

Towards



a more cohesive society

2023/2025

Project management and booklet content: Laura Kristapsons, Iveta Pāvula

Editor: Iveta Pāvula, SIA Adsum

Proofreader: Aira Semjonova

Graphic design: Inta Tīdenberga

Photos:

Inese Kalniņa, Kaspars Teilāns, Valentīns Isakovs, National Youth Council of Latvia, Zvaigznājs, The Latvian Association of Teachers of English, I Granyul Grem, initiative *Active Communities in Latgale*, Edīte Lukša, Foundation Liepāja 2027, Valters Pelns, Artis Veigurs, Valters Lācis, Rothko Museum, Saeima, Ieva Ābele, Partnership Partnerība "Kaimiņi", Anatols Kauškalis, Conversation Festival LAMPA Conversation Festival, Juris Ross, Raivo Sarelainens, Ministry of Education and Science, Rīga Neighbourhood Alliance, Apkaimju alianse, Young Folks LV, Ryan Day, Pacemaker Photos, Katrīna Anna Lieģniece, Fonds INITIUM foundation, Dagnija Bernāne, Lita Millere, Andris Mačāns, Trinity Z, Mouhcine Rossafi, Egīls Arājs, Agnese Zeltiņa, Aivars Ivbulis, Svetlana Pokule, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Džeina Saulīte, Jānis Deinats, New Theatre Institute of Latvia, Kristīne Madjare, Didzis Grodzs, Evija Trifanova, Toms Grīnbergs.

Publisher: The British Council in Latvia

ISBN 978-9934-38-585-8

2026



THE BRITISH COUNCIL
in Latvia

Towards a more cohesive society 2023/2025



TOWARDS
**A MORE COHESIVE
SOCIETY**



Founded over 90 years ago in 1934, amid economic crisis and rising extremism in Europe, the British Council was established to foster mutual understanding by encouraging people to share knowledge and focus on what unites us rather than what divides us. Over the decades, the organisation has continued to adapt to changing circumstances and societal needs, developing new areas of work while remaining true to its mission. This commitment to building trust, dialogue and cooperation has remained constant, guiding the work of the British Council in Latvia since 1992.

For the past ten years, the British Council's work in Latvia has been closely linked to the *People to People* (P2P) programme. The programme was developed in recognition of the fact that a cohesive society is the cornerstone of security and democracy, and that cooperation between Latvia and the United Kingdom must be strengthened not only in the field of defence but also in building societal resilience through education, culture, the arts and community development.

I joined the British Council in 2015 and, half a year later, we began implementing the programme at a time when I was the only staff member in the office. Today, I am deeply grateful to work alongside a professional team and to be supported by a wide network of partners, friends and like-minded organisations across Latvia. Their energy, expertise and conviction have helped turn ideas into tangible initiatives and meaningful change.

When we began this work, concepts such as social cohesion, community building, resilience and media literacy were not yet widely embedded in the everyday practice of policymakers or the NGO sector. Today, they have become essential elements of policy planning and public debate.

I am pleased that our experience, partnerships and long-term commitment have contributed to the establishment and continued growth of these fields in Latvia.

Over the years, small initiatives have grown into sustainable projects, small NGOs have developed into strong and professional organisations, and the programme's experience has contributed to policy development. Yet meaningful change takes time. This is why our shared work remains just as important today as it was in the programme's first year. We live in a time marked by security challenges, rapid transformation and uncertainty, making it all the more vital to strengthen communities, enhance cooperation and build mutual trust, which can never be taken for granted.

As we approach the conclusion of P2P in March 2026, I am confident that the values of the programme will continue to live on through you, our partners, schools, communities and activists who, over the years, have become an integral part of the wider P2P movement. Each of you is an ambassador for P2P, bringing new ideas, openness and inclusion into your everyday work and into the lives of those around you, far beyond the scope of individual projects.

I invite you to explore what has been achieved during the 2023–2025 financial period. This booklet offers inspiration for new ideas, ways to reach and unite diverse communities, and opportunities for future collaboration.

Let us mark the conclusion of the P2P programme and carry forward what we have begun, opening a new chapter in the work of the British Council in Latvia.

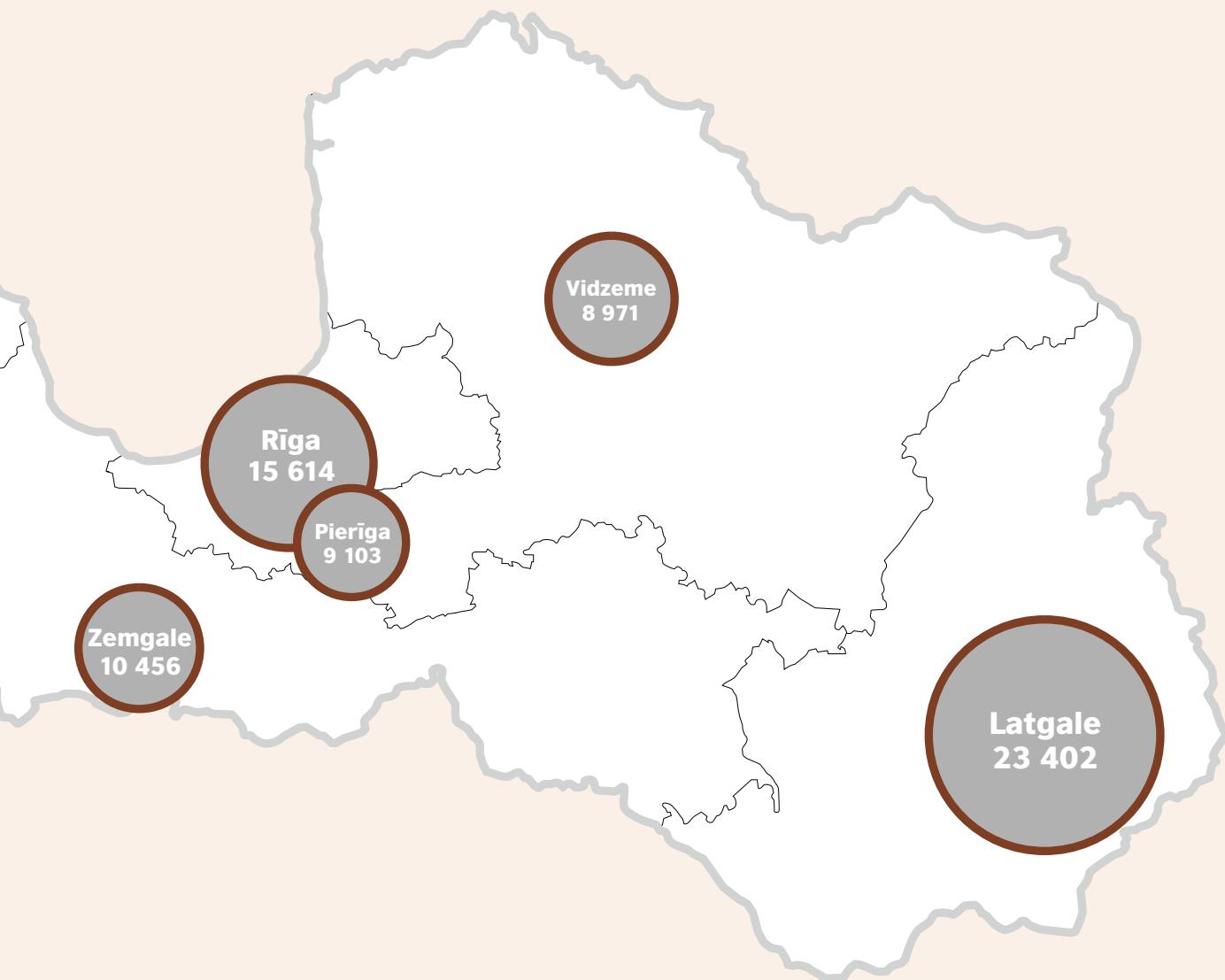
Zane Matesoviča,
Country Director,
the British Council in Latvia

PROGRAMME *PEOPLE TO PEOPLE* (2023–2025)

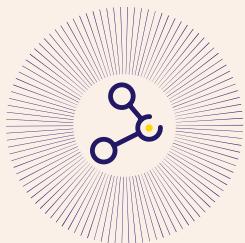
Between 2023 and 2025, the British Council engaged more than **81 000** people in programme activities.*



* Number of people directly involved in programme activities (meaningful engagement).



PROGRAMME *PEOPLE TO PEOPLE* 2023–2025



Together with 35 partner organisations,
112 projects and initiatives were implemented



More than **81 000 people**
took part in programme activities



The highest number of participants was recorded
in Latgale – **23 402 people** (29%)

The British Council, the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities, works in more than 100 countries worldwide. For the past ten years, it has been implementing the large-scale *People to People* programme in the Baltic States, which will conclude in March 2026.

Training and experience-sharing activities, community support initiatives, festivals and cultural events have been organised to engage participants of all ages, backgrounds and communities, helping them develop essential skills, strengthen their sense of belonging and foster open dialogue between national and municipal institutions. The programme supports diverse communities in working together towards shared goals, while also strengthening relationships between Latvia, the United Kingdom and the wider Baltic region.

As the programme approaches its conclusion, the focus in 2023–2025 has increasingly been on ensuring sustainability by passing on experience to partners and to national and municipal institutions, as well as gathering insights to strengthen social cohesion policies. Particular attention has been given to targeted support for ongoing projects and to the engagement of participants who can implement and promote the programme's methods and values. Educators, NGO leaders, professionals from the creative industries and policymakers have played an active role in these initiatives.

By strengthening the capacity of the education and NGO sectors, as well as national and municipal institutions, the projects have engaged:



6276 school pupils and students and **1961** education professionals



1019 NGO and community leaders and **531** civil society organisation representatives



509 professionals from the creative industries



675 decision-makers and policymakers

PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION IN THE TRANSITION TO A UNITED SCHOOL

To support educational institutions in the transition to teaching in the Latvian language and to facilitate the implementation of the United School approach, a pilot project titled *Partnerships between educational institutions to support the transition to learning in the Latvian language* was launched in August 2023. The project was implemented by the British Council in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, based on a memorandum of understanding signed by both organisations.

The aim of the pilot project was to create partnerships between schools teaching in Latvian and schools that had previously implemented minority education programmes, fostering cooperation and mutual support so that teachers, pupils and parents would feel confident and well prepared for the transition to learning in Latvian.

A total of 18 educational institutions from Riga, Liepāja, Ventspils, Jelgava, Rēzekne, Daugavpils and Augšdaugava Municipality took part in the pilot project. Participants received support to jointly plan and implement activities to assist teachers, pupils and parents during the transition, while also strengthening teachers' confidence in their ability to lead change by assessing the situation and needs within each school. The pilot project encouraged schools and

educators to review and transform their existing practices by offering tailored support, including seminars, supervision and consultations led by the project expert, Inga Pāvula. Financial support was provided for planning, implementing and evaluating the activities. The project also enabled schools to jointly develop strategies and methods for long-term cooperation and effective change management.

At the start of the pilot project, each school partnership assessed the current situation and identified the needs within their institutions. In consultation with project experts, they developed tailored activity plans and corresponding budgets. The activities implemented were diverse, recognising that no single solution fits all and that each school requires a different form of support. Teachers took part in joint methodological days and professional development activities, sharing experiences and learning new methods and techniques for working in classrooms with pupils from



Project: *Partnerships between educational institutions to support the transition to learning in the Latvian language*

Implementers: The British Council in Latvia in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and the association Cogito

Project timeline: 25.09.2023–31.03.2024





different backgrounds and with different first languages. Teacher exchanges and classroom shadowing enabled educators to observe lessons in their partner schools.

Pupil activities were organised with the aim of creating a shared linguistic environment. Pupil exchanges, joint lessons, interest-based activities, celebrations and excursions helped strengthen the use of Latvian both in and outside the classroom. To enhance parents' understanding of the transition, individual consultations and parent meetings were held on how to support their children through the process of language learning, alongside thematic workshops that brought parents and children together and allowed parents to experience the learning process from their children's perspective. Across all pilot project activities, Latvian was used as a means of communication and as a bridge between pupils, their families and educators with different language backgrounds.

The insights and conclusions drawn during the pilot project were summarised to inform policy-making and the further development of the initiative. These recommendations were submitted by the British Council to the Ministry of Education and Science in August 2024.

The pilot project results show that:

- participating teachers strengthened their confidence in the ability to implement change, drawing on professional support through supervision and mutual exchange of experience;
- pupils became more confident in using Latvian, less afraid of making mistakes and experienced how the language enables communication with peers and enriches learning both in and outside the classroom;
- educators observed increased parental interest in school activities and growing confidence in their children's preparedness for learning in Latvian;
- across all target groups, various stereotypes were challenged, fostering cohesion between teachers and pupils from different communities;

- the partnerships promoted a culture of cooperation and strengthened communication between neighbouring schools that had not previously collaborated in a structured way.

“We are pleased to have collaborated with the Ministry of Education and Science and to have shared our experience in supporting the development of Latvia's education system and facilitating the exchange of experience among educators. The pilot project helped schools and kindergartens identify their strengths and areas for improvement and to create tailored solutions for implementing change. We concluded that support is needed not only for former minority schools but also for Latvian-language instruction schools where pupils with different first languages are enrolled,” noted Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia.

Following the conclusion of the pilot project, several educational institutions continued their collaboration in the following academic year, demonstrating the initiative's sustainability and significance. Many schools also participated in the follow-up stages of the project, exploring inclusive education, cultural education and community engagement to support the United School.

The pilot project *Partnerships between educational institutions to support the transition to learning in the Latvian language* has demonstrated that educational change takes place when schools are given the opportunity to collaborate, learn from one another and build confidence. It has also shown that the centre of change lies within the schools themselves, in their people, ideas and everyday work.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUPPORTS THE TRANSITION TO A UNITED SCHOOL

The pilot project *Community engagement in support of a United School* was based on insights gained during the previous academic year through the school partnership pilot project (see pp. 8–11). Educational institutions observed that pupils who speak a minority language at home tend to use Latvian mainly at school, while opportunities for wider use of the language beyond lessons and access to a Latvian-language environment is limited. As a result, the pilot project set out to strengthen cooperation between educational institutions and local communities, reinforcing the use of Latvian and fostering a sense of belonging among pupils, teachers and parents.

A total of 14 educational institutions from Rīga, Jelgava, Ventspils, Liepāja, Rēzekne and Daugavpils participated in the project. Representatives appointed by the schools – the project coordinators – took part in practice-based seminars on community engagement and approaches to activating community participation, as well as on project development from the initial concept through to fundraising and implementation. The seminars were led by experts from the Education Initiative Centre and by the project expert, Inga Pāvula.

The ideas developed during the pilot project highlighted a wide range of ways to involve parents, grandparents, school alumni, local museums, libraries and neighbourhood associations in creating a shared linguistic environment. Creative workshops involving pupils and families, celebrations of traditional festivals, joint reading sessions of poetry and fairy tales in Latvian, pupils' participation in neighbourhood association events, alumni storytelling evenings and visits to local museums and theatres were among the activities proposed by the participants.

“Transitioning to a United School model and creating a Latvian-language environment is not solely the responsibility of educational institutions; it also involves the communities around the school and wider society. By supporting cooperation between schools and communities, we can strengthen both the learning process and the sense of belonging, shared responsibility and cohesion within local communities,” emphasised Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia.

Participation in the pilot project provided educational institutions with clear evidence of how community engagement can support the wider use of Latvian among pupils, teachers and parents. It also strengthened the skills of the project coordinator, who gained practical experience in project development, implementation and the planning of community activities.



Project: *Community engagement in support of a United School*

Implementer: The British Council in Latvia in cooperation with the association Cogito

Project timeline: 23.09.2024–31.03.2025





CULTURAL EDUCATION STRENGTHENS
LATVIAN LANGUAGE SKILLS
IN PRESCHOOL

The pilot project *Language and Cultural Education in Pre-school: Towards a United School* aimed to equip teachers with new methods for integrating cultural experiences into the learning process, while supporting preschool children in improving Latvian language skills.

A total of 22 teachers from seven preschool institutions in Rēzekne took part in the pilot project. Within the programme, teachers explored a variety of Latvian language and cultural resources designed for preschool-aged children and their parents, supporting both language use and an understanding of Latvian cultural values. With guidance from experts, participants deepened their knowledge of cultural activities as learning resources, explored books, poetry and folklore and digital tools suitable for preschool children. The workshops were led by *Latvijas skolas soma* Programme Director Aija Tūna, children's literature expert Aija Kalve and LSM editor and education expert Ināra Antiņa. To apply their newly acquired knowledge in practice, participants prepared activity plans to implement in their own educational institutions. Regular seminars and group work also strengthened the exchange of experience between preschool institutions in the city.

“Through our work with schools, we see how important it is to develop children’s Latvian language skills, their understanding of shared societal values and their sense of belonging to Latvia’s cultural space already in preschool. We have also observed strong interest among both teachers and parents in finding high-quality content and cultural offerings for children in Latvian. This pilot project enabled participants to identify, apply

and even create such resources themselves,”

said Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia.

At the conclusion of the pilot project, teachers and their pupils had the opportunity to attend the performance *Figures* by Cēsis Small Theatre at the Joriks Theatre in Rēzekne – a production that stimulated children’s imagination and language use through movement, visual imagery and music.

The pilot project continued the British Council’s previous work in supporting the implementation of the United School approach. In the 2023/2024 academic year, the pilot project *Partnerships between educational institutions to support the transition to learning in the Latvian language* (pp. 8–11) strengthened cooperation and professional development between teachers in Latvian-language schools and former minority schools. In 2024/2025, the pilot project *Community engagement in support of a United School* (pp. 12) further expanded collaboration between schools and local communities. *Language and Cultural Education in Pre-school: Towards a United School* complemented this broader aim – to create a supportive, inclusive and Latvian-language-based educational environment from the earliest stages of a child’s education.



Project: *Language and Cultural Education in Pre-school: Towards a United School*

Implementers: The British Council in Latvia in cooperation with Rēzekne City Council Education Department and the association Cogito

Project timeline: 22.11.2024–16.04.2025

SUPPORTING TEACHERS ON THE PATH TO AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN LATVIAN

Within the pilot project *Towards a United School for Diverse Learners*, teachers in Jelgava participated in an educational programme with a particular focus on working with children who experience a range of learning and communication difficulties.

Under the guidance of project expert Solvita Lazdiņa, teachers identified pupils' needs, developed tailored solutions and formed support groups to exchange experiences. They analysed the learning process in relation to children's overall development and the differentiated support they require, broadening their focus beyond expected learning outcomes. To gain deeper insight into the everyday challenges faced by children and their families and to strengthen their understanding, teachers learned to use the empathy map as a practical tool.

Participants reported that, over the course of the pilot project, they had changed their attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties and related behaviours, becoming more accepting and re-evaluating children's learning needs.

For example, whereas teachers had previously viewed children's movement or drawing during lessons as undesirable or disruptive behaviour, they later came to recognise that for some pupils such activities help maintain concentration. Teachers also emphasised the importance of having formed a professional

group in which they can speak openly and work together to find solutions to practical challenges arising in the creation of an inclusive learning environment.

To learn about Estonia's approach to inclusive education and its experience in the transition to Estonian-language instruction, teachers from Jelgava went on a study visit to Tartu. At Jogentaga School, teachers observed how the learning environment is organised for pupils whose first language is not Estonian, explored methods that support pupils with special educational needs and a range of learning difficulties, and gained insight into inclusive education approaches. The visit encouraged teachers to reassess their own practice and to explore new approaches in their daily work.

The pilot project complemented the British Council's long-term work in strengthening the United School approach, helping teachers create a school environment in which every pupil feels seen, understood and supported.



Project: *Towards a United School for Diverse Learners*

Implementers: The British Council in Latvia in cooperation with Jelgava City Municipality's Education Department and the association Cogito

Project timeline: 01.01.2025–02.06.2025



FUTURE HEROES LATVIA INSPIRES THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW



LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME FOR GIRLS

BE YOUR
OWN
HERO



The core aim of the girls' leadership and entrepreneurship programme *Future Heroes Latvia* was to inspire, equip with the necessary skills and empower the next generation of leaders from different regions and communities across Latvia. The programme offered participants the opportunity to develop new skills and to implement socially significant projects aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

During the third season of *Future Heroes Latvia* in 2022-2023, 50 girls took part. Over the course of six months, participants attended nine workshops covering media literacy and digital skills, financial literacy and fundraising, time management, public speaking and other key topics. Each workshop featured guest experts from different fields, giving participants the opportunity to learn about a variety of professions and working environments, as well as to discover their own strengths. The skills acquired were applied in practice as participants, supported by mentors, worked in teams to develop projects addressing issues of public importance. The themes chosen were wide-ranging – from sustainable fashion to youth mental health support and data security.

Participants organised both online and in-person events, secured sponsors and generated publicity for their projects across social media and in the press. Importantly, participants strengthened their collaboration skills by working in teams that brought together girls from different schools, regions and linguistic backgrounds. The programme culminated in a Final Pitch session, where the teams presented their projects to a jury and received valuable recommendations for further development of their projects.

The main prize was awarded to the team Care4Self, whose project focused on educating young people about health and improving access to free hygiene products in schools. With support from the British Council in Latvia, the winners travelled to London for a study visit, where they visited the organisation's headquarters and met the Ambassador of Latvia to the United Kingdom.



“The chance to meet like-minded people, create a socially meaningful project and go on an inspirational study trip to London was an incredible experience that motivated me to keep going,” said Laura, one of the participants, in the British Council publication *Human Stories*.

The fourth season of *Future Heroes Latvia* was officially launched on 20 October 2023. Once again, 50 girls took part in practical workshops on branding, financial literacy, media literacy and digital communication, deepening their knowledge and skills. The projects developed during the fourth season addressed topics such as promoting youth political participation, gender equality, sustainable fashion and employment. The main prize – a study trip to the United Kingdom – was awarded to the team EcoFam for creating an educational board game about environmentally friendly living for the whole family.

Project: *Future Heroes Latvia* -
Seasons 3 and 4

Implementer: National Centre
for Education of Latvia (VISC)

Project timeline: 2022-2024



Valsts izglītības satura centrs



“We are delighted to have brought the *Future Heroes* programme to Latvia in 2020. It is an initiative that helps young women develop essential skills and inspires them to achieve more. Over these years, we have seen participants grow into active changemakers, demonstrating that investing in young leaders is an investment in the future,”

emphasised Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia.

At the end of each season, graduates of *Future Heroes Latvia* were invited to remain involved in shaping the programme by becoming “Big Sisters” – mentors who supported new teams and helped organise programme activities, while continuing to strengthen their own skills. This approach ensured that the programme focused not only on the development of new participants but also on expanding and sustaining the alumni network. During four programme seasons, 187 young leaders completed the programme, implementing a total of 40 social and entrepreneurship projects.



YOUNG PEOPLE EXPLORE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN LATVIA'S REGIONS

The project *Discover the Countryside Code 2* offered pupils, teachers and career counsellors the opportunity to explore the culture, values and business landscape of Latvia's regions.

During the project, participants from different cities across Latvia took part in study visits to rural areas, where they learned about five sectors essential to the country's development – forestry, agriculture, food production, environmental management and veterinary medicine. Interest in these topics created a strong foundation for cooperation between Latvian-language schools and schools implementing minority education programmes.

These visits fostered mutual understanding and collaboration, enabling participants to gain deeper insight into the opportunities and challenges facing Latvia's regions.

At the same time, the project strengthened participants' 21st-century skills – critical thinking, media literacy and digital competence. Pupils created promotional videos and other materials about local businesses. This experience not only broadened their perspectives but also enhanced the sense of community and cooperation between the participating schools.

Participants also attended seminars on idea generation, teamwork and public speaking, supporting the development of innovative project ideas and cooperation between young people from different communities.

Participants visited regional businesses, including a veterinary clinic, a family farm, wood-processing and food production companies, gaining first-hand insight into business operations in Latvia's regions and meeting industry experts.

The closing event of *Discover the Countryside Code 2* took place at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU). Pupils presented the knowledge and experience they had gained throughout the project, defining their own unique "countryside code". The event was attended by Philip Barclay, Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Riga; Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia; and Ilze Beitāne, Vice-Rector for Studies at LBTU, who emphasised the significance of the project and the achievements of its participants.

During the closing event, young people shared their insights and noted that the project had given them a valuable understanding of business opportunities in Latvia's regions, while also strengthening their cooperation and communication skills.

Project: *Discover the
Countryside Code 2*



Implementer: Centre for Lifelong Education at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies

Project timeline: 24.11.2023–31.03.2024





YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN
CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

The project *Students' Civic Participation Opportunities in Municipalities* strengthened young people's engagement in public processes and their understanding of the importance of civic participation. As part of the initiative, 15 schools from different regions of Latvia explored various forms of participation, integrating them into the learning process as well as extracurricular activities.

Experts from Delna visited schools across Latvia to discuss civic participation with pupils, teachers and municipal representatives, while also testing practical tools for encouraging engagement.

More than 500 pupils and 30 teachers took part in the sessions, gaining insight into the work of local governments, opportunities for citizen involvement and the basic principles of participatory budgeting.

In the first part of each session, pupils learned about the concept of civic participation and the ways in which they can engage at school, in their municipality and at a national level. Particular emphasis was placed on the forms of participation defined in the new Municipal Law, including citizens' advisory councils, collective submissions and participatory budgeting. In the second part, pupils developed their own participatory budgeting initiatives, imagining that they had the opportunity to decide how to allocate EUR 500 for the development of their school. Working in groups, they generated ideas, presented them and voted for the best proposal.

This participatory budgeting exercise enabled pupils to learn about decision-making in practice, develop collaboration and argumentation skills, and reflect on their role in shaping their school and local community. After the sessions, teachers and school leadership worked with Delna experts to analyse the pupils' proposals and discuss possibilities for their implementation.

As a result of the project, pupils in five schools continued working on their project ideas, while a further five schools committed to allocating resources to introduce participatory budgeting in the following academic year. In most sessions, municipal representatives also took part, explaining how pupils can influence decision-making in their city or municipality and take an active role in public processes. The project also strengthened cooperation between schools and municipalities, with both sides discussing ways to promote youth engagement through joint efforts.

To ensure the project's long-term impact, teachers were introduced to Delna's teaching materials, which support the integration of civic participation topics into the curriculum and can continue to be used in subsequent academic years. As part of the project, a survey was conducted in which pupils, teachers and municipal representatives shared their insights on civic participation and ways to strengthen it.

The results showed that three factors are crucial for promoting civic participation among young people – knowledge, practical experience and a safe, open environment. The findings also revealed that in educational institutions where civic participation activities are already integrated into the curriculum, pupils are more likely to engage in initiatives both at school and within their local communities, gradually developing the habit of being active citizens.



Project:
Students' Civic Participation Opportunities in Municipalities

Implementer: Transparency International Latvia – Delna

Project timeline: 19.07.2023–30.06.2024

YOUTH OPPORTUNITY AMBASSADORS INSPIRE YOUNG PEOPLE IN LATGALE

To empower young people to become drivers of positive change in their communities, the *Youth Opportunities Ambassador Programme* was created in Latgale, offering participants the chance to develop leadership, media literacy and civic engagement skills. It provided an environment in which young people not only strengthened their abilities but also discovered how their own example and initiatives could inspire their peers to take a more active role within their community and in public life.

The programme began with a three-day training in Rēzekne Municipality, where participants developed public speaking, media literacy, critical thinking and collaboration skills through practical exercises.

Following the training, the 22 Youth Opportunity Ambassadors, supported by mentors, organised visits to schools in their local areas to share their experience and inform their peers about opportunities available to young people. To motivate and educate others, the ambassadors spoke about civic engagement and volunteering opportunities at local, national and European levels, shared their knowledge of media literacy and encouraged pupils to reflect on how each young person can contribute to improving life in their own community.

The programme far exceeded its initial goal of reaching 900 young people, engaging more than 2 700 pupils across 78 schools in Latgale and neighbouring municipalities.

In addition to the ambassador activities, four workshops on media literacy, leadership and career development

were held in schools, featuring youth influencers and local entrepreneurs.

Throughout the project, the Youth Opportunity Ambassadors received continuous support from mentors, fostering their personal development. Participants noted significant improvements in their confidence and skills and expressed readiness to continue promoting youth engagement and education in the future. The positive impact of the programme in Latgale will endure through these young leaders and the peers they have inspired. Meanwhile, the organisation Delve, with support from the Society Integration Foundation, has expanded the Youth Opportunity Ambassador programme to other regions of Latvia.

The Youth Opportunities Ambassador Programme demonstrates how targeted support can empower young people to become leaders who inspire their peers to take a more active role in community life.

The logo for Esi Vasals, featuring the text 'esi' in a lowercase, cursive font and 'vasals' in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a small leaf icon above the 's' in 'vasals'.



Project:
Youth Opportunities Ambassador Programme

Implementers: Associations Delve and Esi vasals

Project timeline: 01.09.2024–31.03.2025



Man ir
neirobežous
spējas
T JAUDĪGA



PUPILS EXPLORE THE VALUES OF DEMOCRACY THROUGH PLAY

Young people from across Latvia had the opportunity to deepen their understanding of democratic values and the importance of civic participation by taking part in the educational project *Democracy 2084*. At the heart of the initiative is an interactive escape game set in a dystopian vision of a future democratic state on the brink of collapse. Its aim is to show players what life might look like without democratic values and the challenges society would face if democratic systems no longer existed.

During the game, participants enter a fictional world in which they must complete tasks and make strategic decisions to restore democracy and regain their civic freedoms. After the game, young people took part in discussions with the session facilitator, reflecting on their experience and exploring how each of us can contribute to strengthening democratic processes in Latvia.

“Children and young people must learn, from an early age at school, to recognise themselves as part of a democratic system and as individuals capable of influencing it. The game offers an engaging way to begin this essential conversation. After all, it is the younger generation who will shape future democratic decision-making and determine how civically engaged our society will be,”

emphasised Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia.

In the 2023/2024 academic year, more than 669 pupils from 20 schools across all regions of Latvia took part in the game sessions. To ensure a lasting impact on civic education, a methodological resource for teachers was developed to support the integration of democracy and civic participation topics into the curriculum.



Project: *Escape Room: Creating democracy out of the box* (season 2)

Implementer: Civic Alliance – Latvia

Project timeline: 26.09.2023–30.03.2024



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The project *Youth for Youth* was created to strengthen young people's civic engagement, collaboration skills and understanding of inequality in Latvia. Its core idea was rooted in the belief that young people are best placed to understand and reach their peers – especially those who are less active or more difficult to engage.

As part of the project, young people aged 13 to 25 had the opportunity to take part in online training sessions on developing community initiatives and to apply for funding to implement their ideas. The initiatives were carried out in Rīga, Liepāja and Rēzekne, as well as in the municipalities of Dienvidkurzeme and Rēzekne.

The training cycle consisted of four sessions in which participants gained practical knowledge on organising inclusive events, writing project proposals, developing communication for youth initiatives and working effectively in teams. They identified pressing issues within their own communities, formulated goals and developed practical solutions, taking responsibility for driving positive change in their local communities. Participants who attended all sessions received a certificate of participation and the opportunity to enter the initiative competition, where, with mentor support, they prepared their own project proposals.

The project placed particular emphasis on involving young people not only in reducing inequality and fostering intercultural dialogue, but also in promoting an inclusive society, strengthening media literacy and developing non-formal education. Special recognition was given to initiatives created

by young people from diverse communities, demonstrating their ability to collaborate effectively and contribute to social cohesion.

At the final event, participants shared their experiences and insights from the initiatives they had implemented. In total, 13 youth initiatives received support through the community initiative competition. These included creative workshops, the creation of environmental installations, activities promoting the inclusion of minority youth, sports events encouraging healthy lifestyles, media literacy workshops and discussions with local municipal councillors to strengthen dialogue between young people and policymakers. The closing event provided a space for young people to network, exchange ideas and plan future collaborations, demonstrating their ability to self-organise and take initiative.

The project not only equipped young people with practical skills for planning and delivering inclusive activities, but also encouraged them to involve peers from other communities and less active social groups.

Project: *Youth for Youth*

Implementer: National Youth Council of Latvia (LJP)

Project timeline: 24.07.2023–30.01.2024







YOUNG PEOPLE IN JĒKABPILS TAKE PART IN SONG-WRITING MASTER CLASSES

In August and October 2023, young people from local communities in Jēkabpils took part in song-writing master classes, led by musician Agnese Rakovska, instrumentalist Matīss Repsis and the Zvaigznājs team. During the sessions, participants learned the basics of songwriting and music production, working in groups to create the first draft of their own songs. They practised writing lyrics and developing elements of musical composition using contemporary digital tools.

The project offered young people not only the opportunity to gain practical knowledge of songwriting, but also the chance to strengthen their collaboration skills by working alongside other participants.

The purpose of the master classes was to help young people nurture their creative potential by composing lyrics and musical pieces with mentor support.

“We are working to create new compositions, and this is extremely important if we want to stimulate and develop a strategy for producing high value-added products in Latvia,” said Agnese Rakovska. “Music is a high value-added product. I hope that Jēkabpils will become home to future songwriters and musicians whose work can also be exported.”

The master classes were organised in several stages, during which participants worked on lyric writing and music production. The Zvaigznājs team provided young people with essential foundational skills, enabling them to continue developing their musical abilities.



Project: *Song-writing master classes*

Implementer: SIA Zvaigznājs Komanda

Project timeline: 28.06.2023–30.11.2023



YOUNG PEOPLE IN LATGALE DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING AND MEDIA LITERACY

The project *Opinion Matters* encouraged young people to become active members of society by developing skills that enable them to critically analyse information, recognise disinformation, create their own media content and be civically engaged.

It also inspired participants to take a more active role in democratic processes, express constructive opinions and defend them confidently, nurturing future leaders of an inclusive and critically minded society.

The project strengthened young people's resilience to disinformation by enhancing their ability to identify it and respond effectively. Young people and teachers took part in online discussions and workshops with opinion leaders, experts and policymakers. These sessions explored a range of topical issues, including cybersecurity and media literacy, the principles underlying artificial intelligence tools, the importance of civic activism and media content creation – from documentary filmmaking to podcasts and television programming.

In the summer, Digital Bootcamp sessions were held at Malta Secondary School, where young people gained hands-on experience with digital tools and the analysis of information on social media. Participants strengthened their skills in applying the fundamentals of digital

communication, developing a personal brand on social media and using AI tools in creative project development.

To gain practical experience in media production, participants had the opportunity to develop a podcast episode script and take part in the recording of the podcast *Pīci breinumi* at the Latvian Radio Latgale studio. The project concluded in March 2024 with a special event in Rīga, where young people and teachers met Paul Brummell, the British Ambassador to Latvia. In his remarks, the Ambassador emphasised the vital role of young people in shaping the future of society. Following this, participants took part in an interactive game on democracy and civic participation, stepping into the roles of politicians and voters, and visited Latvian Television to learn about the daily work of journalists and the processes behind broadcast production.

Project: *Community Collaborations to Identify and Interpret Misinformation / Opinion Matters*



Implementer: Association Viedokļu līderu skola

Project timeline: 20.03.2023–31.03.2024



BRITISH CULTURE AND TEACHING ROADSHOW-



NEW
OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGLISH
TEACHERS IN LATGALE

The project *LATE British Culture and Teaching Roadshow* enhanced the professional competencies of English teachers in the Latgale region by providing opportunities to explore the latest teaching methods and approaches for integrating elements of British culture into classroom practice.

Through a series of seminars, teachers explored new ways to enhance learning, strengthen media literacy, critical thinking and digital skills, and foster an inclusive classroom environment.

Seminars were held in four cities across Latgale – Daugavpils, Rēzekne, Ludza and Balvi – and were delivered by experienced British lecturers living and teaching in Latvia. The lecturers demonstrated how to analyse media content, recognise fake news, and strengthen pupils' reading comprehension and analytical skills. Teachers developed inclusive lesson plans to ensure every pupil could progress and realise their potential, while exploring creative ways to introduce British cultural values and diversity.

To provide continued support after the course, teachers were invited to join a dedicated communication group. Within this space, the lecturers shared teaching materials, offered consultations, and organised online seminars and discussions to explore the topics in greater depth. The group also served as a platform for teachers to communicate with one another and exchange experiences on applying their newly acquired knowledge in practice.

The project contributed to the professional development of English teachers in the Latgale region by equipping them with practical tools for effective and inclusive teaching, strengthening media literacy, and integrating elements of British culture into the curriculum.



Project: *LATE British Culture and Teaching Roadshow*

Implementer: Latvian Association of Teachers of English (LATE)

Project timeline: 06.06.2023–30.12.2023

LAVSA
LATE

ENGLISH TEACHERS STRENGTHEN THEIR MEDIA LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS

The project *21st Century Skills and Media Literacy* focused on strengthening teachers' digital competencies and integrating media literacy into the learning process. As part of the project, English teachers from across Latvia took part in online training sessions, where experts introduced methods for embedding media literacy, critical thinking and digital skills into everyday classroom practice.

Throughout the training cycle, teachers strengthened their ability to recognise disinformation and verify facts, while gaining deeper insight into methods for supporting pupils in identifying, creating and analysing different types of content. Participants explored platforms and tools for producing advertisements, news articles, blog posts, podcasts and videos, as well as techniques for increasing pupil engagement during lessons. Teachers also discovered how artificial intelligence can support lesson planning and individual learning pathways. Emphasis was placed on strengthening pupils' transversal skills, enabling English lessons to foster a learning environment grounded in collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and communication.

At the end of the project, teachers met in person at Rīga Teika Secondary School to apply their newly acquired knowledge in practical workshops. Working in small groups, they collaborated with colleagues to develop teaching materials for specific age groups, including lesson plans, classroom projects and posters designed to support the development of 21st-century skills and media literacy. All materials created were added to the project's resource bank, ensuring the project's long-term sustainability.

In their feedback, teachers emphasised the value of learning responsible and meaningful ways to use ChatGPT in teaching, as well as exploring platforms for creating interactive polls, discussions, quizzes and virtual "walls" in the classroom.

A total of 242 English teachers from across Latvia took part in the training. At the closing event, participants were welcomed by Paul Brummell, the British Ambassador to Latvia, who emphasised the vital role teachers play in fostering media literacy and critical thinking.

The project equipped teachers with practical knowledge and the confidence to integrate media literacy and digital tools into their lessons, strengthening pupils' language development and critical thinking skills.

Project: *21st Century Skills and Media Literacy*

Implementer: Latvian Association of Teachers of English (LATE)

Project timeline:
25.09.2024–31.03.2025

LAVSA
LATE





GREM MEDIANA – STRENGTHENING MEDIA LITERACY

In July and August 2023, a special video series was released as part of the media project *I Granyul Grem* and its programme *Grem Mediana*.

The initiative aimed to strengthen society’s media literacy and critical thinking, counter disinformation, and ensure access to high-quality information in Russian, with a particular focus on topical and socially significant issues.

Featuring respected experts, the five-episode series explored a range of important, often sensitive and polarising topics that are particularly relevant to Latvia’s Russian-speaking community and frequently targeted by disinformation. These included issues related to LGBTQ+ inclusion, the impact of propaganda and disinformation, the opportunities and risks associated with artificial intelligence, the development of a shared historical memory, as well as digital skills and critical thinking.

The series was published on the *I Granyul Grem* YouTube channel, ensuring broad accessibility and allowing anyone interested to engage with the content. The channel has a substantial audience – approximately one million followers who are predominantly Russian-speaking and consuming content in Russian, around 16 000 of whom are residing in Latvia.

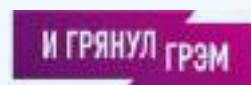
In addition to publishing the videos on YouTube, the project implemented audience engagement activities via the *I Granyul Grem* Telegram channel. The project team shared discussion-provoking questions related to the topics explored in the videos, alongside media literacy and fact-checking tasks in both Latvian and Russian. As a result, the video series reached a wider Russian-speaking audience in Latvia and involved Latvian experts and local opinion leaders.



Project: *Grem Mediana 2*

Implementer: media project *I Granyul Grem*

Project timeline: 01.07.2023–20.09.2023



THE POWER OF COMMUNITIES SPARKS CHANGE IN LATGALE

The initiative *The Active Local Communities in Latgale*, implemented for already six years by the Centre for Education Initiatives in cooperation with the British Council in Latvia, promotes the activation, sustainable development and collaboration of local communities across the Latgale region. Its essence lies in strengthening people's confidence that they are capable of initiating and implementing positive change in their own neighbourhoods.

Within the framework of *The Active Local Communities*, 11 community resource centres have been established in Latgale, accompanied by three community initiative competitions. In total, more than 300 activities have been carried out, involving around 7 000 residents as well as 425 institutions and organisations.

The initiative confirms that long-term support and engagement of local residents are essential prerequisites for the sustainable development of communities.

From 2023 to 2025, two training cycles for community leaders in Latgale gathered a record number of participants. Altogether, 240 community leaders have now completed these training programmes. During the learning process,

participants gained project planning and management skills and, under the guidance of experts, developed ideas for their own community initiatives. After the training, activists had the opportunity to submit their ideas to the community initiative competition. To encourage knowledge transfer, both experienced activists already engaged in the *Active Local Communities in Latgale* movement and newcomers joined forces in implementing initiatives.

Between 2023 and 2025, communities in Latgale focused on environmental improvements, joint clean-ups and celebrations, growing flowers and seedlings, promoting a healthy lifestyle and exploring local history and community stories.

Several small initiatives gained notable public and media attention – for example, the ride-sharing bench in Dekšāres, the first of its kind in Latvia. It was created to help residents reach the nearest town for grocery shopping or medical appointments at times when public transport is not running, encouraging neighbours to give each other a lift on their way. In total, 32 community initiatives have received support.

Project: *The Active Local Communities*

Implementer:
Centre for Education Initiatives

Project timeline: ongoing since 2019









To further strengthen the ecosystem of active communities, consultations were organised for local leaders working in community resource centres, helping them build cohesion, generate new ideas for resident engagement and develop successful cooperation with the municipality. Community resource centre activists were also encouraged to learn from one another during experience-exchange visits.

Marking the initiative's fifth anniversary, the first *Active Local Communities Symposium* took place in 2024 at Krustpils Castle, bringing together dozens of activists from Latgale who had participated in the initiative over the years. The symposium provided an opportunity to share experiences, build connections as well as gain inspiration for new activities. The event was also attended by the British Ambassador to Latvia, Paul Brummell, who further emphasised the vital role of community work in building a cohesive society.

Within the framework of *The Active Local Communities* in Latgale, 11 community resource centres operate across the region. Each centre is individually adapted to the needs of its local community and designed as a space where residents can come together to meet and talk, to plan and implement positive changes in their lives and neighbourhoods and to work towards improving the quality of life in their parish. Between 2023 and 2025, three new community resource centres were opened, with residents themselves taking part in renovating and furnishing the premises. With the support of local municipalities, the centre in Priežmale

(Krāslava Municipality) was established on the premises of the Kastuļina Parish Administration, while in Dagda it was opened in the local cultural centre. In Dekšāres (Rēzekne Municipality), where the local school and kindergarten had been closed, residents decided to transform the former kindergarten building into a community hub, creating a new space where active residents and families can spend time together. The community resource centres have become venues for creative workshops, educational events, community meetings and shared celebrations, fostering a culture of participation at the local level.

To promote project sustainability, the best practices of *The Active Local Communities* have been adopted in other regions of Latvia as well – within the British Council-supported *Liepāja 2027* programme *Neighbourliness*, communities in Liepāja, Kuldīga and the South Kurzeme Municipality learned from the active communities of Latgale.

With the support of the British Embassy in Riga, *The Active Local Communities* multipliers have been trained to pass on this good practice, allowing the ideas of the initiative to continue evolving and taking root across all regions of Latvia.

NEIGHBOURLINESS – COMMUNITY-DRIVEN IDEAS FOR A MORE COHESIVE SOCIETY

To strengthen the communities of Liepāja and the South Kurzeme Municipality and to promote residents' civic engagement, the community activation programme *Neighbourliness* was launched – part of the activity programme of Liepāja 2027, as the city prepares for the title of European Capital of Culture.

The programme aims to equip participants with the tools, knowledge and confidence to create cultural and social initiatives together with their neighbours, strengthening community cohesion and residents' sense of belonging to their place of living.

In the first phase of the programme, local communities and their existing and potential leaders were identified, approached and involved in the initiative. During a four-session training cycle, leaders from the local area learned how to define their community's needs, identify available resources and transform ideas into real projects. Alongside practical skills, mutual inspiration played an important role – Kristīne Liepiņa, Project Manager of the *Active Local Communities in Latgale* initiative implemented by the Centre for Education Initiatives in cooperation with the British Council in Latvia, shared insights on building a community ecosystem in Latgale. Meanwhile, under the guidance of Ieva Niedre, Head of the INITIUM Foundation, a session was held during which participants developed ideas for potential projects in their communities.

Participants presented their ideas aimed at activating local communities and strengthening participation in their neighbourhoods. Financial support was awarded to twelve initiatives. The developed projects focused on exploring neighbourhood histories and creating traditions, fostering intergenerational cooperation, promoting dialogue on community development, organising unifying cultural and arts events and community clean-ups. In April and May of 2025, small grants helped bring these ideas to life – addressing issues important to communities and reflecting the cultural diversity of Liepāja and the South Kurzeme Municipality. Community life in the region was enriched by garden festivals, community theatre performances, resident forums and discussions on neighbourhood development, shared seasonal celebrations, educational walks and storytelling evenings.

As part of the continued strengthening of communities within Liepāja 2027, the community activation programme is planned to continue in 2026 and 2027.

The logo for INITIUM, featuring the word in a bold, sans-serif font with vertical lines through the letters.The logo for Liepāja 2027, with 'Liepāja' in black and '2027' in red, and the text 'Eiropas kultūras galvaspilsēta' below it.

Project: *Community Activation Programme in Liepāja Neighbourhoods*

Implementer: Liepāja 2027 Foundation and the INITIUM Foundation

Project timeline: 11.10.2024–01.10.2025





MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES AS COMMUNITY HUBS

To empower specialists from cultural and memory institutions to foster positive change in their communities, the training cycle and project competition – titled *We for Our Community* – were implemented.

In the first phase, specialists from regional museums, libraries, archives and galleries who wished to build active collaboration with local communities – and who saw their institutions as community hubs – were invited to participate in the training.

The aim of the training was to provide theoretical knowledge and practical tools, enabling specialists to create positive change by engaging representatives of different social groups and strengthening community cohesion.

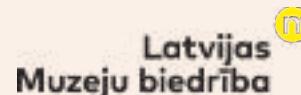
During the sessions, participants deepened their understanding of the role of dialogue and diversity in communities, recognised themselves and others as resources for community development, identified community needs and developed solutions to existing challenges. Guided by experts, they also refined their ideas for initiatives designed to strengthen the connection between their cultural or memory institution and the local community.

Training participants were then invited to apply for financial support within a project competition. Funding was awarded to initiatives developed by the Rothko Museum, Valmiera Library and the Culture Foundation.

As part of the *Photostory for My Community* initiative, implemented by the Culture Foundation, Art Station Dubulti organised photography workshops in cooperation with the Kauguri Social Services Centre in Jūrmala and the Day Care Centre for Children with Functional Disabilities. These workshops offered children from local Jūrmala communities an opportunity to develop new skills and creativity while spending their free time meaningfully. Participants learned the basics of technical and visual storytelling, creating photo stories that reflected their own view of the local community and their place within it. The project culminated in a unique photography exhibition at the Jūrmala Central Library, attended by the British Ambassador to Latvia, Paul Brummell.

In Daugavpils, the Rothko Museum promoted youth engagement by creating a youth club. Young participants took part in creative workshops, explored contemporary art together with museum specialists, artists and experts, visited exhibitions and developed and implemented an art event, *Kultūrpica*, for other children and young people.

Project:
We for Our Community



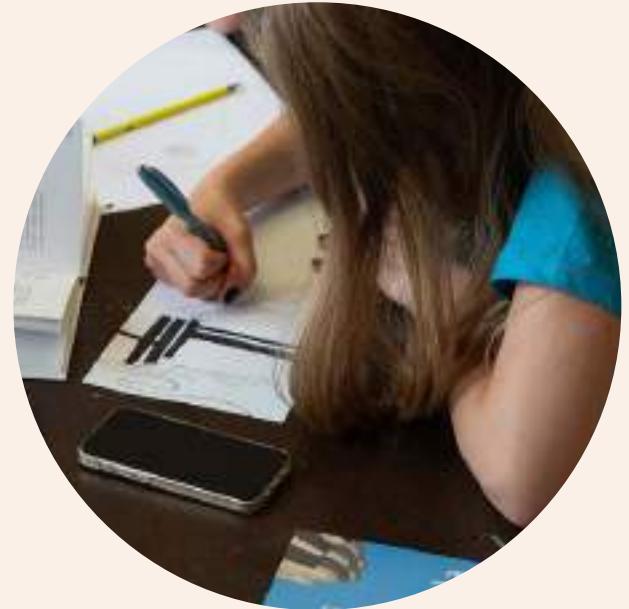
Implementer:
Latvian Museums Association, Library Association of Latvia
and the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO

Project timeline: 11.12.2023–31.12.2024



Meanwhile, Valmiera Library implemented the project *Neighbour. Courtyard. History*. Within this initiative, residents of Seda from different generations joined in unifying activities – collecting local place names, exploring local history and examining their surrounding area. To foster inclusion and reduce barriers, long-term Seda residents, newcomers to the town and residents from Valmiera Municipality all took part.

At the conclusion of the project, the initiative implementers shared their experience with other specialists from museums, libraries, galleries and archives, inspiring them to carry out similar activities in their own communities and strengthen cooperation among memory institutions in the future.



CITIZENS' COUNCILS — A TOOL FOR DIALOGUE AND ADVOCACY



To strengthen civic participation and promote dialogue between municipalities and residents, the forum *Citizens' Councils: A Voice for Communities and a Tool for Municipal Growth* took place on November 22, 2024.

The forum brought together representatives of municipalities and citizens' councils, decision-makers and experts to discuss the role and contribution of citizens' councils in municipal work and to foster cooperation among councils. In her opening remarks, the Speaker of the Saeima, Daiga Mieriņa, emphasised the importance of ensuring that every resident has equal opportunities to participate in shaping the development of their municipality: "One of the tasks of a citizens' council is to maintain a connection with residents who care about the development of their municipality. Once this connection begins to weaken, people lose the motivation to participate."

The British Ambassador to Latvia, Paul Brummell, noted that

citizens' councils have the potential to unite community representatives from different social groups, strengthen their sense of belonging and shared responsibility — essential elements in building resilient and cohesive communities.

Researchers Liga Stafecka and Agnese Frīdenberga from the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS presented findings on the

development and activities of citizens' councils in Latvia, followed by a discussion on their role in strengthening civic participation, improving decision-making and addressing the "periphery effect" after the administrative–territorial reform.

The second part of the forum, held at the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development (VARAM), featured practical workshops where council representatives discussed their functions and cooperation with municipalities, residents and other councils.

Addressing the participants, the Minister for Smart Administration and Regional Development, Inga Bērziņa, emphasised: "The goal is to hear people from every part of the municipality – to understand what matters most to each community and what concerns residents." She noted that as municipalities have grown geographically larger, citizens' councils can serve as an important tool for ensuring meaningful public participation in municipal decision-making, especially in more remote parishes.

Through cooperation between the British Council in Latvia and PROVIDUS, several initiatives have been implemented with municipalities to strengthen dialogue between communities and local governments and build the advocacy capacity of citizens' council representatives.

In 2023, the first conference dedicated to citizens' councils was organised, and the insights shared continue to promote closer cooperation between citizens and municipalities and a sustainable culture of participation across Latvia.

Project: *Citizens' Councils: A Voice for Communities and a Tool for Municipal Growth*



Viedas administrācijas un
reģionālās attīstības
ministrija

Implementer: the British Council in Latvia, PROVIDUS, VARAM and the Administrative-territorial Reform Ex-post Evaluation Subcommittee of the Saeima Public Administration and Local Government Committee

Project timeline: 22.11.2024

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND RESILIENCE IN LATGALE

In 2023 and 2024, the projects *South Latgale on the Way to Civic Participation* and *Community Security is a Key to a Resilient Society* strengthened community resilience in Latgale, supported residents' engagement in local initiatives and fostered dialogue with state and municipal institutions. Garden festivals became informal meeting places where residents could exchange experiences, discuss community issues and learn more about topics relevant to them.

In the summer of 2023, a total of eleven garden festivals were organised across parishes in Augšdaugava, Krāslava, Livāni and Preiļi Municipalities. Their focus was to inform residents about participation opportunities and to facilitate the flow of information between residents and municipalities. These events provided opportunities for local residents and community leaders to meet with experts and municipal representatives, ask questions about civic engagement and learn more about local governance. At the same time, participants drew inspiration from the experience of other active Latgale residents and discussed issues important to the development of their local communities. Participants also mapped community resources to identify strengths and challenges. Special attention was given to explaining the functions of citizens' councils and how they can serve community interests – representatives of citizens' councils from Rēzekne Municipality attended the events to share their experience. At the end of the project, local municipal staff, NGO representatives and community activists took part in an experience-exchange visit to Tukums, where they learned about the work of citizens' councils in Tukums

Municipality. The visit further promoted the transfer of good practices and strengthened cooperation between communities across Latgale.

The garden festival format proved highly effective in encouraging residents to learn about essential topics in a relaxed, informal atmosphere.

For this reason, the tradition was continued in June and July 2024, with five events held in Adamova (Krāslava Municipality), Rudzāti (Livāni Municipality), Pelēči (Preiļi Municipality), Līksna and Svente (Augšdaugava Municipality). These events focused on strengthening community resilience while increasing awareness of crisis response and debunking myths linked to disinformation.

Project: *South Latgale on the Way to Civic Participation* and *Community Security is a Key to a Resilient Society*



Implementer: Partnership "Neighbours"

Project timeline: 20.06.2023–30.11.2023 and 08.07.2024–30.12.2024





The programme included expert discussions and lectures on security, crisis response and media literacy, as well as practical activities such as a workshop on preparing a 72-hour emergency kit. Residents were encouraged to identify the internal resources within their communities that could be mobilised in the event of an emergency.

During conversations with residents, it became evident that communities in the eastern border area of Latgale wished to learn more about security-related topics but often felt distant from national-level decision-makers. At the same time, they observed that trust in institutions was often low, knowledge about reliable information sources was limited and media channels spreading disinformation were commonly consumed by their neighbours.

In response to residents' wishes, a concluding forum – *Security and Community Resilience in Latvia's Eastern Border Region* – was organised in Indra, Krāslava Municipality, only a few kilometres from the border with Belarus.

On 31 October 2024, the forum brought together local residents and NGOs, senior representatives of state institutions and experts to discuss security, community resilience and the importance of active civic participation. Panel discussions featured the Minister of the Interior, Rihards Kozlovskis, decision-makers and experts from the State Chancellery, the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, the Latvian Transatlantic Organisation, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Culture, Rēzekne and Balvi Municipalities, the Civic Alliance Latvia, the Northern Europe Policy Centre and various NGOs. In the forum's working groups, participants gained practical knowledge on media literacy, cybersecurity and crisis preparedness.



The forum attracted significant attention from decision-makers and the media, highlighting the importance of security and community cohesion in border regions. The projects *South Latgale on the Way to Civic Participation* and *Community Security is a Key to a Resilient Society*

helped strengthen civic participation in Latgale, creating an open environment for dialogue between residents and state or municipal institutions and supporting community resilience and active engagement in the region's development.

REGIONAL STAGE – A PLATFORM FOR DIALOGUE ON ISSUES IMPORTANT TO COMMUNITIES

The British Council in Latvia has been part of the core co-organiser team of the *Conversation Festival LAMPA* since the festival's second year, supporting the growth of the festival organised by the DOTS Foundation and its partners. This long-term cooperation has enabled the festival to become a widely attended event where decision-makers, civil society actors, experts and community members come together to engage in an open and respectful dialogue, seek solutions to contemporary challenges and promote democratic values within Latvian society.

Crucially, the festival provides an opportunity to experience diverse perspectives and find common language, helping to reduce polarisation in society. The latest visitor survey results show that 89% of respondents reported interactions with individuals they would not ordinarily encounter or hear from, while 96% agreed that they had witnessed respectful discussions between people with differing opinions. Among event organisers, 77% stated that *LAMPA* helped them step outside their usual social “bubble” and reach new audiences. Visitors similarly noted personal benefits – 92% acknowledged that *LAMPA* is a place where they broaden their horizons and explore topics they would not typically think about in daily life.

LAMPA also serves as a platform for dialogue between different communities, NGOs, activists, state institutions, decision-makers and the wider public. Visitors consider the festival an excellent place for building new connections

(74%), while event organisers report that participation in *LAMPA* has motivated them to collaborate more actively with others (80%). High-level decision-makers regularly attend – including Presidents of Latvia, Prime Ministers, government ministers and Members of the Saeima and the European Parliament. Overall, the festival demonstrates a positive impact on attitudes towards democratic values: 74% of visitors agreed that their optimism about Latvian society and the sustainability of democracy increased through participation.

To broaden the festival's reach, the British Council in Latvia has in recent years prioritised engagement with regional organisations and communities. On 9–10 June 2023, the ninth *Conversation Festival LAMPA* took place in Cēsis. The British Council-supported *Regional Stage* strengthened its presence at the festival, for the second year becoming a platform for the diverse voices of regional communities.

DOTS
FONDS ATVĒRTĀI SABIEDRĪBĀI

LAMPA
sarunu
festivāls

Project: *Conversation Festival LAMPA* 2023, 2024 and 2025

Implementer: Foundation for an Open Society DOTS

Project timeline: 2023–2025



“In my view, the most important discussions are those that help us move from words to action. At a time when Ukraine continues to fight for its independence, it is also vital for us to remain united and think about how to make Latvia a better place to live. *LAMPA* is one of the places where we can do that,”

said Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia, at the festival's opening.

The 2023 *Regional Stage* programme opened with a discussion organised by the British Council in Latvia in cooperation with the Ministry of Smart Administration and

Regional Development (VARAM) on civic participation tools introduced by the new Local Government Law. The discussion featured the Minister for Smart Administration and Regional Development, Māris Sprindžuks.

The *Regional Stage* programme also included discussions on good governance in municipalities, community activation and access to culture in the regions, as well as a performance by Daugavpils Theatre, held in cooperation with the British Embassy in Riga. In total, thirty-six regional organisations took part in the festival, reflecting a steady increase in regional engagement. In 2023, *LAMPA* received the European Citizen's Prize, awarded by the European Parliament, recognising the festival's contribution to strengthening democracy and dialogue.



In 2024, the *Conversation Festival LAMPA* continued the *Regional Stage* programme supported by the British Council in Latvia.

In its tenth anniversary year, the festival gathered more than 25 000 visitors, while broadcasts on television and social media reached 350 000 unique viewers.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science (IZM), the British Council in Latvia organised the discussion *Transition to Latvian language instruction: The First Year*. The session was moderated by Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia, and featured the Minister for Education and Science, Anda Čakša. Experts and representatives of educational institutions shared insights on the successes and challenges of transitioning to Latvian as the language of instruction, the impact of the United School model and the role of school partnerships in supporting change. The discussion highlighted the experience of schools involved in the joint British Council in Latvia and IZM pilot project *Partnerships between educational institutions to support the transition to learning in the Latvian language*.

The *Regional Stage* programme also addressed topics such as rural development, community representation, municipal mandates, civil society in Latgale and the role of culture in shaping local community life. For the first time, the *British Silent Disco* was held at the festival – organised by the British Embassy in Riga and hosted by the British Ambassador to Latvia, Paul Brummell.

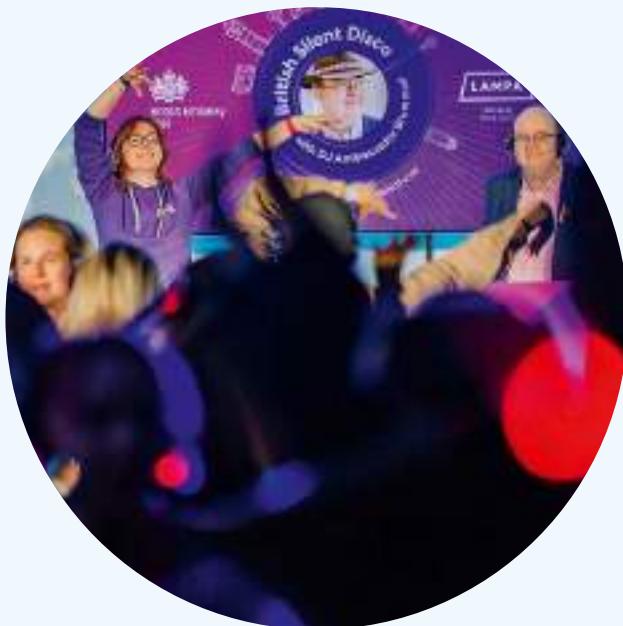
On 20–21 June 2025, the *Conversation Festival LAMPA* took place, marking the tenth year of collaboration between the festival and the British Council in Latvia. Opening the festival, Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia, emphasised:

“Positive change in society begins with people who have ideas and passion. But encouragement and support is also needed

along the way – and, of course, consistent effort and time to ensure those ideas are sustainable in the long term. That is why we continue to stand alongside organisations and community leaders who are a part of the *Regional Stage* programme.”

The British Council in Latvia invited festival visitors to the discussion *Education and Culture – The Power of Communities for Change*. Together with participants of British Council-supported projects, the session explored how to create positive change in one’s neighbourhood, the value of cooperation between cultural and educational institutions and local communities and the factors that help community initiatives to thrive over time.

The 2025 festival brought together more than 20 000 visitors from across Latvia. It was shaped by 285 event organisers and 1 275 participants and speakers from both Latvia and abroad, representing a wide range of sectors, age groups and professional backgrounds – enriching the diversity of perspectives presented at the festival.



FOOTBALL BRINGS RIGA'S NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER

Continuing the tradition started in 2022, the *Riga Neighbourhood Football Tournament (RAFT)* brought together players from various districts of Riga for the 2023 and 2024 seasons.

The aim of RAFT is not only to foster healthy competition and promote an active lifestyle but also to encourage participants to step outside their usual “social bubbles” and strengthen their sense of belonging to their local community – thereby strengthening cohesion and cooperation across neighbourhoods.

The second and third seasons confirmed that the tournament has become an established tradition and a highly anticipated event in Riga's community and sports life. The organisers successfully expanded participation, engaging groups that are often harder to reach and who are the beneficiaries of the *People to People* programme – men over the age of 35 and the so-called “invisible youth”. Players from different generations, social backgrounds and language environments also took part, including those who do not typically participate in neighbourhood association activities.

RAFT has gained strong support from local communities, demonstrated by the growing number of teams, more frequent joint training sessions and friendly matches between neighbourhoods and an increase in the number of spectators attending the games. Organisers have observed that teams often play outside the official tournament schedule, and that

RAFT has inspired additional activities – such as a mini volleyball tournament. One of RAFT's notable success stories is the activation of the local community in Pļavnieki, which led to the establishment of the Pļavnieki Neighbourhood Association.

In the second season, RAFT hosted teams from 14 Riga neighbourhoods, while in the third season the number grew to 16 teams. A new addition was a warm-up mini-tournament held before the official opening, as well as family-friendly activities that encouraged the involvement of players' relatives.

RAFT has become a unique community sports event that combines physical activity with community-building, grounded in a shared passion for football. The tournament helps participants form new connections, fosters communication between different districts of Riga and strengthens residents' sense of belonging to both their neighbourhood and the city as a whole.

The tournament's success has been recognised by the Riga City Council, which has supported its continuation, as well as by the Latvian Football Federation, which has signed a three-year cooperation agreement with RAFT, ensuring the tournament's long-term sustainability.

Project: *Riga Neighbourhood Football Tournament 2023 and 2024*



**RĪGAS
APKAIMJU
ALIANSE**

Implementer: Riga Neighbourhood Alliance

Project timeline: 24.02.2023–31.12.2023 and 10.03.2024–25.09.2024





YOUNG FOLKS TEENS
17 - 19 years

- Address
- Identity
- Self
- Digital
- Wellbeing
- Relationships
- Learning
- Employment
- Financial
- Health
- Housing
- Transport

YOUNG FOLKS TEENS
17 - 19 years

- Address
- Identity
- Self
- Digital
- Wellbeing
- Relationships
- Learning
- Employment
- Financial
- Health
- Housing
- Transport

SOCIAL CLUB BUILDS CONNECTIONS AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

The social club *Forever Young LV* brought together adults from different communities and language backgrounds, creating a welcoming space where people can meet, build new connections and spend time together in a friendly atmosphere. It helped to unite both those who already speak Latvian and those who wished to improve their Latvian language skills in an informal setting, encouraging participants to step outside their usual “social bubbles”.

A wide range of free activities was offered – hikes, language sessions, theatre and concert visits, board game evenings, creative workshops and sports activities.

The social club succeeded in creating a close-knit and open environment where everyone could feel like a part of the community and develop their skills.

To promote inclusion and a sense of belonging among representatives of different communities, participants not only improved their Latvian language skills but also explored Latvian cultural traditions, nature and history, cooked traditional dishes and celebrated festivities together. Perhaps more importantly, participants were not only involved in these activities but also led them – giving everyone the opportunity to share their knowledge, teach others something new, speak about their passions or introduce others to the culture of their own community.



**YOUNG
FOLKS**

Project: *Building Our Shared Home in Latvia*

Implementer: Young Folks LV

Project timeline: 15.01.2025–30.09.2025

TOWARDS A MORE COHESIVE RIGA – STUDY VISIT TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

In September 2023, coordinators from the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents' Centre took part in a study visit to Hull (Kingston upon Hull) in the United Kingdom.

During the visit, participants gained valuable insights into best practice in community cohesion and development in the UK, while also actively sharing their own experience with neighbourhood coordinators in Hull.

The visit began with a meeting at Hull City Council. Neighbourhood coordinators in Hull presented the municipality's support mechanisms for local communities and neighbourhood initiatives, including their work with hard-to-reach population groups. Riga's neighbourhood coordinators, in turn, introduced council representatives to their work and the progress achieved in Riga.

Participants had the opportunity to explore a variety of neighbourhood initiatives in Hull, including those of the NGO Outkast Panda Crew, which supports young people at risk of social exclusion, and the Tigers Sport and Education Trust, which promotes community engagement in sports to enhance wellbeing and encourage an active lifestyle while reducing crime and unemployment. Staff from Back to Ours explained how arts and cultural events can be made more accessible to broader segments of the local population.

The group also learned about different approaches to strengthening cooperation between the municipality and the non-governmental sector – including organisations such as Forum and Sector Connect Hull, which provide training, consultations and financial support for NGOs, and Hull Navigation, which helps residents find suitable community activities in their area, improving their health, wellbeing and opportunities for social connection.

Inspiring stories were shared by local community activists – among them a participant of the British Council's *Active Citizens* community leadership programme. Representatives of HEY Volunteering highlighted the importance of volunteering, describing how they train volunteers for arts and cultural projects and help them gain the skills needed to become leaders in their own communities. Concluding the visit, coordinators visited Welcome House, a support centre where volunteers help refugees and asylum seekers integrate into the local community.

During the study visit, participants were invited to a formal lunch hosted by John Robinson, Deputy Lord Mayor of Hull, together with members of Hull City Council – fostering mutual exchange and a deeper understanding of the municipality's approach to community engagement.

Project: *Riga Neighbourhood
Coordinator Study Visit to Hull,
United Kingdom*



Implementer: The British Council in Latvia

Project timeline: September 2023



OUR IMPACT
2021/22
IN NUMBERS

1,373
 16,775 26,272 1,850
 157 719 406
 14,374 1,443 2,192

SOCIAL MEDIA

1005,156,135

SHARE
 10%
 50%
 10%
 10%
 10%

WALK
 10%
 10%
 10%
 10%





“During the visit, neighbourhood coordinators gained new ideas they could use in their daily work to strengthen neighbourhood associations, support community leadership and develop local communities by involving them in shaping the city’s development. Hull also highly valued our experience with participatory budgeting competitions and the coordinators’ intensive daily communication with residents, providing answers to questions across many areas. The work of Riga’s NGO House was also very positively recognised,” emphasised Ilona Stalidzāne, Head of the Riga City Council Department of Neighbourhood Development and Social Integration, who was among the participants.

“The visit provided Riga’s neighbourhood coordinators with

valuable insights into effective community engagement strategies successfully implemented in the UK. I am confident that participants returned with practical ideas and meaningful takeaways that will help build a more dynamic and inclusive Riga,” said Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia.

Riga Neighbourhood Residents’ Centre coordinators ensure open communication between the municipality and residents or neighbourhood associations – exploring community needs, informing residents about participation opportunities and supporting local communities. The study visit strengthened this work and provided new ideas for the city’s development processes.

BALTIC AND NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY COHESION POLICY EXPERTS SHARE EXPERIENCE

In September 2024, policy-makers and community cohesion experts from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia took part in a study visit to Northern Ireland – Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. The aim of the visit was to share best practice in social cohesion and civic participation, strengthen cooperation between the Baltic States and the United Kingdom, and learn from Northern Ireland's unique experience in rebuilding relationships between politically and religiously divided communities following the Good Friday Agreement.

As part of the visit, the delegation met with representatives of the Northern Ireland Executive, Belfast City Council, civil society organisations and academia. Participants also visited the British Council Northern Ireland office, where its Director, Jonathan Stewart, outlined the organisation's role in fostering cooperation and mutual understanding across the region through arts and education programmes.

Experts explored local organisations to see how cohesion policies are implemented in practice. Special attention was given to neighbourhoods that have historically experienced heightened tensions between their residents and where socially vulnerable groups reside.

Northern Ireland's experience demonstrates that dialogue with diverse communities and targeted support can transform historical tensions into a shared vision for the future.

Participants learned about programmes for improving public spaces and developing community centres, leadership and sports initiatives for engaging young people – helping to reduce crime and unemployment – and the role schools play in reducing division.

The Latvian delegation included representatives of the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the State Chancellery, the Riga City Municipality and the Society Integration Foundation.

The visit was led by the Country Directors of the British Council in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania – Zane Matesoviča (Latvia), Ursula Roosmaa (Estonia) and Ona Marija Vyšniauskė (Lithuania).

Meetings with decision-makers and in-depth discussions provided participants from the Baltic states with valuable insights into community cohesion strategies that have proven effective in the United Kingdom. For Northern Ireland experts, the visit offered an opportunity to learn from Baltic experience in strengthening local communities.

Project: *Northern Ireland Study
Tour for Social Cohesion Experts*



Implementer: the British Council in Latvia

Project timeline: 16.09–20.09.2024





*LĀČPLĒSIS GARDEN FESTIVAL
BRINGS TOGETHER KAROSTA'S YOUTH,
ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITY*

The *Lāčplēsis Garden Festival* has become a cherished summer tradition in Karosta, Liepāja, fostering cooperation between local organisations, schools and the wider community. In the summer of 2024, the festival took place for the fifth time. Over the years, organisers have purposefully refined the programme to ensure that Karosta residents of all ages feel welcome. Importantly, all activities are free of charge, enabling children from socially vulnerable families to take part.

The British Council in Latvia supported a range of activities for children and young people – providing opportunities not only for entertainment but also for developing new skills and exploring extra-curricular activities available in their neighbourhood.

The festival programme included a young talent stage, a musical instrument workshop, stop-motion animation and graffiti workshops, an exhibition and open-air painting session organised by students of the local art school, as well as games and trails for active recreation.

By involving local organisations, the festival offered children and young people the chance to discover different non-formal education activities in a friendly, engaging environment – helping them broaden their horizons, develop creative abilities and spend their free time meaningfully.

To ensure long-term impact beyond the festival itself, a number of additional activities were organised. In 2023, young people who became interested in stop-motion animation during the festival were able to join dedicated

workshops. At the start of the school year, socially vulnerable families in Karosta were invited to educational and creative activities, including a show by the Liepāja Science and Innovation Centre. In 2024, students from the Karosta Music School took part in brass orchestra masterclasses in preparation for the festival's opening performance. These sessions have become a place where many local children feel welcomed and are encouraged to explore new forms of self-expression; the opportunity to prepare for and participate in the opening performance motivated them to continue learning musical instruments. In 2025, photography masterclasses were organised for pupils from Piemare Primary School in Liepāja, encouraging young people to not only create their own photographic artworks but also to learn more about media literacy and safety in the digital environment.

The *Lāčplēsis Garden Festival* has proven to be not only an engaging community celebration but also an effective way to strengthen cooperation and communication among the many organisations working in the Karosta neighbourhood. With the support of the British Council in Latvia, the project has helped children and young people access high-quality extra-curricular activities in Karosta and acquire new skills.



Project: *Hold on to Summer!*
and *Future Sparks: Activities for Youth and Children in Karosta*

Implementer: Baringtons K2

Project timeline: 21.07.2023–15.09.2023
and 05.08.2024–31.03.2025

STORIES OF SUBCULTURES BRING YOUNG PEOPLE TOGETHER IN LIEPĀJA

The aim of the project *Level Liepāja* was to explore and highlight the diversity of subcultures in Liepāja, fostering mutual understanding and inclusion.

The project implementers emphasised that subcultures play an important role in shaping popular culture, contributing to sustainable urban development and supporting young people's personal growth. Within the project, young people representing different subcultures collaborated to create a community theatre performance that reflected the cultural diversity of Liepāja while giving a voice to groups that often remain unseen.

In the first stage of the project, director Andris Željonka conducted interviews, collected stories and organised workshops in which young people from various subcultures shared their experiences using community theatre methods. Importantly, the director involved in the project comes from the punk scene, which has helped to establish connections with youth subcultures that are usually more closed-off and difficult to reach.

The workshops offered young people opportunities for creative self-expression, encouraging them to reflect on their identity, sense of belonging and beliefs. At the same time, tolerance grew as subcultures and social groups which often exist in separate “social bubbles” met and interacted.

The research findings and the stories shared by young people became the basis for the performance *How to Become a Liepāja Local?*, created in collaboration with professional artists.

The production reflected the diversity of Liepāja's alternative culture scene and strengthened local identity, showing that the narratives of subcultures are an important part of the city's character.

The young participants' experiences were complemented by stories from representatives of other generations who, in their youth, belonged to one of the city's subcultures. This approach encouraged intergenerational dialogue and broadened the understanding of social and cultural development in Liepāja.

Project: *Level Liepāja*.
Research and development
of the performance about Liepāja
subcultures

INITIUM

Implementer: INITIUM Foundation

Project timeline: 26.08.2024–31.03.2025



RESEARCHING CIVIC APATHY AMONG LATVIA'S RESIDENTS

In April 2023, the results of the study *Is the Civic Apathy Among Latvia's Russian-Speaking Population a Myth or a Reality?* were presented. The aim of this research was to analyse the causes of low civic engagement among Latvia's population – particularly Russian-speaking residents – including the widespread belief that individuals cannot influence decisions taken by their municipality, the government or the Saeima.

Special attention was given to researching Latvia's Russian-speaking population, as public opinion surveys had indicated low levels of trust in Latvia's institutions, limited confidence in their ability to influence decision-making and infrequent involvement in civic activities.

As part of the study, leading non-governmental organisations in Latvia were surveyed, and eight focus group discussions were held in Daugavpils, Rēzekne, Liepāja and the Riga neighbourhoods of Bolderāja and Pļavnieki. These discussions provided an in-depth examination of civic activism and highlighted key factors contributing to civic apathy.

Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS identified significant drivers of low engagement in political and social activities among the Russian-speaking population by analysing public attitudes and comparing the perspectives of Latvian- and Russian-speaking groups, as well as residents from different municipalities.

Based on the insights gained, recommendations were developed to strengthen trust in state and municipal institutions, enhance civic participation mechanisms and expand opportunities for the involvement of less active and hard-to-reach population groups.

The study was presented to decision-makers and opinion leaders, and its findings were also shared with members of the Saeima Citizenship, Migration and Social Cohesion Committee.

The full version of the study is available on the PROVIDUS website, and it continues to serve as an important resource for policy-making in the fields of social cohesion and civic engagement.



Project: *Researching reasons and solutions for low civic engagement of Latvia's Russian-speaking minority. Part 2*

Implementer: Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS, supported by the Society Integration Foundation

Project timeline: January–May 2023

STUDY REVEALS MEDIA CONSUMPTION HABITS IN LATGALE

To strengthen societal resilience and support national and municipal institutions in countering disinformation, the study *Information Flows in Daugavpils and Latgale* was carried out. It provides an in-depth insight into the region's media audiences and their information consumption habits, as well as offering recommendations for effective communication with different population groups.

The study aimed to identify which information sources people choose, which opinion leaders they trust, and how information circulates between different segments of society.

To achieve this, a diverse methodology was applied – including an analysis of the region's socio-political and media environment, resident surveys, focus group discussions and the mapping of physical information flows.

The researchers:

- interviewed experts and local residents;
- identified information “bubbles” and the links between them;
- analysed the media environment in Latgale;
- created information flow maps illustrating how news and opinions spread across communities and which individuals or groups act as “intermediaries” connecting different audiences.

Based on the findings, recommendations were developed for the Latvian government, its partners and local media outlets. These recommendations support the use of targeted communication approaches to engage audiences in Latgale more effectively — strengthening dialogue between the local population and decision-makers, reinforcing democratic values and reducing the spread of disinformation.

The study is available in the State Chancellery's Research and Publications Database.



Project: *Mapping of Audiences in the Latgale Region — Daugavpils*



Implementer: Media Development and Research Centre; supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, the State Chancellery of the Republic of Latvia and the National Electronic Mass Media Council

Project timeline: 23.10–31.12.2023



THE ROLE OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEE-LED ORGANISATIONS IN SOCIAL COHESION

To inform policy-makers and offer recommendations for strengthening social cohesion and civic participation, the study *The Phenomenon of Ukrainian Refugee-Led NGOs in Latvia: Growth, Challenges and Sustainability* was carried out. It analyses the rapid development of refugee-led NGOs, the factors behind their growth, the challenges they face and their long-term sustainability. The research included interviews with fourteen Ukrainian NGO leaders and six representatives of Latvian support structures.

The study identified key growth factors, including the emergency caused by the war, targeted support mechanisms, the size of the Ukrainian community in Latvia and its strong motivation to act. It also highlighted risks to sustainability, such as reliance on short-term funding, language barriers, administrative burdens, burnout and the possible return of leaders to Ukraine.

The research provides policy-makers with recommendations for strengthening support mechanisms and promoting the full inclusion of Ukrainians in Latvian society.

Following the presentation of the study, an expert discussion on the integration of Ukrainian civilians in Latvia took place. Participants included representatives of the Ministry of Culture, the Saeima, the Ukrainian community in Latvia, the study's co-author and Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia.

In the discussion, Zane Matesoviča emphasised that

integration is not a spontaneous process but one that requires targeted support by empowering active individuals who can serve as “door-openers” to the broader society. She also noted the importance of encouraging interactions between Ukrainians and other communities to help people move beyond their familiar “social bubbles”.

The insights gained through this study are expected to support policy-makers not only in their work with the Ukrainian refugee community but also in shaping approaches for the integration of other migrant groups in Latvia.

Project: *Mapping of Ukrainian refugee-led organisations in Latvia and policy analysis*



Implementer: Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS

Project timeline: 15.01–31.03.2025



CULTURE MEETS NATURE IN THE PRODUCTION *ALL BIRDS SING BEAUTIFULLY*

In May 2023, the production *All Birds Sing Beautifully* (dir. Krista Burāne) premiered at GORS in Rēzekne. The creative team described it as a “site-specific musical performance” that invited audiences to step outside familiar cultural spaces, offering a unique perspective on the boundary between culture and nature – a space where the tension between the cultivated and the wild, between human order and the untamed rhythms of nature, unfolds.

As part of the production, professional artists collaborated with local choirs and young singers, engaging the local community in each performance location. Moreover, the audience themselves became co-creators: by listening to and attuning to stories about birds and people, they helped shape the overall soundscape of the performance.

Support from the British Council in Latvia enabled the creative team to stage the production in Rēzekne, Daugavpils and Viļaka, broadening audiences’ access to high-quality contemporary theatre.

The themes explored in the performance encouraged viewers to reflect on environmental and social issues, on one’s impact on society and the natural world, and on the importance of collective action and community engagement.

The production received recognition from both audiences and professionals – composer Jēkabs Nīmanis was nominated for the *Spēlmaņu nakts Award for Best Original Music*, and Pamela Butāne was nominated for *Costume Designer of the Year*.



Project: Performances of *All Birds Sing Beautifully* in Latgale

DDT
DIRTY DEAL TEATRO

Implementer: Dirty Deal Teatro in collaboration with StoryHub

Project timeline: 01.05.2023–30.09.2023

THE REALITY OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE THROUGH THE LENS OF ART

In August 2024, as part of the Valmiera Summer Theatre Festival, the documentary production *Every Day* – produced by Istabas teātris – premiered, depicting everyday life in wartime conditions. Director Valters Silis developed the production in close collaboration with Latvian and Ukrainian theatre artists, focusing on the stories of Ukrainian civilians. With support from the British Council in Latvia, guest performances took place in Rēzekne and Daugavpils, broadening access to contemporary culture in the regions.

The performances took place at a time when, after two years of war, the public increasingly sought to distance themselves from news, making artistic experiences an important tool for fostering empathy and understanding.

The production focused on the everyday lives of Ukrainian civilians during wartime, using documentary materials, personal stories and theatrical expression to provide audiences with an insight into what it means to live in a country at war. Its creators encouraged viewers to reflect on the presence of war in everyday situations – at school, at work and on the street. The performance took place outside traditional cultural venues, unfolding in public spaces on the streets of Valmiera, Rēzekne and Daugavpils, with audiences experiencing the action through headphones.

In this way, the performance was also accessible to passers-by, attracting a wider audience, including those who do not usually attend cultural events, and thus exposing more of the population to the arts.

“Documenting this time in the language of theatre, here and now, is crucial in wartime – and this becomes evident in the new production *Every Day*. The performance leaves audiences with practical instructions for daily life in wartime, serving as a stark reminder that Latvia and Ukraine share the same neighbour. Ours and yours. And the responsibility to ensure that this production can be spoken about in the past tense as soon as possible, rather than the present tense, is also ours and yours,” wrote theatre critic Kitija Balcare on the portal *Ism.lv*.

The guest performances of *Every Day* in Latgale strengthened cooperation between Latvian and Ukrainian theatre artists and introduced new ways of reflecting on important and sensitive themes through art, deepening audiences’ sense of shared responsibility and the significance of supporting Ukraine.

Project: Guest Performances of *Every Day*
in Rēzekne and Daugavpils

Implementer: Istabas teātris

Project timeline: 20.06.2024–01.08.2024





WOMEN WITHOUT MEN – A DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT THE STRENGTH OF UKRAINIAN WOMEN

In November 2023, the documentary film *Women Without Men* premiered at the cinema Splendid Palace. The film tells the stories of Ukrainian women who found refuge in Latvia after fleeing the war. It was created by Ukrainian director Marina Nazarenko, who has been living in Latvia since March 2022, in collaboration with Latvian director and producer Una Celma.

At the centre of the film are six women whose paths, under different circumstances in Ukraine, might never have crossed – Lyuba, a former factory worker from Zaporizhzhia; Julia, a young mother from Uzhhorod with her daughter; Tatyana from Kharkiv; Olena, a dance coach from Odesa; and Kateryna, who was forced to flee the occupied town of Vovchansk with her newborn twins. The film offers viewers a glimpse into the everyday lives of these women, revealing their pain, moments of joy and their efforts to find strength and hope as they build a new life. The emotional core of the film is shaped by the personal experience of its director, Marina herself.

The film fosters an understanding of the devastating impact of the war in Ukraine, strengthening viewers' resilience to disinformation while also highlighting the challenges and prejudices faced specifically by women. At the same time, it challenges stereotypes about women's roles in society, portraying both traditional gender expectations and the ways in which women transcend them as they fight for the safety and wellbeing of not only themselves but also their children, while their partners and family members remain in Ukraine.

The documentary also brings to the forefront difficult and often uncomfortable questions about the support system for Ukrainian refugees in Latvia. Representatives from municipal and state social institutions were invited to attend the premiere to foster meaningful dialogue about the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Latvia.

The film *Women Without Men* was screened in cinemas across Latvia. In Riga, audiences also had the opportunity to attend special free screenings.

The film promotes understanding of the devastating impact of the war in Ukraine, strengthens resilience to disinformation and challenges stereotypes about women's roles in society.

Project: Documentary Film
Women Without Men

Implementer: Fenixfilm

Project timeline: 22.05.2023–31.12.2023





A CHILDREN'S PUPPET PERFORMANCE
INTRODUCES AUDIENCE TO UKRAINIAN
CULTURE



In January and February 2024, a puppet show for young children, *Kotyhoroshko* (dir. Jurijs Luniks), was staged at the Joriks Theatre in Rēzekne. Aimed at audiences from the age of two, the production was based on motifs from a Ukrainian folk tale and created to introduce members of various local communities to Ukrainian culture. The performance contained no spoken words, meaning it could be enjoyed by everyone, regardless of their age or mother tongue. Musical elements played a significant role, featuring folk motifs characteristic to the south-western regions of Ukraine and performed on traditional Ukrainian instruments. The show's creative team included a composer and a set designer from Ukraine, whose contribution helped create an authentic representation of Ukrainian culture.

The performances were attended by children and families of Latvian, Ukrainian, Russian-speaking and other backgrounds from local communities in Rēzekne. After each performance, discussions were held where members of the audience had the opportunity to ask questions and to share their impressions with the creative team.

The production encouraged both children and their family members to recognise similarities in the cultural heritage of the communities they represent, fostering mutual understanding.

The performance *Kotyhoroshko* has been included in the cultural education programme *Latvijas skolas soma* and has been staged in several schools and pre-schools across Latvia.

Project: *Ukrainian Traditions
in One Fairy Tale*

Implementer:
Rēzekne City Theatre Joriks

Project timeline: 06.12.2023–28.02.2024



A DOCUMENTARY FILM ON THE DEPORTATION OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

At the end of January 2023, a special screening of the documentary *Taken: Putin's Stolen Children*, directed by British documentary filmmaker Robin Barnwell, took place at the cinema Splendid Palace. The screening was supported by the British Council in Latvia and the British Embassy in Riga. It was organised by the Embassy of Ukraine in Latvia and the Children's Hospital Foundation, drawing attention to the war crimes committed by Russia and the forced deportation of Ukrainian children. Proceeds from ticket sales were donated to the Children's Hospital Foundation to support summer camps for Ukrainian children in Latvia.



Robin Barnwell is a well-known British journalist and documentary filmmaker whose work as a director and producer has earned him BAFTA and International Emmy Awards. Barnwell opened the screening in Riga, sharing insights about the making of the film and the stories it depicts with the audience.

The film documents the forcible transfer and deportations of Ukrainian children to Russia and the desperate efforts of their families to bring them back home.

The director, who has spent many years working in conflict zones and reporting on human rights violations around the world for broadcasters such as the BBC, Channel 4 and PBS Frontline, highlights the stories of Ukrainians and the international community's efforts to stop these unlawful deportations.

Project: Exclusive Screening of the Film
Taken: Putin's Stolen Children

Implementer:
Children's Hospital Foundation

Project timeline: January 2023





A PERFORMANCE REVEALS THE YOUNGER GENERATION'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF LATVIA

In January 2025, the production *Future Deciders* (dir. Roberts Dauburs) premiered at the Joriks Theatre in Rēzekne. The creative team collaborated with members of the Joriks Youth Theatre Studio in Rēzekne to explore through their personal stories how the younger generation sees the future in Latvia and its regions. Other young people from local communities also contributed to the development of the production and the creation of its stage design.

The production addressed themes important to young people – relationships, identity, dreams and challenges – revealing moments of joy, hope, doubt, loss and triumph experienced by its protagonists. Using language that is accessible and engaging for teenagers, the performance encouraged conversations about political participation, future prospects in Latgale and opportunities to remain in Latvia and build a life here, especially in the regions. It invited audiences to reflect on the role each individual plays in society and what the future of Latvia's regions might look like.

During the creation of the production, the participants developed their skills as theatre artists and discovered ways of using the language of art to speak about topics that matter to them and other young people, stepping outside their comfort zone. The stage became a space where the voices of young people from Latgale could be heard – genuine, brave and driven by a desire to shape their own future. The performance was in Latvian, but it also featured text spoken in English, Polish and Russian, reflecting the

diversity of communities in Latgale and the different cultural spaces in which the young performers live.

The production broadened the cultural offer in Latgale, allowing audiences to gain insight into the inner world of today's youth and encouraging young viewers to reflect on their role in shaping the future of their community and region.

The performance *Future Deciders* has been included in the cultural education programme *Latvijas skolas soma* and is available to school audiences from other regions of Latvia as well.



Project: Performance *Future Deciders*

Implementer: Joriks Rēzekne Theatre

Project timeline: 15.10.2024–11.01.2025



FROM PERFORMANCE TO CONVERSATION: CONTEMPORARY THEATRE SPARKS DISCUSSIONS IN THE REGIONS



In 2023, audiences in Liepāja and Rēzekne had the opportunity to see two productions – *The War Hasn't Started Yet* and *The Sun Line*. The aim of the project was to expand access to contemporary culture in the regions and to encourage discussions on complex and sensitive social and political issues through the language of theatre, engaging primarily Russian-speaking audiences.

In both Liepāja and Rēzekne, audiences had the opportunity to see Mikhail Durnenkov's acclaimed play *The War Hasn't Started Yet*, which was written in 2015, translated into English, Romanian, Czech, Italian, Lithuanian and Finnish, and staged in London in 2018.

The production was created as a three-actor performance, bringing together actors from different theatre traditions and backgrounds – Latvian actress Guna Zariņa, Lithuanian actor Gytis Ivanauskas and Aleksandrs Majikovs from the Mikhail Chekhov Riga Russian Theatre. The play consists of 14 short stories, written as sketches or monologues, which together form a single dramatic arc. It presents a dystopian vision of a society in which democracy has collapsed and everyday life is suffused with a constant sense of existential threat. At the end of the performance, the audience was invited to take part in discussions on the topics explored in the play – social alienation, propaganda, moral dilemmas and post-truth – and their relevance in today's political context, together with local journalists.

Meanwhile, in Liepāja, audiences were introduced to *The Sun Line* by Poland-based playwright Ivan Vrypaev – a profound and emotionally charged dialogue between two people about genuine intimacy and the mechanisms within relationships that hinder understanding, portraying a married couple in crisis. Actors Andris Bulis and Marija Daņiljuka, who received the award for Best On-Stage Partnership at the Vratsa Theatre Festival in Bulgaria in 2022, revealed the inner conflicts of the human psyche and the longing for true connection, giving the audience an opportunity to reflect on the dynamics of relationships in today's world. After the performance, the audience was invited to take part in a conversation with the creative team to explore the themes emphasised in the production in greater depth.

The project created opportunities for collaboration among actors of different nationalities while offering regional audiences the chance to discover contemporary works of drama that have gained international recognition.

Through the language of theatre, the plays encouraged audiences to reflect on and discuss difficult and uncomfortable topics, fostering critical thinking and broadening the artistic experiences available to regional audiences.



Project: *The War Hasn't Started Yet* and *The Sun Line* – theatre performances in Liepāja and Rēzekne in 2023

Implementer: KatlZ Riga Creative Association

Project timeline: 21.08.2023–27.11.2023



ART AND CULTURE AT THE CROSSROADS OF LATGALE'S DEVELOPMENT

In March 2025, the forum *CROSSROADS X KRUSTCEĻI* took place in Rēzekne.

The event brought together artists, curators, community activists, entrepreneurs and representatives of the creative industries to discuss the role of art and culture in the development of Latgale, strengthening social cohesion and fostering new creative processes.

In expert-guided workshops, participants explored sustainable fashion design practices that combine traditional techniques with permaculture principles, engaged in a reflection on Latgale's collective identity and history, developed innovative approaches to crisis communication and examined the potential of socially engaged art.

The main day of the forum brought visitors together in the building of the Rēzekne SPA Centre, which has been tied to public controversy, opening it to a wider public and offering unconventional ideas for its use in serving the community. Participants were welcomed by a diverse programme of panel discussions and workshops – artists' personal stories; presentations on developments in the art market; the future plans of the Art Academy of Latvia (LMA) Latgale Branch; the role of the Rothko Museum in the region; and discussions

on art in times of war. The forum concluded with an expert panel discussion on the role of art in Latgale and a networking session. Visitors could also view the exhibition *Splash*, featuring works by students of the LMA Latgale Branch and pupils of the Latgale Secondary School of Music and Art.

In total, the forum was attended by more than 150 participants, bringing together creative industry professionals and members of local communities. The event highlighted the importance of the LMA Latgale Branch as a centre of higher education in the arts within the region, offering young artists and designers the opportunity to develop their skills while remaining in Latgale. It also strengthened cooperation between the LMA Branch, local activists and organisations – several institutions expressed their willingness to continue working together after the project, thereby laying the foundations for a more resilient and interconnected cultural ecosystem in the region.



Project: *CROSSROADS X KRUSTCEĻI*

Implementer: LMA Latgale Branch

Project timeline: 21.01.2025–31.03.2025



REIMAGINING WITCHES AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY



In the summer of 2023, the production *Malleus Maleficarum. The New Pact* premiered at Riga Circus. The project was a Latvian–Estonian co-production created by director Iveta Pole in collaboration with seven female artists.

The production offered a unique perspective on the role of women across different periods of history – and in the future.

The production drew inspiration from *Malleus Maleficarum* – the 1486 treatise by Heinrich Kramer that, for centuries, served as a legal and theological justification for the demonisation of women during witch trials. The performance transformed this medieval text into a multilayered artistic reflection, with the material spoken, enacted and chanted by women of different ages and nationalities. This approach invited audiences to reflect on gender stereotypes, the history of misogyny and the challenges that persist to this day.

After the premiere, the audience was invited to take part in a discussion with the creative team, representatives of civil society and policymakers. These conversations explored themes such as the figure of the “witch”, historical and contemporary witch hunts, modern-day misogyny and the potential of art to address social issues.

The production *Malleus Maleficarum. The New Pact* received the highest award at the 2023 *Spēlmaņu nakts* Ceremony, winning the prize for *Best Large-Scale Production* of the 2022–2023 season. Jury chair Toms Čēvers emphasised the production’s innovative approach and the conviction behind its central idea, noting that the work stands out not only for its execution but also for its scale and conceptual depth – qualities rarely seen in Latvian theatre. In addition, Katrīna Neiburga received the award for *Video Artist of the Year* for her contribution to the production.



Project: *Malleus Maleficarum. Seminar and workshop sessions on women’s empowerment*

Implementer: INITIUM Foundation

INITIUM

Project timeline: 29.08.2023–30.12.2023



UNIQUE INSECT OPERA REFLECTS ON DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

At the end of August 2025, the theatre troupe Kvadrifrons invited audiences to the Riga Zoo for an open-air performance – an insect opera for the whole family titled *Ticks*. This musical production presented important themes such as inclusion, diversity and the preservation of biodiversity in a way that was engaging and accessible for children.

The libretto by Klāvs Mellis offers a humorous portrayal of the arrival of tick-borne encephalitis in Latvia, imagining a series of dramatic events unfolding within the local insect community after invasive ticks enter their territory.

“*Ticks* demonstrates not only visual and musical excellence but also considerable thematic depth. By anchoring its narrative in interspecies intrigues among small creatures, the production creates a distancing effect that encourages audiences to reflect on how we ourselves succeed – or fail – to interact within our own species. How do we perceive newcomers? How do we treat guests and members of our local community?” writes critic Ketija Jurčenko on the portal krodery.lv.

With support from the British Council in Latvia, families and children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds were able to attend the performance free of charge, ensuring access to a high-quality cultural event for those who often have limited opportunities to engage with the arts. Presented in a way that resonated with young audiences, the production helped to cultivate an understanding of diversity, integration and the importance of environmental protection.

The production was nominated for the 2023–2024 *Spēlmaņu nakts* Award in the category *Best Production for Children and/or Young People*, while costume designers Kate Krolle and Reinis Bērziņš were shortlisted in the category *Costume Designer of the Year*.

Project: Performance *Ticks*

Implementer: Kvadrifrons Theatre Troupe

Project timeline: 05.08.2024–01.09.2024

KVADRIFRONS





A PERFORMANCE
FOR PUPILS ABOUT BULLYING
AND THE COURAGE TO BE DIFFERENT

In March 2025, the theatre troupe Kvadrifrons staged the interactive performance *All That Is Hidden* (dir. Paula Pļavniece) at Rīga Valdis Zālītis Primary School and Rīga Jaunciems Primary School. Designed for pupils in middle school, the production serves as a tool for fostering conversations about relationships and empathy. It is based on a book by Swedish author Katarina von Bredow.

The story follows an unexpected friendship that develops between Jūels, a loner, and Estere, the class leader. Told from a psychologically nuanced perspective, the narrative explores themes such as friendship, exclusion, bullying and the courage to be oneself. Kvadrifrons created the performance specifically for school environments – it can be staged in different types of classrooms and requires only minimal technical equipment. The production creates a safe space that enables the audience – in this case the pupils – to take part in the action, encouraging them to empathise with the characters and reflect on how they would respond in similar situations.



By observing and re-enacting situations rooted in real-life challenges, pupils develop critical thinking skills and become more aware of their ability to stand up against injustice.

Methodological materials have also been developed for teachers to support ongoing dialogue with pupils about bullying and the dynamics of relationships within the classroom. The performance is included in the cultural education programme *Latvijas skolas soma* and continues to tour schools across Latvia.

Project: Performance *All That Is Hidden*

KVADRIFRONS

Implementer: Kvadrifrons Theatre Troupe

Project timeline: 01.03.2025–31.03.2025

PROMOTING CULTURAL ACCESSIBILITY AND DIVERSITY

In September 2023, as part of the international *New Theatre Festival Homo Novus*, the event *Accessibility Celebration Day* was organised. The programme brought together NGO representatives, cultural sector professionals, activists and artists working in the fields of cultural accessibility and inclusion. The event provided a platform and meeting place for professionals to share experiences and ideas. Throughout the day, participants engaged in conversations and discussions on cultural accessibility, diversity in Latvia, and the promotion of an open and inclusive environment.

Filip Pawlak, an activist from Poland and one of the ambassadors and contributors to the British Council–supported project *Europe Beyond Access* (2018–2023), took part in *Accessibility Celebration Day*, addressing participants during the event. Pawlak is a performance artist, performing arts producer and curator who has worked in both institutional and independent arts sectors. His public work focuses on fostering change within the cultural field by supporting the inclusion of artists and creative professionals with disabilities.

Participants developed a joint manifesto, advancing the idea of establishing an association dedicated to cultural accessibility. The initiative inspired organisers from other institutions and festivals to pay closer attention to accessibility issues and to introduce practical improvements at their own events where necessary.

The evening programme of *Accessibility Celebration Day* was open to everyone, offering an opportunity to discover the diverse talents of artists with disabilities. It featured the

performance *Sitting Stand-Up* and an inclusive dance session with a DJ set. Alongside the wider *Homo Novus* programme, the event contributed to reducing the stigma surrounding artists with disabilities.

The aim of the programme was to highlight the importance of accessible and inclusive cultural events and to encourage the creation of an association that would bring together accessibility advocates.



Project: *Accessibility Celebration Day*



Implementer: New Theatre Institute of Latvia

Project timeline: 25.08.2023–02.09.2023





INCLUSIVE ART BEYOND VISUAL PERCEPTION

The performance *House of Labrys* offered a new and inclusive artistic experience for people with visual impairments, as well as for anyone interested in exploring art beyond visual perception. Created as a spatial sound choreography, the performance was developed by the artistic duo IevaKrish (Ieva Gaurilčikaite-Sants and Krišjānis Sants) in collaboration with composer Jēkabs Nīmanis. It was adapted for blind and visually impaired audiences, offering the possibility to experience the work with their eyes covered, with the interaction of sound and movement creating a unique artistic encounter. “In my view, it is fascinating to experience choreography through senses other than sight – to listen, to discern, to smell, to sense someone close or far away, to follow the dancers’ steps and create a sensory image in one’s mind. It is unique and unrepeatable. By closing one’s eyes, one can see more – you sink into yourself and merge completely with the sound. Imagination is always stronger than anything I could show,” explained Ieva Gaurilčikaite-Sants, describing the core element of the performance – experiencing it with a blindfold on.

In November 2023, *House of Labrys* toured the Latgale Embassy GORS in Rēzekne, the Daugavpils Unity House and the Latvian National Museum of Art in Riga. Before the performance at the Latvian National Museum of Art, visitors were offered a special guided tour adapted for blind and visually impaired audiences. The tactile and musical experience enabled participants to explore the museum’s exhibition in greater depth.

Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia, emphasised the significance of this project, saying:

“In Latvia, we support inclusive arts and cultural events that foster an understanding of diversity and encourage dialogue on important themes. *House of Labrys* is one of these initiatives – it offers a unique experience beyond visual perception, and I encourage everyone to discover it for themselves.”

Support for the *House of Labrys* performances reflects the commitment of the British Council in Latvia to promote access to culture and the arts for diverse audiences, especially for social groups whose opportunities to experience traditional art forms are often limited.

Project: Performance
House of Labrys for People
with Visual Impairments

Tuvumi
production company

Implementer: Tuvumi

Project timeline: 15.09.2023–30.12.2023



ART ILLUMINATES THE INVISIBLE

The project (*In*)Visible Latvia provided young people in Rīga, Jelgava, Daugavpils and Liepāja with the opportunity to take part in applied theatre workshops. Working in collaboration with local youth organisations and associations advocating for queer and LGBTQ+ communities, the workshops invited participation from young people who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as their friends from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds.

The workshops took place in four cities across Latvia, with particular attention given to regional urban centres where the voices of queer communities and young people with diverse perspectives are often less heard and where such groups can be more difficult to identify and engage.

Led by professional directors, theatre artists and community theatre facilitators, the workshops enabled participants to develop their creative potential by exploring personal themes that would later serve as the basis for arts projects.

The aim of the project was to empower participants to use art as a means of creative self-expression, to explore their identities and address the issues that matter to them.

Participants learned about the history of community theatre, performance art and queer performance and, through artistic methods, developed their skills in

creative self-expression while reflecting on their individual experiences. The workshop leaders supported them in choosing forms of expression that enabled them to create unique artworks grounded in their personal stories.

Throughout the project, the creative team collected young people's stories from the workshops and conducted in-depth interviews to develop dramaturgical material based on their experiences. This material is intended for use in the development of a theatre production about the queer community in Latvia.

Project: (*In*)Visible Latvia –
Theatre Workshops Exploring
Latvia's Queer Community

INITIUM

Implementer: INITIUM Foundation

Project timeline: 29.08.2023–
30.12.2023





TELL DADDY – A PERFORMANCE INVITING PARTICIPANTS TO REVEAL THE UNSPOKEN

From 5–7 September 2024, as part of the *Homo Novus* theatre festival in Rīga, British artist Bush Hartshorn presented the performance *Tell Daddy*. The work invited participants into a deeply personal and meaningful experience – to share with the artist something they had, for various reasons, never found a way to say to their father.

Bush Hartshorn is an internationally recognised playwright, theatre programme curator and mentor whose professional path has taken him to the United Kingdom, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland and Denmark. He has collaborated with artists around the world as a mentor and a coach. In the performance, he listened to each participant individually, creating a safe and confidential space for sharing feelings, memories and unresolved questions that often remain unspoken in everyday life.

The artistic project highlighted the significance of men’s and fathers’ roles within families and in wider society, while also addressing the challenges of communication between generations.

The performance *Tell Daddy* offered visitors a unique artistic experience, as each participant became part of the work itself, sharing with the artist deeply felt emotions and thoughts.



Project:
Performance *Tell Daddy*

Implementer:
New Theatre Institute of Latvia

Project timeline: 03.07.2024–01.09.2024



CONTEMPORARY ART SPARKS DEBATE ABOUT THE CITIES OF THE FUTURE

On 5 October 2024, as part of the public programme of the contemporary art festival *SURVIVAL KIT 15*, British researcher Debra Benita Shaw delivered a lecture titled *Posthuman Remains: What Will the Waters Leave Behind?* The 2024 edition of *SURVIVAL KIT 15* focused on the knowledge and practices that shape cities in the present and in the future. Shaw's lecture concluded the fourth episode of the public programme *Future*, in which a new generation of curators explored possible paths for the development of cities.

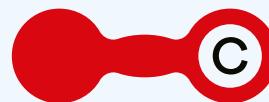
Debra Benita Shaw teaches Cultural and Visual Arts Theory at the University of East London and is a member of the Centre for Research into Social Change and Justice. She is the author of numerous studies and publications on technological development, urban environments, posthuman bodies and science fiction literature.

Shaw's lecture provided a theoretical basis for the artistic events created by young curators from the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art's Volunteer Programme. Their work reflected on the forms of knowledge that will shape the cities of the future and involved young people from different communities as both participants and assistants. Echoing the themes of Shaw's talk, the young people's research and creative process centred on water – a force that connects not only the sky and the deepest layers of the earth but also the past and the future. Debra Benita Shaw also took part in

a practical workshop with the young people involved in the festival, offering feedback on the artistic events they created and on how these works responded to the challenges of urban development.

The *SURVIVAL KIT 15* programme served as a platform for emerging curators and artists, as well as for discussions and new creative works related to the future of urban environments, fostering knowledge-sharing between Latvia and the United Kingdom.

Project: Festival
SURVIVAL KIT 15
Public Programme, Episode 4



Implementer: Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art

Project timeline: 01.10.–30.11.2024



A CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF *MACBETH* BY YOUNG ACTORS IN DAUGAVPILS

In November 2023, Daugavpils Theatre premiered director Oļegs Šapošņikovs' contemporary interpretation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, combining movement, sound and the original text in English. The production provided valuable professional experience for recent graduates of the Stanislav Broks Daugavpils Secondary School of Music and explored themes of ambition and moral decline.

Masterclasses led by British actor, lecturer and Shakespeare scholar Paul Goodwin – organised with the support of the British Council in Latvia – enabled students to deepen their knowledge of Shakespeare's works, understand the significance of the text and explore the nuances of interpretation rooted in British theatre traditions. Paul Goodwin is the founder of The Shakespeare Edit theatre company and has performed with the Royal Shakespeare Company and National Theatre.

The young actors noted that the experience broadened their perspectives and strengthened their sense of belonging to the wider European theatre community.

"I believe it is remarkable that Daugavpils Theatre offers young actors the opportunity to learn from and be inspired by global expertise. We are delighted to have supported the masterclasses led by British actor and Shakespeare scholar Paul Goodwin in Daugavpils.

This global perspective could be felt in the performance itself – I appreciate

the creative team's work in shaping a contemporary interpretation of *Macbeth*, as well as the courage and determination of the young actors who brought Shakespeare's language to the stage in its original form,"

commented Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia, after the premiere.

The production expanded access to contemporary cultural events in Daugavpils and offered a bold reinterpretation of a classic, encouraging audiences to reflect critically on themes of ambition, tyranny and the threat of authoritarianism in contemporary politics.

Project: *Staging 'Macbeth':
Workshops for Daugavpils Theatre's
Upcoming Actors*



Implementer: Daugavpils Theatre

Project timeline: 13.02.2023–31.05.2023





A SHAKESPEARE-INSPIRED PRODUCTION EXPLORES AN ARTIST'S INNER WORLD

In April 2024, a team of independent theatre artists premiered the performance *Goodbye, February!*, directed by Gerds Lapoška and Anna Klišāne. Drawing inspiration from the works of English poet and playwright William Shakespeare, the creative team developed the dramaturgy in collaboration with British actor, lecturer and Shakespeare scholar Paul Goodwin. Throughout his professional career, Goodwin has devoted himself to the study of Shakespeare's works and has performed in leading theatres across the United Kingdom, including the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre. With support from the British Council in Latvia, he had previously worked with young actors at Daugavpils Theatre as they prepared for a production of *Macbeth*.

Goodbye, February! strengthened cultural ties between Latvia and the United Kingdom by bringing together elements of classical British theatre and Latvian contemporary theatre, while fostering collaboration between artists from both countries.

Notably, the production was created by emerging theatre professionals working outside institutional structures, thus contributing to the development of the independent performing arts scene.

Actor Gerds Lapoška's solo performance offered audiences a glimpse into an artist's creative search, drawing on references

from literary, cinematic and theatre classics. The creative team presented an engaging and contemporary interpretation of Shakespeare's work, weaving together world literature with deeply personal stories and the challenges faced by the performance's director and protagonist. The dramaturgy examined the individual's relationship with systems and structures, using Shakespearean motifs to reveal their enduring relevance in the 21st century.



putra

Project: Performance *Goodbye, February!*

Implementer: Association *Putra*

Project timeline: 27.12.2023–30.06.2024

BRITISH ARTISTS BEGIN WORK ON A COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT

In March 2025, artists from the British theatre company Stan's Cafe arrived in Latvia for a research visit. Stan's Cafe is a Birmingham-based theatre company and charity working in the fields of experimental theatre and visual art. It is regarded as one of the most innovative theatre ensembles in the United Kingdom. Central to the company's creative practice is the involvement of local communities, as well as collaboration with schools and representatives of diverse social groups.

The artists visited Latvia to begin work on the community arts project *River Tours: Daugava*.

The project is envisioned as a confluence of stories from people living along the banks of the Daugava, echoing the tributaries that feed into the river and culminating in a collectively crafted textile artwork that will form the basis of a theatre production.

The premiere of this work is scheduled for the 2026 edition of the the International Festival of Contemporary Theatre *Homo Novus*.

During their visit, Stan's Cafe Artistic Director James Yarker and Associate Director Craig Stephens undertook a research journey along the Daugava – travelling from Rīga to Krāslava,

Piedruja and Daugavpils, then returning via Līvāni and Doles sala – to learn about local stories, places and experiences that would enrich the dramaturgical material.

To foster cooperation and knowledge exchange between creative professionals from Latvia and the United Kingdom, Stan's Cafe also met with local playwrights, textile artists and theatre practitioners interested in community-based artistic work. During the meeting, the artists introduced their creative approach and working methods and established connections with local practitioners for future collaboration within the Daugava-focused project.



Project: *River Tours:
Daugava – Research Visit*

Implementer: New Theatre Institute of Latvia

Project timeline: 03.03.–07.03.2025







BRITISH ARTISTS INTRODUCE NEW DIMENSIONS OF ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE

The Riga Photography Biennial is an international contemporary art event focused on analysing visual culture and artistic representation. In 2024, the biennial's programme explored how our understanding of photography has changed due to digital technologies and how these shifts manifest in artistic practice, presenting audiences in Latvia with works by leading artists from around the world.

On 18 April 2024, the exhibition *Vamp(yre) Reality* by British artists Lindsay Seers and Keith Sargent opened at the exhibition hall Rīgas Mākslas telpa. Guests were welcomed by Philip Barclay, Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Riga.

Lindsay Seers and Keith Sargent have been collaborating since 2012. Renowned for their interdisciplinary approach to contemporary art, the artists blend video, digital media, animation and interactive installations in their works, creating narratives that challenge conventional perceptions of reality, identity and memory. Their works have been exhibited at the National Gallery of Denmark, the Venice Art Biennale, the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Finland, the Tate Triennial in the United Kingdom, the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei and other international institutions.

The exhibition *Vamp(yre) Reality* explored the nature of consciousness and its impact on human perception, creating a richly layered visual and auditory experience. By merging objects, spatial interventions, light, sound, virtual reality

and computer-generated imagery, the artists crafted an immersive space that invited reflection on the perception of reality and the construction of identity in today's digital age.

***Vamp(yre) Reality* challenged audiences' perceptions by dissolving the boundaries between the physical and the digital, revealing the complexity of consciousness.**

The exhibition strengthened cultural ties between the United Kingdom and Latvia, offering audiences in Latvia the opportunity to engage with the work of British artists and fostering discussion and a deeper understanding of contemporary art in the UK.



Project: Exhibition *Vamp(yre) Reality*
as part of the Riga Photography Biennial 2024

Implementer: Riga Photography Biennial

Project timeline: 18.04.–02.06.2024.

YOUNG ARTISTS CONFRONT THE CLIMATE CRISIS

In September 2024, the group exhibition *No White Flags*, created as part of the international art residency *SustainARTability*, opened at the Art Academy of Latvia. The residency was organised by the Art Academy of Latvia in cooperation with Europe's network of cultural institutes EUNIC Latvia. It brought together nine art students from Latvia and nine students from other European countries – the United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Austria and Spain.

The residency provided an opportunity for collaboration and exchange among emerging artists from Latvia, the United Kingdom and other European countries, with a particular focus on the role of art in addressing climate change.



Under the guidance of mentors, students participated in seminars and lectures on ecology and reusable resources, exploring how art can help increase public understanding of environmental challenges. Their task was to create an artwork on a sustainability-related theme and to document the creative process. Each artist began with a blank piece of cotton fabric in the shape of a flag, transforming it into an artwork, painting or installation that reflected their perspective on processes in nature and society.

Traditionally a symbol of surrender, in this exhibition the white flag became a sign of creative resistance and determination. The United Kingdom was represented by the artist Kat Newman from Central Saint Martins College of Art in London. Her work was inspired by “guerrilla gardening” – a form of urban environmental activism that draws attention to sustainability by greening abandoned or neglected city spaces.

Project: *SustainARTability* –
Exhibition *No White Flags*



**Latvijas Mākslas
akadēmija**

Implementer: Art Academy of Latvia
in cooperation with EUNIC Latvia

Project timeline: 26.08.–27.09.2024





BRITISH WRITER RECEIVES THE *JĀNIS BALTVILKS PRIZE*

To mark the 80th anniversary of the birth of writer Jānis Baltvilks, the *Jānis Baltvilks Prize* ceremony took place on 24 July 2024 in the Botanical Garden of the University of Latvia, honouring outstanding authors of children's and young adult literature, as well as book illustrators. It is Latvia's most significant award in children's literature; since 2005 it has promoted high-quality literature for young audiences and strengthened reading habits.

The award ceremony was supported by the British Council in Latvia, helping to promote children's literature from British authors among Latvian readers.

In 2024, the international *Jānis Baltvilks Prize* was presented to British writer Kiran Millwood Hargrave for her novel *Julia and the Shark*, illustrated by Tom de Freston, as well as to the book's translator Renāte Punka. Hargrave's novel tells the story of Julia, a teenager who moves to a remote Scottish island with her parents, where her mother, a marine biologist, becomes deeply immersed in the search for the rare Greenland shark.

The book explores a wide spectrum of important topics in a way that's accessible and engaging for young readers – from mental health, family relationships and friendships to coming of age, cultural diversity and the vital importance of biodiversity.

Paul Brummell, British Ambassador to Latvia, welcomed the guests and congratulated the author at the ceremony.



Project: *Jānis Baltvilks Prize 2024*

Implementer: Children's Literature
Centre of the National Library of Latvia

Project timeline: 24.07.2024

iBbY
LATVIA

OUTSTANDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS HONoured AT THE EXCELLENCE AWARD CEREMONY

On 8 November 2023, the British Council took part in the University of Latvia's *Excellence Award* ceremony in the field of languages, recognising the country's most exceptional English language teachers. In 2023, a total of 121 English and German language teachers from across Latvia were nominated for the *Excellence Award* by pupils, alumni, parents and colleagues.

In the final round, the most accomplished teachers demonstrated their professional mastery by modelling and leading lesson segments, analysing teaching scenarios and addressing a range of methodological challenges.

The professional skills of English language teachers were assessed by a dedicated panel of five language education experts, including Zane Matesoviča, Country Director of the British Council in Latvia.

The *Excellence Award* and a EUR 1 400 scholarship were presented by Zane Matesoviča to the highest-scoring teacher, Agnese Gromova-Ķūrena, an English language teacher at Riga Distance Learning High School

"Rīgas Komerckkola". A special award for promoting English language learning in the regions was presented to Rīta Murāne-Rutka, a teacher at Daugavpils State Gymnasium. The laureates were also greeted by Philip Barclay, Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Riga.

"I am honoured to recognise exceptional English language teachers. As a member of the jury, I deeply appreciated the teachers' mastery, creativity and dedication. I am convinced that all nominated teachers have brought positive change to their schools and communities, making the world a better place – which is also the mission of the British Council in Latvia.

I hope that the opportunity to be among the most talented will inspire teachers to continue their work, further strengthening language learning and the development of education in Latvia," emphasised the Country Director of the British Council in Latvia during the ceremony.

Project: University of Latvia
Excellence Award



LATVIJAS
UNIVERSITĀTE

Implementer: University of Latvia

Project timeline: 08.11.2023





YOUNG PEOPLE FROM LATVIA JOIN AN INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

To mark the 90th anniversary of the British Council, the organisation launched the initiative *90 Youth Voices* in 2024, creating a global network of young changemakers committed to addressing global challenges and driving positive change. The project brought together young journalists, activists, content creators, artists, technology experts, researchers and entrepreneurs from 43 countries. Latvia was represented by two young people who had previously taken part in British Council-supported projects: Evelīna Stikāne from Jēkabpils, a graduate of the girls' leadership programme *Future Heroes*, and Kristiāns Zaķēns from Viļāni, a participant in the youth media literacy project *Man nav vienalga*, implemented by the NGO *Viedokļu līderu skola*.

Over the course of five days, participants gained valuable skills, broadened their perspectives and developed new ideas to foster positive change in their communities.

During the first part of the programme in London, the young leaders met Scott McDonald, Chief Executive of the British Council, as well as policymakers, community representatives and peers to discuss youth participation and community development. They explored London's diverse cultural and historical heritage, took part in study visits, developed deep listening skills and built new international connections.

In the next phase of the project, participants travelled to cities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to gain deeper insights into the diverse experiences and initiatives of local communities. The representatives from Latvia visited Cardiff, the capital city of Wales.

Reflecting on his experience, Kristiāns noted that the programme had given him even greater motivation to take action and contribute to positive change in his community.

“Hearing how much other young people have achieved for the benefit of their communities, and how they have inspired others, encouraged me to do even more and to support those around me. This was one of the most motivating experiences I have ever had in any project,”

he told the newspaper *Rēzeknes Vēstis*.



Project: *90 Youth Voices*

Implementer: the British Council in Latvia

Project timeline: June–July 2024



ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Founded in 1934, the British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It fosters a friendly environment for knowledge exchange and mutual understanding in the arts, culture, English language learning, education and civil society across more than 100 countries worldwide, including the Baltic States. Through the resources of the UK cultural sector, the organisation fosters constructive international cooperation, building trust, creating new opportunities and improving quality of life.

In 2024/2025, the British Council reached 599 million people worldwide through its in-person and online activities. The British Council is a UK public body and a charity governed by Royal Charter. Its income is generated primarily through educational and development projects, English language teaching and examination services, partnerships with public and private bodies as well as through donations. The organisation's Patron is His Majesty King Charles III.

Since 2016, the British Council has been implementing the large-scale programme *People to People* in the Baltic States, which supports educational, cultural and community initiatives focused on 21st-century skills, inclusive arts, education and social cohesion.

Follow us on social media!

 [BritishCouncilLatvia](#)

 [lvBritish](#)

 [britishcouncillatvia](#)



The British Council Latvia team

From left: Communications Manager Laura Kristapone, Country Director Zane Matesoviča, Programme Managers Maija Kurte and Anete Blūma, and Consultant on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Keita Melle.

