

30th anniversary of the Employee  
Foundation of the VKR Group

# Green areas and outdoor life program

17 inspiring projects in 13 countries

  
**EMPLOYEE  
FOUNDATION**

Let's work  
it out  
together



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Foundation of the VKR Group

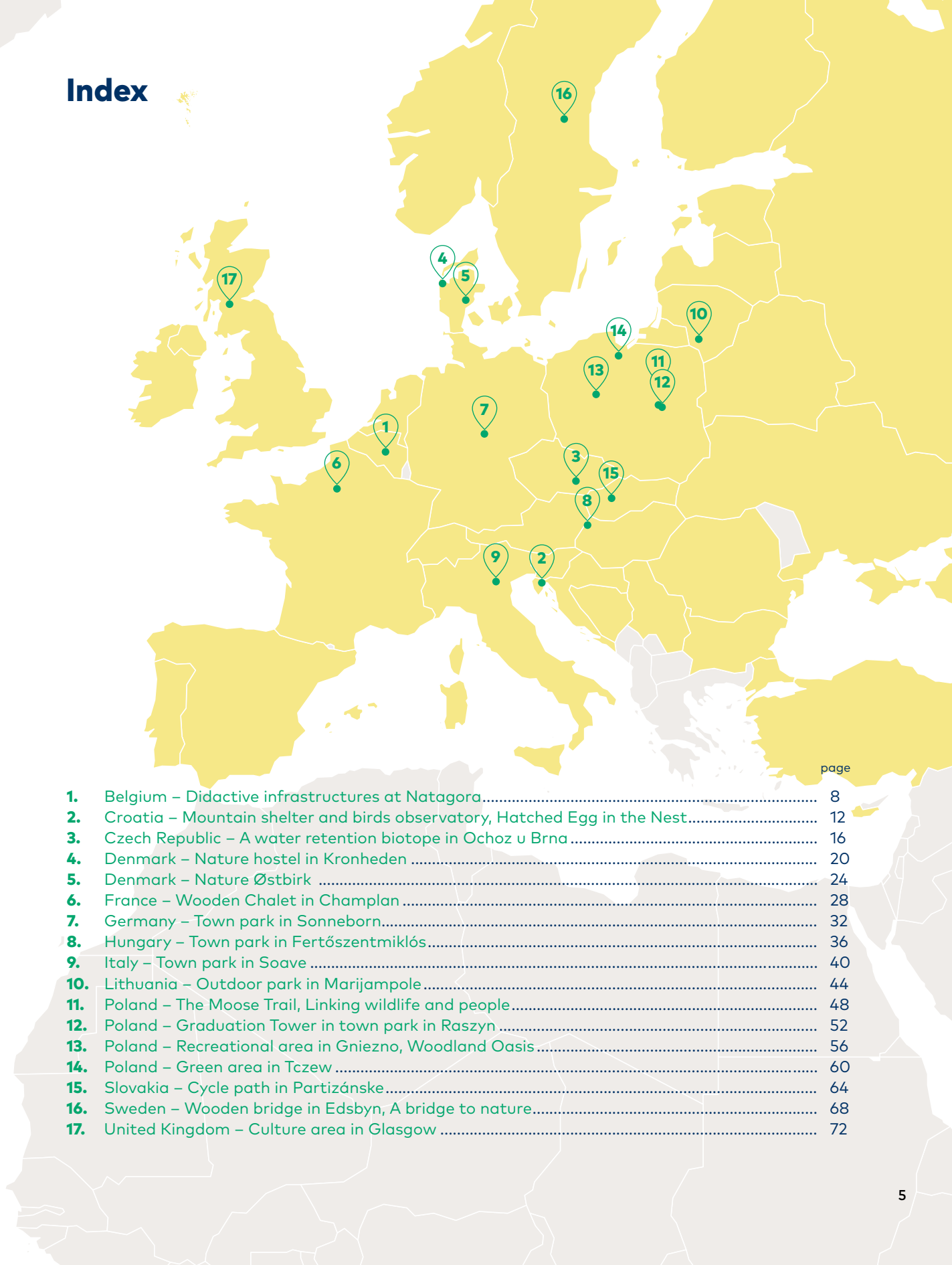
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About Employee Foundation


Since its inception in 1991, the Employee Foundation has dedicated itself to enhancing the lives of employees and their immediate families around the globe. Over the years, the Foundation has made over 11,070 grants, totaling over 35 million €, benefiting more than 8,112 employees. Beyond individual support, the Foundation has funded more than 2,958 projects near VKR Group companies, fostering a stronger sense of community and well-being.

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*"The sun, the blue sky and the fresh air – in nature, we feel alive and free. This touches something very deep in us as humans."*

**Michel Langrand, Chair of the Board**

## **Foreword Green Areas and Outdoor Life Program**

In our fast-paced modern world, where urbanisation is on the rise and most people spend a staggering **90% of their time indoors**, the need for life outdoors with daylight and fresh air is more important than ever. What was once taken for granted – time spent outdoors – has become increasingly rare and precious. The companies in the VKR Group have worked tirelessly to bring **daylight and fresh air** into the spaces where people live and work, recognizing the essential role these elements play in **human health and happiness**.

To mark the **30th anniversary of the Employee Foundation in 2021**, a bold initiative has been launched: €6 million has been allocated to fund original and inspiring projects to create more green spaces and outdoor recreation facilities. This new programme – **Green Areas and Outdoor Life** – invited employees and communities to submit their innovative ideas, resulting in support for 14 outstanding projects near VKR Group sites. These projects serve as beacons, transforming nearby areas into true outdoor gems where people can repeatedly go and live outdoors, improving both their well-being and their sense of community. They not only provide accessible outdoor environments, but also foster a deep sense of pride in giving back to society, embodying an important facet of our Model Company philosophy.

Following the success of the first round, the programme was re-launched in the summer of 2023, with three more projects receiving funding. Today, we are proud to say that **17 projects in 13 different countries** have come to fruition, benefiting our employees, their families and the wider community. Despite the **well-documented physical and mental health benefits of being outdoors**, they are often overlooked in everyday life. By creating inviting green spaces close to where VKR Group employees work, we are making it easier for people to embrace the outdoors as a natural part of their lives.

And this is just the beginning. The overwhelming enthusiasm for this initiative has strengthened our commitment to the cause. The Employee Foundation, together with our dedicated colleagues, will continue to support and expand these lighthouse projects through **Reconnect with Nature programme**, ensuring that more communities can enjoy the countless benefits of the outdoors for years to come.

We invite you to immerse yourself in this book, which celebrates our journey together, 17 remarkable projects and the many passionate individuals who have contributed to their realisation. As you explore these pages, we hope you will be inspired to **visit our Green Areas and Outdoor Life projects**, and to consider proposing new ones as part of our Reconnect with Nature programme, launching in 2025.

Together, we can continue to create environments where people can thrive in harmony with nature.

Let's work it out together!

**Michel Langrand**  
Chair of the Board  
The Employee Foundation  
of the VKR Group





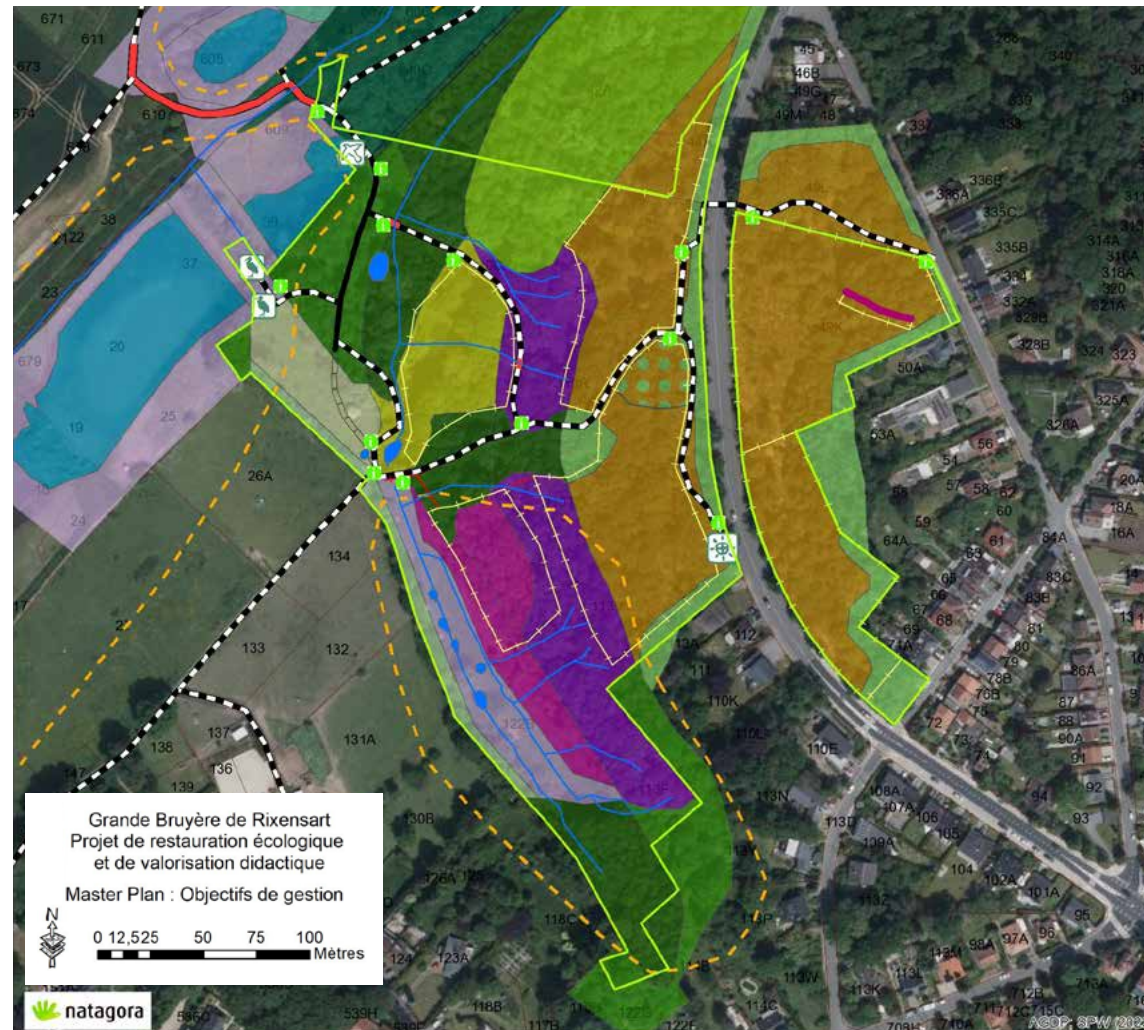


# Didactive infrastructures at Natagora

Country, location: **Belgium, Wallonia, Rixensart, réserve naturelle Natagora de la Prairie du Carpu et de la Grande Bruyère**

The project consists of the **restoration of habitats of high biological interest in the "Grande Bruyère / Prairie du Carpu" nature reserve**. This site is located near Brussels, in the centre of the commune of Rixensart, close to schools, public transport and the VELUX Belgian Sales Company (9 km). The project will make the nature reserve more accessible and attractive to the public.





The Grande Bruyère / Prairie du Carpu nature reserve is exceptional for many reasons. The **soil conditions** are very variable in terms of grain size, acidity and humidity. This explains the great variety of **vegetation types** found in the reserve, given its relatively small size (around 6 hectares). These biotopes were once maintained by extensive practices such as grazing and mowing, which disappeared at the beginning of the 20th century due to the intensification of agriculture and urbanisation. Some parts of the reserve have been abandoned and spontaneously recolonised by pioneer shrubs and trees, causing the disappearance of plant and animal species typical of heathland and grassland.

The first step in our project is to **restore the open habitats**. This involves clearing overgrown vegetation, removing tree stumps and restoring the natural beauty of the area. To further enhance the reserve, we are focusing on **revitalising the dormant seed bank in the soil**. We are also **installing fencing** to allow extensive grazing by sheep to maintain the restored landscape.

Due to its proximity to some urban centres, the site is currently used as a **recreational area** by many walkers who explore the site, sometimes with negative effects on the soil, the typical vegetation and the tranquillity of the water birds. The intention is to **bring more people into the reserve** to reconnect with nature, but at the same time we want to avoid any further deterioration of the reserve. This is why we want to provide educational opportunities and we are implementing various facilities within the reserve. Visitors will have access to **new signposted footpaths**, with around a dozen informative **boardwalks** and a number of **wooden bridges** over streams and springs. The **trails** will allow walkers to access viewing platforms and **observatories** (for birds, but not only). These observatories are designed to enhance the natural beauty of the reserve, while being perfectly integrated into the landscape.

We expect this project to have a very positive impact on **VELUX Belgium** employees, both for those who will experience the reserve in their free time, but also as a strong landmark for potential outdoor activities of the different teams, including outdoor meetings and volunteer work to maintain the reserve.

If you visit the reserve in winter, do not forget to bring your waterproofs, as some areas are particularly wet!

PROJECT name:	<b>Didactive infrastructures at Natagora</b>
Country, location:	<b>Belgium, Wallonia, Rixensart, réserve naturelle Natagora de la Prairie du Carpu et de la Grande Bruyère</b>
Applicant:	<b>Natagora asbl</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>VELUX Belgium</b>
Under development	

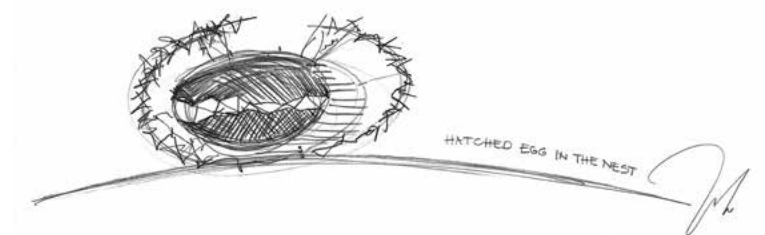




# Mountain shelter and birds observatory, Hatched Egg in the Nest

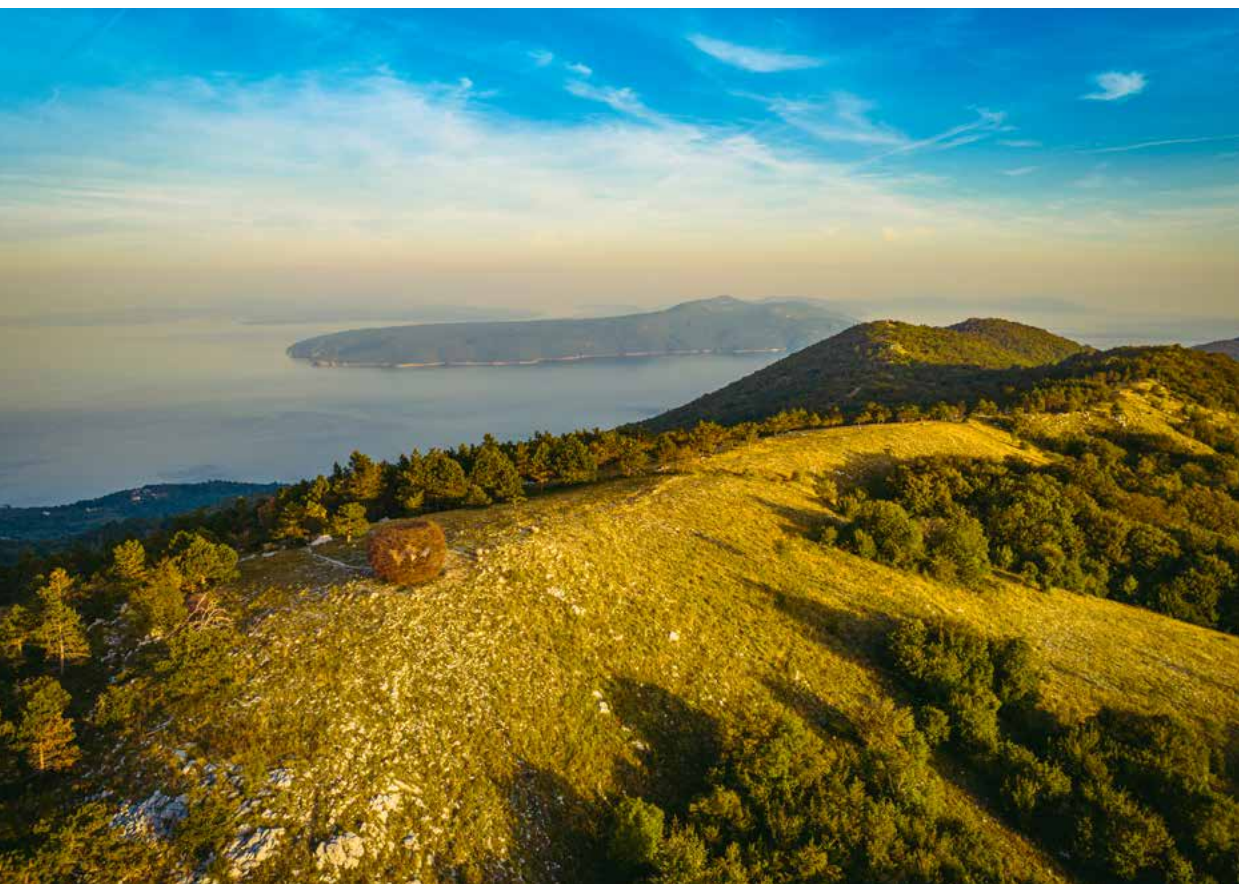
Country, location: Croatia, Učka Nature Park  
(Kremenjak, 847 nm)

In the Učka mountains – a protected nature park and a habitat for more than 170 bird species – **a spectacular shelter for hikers/birdwatchers** was designed and created by architect Ivan Juretić. The shelter is energy independent sustainable design.



When the call for Green Areas and Outdoor Life project applications came from the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group, it immediately struck a chord. Here was an opportunity to create something meaningful, something that could bring people closer to nature and promote well-being by encouraging outdoor experiences. Together with **architect Ivan Juretić**, we responded with enthusiasm and a shared passion for this project believing that it could make a real difference, and followed architect Ivan Juretić's ambitious idea to create a spectacular





shelter for hikers on the long-distance hiking trail Via Adriatica and birdwatchers in the **Učka Nature Park**, overlooking Kvarner bay, Rijeka and the islands of Cres and Lošinj.

Ivan Juretić's role as the lead architect and project manager has been instrumental in bringing this dream to life. His passion for mountain huts and shelters, coupled with his infectious enthusiasm, propelled us forward. Ivan is not only a visionary and a free thinker, but also a precise and punctual project manager who kept the project on track from start to finish. His professionalism united our team of volunteers and contributors, creating space for collaboration and mutual commitment to complete this ambitious project on time. The project had **educational and artistic component** and featured collaboration with **biologist and ornithologist Iva Šoštaić from Biom** and **Kate Foley and School Ballet Ensemble from Vežica**.

The end-result – a unique and inspiring structure we call "The Nest" – is a true work of art. Its innovative design, featuring a symbolic nest with a hatched egg at its core, serves multiple purposes: it is a **safe shelter for mountaineers** and a **tranquil bird-watching point** that blends seamlessly into the natural surroundings. Visitors can find shelter within its walls while enjoying the view of the **majestic griffon vultures** flying over Učka from the nearby island of Cres, with a spectacular **view of the Adriatic Sea**. This thoughtful design reflects our intention to create a space that honors and harmonises with nature, offering protection from the elements while encouraging a mindful connection to the landscape.

Since its completion and opening in June 2023, The Nest has become a landmark on Učka mountain, attracting many nature lovers, mountaineers, and bird watchers alike. It is visually striking, but it feels as if it has always been **part of the landscape**. This project is a testament to the synergy between people and nature, encouraging all who visit to **appreciate nature and the benefits it brings to our wellbeing**.

There are few projects in life that we can look back on with true pride and fulfilment. For me, The Nest is such a project. It is a true labor of love and a reminder of the powerful impact that a supportive **community and a shared vision** can have. My hope is that The Nest will inspire many to connect with nature, improve their wellbeing, and experience the peace that such environments can bring. – *Jasna Jelinek, VELUX Hrvatska (2023)*

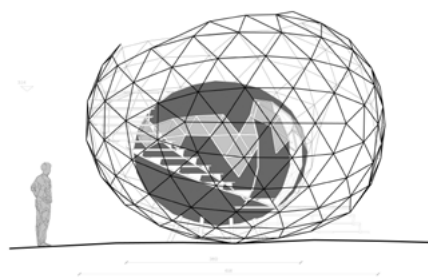
PROJECT name: **Mountain shelter and birds observatory, Hatched Egg in the Nest**

Country, location: **Croatia, Učka park of nature**

Applicant: **Croatian Mountaineering Association**

VKR Group company: **VELUX Hrvatska, Croatia**

Inauguration day: 30th June 2023







# A water retention biotope in Ochoz u Brna

Country, location: Czech Republic, Ochoz u Brna

As part of the municipality's natural beauty preservation efforts, a plan was developed in cooperation with the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic and the Administration of the Moravian Karst Protected Landscape Area for a **water retention biotope on the land along the Ochoz Creek** which would contribute to the protection of the cave ecosystems to ensure that they are preserved for future generations. Last but not least, it will become the starting point of a number of **hiking trails** in the area and an **educational element** raising awareness of the importance of protecting water sources to life on our planet.





### Water treatment & retention

The biotope will improve water quality through wetland plants in the riparian zone and a floating island designed to filter nitrogen and phosphorus while reducing harmful cyanobacteria. This modern technology, used in small reservoirs, will improve the quality of run-off water and help protect the fragile cave ecosystems of the Moravian Karst, especially during heavy rainfall.

### Biodiversity and habitat restoration

The project will create a thriving habitat for rare and protected plant species, many of which are already present in the area. Biodiversity is expected to increase, particularly for aquatic plants and amphibians that depend on shallow water habitats. The littoral zones and floating island will also provide nesting sites for birds and other wildlife.

### Recreation & education

Designed as a peaceful retreat, the biotope will promote the well-being of local residents and visitors. Its integration into the educational nature trails of the Moravian Karst will highlight the importance of water conservation. Public transport links from Brno will make the site easily accessible, offering opportunities for relaxation, learning and seasonal activities such as natural swimming and ice skating.

### Hiking & exploring

As a gateway to the extensive network of trails in the Moravian Karst, the biotope will serve as an important starting point for exploration. Visitors can follow marked trails to nearby caves, educational panels and the local scout base - an important eco-educational centre. The site will cater for both casual walkers and experienced hikers, offering a variety of routes through the region's stunning landscapes.

PROJECT name:	<b>A water retention biotope in Ochoz u Brna</b>
Country, location:	<b>Czech Republic, Ochoz u Brna</b>
Applicant:	<b>Obecní úřad Ochoz u Brna</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>VELUX Česká republika, s.r.o., Brno</b>
Under development (opening date June 12th, 2025)	





# The Kronheden NatureHostel

Country, location: **Denmark, Kronheden**

Establishment of a **nature hostel in Kronheden/Stråsø** close to a future national park. It involves **renovation** of the existing main building and construction of new first-class **educational facilities** for schools and hikers etc. The project includes an observatory platform for viewing the night sky. Project was designed by Labland architects.

A long time ago, just after the First World War, a man got off the train at Ulfborg station in West Jutland and walked towards the moors and forests. In those days there weren't any wolves or too many deer, but there was a lot of sandy soil and children in the scattered farmhouses. In spring and summer the children worked the land with their parents. Only in winter were they allowed to go to school. The man was to become their "winter teacher". He literally moved into the school, where part of the building was the teacher's home. A few years later, a female teacher, Thyra, moved into another room in the school. After 16 years they gave up and got married. Until they retired in 1957, they taught generations of children about the world around them. The faraway world of foreign countries and rivers with exotic names, but also the archaeological and botanical treasures hidden right under their noses.





The school closed in the 1960s but continued as a summer camp, mainly for schoolchildren, run by a group of teachers, all volunteers. The idea was the same as that of the Kaae's: To give children a chance to open their eyes and hearts to the nature around them, because knowing and loving nature makes it easier to protect and preserve it. Today, the summer camp still exists, but from next year it will coexist with a **"nature hostel"** for smaller groups or individuals. Some of us are the children of the original teachers. We grew up here and have a deep affection for the place, the surroundings and the special type of landscape it represents, with the ever-changing colours of the grasses and the flowering heather in August when the sandy hills turn purple. Thanks to the support of the Employee Foundation and the Green Areas and Outdoor Life programme, as well as the support of two other foundations, the old school in the Klausie forest is now being transformed into **a modern spring-board for those seeking time in nature**. The old building will be completely renovated with modern facilities and a completely new service building with an indoor and outdoor kitchen. The most exciting feature will be the **wide wooden staircase** at one end of the new building. Where does it lead? Nowhere. Just closer to the stars that shine so clearly here, away from the light pollution. If you bring your own equipment, you can sleep there too, right next to the Milky Way. Soon, in a nearby beech grove, a brand new, architecturally stunning Douglas fir **shelter will be built**, also thanks to the Employee Foundation. The timing couldn't be better. Just 600 metres from the hostel, a national park with 3,600 hectares of forest and moorland is about to open. The wolf has returned. So have the beaver, the crane and all kinds of birds of prey. An old long-distance footpath, the Drivvejen, is being brushed up and will pass just outside the hostel. We no longer feel so far away, but right in the middle of it all. Just like old Alfred Kaae felt when he got off the train in the middle of nowhere and turned it into the middle of somewhere. Morten Beiter

PROJECT name:	<b>Nature hostel in Kronheden</b>
Country, location:	<b>Denmark, Kronheden</b>
Applicant:	<b>Den Selvejende Institution Kronhede Lejrscole</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>DOVISTA A/S, Ringkøbing, Denmark</b>
Under development, opening planned for Dec 2024	





# Nature Østbirk

Country, location: **Denmark, Østbirk**

By exploiting the natural dynamics of the landscape, natural magnets underpinning and flanking particular views, points and meanings in the landscape. The project includes: **a celestial disc, a sky amphitheater, five natural magnets and a path.**

At the far end of Campus Østbirk lies the new nature area, Nature Østbirk.

**Within a 30-year-old forest, hiking trails and architect-designed nature attractions, viewpoints, and rest areas have been established. Old ponds have been excavated, and vegetation has been cleared, where necessary, to create access, views and light.**

The area was previously overgrown and almost inaccessible, but by improving accessibility, employees, residents, and tourists can now hike in the area and enjoy the natural surroundings, holding meetings, and gathering for social events. School children can investigate the shallow pond for insects and amphibians. The nature attractions are established to take a rest, enjoy the view and reflect. The nature attractions are designed to be used for training and exercise by VELUX Employees and local residents.





More than a hundred people can be gathered around the large stone setting called the **Moon Circle**, with a diameter of 30 meters. If you look carefully you will see the corners of the world marked in the stones.

Colleagues from various departments at VELUX in Østbirk have collaborated with the **architects DET BLÅ** to transform the area. Materials, wood and stone, for the architect-designed nature attractions were harvested locally, and **local craftsmen** have helped bring the architects' ideas to life.

In connection with the transformation of the area, attention has also been paid to how **biodiversity** in the area can be promoted in the future. As an experiment, trees with genes from Caspian forests have also been planted, as they are believed to be particularly resistant to climate change.

A group of residents has followed the project's development and helped communicate the **area's history** and new potential to the town's residents, the school, the sports association, the church, and others. The regional tourist organization has included Nature Østbirk on its list of regional nature experiences and the local citizens' association in Østbirk has showcased the area in a film. As a result, the area has also been promoted to a broader public.

A rise in the grass marks the contours of an **Iron Age house**. There are indeed registered prehistoric remains in the form of an Iron Age village with up to twenty-five houses in the area and beneath the future LKR Innovation House. Nature Østbirk is thus situated in an area where people have roamed for thousands of years, and the intention with the nature area has also been to bring people closer to nature.

In the future, Nature Østbirk will be part of the green areas around the **LKR Innovation House**, thereby contributing to a green framework for the new product development site at VELUX and serving as an **invitation to the outside world to come closer to nature, daylight, and fresh air.**

PROJECT name:	<b>Nature Østbirk</b>
Country, location:	<b>Denmark, Østbirk</b>
Applicant:	<b>Project group SØHØJLANDET</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>VELUX A/S and A/S Østbirk Bygningsindustri</b>
Inauguration day: 7 May 2024	





# House of Nature and the Environment

Country, location: **France, Champlan**

The House is designed as an **educational and community space** within the public and communal gardens of Champlan. It aims to transform citizens' perceptions of nature, promote eco-friendly practices, and preserve local **biodiversity** through **educational and community activities**.

Champlan, a commune with less than 3,000 inhabitants and an area of 368 hectares, is located 18 kilometres from Paris and 8 kilometres from Morangis, the headquarters of VELUX France. The house has been designed as an educational and community space within the **public and urban gardens of Champlan**. It aims to change people's perception of nature, promote environmentally friendly practices and preserve local biodiversity through educational and community activities.





### Project Description

The House is constructed on municipal land as part of a larger reclassification operation, including allotment gardens, educational vegetable gardens, and orchards. Built following ecological building principles, the wooden chalet serves multiple purposes:

**Educational Activities:** Gardening and cookery workshops to teach sustainable gardening practices and reduce waste.

**Thematic Exhibitions:** Covering environmental issues, solutions and moderation of the footprint of human activity, such as agroecology, agroforestry, permaculture...

**Community Events:** Events such as plant bartering to foster community interaction and biodiversity.

**Storage and Facilities:** Space for gardening equipment and the apiary school.

The project was initially launched with the building permit granted but was halted due to COVID and the significant increase in the cost of wooden materials. The proposal for the municipality's candidacy was made by a VELUX France employee who has been living in Champlan for many years. Once selected, a local team of ten employees supported the project for over a year, acting as a liaison between the town hall and the foundation.

### Impact and Perspectives

The House represents a significant advancement for the commune and its residents, but also for the broader Paris-Saclay community, which includes over 300,000 inhabitants. In the long term, the House aspires to become a model for other communes and inspire similar initiatives across France. VELUX France employees can enjoy the facility during internal events or leisurely visits.

The House of Nature and the Environment is more than just a building; it is a symbol of the community's commitment to nature conservation and biodiversity promotion. Thanks to the support of the Foundation and the determination of the Champlan municipal team, this ambitious project has come to life and promises to play a crucial role in environmental education and awareness for years to come.



PROJECT name: **Wooden Chalet in Champlan**

Country, location: **France, Champlan**

Applicant: **Champlan Municipality**

VKR Group company: **VELUX France, Morangis**

Inauguration day: 22 April 2024





# Town park in Sonneborn

Country, location: **Germany, Sonneborn**

Establishment of a town park which will enable inhabitants to enjoy the outdoor. The park incorporates a range of activities including sports, fitness and leisure elements, vegetation and beehives. A small lake in the historic centre of Sonneborn will be revitalised for recreational purposes, and finally an information trail on the history will be established.

The Sonneborn region is home to many JTJ Sonneborn Industrie GmbH employees and their families, who are deeply rooted in Sonneborn and the surrounding neighboring communities. As such, JTJ Sonneborn is one of the most important employers in the region and strives to contribute to the well-being of its employees and the local community **through daylight and fresh air.**

To mark the **30th anniversary of the Employee Foundation**, the works council, and employees of JTJ Sonneborn joined forces with the **municipality of Sonneborn** to develop a local





project to create a community space. The aim was to create open spaces that provide opportunities for a wide range of **leisure and recreational activities** for all age groups. The resulting square – adjoining the company site to the west and the Sonneborn location to the east – forms the **link between the village and the workplace** and is easily accessible from both. From now on, this will be a meeting place for young and old, strengthening the connection between JTJ Sonneborn and the community. However, the project was not only realized in cooperation between JTJ Sonneborn and the municipality. The entire planning was carried out by the engineering company **“Planungsgruppe 91” from Gotha**. Local construction companies were used to create the **square and build the bridge** over the small river Arzbach.

“It is a project that connects the community of Sonneborn with VELUX JTJ Sonneborn in a wonderful and inclusive way. The site is beautiful and promotes **activity, community, and well-being outdoors** – with plenty of daylight and fresh air. In line with our purpose at VELUX – we want to create wellbeing for people and our planet with our products by transforming spaces through daylight and fresh air.”  
**Kristian E. Justesen**, Managing Director of JTJ Sonneborn:

We are sure that this newly created space will be a future local point for energizing **social events, walks and talks** etc. and we already have some concrete ideas to leverage the value of this spot even further. This involves providing the kindergarten, the elementary school and the Sonneborn retirement home with **raised beds** in the **new square**. These will then be planted and maintained by the **kindergarten, elementary school, and retirement home**. However, a “Staffellauf” as fun fact, starting to be a concrete initiative. As there is not yet a proper name for our new Green Area, there will be a kind of naming process. We want to involve the employees of JTJ Sonneborn and ask them for ideas on what the new community space should be called.

PROJECT name:	<b>Town park in Sonneborn</b>
Country, location:	<b>Germany, Sonneborn</b>
Applicant:	<b>Sonneborn Town</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>JTJ Sonneborn Industrie</b>
Opening: 19 September 2024	





# Town park in Fertőszentmiklós

Country, location: Hungary, Fertőszentmiklós

Creation of a town park along the river with a pathway and bike path. The area is fitted with **fitness equipment, dog playground, playgrounds for children, lawn for ball games, sites for relaxing and developing places with plants/trees to improve biodiversity.**

The Ikva Stream, a natural gem flowing through the heart of Fertőszentmiklós, is set to become a beacon of outdoor recreation and community engagement through a transformative green space development project. The initiative aims to revitalize the area, promoting **active outdoor lifestyle and ecological biodiversity** while offering a serene environment for residents and visitors.





The project, designed to leverage the natural characteristics of the **Ikva Stream** and its surroundings, will create a multi-functional green space. This development will encourage outdoor activities such as walking, cycling, playing, and exercising, providing a natural escape within the city. Key features include **pedestrian walkways, bicycle paths, playgrounds, street workout and sunbathing areas, and dedicated spaces for dog play**, all integrated with the city's green infrastructure encouraging active outdoor lifestyle. Additionally, the project's design includes the **regeneration of local vegetation, fostering biodiverse ecological areas.**

**Lotte Kragelund**, Executive Manager of the Employee Foundation, expressed her enthusiasm for the project: "We are thrilled to support this initiative, which perfectly aligns with our commitment to make outdoor life more accessible to employees and the general public to experience the **fantastic gift nature is to us.** The development of the Ikva Stream area will provide a biodiverse, beautiful and functional space for residents to reconnect with nature and each other."

**Eszter Szakács** from VELUX Magyarország Kft, a key partner in the project, highlighted the significance of the development: "The Ikva Stream project is a testament to our **dedication to improving community spaces and promoting outdoor activities.** We are proud to be part of this transformative effort that will benefit not only our employees and their families but the entire Fertőszentmiklós community."

The Mayor of Fertőszentmiklós **Horváth Tibor** emphasized the project's long-term vision: "This development is a crucial step in our mission to create an attractive, environmentally **sustainable and green urban environment.** The Ikva Stream project will serve as a model for other municipalities and enhance the quality of life for our residents. It reflects our commitment to innovative, value-added urban development." The Ikva Stream Green Space Project exemplifies a collaborative effort to enhance urban living through thoughtful, sustainable development. By fostering community engagement and promoting an active lifestyle, the project will transform Fertőszentmiklós into a vibrant, green city center.

PROJECT name:	<b>Town park in Fertőszentmiklós</b>
Country, location:	<b>Hungary, Fertőszentmiklós</b>
Applicant:	<b>Fertőszentmiklós Városi Önkormányzat</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>VELUX Magyarország LKR</b>
Inauguration date:	7 June 2024





# Soave Open Air

Country, location: **Italy, Soave**

In a remarkable collaboration between the Municipality of Soave and VELUX Italy, the Soave Open Air project has successfully transformed public areas into useful spaces for the local community. Funded by the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group, the initiative aims to improve and promote outdoor life in Soave (a small Medieval village close to VELUX Italy Headquarter) with an **urban forest park, a bike pump track and a trail** between the city centre and the city Medieval Castle.

Where there's a will, there's a way. **Davide Personi, a VELUX employee living near Soave**, played a key role in realising the project. Encouraged by a colleague, he decided to apply for funding from the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group. He worked closely with the municipality to define the project's scope, draft the application, and ensure alignment with the foundation's criteria.

In Davide's words, "you can have great ideas, but you need financing."

"The fact that we have a foundation that lets me carry out this initiative for my local community is something really great," says David Personi, Channels Manager Officer, VELUX Italy.





photos: Andrea Segliani

Various citizen associations contributed ideas and perspectives, leading to the decision to create an urban forest park, a bike pump track, and a scenic trail. Dorte Jensen, Simonetta Scarmagnan, and Silvia Torneri from VELUX Italy collaborated with Davide and the Municipality throughout the project to bring this vision to life.

**The Urban Forest Park**

At the heart of the project is Parco dei Poeti, designed for accessibility and learning. The educational botanical garden takes visitors through the five inhabited continents, while outdoor gym equipment and information panels encourage active lifestyles. The park also hosts educational workshops and an open-air library, creating a space for both recreation and knowledge-sharing.

The Municipality has already organized informative talks, including one on climate change, inviting young people and students to participate in discussions.

**The Bike Pump Track**

The pump track, with its bends and humps, is designed for riders to navigate without pedaling, using body and bike movements. With around 150 children from the local cycling association, the track is a favorite, especially in summer. As a mountain biker, Davide tested it himself at the opening—though he admits to using the pedals a few times!

**The Scenic Trail**

The Vajo degli Alpini scenic trail connects history and nature, making it easier for tourists and hikers to reach Soave Castle. This iconic symbol of the town's cultural heritage is now more accessible from the city center.

The trail marked the final step of the Soave Open Air project and was officially inaugurated on September 14th, with the city mayor leading the ceremony. Davide, along with colleagues and over 300 citizens, gathered to celebrate this achievement.

With the project now complete, VELUX employees can enjoy these public spaces near the offices, embracing fresh air and outdoor activity—aligning with the Employee Foundation's mission to promote well-being.

PROJECT name:	<b>Town park in Soave</b>
Country, location:	<b>Italy, Soave</b>
Applicant:	<b>Municipality of Soave</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>VELUX Italia</b>
Opening: 14 September 2024	





# Marių Park Island

Country, location: **Lithuania, Marijampole**

An **open-air park** has been created on an island near the city centre, and it is fully accessible to disabled visitors. It has resting and barbecue areas, walking paths, tree climbing, a floating wooden island, a children's playground and an amphitheater.





## Marij Park Island – A New Nature Spot in Marijampolė

Marijampolė is known for its beautiful parks, friendly people, young families, and growing businesses, now has another great place to enjoy the outdoors. With more people choosing to spend their free time outside, the city parks are often full of families, active locals, and happy children. This growing popularity has increased the need for more natural spaces where people can relax and breathe fresh air.

For a long time, Marijampolė municipality leaders have been thinking about how to bring new life to **Marij Park Island**. This lovely spot, popular with locals and visitors, has always had potential. However, it needed better facilities to make it a comfortable and enjoyable place for everyone, encouraging them to visit again and again.

Thanks to funding from the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group, a new outdoor **recreation area** has been created. The park now has winding **pathways**, **cozy benches**, **a sandy beach**, **beach volleyball courts**, **terrace seating**, **a children's playground**, **picnic areas**, **a wooden floating island on the water**, **lights**, and **sanitary facilities**.

In Lithuania, it is still rare for businesses to invest in recreation spaces for their employees or the wider community. However, **Karolis Jonaitis**, CEO of Dovista UAB, highlights the Danish tradition of caring for both employees and city residents. He believes this is a great example to follow and is proud to see it happening in Marijampolė.

This project shows that Marijampolė is a **lively, green city with excellent infrastructure**. It is a place that attracts young families, brings former residents back, and offers much to locals and tourists alike. And there's always room for new improvements!

PROJECT name:	<b>Outdoor park in Marijampole</b>
Country, location:	<b>Lithuania, Marijampole</b>
Applicant:	<b>Marijampoles savivaldybe</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>UAB DOVISTA, Lithuania</b>
Opening: 6 September 2024	





# The Moose Trail, Linking wildlife and people

Country, location: **Poland, Kampinoski Park Narodowy**

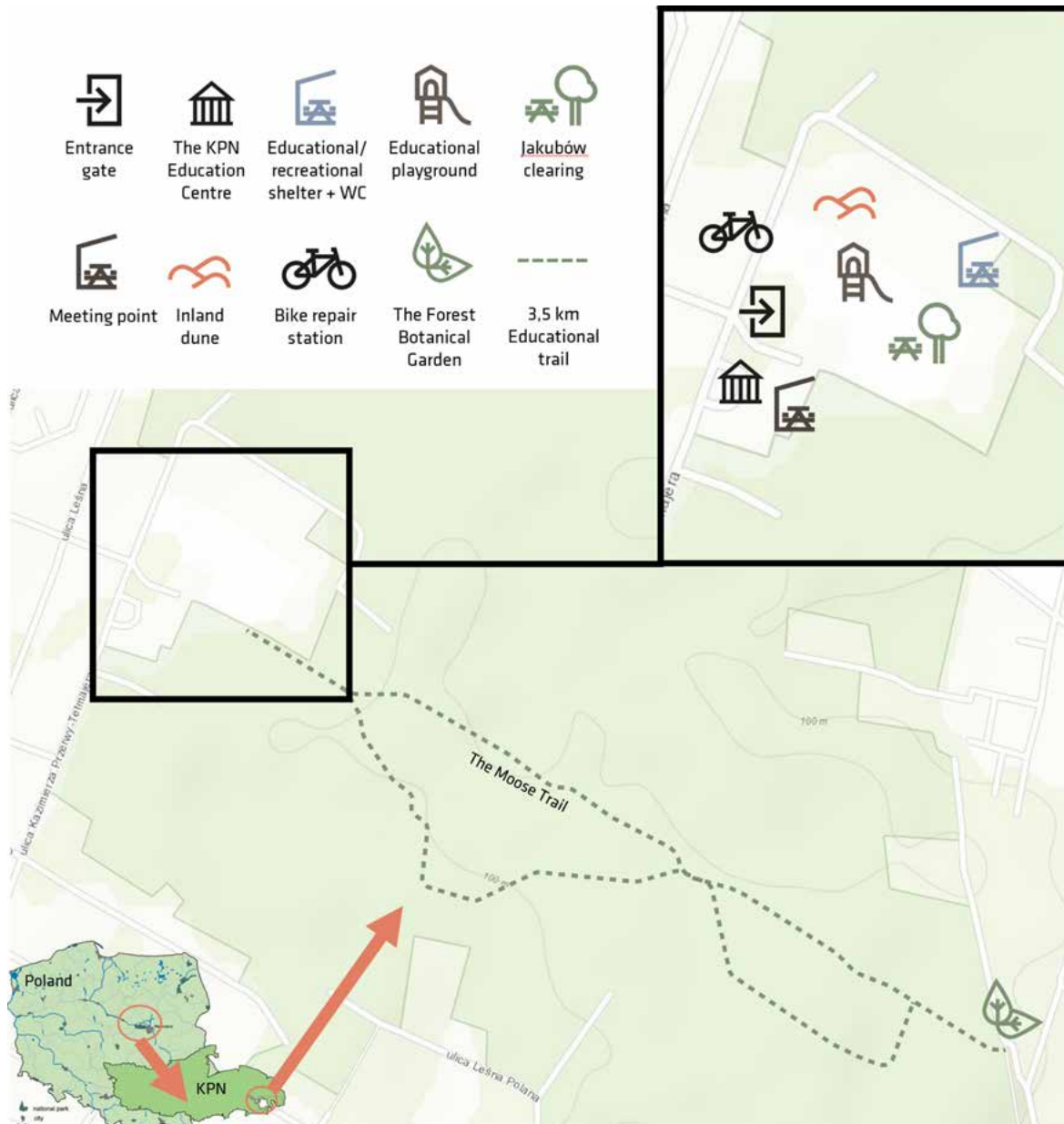
Opening in spring 2026, the Moose Trail will be a 3.5 km educational trail between the Nature Educational Center and The Forest Botanical Garden within Kampinos National Park. The trail will be adapted for the visually and physically impaired and include a thematic playground for children, botanical sensory garden, a dune standpoint, improved signage, bicycle parking and repair station.

Interesting fact: KPN is Poland's second biggest National Park and moose are widespread in the park. This is going to be reflected in the trail.

The aim of the Moose Trail project is to create an accessible **trail featuring educational facilities and an inclusive path**, adapted for the visually impaired and disabled, along with amenities for outdoor activities all within Kampinos National Park (KPN).

Altaterra's (part of VELUX Group) **WeCare team** will be collaborating with the KPN administration to create this flagship trail. The WeCare team is a small volunteer team





A moose crossing the street in Kampinos National Park.



of Altaterra employees responsible for driving awareness towards eco behaviours and sustainability. Although the park is well maintained, certain areas and paths are not easily accessible at the moment.

**The key aspects of the trail** will be:

- A specially adapted educational path for the visual impaired and disabled
- An educational recreational shelter and meeting point with WC facilities
- A themed children's playground
- A botanical forest sensory garden
- A dedicated "dune" standpoint
- Bike parking and repair station
- Improved signage and information
- Improved drainage, electricity, monitoring, etc.

**KPN** is located close to VELUX and Altaterra offices in Poland to the west of Warsaw and is an important area of conservation and climate change mitigation. It is a **Biosphere Reserve and Natura 2000 site**. It is also one of the main destinations for outdoor recreation for city dwellers and sees 1.5 million visitors a year. It provides opportunities for hiking, walking, cycling, time spent relaxing outside, immersive experiences and environmental education.

Visitor numbers have increased since the pandemic and there is pressure to develop an infrastructure that helps facilitate visitors but still protects the park. This is particularly so as there is a large visually impaired community living near the park. The park also hosts groups of visitors with physical and mental impairments.

The project is a unique opportunity to make a lasting impact in a national park, helping to preserve the natural environment whilst making it more accessible. The project will benefit the local community as well as **VKR Group employees** living and working in the Warsaw area enabling them to enjoy **more time outdoors, and more daylight and fresh air**.

PROJECT name:	<b>The Moose Trail, Linking wildlife and people</b>
Country, location:	<b>Poland, Kampinoski Park Narodowy</b>
Applicant:	<b>Kampinoski Park Narodowy</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>Altaterra Kft. Poland, WeCare Team</b>
The project will be finalized between the end of 2025 and spring 2026.	





# Graduation Tower in town park in Raszyn

Country, location: **Poland, Raszyn**

The Graduation Tower is a structure made of wood and branches of a specific type of shrub (blackthorn), which creates a special microclimate thanks to the brine flowing through it. Brine is a mineral water containing a large number of sodium ions and mineral salts. The inhaled air contributes to the prevention and treatment of diseases of the upper respiratory tract, such as sinusitis, emphysema, hypertension and allergies - diseases that are very common nowadays, when we spend more than 90% of our time indoors. The largest and oldest graduation tower in Poland is located in the town of Ciechocinek.





Photos: Raszyn Commune

The graduation tower in Raszyn, a project developed by employees of VELUX Polska and Raszyn Commune, was created based on the slogan **"A green window to nature"**. This investment is located in Magdalena Abakanowicz Raszyn Park. Next to the graduation tower, where residents can relax, new walkways and landscaping have been created. Employees of VELUX Polska can relax in the bosom of nature only a few minutes away from the office.

The people of Raszyn and the many VELUX employees close by can take a break from the hectic city life and enjoy the well-being effect of the Tower while reflecting, letting their thoughts wander, relaxing, and **breathing the healthy vaporized air**.

The graduation tower has many healing properties. It has a positive effect on, among others, **respiratory diseases, and cardiovascular and nervous systems**. Spending time at the graduation tower is also recommended for **thyroid diseases, allergic skin problems and in the treatment of hypertension**. It is also recommended for people exposed to **stress** and all those who want to take a break from the hustle and bustle of the city.

The investment was carried out in 2021-2024 as part of the "Green Areas and Outdoor Activities" grant program announced by the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group, on the occasion of its 30th anniversary.

**Fun Fact:** 1,500 pieces of twig bundles were used to build the Graduation Tower.

PROJECT name:	<b>Graduation Tower in town park in Raszyn</b>
Country, location:	<b>Poland, Raszyn</b>
Applicant:	<b>Raszyn Municipality</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>VELUX Polska</b>
Inauguration day: 26 June 2024	





# Leśna Oaza in Gniezno, Woodland Oasis

Country, location: **Poland, Gniezno**

The project involves the establishment of a recreational forest area which is easy accessible yet without disturbing the nature. The project consists of three zones: a creative wooden playground and fitness path, relaxation zone with shelter, benches, chess game spot and reading area and a long path with educational elements.

Located just 5 kilometers from Gniezno's center, Leśna Oaza is a community-driven nature park created through the combined efforts of the Gniezno Forest District, the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group, and VELUX factory staff in Gniezno (NB Polska Sp. z o.o.). This collaborative initiative has transformed the area into an **inclusive recreational space, fostering connections with nature for visitors of all ages and abilities.**

The park features three distinct zones: **a creative playground with activities like a mud kitchen for children, a relaxation area equipped with hammocks and sunbeds among the trees, and an outdoor gym for fitness enthusiasts.** Every structure, made of wood sourced from the Tatra Mountains, blends harmoniously with the surrounding forest.





The project's success stems from the dedication of its creators. Employees of the **Gniezno Forest District** provided their expertise in nature conservation, while **VELUX staff** contributed through volunteer efforts, crafting benches and trash bins from local wood, landscaping, and planting greenery. This spirit of collaboration has created a sanctuary where nature and community intersect beautifully.

Leśna Oaza is easily accessible by foot, bike, or public transport, making it an ideal escape for those seeking tranquility without leaving the city. Set against the picturesque backdrop of the Gniezno forests, the park accommodates a variety of visitors, from families and children to athletes and seniors. Its inviting atmosphere fosters relaxation, outdoor play, and intergenerational connection.

#### Noteworthy Features of Leśna Oaza:

**Volunteer Contributions:** VELUX employees built wooden amenities and planted trees, shrubs, and grass, showcasing their dedication to the project.

**Artistic Touches:** Sculptures of wild boars by a local artist add charm to the natural landscape.

**Birdhouses:** Handmade by VELUX carpenters, these birdhouses highlight a commitment to wildlife.

**Educational Trail:** Nearby, the Gniezno Forest District has established a trail offering insights into the forest ecosystem.

**Community Engagement:** The park hosts annual volunteer initiatives, ensuring it remains a vibrant space for all.

Leśna Oaza also caters to unique gatherings, such as children's birthday parties, held in its cozy shelter. The park's appeal lies in its ability to bring people closer to nature while celebrating community collaboration.

Whether for a relaxing stroll, family fun, or outdoor fitness, Leśna Oaza is a gem that reflects the dedication and unity of Gniezno's community, creating a lasting legacy for generations to enjoy.



PROJECT name: **Recreational area in Gniezno, Woodland Oasis**

Country, location: **Poland, Gniezno**

Applicant: **Gniezno Forest District**

VKR Group company: **NB Polska, Gniezno**

Inauguration day: 12 April 2024





# Green zone in Tczew

Country, location: **Poland, Tczew**

Green Zone in Tczew – a new space for **recreational, artistic and nature activities** for children, youth, adults and seniors, financed by the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group. It will be located on the square between Podgórna Street and the Vistula River Boulevard. The external arrangement of the area, near the atmospheric old town and the riverbank, will allow for the return, continuation and expansion of educational activities and the comprehensive infrastructure allows for the promotion of new initiatives of other groups, e.g. **workshops, integration meetings, nature classes, fairs, cultural and recreational events.**





The Art Factory is responsible for the implementation of the Green Zone. It is a municipal cultural institution in Tczew, that has been operating since 2007. Its main goal is to strengthen initiatives aimed at protecting the cultural values of Kociewie, improving access to culture and using these resources for socio-economic development.

The product of the project is a newly created innovative space with an area of 1900 m<sup>2</sup>, consisting of a recreation and activity zone and a shelter, that will also serve as a stage.

The following activities will take place in this beautiful green space:

- **Educational activities** for children, in line with school and environmental requirements
- **Artistic workshops** for families with children (e.g. painting on glass, papier-mâché, felting)
- **Ecological workshops** for different age groups: children, families with children, adults (e.g. gardening, herbal medicine, natural cosmetics)
- **Do-it-yourself workshops** divided into age groups: families with children, adults (e.g. how to reuse and recycle old objects, woodworking)
- **Exchanges** (e.g. music, crafts), **small fairs and festivals**
- **Recitals, chamber concerts**
- **Animations** for children
- **Green stop**, where Dovista employees meet, with activities provided by The Art Factory team
- **Events** promoting the cultural and historical heritage of Tczew, the natural values of the Vistula (e.g. ornithological curiosities about migration routes), plein air painting.

In November 2024, the Da-bruk company built a shelter made of Corten steel panels, and Dovista employees and their families, together with the To i Co Foundation, the City Garden in Tczew, planted new greenery on a 50-meter strip.

PROJECT name:	<b>Green Zone in Tczew</b>
Country, location:	<b>Poland, Tczew</b>
Applicant:	<b>Municipality of Tczew</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>DOVISTA Poland</b>
Under development	





# Green relax zones and cycle path in Partizánske

Country, location: Slovakia, Partizánske

The aim of the project was to connect the town with the industrial park so that employees could use a bicycle to get to work without using a car. The **cycle path** follows on the existing city's cycle paths and will be used for various activities as **cycling, walking, roller skating** etc. Two green relax zones give to the path green dimension. They are built in places where previously there were only fields and are complemented by **educational, innovative and entertainment elements**. Both zones are located close to the production plant and are accessible not only to employees but to the public. Each zone features **wooden shelters** made of long-lasting wood, colorful picnic **seating** that fit into surroundings, **bike stands**, **informative boards** and other attractive elements. There are **45 new trees** planted and over 1,500 different sorts of bulbs, grasses and flowers.





**Green relax zone A** is larger and barrier-free, located in direct contact with the cycle path and in the vicinity of the production plant. It is divided into 3 parts – park, children's and educational. Two wooden shelters created an atrium-shaped zone and are enriched with a photo wall with two important personalities - the founder of VKR Group V. K. Rasmussen and the founder of the city of Partizánske J. A. Baťa. We brought VELUX products into the zone too. Polyurethane sashes, which are made directly in the production plant, are used as frames where informative boards and a painted map of the surrounding area are mounted. The zone includes a rain garden that promotes biodiversity. The grassy terrain modulations are a natural play element for children's imagination – raised hills with acacia stake elements form a labyrinth, wooden steps and a slide. The area is completed with tree planting and the imaginary entrance to the zone is formed by a metal structure in the shape of a tunnel, surrounded by climbing plants. There is also a special bicycle bench in the zone. At the end of 0.6 km long cycle path, there is a second **green relax zone B**, which is an important point for linking the cycle path towards the next village in the future. The zone is located below the surface of the cycle path and therefore from the top you can see growing green roof on the shelter. People can hide against sun or rain under or just sit down and have a picnic. The shelter is also enriched with VELUX roof window on the side of the wall. In this smaller zone you will find colorful picnic tables, bike stands, information boards, signposts, booth with books and games and the acacia labyrinth too. An Instagram frame is a great opportunity to stop, look around and take a photo. An attraction especially for the little ones is a land-art element integrated into the terrain in the shape of a lizard and a telescope with a view of the surrounding mountains. In each zone you can play a game using a mobile app, it's called questioning which encourages competitiveness, it is varied, you will find games focused on movement, a memory game, or an educational quiz focused on interesting facts about the city and VELUX.

#### Innovative elements

We tried to bring an innovative elements that are not used in surroundings. There are several examples - terrain grass modulations as a substitute for a concrete playground, a land art element made of stones in the shape of lizard encourages imagination, a rain garden or a green roof as an inspiration to build and plant one at home. Knowing that mobile phones are an integral part of our lives, we integrated a game into the zones using a mobile app.

PROJECT name:	<b>Green relax zones and cycle path</b>
Country, location:	<b>Slovakia, Partizánske</b>
Applicant:	<b>Municipality in Partizanske</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>Partizánske Building Components-SK s.r.o.</b>

Opening: 22 October 2024





# Wooden bridge in Edsbyn, A bridge to nature

Country, location: **Sweden, Edsbyn**

With support from the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group, Svenska Fönster built a **35-meter-wide laminated timber bridge** and a **2.6-kilometer recreational trail** in the Bäck nature area in Edsbyn, providing a new level of accessibility for the town's residents.





Bäck is the only forested area near central Edsbyn and is popular for **walking, cycling, fishing, disc golf, horseback riding, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing**. It is also a regular outing and outdoor classroom for nearby schools.

For years, there was a strong desire to build a bridge that would allow entry and exit from Bäck through different points, connecting bike trails, horseback riding paths, and snowmobile and skiing routes at Bäck to the large activity area at Gårdtjärnsberget, including the ski slope. However, funding was a challenge—until the launch of the Employee Fund's Green Areas and Outdoor Life program. Svenska Fönster seized the opportunity to build **a bridge across the river and enhance the existing trails into a cohesive and accessible recreational path with a natural feel**.

The project began in spring 2022 with trail improvements along the 2.6-kilometer path leading to and from the bridge, followed by bridge construction in February 2023. The bridge was inaugurated on October 1, 2023, and has since been well-received. The improved trails and bridge are now a popular choice for individual walks and organized activities due to their central location and beautiful surroundings.

Ovanåker municipality is now responsible for maintaining the bridge and trails and will continue to develop the area to make it even more attractive for community use.

#### Fun Fact

To blend with the natural and cultural surroundings, it was essential to build the bridge from wood and paint it with red ochre paint. However, crossing the broad Voxnan River was a challenge, so a free-span bridge of approximately 35 meters, with a total length of 55 meters including connections, was built to span the river.

PROJECT name:	<b>Wooden bridge in Edsbyn, A bridge to nature</b>
Country, location:	<b>Sweden, Edsbyn</b>
Applicant:	<b>Ovanåkers Municipality</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>Svenska Fönster, Sweden</b>
Inauguration day: 1 October 2023	





# Going Green in Glasgow – SWG3

Country, location: **United Kingdom, Glasgow**

A former industrial site in Glasgow is being transformed into a prize-winning culture area. In the centre of the area, as much as 3,200 sq. metres will be dedicated to **food production, relaxation, and recreational and educational activities.**





In June 2022, teams from **VELUX** and **Altaterra** took part in a community project at SWG3 in Glasgow. SWG3 is Scotland's leading **multi-disciplinary arts venue** and owns a plot of derelict land in the heart of Glasgow that they wanted to transform into a **community garden and space**.

As an important community project, the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group made a donation to support it, and the teams spent a day helping with the transformation. It was an incredible day with approximately 50 people digging, positioning, and planting shrubs, flowers and trees, by the end of which a great community space was starting to take shape.

As mentioned, the venue hosts a multi-disciplinary arts venue, so, when in ROME! – we were given the opportunity with guidance from some dignified street artists, to attack a wall with spray cans – surprisingly the results were amazing! – highlighting **VKR as a central piece of the street art**.

The purpose of the transformation, was to ensure a previously contaminated derelict piece of land in the heart of an Urban area in Glasgow, enabled the local community to not only visit and enjoy outdoor space, but also have an area of allotment space to **grow, nurture and cultivate vegetables**.

**SWG3** is an ongoing development, and what I consider an exemplary foresight for new starts, creative thinking and a collaborative approach, enriching the community at large.

It is an area where strangers can meet and quickly become friends.

I returned a year or so later and was able and had the privilege to open the event formally. It was amazing to see first hand the transformation, as the trees had grown, the plants blossomed and the vegetables beginning to harvest. Richard Williams, Snr Architectural development manager GB/I

PROJECT name:	<b>Culture area in Glasgow</b>
Country, location:	<b>United Kingdom, Glasgow</b>
Applicant:	<b>Clydeside Initiative for Arts</b>
VKR Group company:	<b>VELUX GB and Altaterra</b>
Inauguration day: 11 June 2024	





### **Final word**

*This programme truly gave the employees a lot of possibilities to **engage in bigger out door projects**. Projects that can really make a difference to people whether it is the employees and their families or the general public.*

*When we launched it and called for ideas and applications, we didn't know what to expect, as it was first time and also large relatively complex projects we asked for. But we were overwhelmed with approx. 120 applications! It was difficult to make a short list, but we went on with approx. 50 for the next round. We ended up with the **17 projects you see in the book**. All different, but all projects will be realised within **4 years** from Grant. with great enthusiasm and involvement from our **employees, management and many external partners: municipalities, associations, national parks, landscape architects, construction companies, local schools etc.***

*Realising the projects has been a process with many challenges. Obtaining permits, meeting and motivating different interest groups for the projects idea, adapting them and detailing, tender process – sometimes several and having to redefine the project to meet budget constraints while keeping the original idea...so we have had a few set backs on the way, But I am proud to have been part of this process and witness the attitude and will from employees to get the job done. Facing challenges in an area out of the daily work with a positive and constructive attitude, finding solutions.*

*This is not a surprise having worked in the VKR Group 24 years, but it is always great to experience – So thank you to all involved for the fantastic projects and the way we realised them – the slogan of the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group **"LET'S WORK IT OUT TOGETHER"** for sure was lived here.*

**Henrik Øvlisen**  
project manager



Next strategic project

# Reconnect with Nature

by the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group

For more than 80 years, the VKR Group has been committed to **connecting buildings with nature**, emphasizing the importance of bringing daylight and fresh air inside.

In celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Employee Foundation of the VKR Group, **€6 million EUR were allocated to support Green Areas and Outdoor Life projects**. The valuable insights gained from these initiatives have inspired us to develop a new program called **Reconnect with Nature**.

Aligned with our mission to promote healthier indoor environments, the **Employee Foundation of the VKR Group seeks to enhance the health and well-being of employees, their families and local communities by encouraging outdoor activities**. We invite colleagues across the group to explore outdoor spaces where shelters and other projects can facilitate greater engagement with nature.

Join us in our efforts to give back to nature and improve our collective well-being.

Let's work it out together!

**Lotte Kragelund**  
Executive director  
Employee Foundation of the VKR Group





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**The Employee Foundation**

The Employee Foundation was established in 1991 to support employees and their families worldwide. Since then, thousands of employees have received support, and a large number of projects in the vicinity of VKR Group companies have benefited from grants from the Employee Foundation.

**11,070 Grants**

**8,112 Employees have received support**

**2,958 Projects in the vicinity of VKR Group companies**

**The foundation's major purposes**

To support employees and their immediate families in times of distress and in connection with death, accident or illness with serious consequences or children's final education. The majority of funds goes to this purpose.

To support non-profit projects within a radius of 50 km of the VKR Group's locations.

Beyond this, the Employee Foundation confers the annual Villum Kann Rasmussen Award to a selection of employees who exemplify the Model Company Objective and the Lars Kann-Rasmussen Safety Award in recognition of special commitment and actions within safety. The foundation is also responsible for special programs promoting health and well-being for all employees, e.g. Healthy Habits campaigns and the voluntary work programme, Live a Dream.

Read more about The Employee Foundation



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