



2025-2030



Valga Museum Development Plan

2025

Valga Museum collects, preserves and researches the cultural heritage of Valga County, safeguarding and communicating the region's identity. Its mission is to deepen understanding of the diverse history of Valga and the Estonian–Latvian border region and strengthen a sense of belonging to this unique cultural area.

Valga Museum is housed in the historic Sääde Society House, a building symbolising both the development of civil society in Valga and the town's cultural diversity. Alongside the building, the Museum's greatest asset is its collection of approximately 85,000 museum objects, including extensive photographic, historical, archaeological, numismatic, ethnographic, zoological, botanical, art and geological collections.

Recent decades have been a period of intensive development and change for the Museum. We have restored our historic home, modernised our exhibitions and developed our educational activities. At the same time, like many other cultural institutions, we have been affected by crises, unstable funding and changes in visitor behaviour. Nevertheless, we have remained committed to enriching the cultural and educational life of the region.

For the period 2025–2030, Valga Museum has set a clear objective: to become a community-centred museum whose impact extends beyond the local area and across the border, with activities founded on participation, trust and professional expertise. Our priorities are to modernise the visitor experience, work collaboratively with the community, develop educational and research activities, and ensure the organisation's sustainability.

The development plan draws on input from the Valga Museum team, partners, the community and policymakers. It aims to strengthen the Museum's role as a community connector, a cultural representative of an international border town, and a provider of inspiring experiences and knowledge for all visitors, while also ensuring responsible stewardship of its collections.

Our vision

Valga Museum is an attractive and engaging centre for education, research and experiences, recognised throughout Estonia and internationally. The Museum actively participates in shaping its community and society, drawing on its historical and cultural foundations while preserving, strengthening and passing them on in diverse ways.

Our mission

Valga Museum's mission is to collect, preserve, research and interpret the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Valga County and its surrounding area for research, educational and experiential purposes.

**Valga Museum has
the spark!**



Current situation

Key strengths

- ♦ Location at the heart of a border town: the Museum occupies the historic Sāde Society House, which embodies Valga's traditions of civil society and cultural diversity.
- ♦ A diverse and valuable collection: the Museum holds approximately 85,000 objects that vividly convey the region's history and identity.
- ♦ Strong educational partnerships: systematic cooperation with educational institutions in Valga means that almost half of the county's nursery and school pupils participate in a Valga Museum educational programme during the academic year. We also work closely with Valka Art School, with which we have jointly organised exhibitions.
- ♦ Multicultural identity and cross-border potential: Valga's unique position on the border between two countries offers an opportunity to serve as a bridge for international cultural cooperation.
- ♦ Active exhibition programme: the Museum hosts more than ten temporary exhibitions a year on average, some originating from other museums in Estonia and abroad.
- ♦ Active Friends of Valga Museum Society: one of the Museum's core communities, supporting its activities through voluntary work.



Key challenges

- Outdated permanent exhibition and display environment: the Museum's permanent exhibition needs updating in both content and presentation to engage local people and visitors from further afield.
- Insufficient storage facilities and conservation conditions: the storage space required for the long-term preservation of museum objects does not fully meet contemporary standards.
- Fragmented capacity and resources: limited financial and human resources affect the continuity of activities and programmes, digitisation of collections and exhibition development.
- Need for more systematic involvement of volunteers and partners: although community interest exists, volunteer management and the maintenance of partnerships require a more purposeful approach.
- Untapped potential in digital solutions and accessibility: greater attention needs to be paid to developing digital content and accessible services, particularly in education and exhibitions.

Key external factors

- ♦ Developments in cultural and education policy: changes in national priorities, including the restructuring of funding models, may affect the Museum's sustainability.
- ♦ Local government expectations and changing role: the strategic priorities of Valga Municipality place expectations on the Museum as a regional development actor and a partner in tourism and education.
- ♦ Demographic change and youth outmigration: a shrinking and ageing population requires the Museum to adapt its activities to the needs of older people and families.
- ♦ Growing expectations of community participation and openness: museums are increasingly expected to provide platforms for community co-creation and support cultural cohesion.
- ♦ Estonian – Latvian cross-border cooperation and EU funding opportunities: regional programmes and European funding schemes offer opportunities to expand international cooperation and increase visibility.

Objectives

1. Valga Museum is a community-centred heritage centre that strengthens regional identity

- Valga Museum's events support its core objectives and cater for audiences ranging from nursery children to older people.
- Valga Museum's gallery is modern, attractive and offers a substantial programme.
- The Museum's outdoor area has been developed and integrated with Sade Park.
- The Museum's activities focus primarily on the community.
- The Museum's permanent exhibition has been renewed and appeals to both the local community and visitors to Valga.

Indicator	Baseline 2024	Target 2030
Number of participants in community programmes per year	1000	1400
Co-created or community-curated exhibitions per year	4	6
Number of events using outdoor area and park per year	12	15



Average visitor satisfaction (Google Business Profile rating)	4,5	4,8
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2. Valga Museum is a centre for education and lifelong learning

- Valga Museum offers high-quality educational and leisure programmes for all levels of education.
- The Museum is an active partner in youth work and involves volunteers in its activities.
- The Museum's educational services are diverse and support lifelong learning and adult education.
- Valga Museum is accessible to as many people as possible.

Indicator	Baseline 2024	Target 2030
Proportion of county nursery and school pupils attending educational programmes	35.7%	42%
Adult education programmes / participants	23 / 990	25 / 1500
Proportion of accessible educational programmes		

3. Valga Museum is a recognised research centre for the cultural history of Valga County and the Estonian-Latvian border region

- Valga Museum plays a significant role in coordinating research into the shared history and cultural heritage of the town of Valga, Valga County and Estonia and Latvia.
- The Museum has developed a well-functioning network of local historians.
- Continued productive cooperation with Valka Local History Museum (Cimze Museum).

VALGA MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2025–2030

Indicator	Baseline 2024	Target 2030
Research and local history publications during the period	7 (2019–2024) -	9 (2025–2030)
Active members of the local historians' network	15	20
Cross-border cooperation projects	4	6
Seminars and conferences organised per year		

4. Valga Museum's collections are professionally cared for, accessible and developed

- Storage conditions in Valga Museum's collection stores ensure the long-term preservation of museum objects.
- Systematic collecting based on the collections development plan, together with cooperation and information exchange with other museums.
- The recording of museum objects in MuIS continues; the collections have been inventoried and analysed.
- Systematic digitisation of collections continues in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the National Heritage Board.

Indicator	Baseline 2024	Target 2030
Proportion of museum objects digitised	20%	45%
Museaalide I sisestamine MuIS-i	39%	60%
Proportion of storage space meeting conservation requirements (%)	60%	75%

5. Valga Museum is a strong organisation with a motivated team

- Valga Museum has a strong, cohesive and effective team and an extensive network of partners.
- The Museum involves volunteers and cooperates with civil society organisations.
- The Museum explores opportunities to develop the fourth floor of the Säde building for its core activities.
- The Museum seeks additional funding to implement its development plans.

Indicator	Baseline 2024	Target 2030
Number of team training per year	2	4
Number of civil society organisations and partner organisations	25	30
Number of regular volunteers	10	15
Number of funding and cooperation projects per year (including EU funding)	7	10