality.

After many administrative reforms at territory repartitions local residents were not much attached to administrative boundaries, while common history of the land and common problems facilitate common resolution of territory development issues.

Before establishing Sūduva LAG, Suvalkija LAG, which combined territories of all municipalities of Marijampolė circuit, was in the middle of preparing trial area development strategy. Representatives of Kazlų Rūda municipality and Sasnava eldership cooperated closely in the process. Therefore, when Sūduva LAG was established, it was not too difficult to find common tongue and make plans for future.

So, Sūduva LAG territory is a new, dynamic, and solid formation of Sūduva ethnographical region extinguished by abundance of forests and having sufficient development potential.

### **2.2. Geographical Position and Natural Resources**

Sūduva LAG territory covers Kazlų Rūda municipality (less Kazlų Rūda city, which following provisions of the LEADER method cannot belong to a LAG territory, whereas number of its residents exceeds 6 thousand) and rural part of Sasnava eldership, which belongs to Marijampolė municipality. The entire territory of Sūduva LAG belongs to Marijampolė circuit.

Total area of Sūduva LAG territory is 683 km<sup>2</sup>. According to data of early 2007, there were 10.9 thousand residents in the territory. It consists of 5 elderships: Antanavas, Jankai, Kazlų Rūda, Plutiškės (Kazlų Rūda municipality) and Sasnava (Marijampolė munic.).

The rivers Šešupė, Sasna, Pilvė, Valčiuva and Utalina run across the territory.

Territory of Sūduva LAG is wooded. Wooded area of Kazlų Rūda municipality makes 64 percent. Coniferous trees prevail (67 percent) (pine woods, fir woods); the rest 33 percent of forests are deciduous woods (alder woods, birch woods). Wooded area of Sasnava eldership is smaller (25 percent).

In evaluation of natural and other physical resource, residents mostly appreciated abundance and condition of forests. Even 38.2 percent of respondents believed that condition of forests was good. Another element that achieved 30.4 percent of positive evaluations was unique natural resources and their variety. However, water basins and their condition were in absolutely contrary situation. 39.5 percent of residents believed the condition was poor and 41.8 percent indicated it was even worsening.

Landscape of alluvium plains rugged by rivulet valleys is preserved in Kazlų Rūda landscape sanctuary established in the territory. Small part of Novaraistis ornithological sanctuary famous for abundance and variety of rare birds also falls in the territory. Another part of the sanctuary lies in Šakiai and Kaunas regions.

There are three municipality-level sanctuaries in the LAG territory: Raudonplynis landscape sanctuary, Višakis valley botanical sanctuary and Kazlų Rūda botanical-zoological sanctuary. There are unique fragments of seif dunes in Raudonplynis landscape sanctuary. Rare plants grow in the wet biotopes of Višakis valley botanical sanctuary. Distinctive plant groups grow in alder forests of Kazlų Rūda botanical-zoological sanctuary.<sup>1</sup>

Sūduva LAG territory has convenient communications with other Lithuanian cities. Via Baltica motor highway and railroads Kaunas–Šeštokai, Vilnius–Kaliningrad crosses the territory.

Since Kazlų Rūda city does not belong to the territory, there are no cities. There is Sasnava Township with 700 residents in Sūduva LAG territory. The largest settlements are Sasnava, Puskelniai and Antanavas village with 700 residents each.

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<sup>1</sup> Lietuvos gamta. Saugomos teritorijos / M.Kirstukas (ed.) et all. – Kaunas: Lututė, 2004. – p. 392.

### 2.3. Elderships

There are 5 elderships in Sūduva LAG territory (eldership headquarters given in brackets): Antanavas (Antanavas), Jankai (Jankai), Kazlų Rūda (Kazlų Rūda), Plutiškės (Plutiškės) and Sasnava (Sasnava) eldership.

**Antanavas eldership.** There are 14 villages in the eldership. Area of the territory is 1,898 ha 1,560 ha of which are agricultural landed property. There run the Šešupė and Pilvė Rivers.

There is a post office, railway station, primary school, library, culture house, medical station, a chapel (architectural monument), chapel in Pliopliai cemetery (monument), commemorative cross to remind rebellions of the year 1863, former estate of the landlord Stasys Šabunevičius, praying house and cemeteries in Gaisriai and Pliopliai villages in the eldership.

Antanavas community children's day centre is in the eldership, Antanavas community engages in its activities as well as Antanavas branch of society of the disabled and Antanavas youth club "Draugai".

There is Antanavas plant of PL JSC "Suvalkijos agrocentras", electric motor repair workshop, veterinary service company, wood production company, metal shopper's office "Subarė" and four shops in the eldership.

**Jankai eldership.** There are 46 villages with total 1,424 people. Total area of the eldership is 16,949.48 ha. Jankai and Būda villages are largest under their population. Forests of Nova, Višakio Rūda, and Kleviniai forestry fall in the territory of the eldership. Wooded area occupies about 6,400 ha. The Nova, Šilupė and Noreikupis rivulets run across the territory. There are regional roads across the eldership such as Kudirkos Naumiestis–Zapyškis, Kazlų Rūda–Bliuviškiai, Karčrūdė–Jankai–Baltrušiai and about 47 km local roads.

There are 2 schools in the eldership: Jankai primary and Būdos elementary schools. There is a St. Spirit church and cemetery in Nemirai village. The only culture house of the eldership is in Būda. Both Būda and Jankai have medical stations, libraries and shops. There is a post office and fire-fighting service in Jankai. Jankai village community unites eldership residents for common activities.

There are 4 sawmills in the eldership. The majority of people live on agriculture, wood preparation works, osier growing and osier material preparation.

**Kazlų Rūda eldership.** Kazlų Rūda eldership is the largest eldership of the municipality according to its area and population. The territory occupies about 36 thousand hectares and has 12,454 residents. However, the very city of Kazlų Rūda with 7,162 residents (1 January 2008) does not fall in the LAG territory.

Largest area of the eldership is occupied by forests. Small rivers like Pilvė, Jūrė and Judrė run across the territory. Via Baltica highway and such railroads as Vilnius–Karaliaučius, Sankt Peterburgas–Varšuva crosses the territory of Kazlų Rūda eldership.

There are a lot of historically valued old cemeteries in the eldership and the famous springlet and chapel in Višakio Rūda. There is a monument of exile near Kazlų Rūda railway station. There are lots of wooden oratories and sculptures to remind famous people of the land and the sate.

Next to educational institutions of the city there are primary schools in Ažuolų Būda and Bagotoji. Kazlų Rūda elementary school has 4 departments: in Višakio Rūda, Jūrė village, Bebruliškė and Jūrė Township. Kazlų Rūdos culture centre organizes cultural education of people of the land as well as nourishing and continuity of general and land culture. This covers 3 culture houses in the eldership: Višakio Rūda, Jūrė Township and Bagotoji houses. Višakio Rūda culture house has country music band “Šaltinėlis”, which sound names of Kazlų Rūda in Lithuania and abroad. “Jūrės seklytėlė” folklore collective works under the Jūrė Township culture house. There are 6 departments of the Public Library, 5 post offices, 4 medical stations and a private company R.Klusevičienės ambulatory in Bagotoji, which serves people from Antanavas eldership as well.

Villages have their communities; there are 9 communities in the eldership (Ažuolų Būda, Gudeliai village, Bagotoji, Bebruliškė, Jūrė village, Jūrė Township, Kazliškiai, Višakio Rūda and Kvietiškis village communities).

There are several business companies in rural area of Kazlų Rūda eldership: PL JSC “Kirvilė”, Urbanavičius’ private company “Aelita”, PL JSC “Medonos mėsa”, PL JSC “Juodeliai” branch, Jūrė workshop, PL JSC “Jūrės medis”, PL JSC “Per-Arne List Baltija”, V.Kanevičius’ company “Komprema”, PL JSC “Čiga” and R.Skaisgirys’ production and commerce firm in Jūrė village; Gudeliai tavern and PL JSC “Imbreta” in Gudeliai; A.Baltrukonienė’s trade company and PL JSC “Karpis” in Bebruliškės; A.Juškevičius’ trade company, Z.Jodžbalis’ wood production company and R.Gudynas’ firm in Bagotoji; PL JSC “Dareista”, S.Arcikauskas’ trade firm, PL JSC “S.Danieliaus ir Ko” in Ažuolų Būda; Jonas Kęstutis Kirna’s farm in Kazliškiai; PL JSC “Giria”; Public company “Judrės parkas” and P.Skirkevičius’ private company in Višakio Rūda.

**Plutiškės eldership.** Area of the eldership is 3,025.8 ha, 96.62 percent of which is agricultural landed property. There are 23 villages and granges in the eldership. There live about 830 people. Length of local roads is 25.6 km; public roads make 15.8 km of them. Two regional roads and Via Baltica highway cross the eldership territory. There is 1 usable cemetery in Plutiškės village, 2 closed cemeteries, one old tomb and German cemetery in Subačiškės village.

There are 295 farms in the territory; 219 of them grow animals. Most farmers plant wheat, barley, triticale, mangel, sugar-beet and potatoes; one farmer is engaged in floriculture and another



one breeds horses. Only two farms of the said are larger, the rest have 3–23 ha each. 2 individual veterinary service companies, 2 wood production companies, 1 taxi service company and 1 trade company is registered in the eldership.

There is a post office, secondary school (elementary school established in 1920), village library (opened in 1907), church and culture house. Plutišk4s village community is the only community in the eldership.

**Sasnava eldership.** Sasnava eldership has 52 residential areas with total 3.5 thousand people. Eldership area is 13,197 ha. The eldership lays out in both sides of the road Marijampolė-Kaunas and has comfortable communications with Marijampolė centre and other cities. Railroad Kaunas-Šeštokai and ViaBaltica highway cross the eldership. The river Šešupė runs in Western part of the area. The eldership is arched by woods of Sasnava and Varnabūdė forestry. Forests occupy 25.3 percent of the area. There are two ponds and several trees (natural monuments).

There are 5 libraries in the eldership. Four of them have public internet connections. The only new Lithuanian barn theatre was built and opened in 2002 in Tautkaičiai. Sasnava Township has its entertainment centre.

There is a children's day centre "Saulutė" in Sasnava; about 25 children of socially supportable families attend the centre. There are two schools in the eldership: Lygumai primary and Sasnava secondary school (with three departments in Puskelniai, Smilgiai and Tautkaičiai). There are four village communities established: Gavaltuva, Sasnava, Puskelniai and Tautkaičiai.

Residents of the eldership mostly engage in agriculture and forestry, food processing, car repairs, retail trade and cargo transport. There are 12 trade companies, 4 petrol stations and a stock purchase and meat processing company in the eldership. Crafts are popular in villages.

## **2.4. Residents and Their Social Condition**

### **2.4.1. Demography**

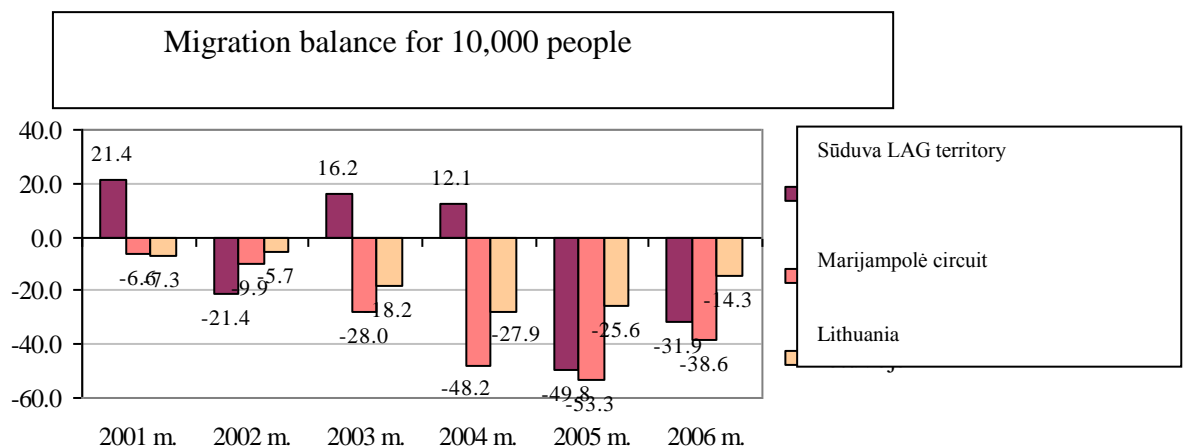
In 2007 there lived about 10.9 people in Sūduva LAG territory: 700 of them in Sasnava Township and the rest in villages, therefore the territory is called rural area. The territory is quite sparsely neighbored: 16 people in one sq. km (in 2007), which is much sparser than in the state (51.8 in average) or in Marijampolė circuit (40.9).

Sūduva LAG territory is quite attractive to people. Demographical changes substantiate the fact. Within the last average-time period (2001-2006) number of residents has been decreasing slower (less than 0.2 percent a year) than in Marijampolė circuit or the state (average 0.6 and 0.5 percent respectively). Unfortunately, in recent years (2004-2006) number of residents has been decreasing

much faster; average 0.4 percent a year if compared to 0.1 percent in the beginning of the period (2001-2003).

Results of people survey carried out by the LAG has shown that residents of the area have things to be proud of: beautiful and clean environment, village peace, plentiful and rich forests, good relations between village people, springlet, rivulets, local history, active community, etc. Such thoughts expressed by the residents expand concept of territory attraction.

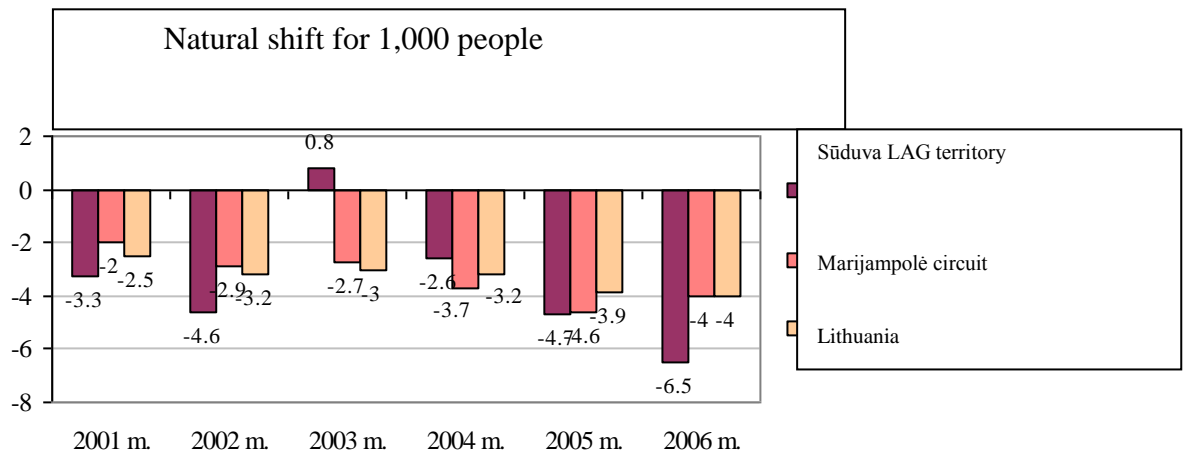
Resident shift numbers in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 shows that population decrease was caused by negative migration and natural negative change. As it is shown in Figure 2.1, the territory is distinguished by larger numbers of the outgoing than of the incoming, except the year 2001 and 2003-2004. Especially large numbers of people have left the territory in recent two years. On the other hand, negative migration balance in the LAG territory is smaller than in the state.



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.1 People migration balance** (difference in numbers of the outgoing and the incoming people)

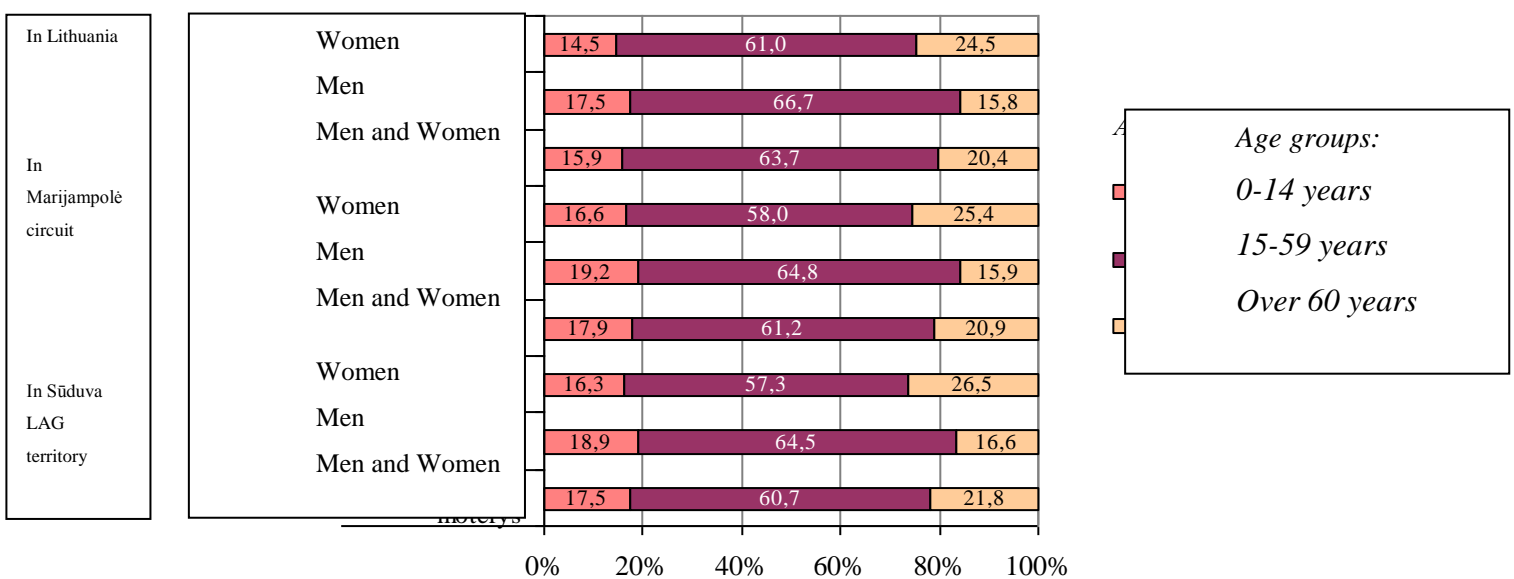
Population decrease in Sūduva LAG territory in recent years was also caused by natural negative population shift tendencies. In the average-long period much less people were born than died. Such gap has been especially increasing from 2004 (see Figure 2.2). Moreover, natural population shift results in the region within the last two years were unfavourable more than in average in Marijampolė circuit or the state, where the gap between the born and the dead is smaller.



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.2 Natural population shifts** (difference in numbers of the born and the dead)

As regards economical and social development of the territory population age structure in Sūduva LAG territory is less favourable than in Marijampolė circuit or Lithuania. Our residents are older: in early 2007 average age of people was 38.7 years (compare with average 38.1 years in Marijampolė circuit and 38.6 years in the state. Moreover, share of children (0 to 14 years) and elderly people (over 60 years) is noticeably bigger than the share of employable persons (see Figure 2.3). 30.9 percent of the questioned people evaluated demographic condition (age composition) as poor. Overall evaluation is 1.8 points of 3. Respondents also forecasted further demographical situation worsening tendencies.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.3 Population structure under age groups**

## 2.4.2. Employment and Unemployment

Labour market in Sūduva LAG territory has become noticeably more active within the last three years. Average numbers of main and secondary employment increased from 16.8 percent (i.e. 3 thousand in the year 2003) in Sūduva LAG territory within the last three years to almost 3.6 thousand in 2006 with average annual grow of 5.6 percent. Such grow in employee numbers is much bigger than in the state, where average annual increase in number of employees was 2.6 percent, or in Marijampolė circuit (1.1 percent).

Though labour market has become more active in the LAG territory (especially due to business development in Kazlų Rūda city), employed people (as shown in Figure 2.4) take much less share percentage of employable population (average 35 percent in 2001-2006), if compared to the state average data.

The survey showed that local people's ability to adjust themselves to changes in labour market vs evaluated average. 80 percent of respondents shared such opinion.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

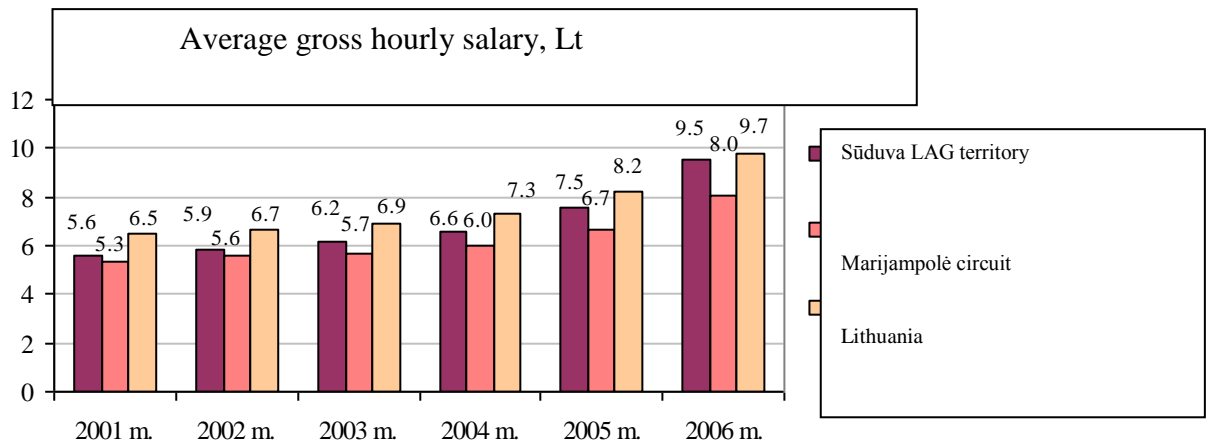
Notes: \*calculated under average numbers of main employment, while from the year 2005 including secondary employment data

**Figure 2.4 Proportion between employed and employable people**

Such difference has been caused by several minor factors. As it was mentioned, Sūduva LAG territory is distinguished by absence of cities (Kazlų Rūda does not belong to the LAG territory); therefore, almost all residents live in villages. Traditionally, village people labour activity and mobility is smaller than of the city people.

Increased activity in labour has been caused by comparatively high level of salaries, which is higher than in Marijampolė circuit but lower than average salary in the state (see Figure 2.5). Average

gross hourly salary in the territory in 2001–2006 was 10 percent higher than in Marijampolė circuit and 9 percent lower than in the state.



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.5 Average hourly salaries**

However, present salaries are not sufficient motivation to stay in the area and plan future here. Lack of jobs near the place of residence has induced emigration of young people from Sūduva land to foreign countries. Survey participants held that one the most relevant problems are that young people leave their villages and do not plan to come back.

According to place of residence declaration data available at Population Registry average 12 people a year left Kazlų Rūda municipality and went abroad in 2004-2006. If calculated for ten thousand residents, number of out goers from the territory exceeded number of incomers in 11 persons. In 2006 such international migration balance index fell to almost 5 people. However, unofficial migration to work abroad has increased. Therefore, numbers of young and qualified people are still decreasing.

Respondents evaluated lodgement of young families and specialists in the territory worst of all territorial capital parameters (average evaluation was 1.4 points). 57.5 percent of respondents noticed that the situation is poor. Moreover, change tendencies of the element were also evaluated as worsening. The element is attributable to a crisis zone (for details see Section 2.7).

Unemployment in Sūduva LAG territory was always less troubling than in the state or in Marijampolė circuit, whereas unemployment level was quite low. Thus, unemployment significantly decreased in the first three years of Lithuanian membership in the EU. Before entering the EU official unemployment level here was 13 percent (2001-2003) and one in average 1 percentile lower than the state level. According to the data available at Department of Statistics, number of registered

unemployed people decreased 9 times (from 900 to 100 persons) if compared data of the year 2007 and 2001.

According to the data available at Department of Statistics, number of registered unemployed people decreased from 11.2 to 2.4 percent (see Figure 2.6) if compared data of the year 2006 and 2001. Thou employment was increased by new jobs creation induced by growing economics, migration of employable persons to foreign countries of the EU had serious impact on decrease in unemployment level.



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.6 Official unemployment**

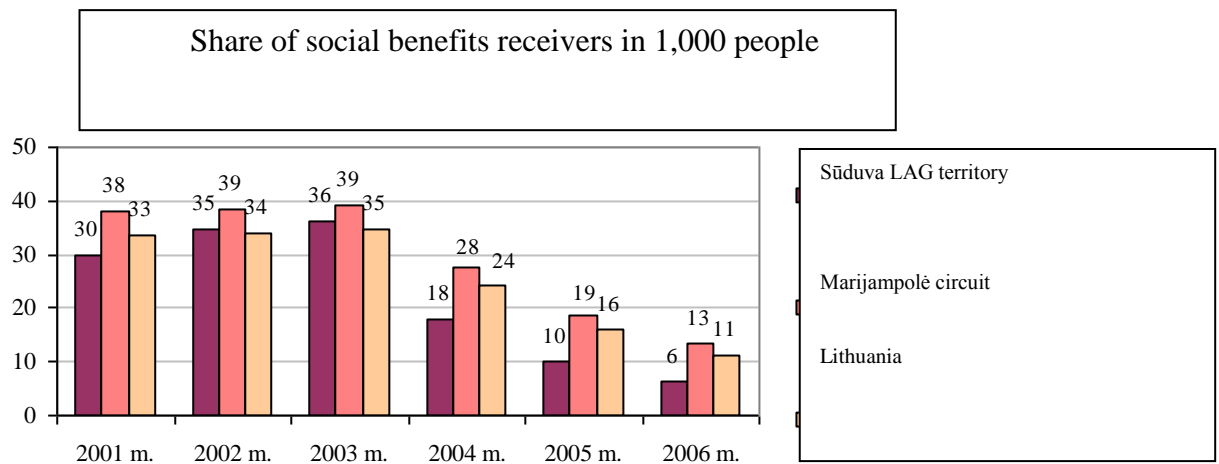
Employment, especially of ladies, has been mentioned as a serious problem in meetings with local residents. Solution of the problem relates to supply of jobs and limited possibilities of women to work full-time or travel long distance to a workplace. Therefore, discussion of women employment in rural areas has to lead to varied solutions.

On the other hand, evaluating human resource in the survey most of respondents indicated that women's activity in labour market and public life is average; 30.7 percent of respondents told women's activity was increasing. It must be noted that women's activity is well-seen in public activities and village community movement.

### 2.4.3. Poverty and Social Disjuncture

Share of low-income families or people in Sūduva LAG territory is much smaller than average numbers in the state or in Marijampolė circuit and it is one of the smallest in Lithuania (see Figure 2.7). 0.65 percent of people received social benefits in 2006. This is the smallest index in Marijampolė circuit. In the average-time period number of social benefits receivers of Kazlų Rūda

municipality decreased in over 78 percent (from 448 in 2001 to 95 in 2006). Best improvement was in 2004-2006, when number of unemployed people decreased significantly and salaries grew.

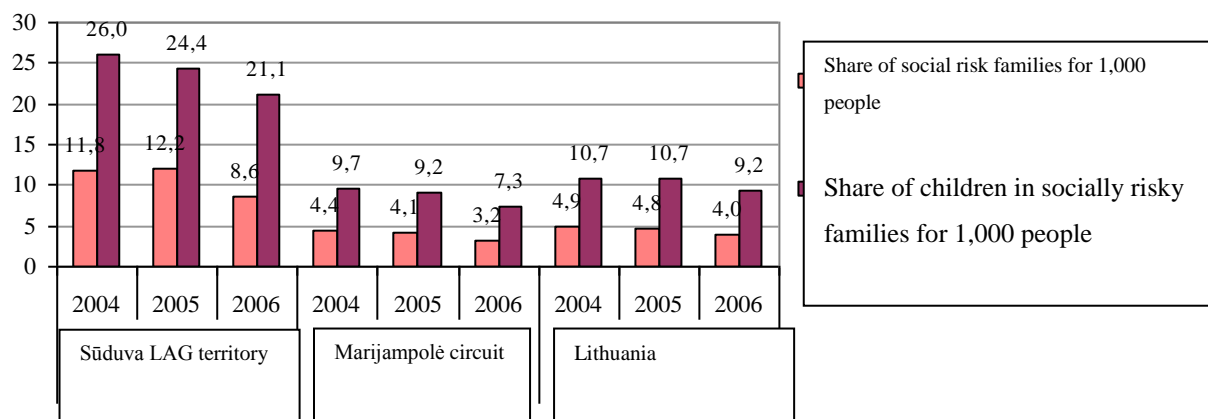


Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.7 People with small income**

Under the marginal expression of social disjuncture (number of asocial families and children living in such families) situation in Sūduva LAG territory is noticeably worse than average in the circuit and the state (see Figure 2.8). Number of asocial families for one thousand of people in 2004-2006 was 2.7 times bigger than state average and 2.4 times bigger than average in Marijampolė circuit.

On the other hand, situation in the LAG territory has shown a little improvement in recent years. This is illustrated by 30 percent decrease in social risk families and 20 percent decrease in children living in such families. 126 socially risky families with 310 underage children living a risky life were registered in 2006.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.8 Social risk families and children**

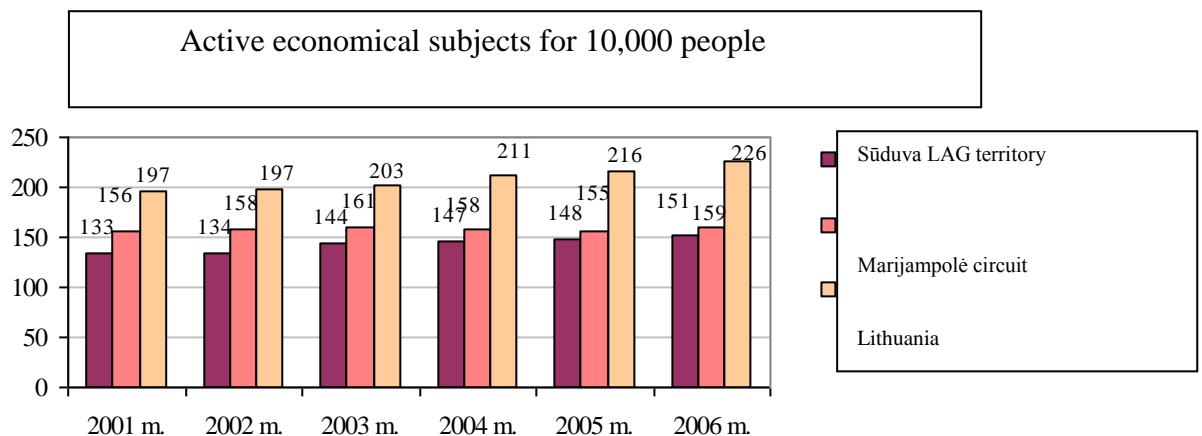
One of the elements to be evaluated in the survey was traditional harmonious family. 66.4 percent of respondents living in the territory of Sūduva LAG gave average evaluation to this element and change tendencies were estimated neutral by 77.2 percent respondents. Meanwhile, 17.8 percent of respondents mentioned the said tendency as worsening.

## 2.5. Economical Condition

### 2.5.1. Industry, Business Sector and Investment

227 economical subjects (excluding farms) worked in various areas of economical activity. 173 of there were service establishments, 35 industrial businesses, 14 agricultural, hunting, forestry and fishery entities and 5 construction companies. Within the year 2007 (if compared to previous year 2006) number of economical subjects grew in 2.7 percent. According to legal forms the businesses are mostly public limited joint stock companies (76) and private companies (84).

According to number of active economical entities for ten thousand people, the territory is far behind average level in Marijampolė circuit and the entire state (see Figure 2.9).



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

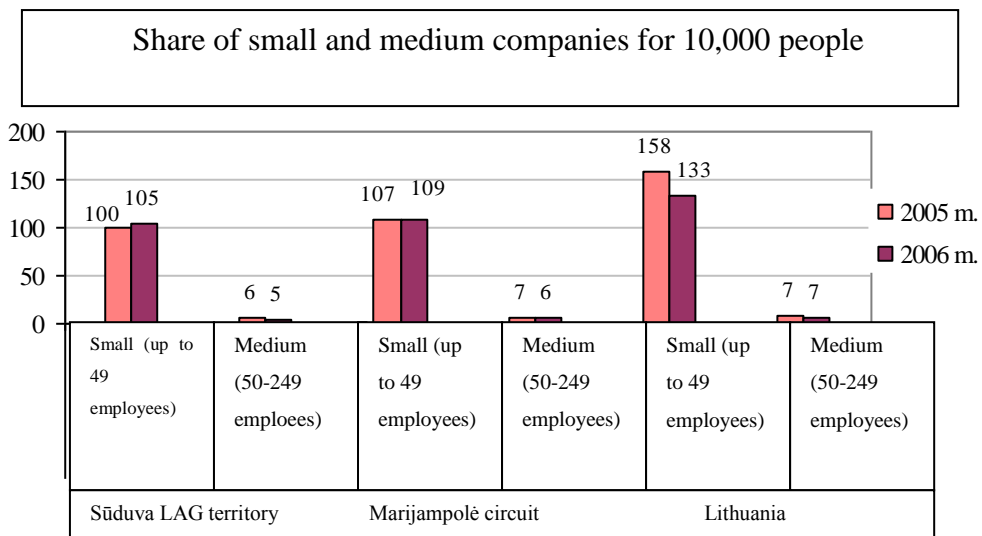
**Figure 2.9 Active economical subjects**

Since the beginning of Lithuania's membership in the EU priorities of economical activity have changed many times: in 2004-2006 number of active economical entities (farms exclusive) has changed insignificantly (increased in mere 1.4 percent), however, distribution of the entities under their activity areas changed a lot: 15.4 percent or 2 units decrease in agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing, 3.1 percent or 9 units increase in service area. Numbers of industrial and construction companies remained unchanged.

The most-developed branches of industry in the land are agriculture, food processing, wood production, metal production and cargo transport.



Small businesses prevail in Sūduva LAG territory just as in the state and in Marijampolė circuit (see Figure 2.10). Small companies with up to 49 employees have taken 96 percent share of all active economical subjects (farms exclusive) within the previous two years. Similar percentage of such companies is in Marijampolė circuit (94 percent) and the state (95 percent). This shows that business structure in Sūduva LAG territory is similar to business structure in the circuit. Small companies with up to 4 employees prevailed in 2006 (55 percent); share of such companies at the state level was also mean 55 percent, while medium companies with 20-49 employees took 11 percent, which means 3 percent bigger number than at the state level.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.10 Active small and medium companies and number of employees**

Within the recent years business in Kazlų Rūda municipality has had a tendency to fine down: number of companies with 50-249 employees decreased (4 companies of such size were closed), while number of very small businesses (up to 4 employees) increased in 3.4 percent.

Antanavas water-power plant appurtenant to PL JSC “Vandens jėgainės” and newly-rebuilt Puskelniai water-power plant appurtenant to PL JSC “Žaltytis” operate in Sasnava eldership. There is a meat processing company PL JSC “Sasnelė”, international cargo transport company PL JSC “Avansas” and others.

Evaluating condition and activities of local business companies respondents often marked it was average (56.9 to 72.1 percent of respondents). Change tendencies were evaluated similarly. There is a presumption that local respondents do not have clear opinion about activity of business sector or it is less relevant to them.

Residents of Sūduva LAG territory are not enterprising. Both official statistical data and opinion study illustrates the fact. 46.1 percent of respondents saw people’s preparation to start own

businesses as poor. Mean evaluation of this element is one of the smallest (1.6 points). However, change tendencies were evaluated as improving (2.1 points).

To help newly establishing small and medium businesses of the city and region there is a business incubator in Kazlų Rūda, which rents premises for the sheltered economical entities on favourable conditions, provides business management services (information, consultations, training, etc.) and intermediates in receiving finance, implementing new technologies and scientific innovations in business. Directress of the incubator represents interests of local businesspeople and is a member of LAG board.

Material investment value calculated for one resident of Kazlų Rūda municipality territory equalled to mean value of state's material investment in 2004 and 2005. In 2006 material investment value grew a lot and outran mean state's and circuit's values. In average one resident received two times more material investment than in Marijampolė circuit in 2004 and 2005. In 2006 material investment share value per person became 3 times higher and 2.5 times bigger than national mean value and 4 times bigger than mean circuit value of investment. Major part of material investment goes to Kazlų Rūda city, however, such investment promotes economical development of Sūduva LAG territory, its increasing attraction to business and other economical activity investment.

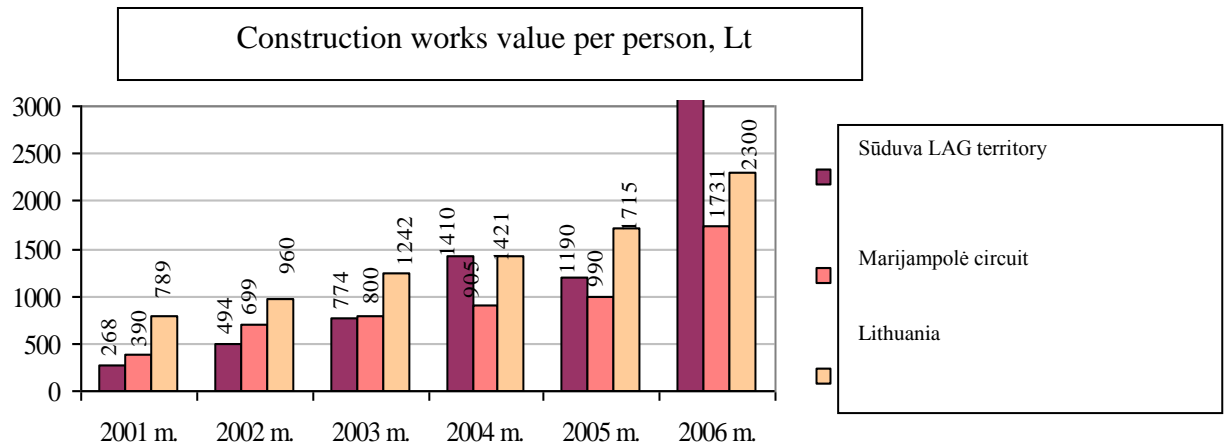
Evaluating goods, services and labour markets almost half of respondents (48.4 percent) gave negative evaluations of payable local services. According to thoughts expressed in various meetings, there is a great lack of such services in rural areas. Agricultural services were evaluated a bit better. Evaluations of local market feature good (mean evaluation 2.3 points) and improving situation in premises, land or other real estate purchase and sales area.

In medium-long period Sūduva LAG territory has remained little attractive to foreign investors. In 2001-2006 direct foreign investment calculated for one person made in average 10 percent of national level and 18 percent of Marijampolė circuit level and gross value of foreign investment in 2006 was mere 11.3 million Litas. Though in 2001-2006 extent of such investment grew almost 5 times bigger (or in 8.6 million Litas), its share per person still remained very small, if compared to mean state and circuit level.

### **2.5.2. Constructions**

As per value of construction works per person in recent years Kazlų Rūda municipality far exceeds mean state and circuit levels (see figure 2.11). In 2001-2006 volumes of non-residential building construction in the municipality grew much. According to the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics, number of non-residential buildings under construction in 2006 was 5 times bigger than in 2001. Numbers of new constructions especially grew in the last two years. However,

very few apartments (approx. 3.8 apartments a year) were constructed in the LAG territory in 2001-2006.



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.11 Construction works value**

### 2.5.3. Tourism

Sūduva LAG territory is one of the most wooded in Lithuania and therefore it is famous for excellent hunting areas and abundance of various berries and mushrooms. Hunting, walking or bicycle riding along forest tracks are the most popular ways of entertaining visitors.

Kazlų Rūda municipality is the one in Lithuania, which has a wooden hexagonal chapel built in 18<sup>th</sup> century in the heart of Antanavas eldership. It was built by Antanavas' landlord Chrapovickis. In course of time it has become pantheon of the family. In 19<sup>th</sup> century the chapel underwent repairs and was decorated with paintings<sup>2</sup>. At present its condition is extremely poor, but Kazlų Rūda municipality is planning to preserve and repair this object thereby recreating its cultural value.

Many legends and tales have been created about the so-called magic springlet in Višakio Rūda, which ostensibly has healing powers. People say that Blessed Virgin Mary once appeared there. A chapel near the springlet reminds that.

Sūduva LAG territory is rich with famous historical personalities. President Kazys Grinius was born in Selema village and buried in Mondžgirė. There is a wooden cross made in honour of signatory P. Dovydaitis and a wooden church of the Holy Bishop Stanislaw in Višakio Rūda. The latter is one of the most beautiful sacral buildings in Užnemunė.

Sasnava Blessed Virgin Mary's church standing in the centre of Sasnava eldership is one of the largest and ornate sacral buildings in Užnemunė. It has several art monuments. The old Sasnava

<sup>2</sup> Kazlų Rūdos savivaldybė/Seniūnijos/Lankytinos vietos [www.kazluruda.lt](http://www.kazluruda.lt)

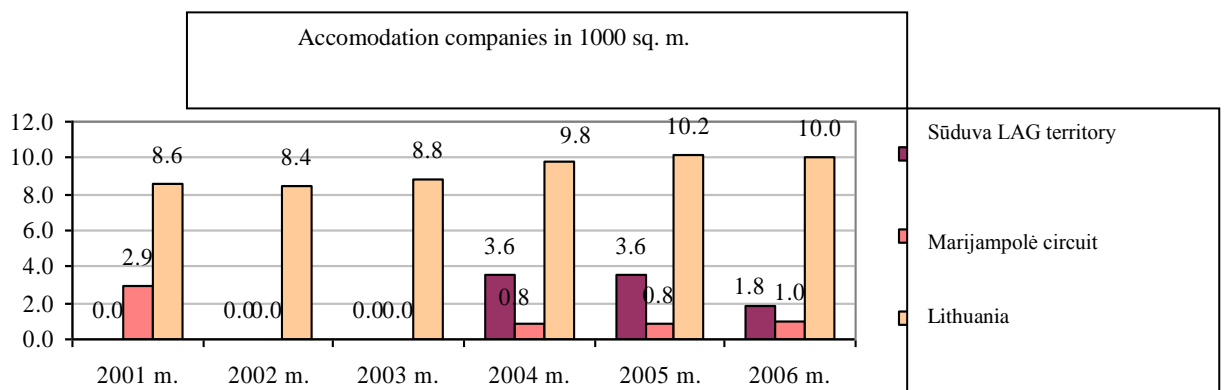
parsonage built in 1905-1906 is an architectural monument used for people's needs. Other places of interest in Sasnava eldership: chapel in memory of book-deliverer J.Luobikis and his brothers in Sasnava Township; home of the famous plane constructor A. Gustaitis is in Obelinė village.

There is one museum (windmill of Sinderiškės) in Sūduva LAG territory.

The rivers Šešupė, Sasna, Pilvė, Valčiuva and Utalina run across the territory. The latter is one of the cleanest Lithuanian rivers. Rivers are full of various fishes and crayfish. Otters and beavers live in wooded river areas. All rivers are dammed up and their dams attract both holidaymakers and fishermen. One can catch pike, roach, trench, carp, crucian, perch, bream, rudd and other kinds of freshwater fish. Commercial fishing is being developed in the territory. Public limited joint stock company "Karpis" established in Bebruliškė village is engaged in such activity.

One may go sightseeing by bicycle riding along the popular 40 km long bicycle track "Kviečia miško takai". Two bicycle tracks important to development of Lithuanian tourism cross Sūduva LAG territory. Implementing the project "Bicycle tourism development in Lithuanian and Polish frontier" sponsored by the UN Small Projects program of the World Environment Fund the track "Šiaurės Suvalkijos žiedas" was adapted to tourism needs. The track was marked, staging-posts were equipped and a specialised tourist guide was published. Having implemented the project "Bicycle tourism infrastructure development in Šešupė Euroregion" tourists riding from Poland and Kaliningrad region will visit Kazlų Rūda.

Unfortunately, network of tourist and guest accommodation objects is hardly developed. Under density of tourist and guest accommodating companies (see Figure 2.12) the territory lags much behind average situation in the country. In 2004–2005 there were 2 accommodation entities in the territory, while in 2006 only one was left.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.12 Tourist and guest accommodating companies**

PL JSC “Karpis” in Bebruliškė village provides accommodation, amateur fishing and hunting services. There is a homestead “Violetos ranča” and Vida Litvinienė’s village tourism farm in Juodrarūdė village, Antanas Vilimas Stančiauskas’ village tourism farm in Katinai village, Saulius Eidukonis’ village tourism farm in Jūrė village and Povilas Mėdžius’ village tourism farm in Čėčetos village.<sup>3</sup>

Image of the land and efforts to nourish it have much impact on development of tourism services. As it was already mentioned, Sūduva LAG territory is rich with various objects interesting both to locals and visitors. Land image component was best evaluated by local residents (average evaluation 2.2 points). The best-evaluated element is pride of local residents of their land; this element was positively evaluated by 36.7 respondents.

#### **2.5.4. Agriculture**

Importance of agriculture in Sūduva LAG territory under the below indices is a bit lower than in Marijampolė circuit and almost equals state’s mean value. Agricultural landed property occupies 31.5 percent of total area (circuit mean value is 67.4 percent, Lithuania’s mean value is 53.4 percent). Gross agricultural production value (1602 Lt/ha) share for a hectare of agricultural landed property in 2005<sup>4</sup> was about 11 percent lower than mean state values (1786 Lt/ha) and 22 percent lower than values in Marijampolė circuit (2037 Lt/ha).

Plant (especially crop) production prevails in the territory. Plant products made 52 percent of gross agricultural production. Two thirds (42.3 thousand ha) of in crop area was planted with crop in 2007. Stock-raising is also developed in the land, but there were 14 percent lower numbers of stock in a hectare of the landed property than the mean state values; meanwhile, production of stock-breeding farms<sup>5</sup> was approximately 13 percent lower.

Agricultural production is concentrated in almost 2.12 thousand farms and homesteads: 1.58 thousand in Kazlų Rūda municipality and 0.54 thousand in Sasnava eldership, which has 3 agriculture companies. Small farms and homesteads prevail in Sūduva LAG territory. In recent years their average size (8.6 ha agricultural landed property) was smallest in the whole state. Size of average Lithuanian farm is 9.8 ha, and size of average farm in the circuit is 10.9 ha.

In Sūduva LAG territory agricultural activity is less important to people’s employment and revenue than in the state or circuit (see Figure 2.13). For example, one thousand village people have 7 percent less agricultural workers recalculated in full-time workers and 5 percent less than average in

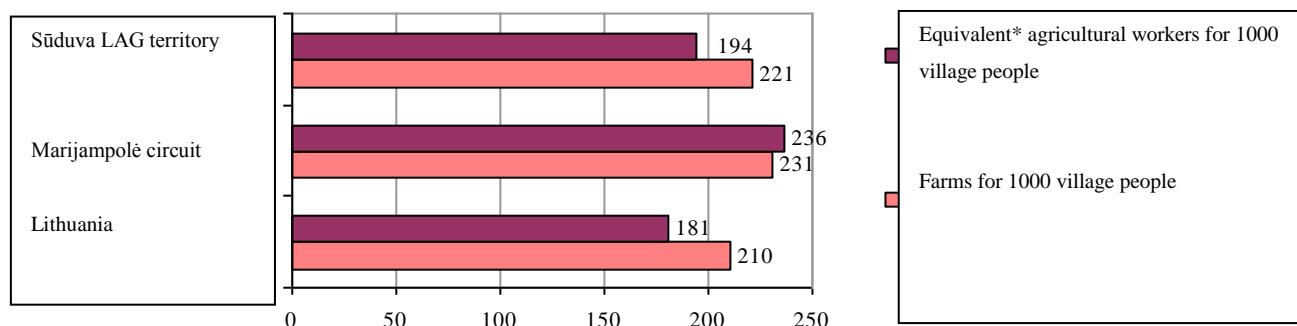
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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.suduvosgidas.lt>

<sup>4</sup> Structure of gross agriculture production in 2006 was affected by drought, therefore this year does not reflect actual situation.

<sup>5</sup> Evaluated under stock-breeding products recalculated to milk volume for 100 ha of land property.

Lithuania. If compared to Marijampolė circuit, agricultural workers in Sūduva LAG land make less than 24 percent. This shows that less village people are dependent on agricultural activity as a source of living.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

Note: \* equivalent worker is a full-time worker. Number of part-time workers was recalculated to full-time workers.

**Figure 2.13 Importance of agriculture to village people in 2005**

Preparing development strategy and questioning local residents it was tried to learn of their attitudes towards the territory based on two criteria: to what extent rusticity and agrarity is peculiar to their land. 4 types of village localities have been distinguished under the said criteria: **Type 1** Village – hotel; **Type 2** Village – factory; **Type 3** Village – museum; **Type 4** Traditional village.

According to the said types proportions of respondents who attributed their place of residence to a particular type was calculated. Almost 1/3 of respondents (30.8 percent) replied their place of residence mostly matches a concept of traditional village (Type 4). Another 1/3 of respondents (37.7 percent) attributed their territory to Type 3 (village – museum).

Several respondents from almost all elderships selected Type 1; 19 percent of Sasnava eldership people – to Type 2; 51 percent of Kazlų Rūda and 62 percent of Jankai eldership respondents marked Type 3. If analysed type by type, respondent evaluations vary, but prevailing evaluations allow attributing the LAG territory to Type 4 (traditional village).

Author of such typology Polish scientist A. Michaliak noted the village views are rather diverse. Traditional village combines rusticity and agrarity. Important element of this type was traditional village family of 3 generations closely related to local community. Today the way of living in rural areas is different.

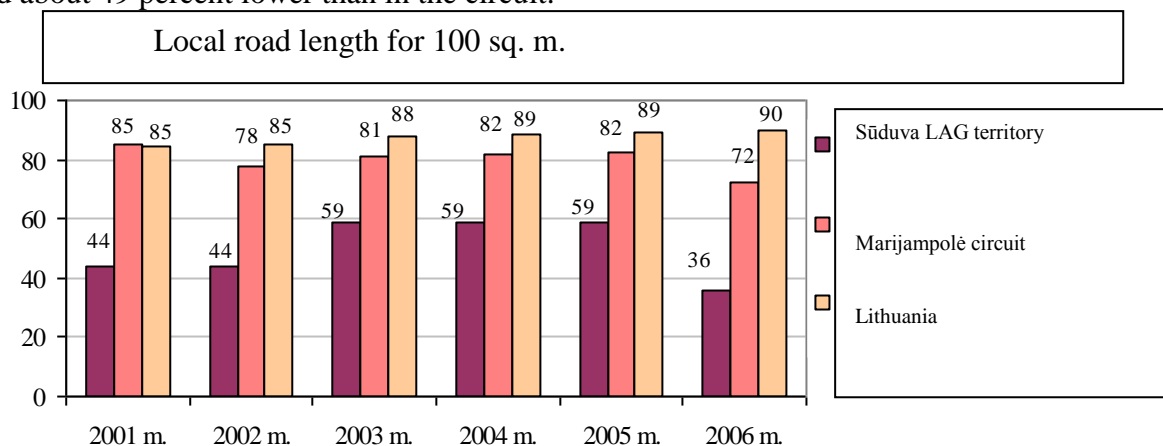
Average evaluations of respondents show the LAG territory is attributable to traditional village type, which means it has a multidimensional development potential. Such potential can be exploited most effectively by implementing integrated village development instruments.

## 2.6. Public Infrastructure and Services

### 2.6.1. Communications

Regional roads prevail in Sūduva LAG territory, but Via Baltica highway crosses Sasnava eldership. This international highway makes the territory a transit region and promotes attraction of local and foreign investment and trade.

According to the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics length of local roads in LAG territory in 2006 was 335 km, and 64 km of them had improved road covering. Local road network in Sūduva LAG territory is noticeably sparse than in the state or in Marijampolė circuit (see Figure 2.14). In recent years their density in the territory was approx. 58 percent lower than in the state and about 49 percent lower than in the circuit.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.14 Local roads network**

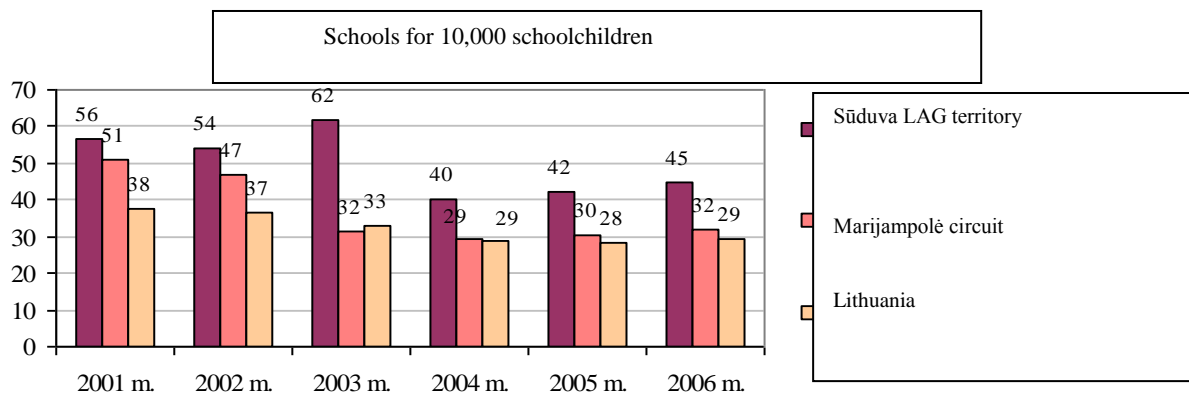
Local people evaluate condition of roads, streets and sidewalks in Sūduva LAG territory as worse than average. 40.8 people noted it was bad. Tendencies were evaluated very differently, since situation in particular localities changes differently. Average tendency evaluation is neutral (2.0 points).

### 2.6.2. Education

There are 11 general schools in Kazlų Rūda municipality and Sasnava eldership. 7 of them belong to Sūduva LAG territory: Ažuolų Būda primary school, Antanavas primary school, Bagotoji primary school, Jankai primary school, Lygumai primary school, Plutiškės primary school and Sasnavas secondary school.

There were 2,236 schoolchildren in those schools on 1 September 2007. This is 16 percent less than in 2001.

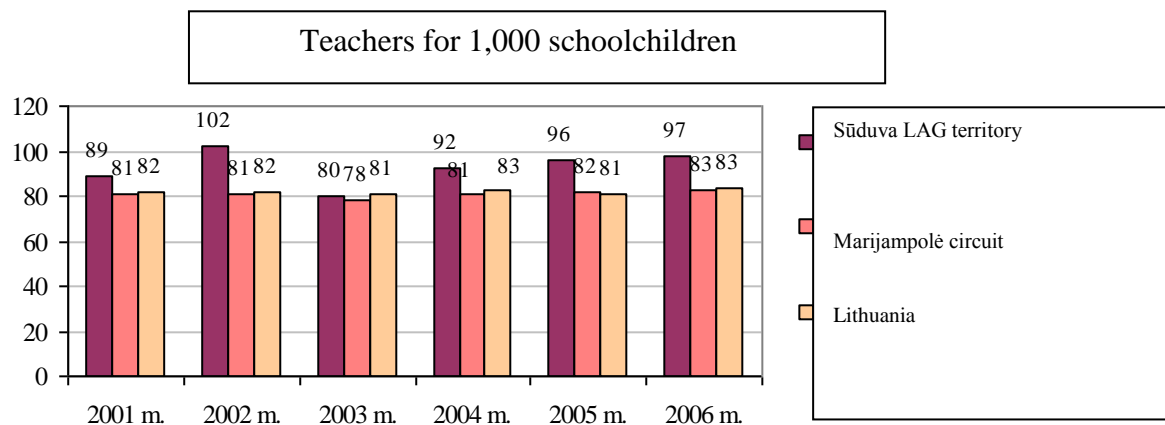
Education system is well-developed in the territory. Schools network is better developed than in the circuit or in the state (see Fig. 2.15 and 2.16). Within the last 4 years number of schools for ten thousand schoolchildren in the municipality was 54 percent bigger than in the state and 40 percent bigger than in Marijampolė circuit.



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.15 Network of schools**

Proportions between teachers and students are illustrated in Fig. 2.16. Within the last medium-term period the municipality had 14 percent more teachers for one thousand schoolchildren than in Marijampolė circuit and 13 percent more than in the state.



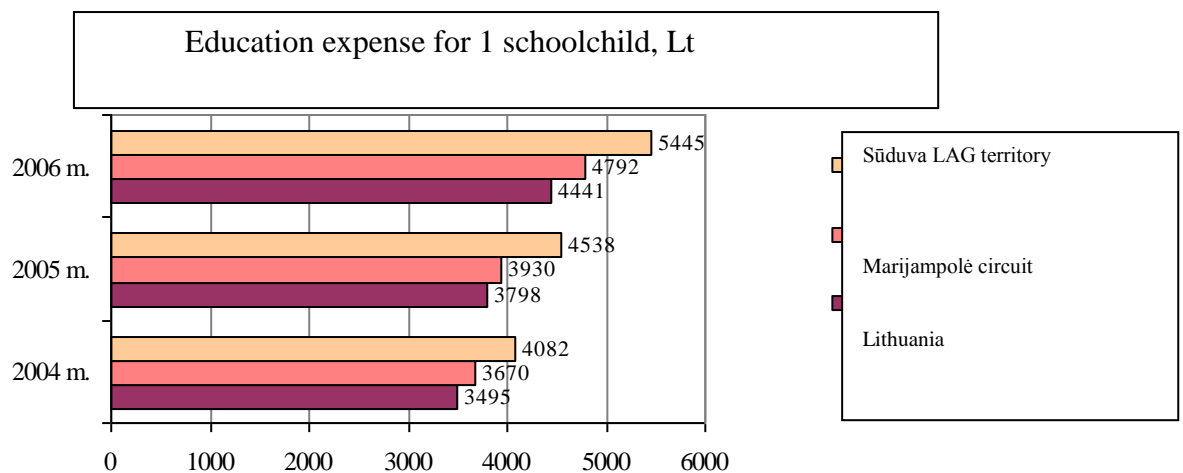
Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.16 Proportions between schoolchildren and teachers**



About 220 educators work in all these educational institutions. 80 percent of them have higher education, 17.7 percent have extended education and 1.8 percent has secondary education (data of the year 2005)<sup>6</sup>.

Condition of education system in the LAG territory is better than average in Marijampolė circuit and in the state, though education here is financed poorer (see Fig. 2.17). Within the last three years municipality budget expense for one schoolchild was 6 percent lower than circuit average and 13 percent lower than those of the state.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.17 Municipal expenses for education**

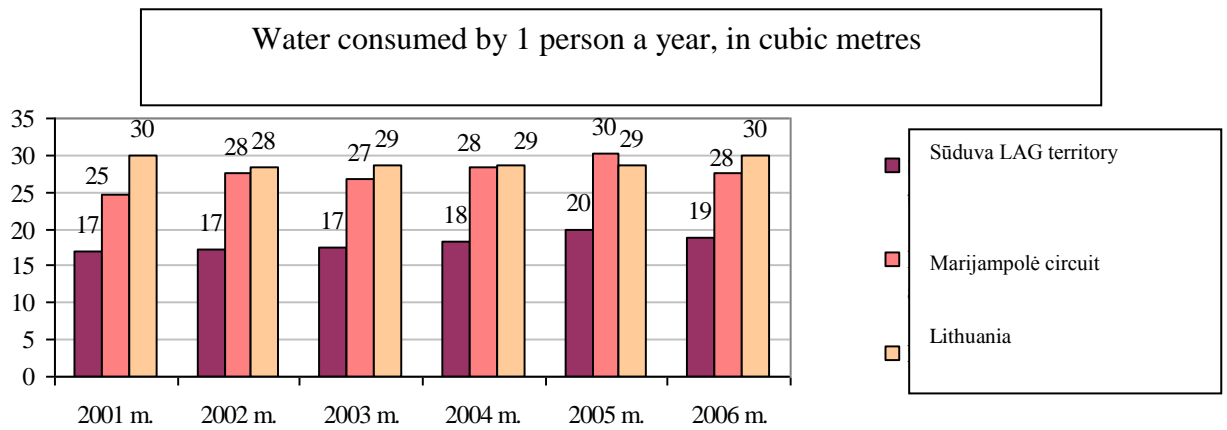
However, pre-school education network is much less developed in Kazlų Rūda municipality than in the state or the circuit. In recent years only 15 percent of pre-school children (0-7 years) were provided with kindergartens.

There is only 1 nursery-kindergarten in the territory; it is in Kazlų Rūda city. Antanavas village community has its own child's day centre operating just like Sasnava Township. Formation of pre-school education institutions in other elderships of the territory would resolve many problems: young mothers would be able to work and new jobs would have been created, etc.

### 2.6.3. Communal Economy and Accommodation

Within the medium-long period about 276 thousand m<sup>3</sup> of water is consumed annually for economic and household needs in Sūduva LAG territory. This need has been growing in recent years: in 2006 to compare with 2004 it increased in almost 14 percent. One person consumes less water a year than average consumption in the state and the circuit (Fig. 2.18).

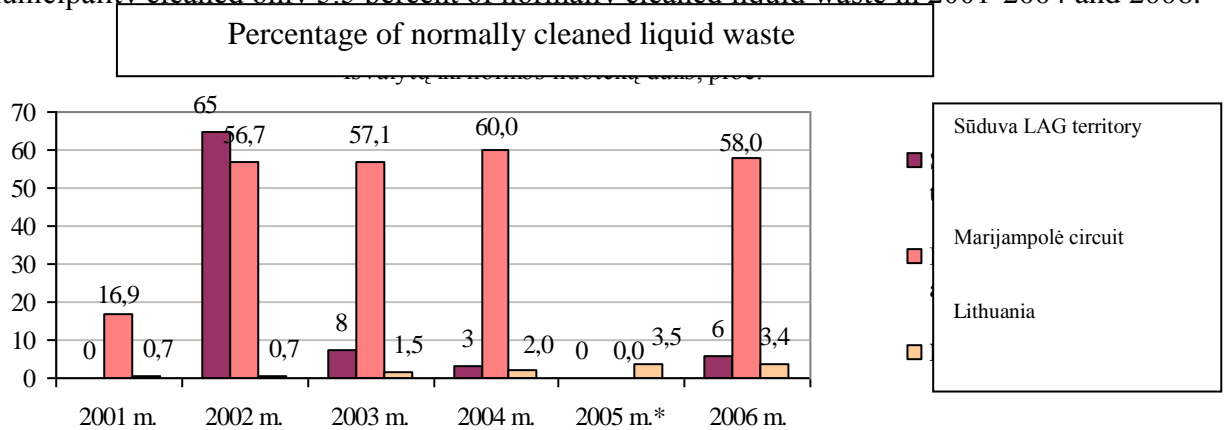
<sup>6</sup> Data of Kaunas Territorial Board of Statistics, 2005



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.18 Water consumption for economical and household needs**

Liquid waste cleaning condition in Kazlų Rūda municipality is poor (see Fig. 2.19). Contrarily to Marijampolė circuit, where major part of drained liquid waste is cleaned up to the norm, Kazlų Rūda municipality cleaned only 5.5 percent of normally cleaned liquid waste in 2001-2004 and 2006.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

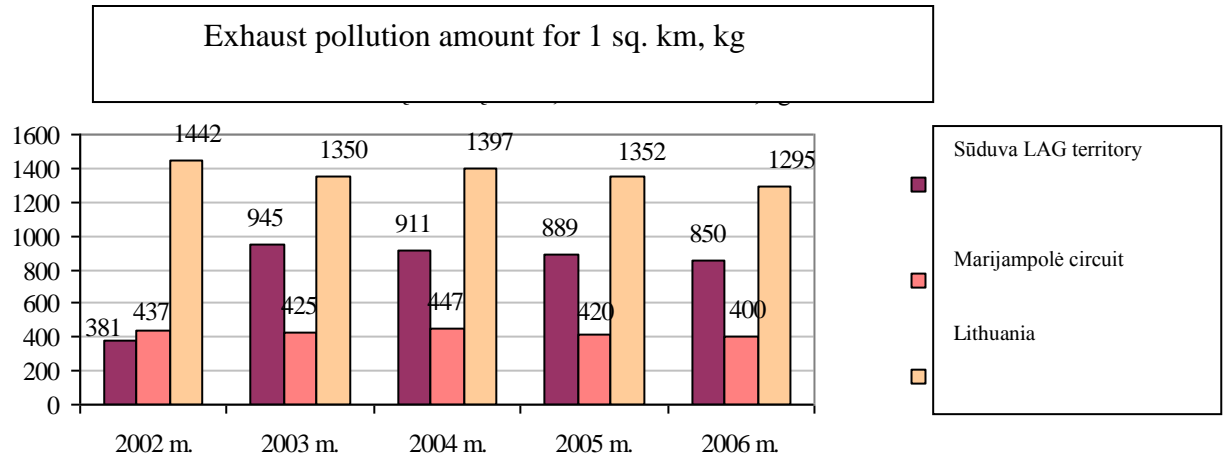
Note: \*Data on drained liquid waste was not delivered in 2005

**Figure 2.19 Normally cleaned share of drained liquid waste**

It must be noted that quite a big part of people residing in the territory cannot use water supply and canalization systems. Only 53 percent of residents use centralized water supply services, while the percentage of canalization users is even smaller. Water supply and canalization system mounting or repair works are necessary in many rural areas of the territory. Residents bring forward poor drinking water quality problems.

60.2 percent of respondents mentioned improvement of communal services, building maintenance and road repairs as the main problems.

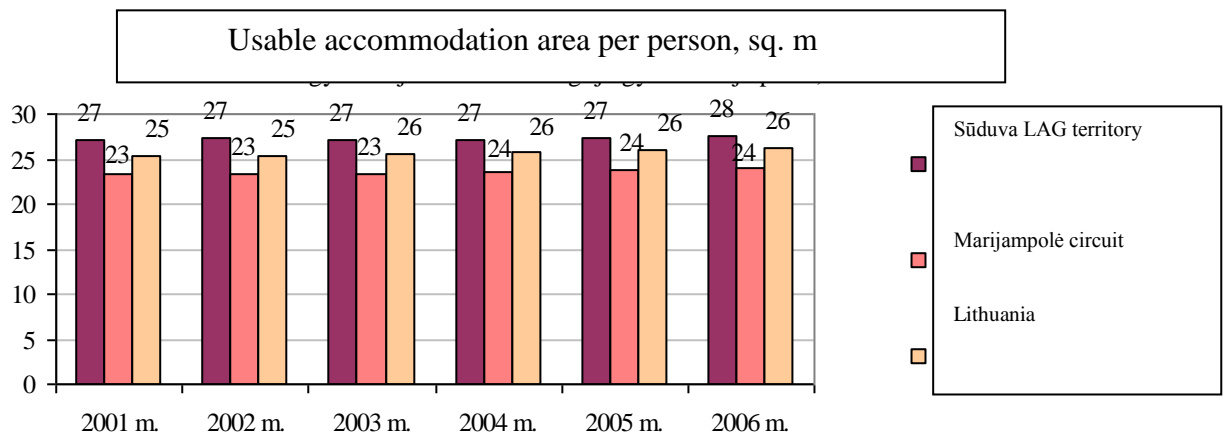
Exhaust pollution amount in one sq. m. of the LAG territory is twice as big as in the circuit but 35 percent smaller than in the state. Thus, exhaust pollution amount is decreasing gradually: from 2003 to 2006 it decreased in 9 percent (from 35.3 t in 2003 to 32.1 t in 2006). Container based hard waste collection system is being implemented in townships and villages of Sūduva LAG. Residents are asked to sort such waste.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.20 Pollution amounts**

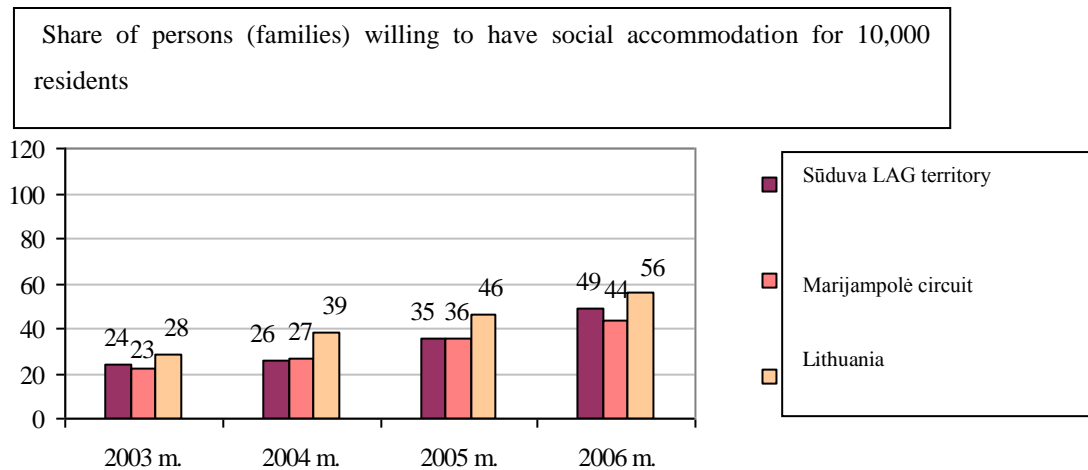
Accommodations occupy over 200 thousand m<sup>2</sup> in rural areas of Sūduva LAG. It has changed insignificantly in a medium-term period (decreased in 0.1 percent). Village people of Kazlų Rūda municipality are slightly better provided with accommodations than in Marijampolė circuit (Fig. 2.21).



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.21 Accommodation in rural areas**

Need for social accommodation is rising annually in Sūduva LAG territory. Within the last four years number of persons (families) entered in the lists for providing with a social accommodation has almost doubled; 3 additional young families expressed their will to receive a social accommodation. In recent years need for social accommodation here has been 14 percent lower than the state level and 11 percent higher than the one in Marijampolė circuit (see Fig. 2.22).



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

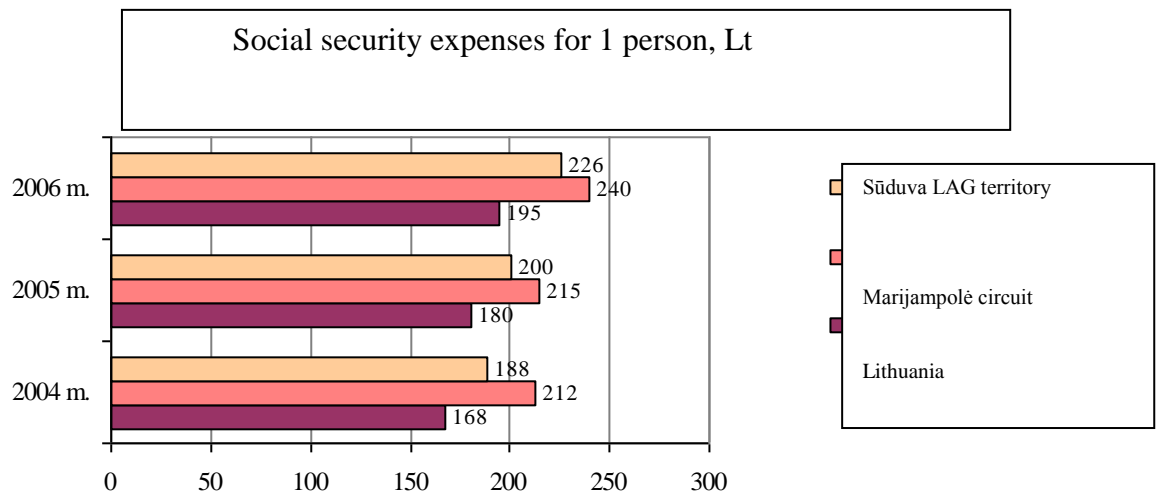
**Figure 2.22 Need for social accommodation**

82.9 percent of respondents saw condition and aesthetical view of residential buildings as average. However, evaluation of change tendency of this element is more important. Half of the respondents (50.5 percent) noted that the condition is improving. The tendency is of particular importance in regards of the planned Village renewal and development instrument, which is partially meant to create aesthetical welfare of rural areas.

Another important direction is public spaces, rest and recreation areas and their condition. Considering people's needs village communities mentioned necessity to trim sports squares, rest areas and water recreation areas. This would resolve aesthetical view, free time spending, children and youth occupation and similar problems.

#### 2.6.4. Social Security and Social Services

In recent years social security system of Kazlų Rūda municipality has been financed poorer than at the state or circuit level. Moreover, the gap hardly changes (see Figure 2.23). Within the last years expenses for social security have grow much slower (approx. 7 percent a year) than, for example, municipal expenses for public order and society protection (almost 15 percent a year).

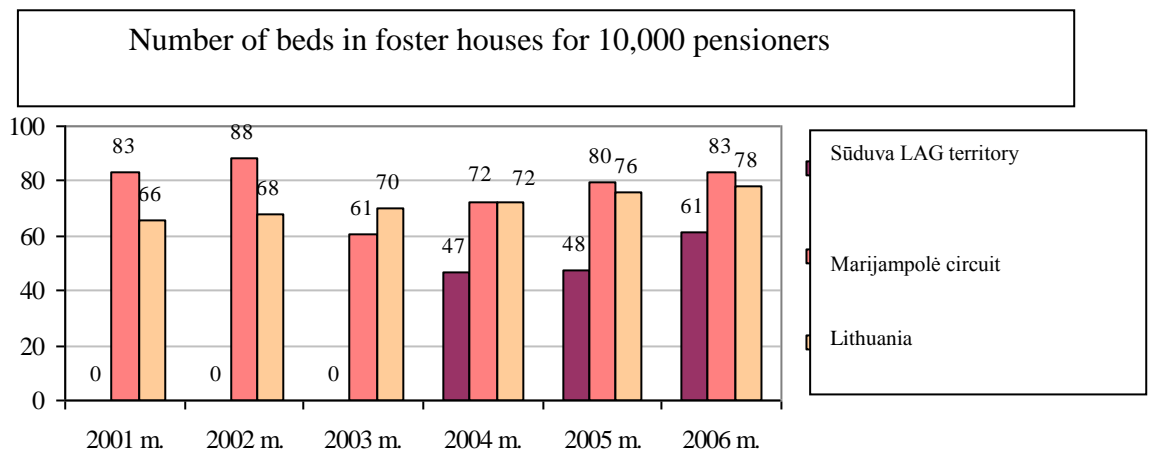


Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.23 Municipality expenses for social security**

1 elderly people fostering institution operates in Sūduva LAG territory; number of beds in it has not changed in the last medium-long term (19 beds) and all beds have been reserved. There are no children's foster houses in Sūduva LAG territory.

Stationary elderly people care network is poorer developed than in the circuit or state (see Fig. 2.24). In recent years 10 thousand pensioners have had approx. 34 percent less beds in foster houses than the mean state level and 32 percent less than the level in Marijampolė circuit.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.24 Elderly people foster house network**

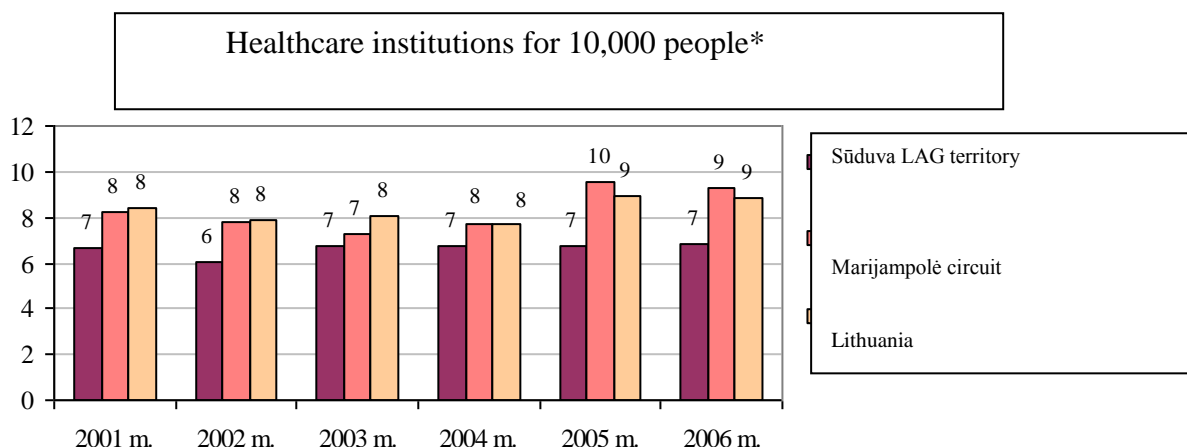
Previously (before the year 2004) quickly growing home care services to elderly people, disabled adults and disabled children have fallen down almost twice in 2005-2006. Number of fostered and cared people decreased from 233 in 2004 to 50 in 2006.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics.

### 2.6.5. Healthcare

20 healthcare institutions work in Sūduva LAG territory: 16 in Kazlų Rūda municipality and 4 in Sasnava eldership. 11 of them belong to Healthcare Ministry and 9 are private. Among institutions appurtenant to Healthcare Ministry there is 1 hospital, 3 ambulances and 7 medical stations. 7 healthcare institutions and 2 odontology firms belong to private sector. Within the last medium-long term number of private medical institutions has grown 2001-2006, while number of hospitals appurtenant to the Healthcare Ministry has not changed. There are 6 chemist's shops in the territory. Pharmacy network (2.2 pharmacists for 10 thousand people) here is less developed than in the circuit (3.8 pharmacists for 10 thousand people) and significantly worse than at the state level (6.5 pharmacists for 10 thousand people)<sup>8</sup>.

Healthcare institutions network in the LAG territory has been developed poorer than in the state or in Marijampolė circuit (see Figure 2.25). Within the last medium-long period number of healthcare institutions for 10 thousand people was 20 percent lower than average at the state or circuit level.



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

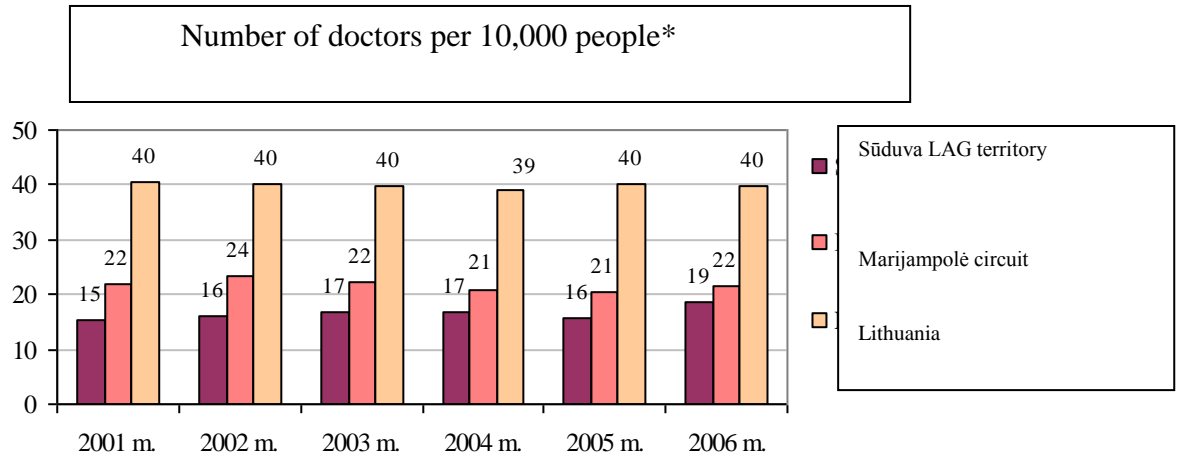
Note: \*including public and private hospitals, ambulances, clinics and odontologists.

**Figure 2.25 Network of healthcare institutions**

Moreover, supply of doctors is noticeably worse in the territory (see Figure 2.26). Within the last medium-long period number of doctors for 10 thousand people was 60 percent smaller than at the state level and 24 percent smaller than in Marijampolė circuit. On the other hand the gap decreased recently.

<sup>8</sup> Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics.

Within the last medium-long term average annual number of person's visits to clinics and hospitals (approx. 5.2 visits) is 20 percent lower than at the state level (approx. 6.4 visits) and equals to Marijampolė circuit level (approx. 5.2 visits)<sup>9</sup>.

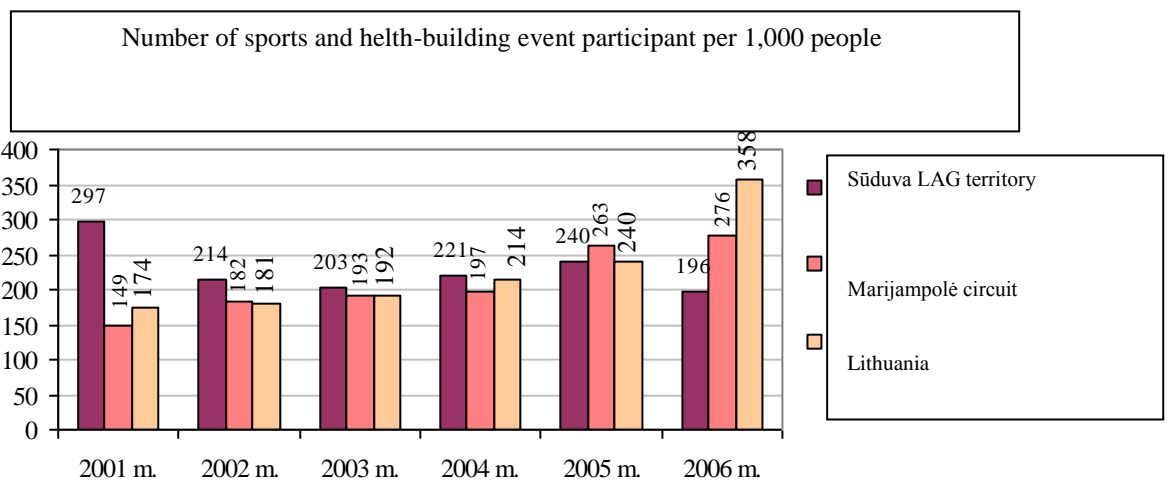


Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics  
 Note: \*these are doctor specialists (nurses and odontologists excluded).

**Figure 2.26 Provision with doctors** (nurses and odontologists excluded)

### 2.6.6. Sports Organizations and Their Activity

Residents of the territory take quite active part in sports competitions and other types of health-building events (see Figure 2.27). Within a medium-long period number of participants of various sports and health-building events per thousand people was 9 percent bigger than in Marijampolė circuit and equalled average state level. However, people's participation activity decreased (2001-2006 it decreased in approx. 33 percent).



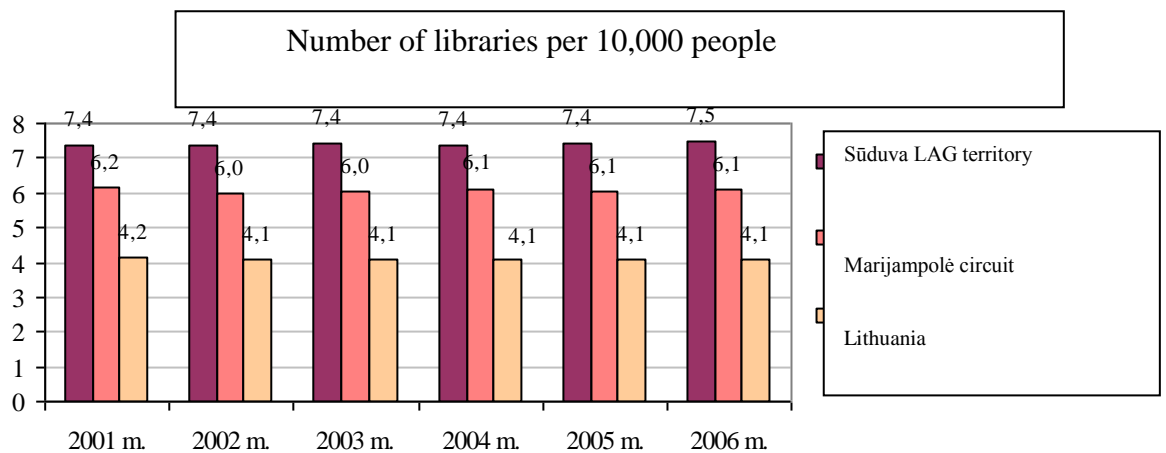
Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

<sup>9</sup> Apskaičiuota pagal Lietuvos statistikos departamento duomenis.

**Figure 2.27 People’s participation in sports competitions and health-building events**

**2.6.7. Culture**

There are 16 libraries in Sūduva LAG territory: 11 in Kazlų Rūda municipality and 5 in Sasnava eldership. Ten thousand people in the territory have approx. 7.5 libraries. Here the network is better developed than in Marijampolė circuit, where 10 thousand residents have approx. 6 libraries and in the state, where 10 thousand people share approx. 4 libraries (see Figure 2.28).



Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

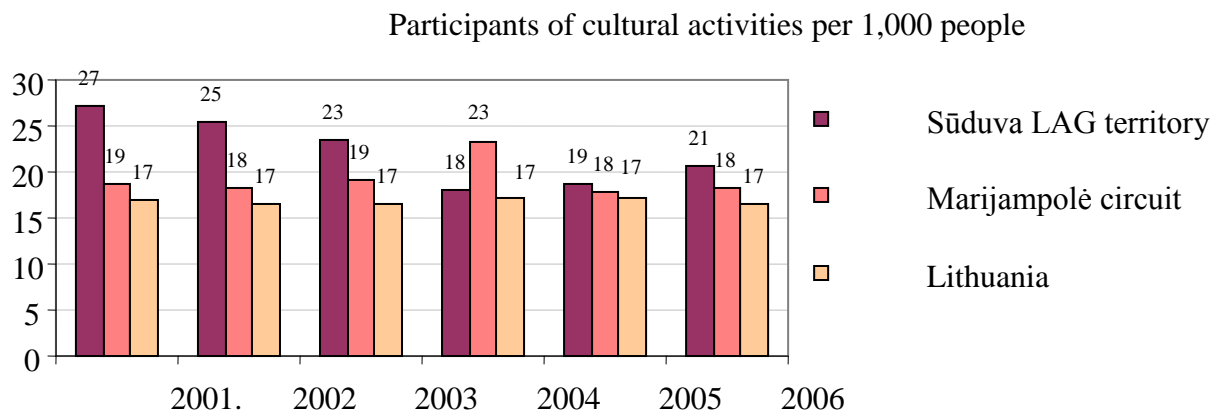
**Figure 2.28 Network of libraries**

Residents of the LAG territory use library funds similar to Marijampolė circuit people or residents of the state: within the medium-long period one person took approximately 9.4 documents. Moreover, people tend to use books and other documents gathered in libraries more actively. Within the medium-long period number of documents given to one person has increased in 6 percent

There are 7 culture centres and 27 amateur artist bands in Kazlų Rūda municipality. Number of the latter in 2001-2006 has decreased in 24 percent. There are 3 leisure-time halls, barn theatre, mixed vocal band, children and youth theatre and country music band in Sasnava eldership.

Before 2006 residents of Sūduva LAG territory took more active part in activities of culture and leisure centres (see Figure 2.29). Before 2004 number of participants was decreasing, but from 2005 it began growing again. However, in 2006 number of participants has not achieved the level of 2001 yet.





Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.29 Participants of cultural activities**

Culture centre and its territorial branches organize many traditional and other cultural events in Sūduva LAG territory. They arrange public celebrations, concerts and youth discos. Village communities also organize various events.

Local amateurs give concerts, craftspeople and folk artists participate in markets during celebrations. Folk artists nourish many old crafts. Symposiums are often organized in the area; local folk artists and visitors participate in them. Therefore, Kazlų Rūda surroundings are so rich with wooden chapels and wooden monuments to memorize famous people.<sup>10</sup> Sasnava eldership can also be proud of its wooden monuments, especially in Tautkaičiai barn theatre territory.

Marijampolė parachutes club competitions and aviation events happen in the airport of Sasnava eldership from May to September. Tautkaičiai barn theatre organizes annual events of village theatres.

Folk artists and craftspeople make Kazlų Rūda municipality famous. Sasnava eldership also has such people. Spring and autumn feasts are organized, in which people from the territory and foreign visitors gather together. At present Kazlų Rūda municipality cooperates with Kaliningrad region, Poland and Germany. Sasnava eldership organizes cultural interchanges with Germany, Poland and Holland.

### 2.6.8. Village Communities and Their Activities

There are 17 village communities in Sūduva LAG territory. Their “age”, activities, energy and represented territories differ greatly. Some of them work in a particular village, other cover entire

<sup>10</sup> Source: [www.kontrastai.lt](http://www.kontrastai.lt)

elderships; some of them have been working for several years already, while others are still undergoing formation processes.

Most village communities of Sūduva LAG territory have their own premises. The only Antanavas community is the owner of such premises. 6 communities have made use agreements with Kazlų Rūda municipality, 2 (Sasnava and Gavaltuva communities) have made use agreements with Marijampolė municipality, Tautkaičiai community has a contract with Sasnava secondary school, 2 communities (Gudeliai and Bebruliškė) have made premises rent agreements with business entities. Another 2 communities (Plutiškės and Višakio Rūda) have made contracts with elderships of Vilkaviškis diocese. Kazliškiai community and Kazlų Rūda municipality have made a land use agreement and began constructions of community centre. Puskelniai village community applied to Marijampolė municipality for premises for community needs. Most of the communities (8) used funds from Public support to village communities and local activity groups and municipality funds (4 communities) to repair community centres; some of them decorated surroundings (5 communities) and the rest organized various events.

Kazlų Rūda municipality increasingly sponsors village communities. In 2004 the municipality support was 15,000 Litas, in 2005 – 45,000 Litas, in 2006 – 55,000 Litas and in 2007-2008 - 70,000 Litas. Municipality supports communities in many other ways: helps to prepare projects and rents lots and premises. To achieve closer cooperation Economic Development Department of the municipality has established a new office, chief specialist for work with communities, who consults organizations and helps to make projects. Marijampolė municipality also finances community projects. In 2006-2007 it gave 30,000 Litas to union of Marijampolė communities. Union members distributed such funds under the projects given by its communities. The funds have also been used to cover community establishment and registration expense. In 2008 Marijampolė municipality co financed Tautkaičiai (7,000.00 Litas) and Sasnava (7,500.00 Lt.) community projects implemented of funds from State support. In the same 2008 Marijampolė municipality gave Sasnava eldership 8,000 Litas (2,000 Litas to each community), use of which shall be determined by the communities themselves.

In 2006 Lithuanian village communities and local activity groups received 3 million Litas of state support. 7 communities of Kazlų Rūda municipality prepared their own projects value of which was 110,492.33 Litas. 6 organizations prepared qualitative projects, value of which was 79,835.87 Litas. In 2006 Sasnava elderships did not submit any projects, while in 2007 induced by Sūduva LAG they prepared two projects and received finance the value of which was 48,500 Litas. The funds have been used for repairs of community premises, furniture, computers, and other office equipment purchase, event organizing and publishing.

Association of Kazlų Rūda municipality communities was established in 2003 by initiative group of the communities. 12 communities with over 650 people were members of the association in early 2008. One of the basic goals of the association is to represent members' interests by constructive cooperation with local authorities, analysis and coordination of members' activity and provision of multipurpose assistance on community activity, management, project making and other issues. Since 2006 it is a board member of Lithuanian village community union.

Analogical association of Marijampolė municipality communities was established in 2005. Basic goals of the Association were to gather individual communities and educate their members. All communities of Sasnava eldership have entered the association.

Greatest attention is paid to education of civil and community spirit, village development and improvement of life conditions. On the initiative associations of Kazlų Rūda and Marijampolė communities annual community meetings are organized (the Harvest Feast in Kazlų Rūda and the Association Feast in Marijampolė municipality) and communities visit international events. Most active members of the association communities periodically have various trainings regarding finance accounting, document keeping, project sponsorship by state and other issues.

Community association publishes annual publication about community projects under implementation and prepares souvenirs to public organization activities in Lithuania and abroad. Association of Marijampolė municipality communities makes souvenirs too. Since 2006 unions of Kazlų Rūda and Marijampolė communities are members of Lithuanian community union. Together with the union they hunted experience in Ireland in 2007 and in Hungary and Slovakia in 2008.

Projects implemented by association of Kazlų Rūda municipality communities:

1. Baltic-American partnership program project “**Community consolidation in Suvalkija land**”, aim of which was to enforce effectiveness of community activities in Marijampolė circuit by spreading good practices.

2. Open Lithuanian Fund project “**Internet portal of association of Kazlų Rūda municipality communities**”, result of which the community website is recently developed into Sūduva local activity group website.

3. Baltic-American partnership program project „**Philanthropy development program – NGOs of Marijampolė circuit**”. Result of the project: prepared publication on village communities acting in Marijampolė circuit and Lithuanian philanthropy funds.

4. Lithuanian adult education and information centre project “**Kazlų Rūda municipality community association public spirit education program**”, aim of which was to arrange public spirit education seminars for the 11 village communities and consolidate abilities of their members to

take active part in public activities. Implementing the project a conference was called and a publication was prepared.

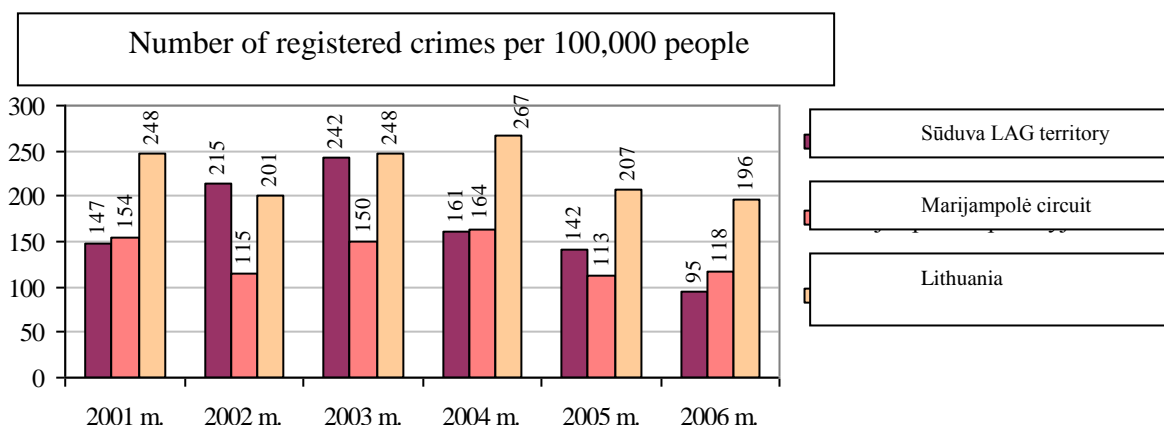
5. Open Lithuanian Fund project **“Study of philanthropic activity experience of German and Polish community organizations”** – traineeship and contact establishment in Poland and Germany.

6. In 2006: States’ support for the project **“Consolidation of material basis of Kazlų Rūda municipality community association”**. Funds of the projects were used to obtain multimedia equipment, laptop and camera.

7. In 2007: State’s support for the project **“Consolidation of Kazlų Rūda municipality communities association and conference organizing”**. The conference “Partnership between NGOs and local municipal authorities: present and perspectives” was organized under project guidelines; representatives of Kazlų Rūda, Vilkaviškis, Marijampolė, Jurbarkas, Prienai NGOs and local municipal authorities participated in the conference and a publication was issued too.

### 2.6.9. Public Safety

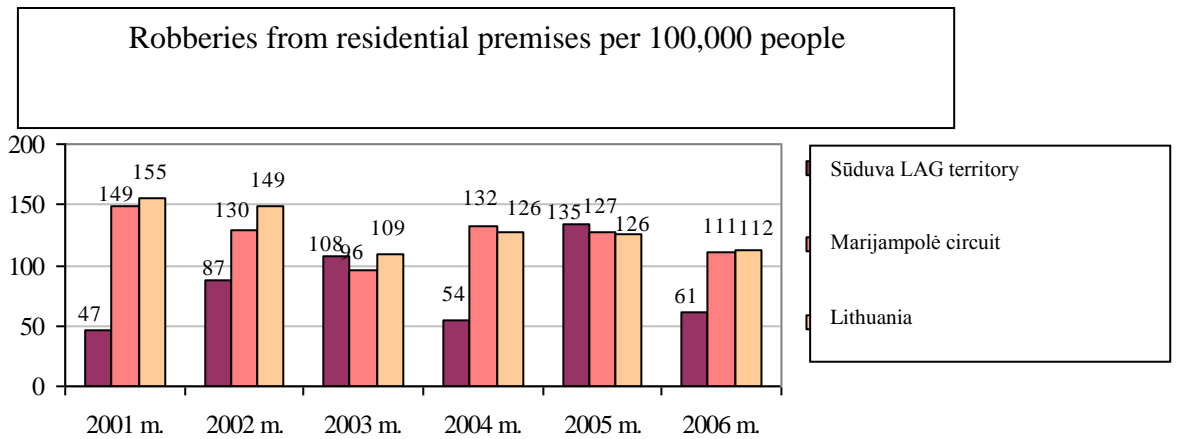
Average criminal situation under the registered types of crimes in LAG territory is significantly better than in the country or in Marijampolė circuit (see Figure 2.30). There were 40 percent less registered crimes per ten thousand people if compared to the state and 20 percent less than in the circuit. Moreover, within the last medium-long period number of crimes in the region has decreased in 31 percent



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.30 Registered crimes**

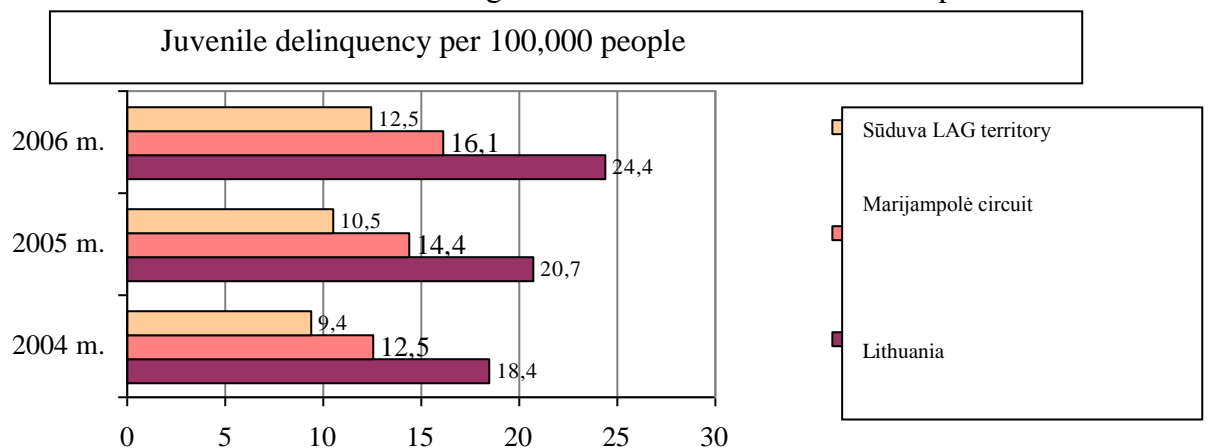
Within the last medium-long period people were safer at home. Number of robberies from residential premises in Kazlų Rūda municipality per 10 thousand people Kazlų Rūdos was much smaller (about 30 percent) than at the state level and approx. 20 percent higher than in Marijampolė circuit (see Figure 2.31). In 2001–2006 total number of registered robberies from residential buildings has decreased in 25 percent



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.31 Registered robberies from residential premises**

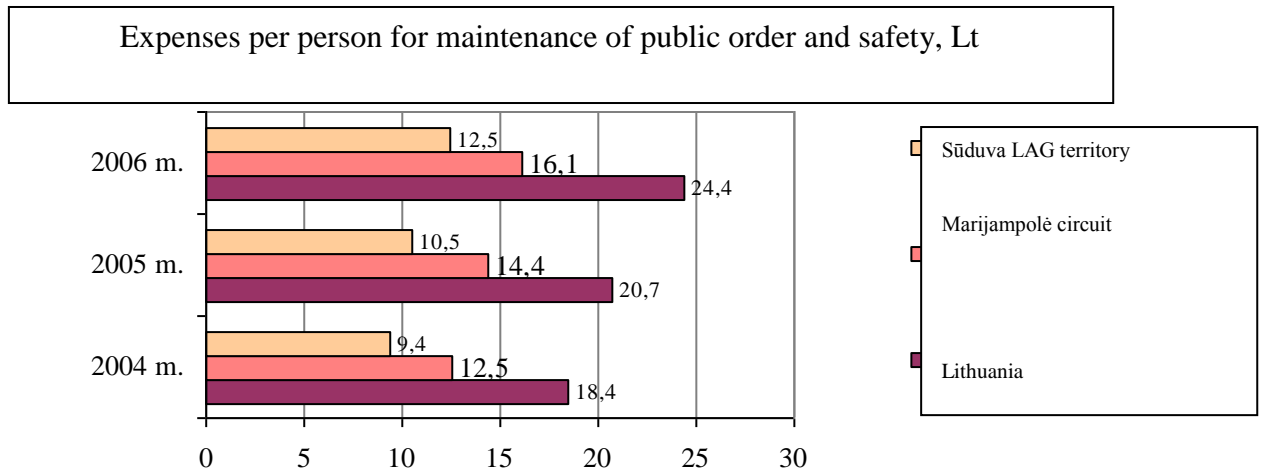
Within the last three years juvenile delinquency in Sūduva LAG territory has varied. In 2006 the problem was half troublesome than at the state or circuit level. In 2001-2002 level of juvenile delinquency was much lower than at the state and circuit level (see Figure 2.32). However, in 2003 and 2005 numbers almost reached state's average and exceeded circuit level in 10 percent.



Source: Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.32 Juvenile delinquency**

To support public order and safety municipalities spared much more funds (see Figure 2.33). Within the last three years municipality funds per person to finance the said function exceeded the state level two times and the circuit level 1.5 times. This was one of the main presumptions of lower criminal level.



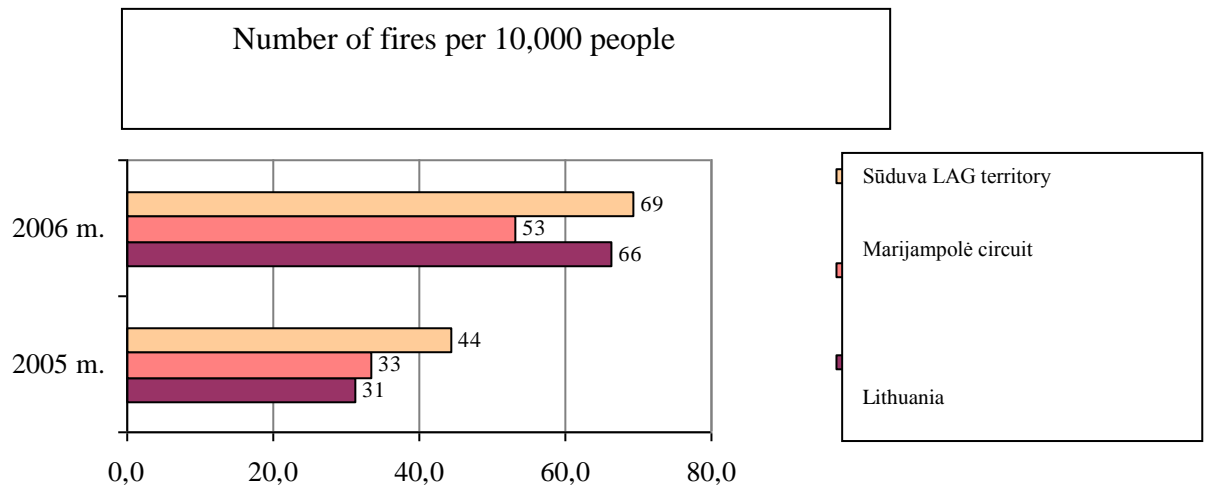
Source: Calculated under the data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics

**Figure 2.33 Municipality expense for maintenance of public order and safety**

However, Kazlų Rūda municipality has less police people. In 2006 the level was 21 police officers per 10,000 people and this was 15 percent less than in Marijampolė circuit and 35 percent less than average state level<sup>11</sup>.

Fires are dangerous to safety of residents and their property. There were 99 fires in the territory in 2006. If compared with 2005 number of fires grew in 46.5 percent. 1 person died in fire. Under number of fires per 10 thousand people in 2006 Sūduva LAG territory far exceeded average level in the circuit and almost equalled to the state level (see Figure 2.34).

<sup>11</sup> Data available at Lithuanian Department of Statistics.



Source: Data available at Fire Safety and Salvage Department under the Ministry of Interior of the LR

**Figure 2.34 Fires**

Main reasons of fires are incautious behaviour with fire, irregular power installation, violation of domestic appliances exploitation rules, grass burning, use of irregular stoves and chimneys, unsafe smoking and children's play with fire<sup>12</sup>. Such quick growth in number of fires is bothering and makes us think of possible preventive means.

Arrangement of water basins in settlements can expand recreation possibilities and facilitate work of fire-fighting brigades in case of fire. Greater damages caused by fire are often related to poor possibilities to find a water basin suitable for fire-fighting.

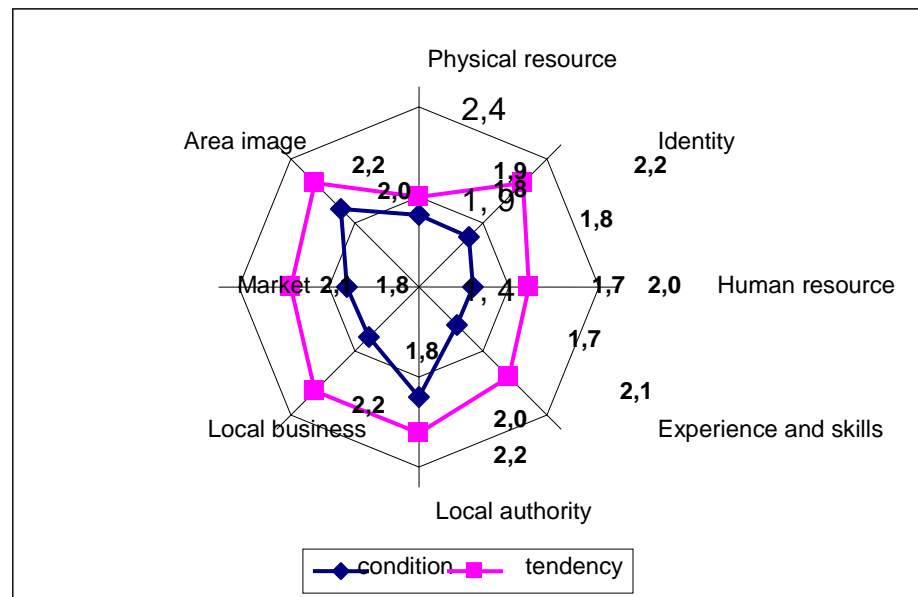
## 2.7. Territory Condition and Development Tendencies Evaluation by Locals

Following methodology of the LEADER program, survey questionnaire asked respondents to evaluate territorial capital of the region, which comprises of 8 components: resources created by nature and man (physical); collective spirit and identity of local residents; human resource; professional experience and skills of local residents; activity of local institutions and authorities; business companies and their activity; goods, services and labour market; land image.

Respondents expressed their opinions on value of territorial capital components under 9-10 parameters of present situation with each parameter. Parameter condition was evaluated under the following scale: 1 point – poor condition; 2 – average; 3 – good. Condition tendencies: 1 point – worsening; 2 – neutral; 3 – improving.

Overall view of territorial capital components and tendencies is illustrated in figure 2.35.

<sup>12</sup> Priešgaisrinės apsaugos ir gelbėjimo departamento prie LR VRM statistika



**Figure 2.35 General condition and change tendency of territorial resource**

Territory capital profiles became clearer, when respondents evaluated elements forming one or another component of territorial capital. **Six** basic types of element condition and change tendency can be conditionally extinguished; development tendencies can be most evident revealed by the four development profiles:

1. **Achievement area.** (Element condition evaluated “Good”, element change tendency “Neutral” or “Improving”);
2. **Stagnancy area.** (Element condition evaluated “Average”, element change tendency “Worsening”);
3. **Crisis area.** (Element condition evaluated “Bad”, element change tendency “Neutral” or “Worsening”);
4. **Hope area.** (Element condition evaluated “Bad”, element change tendency “Improving”).

To prevent territorial capital element evaluation errors possibly caused by lack of knowledge, extremely personal position, hasty answering or other reasons, it is rational to spare more attention to “Achievement” and “Crisis” areas. This was considered preparing list of strategic priorities and instruments.

**ACHIEVEMENT area** shows strengths of the territory, which may be exploited to resolve regional problems successfully.

**CRISIS area** shows the most dreadful elements, i.e., the ones condition of which is poorer than average and continues worsening. Such condition of elements informs of crisis taking up



particular areas of life or reveals massive dissatisfaction of respondents with present situation and development tendencies.

**Table 2.1 Achievement and Crisis areas of Sūduva LAG territory capital**

Territory capital components	Achievements area	Crisis area
<b>1. Resource created by nature and man</b>	Unique and varied natural resource; Abundance and condition of woods and other plants;	Abundance and condition of water basins; Sanitary conditions in townships and villages; Squares, parks, playgrounds, sports grounds and other public areas; Roads, streets and sidewalks;
<b>2. Collective spirit and identity of local residents</b>	–	–
<b>3. Human resource</b>	–	Local entrenchment of young families and specialists
<b>4. Professional experience and skills of local residents</b>	General professional preparation of local people	Preservation of dying professional knowledge;
<b>5. Activity of local institutions and authorities</b>	Municipality council activity; Activity of municipality officers and specialists; Eldership heads' activity;	–
<b>6. Business companies and their activity</b>	–	–
<b>7. Goods, services and labour market</b>	Ability to buy and sell premises, land or other real estate;	Payable services to locals.
<b>8. Land image and efforts to nourish it</b>	Being proud of the land by locals; Knowledge of the land by locals; Tourist and other visitor attitudes towards the land and its people; Natural monuments and landscapes.	–

## **2.8. Analysis of Needs of Sūduva LAG Territory Rural Development Participants**

The strategy has been consistently prepared since April 2007. To analyze needs meetings with residents have been organized; village communities and elderships have fulfilled their tasks; questionnaire survey of locals has been carried out.

*Meetings with residents.* Before beginning to prepare development strategy LAG divided the territory to three provisory parts and invited local residents and their organizations to participate in meetings to present local activity group once again, explain its purposes and discuss local topicalities. Participants have been informed that LAG was preparing the Strategy and is willing to discuss

peculiarities of the process and role of local people. LAG also invited people willing and full of ideas to join its activity.

Separate meetings with target groups of youth and ladies have been organized. Before the meetings focus group interview questionnaires have been prepared, under which a discussion was carried out in the meetings. Participants of target groups have been selected in the way to identify problems and needs of those target groups.

**Tasks for village communities.** Three tasks have been given in meetings with communities and residents for communities and elderships to fulfil. This was a real help in preparing the Strategy, ascertaining particular problems of a locality and interests and needs of local people and local development activists.

1. To describe eldership organizations and their interests according to the table below:

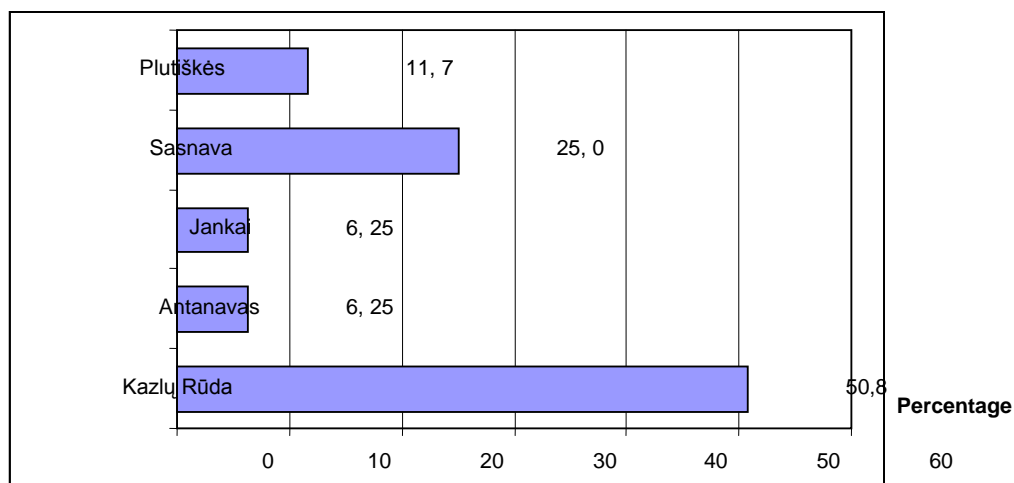
<b>Interested party</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Effect</b> (Positive, Negative, Neutral)	<b>Effect strength</b> (5 strongest – 0 weakest)	<b>Instrument plan</b> (how to consolidate/reduce the said effect – possible actions)

Such information helped to evaluate subjects acting in rural areas, level of cooperation between them and need to strengthen it, and evaluate actual possibilities of organizations to contribute to local development by implementing the Strategy.

2. To carry out the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. Results of the task have been used for preparing general SWOT analysis of the LAG territory by a team formed by LAG.

3. The most active communities wrote essays on the topic “Settlements (e.g., Smilgiai) – present and perspectives”. The essays helped LAG to know peculiarities of local life better, understand problems found by local people and feel their hopes to improve life in each locality. Third task directed LAG in choosing and intending strategic priorities and instruments and helped to follow needs of local residents.

**Questionnaire survey.** It was carried out to analyse needs, opinions and evaluations of village people. Our consultants helped to prepare the questionnaire to question people of all elderships of the LAG territory (see Figure 2.36) and consider population of each eldership.



**Figure 2.36 Distribution of respondents according to elderships**

More than 180 questionnaires have been delivered. LAG refused the idea of continuous survey, since board members ensured possibility to use municipality information gathered before preparation of municipality strategic planning documents.

Respondents told the most relevant problems (open question) they encounter in their place of residence. Even 60 percent of respondents told the main problems were improvement of communal services, maintenance of public buildings and improvement of road condition. Second most important problems such as social diversion, poverty and social disjuncture were mentioned by mere 6.5 percent of respondents. Other problems mentioned include: employment, social services, people's activating, demographical problems, etc.

Youth problems were discussed during the meetings with youth representatives. One of the most relevant problems was lack of occupation. In case of lack of purposeful ways to spend free time negative social phenomena spread among young people: alcoholism, crimes and violence. Lack of leaders is peculiar to both village communities and youth organizations. The very youth is not much active; therefore, voluntary involvement in public activities is slow. Young people usually need invitation, inspiration or suggestion to do something useful together. The youth often feel lack of information on existing possibilities of action.

Youth representatives expressed their wishes and offers. Many young people missed possibilities to engage in active sports. There are no suitable conditions for that: outdoor stadiums are messy and there is a lack of gymnasiums. Young people would like to cooperate with various organizations matching their interests as well as to prepare and implement common projects. They are interested in various excursions and seminars on relevant topics.

Meeting with ladies LAG representatives discussed questions relevant to them. Just like in common meetings the main problem was employment of village women. Women mentioned possibilities to provide various household and social services in villages. This would create jobs for women and satisfy need for such services. Men's alcoholism and violence in families were other problems relevant to women.

Women stated noticing positive changes in their lives: beautifying environment intensifying activity of village communities. Community activities were seen as actual possibility for self-expression and occupation. Women consider intense participation in community activities as one of the ways to improve quality of village life.

LAG survey was also meant to know opinion of local residents of the use of EU support. Therefore, the question on development priorities was included. 23 basic areas of activity were enumerated in the question. People could give priorities to any of them, which, according to people, needs development supported by the EU funds most. Each area was evaluated in points from 1 to 5, where 1 – support is the least necessary and 5 – support is vitally necessary. The following priority areas of activity were selected (average evaluation is given in brackets):

1. Communal services (water supply, canalization, heating, etc.) development (4,7);
2. Water basins cleaning and rest place equipment (4,6);
3. Cultural event, community celebration, sports and leisure organizing (4,5);
4. Schoolchildren and youth occupation improvement (4,5);
5. Premises furnishing for community needs (4,4);
6. Public area (squares, parks, sports stadiums) cleaning (4,4);
7. Community and other NGO activity promotion (4,4);
8. Healthy way of living promotion (4,3);
9. Business, including crafts, development in villages (4,2);
10. People's and their assets security ensuring (4,1);
11. Environmental care instrument promotion (4, 1).

Considering the fact that there are lots of attention and investment requiring areas in villages, local residents were asked to select three priorities most worth to receive the EU support. Priorities were ranked in the following way:

1. Communal services (water supply, canalization, heating, etc.) development;
2. Business, including crafts, development in villages;
3. Schoolchildren and youth occupation improvement;

It must be noted that priority number 1 highly distinguishes from others and its importance twice exceeds importance of priority number 2.

Irrespective of so much varied evaluations of present condition and perspectives of the territory people of Sūduva land are true optimists. Even 92.8 percent of respondents believe their life is going to improve in future, while mere 7.2 percent think opposite.

Considering recommendation for the LEADER method, local residents were asked to share opinions of the existing situation and actual instruments to improve life quality in the place they live. Irrespective of the fact that quite numerous suggestions impossible to be implemented by local residents or local authorities (such as “supplant army of bureaucrats to make it easier to work”), some residents gave really rational offers. Almost every third respondent mentioned improvement of communal services and road condition. 23 percent of people think the life would turn better, if their revenue had grown. Almost 11 percent of respondents believe they can resolve most problems with the active help of local people.

Needs expressed by local residents helped the local activity group to form more detailed view of actual situation in the territory. Situation and needs analysis was finished with SWOT analysis, which underlines basic aspects most relevant to planning future of the territory.

Following results of situation analysis LAG has elaborated priorities and instruments and evaluated their relevance and possible effects in solving relevant problems and creating new development possibilities.

### III. SWOT ANALYSIS OF SŪDUVA LAG TERRITORY

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
1. Favourable geographical position, comfortable communications (via Baltica highway and railroad Rail Baltic Vilnius – Karaliaučius, Sankt Peterburgas – Varšuva cross the territory of Sūduva LAG).	1. Present tourism resources are not prepared for visitors (bicycle tracks do not comply with requirements, water basins are not adjusted to water tracks, coasts are not in order, no access roads, no directions and no information on how to reach various places of interest).
2. Wooded lands make more than half of the territory (forests suitable for commercial bird hunting, recreation, rest and other ways of spending free time).	2. Lack of service companies does not guarantee supply of entertainment and services necessary for tourism development.
3. Even network of village communities in all elderships of the LAG territory facilitates unified resolution of problems and quick exchange of information.	3. Village people cannot organize qualitative events and read desirable literature due to the poor material basis of culture houses and libraries.
4. Second largest Lithuanian city Kaunas (37 km) and average size city Marijampolė (20 km) are not far from the territory; residents of the cities could be potential visitors/tourists.	4. Lack of occupation centres for children and youth does not ensure youth socialization processes.
5. There are ecological farms (milk, herb, vegetable), three agriculture partnerships (Sasnava, Smilgiai, Tautkaičiai). Their activity enables possibilities to develop ecological farming successfully.	5. Most people encounter drinking water quality problems. This is caused by insufficient reach of water supply system and its condition. Canalization system is in analogous situation.
6. Old crafts are being revived (smithery, slip cutting, pottery).	6. It is difficult to attract EU and other foreign and national funds due to lack of project preparation, administration and implementation skills.
7. Gas piping crosses Sūduva LAG territory and enables each resident to use modern source of fuel.	7. Poor condition of road infrastructure aggravates tourists and visitors access to places of interest.
8. Cooperation with Dutch and German communities and charity fund facilitates successful international cooperation and foreign investment attraction to Sūduva LAG territory.	8. Outdated melioration system disturbs living environment in villages and seasonal floods cause repetitive material damages.
9. Thanks to large industrial companies in Marijampolė and Kazlų Rūda municipalities, unemployment in Sūduva LAG territory is quite low.	9. There is a lack of duly prepared recreation sites to enables tourist/visitors rest in nature nearby tourist attraction objects.
10. There are lots of usable tourist attraction (Sasnava airport; Tautkaičiai barn theatre) and cultural heritage objects (Antanavas chapel, oldest wooden Lithuanian church in Višakio Rūda, Sasnava church and eldership house, A. Gustaitis' home in Obelinė, Nendriniai tombs; war heritage objects – Public company “Judrės parkas”).	10. Most of cultural heritage objects are of local importance. There are no possibilities to expose regional studies material and other ethnographical exhibits.

	<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
1.	<p><b>P (Political)</b> Consolidated regional policy will promote and facilitate positive presumptions to exploit unique resource of LAG territory development effectively and Schengen agreement shall open doors for direct cooperation with neighbouring regions.</p>	<p><b>P (Political)</b> Difficult rural area development policy implemented by the EU requiring to realize the Leader method and support to initiative from bottom to top principle may become irresolvable task for state and local politicians and leaders.</p>
2.	<p><b>E (Economic)</b> Euro integration process will make positive effects on local economy development, since competitive farms and business companies of the territory will be able to receive support for implementation of environmental instruments, decrease of technological lag and increase of economical effectiveness. Open European markets will induce local farmers to cooperate their activities and actively join international labour sharing.</p>	<p><b>E (Economic)</b> Openness to global economic tendencies constantly increases instability and vulnerability of local economy. Quick growing manufacturing materials prices and labour force competition will decrease strengths of local economical subjects. Limited competitive possibilities and lack of qualified employees may restrict development of local economy and make negative effects on other village functions.</p>
3.	<p><b>S (Social)</b> Increasing attention of national policy to social aspects of village development and investment of EU funds in development of social relations, solidarity, human relations and development of professional experience and skills will allow actual decrease of vulnerability of village social groups and fight social passiveness of village people.</p>	<p><b>S (Social)</b> Uneven development of regions and international competition of labour force may cause mass migration of employable and active village people (especially young ones) and disturb vitality of villages. Decrease of village social resource and relative increase of “unnecessary” residents (long-term unemployed, addicts, etc.) may split local communities even more and induce undesirable effects.</p>
4.	<p><b>T (Technological)</b> Progress of communication technologies and spread of broadband internet connections in villages (RAIN project) will decrease geographical distance of settlements and form better presumptions for economic activity and community spirit strengthening.</p>	<p><b>T (Technological)</b> Agriculture product, foodstuffs and energetic plant price growth tendency in world markets may increase interest of local farmers to apply industrial agricultural production methods and pay less attention to ecological farming possibilities and protection of biodiversity in their fields.</p>
5.	<p><b>L (Legal)</b> Cohesive development priority established in the programming documents of the EU and national development (including rural area development), environment and social security legal acts will facilitate balanced</p>	<p><b>L (Legal)</b> Strict sanitary, work safety and other requirements for businesses and insignificant rights of entrepreneur punishing institutions to modify requirements having evaluated particular situation may decrease farmers’</p>

	development and become a barrier for selfish actions and/or interest groups misuse of their position.	and other village people's motivation to engage in other than agricultural activity.
6.	<b>E (Environmental)</b> Growing cultural prudence of Lithuanian people and consciousness in environment control area, developing tourism sector and increasing demand of ecological production will promote development of cultural, recreational, environmental and other functions of modern village, reveal true value of local cultural and natural resource and strengthen their determination to protect unique local resources.	<b>E (Environmental)</b> Kazlų Rūda city development and industrialization of rural areas may distort the most beautiful places of landscape and violate ecological stability of villages. Global climate changes require increasing attention and such changes may be negative to local economy and nature.
7.	<b>Eq (Equality)</b> Village community promotion and strengthening policy and decentralization of social services will facilitate increase of social solidarity of village people, reveal specific needs of unequally treated village people groups and induce search for ways to involve such persons in fully fledged life.	<b>Eq (Equality)</b> Technological advance of national economy, including latest information technologies, and overall progress of education, science and culture may form new social disjuncture barriers in villages. Moreover, prevailing tradition of society to treat village as a recipient of support may form a freeloader mentality in village people and this would prevent them from seeing and realizing specific advantages of rural area development.
8.	<b>E (Educational)</b> In the new programming period huge funds are meant to finance obtaining new professional knowledge and skills so necessary for village people. This will allow actual implementation of life-long learning principle and ensure spread of innovations, which is one of the basic development preconditions in knowledge society.	<b>E (Educational)</b> Difficult and inflexible professional qualification development system disregarding specific needs of village people may complicate spread of vital innovations and become an invincible barrier for life-long learning system.
9.	<b>M (Market)</b> Market shall become more and more global and its effects on local development will grow. From the point of view of local development the following global market change tendencies are the most important: constant growing fuel prices will increase renewable fuel production volumes and effectiveness, prices of agriculture products and foodstuffs will grow as well as consumers' need for "natural" products of good quality "regions" and unique handmade craft articles.	<b>M (Market)</b> Trade capital concentration and really quick modernization of the area at international and national levels shall raise extremely high requirements for local production on sale. Requirements to supply huge amounts of high quality products exactly under a timetable shall become common practice in all transactions. If local manufacturers fail to cooperate in time or create alternative regional marketing and sales systems, production channel monopolization shall cover sales of local products too and this will prevent development of local economy.



10.	<p><b>B (Business change)</b>  Business changes are usually caused by changing consumer behaviour and advance of modern technologies, therefore, being aware of increased consumers interest in specific regional rather than mass products and ability of modern technologies to produce small amounts economically efficiently, one may forecast that local businesses is going to push more and more unique products to the market and thereby ensure niche for such products as well as safe future perspective.</p>	<p><b>B (Business change)</b>  Development of local economy shall become increasingly related to and dependent on Kazlı Rūda city development, therefore, dominance of city business interests and solution of own problems at the expense of villages seems quite possible. E.g., Heavily pollutant factories may be increasingly moved to rural areas. From the point of view of long-term perspective, such local business development model may prevent from perspective development directions (recreation services, tourism, etc. and violate provisions of sustainable development.</p>
11.	<p><b>Et (Ethical)</b>  Quick society changes will induce natural reaction of village people to gather together and look for new bases of stability in life. This will cause further growth of village communities, patriotism and search for identity.</p>	<p><b>Et (Ethical)</b>  Heavy territory development impulses caused by external environment may disorganize community of the LAG territory to such extent that it may become incapable of public discussions and solution of long-term development problems: administration and constant fight between interest groups will replace public life.</p>
12.	<p><b>R (Regulations)</b>  Policies of EU and national finance provide to spare much funds to improve village life quality by concentrating financial support in renewal of villages. Implementation of the Leader method and other horizontal requirements will promote innovative, modern and balanced village development and reveal the true meaning of bottom to top initiatives.</p>	<p><b>R (Regulations)</b>  Rural area development support policies put strict administrative and partnership requirements and provide for increase of enterprise of village people as well as bottom to top initiatives. If the said requirements will not be met, wide circles of village people will not be able to involve in solution of village life quality improvement and this will have negative impact on decisions quality and the entire village development process.</p>

## **IV. SŪDUVA LAG TERRITORY DEVELOPMENT VISION, PRIORITIES, INSTRUMENTS AND ACTIVITY AREAS**

Strategic analysis of present LAG territory social and economic condition and future tendencies forms the basis for Sūduva LAG territory local development strategic vision, priorities, goals and implementation instruments to formulate.

### **4.1. Sūduva LAG Territory Vision**

#### *Sūduva LAG territory vision until 2020*

Sūduva land cares of each person's welfare, preserves natural wooded landscapes, nourishes traditions, forms community spirit and develops village businesses.

The territory vision formulated by LAG is the view of desirable future. It was important to reflect essential elements for territory development considering basic directions of the European Union and Lithuanian development policies. The vision reflects strengthening of human potential, environment protection and maintenance of land identity by nourishing its traditions.

### **4.2. Strategic Priorities and Instruments**

#### **Priority I. RURAL AREA INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT AND CRAFTS DEVELOPMENT PROMOTION**

**Goal.** To create attractive environment for living and working in rural areas with more attractive and modern villages; to improve quality of life.

**Intended effects.** Attractiveness of rural areas of the LAG territory to local people and to visitors shall increase. Available abundant local resource shall be used for sustainable development.

##### **Instrument 1.1. Village renewal and development**

**Goal.** To improve aesthetical view of villages in Sūduva LAG territory, to maintain and renew public infrastructure.

**Intended effects.** Having made investments in rural area infrastructure maintenance, local people shall have more possibilities to live fully-fledged life and engage in public activities. Public infrastructure maintenance projects shall improve life quality in rural areas.

##### **Instrument 1.2. Promotion of village tourism activity**

**Goal.** To increase attractiveness of village tourism services by developing local crafts in homesteads.

**Intended effects.** Village tourism homesteads of the territory shall give their visitors an opportunity to get acquainted with old crafts of the land; craft technologies shall be preserved and old craft traditions shall be revived.

## **Priority II. NOURISHMENT OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND FORMATION OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT**

**Goal.** To increase social competitiveness of the land by preserving its uniqueness and traditions.

**Intended effects.** Increased concentration and activity of local people shall form presumptions for strengthening relations with the land. This will induce more young people to stay in their native land and decrease migration-related depopulation of rural areas. Intense activity of various organizations shall promote interest in own land and nourishment of traditions.

### **Instrument 2.1. Community spirit formation and good practice sharing**

**Goal.** To strengthen abilities of people and communities to develop vivid environment and to promote intense activity and cooperation between various organizations in the territory.

**Intended effects.** Implementation of experience sharing projects shall strengthen relations between non-governmental organizations in the territory and beyond its boundaries. More local people shall involve in intense public activities and intensify activities of newly established village communities. This shall decrease generation gap between people and the youth will be more and more integrated in local life.

### **Instrument 2.2. Nourishment of land traditions**

**Goal.** To preserve Sūduva land traditions and transmit them to the young generation; to form consciousness of local people by nourishing and representing land traditions.

**Intended effects.** A sense of identity between local people shall grow as well as interest of young people in local traditions. Organization of traditional festivals of Sūduva land shall induce interest of all generations of people and make them contribute to nourishment of local traditions.

**Table 4.1 Description of strategic priorities, instruments and activity areas of Sūduva LAG**

<b>Priority I. RURAL AREA INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT AND CRAFTS DEVELOPMENT PROMOTION</b>		
<b>Instrument 1.1. Village renewal and development</b>		
<p><b>Financeable expenses:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aesthetic village welfare expenses (e.g., front painting, re-roofing, window replacement, etc.);</li> <li>2. Creation and improvement of public infrastructure;</li> <li>3. Renewal of buildings and adaptation to public needs;</li> <li>4. Establishment of traditional craft centres (including formation of technological line of traditional crafts, equipment of traditional crafts fair and training facilities);</li> <li>5. Purchase of construction materials at normative tariffs set by the Ministry of Agriculture in case of economic construction.</li> <li>6. General expense;</li> <li>7. Project publication expense.</li> </ol>		
<b>Support intensity:</b> up to 90 percent of all financeable project expenses.		
<p><b>Maximum support amount per project:</b></p> <p><b>1.1.1 Activity area</b> – up to 690 thousand Litas</p> <p><b>Activity area</b> – up to 150 thousand Litas</p>		
<p><b>Support recipient feasibility criteria</b> (1.1.1 – 1.1.2 activity areas):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Applicants must comply with general provisions and regulations set in Sections II and II of Addendum I to Lithuanian village development program 2007–2013;</li> <li>2. Projects must comply with the goals of the instrument under which the support is applied for;</li> <li>3. Project activities and related investments must be implemented in rural area;</li> <li>4. Projects must be public (non-profit).</li> </ol>		
<p><b>Priority criteria</b> (1.1.1 – 1.1.2 activity areas):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Projects cover renewal (protection, restoration, renovation and change) of cultural heritage objects listed in the list of immovable cultural values;</li> <li>2. Applicants – village communities;</li> <li>3. Support is needed for creation of traditional crafts centre.</li> </ol>		
<b>Activity area</b>	<b>Project ideas</b>	<b>Support recipients</b>
1.1.1. Improvement of public infrastructure	Drinking water quality improvement projects Canalization trace reconstruction and repairs Equipment of sports and leisure grounds; maintenance of access to water basins; sidewalk maintenance	Municipalities and municipal institutions; Village communities and other NGOs

1.1.2. Repair of buildings and premises of village communities and other public buildings and premises; their material base strengthening	Maintenance of community buildings and adjustment to public needs; culture house repairs and their material base strengthening	Village communities and other NGOs; Municipalities and municipal institutions
<b>Instrument 1.2. Promotion of village tourism activity</b>		
<p><b>Financeable expenses:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Construction and (or) reconstruction of buildings and structures meant for project needs, including purchase of construction materials and works at normative tariffs set by the Ministry of Agriculture in case of economic construction;</li> <li>2. Purchase of new technique, technological devices, equipment, including hardware and software, meant for project needs;</li> <li>3. Infrastructure creation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Business infrastructure (illumination, access, canalization system, etc.);</li> <li>b) Small information infrastructures (information stands, pointers to places of interest, etc.);</li> <li>c) Recreation infrastructure (access to natural objects, small-scale accommodation services, coast maintenance, etc.);</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Marketing and development of village tourism services (website creation, etc.);</li> <li>5. General expense (up to 10 percent of all financeable project expenses);</li> <li>6. Project publication expenses.</li> </ol>		
<b>Support intensity</b> up to 50 percent of all financeable project expenses		
<b>Maximum support amount per project</b> – 60 thousand Lit		
<p><b>Support recipient feasibility criteria:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Applicants must comply with general provisions and regulations set in Sections II and II of Addendum I to Lithuanian village development program 2007–2013;</li> <li>2. Applicants must have particular qualifications;</li> <li>3. In their business plan applicants must prove that an economical entity complies with economic viability criterion;</li> <li>4. Projects must be implemented in rural areas with maximum 6,000 of population.</li> </ol>		
<p><b>Priority selection criteria</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Applicant has never received Community investment-type support for agriculture or rural area development</li> <li>2. The Applicant has been engaged in economic and (or) professional activity in rural area for minimum 2 years before submitting the application;</li> <li>3. The Applicant is a farmer up to 40 years of age</li> <li>4. The Project intends to implement innovation</li> <li>5. The Project is to be implemented near tourist routes</li> <li>6. The Project with higher internal yield norm</li> <li>7. The Project to develop crafts</li> </ol>		
<b>Activity area</b>	<b>Project ideas</b>	<b>Support recipients</b>
Promotion of village tourism, including development of crafts in village tourism homesteads	Craft development projects in village tourism homesteads	Farmers; Village people

**Priority II. NOURISHMENT OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND FORMATION OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT****Instrument 2.1. Community spirit formation and good practice sharing****Financeable expenses:**

1. Purchase of new equipment, devices, tools, technique, machines, furniture and other equipment, computer hardware and software, other electronic equipment, digital machines and other goods directly related to implementation of local project;
2. Works and services;
3. Purchase of construction materials and other materials;
4. Purchase of information and publication instruments related to the implemented local project;
5. General expense – salaries to engineers, architects, consultants and experts on technical, technological, economic and organizational local project preparation and implementation issues, if such services are not continuous or periodical and related to general activities and expenses of the applicant; structure project preparation (including expertise) expense, project technical study, patent and licence purchase expenses. Up to 10 percent of all financeable project expenses shall be financed. Up to 5 percent of financeable local project expenses may be meant for business plan preparation and consultations on business plan implementation issues (applicable to profit-seeking projects).

**Support intensity** up to 80 percent of all financeable project expenses

**Maximum support per project** – 40 thousand Lit

**Support recipient feasibility criteria:**

1. The Applicant maintains his/her accounting under requirements of legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania;
2. The Applicant is registered and acts in rural area, i.e., vicinity with up to 6 thousand residents;
3. The Applicant's project complies with strategic priority and instrument goals, under which it is being prepared;
4. Project activity and related investment is realized in rural area (locality with up to 6 thousand residents);

**Priority selection criteria:**

1. Project is implemented with partners (village communities, NGOs, etc.)
2. Project promotes development of social services and reduces social disjuncture in villages
3. The Applicant is village community

**Project ideas:**

Exchange of good activity practice, village leaders education; community spirit forming/inducing projects; social integration projects, cooperation between various organizations projects, etc.

**Support recipients:**

Village communities and other NGOs and their associations

**Instrument 2.2. Nourishment of land traditions**

<p><b>Financeable expenses:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Purchase of new equipment, devices, tools, technique, machines, furniture and other equipment, computer hardware and software, other electronic equipment, digital machines and other goods directly related to implementation of local project;</li> <li>2. Works and services;</li> <li>3. Purchase of construction materials and other materials;</li> <li>4. Purchase of information and publication instruments related to the implemented local project;</li> <li>5. General expense – salaries to engineers, architects, consultants and experts on technical, technological, economic and organizational local project preparation and implementation issues, if such services are not continuous or periodical and related to general activities and expenses of the applicant; structure project preparation (including expertise) expense, project technical study, patent and licence purchase expenses. Up to 10 percent of all financeable project expenses shall be financed.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Support intensity</b> up to 80 percent of all financeable project expenses.</p>	
<p><b>Maximum support per project</b> – 40 thousand Lit</p>	
<p><b>Support recipient feasibility criteria:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Applicant maintains his/her accounting under requirements of legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania;</li> <li>2. The Applicant is registered and acts in rural area, i.e., vicinity with up to 6 thousand residents;</li> <li>3. The Applicant’s project complies with strategic priority and instrument goals, under which it is being prepared;</li> <li>4. Project activity and related investment is realized in rural area (locality with up to 6 thousand residents);</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Priority selection criteria:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project is implemented with partners (village communities, NGOs, etc.)</li> <li>2. Project promotes development of social services and reduces social disjuncture in villages</li> <li>3. The Applicant is a village community</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Project ideas:</b></p>	<p>Organization of traditional celebrations and events, family traditions nourishment, healthy way of living projects, cultural heritage preservation projects, etc.</p>
<p><b>Support recipients:</b></p>	<p>Village communities and other NGOs and their associations</p>

### **4.3. Compatibility of the strategy priorities with the municipal, regional and national priorities**

Sūduva LAG territory development strategy for the years 2007-2013 (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy) is prepared for better coordination of implementation of LEADER method in Kazlų Rūda municipality and Sasnava rural locations in Marijampolė municipality.

The Strategy is prepared considering provisions of the strategic planning documents regulating the national development as well as development of Marijampolė region, Kazlų Rūda and Marijampolė municipality:

1. State long-term development strategy approved by decision IX—1187 of LR Seimas on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2002;
2. Strategy of development of Lithuanian economy till 2015, approved by decision No.853 of LR Government on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2002;
3. National strategy of harmonious development (2003);
4. Strategy of regional policy till 2013 (approved in 2005);
5. Strategy of usage of Lithuanian EU structural funds for the years 2007-2013 as well as implementing programs of cohesion promotion, economy development and human resources development;
6. Strategy of rural development in Lithuania for years 2007-2013 and program of rural development in Lithuania for year 2007-2013;d
7. Development plan of Marijampolė region for years 2006-2013;
8. Strategic development plans of Kazlų Rūda municipality (for years 2004-2012) and Marijampolė District municipality (till 2010).

The priorities provided in the Strategy coincide essentially with the main priorities and aims provided in the strategic planning documents of national, regional and local municipal levels, and the means suggested by LAG supplement and conform to the means which are implemented by national, regional and local authorities.

Comparison of the priorities and means of Sūduva LAG territory local development strategy for 2007-2013 with the national priorities allow the conclusion that the Strategy supports implementation of the most priorities and aims of the following strategies: State Long-term Development, Lithuanian Economy Development till 2015; National Harmonious Development and Regional Policy till 2013.

Priorities of Sūduva LAG territory local development strategy are in harmony with the following priorities of the strategy of State Long-term Development:

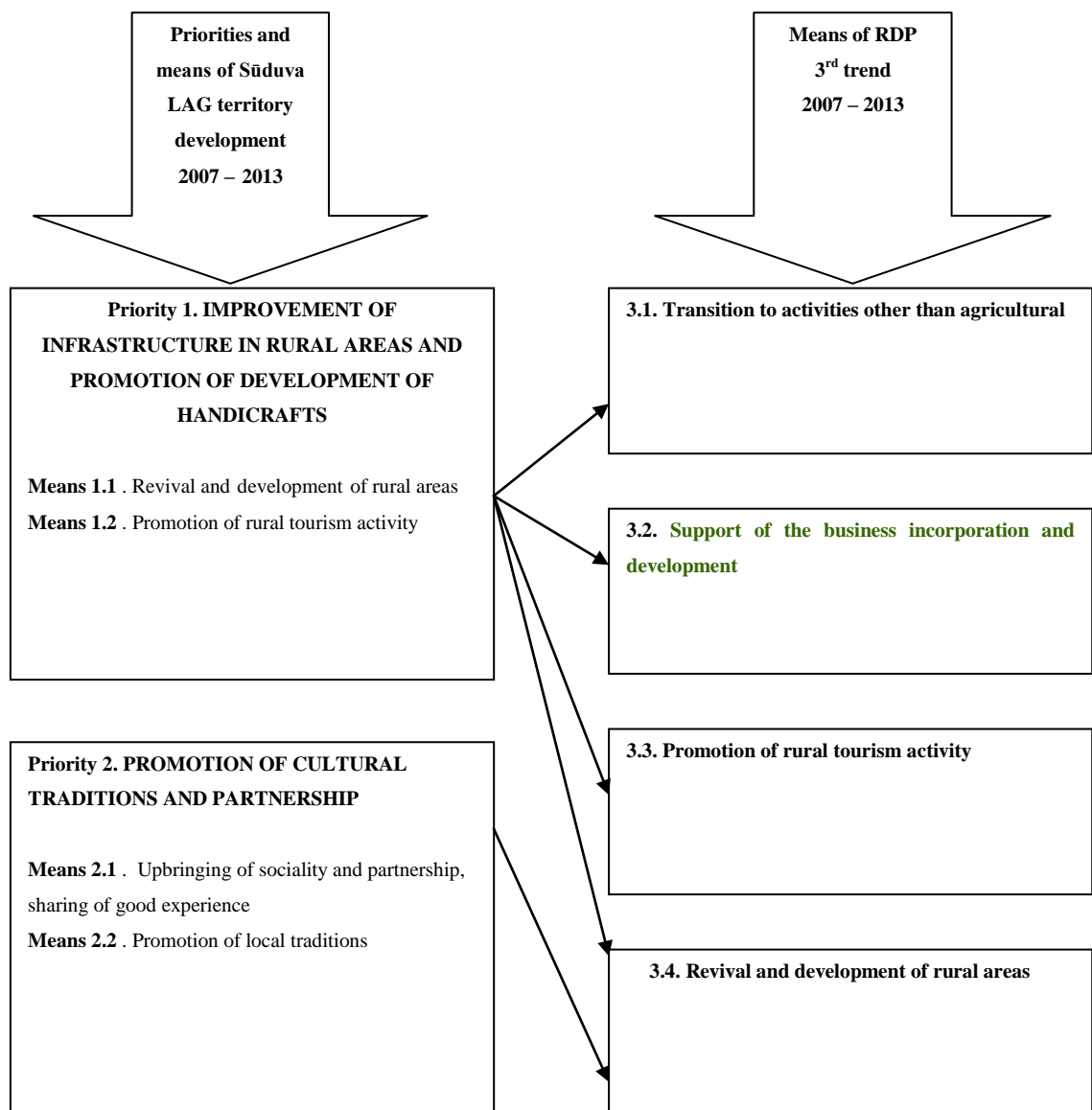


1. Knowledge society (includes education, residents' competence, municipality, culture and other trends)

2. Competitive economy (includes industrial and business trends as well as trends of knowledge-based economy and electronic business, rural and agricultural development, regional development and tourism)

3. Safe and secure society (includes the trends of environmental protection, public security, social security, health service, foreign policy and lawmaking)

Comparison of priorities and means of Sūduva LAG territory local development strategy for year 2007-2013 with the priorities of national rural development allow the conclusion that the Strategy would considerably facilitate the implementation of the means of 3<sup>rd</sup> trend of the program of Lithuanian rural development for years 2007-2013 "Life quality in rural areas and assessment of rural economy" (fig. 4.1).



**Fig. 4.1 Compatibility of priorities and means of Sūduva LAG territory local development strategy for 2007-2013 with the means of 3<sup>rd</sup> trend of the program of Lithuanian rural development for years 2007-2013 “Life quality in rural areas and assessment of rural economy”**

The Strategy also supplements the three main priorities of the strategy of usage of Lithuanian EU structural funds for years 2007-2013: “Life quality and cohesion”, “Competitive economy”, “Productive human resources of knowledge society”, which will be implemented with the help of three programs (Promotion of Cohesion; Economy Development; and Development of Human Resources).

The endeavours are made in order to use better the local potential, to provide quality and accessible public services and to preserve and improve the environment quality when implementing the action program of promotion of cohesion. The priority 1 of the Strategy “**Improvement of infrastructure in rural areas and promotion of development of handicrafts**” which will be implemented by the means of “Revival and development of rural areas” will support the implementation of the aims of this action program.

The endeavours are made to attract and retain people in labour market, to promote early life-long learning and to develop the labour force of the highest qualification when implementing the action program of human resources development. The second priority of Sūduva LAG Strategy “**Promotion of cultural traditions and partnership**” which will be implemented by the means “Upbringing of sociality and partnership, sharing of good experience” and “Promotion of local traditions” also partially match the aims of this action program.

The endeavours are made to increase the comparative part of high value-added of business in Lithuanian economy, to provide the favourable environment for small and medium enterprises and for novelties as well as to make the economical infrastructure more effective when implementing the action program of Economy development. The means “Promotion of rural tourism activity” of the priority 1 of the Sūduva LAG Strategy “**Improvement of infrastructure in rural areas and promotion of development of handicrafts**” also partially supports implementation of the aims of this action program.

Table 4.2 shows the compatibility of the priorities and means of Sūduva LAG integrated development strategy with priorities and means of development plans of Kazlų Rūda municipality for years 2004-2012 and Marijampolė District municipality till 2010.

Both priorities as well as means of the Strategy are compatible with and supplement all three priorities of the development plan of Kazlų Rūda municipality for years 2004-2012”:

**“Development of the progressive, conscious and enterprising society” (Priority 1), “Development of safe, clean, healthy and convenient environment” (Priority 2), “Development of economic activities which improve attraction to and competitiveness of municipality” (Priority 3) as well as other aims of development priorities of Kazlų Rūda municipality**

**Table 4.2 Compatibility of priorities and means of Sūduva LAG territory local development strategy for 2007-2013 with the priorities and means of development plan of Kazlų Rūda municipality for years 2004-2012**

<b>Priorities and means of Sūduva LAG territory local development strategy for 2007-2013</b>	<b>Priorities and means of development plan of Kazlų Rūda municipality for years 2004-2012</b>
<p align="center"><b>Priority 1. IMPROVEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL AREAS AND PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF HANDICRAFTS</b></p> <p><b>Means 1.1.</b> Revival and development of rural areas</p> <p><b>Means 1.2.</b> Promotion of rural tourism activity</p>	<p align="center"><b>Priority 2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRESSIVE, CONSCIOUS AND ENTERPRISING SOCIETY</b></p> <p><b>Aim 1:</b> To develop network of health and social services infrastructure</p> <p><b>Aim 3:</b> To form the safe and secure environment</p> <p><b>Aim 5:</b> To ensure ecological environment, to preserve nature</p> <p align="center"><b>Priority 3. DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES WHICH IMPROVE ATTRACTION TO AND COMPETITIVENESS OF MUNICIPALITY</b></p> <p><b>Aim 1:</b> To develop the infrastructure of services sector</p> <p><b>Aim 2:</b> To develop infrastructure for business support</p> <p><b>Aim 5:</b> To develop rural areas</p>
<p align="center"><b>Priority 2. PROMOTION OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND PARTNERSHIP</b></p> <p><b>Means 2.1.</b> Upbringing of sociality and partnership, sharing of good experience</p> <p><b>Means 2.2.</b> Promotion of local traditions</p>	<p align="center"><b>Priority 1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRESSIVE, CONSCIOUS AND ENTERPRISING SOCIETY</b></p> <p><b>Aim 1:</b> To develop convenient and healthy conditions for learning</p> <p><b>Aim 2:</b> To expand quality services of training and education</p> <p><b>Aim 3:</b> To form modern culture of residents</p> <p><b>Aim 4:</b> To preserve the cultural identity</p>

Sūduva LAG strategy of integrated development also is compatible with development plan of Marijampolė District municipality for the years till 2010 (Table 4.3).

1<sup>st</sup> priority and the means of the Strategy coincide or supplement the 2<sup>nd</sup> priority of development plan of Marijampolė District municipality “**Development of engineering and transport infrastructure and environmental protection**” and 4<sup>th</sup> priority “**Rural and agricultural development**” as well as a part of their aims and tasks; and 1<sup>st</sup> priority and means of

the Strategy supplement the aims of 3<sup>rd</sup> priority “**Development of modern, safe and secure community**”.

**Table 4.3 Compatibility of priorities and means of Sūduva LAG territory local development strategy for 2007-2013 with the priorities and means of development plan of Marijampolė District municipality for years till 2010**

<p><b>Priorities and means of Sūduva LAG territory local development strategy for 2007-2013</b></p>	<p><b>Priorities and means of development plan of Marijampolė District municipality for years 2004-2012</b></p>
<p><b>Priority 1. IMPROVEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL AREAS AND PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF HANDICRAFTS</b></p> <p><b>Means 1.1.</b> Revival and development of rural areas <b>Means 1.2.</b> Promotion of rural tourism activity</p>	<p><b>Priority 2. DEVELOPMENT OF ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION</b></p> <p><b>Aim 2.1.</b> To develop functional and balanced evolution of Marijampolė municipality (<b>Task 2.1.4.</b> To develop the residential environment which meets the needs of residents)</p>
	<p><b>Priority 3. DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN, SAFE AND SECURE COMMUNITY</b></p> <p><b>Aim 3.3.</b> To form the centres attractive for tourists by using the nature and cultural heritage objects <b>Aim 3.8.</b> Development of safe and secure environment</p>
	<p><b>Priority 4. RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p><b>Aim 4.2.</b> To increase the employment of residents</p>
<p><b>Priority 2. PROMOTION OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND PARTNERSHIP</b></p> <p><b>Means 2.1.</b> Upbringing of sociality and partnership, sharing of good experience <b>Means 2.2.</b> Promotion of local traditions</p>	<p><b>Priority 3. DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN, SAFE AND SECURE COMMUNITY</b></p> <p><b>Aim 3.1.</b> To improve conditions for the local community to participate in culture and to use it</p>
	<p><b>Priority 4. RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p><b>Aim 4.3.</b> To raise the social activity and vocational abilities of the rural residents</p>

Sūduva LAG territory local development strategy also is compatible with development plan of Marijampolė region for the years 2007-2020 (Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4 Compatibility of priorities and means of Sūduva LAG territory local development strategy for 2007-2013 with the priorities and means of development plan of Marijampolė region for years 2006-2013**

Priorities and means of Sūduva LAG integrated development strategy for 2007-2013	Priorities and aims of development plan of Marijampolė region for years 2006-2013
<p align="center"><b>Priority 1. IMPROVEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL AREAS AND PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF HANDICRAFTS</b></p> <p><b>Means 1.1.</b> Revival and development of rural areas <b>Means 1.2.</b> Promotion of rural tourism activity</p>	<p align="center"><b>Priority 1. DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS, MANUFACTURING AND SERVICES</b></p> <p><b>Aim 1:</b> To improve the industrial and business competitiveness <b>Aim 3:</b> To develop tourism infrastructure and services</p>
	<p align="center"><b>Priority 3. DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE</b></p> <p><b>Aim 4:</b> To develop and modernize the public infrastructure of the region <b>Aim 5:</b> To set in order the infrastructure of water supply and waste water treatment</p>
	<p align="center"><b>Priority 4. DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETITIVE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREA</b></p> <p><b>Aim 2:</b> To develop the alternative rural trades <b>Aim 3:</b> To preserve and modernize the technical, engineering and public infrastructure of rural areas</p>
<p align="center"><b>Priority 2. PROMOTION OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND PARTNERSHIP</b></p> <p><b>Means 2.1.</b> Upbringing of sociality and partnership, sharing of good experience <b>Means 2.2.</b> Promotion of local traditions</p>	<p align="center"><b>Priority 2. DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES</b></p> <p><b>Aim 1:</b> To provide equal possibilities to acquire quality education and possibilities of life-long learning for all residents of the region <b>Aim 2:</b> To strive for improvement of human resources qualification and adequacy to needs of labour market <b>Aim 3:</b> To develop cultural infrastructure and services</p>

1<sup>st</sup> priority of the Strategy supplements the 1<sup>st</sup> priority “**Development of business, manufacturing and services**”, 3<sup>rd</sup> priority “**Development of Infrastructure**” as well as 4<sup>th</sup> priority “**Development of competitive agriculture and rural area**” of Marijampolė region development as well as part of their aims; and 2<sup>nd</sup> priority of the Strategy are the most compatible with 2<sup>nd</sup> priority “**Development of human resources**” of Marijampolė region development as well as its aims.

In summary, the priorities provided in the Strategy are in compliance with or supplement the main priorities and aims provided in all main strategic planning documents of national, regional and local municipal levels; and the means suggested by LAG Strategy supplement and are in compliance with the means which are implemented by national, regional and local authorities.

#### **4.4. Strategy Correspondence to LEADER Method Requirements. Innovation and Integrated Approach of the Strategy**

Application of LEADER started in 1991, which provided EU rural areas with conditions for active creation of their own future. Experience of old EU countries shows that the LEADER method works best in different circumstances and various types of rural areas, therefore owing to use of this method formation mechanism of rural policy can be adjusted for meeting requirements of vastly different rural areas. Due to that the method became an integral part of rural development policy. The LEADER method, which encourages participation of rural residents and organizations in arranging and implementing local development strategy, is a critical means of rural policy.

The fundamental idea behind the LEADER method lies in assumption that due to diversity in local development of European rural areas the strategy is more effective and productive when local residents and organizations make decisions concerning the strategy and implement it, when related procedures are clear and transparent, when institutions of local authorities provide support, and when needed technical support is received for sharing the best practice. LEADER differs from other, more traditional means of rural policy by pointing at “how” things must be done, but not at “what” should be done.

In the course of preparation of local development strategy of Sūduva LAG territory for 2007–2013, principles of the LEADER method were implemented and highlighted, as it was required by provisions of the IV<sup>th</sup> direction “Implementation of the LEADER Method” of Lithuanian rural development program for 2007–2013. The LEADER method consists of seven key principles:

1. Territorial attitude
2. Local activity groups (horizontal partnership)
3. Principle “bottom-upwards”
4. Level of integration (multiple sectors)
5. Innovative activity
6. Creation of networks and international cooperation
7. Local funding and management

Sūduva LAG territory corresponds to **territorial attitude** principle, since it was chosen despite administrative division borders (it embraces more than one municipality), whereas with due consideration of commonality of territorial problems, people relationships, and integrity of geographic territory.

The chosen territorial development administrator – **local activity group** – is a stringent condition of the LEADER method. Sūduva LAG meets all requirements raised for this partnership. Three sectors are represented at adequate ratio – business, local authorities, and nongovernmental sector. Ration of men and women in LAG administration is observed, there is a youth representative, and members of administration have a required expertise (see section 1.9).

The principle “**bottom-upwards**” means that local residents and organizations participate in decision-making concerning strategy, its priorities, and means to be implemented in their area. This principle was followed when preparing the Sūduva LAG territory strategy. Concerned local activists were involved in the entire strategy planning process – starting from situational analysis, concluding with preparation of financial and implementation plan for the strategy (for more please see sections 1.6; 2.8 and VI).

LEADER is not a program for sectorial development, local development strategy has a polysectorial foundation embracing **an integrated development of the territory**. Activity and projects provided for by Sūduva LAG territory strategy provides are coherent altogether and are suited to each other by supplementing each other. In the course of implementing projects of the I priority means “Rural revival,” infrastructure was developed as well as other results were achieved, all of which will be successfully used for implementation of projects of the II priority means.

LEADER is an **innovative** method of EU rural development policy. LEADER encourages rural areas to seek for new ways of becoming and staying competitive, of making the best use of available resources, and solving local problems. Being innovative is a process consisting of application of innovative decisions or improvement of existing solutions by adjusting them to new areas of human activity.

Formation and creation of integrated development strategy of represented territory at the LAG territory may already be considered innovative. Surprising innovations may be developed during implementation of the prepared strategy and while consulting with persons responsible for preparing local projects. Those innovations may help in obtaining funding and will be successfully implemented. A new LAG activity method was planned. It not only will administer implementation of the prepared strategy, but also will coordinate the entire process, will consult persons potentially responsible for preparing and implementing local projects. Such coordination will help saving time and resources of local residents and organizations, aid in polishing up ideas for projects, and under



the necessity – will be of use in looking for appropriate partners. Local residents will be adequately informed during the entire period of implementing the strategy.

Nevertheless application of innovation principle and its display in the strategy was somewhat limited by national implementation guidelines and compulsory provisions of the LEADER method (a provision that at least 73% of intended support for implementation of local projects must be allocated to the means “Rural revival and development”; definitions of profit and non-profit projects, etc.).

While preparing the local development strategy, the LAG was looking for partners for joint activity in and outside Lithuania. Thus, a **cooperation** principle was implemented. Aware of importance of sharing good practice, in its search for partners the LAG paid attention to their lines of activity, specific character, tried to discover shared interests, and possible areas for sharing. Sūduva LAG is a member of the network of Lithuanian local activity groups (hereinafter referred to as the Network), while LAG chairman represents the entire Suvalkija region in the Network.

The principle of **local funding and management** is concerned with LAG autonomy in solving issues of long-term territorial development, by leaving a wide clear field and flexibility for the LAG in decision-making concerning activity it wishes to support. The right of distributing funding sources for strategy implementation is assigned to the very LAG with the exception of payment function, which will be solely exercised by the National Paying Agency by the Ministry of Agriculture.

#### **4.5. Strategy Conformity with Common Areas (Horizontal Level)**

The prepared local development strategy of Sūduva LAG territory is, as already mentioned, a polysectorial, embracing several area of life and activity. Wholeness and level of integration of the strategy are also reflected in its conformity to key common (horizontal) course of EU policy. A cohesive development, information society, regional development, and equal opportunities all are connecting links of the strategy. The areas are typical to both of priorities and will be topical during the entire strategy implementation period. No detailed quantitative objectives are set for horizontal areas, however that does not mean that implementation results in these areas will not be measured – they will be integrated into common system of strategy implementation indexes.

##### **Cohesive Development**

Key provisions of cohesive development have been precisely stated at the meeting of the top of the countries in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Cohesive development was validated as a key long-term ideology of society development. The concept of cohesive development is based on 3 equivalent components – environment protection, economic and social development.

In terms of national cohesive development strategy a cohesive development is understood as a compromise between goals of environment protection and economic and social goals of society, creating opportunities for achieving an overall wellbeing for current and coming generations without violating limits of permissible impact of environment.

A cohesive development is impossible without a full-scale participation of society not only in solving particular tasks, but also in making decisions on all levels important in terms of cohesive development.

With a purpose of long-term development on the territory, this horizontal area becomes of an utmost importance. The prepared strategy of Sūduva LAG aims to exercise the cohesive development principle and provides for cooperation of different sectors in improving infrastructure of the territory and promoting sociality of local residents.

Environment protection aspect becomes important in evaluating Kazlų Rūda town surrounded by the territory and processing industry companies operating in it. Even the very vision of the LAG territory highlights preservation and proper use of plentiful forest resources. On the other side, it is important to use economic and other opportunities provided by the town vicinity, especially so in terms of workplaces, the lack whereof is evident on the LAG territory.

In terms of social development, from the viewpoint of cohesive development, strategy gives attention both to preservation of current traditions of the area and interaction and cooperation of different generations of residents, and to changes based on successfully implemented activity. In this manner, the goal is to avoid isolation of separate groups of residents, cultivate active citizens, and promote partnership.

### **Development of Information Society**

Information society shall have a very important role in the implementation of the prepared strategy. Seeking for knowledge society, rapid and cheap spread of knowledge is a very important aspect. It will be very important for LAG to find effective ways of informing local residents during the strategy implementation. A wide spread of information will be required by any instruments which will be used by LAG to make local residents more active and to inform them about preparation and submission of area projects, about all existing possibilities and requirements. While preparing the strategy LAG also implemented the project of creation of the website ([www.Suduvosvvg.lt](http://www.Suduvosvvg.lt)). This website will be used for implementation of the prepared strategy, informing of the residents, also for preparation and implementation of LAG cooperation projects.

Another aspect is the spread of good experience during the implementation of area projects not only in LAG territory but also in all country seeking to familiarize the society with the

achieved results and also to make local residents more active. Spread of good experience is already recorded in the strategy itself (Priority II Instrument 2.1. Promotion of social relations, sharing of good experience). During the implementation of this instrument, implementers of area projects are encouraged to cooperate with other organizations, to solve relevant issues together, to share the experience of activity. By implementation of this instrument, LAG seeks to solve the problem of isolation of local organizations, to make better conditions to receive important information.

During the performance of Priority I instrument 1.1 “Rural area renewal and development” and the implementation of the projects of adjusting public buildings to the needs of the society, the possibilities for local residents to use the Internet will be promoted because the issue of the Internet accessibility in LAG territory is relevant even now.

### **Regional development**

It is very important for Sūduva LAG territory which is in Marijampolė district of rather low development as compared to other districts of the country to decrease this difference. Therefore, in the use of EU support for strategy implementation prepared by LAG, it is very important to improve the conditions of life and the quality of life while seeking to get closer to the average of the development of the country.

It is very important to maintain the aspect of differentiation – identity of the regions in the understanding of regional development. Sūduva LAG specified a separate instrument in the strategy (Priority II instrument 2.2 “Maintenance of cultural traditions”) which is meant for preservation of Sūduva land traditions and their transfer to the young generation.

The Strategy does not emphasize the promotion of economics as much as the instruments to ensure the liveliness of rural areas while solving other problems of development. LAG takes an important function: to coordinate the projects implemented in the whole territory, to provide consultations to submitters and implementers of area projects. The aim is to ensure cooperation between separate organizations and persons trying to use the support and the possibilities of the region in the best way and to ensure a long-term development.

### **Equal opportunities**

The guidelines of EU policy on equal opportunities include overcoming of sex differences, coordination of family life and work, easier (re)integration into labour market, support for integration of different groups of social disjuncture.

The instrument “Promotion of social relations, sharing of good experience” of priority II of the strategy directs potential submitters and implementers of area projects towards mutual cooperation and creation of partnership. This direction of activity does not directly ensure any equal opportunities but it creates conditions to perform educational activity in rural areas. Such activity is

important not because it helps to solve the problem of equal opportunities directly but because it allows local residents, especially women, to find out more about manifestation of inequality, its forms and to get familiar with the experience of other regions, or even other countries, in performance of actions to decrease inequality.

Since the youth is the target group, preparation of the strategy included not only discussions with the youth about their problems, about their input into preservation of traditions, but also discussions about the increase of their activities. During the implementations of public infrastructure development projects in rural areas conditions will be created for organization of meaningful activities.

The aims of area development strategy of Sūduva LAG territory are oriented towards equal opportunities for all residents to participate in problem solving and making important decisions for the development of the land.

## **V. Strategy Implementation Plan**

### **5.1. Strategy Implementation Stages and Their Substantiation**

Table 5.1 provides stages of implementation of area development strategy of Sūduva LAG territory. Strategy implementation can be divided into preparation stage and the stage of area project submission, evaluation and organisation of implementation. Each of them includes specific works which have to be performed by the strategy implementer LAG.

*Preparation stage* includes the works which have to be performed before the beginning of the main stage. Therefore all formalities related to creation of work places necessary for Strategy implementation, acceptance of employees and preparation of implementation documentation and its coordination with National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture have to be dealt with.

*In the stage of submission, evaluation and organisation of implementation of area project* LAG organizes Strategy implementation pursuant to the procedure and the schedule coordinated with National Paying Agency. Implementation includes submission of area projects, their evaluation and organization of implementation as well as financial settlement.

Publication of LAG activity which is specified in the plan of strategy implementation shall be also performed during the whole period of strategy implementation.

Strategy implementation shall be performed by the persons employed by LAG – LAG administration which shall follow the stages of Strategy implementation presented in Table 5.1 and “Regulations of administration of area development strategies implemented pursuant to the instruments “Implementation of area development strategies” of the direction “LEADER method

implementation” of the programme of rural development for the period of the year 2007-2013”(hereinafter referred to as Regulations of strategy implementation) which regulate general provisions of funds assignment for implementation of area projects, procedure of filling in, submission and registration of area projects’ applications, organization of implementation of area projects’ applications, conclusion of the contracts for area projects’ implementation and their implementation, settlement for area projects’ implementation, performance of examination of area projects. Also LAG administration shall be responsible for fulfilment of obligations specified in support contract.

It is planned to organize calls for applications of area projects every year whereas applications would be organized by separate instruments taking into account the preparation of potential submitters of applications and registration of documentation necessary for implementation of the area projects. Calls for applications of area projects shall be announced by Sūduva LAG in local media and websites [www.sudvosvvg.lt](http://www.sudvosvvg.lt), [www.kazluruda.lt](http://www.kazluruda.lt).

**Table 5.1. Plan of area development strategy implementation**

	2008					2009					2010					2011					2012					2013					2014					2015				
	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV							
<b>Preparation stage</b>	X	X																																						
Opening of bank account	X																																							
Conclusion of the support contract for strategy implementation	X																																							
Organization of public procurement	X																																							
Creation of work places for LAG employees	X																																							
Selection and employment of the persons administrating strategy implementation	X																																							
Preparation of documentation for calls for applications of area projects and their coordination with NPA	X	X																																						
<b>Submission, evaluation and organization of implementation of area projects</b>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Announcement of calls for applications of area projects			X			X				X				X				X				X						X												
Call 1: priority 1 instrument 1.1 and priority 2 instruments 2.1, 2.2			X																																					
Call 2: priority 1 instrument 1.1 and priority 2 instruments 2.1, 2.2						X																																		
Call 3: priority 1 instruments 1.1 and priority 2 instruments 2.1, 2.2										X																														
Call 4: priority 1 instrument 1.1, 1.2 and priority 2 instruments 2.1, 2.2														X																										
Call 5: priority 1 instrument 1.1, 1.2 and priority 2 instruments 2.1, 2.2																									X															
Call 6: priority 1 instrument 1.1 and priority 2 instruments 2.1, 2.2																											X													
Consultation of submitters of area projects			X			X				X				X				X				X				X						X								
Evaluation of area projects			X	X		X	X			X	X			X	X			X	X			X	X			X	X			X	X									
Conclusion area project implementation contracts				X		X				X				X				X				X				X				X										
Evaluation of administrative compliance of payment requests of implementers of area projects					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Organization of examinations of area projects				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
<b>Preparation of reports and their submission to NPA</b>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
<b>Preparation of payment requests and their submission to NPA</b>	X																																							
<b>Interim strategy evaluation and their adjustment</b>										X																						X								
<b>Publication of strategy implementation</b>			X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X			X	X			X	X		X	X		X	X		X						
Installation of explanatory stand				X																																				
Advertisements, articles in the media				X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X			X	X			X	X		X	X		X	X		X							
Publication of booklets and posters				X						X				X							X				X				X											
Information events			X						X				X												X				X					X						

Procedures and criteria of selection of area projects is an important part of strategy implementation which helps LAG Board to perform evaluation and selection of area projects smoothly and transparently. Applications of area projects shall be evaluated by evaluators of applications of area projects assigned by LAG Board pursuant to the procedure of registration, evaluation, preparation of evaluation reports and their submission to LAG Board coordinated in advance with the National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture. If evaluation of area projects requires special knowledge, LAG shall bring in independent experts. All applications of area projects submitted during the call for applications of area projects shall be evaluated pursuant to the requirements specified in special regulations for applicants which shall not be changed during the period of evaluation of applications of area projects. When call for applications is announced, LAG shall provide consultations to potential submitters of projects.

The specified criteria and procedures of selection of area projects shall create assumptions for successful implementation of the prepared Strategy.

*Publication of Strategy implementation.* Following the requirements specified in the regulations for publication of the support provided by EU, LAG plans to publicise the strategy of area development under implementation and the support provided to it. LAG undertakes to fulfil all obligations which shall be entered into the support contract.

When the project begins it is assumed to make explanatory stand which shall specify contact data of Sūduva area activity group, stages of implementation of integrated strategy of area development, financing sources, partners and sponsors. Explanatory stand shall be installed close to the administrative premises of Sūduva LAG.

Assumed actions of strategy implementation are described in more detail in chapter 1.10. of the strategy.

## **5.2. Strategy Implementation Financial Plan and Its Substantiation**

Financial plan of the strategy of Sūduva LAG territory is presented in Table 5.2. In the process of creation of the financial plan attention has been paid to the requirements of the strategies of area development prepared for the implementation of LEADER method, which are provided in the regulations of selection. Total amount of support for implementation of the strategy is estimated following the order of the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania No. 3D-544 of 11 December 2007 for the order of support provision to implement the strategies of area development, and the methodology to estimate the amount of support pursuant to the programme of rural development in Lithuania for the period of the year 2007-2013.

The amount of support for rural territory of Kazlų Rūda confirmed in point 6 of this order is 5,00 million Lt. Sūduva LAG territory also includes Sasnava eldership of Marijampolė municipality which, according to the information of the Department of Statistics under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania as of 1 January 2007, had the population of 3500 residents. Following the support confirmed by the same order to 1 resident of Marijampolė municipality (380,80 Lt) 1.33 million Lt have been added to the total amount of support for the strategy implementation. Therefore the amount of the support for strategy implementation distributed in the financial plan of the strategy by Sūduva LAG is 6,33 million Lt.

80 per cent of total amount of the support is for the implementation of area projects. The remaining amount of 20 per cent is for administration of strategy implementation. According to the requirements the instruments of “Rural area renewal and development” is provided in the strategy which are assigned 81 per cent of the amount for implementation of area projects (not less than 73 per cent as specified in the Regulations of Selection).

The finances for implementation of the strategy are distributed for each year according to financial possibilities of municipalities and other potential implementers of area projects. Also the proposals for applications of area projects are planned taking into account these possibilities (Table 5.1).

Expenses of administration of the strategy are distributed for each year to be sufficient amount to perform functions of LAG as the implementer of the strategy. The main amount of the finances for administration of the strategy includes the assumed pay for administrators and evaluators of area projects. Administrative expenses also include the expenses for publication of strategy implementation.



**Table 5.2. Financial plan of Sūduva LAG area development strategy implementation**

<b>Priorities, instruments</b>	<b>Total amount, million Lt</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Priority I. IMPROVEMENT OF RURAL AREA INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROMOTION OF TRADE DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>4,20</b>	<b>0,85</b>	<b>0,85</b>	<b>0,91</b>	<b>0,79</b>	<b>0,55</b>	<b>0,15</b>	<b>0,10</b>
Instrument 1.1. Rural area renewal and development	<b>4,10</b>	0,85	0,85	0,85	0,75	0,55	0,15	0,10
Instrument 1.2. Promotion of rural tourism activity	<b>0,10</b>	0,00	0,00	0,06	0,04	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Priority II. MAINTENANCE OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND PROMOTION OF SOCIAL RELATIONS</b>	<b>0,86</b>	<b>0,14</b>	<b>0,14</b>	<b>0,12</b>	<b>0,12</b>	<b>0,12</b>	<b>0,12</b>	<b>0,10</b>
Instrument 2.1. Promotion of social relations, sharing of good experience if activity	<b>0,43</b>	0,07	0,07	0,06	0,06	0,06	0,06	0,05
Instrument 2.2. Maintenance of cultural traditions	<b>0,43</b>	0,07	0,07	0,06	0,06	0,06	0,06	0,05
<b>Strategy administration</b>	<b>1,27</b>	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,17	0,17	0,17	0,16
<b>SUPPORT FOR STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>6,33</b>	<b>1,19</b>	<b>1,19</b>	<b>1,23</b>	<b>1,08</b>	<b>0,84</b>	<b>0,44</b>	<b>0,36</b>

### **3. Strategy Implementation Control and Evaluation System**

#### **5.3.1. Strategy Implementation Control**

Control of the implementation of integrated area development strategy shall be performed by 3 assigned LAD Board members – the Supervision group of Strategy implementation (Supervision group). The work of this group shall be governed by a member of LAG Board responsible for the control of strategy implementation; provisions of group activity shall be verified by LAG Board. Control of strategy implementation shall be performed taking into account the plan of strategy implementation (see chapter 5.1) and set indicators of strategy implementation control. Technical support to Supervision group shall be provided by LAG administration by providing necessary information about the process of Strategy implementation, issues to be solved, problems incurred, etc.

Supervision group shall constantly perform Strategy implementation control and it shall periodically provide LAG Board with the conclusions on the results of implementation. Chairman and members of Board of LAG have a right to participate in the meetings of Supervision group.

During the implementation of area project, implementers of the project provide local activity group with payment requests and interim and final reports. Interim report is provided quarterly, the final report of the implementation of area project is provided after the provision of final payment request.

Following the reports of implementation of area projects provided by implementers of area projects, administration of local activity group prepares information on the process of strategy implementation and the final report of strategy implementation. The reports are considered by the Supervision group and the conclusions and recommendations on implementation of the strategy are provided to LAG Board. Interim and final reports are submitted to the National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture following the settled procedure.

Examination of area projects in the place of their implementation is performed pursuant the plan verified by LAG Board at least once in the period of project implementation. On-the-spot examination of the project may also be performed according to the needs (in the case of suspicion that the information provided by the applicant or the implementer of area project is not precise, full or is misleading, etc.). Members of Supervision group may participate in performance of project examinations.

**Table 5.3. Plan of control instruments of strategy implementation**

<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Responsible implementers</b>	<b>Terms of implementation</b>
Consultation of submitters of area projects	Planned accumulation of applications of area projects, implementation of the specified stages of implementation	LAG administration	Before every proposal for applications
Consultation of implementers of area projects	Smooth implementation of area projects, orderly filling in of the reports and payment requests	LAG administration	Always
Solution of the problems of implementation of area projects	Smooth implementation of area projects	Supervision group of strategy implementation	According to the needs
Cooperation with NPA, mediation between NPA and implementers of area projects	Successful settlement with NPA for implementation of strategy and area projects	LAG administration	Always
Evaluation of achievement of indicators of the strategy	Discrepancies between planned and achieved results are noticed in due time and manner, adequate reaction	LAG administration	Quarterly
Analysis of the process of strategy implementation, specification of necessary instruments	Successful strategy implementation	LAG Board Supervision group of strategy implementation	Always

### **5.3.2. Evaluation of Strategy Implementation**

LAG Board has prepared indicators of Strategy implementation according to which the process of Strategy implementation shall be analysed and evaluated.

**Table 5.4. Indicators of Strategy implementation**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Name of the indicator</b>	<b>Measures</b>
1.	Call for applications to implement the strategy	Times
2.	Applications submitted for strategy implementation:	Units
2.1	– profit projects	Units/per cent
2.2	– non-profit projects	Units/per cent
3.	Distribution of submitted applications pursuant to priorities, instruments and fields of activity	Units/per cent
4.	Financial value of submitted applications for strategy implementation	Thousand Lt
5.	Evaluated applications of area projects	Units

6.	Signed contracts with implementers of projects:	Units
6.1	– profit projects	Units/per cent
6.2	– non-profit projects	Units/per cent
7.	Rejected applications for strategy implementation	Units/per cent
8.	Financial value of rejected applications for strategy implementation	Thousand Lt
9.	Value of signed contracts	Thousand Lt
10.	Beneficiaries: – Rural communities – Union of rural communities – Other non-governmental organizations – Projects implemented with partner (s) – Public institutions – Businessmen and their organizations – Municipality and its institutions – Farmers – Rural residents	Number/per cent Number/per cent Number/per cent Number/per cent Number/per cent Number/per cent Number/per cent Number/per cent Number/per cent
11.	Co financing of projects	Thousand Lt
12.	Co financing of projects by voluntary work	Thousand Lt/Hours
13.	Achieved level of implementation of strategy/project pursuant to the funds used	Lt/per cent
14.	<u>Consultations organized for implementers of projects</u>	Number
15.	<u>Number of implementers of area projects participating in consultations</u>	Number
16.	<u>Organized meeting of LAG Board</u>	Number
17.	<u>Organized meeting of Supervision group of Strategy implementation</u>	Number

LAG shall be also responsible for the achievement of indicators specified in the Strategy on control of its implementation.

**Table 5.5. Control indicators of strategy implementation**

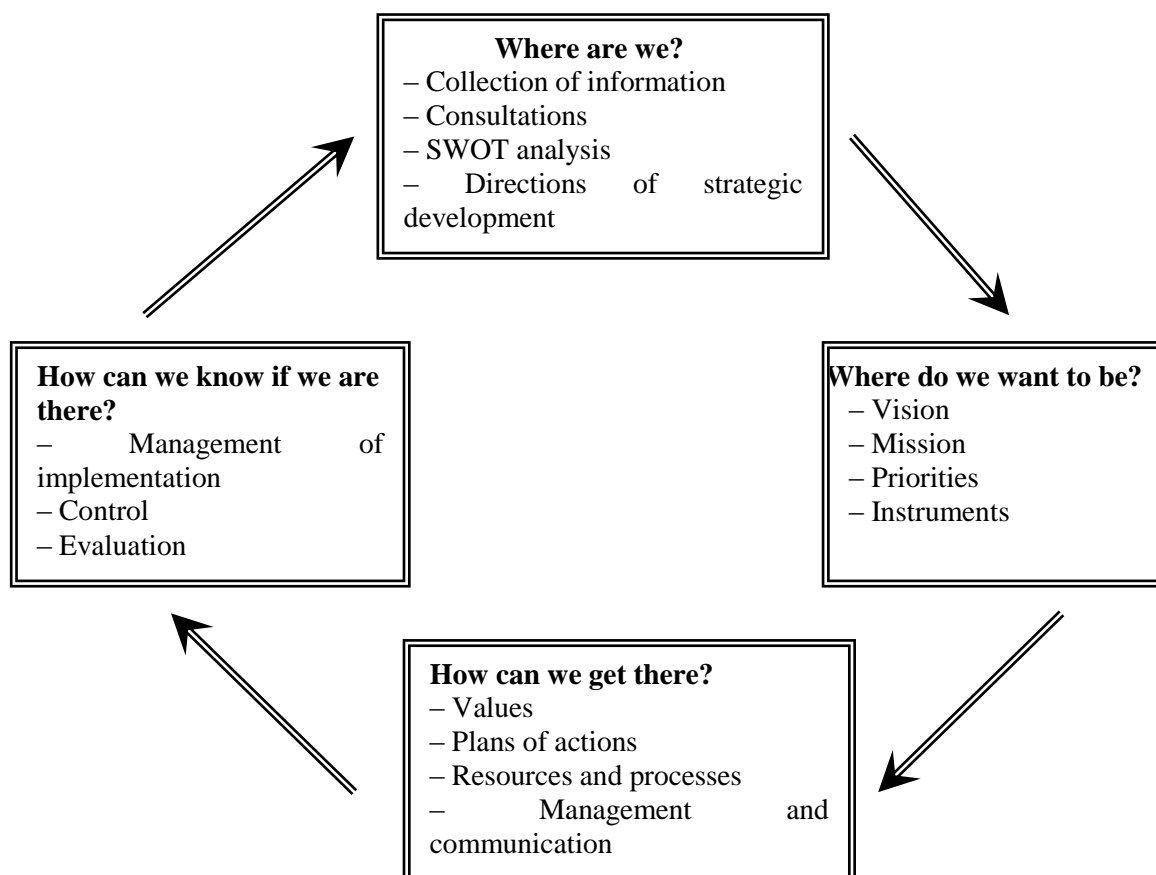
Ref. No.	Indicators	Measures	Number
1.	Prepared and implemented projects	Number	60
2.	Beneficiaries	Number	28
3.	Rural areas (rural districts), where projects are implemented	Number	20
4.	Supported projects of rural area renewal	Number	11
5.	Supported projects of development of countryside tourism	Number	2
6.	Created work places:	Number	2
6.1	For men	Number / Per cent	1
6.2	For women	Number / Per cent	1
6.3	Persons up to 30 years old	Number / Per cent	1
7.	Renewed and equipped public premises/houses	Number	7
8.	Equipped zones for sport activities/rest	Number	12
9.	Renewed and preserved objects of country heritage	Number	2
10.	Renewed and preserved components of countryside landscape	Number	12
11.	Rural area residents who shall use the results of projects	Per cent	70

Periodically observed and recorded indicators shall allow LAG to evaluate the development of strategy implementation and to seek for focused results.

## VI. SŪDUVA LAG TERRITORY AREA DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PREPARATION METHODOLOGY

Sūduva LAG prepared the strategy of area development following the main principals of LEADER programme by combining it with common practice of strategic planning. Also the main provisions of direction No. 3 “Life quality in rural areas and diversification of rural economy” and direction No. 4 “Implementation of LEADER method” of the programme of rural development in Lithuania for the period of 2007-2013 have been applied in preparation of the strategy. Prepared strategy of area development of Sūduva LAG territory complies with the requirements of “Regulations of selection of area development strategies” verified by the order of the Minister of Agriculture No. 3D-549 of 12 December 2007.

General outline of strategy preparation is provided in Figure 6.1. This outline is used by local activity groups in Ireland in preparation of strategies which comply with the principles of LEADER method. This outline has also been tested in conditions of Lithuania in implementation of the project of the programme of Baltic rural communities’ partnership in the period of 2000-2003.



**Figure 6.1. General outline of strategy preparation of area development of Sūduva LAG territory**

The Strategy was constantly prepared from May 2007 till July 2008.

Despite the main works of strategy preparation a lot of attention was paid to consolidation LAG itself as organization. In work meeting the main areas of activity of LAG were formed, organizational structure was prepared, functions were distributed, primary plans of works were prepared. Also LAG was looking for relations of interterritorial and international communication during the preparation of the strategy.

Preparation of the strategy was performed in stages. The following are the descriptions of the stages of preparation of area development strategy.

**1. Stage of preparation.** Consideration of LAG values, general working rules; agreement with local government on provisions of strategy preparation principles. Before preparation of integrated area development strategy of the whole territory LAG considered the main things which are important when working together. Therefore, the values of LAG were specified. They are important not only in preparation of the strategy but also in its implementation.

One more important step was consolidation of cooperation between sectors. LAG representatives met with the heads of municipalities who were informed about existing situation and necessary support. When the necessary support was ensured during the meetings, local activity group responsibly started the works of strategy preparation.

**2. Involvement of local residents and organizations into strategy preparation.** In the process of preparation from bottom to the top principle was emphasized which does not only allow for local residents to participate in planning of future of their country but also obligates to be active participants of this process. During strategy preparation period information distribution was performed using close relations between rural communities and good-natured communication with LAG. The abovementioned principle required to the ways to allow providing and receiving information from the places quickly.

During strategy preparation LAG organized meetings with local residents. During the meetings residents were asked to express their ideas, questions, to give suggestions. Questionnaire of the residents allowed collecting important information for strategy preparation. Residents evaluated the existing state and tendencies of the places of their residence, expressed the main problems, suggested ways of problem solving. Also rural communities together with the elderships did their “homework” (see more in chapter 2.8).

The main aims of involvement of the residents are development of democracy and public spirit, and approaching of decision making to local residents.

**3. Analysis of social economic situation and needs of the residents in the territory.** This is the stage which required a lot of time and effort. Specific and detailed analysis influences effectiveness of chosen priorities and instruments. Necessary information for evaluation was collected in several ways:

- *analysis of official statistical data* which was carried out using data base of the Department of Statistics to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, and the other data was collected from local and governmental institutions. Statistical data was collected pursuant to the outline of data collection prepared in advance;

- *questionnaires for local residents*. The research of needs, opinions and evaluations of rural residents was performed by the survey of local residents. A questionnaire was prepared together with consultants and it was supplemented by local residents from all LAG territory. The aim of the survey was to see the main problems in the area, to find out the opinion of the residents on which domains need financing first, to collect suggestions for problem solving. One of LEADER methods was used to create the questionnaire – determination of territory profile (territory profile was described after generalization of evaluation of the state and tendencies of eight components of territorial capital and their separate elements made by residents);

- *“homework” of communities and elderships*. Rural communities within the limits of elderships carried out the analysis of interested parties, SWOT analysis and wrote short presentations of localities of their residence about existing situation and assumed perspective (see more in part 2.8);

- *interview of focus groups*. Following the interview questionnaires prepared in advance, meetings and interviews were performed with two main target groups: women and the youth. Participants of the meetings evaluated the situation, expressed their ideas, they had a possibility to discuss and specify the main accents;

- *analysis of existing strategic territorial and national documents* helped LAG Board to decide on the priorities and instruments of the strategy. The aim was the priorities, instruments and areas of activity which could supplement existing strategic municipal documents and specific instruments indicated there. Also attention was paid to combination of the aims defined by the priorities and instruments of the strategy with the provisions of strategic development in Lithuania specified in national documents;

- *systemization and analysis of collected quantitative and qualitative information*. Different information about the territory collected in different ways had to be generalized to get a detailed picture of the existing situation. Therefore, the quantitative information was combined with qualitative information according to specific topics.

**4. SWOT analysis of the territory.** On the basis of social economic situation in the territory and analysis of the needs of residents, the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) was carried out. Strengths and weaknesses of the territory were determined in accordance with the components of sustainable rural development: economics, social factors, culture and environment protection. Combination of PESTLEE and SEPTEMBER methods was used for identification of opportunities and threats, i.e. factors were specified in political, economic, social technological, legal, environmental, equal opportunity, educational, market, business change, regulation and ethical aspects which may influence the processes of the development of territory.

When as many as possible of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified, members of LAG evaluated the importance of each of them for LAG territory. Following generalization of evaluations by LAG members 5 main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified and the possible strategic scenarios were created on their basis.

**5. Modeling of strategic development directions (strategic scenarios) of the territory.** The method of SWOT/TOWS analysis (it is one of SWOT method modifications which uses specified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the territory for the choice of strategic directions) was used. The essence of this method is consideration of interaction of five most important strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the territory: 1) do threats weaken the strengths? 2) will threats make weaknesses deeper? 3) do opportunities make strengths stronger? 4) do opportunities allow overcome weaknesses? 5) do strengths allow using opportunities? 6) do strengths allow resisting threats? 7) do weaknesses restrict using opportunities? 8) do weaknesses strengthen the influence of threats?

The most important stage for further preparation of the strategy was the stage where LAG members generated potential strategic decisions on the future in consideration of interaction of SWOT points. 4 groups of interaction were identified: strengths and opportunities; strengths and threats; weaknesses and opportunities; weaknesses and threats.

Following generalization of generated ideas it was possible to identify priorities, instruments and fields of activity of the strategy.

**6. Formation of vision of the territory and LAG mission.** LAG members formed the vision of territory as well as the mission of their organization after analysis of the situation. During the formation of the vision each member of LAG work group answered the following questions: For what period the vision is formed? What will be paid most attention? How the situation will improve? During the analysis of answers of each LAG member to these questions the general vision of the territory was created.



Defining LAG mission, LAG members thought of which part of vision they undertake to implement in the period of 2007-2013 while implementing the prepared vision, what is the purpose and function of this organization in the processes of rural development. It was important in the formation that the mission is clear, real, acceptable and motivating.

**7. Specification of priorities, instruments and fields of activity of the strategy, creation of financial plan.** In preparation of the strategy a lot of attention was paid to the priorities and instruments which would help to seek for mission and their implementation would make the highest added value. Following the meetings and consultations with rural communities, LAG checked if they correctly interpreted the information collected during the analysis of the situation. Also local residents and organizations had to decide in which domains of public life the changes and investments are the most necessary, and if they are ready to initiate specified changes.

Area development strategy of Sūduva LAG territory includes: two priorities, 4 instruments and 3 fields of activity. The biggest part (83 per cent) of the support funds is assigned for the first priority where the specified instruments are of investment character. This priority also includes the mandatory instrument of “Rural area renewal and development” which is assigned 79,25 per cent of the amount for financing of the projects. The second priority includes two instruments and it is assigned the amount of 17 per cent of the support for the projects. In financial plan the planned amount of the support for each instrument is outlined according to the year. Following valid provisions of suitability of area development strategies, LAG assigned 20 per cent of all amount of the support for Sūduva LAG territory for administration of strategy implementation.

**8. Preparation of the system of plan, control and evaluation of strategy implementation.** Sūduva LAG paid a lot of attention to planning of Strategy implementation. LAG intends to establish their office, to accept employees and to consult submitters and implementers of area projects. At first pursuant to financial plan of the strategy it was planned to call for applications of area proposals by specifying in which year and according to which instruments area projects would be selected. Also the time for evaluation of the projects which shall be organized by LAG is specified.

The strategy also specifies the system of control, the plan of control instruments is prepared. Also the list of indicators of strategy implementation is prepared achievement of which shall be constantly observed.

Strategy implementation shall be organized following the provisions of administrative regulations of “The area development strategies implemented pursuant to the instrument “Implementation of area development strategies” of the direction no.4 “LEADER method implementation” of the programme of rural development for the period of 2007-2013”. N

**9. Public presentation of the strategy.** Following strategy preparation, the conference in which the strategy was presented was organized. Participants of the conference were local activity groups of neighbouring districts and also partners from Poland. Agreement of rural communities on prepared area development strategy of Sūduva LAG territory was registered during the conference.