



Playing with colours

Kekava Primary School shows that an energy-efficient school can be realized without sacrificing quality – on schedule and even more economically than originally thought! This colourful miracle is found in Latvia.

Kekava Primary School

Location: Kekava, Latvia

Realization period: 2012, 2014

School construction: 1723.4 m² (2012) / 2524.8 m² (2014)

Total area: 2919.8 m² (2012) / 4807.6 m² (2014)

Façade boards: Cembrit Zenit, 1128.87 m² (2012) / 2257.4 m² (2014)

Colours: Venus, Luna, Mercury and Pluto

Architectural design: EJA Architectural Office / Edgars Dzenis

Contracting: Abora / Project Manager Jānis Bleibergs



The coloured pieces of the Cembrit Zenit façade boards bring the interplay of light and shadows in the apple orchard originally on site to mind.

Kekavas Vidusskola is a large and stately building. Getting round it takes some time. After turning behind the corner, new vistas still come into view: various facades, protective inner courtyards, wings that are lower or higher than previously. There's no getting tired of all the things to see! The architect has playfully pieced the building mass together in terms of the proportions of the window openings obtained by means of Cembrit Zenit façade boards, whose lighter and darker grey colours Pluto, Mercury as well as white Luna and light yellow Venus captivate one's gaze and simultaneously bring light into the façade also when the weather is gloomy. The totality is high-quality, sophisticated and, at the same time, quite exceptional. It actually brings to mind the hint of interplay of light and shadows in a garden.

Just a few years ago, an apple orchard stood on site. The apple orchard is in a way still in existence – as a memory in the minds of the locals and in a painting donated to the municipality of Kekava by architect **Edgars Dzenis**, who designed the school. In a few years, even the location of the apple orchard may be hard to imagine, if the plans are implemented in the manner conceived. Namely, Kaleva's new municipal centre – with its sports halls, indoor swimming pools and administrative buildings – will all be built round the school.

EJA Architectural Office has designed Kekava's new centre as a whole, complemented by the already previously completed Music School situated nearby. During the next stage, construction work will start adjacent to Kekava Primary School on two indoor swimming



You can find your own locker in this lobby quite easily.

pools integrated with each other, as well as a sports hall where it will be possible to organize international level competitions.

CHEERFUL FACILITIES FOR YOUNG SCHOOLCHILDREN

Let's nevertheless return to the present. Kekava Primary School is a modern school building constructed in two stages, where 700 schoolchildren are studying from pre-school right up through classes 1–6. Architect Edgars Dzenis has designed a simply incredible school with attractive colours and charm for them, a building which totally astounds those used to the drab beige-dominated colour



Architect Edgars Dzenis applied his entire 35 years of experience to ensure that the design of Kekava Primary School's learning environment would be as pleasant and enjoyable as possible.

scheme found also in many new Finnish primary schools. The corridors and lobby areas of the Atrium school act as a tonic on a grey, rainy day, and, even in all their practicality, they take the visitor straight to a world of fanciful fairy tales.

According to the architects, the colours have highly important significance specifically in the school's joint spaces and transfer facilities. Children often like bright colours, and they have been shown to increase the effectiveness of learning even up to 5–10 per cent in various colour studies.

The classrooms and working spaces of Kekava School are indeed quiet, minimalist and intended to provide peace for working and concentration.



The inner courtyard provides sheltered space for enjoyment of the facilities. Here the interplay of colours provided by the Cembrit Zenit façade boards is at its best.

The architect has used everything he's learned to create an especially comfortable, pleasant and positive learning environment from Kekava Primary School. He says that many of the ideas he has applied to the school – such as a functional central atrium – are creations he has personally conceived, but he also observed later on a study trip made to Sweden that they are used substantially in new school buildings in, for example, the Nordic countries.

The architect regarded it as important that the children would also get to participate in the design of the school. Indeed, he suggested that a competition could be arranged whose winners would design works of art that could be implemented on the walls of the school. They can now be admired on the walls of the cafeteria.

Anyone wandering through the school is continuously impressed by the inventiveness of the architect and the abundance of his imagination. He has understood what young schoolchildren would like to get from their learning environment. Nevertheless, Kekava Primary School is a rather traditional school in terms of its basic solutions with regard to its classrooms, corridors and dining facilities. It's just a lot more pleasant and enjoyable!

ECOLOGICAL AND ENERGY-EFFICIENT

Natural light is utilized to the maximum extent possible, and there are also large windows in the spacious atrium facilities. There was a wish to have German air-heating deployed in which the radiators in the ceiling limit radiate heat effectively and ventilation is properly ensured, so that it is distributed evenly throughout the premises. This way the conditions are maximally comfortable within the premises – no matter what the outside temperature.

"Kekava Primary School isn't specifically designed to be a passive building, but highly energy-efficient regardless. Naturally there's also heat recovery in the ventilation system, but to my knowledge this school is the first building in Latvia where heat is retained also from the warm water used," Mr Dzenis relates.

The use of maximally durable and long-lasting materials represents sustainable development in construction.

"The use of high-quality materials in school buildings is very important," Mr Dzenis emphasizes. "Not only do they look good, but they withstand time and lots of use, and are also easy to keep clean."

With regard to materials, this applies both to outdoor and indoor space and explains not only the high-quality linoleum on the floors but also the materials used in the façade, the Italian ceramic tiling and the Cembrit Zenit façade panelling. "I was very satisfied with the combination of materials. It works well and the final result matches all my expectations," he declares.

Now the architect is waiting for the next elements in the entity as a whole to be incorporated in the construction. Next to rise will be the indoor swimming pool complex including a large, smaller and children's pool, alongside a sports hall. These too will be integrated into the school as a complete entity. And if the architect's word is gold, these too should be more economical to build than what was budgeted for the job!

"I've provided proof that good things can be built economically," Mr Dzenis says with emphasis.

A FINE SITE TO DISPLAY

When the administrative building as well is ready, Kekava will have a new town centre which should provide a learning model not only for the rest of Latvia, but for anywhere else in the world as well. It's also a sure bet that awards are on the way for EJA Architectural Office to help grace its walls and shelves in the future as well.

This is also the hope of Project Manager **Jānis Bleiberis** about the Abora contract site, which has also won appreciable success in various competitions. Kekava Primary School is just the sort of site that a significant contractor likes to present in his portfolio: a large site completed on schedule that was readied with even more economical cost savings than originally planned, and which has garnered only praise from both the general public and its users.

Mr Bleiberis emphasizes that a ventilated facade in these sorts of high-standard sites is the only reasonable solution, since it is safe, durable and easy to install as well. The cut-to-size boards can also be installed regardless of season and weather, any time. "Aluminium was also considered as an alternative for this project. The Cembrit Zenit façade boards represented an excellent solution, also in the sense that they're exactly the same as each other in size," he laughs.

Abora has good experiences in cooperating with Cembrit, so it was safe to embark on realizing this demanding project. "We knew we could get help for sure if problems came up," Mr Bleiberis concludes.



Two swimming pool complexes as well as a sports hall are being built, connected with the school.



Project Manager Jānis Bleiberis says that Kekava School is a site that he gladly likes to present to future customers as well. "A high-quality public site that was completed on schedule and even more economically than originally thought!" he enthuses.



Still another surprise: a peaceful yet ornate "ribbon façade" at the side façade of the school (phase 2).

*I've provided proof that
good things can be built
economically.*

Architect Edgars Dzenis



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